

CAT - "Christianity Awareness Training"

For Clinicians And Helpers who Are Working with Former Members Recovering From High demand Christian groups

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"The map is not the territory¹"- Alfred Korzybski

Abstract: Many in the therapeutic community are first hand witnesses to the destructive effects of high control religious groups. To honor and respect those who come to us for help, let's take the opportunity to examine our own possible biases including how we define healthy Christianity. There is much diversity of belief within Christianity. Our biases might include our thinking about what is "mainstream," and how loaded that language is. Perhaps Freud is mainstream and Jung is not? Understanding enhances our therapeutic intervention capability. Our attention and care helps us become part of someone's healing support system, instead of yet another person violating their boundaries from an authority differential. Isn't that what happened to them in the cult? The Christian's relationship with God may have been distorted by the high control group, but does that mean God or faith are the problem? An abused wife and her therapist will work cooperatively so she can thrive in future healthy relationships with men. A Christian seeking help isn't necessarily wanting to jettison his or her God any more than an abused wife's health includes no more men. Do we see it as healthy when a Christian wants nothing more to do with God or faith? Are we intentionally faith-supportive of Christians who wish to retain or restore their relationship with God? If our biases are inflexible, can we abstain from working with that population so as not to cause harm? Recovery inherently challenges beliefs. This paper gives some perspective on history, present day challenges, possible guidelines and educational solutions for clinicians, educators and others who want to be a more helpful part of the support system for people recovering from high demand Christian groups.

1. General Application And Issues Specific To Christianity

Some of what is discussed in this paper could apply to other forms of bias in settings where people are involved in helping others. Supplying specific knowledge representative of all of Christianity is beyond the scope of this paper. Some of the suggested guidelines [See Appendix II] and questions to ask [See Appendix III] could be modified to apply to other religious identifications and practices. Even so, the main purpose of the ideas explored in this paper is to generate awareness of some unique issues that effect helping interventions with people identifying as Christian. This includes branches of Christianity that may be less well known. When we discuss statistics, the discussion may be limited geographically to American Christianity, but it may be applicable elsewhere.

It is hoped that you will investigate the specific Christian faith, practice, history and concerns of the individuals with whom you work, and that this paper will present sufficient reason for doing so. Potential harmful prejudices and their formation are examined, including media, socio-political, cultural, historical and personal bias. Unconfirmed assumptions lay dormant

¹ Korzybski, **Alfred A Non-Aristotelian System and its Necessity for Rigour in Mathematics and Physics**, AMS paper for AAAS Conference in 1931.

and function as prejudices. They obfuscate understanding and damage rapport. As part of your caring for and helping people, you can choose, proactively, to take extra steps to examine your own presuppositions and biases related to Christianity in general, and the specific branch and practice of each Christian with whom you work. There are some hard personal questions we can ask ourselves as helpers, with intent - in the long run -to build a bridge. In order to build that bridge, we'll have to examine pressures to be polarized, pressures to mistake assimilation for diversity. At the conclusion of this paper is some brief discussion of historical bias between psychology and Christianity. This is not to say all Christians, clinicians, educators or helpers hold these biases unilaterally, but again, the aim is awareness. We stand on historical foundations whether we are aware of their influence or not. It may bring some light as to why some Christians seem less open to counseling and therapy as venues for recovery, and why even Christian psychotherapy modalities may not be as appealing to some as you might think they would be. We examine areas where we think we "know," but perhaps, may not "know that we don't know." Our work helping people takes place in an environment of growing multicultural relativism, including pressure to see religion much like personal opinion. We examine the effect of this upon Christians who are less likely to integrate others' beliefs into their own as are the polytheistic faiths.

2. Playing Well With Others

With the exception of newer Christian Universalists and ecumenical groups, Christianity is unique in that Jesus is indispensably required. There are people who identify as predominantly Christian who believe Yahweh=Allah=Buddha=Your God too, but purist traditional and conservative Christianity says the only door to God is through Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and that a Christian's God is the only one who is actually God. Before that raises hairs and gets claws out, the point here is not to debate who is and is not God, but to point out that there is a certain mutual exclusivity of theology between adherents of other religions and a considerable portion of those identifying as Christians. Concerning matters of eternal welfare and salvation, the necessity of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and His primacy as both God and man is, at the same time, mutually exclusive with the beliefs of most religious groups which follow or include gods by other names. If I believe the only fire exit in this building is through the front door and you believe the only fire exit through the building is in the back door, and someone else believes there is more than one door, we can easily verify the number and location of fire doors in most buildings. Even if we were temporarily not able to locate and count them, it is unlikely we would become hyper-aroused over whose version was true. People could choose to come to blows over something like this, but it would be the exception, not the norm. In discussing fire doors, we also probably would not have a problem with the idea off absolute truth, meaning that in this space and time only one person could be correct.

To be very simplistic and cover a great deal of completely general ground about Christian belief, many Christians are convinced that there is one stairway (door) to heaven, only, and that is through Jesus Christ. Some will tell you, it is Christ and what he did, period. Others will say it is Christ plus your good works. Others will say it is Christ plus faith in what He did, so it's not about being performance driven for God. Then there are variations on the theme. The thing to note here is that this is not at all about hate. It has nothing to do with hating other people for believing differently. It's not about not "playing well with others." Back to our analogy about a building and a fire exit, many Christians believe we all must exit (at physical death). They see the need for a fire door, and believe there is only one door, and that "One" is Jesus. This is a long term goal issue, outside the range

of our best technology and instrumentation. We have nothing yet big enough to study the "end of physical life as we know it" issue sufficiently to verify the reports of those who say they have gone beyond it. Since we can't conduct evidenced based studies about whose god is in operation, you have different people convinced strongly. People who have no trouble seeing that one door and multiple doors is logically mutually exclusive in this time and space continuum, sometimes have issue when we extrapolate that issue to it being God or gods instead of Door or doors. Its numerical logic, not a decision to hate someone who believes there is another back door.

Christianity, is at basic doctrine a "Jesus is the Only Way²" religion, and that does not fit with today's postmodern pluralistic view point that good religions should all play well with other religions. Thoughts like "why don't they just agree all gods are basically the same thing" or "give each others' gods equal value and worth," are common. A Christian can respect and love a person with a different belief system, just as a non-Christian can love and respect a Christian. This does not mean that all must or could agree that a religion that says "Jesus is not the only god," is true. Current pop culture mistakes this for a form of hate, but it is neither. Within groups that identify as Christian, there are groups that are ecumenical or unitarian in nature, meaning they are attempting to include other gods or allow for the belief that Jesus is not the only door. Other Christians would say that once you drop "Jesus is the only way," you have lost Christianity in attempt to be inclusive. What is the take home, here, for you as someone working with Christians? It's wise not to go from zero to sixty in assuming the person or group is a hate group just because they don't believe there is another God or another way to heaven, or just because they take a biblicist view that x or y is a sin. Helpers can be experts at facilitating harmony in terms of agreeing to disagree without being disagreeable, but only if they value the permission of unique belief as healthy.

There is plenty of room for you to exist and another person to be different from you without that person hating you for it, and without you hating that person. Having some strong areas of belief that are not open to compromise does not mean the person as a whole is rigid and inflexible or uncooperative. When we judge Christians as wrong or deceived or deluded, that can't but help come out in how we interact. The use of the word "judge" here is specific, implying intentional discrimination. It is one thing to observe a difference. It is another thing to believe someone's thinking is wrong, and to hold a strong opinion, but still be fair in your interaction. It is crossing over a line treat when we choose to mistreat others on the basis of their beliefs or we ascribe to them behavior and motives that are unconfirmed, on the basis of what we fear those beliefs will cause them to do. It can help to see if we've attributed a motive of hate to someone on the basis of what we think they believe and how we think they will act. We will want to be alert and quick to recognize that when assumptions about individuals and groups are different from their actual behavior. There's having different, even strong beliefs, and there is choosing to mistreat people over those differences. Let's remember to keep them separate, and hopefully not engage in the latter.

Why is this discussion about Jesus being "the only way" so important to some Christians? Because, if we don't examine any negative sentiments we have toward - and get past the impact of - someone who has a "this is the only way" belief system, it is bound to come out as pressure upon the one we're helping to eject beliefs we see as not healthy. You

can read that as "this is the only way (for that person)." The question is do you need them to acknowledge that other ways are equally valid in order to work with them? Can you be O.K. with allowing them to have their exclusive belief system, without mistreating them, and without needing them to validate your beliefs or place your beliefs on an equal level with theirs?

A Christian's God says He's the only way, and many people who identify as Christians believe Him. They can come with you to accept other people believe different ways, but most will not agree to the "equally valid," idea because it makes no sense. If there is only one fire door, then saying there are two seems insane. They just came out of an insane cult with lots of double-think. Many areas of faith and practice encourage Christians to treat others well despite a difference of belief. Do you believe Christians are people of hate? This will influence your ability to be neutral in a helper role. A Christian exiting a cult has probably been abused more than enough. A therapist who assumes Christians are haters is throwing up a huge roadblock. Making the connection that most Christians do play well with others, and that differences are usually not about "hate," is a necessary step to creating a safer environment and for you to become a useful resource for healing.

"When we talk about prejudices, we mean all the sets of fantasies, ideas, accepted historical facts, accepted truths, hunches, biases, notions, hypotheses, models, theories, personal feelings, moods, unrecognized loyalties — in fact, any pre-existing thought that contributes to one's view, perceptions of, and actions in a therapeutic encounter³"

3. Restoring Dignity And Respect

To extend further dignity and respect to those who seek our assistance, we might include refraining from labeling types of religious groups or their practices as being unhealthy unless confirmed and in the unique circumstance of an individual. It can save much heartache for us, and those who seek help, if we take care in examining the function of any specific practice and how it operates in the life of the individual person with whom we are working. The practice may have been used in a corrupt way in the cult. There may also be a practice by the same name which is beneficial.

The field of cult recovery has been instrumental in restoring dignity to those suffering from the effects of being in high control and high demand groups. Clinicians without specific knowledge of the issues facing cult survivors may place inordinate focus on a victim's childhood or view a client through the lens of mental illness or other disorders, not taking into account the impact of thought reform and manipulation and trauma which lead to commonly observed after effects of cult membership. Bringing to light the impact of cult related abuse restores dignity and discourages laying blame to the victims of high demand and high control groups and relationships.

"The second common error mental health professionals make is to assume that a group involvement reflects unconscious individual psychopathology and/or a dysfunctional family system. There is no doubt that many who join cults have pre-existing psychological problems and/or come from highly dysfunctional families. But

³ Cecchin Gianfrocco, Lane, Gerry And Ray, Wendell, A., ***The Cybernetics Of Prejudices In The Practice of Psychotherapy***, Karnak Books Ch. 1 & 2, E-book, Kindle Edition, 2010 978-1855750562

many have normal psychological and family backgrounds. Those who were troubled and those who were not troubled may both be affected—though perhaps in different ways—by a highly manipulative and exploitative group environment. In one of our research studies, former group members preferred the terms “psychological trauma” and “psychological abuse” to describe their experiences, rather than “cult,” “mind control,” or other terms. So don’t focus on the person’s or family’s past to such a high degree that you overlook possibly traumatic effects of an abusive group experience.⁴

Through education, validation, being a caring witness and other methods, those who participate in assisting others in cult recovery have been part of the supportive process of many exiting and former members. The status of those who come to help has moved from victims who were often seen to blame for what happened to them, to now being viewed as people of strength and resilience who are overcoming the effects of abusive treatment, prolonged manipulation, trauma, betrayal and other means of thought reform.

“People don’t join cults. They are deceived and purposefully recruited. The majority are in some sort of normal human transition stage in life, such as leaving high school for college, leaving college for the “real world,” experiencing the breakup of a relationship or marriage, losing a job, moving to a new location, retiring. And along comes a group of what seem like the most wonderful people from the most wonderful group with the most wonderful goals who show them love, acceptance, and a “higher purpose.” Many people have the mistaken idea that only troubled people from troubled families get involved in these groups. Cults don’t want troubled people. They want bright, dedicated, idealistic, energetic people to raise money, do the work of the group, and recruit new people. We know they would never have chosen to join a cult, nor are they people of low intellect, but that they are often idealists who were approached in a time of life transition.⁵ ”

We give exiting members time and a safe space to learn to think critically, mitigate the effects of trauma, process what happened to them and transition through recovery to a more fulfilling and healthy life. Instead of taking on a closed and authoritarian posture, we engage in forms of helping that are more egalitarian and cooperative, and this includes being as respectful as possible.

Stephen Martin, while commenting on Lifton’s criteria for thought reform, describes how some Christian groups are often authoritarian and totalitarian⁶ in nature. We know blanket labels and depersonalization are destructive in other fields, including our own. It follows that depersonalizing or labeling varieties of Christianity or subsets of belief and practice would not be helpful, either. How do we know we are labeling or depersonalizing? We will have to be proactive and take time to stop to observe if our “map” of the territory is accurate. Hence the repeated encouragement here is to apply oneself continually to learn about the specific religious history and experience of individual people who come to us for help, and be open to the idea that the next person coming through the door who states a similar background may have an entirely different experience in a faith group that appears

4 Langone, Michael, *Mental Health Overview* ICSA website <http://www.icsahome.com/elibrary/studyguides/mentalhealth>

5 Giambalvo, Carol ***An Open Letter to Clergy Regarding Helping Former Members of Abusive Churches or Cults*** ICSA Today, Vol. 3, No. 2. pp.6-7 2012

6 Martin, Stephen ***The Heresy Of Mind Control: Recognizing Con Artists, Tyrants And Spiritual Abusers In Leadership***, ACW Press, 2012

to be the same at first look.

4. Labels And “Trigger” Words And Phrases

Appendix II includes a very short starter list of possible “trigger” words and phrases which sometimes elicit strong responses. You are encouraged to add your own “trigger” phrases and words to this list, as well. You can explore any practice which is foreign to you in someone else’s faith or belief. What is helpful is to have the desire to look into practices which are unknown to you. Let’s look at one practice that is a “trigger” phrase for some: “speaking in tongues.” Prolonged variations of this practice have been referenced in cult recovery literature as dissociative in function or intent⁷. This does not mean that “speaking in tongues” is dissociative in, and of, itself. But how would know that, unless you were familiar with, or had researched, it. In attempting to help, some would advise a Christian to discard this practice. Since the helpers only exposure might be hearing about it in the context of cults and cult recovery, she or he might forget that the dissociative element is when a cult group has people doing this, in an aberrant way, for an extended time.

Hearing that hypnosis has been used in the creation of false memories does not necessarily mean that every practitioner of hypnosis or induction technique is in the practice of false memory creation as a rule⁸. If you have no other point of reference, then you might mistake “speaking in tongues” itself to be a thought reform activity, and you might want to caution people to stay away from it. It’s happened before. Someone mistakes an unknown or small sample of experience, and equates it to be a generally “known bad” practice. Perhaps in one congregation what is meant by “speaking in tongues” is a dissociative practice, and in another, and open minded means of individual prayer or infrequent communication by one or two members in a large group of a message believed to be from God. Why would you think it is something other than weird without personally participating in a healthy version of it or having a proactive desire to understand its practice its religious and historical context - and as part of that individual’s experience? The map is not the territory. More than three million Americans and approximately 70 Million worldwide see this practice as an important part of their Christian faith, and as such is a main part of their statement of faith, and that is in one Christian denomination alone⁹. It can be eye opening when we have some more education and awareness of the history and diversity of American pentecostal Christian faiths. Why would we want to if we don’t know that we don’t know? If we start making note of those practices we have concerns about, or that “trigger” something for us, then we can set about to do some research from more than one side of the issue. Find out the positive function it can serve. Discover whether there is a variety of practice. You may venture as far as reading about it in the religious texts, since many practices originate there. Despite the fact that some Christians may rely on the Bible, and you may not share the same values regarding their religious text, often there are boundaries stated about some particular practice¹⁰. You may find that if you are willing to look into that text that

7 Singer, Margaret T., **Coping With Post Cult Trauma**, 1993 Minneapolis CAN conference http://www.refocus.org/uploads/3/9/3/8/3938709/coping_with_post-cult_trauma_singer_can_1993.pdf

8 Loftus, Elizabeth F., **Creating False Memories**, Scientific American Vol. 277 No. 3 1997 pp.70-75

9 Assemblies of God, **Worldwide Churches And Adherents 1975-2015, Statistics on the AOG (USA)** <http://ag.org/top/About/statistics/index.cfm>

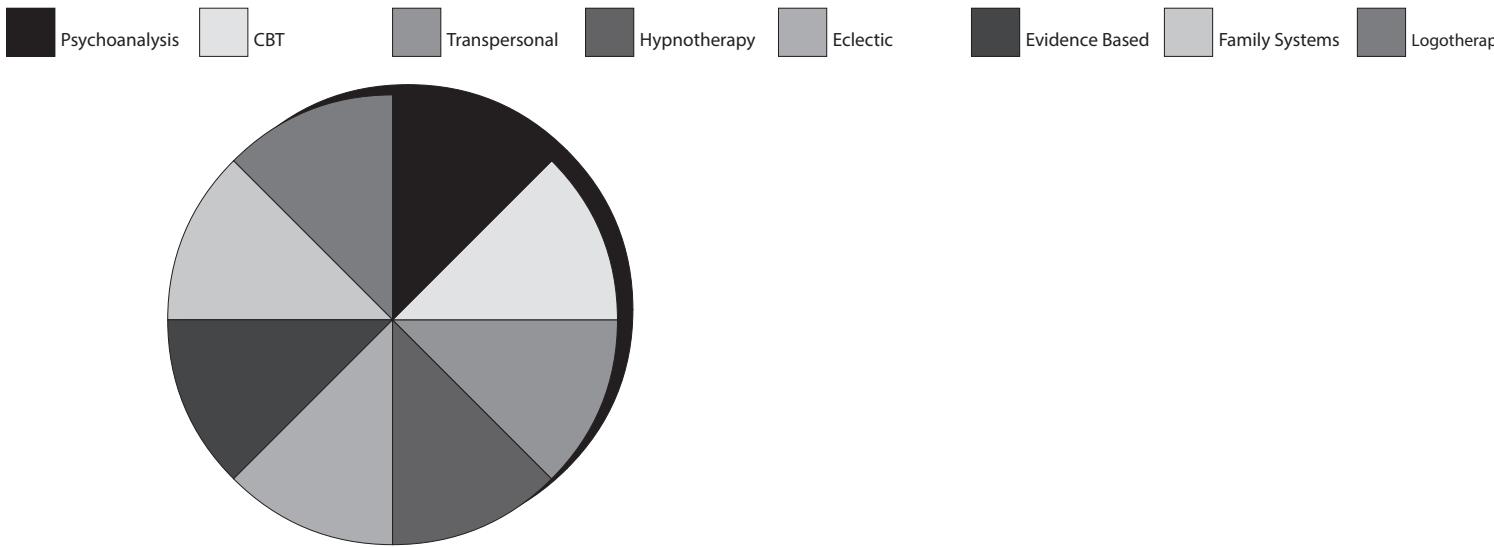
10 **Holy Bible**, King James Version (similar references may also be found in other versions) - various references. KJV is used as it is public domain

it will denounce the cult's dysfunctional practice but encourage a healthy practice of the same things. You may be able to help someone retain a belief or practice but lose the dysfunctional part.

A healthy immune system properly identifies invaders and helpers, It does trash duty on the malignant or invading entities. We don't want to act as someone's psychological immune system in the case of someone who has already lost friends, family, community and intimacy. Instead, we want to help people with tools like critical thinking skills and education about influence and thought reform. Good surgery tries to preserve healthy tissue, and only remove what is necessary of a cancer. Helping others can be like spiritual heart surgery. When working with spiritual abuse in a religion which varies from our own, it will help to admit it if the practices of "XYZ Tabernacle Of New Christendom," or any group, is foreign territory. It can help you to give yourself time to diffuse the things that trigger you, and to be more available to those you help because you have a greater comfort level. Give yourself time to learn about church X, or denomination Y or congregation Z. Your educating yourself, combined with your expertise in cult recovery, can help you be a powerful ally for a former member of a cult or controlling Christian relationship.

5. Diversity Of Religion

Religions of the world have an incredible diversity, whether viewing them anthropologically, societally or psychologically. A person identifying with any religion may be doing that on a purely cultural or family basis (i.e. "I am Jewish") because of genealogy or family affiliation. It could be national heritage alone, or a person may practice the written or unwritten commands of that faith. If Jewish, one could be Reconstructionist, Reform, Conservative or Orthodox, or perhaps humanist and other variations. What's more important is what it means and how much a priority it is to the individual sitting across from you. What's the frequency of familial and personal participation? Is it central to their work and family life? Food and holiday celebration may be a part of family observances, but are the religious holidays and rituals and practices personally meaningful? Was the person educated in a religious sponsored school? Did they learn a foreign language as part of their understanding of the religion's texts? Was it chosen for them, or did they make a choice or confirmation at a certain age? People can be pressured into significant rites of passage, such as bar or bat mitzvahs, confirmations, adult water baptisms, They can also freely choose them, or it may be a combination of the pressure and free choice. Within any religious group, and its subgroups, there is a continuum of buy in, from going through the motions to devout practice in which the person also acknowledges their faith as a significant part of his or her identity. Key persons in someone's life can influence the desire to become a participant in the same religion or spirituality of that key person. Levels of participation in one's faith may change throughout a person's lifetime. In some groups, heritage may fix levels of association and participation, such as in caste systems. In others, one can freely move from one church to other areas of Christianity. Understanding the diversity of religion is about more than just becoming aware of, and articulating, the distribution of the different subbranches of a religion. It is also about coming to know the individual variations and the significance of the part it plays in the individual identity of the person who is coming to you for assistance. Religious meaning and participation is dynamic, not static over the course of someone's lifetime. Cult participation makes this more complex, so time and care are needed to preserve the positive, life-enhancing elements of the faith of someone who is



How Do You Slice The “Pie?”

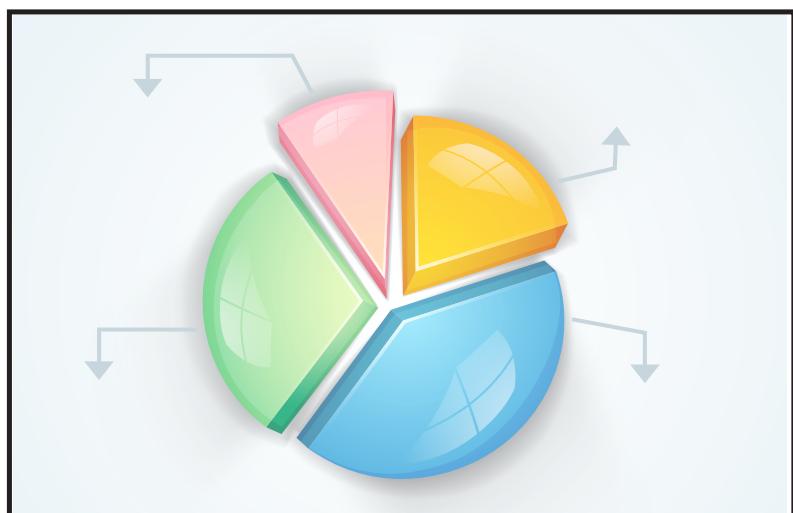
existing a cult.

6. Exploring The Word “Mainstream” By Drawing Our Own Conceptual Pie Chart In A Familiar Area

If we took a sampling of people who are current practitioners of in the helping professions asked: “What is mainstream or mainline psychology,” what would they answer? What criteria would they use to divide up areas of practice? Would it be based upon the time line and longevity of the practice, or upon historical development of schools such as Freudian or Jungian? Would they divide up the number of licensed practitioners in each area to create a representative distribution? How would they classify those who use eclectic methodology or those who utilize more than one therapeutic modality? Would the psychoanalytic fields be “mainline?” What about the evidenced based therapeutic schools? Would these branches be considered “mainstream” fields of psychology? How about the family systems groups or the Rational Emotive (REBT) stream¹¹ and CBT¹² lines of training and practice? Cybernetic? Brief Therapy? Maybe “mainstream” is a fusion, an eclectic blend dependent upon the clinician’s own journey, study, training and history of “what works?” If everyone who worked in the helping professions was asked to create a distribution chart, such as a pie chart or other graph, how would the field be divided up? What if the APA or APS did mandatory survey of all members? Who would choose the survey questions and would those questions influence the kinds of responses? You see, dividing up the “pie” of the psychotherapy or helping professions world is something which would be done differently by different groups and individuals. Take a field that is approximately a century and a quarter years old since its “talking cure” inception, and try to properly categorize it, break it down into its branches and describe the distribution of its practice. It is not that simple. In a familiar field, it will depend upon your education, mentoring, what books you’ve read, with whom you associate in your practice, and the prevailing viewpoint of colleagues or peer group. Where standardized by state board exams, there will be more cohesion of viewpoint. Despite a high degree education and regulation, there is still great variation in actual living practice. Twenty years from now,

11 Ellis, Albert & Dryden, Windy The Practice Of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, 2nd Ed. 1997 Springer Publishing, pp. 1-70

12 **A Brief History Of Cognitive-Behavior Therapy**, Suffolk Cognitive Therapy 2006 <http://suffolkcognitivetherapy.com/cbt-history.htm>



what is considered “mainline” or “mainstream” will inevitably change as you learn and grow. What will it look like then?

The past 25-75 years has seen an incredible degree of diversification and change. Some helping practitioners will not go near psychoanalytic schools, with the exception of prerequisite classes for a degree program, certification or the recommendation of a respected peer or mentor. Some will steer clear of therapeutic modalities which have not been thoroughly proven effective in evidenced based studies. For others, they are confident if it works in their experience, and the proof is in the pudding. Perhaps it is the influence of marketing, peer groups, and the repetition and frequency with which we receive input and education about any area or field, that determines how we view any area, whether that be religion or the practice of helping people. Our peers or those who taught us find this to be “mainstream” and that to be “fringe” or “cutting edge.” This influences how we think and feel about it.

7. Why Take The Time To Raise Awareness Specifically About Christianity?

Seventy-Seven percent of Americans identify as Christian according to a Gallup poll in December 2012¹³. If you count Mormonism, then the number is closer to 90%.

“The United States remains a largely Christian nation; more than nine in 10 Americans who have a religious identity are affiliated with a Christian religion. There has been little change in this portrait of religious identity in the U.S. from last year¹⁴.”

Various other groups’ studies indicate the majority of Americans identify as Christian, even if the population samples of those studies are less well funded than the Gallup organization. Being the most common religious background in the United States, one would assume we are all familiar with the Christian religion. Despite its prevalence, the breadth and diversity of religious Christianity in the United States cannot be distilled into a

¹³ Newport, Frank **In U.S. 77% Identify As Christians**, Gallup Poll Data And Summary, December 2012 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/159548/identify-christian.aspx>

¹⁴ IBID & Newport, Frank **Christianity Remains Dominant Religion In The United States** Gallup poll data and summary, December 2011 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/151760/Christianity-Remains-Dominant-Religion-United-States.aspx>

unified “The.” [as in “The” Christian religion]

Because Christianity is frequently referenced, and because it “so” familiar, we think we know a lot about it already, but we do not normally examine how we came to our own belief systems about Christians, their faith, their spirituality and practice unless it is a part of our own daily life. That being said, we still have our own familial upbringing, cultural heritage, educational & media influence, and our own political views which shape our impressions and opinions when it comes to different branches within the Christian faiths. We bring inherent bias and prejudice which are often unexamined and which does impact how we interact with those who come to us for help.

Christianity awareness is important when interacting with those people we are helping. If we project our prejudices into another’s world view, faith and practice, then we can end up doing the same thing the cult leaders did to them. We will replicate the damage by being another person in a power differential who is defining good and evil for them. Korbyzki’s statement that “The map is not the territory¹⁵” applies. Our inner representational maps of Christian faith and practice can do harm if we operate projecting them into the experience of others in an environment where there is a power differential. We can mistakenly assume a “new religion” is more likely a cult or that a practice with which we are unfamiliar is a thought reform technique. We can think we are making healthy recommendations when we tell people to “stay away from religion for a while” or “read a different Bible translation,” but that may actually be highly counterproductive depending upon an individual’s situation. However collaborative and egalitarian our practice and process, we are still seen as the helpers, and those coming to us for help inherently come looking to us as a resource, whether it is for information, education or facilitation of trauma recovery. So if we desire to not replicate the authoritarian undue influence of the high control or high demand group or relationships, it would be best to understand that we don’t yet understand some things, and not jump so quickly to assume those things that are unknown, unfamiliar or “triggers” for us are pathological in the world of those we help. The moment you draw a line to say “this is Christian and this is not,” there is probably an ecumenist who wants to fight you on the “not” part and a purist who wants to include what you believe should be excluded. This realization is very important, because without our eyes being opened to the diversity issue, the concept of “mainstream” has a thought stopping effect which we use to legitimize or de-legitimize Christian faith and practice. It is precisely when we move forward in false confidence that we can end up hurting instead of helping.

8. How Do We Decide What Is Christian Mainstream?

Do we decide that something is “mainstream” based on its longevity or prevalence or sustainability? Does the size of the group or number of its congregations make it mainstream? Not necessarily so. Do we make decisions based on its membership statistics? How do we determine the objectivity of studies on membership reports? We can probably all name cults that have large multinational following. Could it be the degree to which the public has access to the group or the group reaches out in advertising or personalized public access? Perhaps a “mainstream” group is one that has a large website and literature presence or professionalism in its style sheet protocol? Does “mainstream” mean a clear statement of faith aligning predominantly with Catholic, Eastern Orthodox

¹⁵ Korzybski, **Alfred A Non-Aristotelian System and its Necessity for Rigour in Mathematics and Physics**, and AMS paper for AAAS Conference in 1931.

or Protestant belief systems? For many Christians, church congregation or denominational membership is not necessarily required to "be a Christian." Others would require someone to become a member, agree with a statement of faith, or participate in a local water baptism or confirmation of faith. It is most likely that we were not aware of how we decided to distinguish between "mainstream" vs. non-mainstream. What forms the basis of what we consider "mainstream" in the area of religion and Christianity in specific? The words "mainstream" or "mainline" can have a "thought-stopping" loaded language for us, a shortcut to determining which groups are legitimate in our eyes. To some, only Catholic would be mainstream. To others only commonly known Protestant or Eastern Orthodox churches. Does a Christian group's involvement in education and the fact that it has many schools make it so? Financial prevalence, perhaps? Is it "mainstream" based on how well it adheres to the Bible? If so, which Bible? Perhaps only those Christian groups moving toward ecumenical inclusivity of all religions are considered "mainstream" in the current socio-political climate. You see "mainstream" is actually loaded language and very subjective depending upon who is wielding that word and why. We have a valid desire to be able to sort the bad from the good, the legitimate from the illegitimate, and the pathological from the healthy, but the word "mainstream" itself means different things to different people.

9. How Do We Determine Religious Legitimacy or The Health Of Someone's Faith?

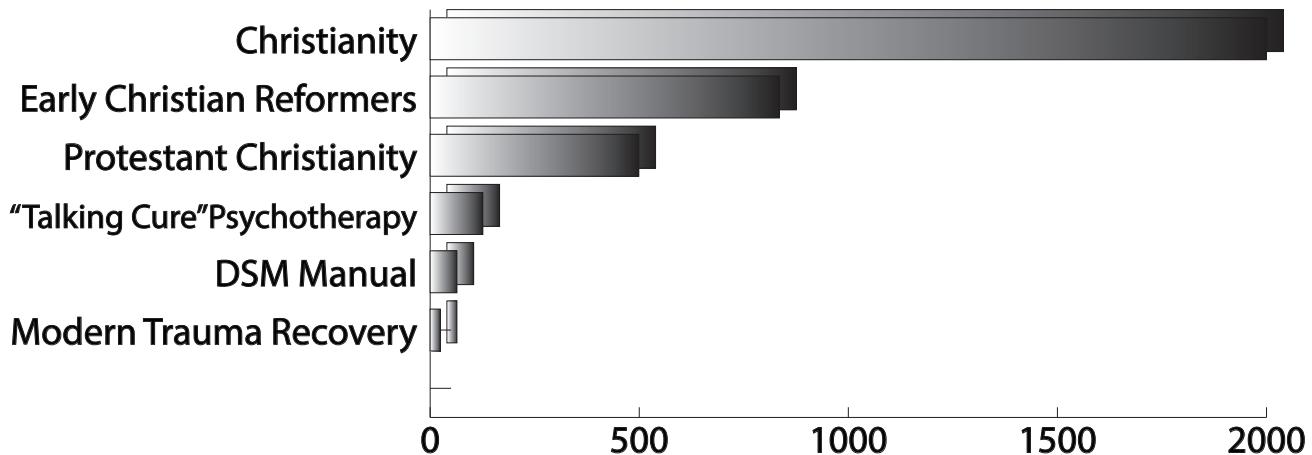
Our background and experience in the helping professions may be that the more the education, the more well known the school, the more rigorous the credentialing, then the greater the likelihood of professional legitimacy. Perhaps as a general rule, but in the helping professions as well as other fields, we know that success as helpers is not guaranteed by these things. Maybe it is experience? Good supervision? Maybe it is communication and listening skills? Some churches operate like businesses in terms of their finances. Transferring legitimacy criteria from our own professional context into a religious one may not be wise. We run the risk of utilizing common cues¹⁶ for the helping professions and attempting to read the cues in a religious context. Our own experience could be Baptist or Catholic, and we could have several fundamentalist or generic Christian people coming to us for help. Would we prejudge an unknown group or practice as suspect because they don't appear to have large established seminaries, degree programs, and certification processes for their ministers? What about homeschooling? If we look beyond fears about what could go wrong, we might agree with the reasons some Christian parents choose a home school environment. If we camp out in fear or bias, we my only speculate the potential problems of what we believe to be "unregulated" environments. For example, we could know of situations where people were abused in a home school, Since we've heard about issues in some home schools, we may develop a prejudice about home schoolers seeing them as isolationists that breed child abuse. At the same time, we are aware of the effects of bullying in the public as well as private school sector, or low ratios of adult teachers to students or guns and violence. Without a desire to understand and do some research, we might not have a clear understanding of positive common ground motives, and concern for children, that provide impetus for some Christians to home school. Is this Christian practice a tool or is it inherently problematic? What is informing how you decide the health or pathologic nature of the practice in these areas?

16 Cialdini, Robert ***Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion***, Revised Edition Revised Edition Harper Collins, 2006, pp.1-16 ISBN: 978-0061241895

Let's take on how the use of hypnosis is viewed among the helping professions. Some see it as inherently problematic, with great potential for undue influence, suggestibility and a tool that is often implicated in false memory fabrication. Others see it as an invaluable tool for exploration in therapy and trauma recovery and a means to phobia reduction. Then there are the gray areas of re-framing and other types of therapy that do not use formal trance induction, but nonetheless, are considered derivatives of hypnosis. You probably have worked through what works for you as a helper, and what you won't do, and why.

It is important to examine whether we think something is unhealthy for someone else. When we are in the position of helping, there is an authority differential. We are in a position of influence, whether we intend it or not. The difference with Christians is that there are often more "obey authority" directives going on in a Christian's external and internal world. There's a firm sense of right and wrong, and, in general, the authorities in a religious context are often looked up to. Obedience has often been a significant and repeated choice, and chances are the cult magnified that habit, and abused it. It is easy for a Christian exiting a high demand group to be influenced by your value judgments. Let's not call something they are doing unhealthy unless it is truly functioning in that manner for them. Let's not make a quick call on something we don't yet know. And if we do have to do that, perhaps we can cooperate with people who come to us to seek out alternative variations of those practices that serve the person well, if they wish to retain that practice in their faith.

10. A Perspective Of Longevity & Prevalence:



How much time in human history [years] have these things been extant? Christianity is approximately 2004 years old if you count the start date being when the 12 year old Jesus of Nazareth was teaching in the temple, as the formal start of his following. Reform movements, like the Waldensian and Poor Of Lyons, early precursors of the Protestant reformation, began around 1181 A.D. They have been in existence in some form or another for 835 Years. Protestantism has been said to have formally started in the year 1517 when Martin Luther's 95 theses were nailed to the castle church in Wittenberg. That's 499 years of formal existence of Protestant Christianity. The psychotherapeutic "talking cure" had its beginnings in the 1890's. That's 126 years¹⁷. The first *Diagnostic*

¹⁷ Shorter, Edward, **A History Of Psychiatry**, 1997 John Wiley & Sons, pp.148-158 ISBN 0-471-24531-3

And Statistical Manual, DSM-I¹⁸, as we know it today, was published in 1952, 64 years ago. It's undergone significant changes. If you consider Judith Herman's groundbreaking book, *Trauma And Recovery*¹⁹, a catalyst for the coagulation of modern trauma therapy, then this field is approximately 25-35 years old. The demand for solutions for Vietnam vets recovering from war trauma served as part of its foundation. The knowledge base surrounding trauma recovery has been grown in many areas since that time, but it is still developing. Not to de-legitimize therapy and the helping professions, but a time line can put into perspective that non-Christian clinical help can appear to some Christians as if it is a fast growing new religion or of its own in terms of its inception and history.

Why is this important? Even many of what we consider the "New Religions" in the Christian tradition or Christian sects have both prevalence and longevity, if not in all aspects of their doctrine, but in the majority of Christian doctrine upon which many of them are founded. Christianity and its forms of social welfare and pastoral care have been around fifteen times longer than the talking cure, doing much good. Those foundations predate television and social media, e-mail and computers, and often radio as well.

When we discuss the challenges in studying and categorizing Christianity, there will be more detail on the prevalence of Christianity. Here's a head's up. In the USA alone, people who identify as Christian comprise 77-90% of the population. Most of them are not dealing with cult recovery issues. Can we decide, by theology or belief alone, what is a legitimate religious group or practice? Perhaps the issues of health and legitimacy are more about the method and behavior employed by individuals or those on the top end of the power differential in such a group. Do they use undue influence more than those groups in which we participate? Established longevity is something to be examined, but it should be done neutrally. We don't want to discount the historical good of Christianity, or mistake firm belief for inflexibility in social interactions with others.

11. Who Are The "Problem Groups" In Our Eyes?

If we have come to identify certain branches of Christianity as "problem groups," without thoroughly investigating what is and is not problematic about them, we may be prematurely guiding people to an unnecessary divorce with God or something they practice as part of their faith. Because some helpers don't really understand the diversity and breadth of an exiting member's religious experience or practice, and because the person has come out of a cult, some think it is best to have someone stay away. That may work with a business cult, but a Christian's faith is sometimes more like an arm or a leg. You don't want to amputate what could be part of their circulatory system. We might believe that some practices were specific to the cult, without understanding the broader, more benign practices from which they were derived. It is very important to examine our presuppositions about "problem" groups. How do you personally identify a "problem group"? Is a group a problem, if it has not been around for long? If so, how many years does it need? Does it need to be like Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox or Protestant denominations? If it does not ordain clergy? Is it a problem if it is a small congregation or meets in a home, or it does not own its own building? If they believe in healing? If they baptize adults? If they don't believe in a clergy/laity split? If they worship

18 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (I), American Psychiatric Association 1952

19 Herman, Judith, *Trauma & Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence - From Domestic Abuse To Political Terror* 2015 978-0465061716

on Saturday instead of Sunday? If some people in it are called Apostles or Prophets? Our understanding of thought reform²⁰ methods can help us to identify “problem groups,” but even so, we don’t want to be throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and assume just because something was practiced in the cult, that practice, itself, is problematic. Is it the whole group and all its practices that are destructive, or some leaders and individuals within the group? What if we take the criteria we apply to them and turn it on the things we are involved in? It may not work in that context, but it can help us to see if we are being more harshly critical of what is not familiar to us. We can examine if a practice truly is destructive in the life of someone who comes to us for help. We can educate her or him about how undue influence works, and give her or him some criteria by which to discern. In this way, we can cooperate side-by-side with those we help, to sort this through for themselves.

12. Difficulties In Studying And Categorizing Religious Faith And Practice

We don’t have an independent body who can formulate theory without bias and conduct an unbiased random sampling or survey of Christianity. In the United States, you would think the US Census would be most objective, but the last surveys done were in the late 1930’s and published in the 1950’s, and one separate survey, last one being published in 1957.

“The U.S. Census Bureau does not collect data on religious affiliation in its demographic surveys or decennial census. Public Law 94-521 prohibits us from asking a question on religious affiliation on a mandatory basis; in some person or household surveys, however, the U.S. Census Bureau may collect information about religious practices, on a voluntary basis. Therefore, the U.S. Census Bureau is not the source for information on religion, nor is the Census Bureau the source for information on religious affiliation²¹

Who is doing any truly independent research? The instruments have already been influenced. You may find surveys on the internet or in a published study, but they are more often than not conducted by Christian denominations who have prejudices about other groups of Christians. It is rare to have a comprehensive understanding of the incredible diversity of Christian religion in terms of written and codified faith and practice. In studying religious faith and practice, you also have the issue of written doctrine versus the interpretation and actual practices followed in groups large and small. Some groups hold closely to traditional texts and their interpretation of them. Others leave room for additional writings. There are national, regional, local and even family subgroup variations within many churches. Our own ideas are outdated with a 1950’s view²² Less quantifiable, are the elements of an individual Christian’s spiritual life, and how he or she lives this out relative to the subgroups to which he or she belongs. This is true even if we, ourselves, identify as Christian. We could make attempts at studying religious denominational trees in historical context, charting when new groups formed over doctrinal issues, and that would help us to understand some of the differences in codified practice. Chances are, we view Christianity as a locus of certain denominations and groups. Within those groups,

20 Lifton, Robert Jay, M.D. ***Thought Reform And The Psychology Of Totalism: A Study Of "Brainwashing" In China*** University of North Carolina Press 1989 pp.419-435

21 United States Census Bureau <https://ask.census.gov/faq.php?id=5000&faqId=29>

22 ***Religion Report by the Civilian Population of the United States***, United States Census Bureau, March 1957

like a buffet, we most likely define the branches with which we are familiar as having different flavors. Different people divide the Christian “pie” diagram differently. Seminary textbooks on comparative religion and comparative Christianity slice the Christian “pie” based on bias inherent in that group. In reviewing studies on the diversity of Christianity, it seemed that Roman Catholic based studies seemed to weight the USA pie with a Roman Catholic majority, whereas a Baptist study saw Baptist denominations as more prevalent. Even seemingly neutral studies, have smaller sampling sizes, like the 2010 survey of 236 religious bodies²³, but they are heavily weighted toward member organizations. Most have had to make assumptions in how to divide the pie into groups just so the survey questions could be formulated. To some Christians, denominational membership is not required to identify as Christian, which can further complicate the design of a survey to study the issue. You have large numbers of Christians who do not attend organized forms of worship or education. You have Christians who attend more than one type of service, and those that transition between subgroups of Christianity. If these studies and the media are our best hope of viewing the diverse landscape of Christianity, we are at a disadvantage.

It is best to take an honest look to admit what we don’t know. We thought we knew, but we know less than we thought we did. We don’t have an accurate picture, the oldest possible objective one being a US Census Bureau survey in 1957, that’s more than half as old as the entire history of psychology. For those of us in the United States, we probably retain the snapshot in time from the influence of that older census data and how that was communicated into common parlance.

Demographic charts and statistical data are subject to the sampling methods of studies, and the premises on which they are based. Having people self-identify their religious affiliation poses one set of problems. Giving them a selection to choose from presumably closes the door on those options we did not offer. Even so, we would think the most neutral views of religious groups are from outside. As previously mentioned, studies conducted by the groups themselves are influenced by the assumptions of those groups. There is inherent difficulty in studying and sampling groups as an outsider, as well, when participation is primarily open to adherents. How do you evaluate the psychological health of a group’s practices in an evidenced based way, much less view the practice in its context? It is hard to conduct a study if you are an outsider, because some practices are unavailable to view. It is rare you will have someone who has been part of a major world religion who is at the same time part of more than one other major religion. Perhaps someone has adhered to at most two, or maybe three major religions, over the course of a lifetime, but not usually simultaneously. The exception might be for messianic Jews, unitarians, or those of polytheistic faith who seek to merge the apparent similarities of religions in attempts to focus on common ground. We covered the ground earlier that modern multiculturalism would appear to be inclusive and welcoming, but for the practicing Christian whose believes “Jesus is the only way to salvation or heaven,” socio-political multiculturalism often forces Christians into a corner of being accused not meeting up to cultural requirements of “playing well with others.” Some melting pots, rather than featuring and celebrating the maintenance of diversity, become crucibles of assimilation. This is the case for a Christian who is pressured to surrender Jesus Christ centered monotheism.

23 Association Of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, ***US Congregational Religion Census 2010***. Published in 2012 See <http://www.rcms2010.org>

Facing this prospect, of the pie being too large to really get a handle on, forces one to realize that we may not "know" Christianity as well as we thought we did. Earlier, it was suggested that you try illustrating the diversity of psychology or clinical psychology by drawing your own distribution in the form of a pie chart. Think of doing the same thing with something much more dynamic, diverse and prevalent which is now more than two thousand years old.

In the absence of evidenced based studies with thorough sampling methods in groups that have a high level of participation, it is surprising how much we absorb from our peers' ways of thinking and from movies, social and news media. Not to belabor the "Christian as victim" conspiracy theory point of view, even so one would have to admit the news stories and impressions of Christians, especially "conservatives," "fundamentalists," "right wingers," "charismatics," or "evangelicals" is not a positive one. That would lead one to believe these groups are problematic at best, and we would feel justified in our assumptions. It's important to resist the pressure to consider Christian groups with these labels a whole lot of bad apples. How many of these people do you personally know? Have you sat down to discuss their beliefs and values. The majority are probably not the ones knocking on your door pressuring you to say "uncle." You may find that individuals, even within these groups, do not have the black and white values that are presented in entertainment and mass media generated venues. Later we will discuss the media's propensity to polarize issues so as to generate outrage with the aim of increasing viewers for advertising revenue. Christians are not the only target, but it is unusual that a population majority is so well targeted as to generate a great deal of societal prejudice and bias. This has happened to other groups in human history, such as many Jewish populations. Keep this in mind when you meet a new person who has come out of a Christian cult or high control group, and the person wants to retain their faith and their relationship with God.

13. How Some Christians View Other Christians

Some Christians would include Mormonism in their description of Christian denominations and religions, others would not. Roman Catholicism espouses that it is the only "One True Religion²⁴," therefore essentially qualifying itself as the only true Christianity. Many Catholics, in actual practice, might not agree. The public face says some baptized Protestants would qualify, but the actual canon - the Council of Trent being in still in effect today - says no.

"Trent was the ideal Counter-Reformation to the Protestant Reformation where Protestantism was condemned as anathema along with Martin Luther and other reformers who had bolted the Church. Moral discipline was emphasized and reinforced in order that Holy Mother Church regain the respect and authority intended for the Church Christ founded and passed down through His infallible, perennial Magisterium of the Church, preserving the Truths and Traditions of Holy Mother Church in the Sacred Deposit of the Faith²⁵"

Some Protestant and Bible based groups rely on the Bible, but then you have issues of Bible translations and intermediate translations of manuscripts into Greek, Hebrew or

24 DiBruno, Rev. Joseph, D.D. **What Catholics Do Not Believe** www.ewtn.com

25 Discussions of 19th-21st Councils of the Church including Vatican II and the Council of Trent www.dailycatholic.org

Aramaic. Even those who agree on translation issues, disagree on issues of interpretation and whether the Bible manuscripts effectively preserved God's messages to mankind or not, and if not how much it should be relied upon. Some believe certain passages have more of a local application in time, others believe they apply literally to the church today. Some value and see implicit harmony of Old Testament with New, and others exclude the integration of Old Testament teaching, seeing the New Testament superseding the Old. Some Non-Christian and occult groups have views of Jesus which would be considered a false Christs. People in these organizations may consider themselves essentially Christian or Christian Universalist, but their definition of Christ and Christian would not agree with the majority of other Christian groups.

There are concerns and disputes over Jesus being both a man and God and whether God died on the cross or Jesus, and how and whether God can be in three Persons, Father, Son & Holy Spirit. We spoke of "Jesus is the only way," Some believe in the trinity, and some literally believe in Jesus only, with no trinity. Adventists hold some beliefs about the Roman Catholic Church which are shared by some Protestants. Many Protestants reject Adventist prophetic time lines and teachings. Some consider them a cult. In fact, there is a lot of challenging going on in different denominations about which groups are actually Christian, and what qualifies one for heaven, or salvation, as it is often called, and what one does with sin or if one actually sins after becoming a Christian. Please put the debate timers down, this is merely for description of the diversity within Christendom, not a theology discourse on which is correct.

Throughout the history of Christianity there have been major and fine points of theology, belief, faith and practice which have been considered so essential to some, and less essential to others, that unified groups later became divided over them. Martin Luther's 95 Theses were posted in protest of the abusive practices of the prevailing Christian faith in those days. His theses were more successful than the Waldensians and Poor of Lyons 300 years prior in gaining widespread support for churches without the abuses of that day. The main locus of issues he presented had to do with whether forgiveness was something between God and man, or whether man had to go to the Catholic Church or Pope. Luther took issue with the selling of this forgiveness or reduction in penance (payment) for sin that the Catholic Church was doing. Some Baptist groups say the spiritual gifts passed away with the Apostles, some groups advocate a clergy/laity split, and others see their ministers as equals, brothers and sisters, part of a living organism of community under Jesus Christ. Those are not advocates for religious hierarchy, and believe that when the Bible speaks of obedience to authority it is primarily in speaking of following the law with respect to civil authorities.

Some emphasize salvation, forgiveness or the attainment of eternal life through the performance of good works, and others, by faith in what Jesus Christ has done for them alone, repentance and asking for forgiveness. Some believe success and prosperity is based on doing what Jesus said to do, and others do not believe things such as curses or blessings exist. There are egalitarian Christians who observe the slave like status of women in some legalistic churches, and some who insist on a complementarian view, where wives are said to be equal but subordinate to husbands and women sometimes subordinate to men, in general. Some groups treat women like children or slaves, others are not discriminatory. Some discriminate but put a spiritual spin on it, with proof texts,

to help the women buy in to this thinking²⁶. Some believe the activity of this generation can make things better for the next, and others believe everyone stands alone before God.

There is the whole issue of “born again” and what that means, but if you have been harassed by someone or one group who claims to be “born again,” why would you look further to explore if there is a healthy version? Exactly! Jesus did not teach people to go out and hard sell and harass the heck out of everyone, but if that is your experience of one or more Christians, you might not realize that there are healthy Christians who agree with that terminology but they don’t hate, nor do they want to harass anyone.

Within the huge number of people professing to be Christian, and others who lay claim to explaining Christ, today’s modern Christian would likely divide the Christian pie differently than the next modern Christian. It is not one, unified, “The,” as in “The Christian Faith,” in terms of how people who identify as Christians practice today. Some find Christ’s teaching and wisdom and self-sacrifice to be virtuous, and so they admire Him as someone with spiritual insight, but they don’t believe He is God. Some believe Him to be God, one with their Creator, and it changes the dynamic. When someone says “Christian” or “Christianity” or that they are “XYZ Christian,” it will help to take time to find out and understand exactly what an individual or group means by that and how it is lived out. It’s good to not make a snap judgment on a sampling of a small number of interactions or rely on programming by movies, television and stories about Christians with bad behavior, which is also influencing what your peers think. How do you look for and observe healthy Christianity? You make a choice to get to know some Christians, not just in your practice. You don’t assume you’ve sampled the issue enough and have come to a definite conclusion until you put some time into it. You do that by inquiring and watching someone’s life over time. No one is 100% consistent all the time, but you will find health and life-affirming faith among some Christians. It is not just what is said that matters, but what people do.

14. How Our Views on a religious group are formed

To study a group like “the Amish” or “the Muslims” or “the Christians,” those words draw upon the store of memories of personal experience and cultural training. We could learn from text book reading, experience in our work and reports of those we know. Our colleagues and friends, and we, ourselves, are not exempt from news and fictional entertainment media. Unless you live in Pennsylvania or Ohio or nearby another area of large Amish population, or are working with former members, you have probably been more educated about “The Amish,” by fictional or supposed “reality” TV and movies, and perhaps to a lesser degree by written or internet accounts. In fact, we are heavily influenced by first impressions and media when it comes to religious groups in which we are not firsthand participants, and where we do not personally have close friendships with the adherents of those groups. We are influenced by our own upbringing and personal experience as well, including how our parents viewed other religious groups. Just like racism, religious prejudice transfers. The exception is that today, while racial and gender discrimination is heavily socially policed, religious bias is encouraged. We are also influenced if our own work is cult-recovery or abuse intervention or some other arena where we are seeing people who are suffering destructive effects of having been subject to abusive religious activity and thought reform. We can’t but help be impacted

by the reports of those with whom we empathize and get to know. If 77-90% of the US population is Christian, then what major religion will generate the most people coming through your door reporting abuse? You may want to make an adjustment to weight the impression abuse reports when you form your opinion about which groups are most abusive, Christians or some other groups? One could mistake prevalence in the population for the feeling that Christians, in general, are more abusive than other groups. That would be like saying because there are car accidents than bus crashes, that cars are more dangerous. Those statistics have to be adjusted and weighted to account for the fact that there are way more cars on the road. Exposure to the diversity of a religious groups is rare, because how many religions can you truly participate and become part of in a lifetime? Let's look at peer, professional and media influences as well as how we are influenced by hearing the stories of those who come to us for help. Let's also look at our own upbringing and experience with Christianity.

15. Professional & Peer Group Influence

Depending upon the socio-political climate of one's colleagues, there may be a predominant mindset toward religion in general, and specifically Christianity or branches or sects of Christianity. In Freudian and Jungian Psychology, there is a historical bias which we will touch on later. This cannot help but impact one's education and training, since reading and study in this area is often foundational to a Psychology degree or certification program. There is discrimination against conservatives in certain branches of psychology. There is sometimes an assumption that Christians are diversity deficient in their education, and that part of the therapeutic process is to raise awareness to be more inclusive and accepting of diversity in feminist and other issues²⁷. It is not uncommon for people to not want to associate or include those who do not share compatible socio-political views. We will also discuss the anti-psychology bias that some Christians have. Was a friend or colleague hurt in a Christian context? Do they know people who have suffered trauma or abuse in a group that calls themselves Christian? Have they heard stories of ministers or Christian leaders who did really offensive things? If so, has it given them a bad taste for Christianity. Do the helping professions have a population representative share of Christians in the United States (i.e. 77-90%)? Perhaps one of the ICSA surveys in the past has done a survey of the ratio of religious backgrounds in its helping professions and its membership, if not, maybe one can be done. This is another reason we want to take care that when we think we know, or have unbiased perspective, we may want to evaluate from who, where, and how our conclusions were formed.

16. What Is Influencing Our Prejudices Now? - Media Influence

Unfortunately, you don't get a representative and fair sampling of Christians and their real attitudes and practices in the media. Media brings your attention to groups exhibiting hateful, unjust, violent and disagreeable behavior. Mass media outlets want you aroused and engaged and coming back for more. Some story about wacko Christians is designed to get you tweeting about it, talking about it and shaking your head with the strong desire to follow up to see if that unjust thing has been dealt with. How can it be allowed to continue? It draws, or leads you to draw, conclusions about associated groups of people who are doing none of those things. In fact, the bad behavior on Television is often as offensive to the majority of other Christians as it is to non-Christians, more so, because it's now guilt by association. It's embarrassing. A Christian in a predominantly non-

²⁷ Madanes Cl  e, ***The Therapist As Humanist, Social Activist and Systemic Thinker***, Zeig, Tucker & Theisen, Inc, 2006 978-1932462852

Christian group is going to be asked to comment upon and answer (for) that unjust thing being talked about all over the news. It may be as far from their kind of behavior as the East is from the West. Those who grew up in the 60's and 70's who had no racism in them were sometimes made to feel guilty for what "they" did to the minority. Racism is real evil, but not everyone in the majority race was interested in oppressing the minority. Many a child had to stand silent, while a racial minority took the outrage of historical crimes out on the children of the next generations. It would not have mattered if the majority person was a minority activist. They were race X, and therefore the enemy.

We see this happening when all Christians or all of some type of subgroup of Christian's is on trial in a media circus designed to create polarized conflict. The purpose of TV, and why it exists, is make money by selling advertising. Much like when Cialdini²⁸ described automated behavior, the effects of many news stories of this nature are to bring strong arousal at injustice, then to polarize people in assuming the differences and disagreements are indicative of hate and dangerous behavior in a larger population of similar people. It's part of the current media trend to incite fear and anger over injustice in a limited sphere, and then to project that association onto others who really want nothing to do with being "haters." This happens, not only with Christian groups, but it's often done to other religious²⁹, and minority groups³⁰. More viewers mean huge revenues from sponsors. If you are aroused and upset enough to be glued to the television, online or print media, they can sell more advertising space or copy because of the increase in interest. Media conglomerates and internet websites want you and your attention. They want you hooked on multiple channels and feeds. The more you watch, the more you are exposed to advertising, the more opportunity to generate a need in you to buy a solution, the more sales generated, the more advertising space is paid, and so on.

Popular culture is not without influence when the news media creates caricatures and polarizes issues in ways that arouse viewer interest for advertisers at the cost of inaccurate representations of Christian populations. Reports of happy, loving Christians do not make headlines or sell ad copy or space. Portraying people who should love as people who appear to be "haters" incites strong emotion and polarizes discussion. It is like a trial without representation or an advocate, because the slant is implied. It is intended to get people upset. This cannot help but influence how we see and view religious groups in absence of understanding how our perceptions of these groups have been formed and examining our own biases. From within such a group, like Christians or Catholics or Protestants, we are still heavily reliant on external media, and we seldom have examined how we have formed our impressions of these groups, and who and what have shaped our attitudes and beliefs toward them. This is true of entertainment media as well. Unless you are watching predominantly dedicated Christian media outlets, which have their own biases, you are most likely being bombarded with negative views of Christians. Let's talk about some of those Christian media outlets. They are being bombarded with similar messages which polarize them, as well, only the focus is different. The intent is to keep them coming back for more so revenue can be generated.

28 Cialdini, Robert **Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion**, Revised Edition Revised Edition Harper Collins, 2006, pp.1-16 ISBN: 978-0061241895

29 Yardley, Jim **Europe's Antisemitism Comes Out of the Shadows** The New York Times, September 13, 2014

30 **Out In The Night**, PBS POV Documentary & A Co-Presentation with the National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC)

Our emotions and thinking, including our biases and prejudices, will bear fruit in our behavior, and how we treat the next Christian who walks through our door. Unless we consciously work to interrupt the automatic programming, then if we hear someone is from such and such a religious group that did that awful thing, then it will be hard to break the unconscious association and not attach it to the individual.

"As we studied social networks, we began to think of them as a kind of human superorganism. They grow and evolve. All sorts of things flow and move within them. ... Seeing ourselves as part of a superorganism allows us to understand our actions, choices and experiences in a new light. If we are affected by our embeddedness in social networks, and influenced by those who are closely or distantly tied to us, we necessarily lose some power over our own decisions. Such loss of control can provoke especially strong reactions when people discover that their neighbors or even strangers can influence behaviors and outcomes that have moral overtones and social repercussions³¹."

We see seasons in our culture where particular groups are bullied and mobbed and not given a fair hearing. It is not just in Christian circles that a group could receive extensive coverage because a type of issue incites outrage at injustice and strong polarization. A whole nation can be moved by media coverage. But then there is the ongoing transfer of outrage, reinforced through social networks. Public response to a media barrage, which generates additional media for a period of time, might even influence or weight court decisions and sentencing on legal matters.³² Social media is not exempt. Remember that Facebook does not exist primarily for social media. Companies pay for increased visibility, so it is not just peers you select, but your data is mined and you are targeted and exposed to content specific to your interests, with commercial goals in mind. The company exists to mine data and make income. Popularity is gained by its enabling functionality, but now people are virtually addicted. Google and Yahoo do the same. They gain a large following through facilitating interaction, then capitalize on that interaction to generate income. Try staying away from all social media and internet searches for a week. People visit because it is personalized, and they are subject to marketing and advertising as part of the process. There is also an interactive influence in terms of how news media interacts with social media. The more arousal, the more tweets and facebook posts and blogging, and looking for more updates, the more viewer time, the more money.

In the same way that we can tend to discount the effects of cult programming, we might want to wake up to how thoroughly social, print, entertainment and news media can influence us. What types of portrayals have you seen on the news about Christians? What about tweets from friends or family? What about in print news or on television? The portrayals of ministers in movies or TV media are of mostly mentally deranged, narcissistic, psychopathic, financially abusive, sexually predatory, hypocritical or legalistically wacko fictional characters that look like real people. This is no different in Europe. Individual Christians are portrayed as haters or as swept up in religious fanaticism. Christian groups are more often portrayed as cults than normal, happy and

31 Christakis, Nicholas A, MD PhD And Fowler, James H., PhD, ***Connected: The Surprising Power Of Our Social Networks And How They Shape Our Lives***, Little Brown And Company, p. xii

32 ***Out In The Night***, PBS POV Documentary & A Co-Presentation with the National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC)

healthy congregations. Combine that with most Christians who come through your door suffering abuse or trauma in a so called Christian or church setting. It is especially timely to discuss Christianity in specific because of our increasing reliance on social media and social proof, and because the amplification of the social impression of anything but the ecumenical inclusivity-unity-oriented branch of the Christian faith is a very negative. Entertainment, social, news and other forms of media also occupies large amounts of people's time and attention.

Here's an example of the permission to paint Christians into a caricature by repeating a theme in a humor context. The recent late night show monologue of Conan O'Brien:

"Political analysts say the rise of Donald Trump has made Evangelical Christians feel 'abandoned.' Evangelical Christians said, 'We've been so depressed, it's hard to get up the energy to hate gays.'³³"

You've heard so many things about "evangelicals" these days. Who is forming your opinion? Here's some information from a 2005 research study on media use and access:

"The average American spends more time using media devices —television, radio, iPods and cell phones — than any other activity while awake, says a new study from Ball State University. The Middletown Media Studies 2 (MMS2), the most comprehensive observational media use study ever undertaken, also found participants are adept at managing their use of two or more types of media at the same time. Researchers from Ball State's Center for Media Design (CMD) unveiled the key findings Sept. 26 in New York as part of Media Magazine's Forecast 2006 program. The research team includes Mike Bloxham, CMD director of testing and assessment; Robert Papper, telecommunications professor; Mark Popovich, journalism professor; and Michael Holmes, communication studies professor spending this semester as a CMD faculty research fellow. "As a society, we are consumers of media," Papper said. "The average person spends about nine hours a day using some type of media, which is arguably in excess of anything we would have envisioned 10 years ago." Research team members spent the last several months shadowing about 400 people — collecting and analyzing data on 5,000 hours of media use — in Muncie and Indianapolis. Recording information every 15 seconds, researchers measured participants' use of 15 media including television, books, magazines, cell phones, the Internet, instant messaging, e-mail and radio. Bloxham said the subjects in the study were ordinary people, not a group of "media sophisticates who define themselves by the use of the latest media gadgets."³⁴"

If that was 2005, what do you think it is like today? Examine the email, Facebook views, news stories, movies, tweets and friends' and colleagues' comments on the same. What is feeding and influencing you? Unless we virtually unplug, it is difficult not to be influenced, and many could not unplug even if we wanted to, as our work is heavily reliant on electronic communication which, at some point, involves accessing content streamed toward us while we are engaged in other tasks.

33 O'Brien, Conan Late Night With Conan O'Brien Show 5/10/2016

34 Ransford, Marc, **Average Person Spends More Time Using Media Than Anything Else**, Ball State University, 2006 <http://www.bsu.edu/up/article/0,1370,32363-2914-36658,00.html>

17. Which Side Are You On?

Which side are you on? Inherent in that question is the presumptive close that there are two distinct sides one could be on. It creates a kind of tunnel vision that you have to pick a side and that there are only two ways to go. In reality, there is a continuum of opinions, but the question forces a split. It puts a line in the center, and each person starts viewing the others as if they are on one side of the line. Beforehand, you were two people, now you are on this side or the other. This is what polarization is like. Before there was a whole planet, now it's just North Pole and South Pole. It used to be thousands of individual issues, now it is left and right.

In getting to know individuals who identify as part of the Christian faith, even in what some would consider the deep back woods of fundamentalism, you will find an incredible continuum of diversity. Will some fit the media stereotype of South Pole? Yes, there are people who fit the "redneck" stereotype, too. But they are not what is presented. People who play golf and drive Mercedes get red necks, too. You could well be seeing a small dysfunctional minority featured frequently in the media so as to spark passionate interest and generate numbers of viewers for advertisers. Forced dichotomies and polarization of value systems misrepresents individual diversity and encourages depersonalization. It can incite wars, by preying on fear and creating prejudices.

This next quote needs to be prefaced by stating that the purpose of this paper is not to promote an anti-left agenda. It is to raise awareness about bias and prejudice and their sometimes unconscious formation, and how we can remedy the negative effects to the benefit of those who come to us for help. It is likely that this paper will be read by a predominantly left-leaning audience, so apologies are being offered in advance for the quote. Please take a breath, and look beyond what this man is saying about politically left oriented people. Take a look at the double-bind he claims he is being put in. This double bind situation is being forced on Christians and those who become opposed to them. What is hoped here is that you catch, instead, the mechanism whereby both "right" and "left" are being set at each other's throats. This is an example of people being manipulated into polarization through their interaction with media. Put your cult-recovery expert glasses on, and take a look at the dynamic of creating false accusation and conflict, which the person quoted is describing. You are not being asked to agree with his opinion and who he thinks the bad guys are. You've got the two groups facing in opposite directions with media whacking them both in the back of the head. Looking past this man's political views, he is describing the double-bind he's been put in. He can't speak freely to object to something reasonable without being accused or branded unreasonable on a different, but very "heated" subject. It is a phenomenon frequently happening in the media:

"....Leftists are the minority. However, they own the federal government, social media, public education, Hollywood, and the Democratic party. They incite misdirected anger, hate and guilt to bully the public into embracing their anti-American and anti-God agenda. Because the Left controls the media, they get away with falsely portraying their opposition. The Left takes disapproval of them forcing their agenda on us to absurd extremes. For example: If you say "no" to men using girl's restrooms, Leftists in the media brand you an insane hatemonger who seeks the murder of all homosexuals. If you disagree with the Left's illogical obsession with disarming Americans, repealing the second amendment, Leftist media brands you a racist toothless idiot redneck that wants to shoot all people who do not look like you. The

Left used the same take-opposition-to-absurd-extremes tactic to brand the Tea Party racist. The good folks in the Tea Party simply disagreed with Obama's unlawful overreaching and ignoring of the Constitution. The Congressional Black caucus despicably took their opposition to the absurd extreme of claiming that the Tea Party would "love" to see black Americans "hanging on a tree.³⁵"

The left is not his problem. His problem is the double bind situation he's in. It's not just his problem, it is when people react to double-bind influence by taking a side. Then you've been taken. This is the dynamic: "If you say no to X, then you are branded Y" or "If you say yes to A, then you are branded B" Christians who are not Y and not B, effectively have their hands tied to speak or act out on X or A, which are often very reasonable and non-controversial things. What kind of a choice is that, silence or accept the branding? While they are stuck in the double-bind, no matter what they choose, they lose public respect and public opinion in the arena of social proof which happens to look and feel like real news. It is, of course, news, but there is the incredible pressure of the "spin" on that content. Yes, facts are there. Yes, a really bad thing happened, but people also absorb the "spin" they don't see created for them, for the purpose of keeping people dialed in to the media feed, which has the effect of inciting prejudice toward larger groups.

Christians don't get to refute the branding of being haters and bigots, but media gets to silence concerns about children's safety in restrooms. You have heard the expression "they made it a racist issue." Sometimes some people do bad things to other people and they are of a different race. This is not to diminish the need to advocate for victims of racism or sexism or any other type of discrimination, but a "hot topic" these days is bashing Christians over issues where a strong belief in one area is being made out to look like hate or some other offensive thing. His point about how associations are drawn by media is true, whether it is Christians being singled out or any other group. One can't deny that news media is not just about reporting facts.

But then when media stories do put groups in double-binds, it can shape our views of them, just like people being silenced or manipulated in a cult by means of "don't talk" rules combined with social proof or slander generated by leaders in a power differential environment. If our attention was being grabbed 9 hours per day in 2006, we have yielded to a kind of power differential in terms of what is occupying our attention. We don't want to discount its influence in polarizing us on any number of issues, including religious ones. Commercials can work like social proof. Movies can work like social proof.

18. Christians are not paranoid by nature, but someone is out to get some of them

There is a changing landscape of social values which once saw Christianity as a valuable contributor to society. Media is most definitely a strong influencer in this. Well known was - past tense - the fact that people of faith in God exhibited much healthy behavior that echoes things we do care about like integrity, care, love and a healthy kind of internal self-regulation in dealing with other people and challenges of life. Many Christian groups provide food, clothing, housing, and other forms of social and spiritual care, today, but this is not what you often see on the news. Current media portrayals include over-representation of some Christian groups as "haters" and people who "don't play well with

35 Marcus, Lloyd **Media And The American Left** 2016 http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/06/the_american_left_is_evil_orlando_shooting.html

others" or vicious proselytizers. The repetitious news and entertainment featuring glaring sins of some Christians portray a people who would rather deny their children proper healthcare and resort to prayer instead. We talked about either-or polarization. Prayer and medical care are not mutually exclusive, and even most conservative Christian groups who believe God responds to prayer, would not think of denying their children medical care. There is continual repetition of small cases of problems being projected to represent a larger group who would often agree with the public about the problems of the smaller group.

"At the end of this brief analysis we can conclude that propaganda is one of the most powerful factors of de-Christianization in the world through the psychological modifications that it effects, through the ideological morass with which it has flooded the consciousness of the masses, through the reduction of Christianity to the level of an ideology... And this de-Christianization through the effects of one instrument-propaganda - is much greater than through all the anti-Christian doctrines³⁶

When mass media repetitiously presents caricature Christians whose hallmark of high visibility is shown to the public as people who violate others boundaries by hating, uncaring, mindless, obsessive and fanatic behavior, it is a form of cultural programming. Without consciousness of how we are absorbing and adopting a point of view we are being pressured to see, it would not be uncommon to become upset at Christians and what "they" are doing. We combine our own experience of those abusive Christians we have met, with the media display showing an inordinate and increasing prevalence of societally malignant Christians, and our own feelings are being solidified, partly on the basis of the high incidence of bad news based on this limited information. Once you see what has influenced you, it gives opportunity to effect change.

We discussed the present day move towards multicultural relativism in this postmodern era. We'll discuss the existence of a psychology bias against Christianity due the influence of the thinking of some of psychology's founders. Present practitioners today, partly because of postmodern multicultural relativism, are often, to their credit, attempting to be inclusive of all religions, by promoting transpersonal psychology and find some harmony with the more ecumenical and unitarian approaches to Christianity. For Christians who believe that Jesus is the only way, this is like a forced state religion subjugation to assimilation, rather than celebrating diversity. Why? Because it demands they give up their faith. We discussed how forced polarization on issues, were people are not really that polarized on everything, is part of the destructive force at work. Society's problem is not Christianity and its beliefs. It is those who have motives to convince you that Christianity is an enemy to sanity. It is when you are convinced that if you don't stop those crazy Christians, they are going to subjugate you. Media profits from the conflict it creates, and the subsequent interest, viewers and advertising it generates. When society communicates that those who believe there is only one door are a problem unless they get with the program, we have to see if we are buying in to society's message or denying that the message is there. If so, we can be like the enabling spouse who minimizes the children who complain that their mother beats them or father sexually molests them. As a rule, Christians are not paranoid. Sometimes they are pointing out real issues which would be important to you as well. When the predominant view of Christians is as they are shown in the media or sitcoms, it is an uphill battle just to be seen and heard as

36 Ellul, Jaques **Propaganda: The Formation Of Men's Attitudes** pp.231-232

themselves instead of who they are made out to be. Are Christians fearful and paranoid and making up the idea that they are discriminated against? We see abusers who can win allies and make it seem like they are the victim of the spouse they covertly abuse³⁷. Have you ever had a conversation with someone where you were speaking clear words, but they heard something different? You tried explaining yourself three different ways to tell the person to turn left at the 7-11, but they kept asking you when to turn at the McDonald's or something? You know how that is. Next time you have a Christian seeking your help, take time not only to listen, but to really hear.

There are often filters you have to unmask in order to hear what is being said without looking through the lens provided for you in our culture.

19. What We Learn From Those Who Come To Us For Help

Influence by clients who have been controlled by sociopaths or narcissistic people in the branches of Christian cult groups from which they came can further reinforce existing bias if we have some. If you hear 21 people complain about bishops or elders and abuse in the church, that's 21 repetitions of clergy problems, it will be hard to remain neutral about clergy or people who have some kind of title or leadership in congregations and churches unless you factor in that the sampling of who is coming through your door is not randomized.

It unlikely, in the arena of cult recovery and post trauma recovery, that one's client base would include a representative sampling of pain-free, healthy vs. unhealthy Christians living a vibrant spiritual life and well adjusted to life in all arenas, living our their lives in healthy congregations. It is more likely that there is pathology in the methods and some of the ideology of the immediate cult or high control religious community from which the person exited or is exiting. People seek help when they are in pain. Clinicians work in a fields that diagnose and codify disorders and mental illnesses. Academics in psychology and the helping professions are usually not studying healthy Christians in their native environment. Where's the problem to fix in studying that? Professional life requires those distinctions so insurance can compensate the hard work of those in the licensed helping professions as they apply. Also because of exclusivity of belief and feeling generally well, happy Christians are not going to be out seeking therapeutic intervention for problems and life issues, as a rule. They will seek often help within the church, through peers and others, which does often bring resolution for some. This is not a description of what is right or wrong, just what people do.

Because clinicians in the field of cult recovery are hearing firsthand accounts from people who have been traumatized by spiritually abusive people in high demand and high control environments, and not hearing healthy reports of fulfilling and healthy Christian lifestyles, this might lend to extrapolating what one hears to religious faith and practice with which one is otherwise unfamiliar. In fact, your own sampling of the stories of those who are coming through your door may not be healthy Christianity, so it cannot help but bias your viewpoint about those Christian groups in particular and the Christian religion in general, unless steps are taken to adjust to known bias. Someone is not coming to you for help or therapy to tell you how wonderful their church is and to share the acts of kindness and generosity they experience from functional Christians. You may hear some of that, because even in the worst groups you find some good. People are coming for help

37 Bancroft, Lundy **Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men** Putnam Publishing 2002

recovering from the trauma and pain of being treated inhumanely by psychopaths and other controlling people on power trips. Why would you have a positive impression if most of what you hear is about manipulation and control or the bad behavior of some Christians and what was done to the people who come to you?

When certain brands or types of Christianity are viewed as pathological then it might appear to be helpful to do some research to verify or negate those suspected pathological elements as being disposable in the life of a Christian. The problem is not so much that there may be religious practices used in a destructive manner, but it is when we extrapolate those practices and consider them destructive and disposable across the board that we might short change someone. We might hear of a practice such as "speaking in tongues" used in an abusive and controlling manner to cause dissociation and assume that "speaking in tongues" is always a dissociative aberrant practice, even in other groups. Being open to how we can quickly make associations about a Christian practice used in a destructive way, will give us more options in helping other Christians to preserve healthy practices when exiting Christian cults.

We can take a look at something like the practice of meditation, and practically no one would take the whole baby and throw it out with the bathwater because some cults use meditation techniques as a mind-blanking thought reform technique. Then why would you judge "speaking in tongues" to be a thought reform technique? Precisely because you have not heard or investigated it outside literature which calls it pathology, and perhaps you have helped people where their church used it that way. The thing to take home here is that if you make a decision to see how those who come for help influence your viewpoint on a church group or practice, then you can make a choice to be more open minded when the next person needing help comes from an apparently similar background.

20. Our Personal Experience And World View

How many religions or diverse sects of Christian religion are there in which we personally received education, training and practical life experience? How much time have we devoted to their practice? This should put us on alert that an area where we may "feel" qualified to judge may be one in which we are greatly information deficient. Knowing that can help us not make assumptions that will negatively impact clients based on unknown bias.

Some of the questions to ask [See Appendix III] are intended to explore your personal religious history and experience. Sometimes our associations can be strong and cause avoidance behavior because we have such strong impressions. A child who ate a certain food at a young age, and got sick afterwards, might never go near that again in a lifetime. We all have our preferences, but when it comes to working with people and people groups, to be professional and fair, we do want to have that be more conscious than unconscious.

We already come to the table with an opinion about Christianity - and it may not be one that is helpful for people we want to help. In addition to our personal experience, we'll discuss how mass media, news media and the socio-political climate can inform the way we think. If we are mostly unaware of the conclusions we've come to and what induced us to come to those conclusions, then if those conclusions are not based on a reality check or if they are in stark contrast to the experience of those we help, we may actually be

putting road blocks in people's way, making it unsafe for them to receive help and healing. We owe it to ourselves and the people who trust us with the issues of their heart and life to learn where we are neutral and where we are not. When we are not, we can later take steps to be honest with those we are helping if we have biases we can't or are unwilling to change.

21. Diversity Of religious practice and to what degree it comprises a part of someone's identity

Christianity may be a part of their childhood training or current practice only, or it may be central to their way of life, or a combination of these. Religious belief and activity could well be a foundational part of someone's identity long before interaction with high demand and high control religious groups. Experience in cults are not always 100% negative. Not everything that influences someone's Christian faith in a cult is negative, nor is everything positive. Time in a cult can distort or contribute to a person's faith, belief in God and sense of purpose and identity. Even if the cult impacted someone's identity, not everything they received in the cult is necessarily evil. If someone is born into a Christian cult, they may need time to explore God and Christianity separate from the distortions, manipulation and control in the cult. Are the pre and post cult identity two unique and separate identities that share nothing and have no overlap, so that when a person leaves everything he did or said or felt for all those years is thrown out? Perhaps the demarcation line is not so discrete. This is why it is important to not move quickly to see particular aspects of their faith and spirituality as part of the thought control or manipulative process of the cult. Let's not let our understanding run ahead of the personal sorting process someone goes through while and after exiting a Christian cult. Consider that religious identity and affiliation could be stronger for many Christians than professional identity. Let's also challenge the feeling that we "know better" than those we help. We can't say that no one thinks that way. And yes, some helpers and clinicians have a considerable amount of education. If we admit considerable diversity and differentiation in the practice of psychology which could be said to have begun, in earnest, with the "talking cure" in the 1890's, why is that some relegate Christianity as small minded and as having remained in the dark ages when it has had continuous existence for over two thousand years? When a person is in a time of transition, that's when her or she is more vulnerable to cults, right? How about the vulnerability of a person's identity when she or he is transitioning out of a cult? That person is in even more transition, and very vulnerable to you and to your influence. It's challenging to be figuring out what is really God, what's really a faith that is theirs, and what is the cult group-think, whether there is any overlap to keep. That last part can often be the most challenging, like trying on parts of an outfit, to see what really fits and is right. It may take some tries back and forth over time to reassess their faith the longer they are away from the cult.

22. Comparing Spouse Abuse With Religious Abuse

Should we help them swear off men? Should we throw out religion and God or teach them what an acceptable or unacceptable re-frame of their faith should be? Consider helping a woman who has been in an abusive marriage³⁸. She comes to you for help and decides that she's been hurt enough and she never wants to get involved with another man again. In context, you might see this as an issue of timing, knowing once she has dealt with the trauma, and processed her experience, and has realized that this man isn't all

38 Bancroft, Lundy **Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men** Putnam Publishing 2002

men, she will most likely want to be in another relationship. She can also learn new skills as to being able to test future relationships for trustworthiness and perhaps be able to trust men worthy of that trust again and recover some agency to engage again with the other half of the human race. It is common for friends and others who want to "help" those coming out of an abusive religious group to tell former members to "stay away from anything religious for a while," if not forever. It's like presuming the male population is the woman's problem. Is that doing people a service long term? Have a bad experience with a bad therapist, the last thing one would be advised is to stay away from any kind of therapy. It would be almost a no brainer to encourage someone to look for another therapist or modality when they are ready, or even "as soon as possible," right? Consider that to a Christian, their faith is much more deeply part of their identity and life. It is not disposable for most, and expressions of wanting to eject faith or God are usually coming out of the bad experience with people who hurt them, not with God. Church community may also be a large part of a person's faith, and losing a hundred or more friends overnight can be devastating. It can be part of the healing to go back to church or interact with other Christians who are familiar with cult recovery or are themselves former members. Rather than seeing the church as oppositional to someone's recovery, there may be a place of educating those within the church to better support those exiting a destructive religious setting. It's doing a disservice to assume God is the problem or Christianity itself.

As helpers, we often make a safe space for people to make choices we, ourselves, would not make, and this allows for differences. Parroting is what was done in the cult where they learned to follow and repeat the mindset of the leader. Having uniform followers who were manipulated to yield to the leadership's demands was what happened to them in high control or high demand relationships. Part of the help we can offer, is giving people wings to recover the good and leave the bad. This means even where we have strong opinion, we don't utilize the power differential to leverage their doing things our way. In a healthy helping relationship, there should be freedom for someone to know you have a difference of opinion, yet still the safety that the helping relationship will be undamaged if the person chooses a different way than you would choose. Part of our providing that space is having the forethought to realize that faith is often a very intimate, personal relationship to God, and that you can help facilitate a healthy restoration of that relationship if it has been distorted or damaged by the cult. People in cults often say they represent God or say they speak for God, and it is very often the people who say they are God's mouthpiece or intermediary that have harmed a person who seeks assistance. You can help them with that understanding, and you will find that in many cases it brings a person into a more mature, autonomous and less codependent way of living. You can help someone on the path of restoring healthy relationship with God or put roadblocks in the way.

23. The Value Of Faith & Belief In The Care Of The Soul

Therapy effectiveness is well correlated with the participants' beliefs of the beneficial effect of the therapy. Religion deeply involves belief and faith. There are some that see therapeutic modalities as a type of or replacement for religion. Historically that would not be far from true, nor culturally in the place that people-helping functions and social work functions, were historically carried out often in church sponsored venues, as they are today. The care of the soul is still practiced today in different types of Christian ministry and spiritual dialogue and teaching. A social obligation to care for others and minister

to them been part of the historic practice of Christianity since its inception. Even though there is some inherent bias in psychology toward Christianity and the converse is true, the active goal of caring and helping is shared, and there is much room for a cooperative spirit to make therapeutic modalities more accessible to populations that would tend to confine their seeking of help to sources only within their religious community. A healthy Christian will see faith working in a healthy way in many areas of life, much like a helping professional will see the fruit of a particular technique or practice for which the founder may not know the mechanism. Both bring to the table life experience and are adherents because they both see and say: "It works." Despite the growing number of evidenced based methodologies, the confidence in a particular means of helping is also a matter of peer to peer enthusiasm and faith plus personal experience. Accepting that Christians have practices in their faith and spiritual life that can also be healthy and life giving, is not only maintaining respect, but it reiterates the common ground goals of a flourishing and healthy life. This paves the way for fruitful common ground between people helpers in secular professions and those who help others within a Christian context.

24. Unique Situational Need Of Each Person Coming For Help Is Primary

One reason to become more aware of issues unique to Christians, is it is helpful to understand where a practice of a person's faith is, in fact, one in which that undue influence or thought reform has occurred. If you don't know or have not experienced that practice, then you are informed by external sources, who may also not have accurate information. Because of the diversity of Christian practice, even across groups of similar identification in nature, you may find that in one congregation or under one leader a practice may be employed which abuses, traumatizes and unduly influences someone, but in another Christian community or gathering that same practice under the same label may be helpful or benign. You have to want to look beyond what you think you know and want to explore their background and situation. Otherwise you rely on education and what you already believe, and this can often appear to condescending to Christians who do not see themselves as less intelligent or less wise, just wanting help for what they are facing in transitioning from an unhealthy group to healthier relationships.

Where did we take on our assumptions about the meaning of the individuals faith and religion? When we later take a look at historical prejudices, some of the answers may be eye opening. The "educated" sometimes see religion as a fantasy. That attribution is patronizing to many, and communicates lack of respect. Some would go so far to say, because of lack of instrumentation to prove it, people of faith are victims of wishful thinking, projection, delusion or even insanity. If someone is vulnerable and searching, how might it be on the receiving end when someone is re-establishing or, in the case of SGA's, establishing for the first time their non-cult identity? It's unwise to discount longevity and prevalence of Christianity or the importance of faith in a Christian's identity. It will be a hard uphill battle with someone who puts God as #1 in their value system, if you prejudge that system. The intent is not to debate who knows what and who is ignorant of knowledge useful to healing from high demand and high control groups, but the intent is take a journey outside a helper point of view, to see things from the perspective of an individual exiting one of those groups, cults or relationships.

This feeling of thinking we know better is easy to pick up in any arena where we are surrounded by people who share our socio-political views, education or profession. Someone seeking help is not going to feel welcomed by someone who is convinced they

know better than the Christian or know better than God. When a Christian seeks help from a non-Christian source, they have a whole history of life experience, education and choices which should not be discounted, even they're not academic or professional training or experience. We can do a lot with our attitude and thinking to dispel the "we know better" impression. Those who get well educated in an area sometimes infantilize those who do not see that area of expertise as one for which they have long held in high esteem and value. If the ones who are educating or helping others are not careful, they can appear to be elitist or snobbish because of training or belief in the superiority of scientific methodology, or because they took on the attitude of superiority, or disdain for religion, which accompanied those who trained them. If we project this into people helping work, we are taking on the same mindset of those who thought themselves superior in the high control or high demand environments.

25. The Benefits Of Revealing And Openly Stating A Known Bias

When a person in the helping professions assumes that any specific practice, which is part of a person's faith, is inherently damaging, they run the risk, even unintentionally of further hurting the person coming for help. If we believe something is poison or damaging, we are likely want to help someone to eject that practice while sorting through the wreckage of cult experience. If the person offering help has an agenda for the Christian to divorce himself from a part of his religion or its practices, it's best to bring that out in the open. Unknown counter-transference issues and prejudicial thinking towards Christianity or subsets of its faith and practice can create problems for those we help, not dissimilar in effect to the results of actions flowing from the hidden agendas of cult leaders. But what if, in that person's situation or experience, that practice we pre-judge is actually valuable and life giving? It would be like helping a friend sort through his or her home after a fire, telling the person that their precious photos or wedding dress, or deceased child's favorite toy needs to go. Having a non-judgmental or neutral mindset toward Christianity, or at least examining and stating our known prejudices in advance contributes to a respectful environment and to the safety of people who utilize us as resources.

Let's say you have some serious concerns about ABC brand of Christianity someone wants to practice after exiting the cult. Perhaps it is a new movement that you believe -- after having done your research into that person's unique situation and the group - is a cult. Maybe it is not about bias that is unwarranted, but you have had 20 or more others you have helped come out of the same group, and you think the person is wanting to go from frying pan into the fire by engaging in that group's destructive practices. Some think that they can "be neutral" while not really being neutral, but that lack of integrity will come out in body language, affect, tone of voice or non-verbals. It's time to be transparent. You've done your homework and are truly convinced by the facts, then its time to bring the same dignity and respect we would want in the situation, and come out and say so. A Christian does not need you denying the elephant in the room, any more than anyone else. The key message of this paper has to do with when there really is no elephant, but people persist one is there. Sometimes the particular practice for that person is really not healthy and provides no positive function.

There are several ways we can say so, when we have done our homework and believe we see a real problem. We can say we suspect something is not helpful and then give reasons why. We can share that we've worked with several others coming out of the group and their practice of ABC was traumatic for all, and that you care and you don't want them to

get hurt. The point is that once you have confirmed a problem with a group or practice, it's time to get it out on the table, but do confirm the problem first.

If it is not necessarily an issue of a confirmable problem, but you, yourself, have difficulty being neutral, come out and say so, and see if you can still negotiate a way to work together despite your bias or prejudice. This signals the person with whom you are working, to make further investigations in areas in which you hold strong opinions. It enables you to communicate your insight but not enable them to be overly reliant upon it in the areas where you believe and think differently. Your communication is congruent with your beliefs, and you are not hiding something while trying to feign neutrality. This is honesty and transparency that many can respect. It is encouraging, that even people who disagree strongly in areas can work together if they want to. They allow each other the space for differences. Perhaps the person you are working with wants to work with someone who is unbiased or positive toward Christianity or his or her practice or particular set of traditions. This gives you an opportunity to support the person in transitioning to a situation, which for him or her, feels safer and more viable³⁹.

26. Knowing Our Limitations

There are times when we can't or don't want to work with certain people or those who hold viewpoints in strong opposition to our own. We can work through our own issues on it, or mistakenly blame the other person or the group from which they come. We can request a consultation formally or informally with a mentor or supervisor or more experienced helper, but it is not a failure to assess the situation and do something different while there are still more gains than losses. There are times to gently transition someone to someone who either shares or can work more fluidly without the Christian's belief system being a problem for them. Sometimes everyone tries to be agreeable despite disagreement, and being agreeable isn't happening even with a lot of effort. Help someone find someone they can work with. Treat them with dignity and respect as you both let go of the hope you invested. Although those who help often like to think they can take on and help anyone through most situations, if we work in helping long enough we find that we have our limitations in things we'd like to be able to do, but are not (yet) able to do, or may never be able to do. We also have our boundaries, and those are important as well. Sometimes we've drawn boundaries to protect bias and prejudice, and hopefully those are movable boundaries that will give us more flexibility over time. But all of us have our "yes" and your "no," including the people you help.

27. Taking On The Respect Of Exploring And Experiencing A Foreign Culture

There is a positive "I am an explorer" point of view many of us take on when traveling or visiting a foreign culture or even watching shows like *Globe Trekker* or shows on travel. It seems with issues of foreign countries or spiritual practices, like Buddhism, we are willing to take a "cultural" explorer viewpoint. We're told the protocol in visiting the temple, and out of our sense of respect and honor for the dignity of an indigenous culture, however foreign to us, we participate in those things requested of us during our as far as we are able. We may not believe in the segregation of men and women, but I doubt anyone on a pilgrimage to Mecca or the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem would violate cultural boundaries. This usually goes further than just wanting to stay within the law of the land to not go

³⁹ Cecchin Gianfrocco, Lane, Gerry And Ray, Wendell, A., ***The Cybernetics Of Prejudices In The Practice of Psychotherapy***, Karnak Books Ch. 1 & 2, E-book, Kindle Edition, 2010 978-1855750562

to Jail. It includes a positive regard. It includes an appreciation for diversity and desire to honor and respect what many cultures hold as reverent, even if we don't revere those things personally. It is a kind of caring about people where we don't want to violate their boundaries. We might not ask why we remove our shoes when going inside the house to sit on the tatami mat of a newfound Japanese friend, we just see that they do it, it's important for them, and that's enough for us. We respect that is their culture. If we ask, it is because we are curious and want to learn, not because we are critical of the unfamiliar. Why not do the same with religious subgroups which are at first foreign to us? Can we afford cultural respect to those we help coming from strong evangelical or unfamiliar Christian backgrounds? You see, we treat multiculturalism as an act of respect and dignity, even though there are some pretty strong rules inherent in those other cultures, and practices we would not dare participate in ourselves as a way of life. We don't see these other cultures as an imposition or a form of bigotry. We take on an attitude of wanting to understand, wanting to learn, wanting to know. We don't assume we already know. We see ourselves as visitors in their world and in their forms of ritual and we afford them the dignity to maintain their cultural uniqueness. Why not afford those we work with the same sense of exploring and honoring what we don't know or agree with without prejudging their religious "culture." Perhaps it is because Christianity is not presented to us like the travel shows we view, not in the media, not in the news. It is so common, so prevalent, so familiar to us, after all. It's never too late to learn and explore through a new pair of glasses.

28. What They Say, What They Do, And How It Functions

How can we determine what is our bias or prejudice and what is just not good for the other person? What if someone's beliefs, which they believe to be part of their Christian faith, are really destructive to the person you are trying to help? In examining beliefs and practices of Christians with an eye to helping people, it's helpful to distinguish what doctrine is codified in that it is explicit or written down. It also helps, if from a wider context, one investigates the spirit or intent behind the religious belief or practice. Let's think of sensory channels, like visual, auditory, taste, smell, touch, pressure, heat/cold. An experience can take place on a number of channels at once, and it often does. There are religious ideals and doctrine, then there is the actual practice. One channel is the concrete and written - What is written or what is said. The next channel is what it represents to a group or an individual- What it means and why it is done. There can also be what it means relative to the whole of religious practice or instruction. Then is the behavior and actual practice - How it is done. Lastly there is how it actually functions in the group. For example, obedience is a theme in Christianity. Sometimes a cult or controlling individual will re-frame the concept of obeying God to mean obeying the desires of whatever man is encouraging obedience. In this case the last channel, the function, has nothing to do with love or obedience to God, it has a lot to do with serving the narcissistic needs of that particular leader in that particular situation. Are there cases where obeying man is good? Yes, such in a military chain of command and where lives are at stake and in a certain context.

One way to help someone is to teach them to look at things on the different channels: code or law, meaning, larger context of meaning, behavior, and function. This can help them because, in examining their own beliefs, they may see that the belief or practice can appear good on certain channels, but also how it was used against them to control them on other channels. Maybe you are not sure, and you can invite someone you are

helping to cooperate in an exploration journey, in a non-leading way, to examine beliefs and practices that could have been misused. You can encourage them to explore the heart and intent of the practice in a wider Christian context, and then how it was actually practiced or used in the group. You could help them explore the ideals the leaders espoused and what they actually did and how it functioned to damage people. This could help when going through the ashes of a cult experience, for someone to not only recover the treasures, but discard practices, by their own evaluation, that do not fit for them. This honors someone's freedom to keep faith and practice of their own choosing, and allows the Christian to be the initiator of defining his or her own relationship to God and what that means in terms of behavior.

29. Historical Basis for Psychology having an anti-Christian bias

A student of psychology will study its history and application. Founders are revered and respected for their pioneer status, thus they are key influencers in the helping professions. Most who have been educated as clinicians and helpers in therapy and psychology fields have done some reading in the foundational works of Freud, Adler, Jung, Piaget, Bowen, Beck and others who contributed to the development of the history of helping professions. They are influential in our thinking and beliefs, whether they practiced techniques that would qualify as an evidenced based modality by today's criteria. Case studies in early psychology transferred the legitimacy of practitioners in those days combined with training that was deemed sufficient by the founders or their legacy organizations.

To preface this discussion, let's go back to the reminder that Christianity, in its essence is a monotheistic religion. If you ever remember hearing the ten commandments, there's the one about God being God and not having any other gods before Him: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me⁴⁰."

This paragraph includes a very brief, bare bones, woefully insufficient description of the cosmology of the spiritual world of large numbers of Christians. That is to admit we neither have the time nor space to go through the breadth of variation of beliefs within Christianity on this area. Not all Christians believe all of these specifics, but most believe some of them. The purpose is to familiarize you with some concepts to frame the context in which to view some of the major opposition psychology has had with Christianity. There is the visible world of humans and humanity. Humans are seen as both physical and spiritual. They are the top of the food chain in the physical world on this planet. Christians also believe there is a spiritual world - which co-exists with but is not always directly visible within - the material world. God is seen as life-giving to humanity, not a consumer of it. He is seen as Creator, benefactor and someone who likes and cares for humans. Many Christians view God's commandments as a form of protective agency, as prohibitions against things that would bring humans to harm. Humans are not seen as gods or on the path to becoming gods. They are also not automatons, but have volition and choice within some boundaries like physical laws, and less visible boundaries of possible spiritual or social laws. An example of one of these spiritual laws which you can see socially is that if a person treats everyone around them rudely, and with a gruff manner, it is highly likely that he will be treated that way in forms of social sanction. Someone might appear to bypass that, like the guy who cuts everyone off in traffic, but it is not without consequence in the long run. Some people believe that the commandments and exhortations in the Bible are God giving humans a heads up so they don't have to run headlong into a brick wall to find out that it hurts. Then a lot of people who have told

40 Bible (most translations) Exodus 20:3

others stay away from hot stoves have seen people prefer the “test it out personally to see if it’s true” method. Most people, with the exception of genuine skeptics, don’t have a problem with the idea of a spiritual world. If you are an atheist but you enjoy science fiction, a helpful “map” of this territory is the idea of inter-dimensionality. Only, this is not fiction, except to those who see God as a projection of people’s needs or as part of their own inner unconscious or as fantasy. In Christian theology, there is God and the angels, and there are evil spirits, including evil angels and evil spirits (devils). Some would argue the latter two are one and the same. Again, the purpose of this paper is not theology, but awareness. This paragraph is a lens into the view point some Christians share about the physical and spiritual world. Many Christians, but not all denominations, believe that once a person has died, there’s no communication pathway available from the deceased to the living. The Bible has prohibitions about consulting “the dead” and mediumship, and what we could today, consider, “channeling” or talking with other spirits on the other side other than the Holy Spirit of God. It has prohibitions against idol worship, including figurines, talismans, statues and the spirits or gods which some of them may represent. Do Christians “hate” polytheists and people who believe differently. Not usually, but they have strong prohibitions against the practices of those other religions and anything involving worshiping, or going to another god as a source, as well as many practices which originate from those other religious sources.

Now let’s talk about the occult and why it is not Christian. Occultism has a broad meaning, but occult activity would include things like paranormal experimentation all the way through alternate religions which have gods other than Christ, and any contact a human initiates with any spirit that is neither human, nor God. It would include Ouija boards and pagan rituals and other things that sometimes are a part of childhood experimentation and multicultural exploration. Again, this is a very simplistic description, and the point is not to make a case for this belief, but this is a quick outline of what a large number of Christians believe about humanity, God and the spirit world. There are also many prohibitions on the occult in the Christian Bible. Going to a psychic, doing channeling, going to a séance, visiting a medium, bowing to the sensei or Shinto shrine in the dojo, participating in a Native American pipe ceremony, automatic handwriting (types of journaling and dreamwork), some forms of guided free association, and various other practices are no go. Common belief is also that this is basically a dangerous activity because a Christian doing these things is making a choice - against God - to go to other gods as a source, instead of God. Take a moment to catch your breath, and step out of the picture and look at this the same way you would if you were an observer of some of foreign culture. There are whole branches of psychology that acknowledge the spiritual. Although there are many atheist and agnostic people in the helping professions, it is not insanity to acknowledge a spiritual world, and most people do ascribe to some type of spirituality and understanding of what happens in this life as we know it and the one beyond. If you don’t believe in God or if you do believe in God but you don’t believe in evil or personified evil, or you don’t believe there are any beings that are invisible to the human eye, it’s harder to accept people believe this way, and that this specific type of belief has validity. But many Christians do believe this. If someone was to ask who were the three main founders of the psychology helping professions, most would answer Freud, Adler and Jung. Let’s take a look at some of the people who paved the pathway in the historical foundations of psychology, beginning with Sigmund Freud:

From the outset, Freud was involved in ESP and occult spirituality. He was a member of

British and American Psychical Research Societies. He was very anti-religion, which means he was anti-Christian. He considered it wish fulfillment, basically a constructed fantasy to meet a need. So he took faith which historically had great value and he re-framed it to be part of a pathology, or something engaged in unnecessarily.

Most people can accept that our vegetarian friends can refuse meat but not hate us because we like steak. You may be Buddhist, but chances are you would not think an Orthodox Jewish friend to be insane because he does not want a cheeseburger. You don't psychologize it as some form of pathology or wish fulfillment and see it as a means to compensate for his problem. You know, for yourself, a cheeseburger is fine, but you respect his tradition of keeping Kosher. Even if you have explored it in the Torah, and believe it is unfounded, and you don't agree with his reasoning, you respect his boundaries and do not make value judgments about him and his state of mental health. Freud set a precedent in psychology that religion was a compensation for unfulfilled wishes, thereby casting a negative view of it in the "talking cure."

Early founders' philosophy, explanations and reasoning had and have great impact on the field of people helping. Even our language about the unconscious, ego and the like, have been incorporated into our belief systems culturally, and have had much influence and impact. Freud's activity and beliefs set a precedent to demote the status of religious people indirectly, since this was not his main focus. This set one of the precedents to anti-Christian bias in the helping professions. Are modern psychoanalytic schools affirming to religion and faith or do they take on Freud's presuppositions about religion and faith?

"Freud was also deeply interested in witchcraft and other occult phenomena. On Saturday evenings, he would frequently play tarock [tarot] - a card game associated with the Kabbala. However, he appeared to have a conscious hatred of religion - both Orthodox Judaism and Christianity. In 1937, when he was urged to flee Nazism, he responded that his real enemy was the Roman Catholic Church. Interesting enough, his childhood hero was Hannibal, the Carthaginian besieger of Rome. Freud was also to make sure that his wife rejected Jewish Orthodoxy soon after they were married. Religion was for him nothing but psychology projected into the external world. Biologically speaking, religion is to be traced back to the small child's long drawn out helplessness. The longing for the Father which constitutes the root of every form of religion inevitably calls up the entanglement of the Oedipus complex, including feelings of fear and guilt. By 1907, Freud was writing papers that were deeply hostile to religion, claiming that there were similarities between neurotic behaviour and religious rituals. This observation was based on his study of a handful of disturbed patients..." In 1927 came his most famous attack on religion - *The Future Of An Illusion*. The question asked is : can we one day do without the consoling illusions of religious beliefs? Religious beliefs are based on desires that cannot be challenged and they lie in the infantile past of the individual when he sought protection from the mother and the father. Later on, our fear of death will bring back the old anxieties and the longing to be protected by the father. This irrational origin of religion gives it the odour of sanctity but it has proved unhelpful to most people: "The question cannot but arise whether we are not overrating its necessity for mankind..." There are remarkable similarities between Karl Marx and Freud. They both held religion to be an illusion and neither believed in the existence of a immortal soul. They both shared assumptions about man and the world which are grounded in the philosophy of the

Enlightenment⁴¹."

You can do your own research to verify Freud's hostility to Christianity. That sentiment was innate in the beginnings of "the talking cure," but it did not stop there. Others who followed Freud, studied occultism in the context of psychoanalytic research and work and published papers to that effect⁴² Venerating the occult is antithetical to Christianity and however much on the surface variations of this can appear to be inclusive, it puts the practice at odds with monotheism. It goes back to our early discussion of mutual exclusivity. As such, clinical and therapeutic psychology's beginnings were either hostile to religion or hostile to Christianity because it valued occult spirituality in which Christians couldn't participate. That may not be the place where many current practitioners in the helping professions are coming from consciously or intentionally, but the Christian has room for spiritual health inclusive of only one God, and specifically God accessed through Jesus Christ. Clinicians and people helpers may claim they reject Freud, but it can't be denied how his theories and thinking are part of therapeutic culture and language. What told anyone to reject his views on religion? Many atheists have adopted them. We also have to remember that Freud did not do any randomized clinical evidenced based studies on whether religion was wish fulfillment or God was a projection of human fantasy. The foundational tenets of what we "know" from education, may have been just someone's instinct and hypothesis in this area, through repetition and homogeneity of communication over time, it can feel like truth. Those who reject Christianity and other monotheistic religions often state lack of proof of the existence of God. One can't prove Freud's guess about religion, either, yet our thinking has been greatly influenced by it. Do you think of God as just someone's need for a parent figure? That mental processing construct is Freudian, it is presuming and agreeing with the thinking that Christianity is a projection that serves as a wish fulfillment. Marx said it functioned like a pacifier. When someone holds this type of mindset, it is patronizing and it is de-legitimizing. It is also difficult to not have this come through in body language, voice intonation and other ways. Most people have had the experience of being patronized. If someone thought of you as a child in an adults body, engaging in something you valued highly, but seeing you as compensating for -- and still needing -- and wishing for a parent, how do you think that would come across?

So be confident at this point. Press home those hard questions. Where do Freud's ideas come from – hard experimental evidence, or his own atheist prejudices? Where is the historical evidence that Christianity owes its origins to a father complex, and can we accept anyway such a deeply sexist approach to religion? And why should Christians be expected to abandon their faith on account of Feuerbach's projection theory, a hypothesis which, in the end, rests on a logical error⁴³

Freud's famous antipathy to religion, which he viewed as an essentially infantile search for the unbounded love and protection we experienced in earliest childhood, still colors the thinking of many psychotherapists⁴⁴.

41 Thevathasan, Dr. Pravan <http://theotokos.org.uk/pages/churpsyc/Freud.html>

42 Gay, Peter. **Freud: A Life for Our Time** W.W. Norton and Company, 1988, pp. 536-537

43 McGrath, Alister **Bridge Building: Communicating Christianity Effectively**, Inter-Varsity Press, 1992 9780851109695

44 Schiffman, Richard **Spiritual Wisdom Confronts Psychology: Faith Based Psychotherapy** <http://spiritualprogressives.org/newsite/?p=679>

What were the views on Christianity by other founding members of the helping professions? Let's take a look at Carl Jung's views as described by Jung Historian, Richard Noll in the revised 2015 preface to his 1994 book about Carl Jung:

"For those who are not scholars and who rely only on what they are told about C. G. Jung in Jungian books and journals, I can understand how some of the material I present in this book may be shocking. If so, the fault lies not in these pages but in the implicit conspiracy of silence concerning the historical truth about Jung and his movement. One of the critical issues I raise early in this book is that for generations those near Jung knew the truth behind the distortions that were deliberately presented to the public concerning him; and yet, for various reasons, they kept their silence. The truth about Jung's conscious falsification of his evidence for a collective unconscious, or about his racialist attitudes and antisemitism, or about his lifelong practice of polygamy were all known by people like C. A. Meier and Aniela Jaffé and many others who were in his inner circle for decades — but, to preserve the image of Jung as a guru-like holy man or god-man, they all kept quiet or lied about the evidence. ... Why should a historical work on C. G. Jung be so controversial? ... They [Jungians] were shocked by what I uncovered and presented in [1994 earlier edition of] this book. In particular, many expressed disbelief (again, without sifting the evidence for my argument) in my hypothesis that during the years of the Great War Jung deliberately set out to form a religious cult based on Aryan mysticism and polytheistic paganism. In December 1913 Jung had an experience (documented in this book) in which he underwent a visionary initiation into the Hellenistic mysteries of Mithras — the oldest of all the Aryan mystery cults of the Hellenistic world. At the climax of his initiatory experience he became a god — but not just any god: he became the Aryan Christ. Jung believed and acted — consciously — like a religious prophet who sought to bring about a new spiritual age. His "psychological" theories and his therapeutic techniques were based on these core experiences. ...

Jung was a bitter enemy of the orthodoxies of Judeo-Christianity, especially the Roman Catholic Church. Why? Because—and this is what his disciples have long forgotten—Jung believed that Christianity was a Jewish cancer, a "foreign growth" imposed on the Germans (such as himself), which cut them off from their biological and spiritual roots and made them ill. Jews were too "civilized," too cut off from the natural religion of the sun and sky that the Germans practiced only a thousand years ago. They had no concept of "rebirth" nor any mystery cults, and therefore they could not be redeemed. To maintain the racial purity of his cult in Switzerland, he denied membership to Jews for decades, and in later years maintained a quota on their membership. As late as 1944 Jung's closest associates, including C. A. Meier, drew up a secret document which set a "Jewish quota" to Jung's Psychological Club in Zurich. Jolande Jacobi, Aniela Jaffé, and many other familiar Jungian authors and analysts knew of this and kept silent. Not surprisingly, there was much pro-Nazi sentiment among those in Jung's Psychology Club in the 1930s. To my knowledge, even as of this late date (1996) no one in Zurich—certainly no one in the Jung family—has ever attempted to make a formal apology for these attitudes or actions⁴⁵."

45 Noll, Richard ***The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement*** 2015 Preface published in *Open Journal of Jungian Typology* September, 15 2015

There's not much to add to this. Richard Noll is a historian of Jung who did extensive research. His book should be read on its own merit. It is probably safe to say that the majority of people in the helping professions who practice today have been significantly influenced by Jung or peers or mentors who highly value Jung's work. The modern Christians and transpersonalists would agree that humans are very spiritual. Even if you do not consider yourself a follower or fan of Jung's work, you are probably familiar with the work of Katherine Briggs and Isabelle Meyers, her daughter⁴⁶. Jung's spirituality was not just anti-Christian because of the mutual exclusivity issue. He had no problem with the issue of spirituality, but he hated Christianity. Creativity and Christianity are not opposed. An anti-Judeo-Christian and openly Anti-Christian foundation is not a basis for a healthy relationship with Christians. Is there evidence of discrimination or bias in the founders of psychology? Did it influence their philosophy, ideas and process? If you dismiss the reasons some Christians have for rejecting therapy or psychological help as superstition or lack of rational thinking, perhaps it is time to look again, with an objective eye, at the foundations upon which the helping professions were built.

"It was shortly after Carl Jung's publication of Psychological Types (1921; 1923 in English) that Katharine realised how closely his theories resembled hers, and how much more developed [Carl Jung's] were [than her own].... Driven by a desire to help people understand themselves and each other better in a post-war climate, Isabel Myers set about devising a questionnaire that would identify which psychological type a person was.⁴⁷

This means those going for employment tests or psychological help are often subject to personality typing inventories which some Christians see as a form of astrology of personality, which fixes an individual into a typecast set of relating. Who has not studied or been influenced by this work, or taken these inventories? Was Jung really anti-Christian?

"I think we must give it time to infiltrate into people from many centres, to revivify among intellectuals a feeling for symbol and myth, ever so gently to transform Christ back into the soothsaying god of the vine, which he was, and in this way to absorb those ecstatic instinctual forces of Christianity for the one purpose of making the cult and the sacred myth what they once were - a drunken feast of joy where man regained the ethos and holiness of an animal.⁴⁸"

Modern transpersonalists have been heavily influenced by Jung, and transpersonal psychology often attempts to be inclusive of Christianity, most likely unaware of Jung's anti-Semitic roots, or making peace with them, perhaps. Even though both Christians and helpers share a high value of human life and care for individuals, the mutual exclusivity of doctrine comes into play when one group exalts the human being as the epitome of evolution, and the center of the highest good - as in the case of humanistic psychology. To Christians, God is the center. To humanists, man is.

46 Paul, A.M. ***The Cult Of Personality Testing***, pp. xiii. Simon & Schuster 2004

47 OPP, British Distributor for the Myers-Briggs-Type Indicator, on the History of the MBTI <https://www.opp.com/en/tools/MBTI/Myers-Briggs-history>

48 Edited by McGuire, William, J (Ed.). ***The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence Between Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung***. Princeton University Press 1974 p. 294

Alfred Adler was more neutral or positive toward religion, and had no issue in specific with Christianity but noted that problems with religion stemmed more from people's objection to the abuses of religion. This is exactly the point made about media who takes abuses by the few and accuses the many, inciting riots against people who don't believe as the few abusive types. Adler was not religious, but his family was atheist. From a rational perspective, he agreed in principle with the concept of loving one's neighbor.

"He was not anti-religious, but he did believe "No experience is in itself a cause of success or failure," He wrote in his 1931 book, *What Life Could Mean to You*. "We are not determined by our experiences, but are self-determined by the meaning we give to them; and when we take particular experiences as the basis for our future life, we are almost certain to be misguided to some degree. Meanings are not determined by situations. We determine ourselves by the meanings we ascribe to situations.⁴⁹"

Some Christians would be fine with Adler's thinking. Others would take issue with "self," rather than God, ascribing meaning. Christianity has some absolute meanings in some circumstances and encourages some direction in attitudes regarding other circumstances. If you factor in that God gives people choice, then Adlerians and Christians can find some common ground. Adler influenced Ellis and some of the other behaviorists. Behavior therapy seeks to effect change in a functional domain (i.e. reduction of phobia, obsessive or other behaviors), which is sometimes divorced from the context of a Christian's relationship to God, and what that fear or habit may mean in terms of spiritual understanding.

Let's move to taking a look at one other person who was also foundational in the history of the helping professions, but closer to modern forms of people helping, Carl Rogers:

"Rogers is another example of one of those influential pioneers. While attending Union Theological Seminary, he and some of his fellow classmates "thought themselves right out of religious work." He did not find what he was looking for in Christianity and thus turned away from his Christian upbringing and Christian calling. Rogers renounced Christianity and became one of the most respected leaders of psychotherapy. He confessed, "I could not work in a field where I would be required to believe in some specified religious doctrine." Rogers also said: "Neither the Bible nor the prophets—neither Freud nor research—neither the revelations of God nor man—can take precedence over my own direct experience." ... Not only did Rogers embrace another religion, secular humanism; he later turned to the occult. Rogers engaged in the biblically forbidden practice of necromancy, which is communication with the dead through a medium⁵⁰."

You have a large number of people helpers today who are agnostic, atheist or very interested in spirituality of other-than-Christian or many different paths. Just because someone has a different spiritual path or faith does not mean they are anti-Christian. We have whole groups of transpersonal therapists and psychologists who value spirituality. A quick survey of their literature would put a majority of transpersonal psychology clearly in

49 Stepp, Gina. **A Psychology Of Change**, Vision Magazine, Winter 2011 <http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/alfred-adler-adlerian-psychology/41045.aspx>

50 Bobgan, Martin & Diedre, **PsychoHeresy: The Psychological Seduction Of Christianity Revised Edition**, 2012 978-0-941717-23-6

partnership with or inclusive of alternatives to Christian spirituality, and actively promoting those alternatives. There is an attempt to be inclusive, but we are in a multicultural postmodern era that does not like Christian absolutes. Like the husband who is happy with monogamy and does want to be influenced or tempted to need another wife or lover, Christianity is a one God religion.

One might see possible incompatibilities for conservative Christians in transpersonal psychology or humanism, but what about the behavioral therapies?

"Philosophically third wave therapies have a decreased emphasis on controlling our internal experience; they offer a more eastern [as in eastern spirituality] approach to our psychological lives. Many of these therapies are incorporating the role of acceptance and mindfulness into traditional CBT... So called "third wave" CBT is a loose affiliation of various modern therapies with no specific criteria about who is or isn't third wave. At the risk of sounding like alphabet soup here are some of the major third wave CBT therapies; Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Behavioral Activation (BA), Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP), Cognitive Behavioral Analysis System of Psychotherapy (CBASP), Integrative Couple Therapy (ICT)⁵¹.

It's probably the case that what brought you into the helping professions then launched you into an educational process, learning from people and founders with whom you were familiar, and also learning from those new to you. It probably was not a primary concern at the time to examine the levels of antisemitism or anti-Christian sentiment in those traditions or lines of therapeutic practice you studied. What about now? Would it hurt to take a look? It could help to raise awareness if you went back over who you studied under and whose theories or traditions or therapy models they studied under, and you examined what were those founders' views on religion and Christianity in specific. Did they see therapy as an a-religious practice? Did they see religion in a positive or negative light? Did they see religious people as problematic? Infantile? Irrational? Deluded? Was there an active thwarting of someone's faith or attempt to dismantle it as a form of irrational belief or a crutch? Did they decide that certain types of belief or faith were destructive? Where did they speak of Christianity as being positive in people's lives, even healthy?

"A lack of political diversity in psychology is said to lead to a number of pernicious outcomes, including biased research and active discrimination against conservatives. The authors surveyed a large number (combined N = 800) of social and personality psychologists and discovered several interesting facts. First, although only 6% described themselves as conservative "overall," there was more diversity of political opinion on economic issues and foreign policy. Second, respondents significantly underestimated the proportion of conservatives among their colleagues. Third, conservatives fear negative consequences of revealing their political beliefs to their colleagues. Finally, conservatives are right to do so: In decisions ranging from paper reviews to hiring, many social and personality psychologists said that they would discriminate against openly conservative colleagues. The more liberal respondents were, the more they said they would discriminate⁵².

51 **A Brief History Of Cognitive-Behavior Therapy**, Suffolk Cognitive Therapy 2006 <http://suffolkcognitivetherapy.com/cbt-history.htm>

52 Inbar, Yoel & Lammers, Joris, **Political Diversity in Social and Personality Psychology**,

If researchers, who are supposed to be unbiased, actually are biased, and less opportunities are made in the field of psychology to conservatives - of which some are Christians - then how can the research or distribution of research projects be unbiased? If peer reviews cater to socio-political popularity instead of examining papers on their own merit, is it just supposition of bias, or real bias? What does that predict for the future of an objective view on Christians and Christianity, many of whom are conservative? Training and certification in psychology rests on current research. There is sure a lot of pressure to surrender what makes Christianity different from any other religion. A conservative Christian might not be welcome at universities, and may get less opportunities for research, or be less likely to be hired In an area which should be impartial or at least allow free discourse. It appears some areas of psychology may favor political homogeneity. It's costly, in terms of social sanction, to hold conservative views, and people are afraid to be open about them. If that is what is like for people who work in the areas of study and people-helping, what is it like for those seeking help?

Personality inventories and psychological testing, are they religiously neutral? These are some instructions in a book on Advanced Techniques for interpreting Rorschach tests. Although less popular today, and hopefully they have updated the bias. But think of how many people were instructed to see religious images as abnormal?

"Religion contents are virtually never present in the records of normals. Their occurrence is associated with profound concern about the problems of good and evil, concern which, almost always, is a screen for and displacement of guilt induced by sexual preoccupation....[Religious] responses are most common among schizophrenics, particularly patients with delusions which concern religion.⁵³"

The earlier quote from Richard Noll⁵⁴ mentioned people being so devoted to Jung, that they did not want to admit to factual information about his beliefs and thinking. Even in hard science, people have been known to throw out evidence that does not support their hypotheses. The intent of this section was not to make a case for all people in the helping professions having bias or prejudice, but it was to make a case for the existence of bias among some, historically and in the present. For those in the people helping professions let's face what was and what is, take a look at history objectively, and if we desire to help people from a less prejudicial place, let's take steps incorporate what we find as we grow and learn to be better helpers for Christians.

30. Historical Basis for Christians having an anti-Psychology Bias

A Christian exiting an abusive Christian group has most likely experienced what Lifton calls dispensing of existence⁵⁵. We already described some of the postmodern, socio-political climate which and possible effects on people who hold a conservative Christian belief system. Some of psychology's founders appeared to be dispensing of existence when it comes to religious or Judeo-Christian religious people. Our concern right now is

Perspectives On Psychological Science Vol. 7 2012, pp. 496-523

53 Phillips, Leslie. And Smith, Joseph. ***Rorschach Interpretation: Advanced Technique*** Stratton Publishing 1953 p. 149 [Mentioned in Bobgan 2012 p.145]

54 Noll, Richard ***The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement*** 2015 Preface published in *Open Journal of Jungian Typology* September, 15 2015

55 Lifton, Robert Jay, M.D. ***Thought Reform And The Psychology Of Totalism: A Study Of "Brainwashing" In China*** University of North Carolina Press 1989 pp.419-435

to bring this in to the context of today for clinicians, educators and other helpers who desire to make cult recovery education and help more accessible to everyone, including Christians. Most normal people, when discriminated against, have no great desire to be involved with those who dispense of their existence. If Christians are marginalized because they are viewed non-scientific, sometimes superstitious, people stuck in "doctrine over person⁵⁶" mindsets, then their concerns get bypassed or minimized by those who think "we know better than they do." If we prematurely decide something in their faith is pathological, and seek to help rid them of it, and it isn't, then we are part of destroying what is life giving and helpful, not removing what is problematic. If we have a patronizing attitude towards the concerns of the people we are trying to help or their thinking, then we replicate the treatment they received in the cult or high control relationships they are exiting.

Given the discussion in the last section, do you think it completely unfounded to think that clinical psychology and therapeutic practice as it exists today has some anti-Christian bias? Sometimes Christians are dismissed for this thinking. We discussed just a few of psychology's founders to make point that historically there was some anti-Christian bias. The founders' thinking still lives on among people in the helping professions. It is absorbed in their writings and typologies, and in the devotion to some of the concepts that may not harmonize well with Christianity. You personally may not share some of their prejudices, but why would a Christian want to seek help from a profession that has a history of sometimes being an unfriendly territory, and even openly hostile to Christians?

Some Christians view Jung's psychology as partially derived from channeling, and that later the word demons was changed to archetypes to make it more palatable. If you told most Christians your brand of understanding came through what you'd channeled through demons, would you expect them to come and see you and those who practiced that kind of "help"? When people try to make things that appear oppositional to Christianity more palatable, it sounds to a Christian like when a cult member tries to convince you of their unique meanings or reasons for cult practices.

Let's look at why some Christians have an anti-psychology bias. Martin and Diedre Bobgan have written books about why Christians should stay away from psychology. Martin's views are essentially that Christianity and psychology are like oil and water, and he holds some very strong views with which many Christians might not agree. He was initially a proponent of Christian psychology but later came to view that these two things should not mix, and that psychology worked in opposition to a Christian's reliance upon God. His bias is being openly stated so that you don't reject some of what he brings to light. Remember, you are wanting to understand how people think and what some of them consider the boundaries of their faith. He shares a perspective with others in the helping professions, both Christian and secular, that "the talking cure "did not begin with the Freud's, but that it was based earlier in the thinking of Anton Mesmer and mesmerism.

"Although hypnosis had been used for centuries in various occultic activities, including medium trances, Mesmer and his followers attempted to bring it into the respectable realm of Western medicine. And, with the shift in emphasis from the physical manipulation of magnets to so-called psychological powers hidden in the depths of the mind, mesmerism moved from the physical to the psychological and

spiritual. As the practice of mesmerism moved from the heart of Europe to America it evolved from concentration on the body to the mind and from bodily manipulation to conversation, because the mind was considered to be the gateway to healing.

This seemingly minor change made a dramatic difference. This was the beginning of conversation as the medium of cure and problem centeredness as the method of cure, thus the beginnings of psychotherapy. ... The users of mesmerism did not suspect the occultic connections of hypnosis. Both the practitioners and subjects believed that hypnosis revealed untapped reservoirs of human possibility and powers. They believed that these powers could be used to understand the self, attain perfect health, develop supernatural gifts, and reach spiritual heights. Thus, the goal and impetus for discovering and developing human potential grew out of mesmerism and stimulated the growth and expansion of psychotherapy, positive thinking, the human potential movement, and the mind-science religions⁵⁷.

In this discussion we deliberately touch some "sacred cows," to make a point that someone seeking help is not necessarily coming from superstitious thinking in saying "no." Multicultural Emphasis often sees religious issues as cultural issues, so cultural pluralism and multiculturalism then judges Christians as "don't play well with others." Some Christians see the humanist movement as anti-Christian, whereas a large number of therapists are very positive in the affirmative aspects of humanistic psychology. Christians, even more conservative ones, are not without rational and sound thinking when evaluating who they go to for help and what they find acceptable or not. The field of people helping can seem like "sacred science" to Christians who have been in churches and organizations which are unreceptive. If the mechanism for discounting a Christian's caution is the "we're licensed and we know better...licensed people only are trained, so you can't know" How is that different than Lifton's "sacred science"⁵⁸? Only those in the know - those who have made the invested buy in - know. Within a field, licensing often creates cues of legitimacy and confidence. It can appear to a Christian exiting a cult that you are establishing an unwanted authority power differential. A Christian may not have the same legitimacy cues, so things like "evidenced based" may not mean as much. Relationships, however, are very important. How well people are treated, whether your dealings have integrity, and what peers have seen beneficial results do matter.

Regression therapies and Ericksonian⁵⁹ hypnosis provide very powerful cathartic experiences and sensory recall, vivid memory perception processing and integration of that experience to put the past in perspective. However effective they appear, some Christians do not want to participate in guided visualization or memory direction, because they appear similar to or derivative forms of hypnosis or variations on the NLP type techniques of the 80's. This may include passive or free association techniques like journaling, automatic writing, because those activities can put one in a state of being trance like or open to suggestion. In the broader inspection of suggestibility in visualization and redirection techniques, some Christians will not go near them, and this can even include fishing in one's memory store. Saying "Remember a time when...." or "Close your eyes and think....." Techniques considered "grounding" often derive from yoga

57 Bobgan, Martin & Diedre, ***PsychoHeresy: The Psychological Seduction Of Christianity Revised Edition***, 2012 978-0-941717-23-6 pp.83-84

58 Lifton, Robert Jay, M.D. ***Thought Reform And The Psychology Of Totalism: A Study Of "Brainwashing" In China*** University of North Carolina Press 1989 pp.419-435

59 Simpkins, C. Alexander & Annellen M., ***An exploratory outcome comparison between an Ericksonian approach to therapy and brief dynamic therapy*** American Journal Of Clinical Hypnosis Vol. 50 No. 3 January 2008 pp.217-218, 227-228

or eastern meditation or self examination exercises. Words like “mindfulness” may not have a positive connotation for Christians exiting cults.

What does this mean to someone trying to help a Christian who says “no” to the best of your therapeutic repertoire, especially if they do rely on techniques a Christian might refuse? If your heart see religious Christians on the same level as yourself in terms of evaluating what they will or won’t participate in, then it is best to honor their boundaries. Take the path to being more flexible in what you do if that is possible.

The Judeo-Christian God asks His followers to put Him in the #1 position, so humanism is seen to some Christians as humans raising themselves up above or against God, which is what they see Satan as having done. We discussed the Christian bias towards humanistic psychology. It can be a challenge depending upon how the Christian understands self and “death to self,” in discussing things like self esteem and self care. Some well meaning Christian groups are trying to encourage people to not be selfish, so they may misinterpret your encouragement of self-care as them being selfish. In a cult group, anything the leader did not like may have been considered selfish. It can sometimes explain to people that even the family car needs rest, gasoline, maintenance and time when it is not turned on. Or proposing how it would be for their children or others to be treated like they treat themselves in terms of the Christian values of kindness, gentleness, patience and love. It will help you to find positive Christian points of reference which are in agreement with the principles you are trying to teach and encourage. But be careful not to use them as logical manipulation or argument. God being #1 can also mean self-care, but some may need help to see that, otherwise your encouragements that they think and do for themselves may be resisted in ways that don’t make sense to non-Christians. It is helpful to remember that a Christian may place a high value on considering God in his or her decisions and evaluations, whereas others may not be doing this.

“In his keynote address to the conference on spirituality and psychotherapy, David Lukoff [who, at the time was Co-President Of the Association For Transpersonal Psychology], an expert on spiritual issues in clinical practice, quoted a variety of studies which demonstrate that religious believers as a class are healthier than nonbelievers, that they are less prone to substance abuse, that they are four times less likely to commit suicide, and that they are more likely to recover, and to recover more quickly, from heart surgery than their agnostic counterparts. He also cited the growing body of research that shows prayer is a powerful aid in both physical and psychological healing. Lukoff went on to assert that lack of religious belief is a risk factor equivalent to tobacco and alcohol abuse for a wide assortment of illnesses of the body and the mind⁶⁰.

Helping relationships are often based on mutual confidence if both the helper and the person seeking help have a choice in selecting the persons with whom they work. The ability to do that is not always the case if you are someone working in a clinic or referred through insurance. But this is stated here because of our reliance on increasing legitimacy criteria being that some helping practice is evidenced based. This is not advice to throw that out the window, but most people helpers recognize there is rapport, goodwill, care, even love, and the communication of humanity and warmth that all contribute to why

60 Schiffman, Richard ***Spiritual Wisdom Confronts Psychology: Faith Based Psychotherapy*** <http://spiritualprogressives.org/newsite/?p=679>

a therapeutic relationship or intervention will work. If it is just about the technique in a mechanistic practice, then a person could watch a computer do the technique to them with some kind of machine vision to monitor responses or biophysical data.

Please laugh at this. The software and computer we use could be evidenced based. Through alpha, beta testing and initial release, the hardware, operating system and email programs have undergone rigorous testing. Problems have been identified and remedied. Software problems have been fixed in new releases. The program is guaranteed to properly transmit email. Technology can be detailed, but it is not as complex as a human. Now, which of us has not had email crash? What about a computer that on more than one occasion has failed to do what it was programmed to do? How much more complex, fluid and dynamic is human interaction and the helping relationship? Yes, even if you are practicing a step-by-step known proven process?

You have not been studied in a clinical trial the way you generally work with most people. Even the best studies have not been done, double-blind like a true scientific method. Some people call the science of therapy a pseudoscience, and believe Christians oppose it because they oppose science.

This is not to diminish the fact that people need help and there are people who know things and can help them. A Christian also has a relationship with God that helps, which is not easily studied by science. How do you want to position yourself as a helper in a Christian's life? Both you and the Christian seeking help to exit a cult learn a lot by trial and error what works and what does not. Both are highly influenced by the word of mouth of trusted peers as to what works and what does not. You have the benefit of practicing what you do and seeing how it has helped others, or you probably would not still be helping people if it did not bring benefit. What is it about you that invites a Christian to come to you despite their concerns about the things we have mentioned?

Christians for almost 2000 years have found a faith that "has worked.". It is best to respect and honor someone's boundaries when they say "no" to techniques they feel are occult or anti-Christian in nature. Someone looking for effective help may ask you hard questions about where you are coming from, what you believe and how you measure not just the effectiveness of the therapy, but you doing therapy. These are valid questions, some of which we can ask ourselves if we want to be better people helpers in any area.

"In medicine, there are more than 13,000 distinctly different diseases, syndromes, and types of injury, most of which have a very specific intervention protocol. Contrast that with the current state of psychotherapy, in which there are over a thousand different named therapies (and how many unnamed?) and nearly all of them assume that their one process will work with any and all difficulties⁶¹"

31. Modern Christian Psychology

You would think that Christians who are not open to secular psychology might find Christian psychology appealing. Christianized versions of psychology are often seen as, and often are, repackaged secular psychology with a "Christ" wrapper on them. What

61 Andreas, Steve, **Gestalt Therapy 40 Years On**, 5/12/2016 Steve's blog on www.realpeoplepress.com

John Bradshaw⁶² popularized in the 80's and 90's came to the Christian scene in different forms of "inner healing" and psychology practices taking place in church settings among peers or in Christian counseling clinics. There are associations of Christian therapists, psychologists. There is also a whole movement called biblical counseling. Others strongly opposed this, because non-Christians generally do not believe God + the Bible + non-professional help is sufficient for counsel and help with life issues. Some Christians don't agree that secular help with soul issues can be neutral or beneficial for some of the reasons described in the last sections. Some feel that the Bible and psychology do not mix because they see the secular part as a way of bypassing God's power and going to an alternate power (the aforementioned occultism or anti-Christian thinking) for help. Those who are more biblicist in nature, take issue that atheists and people who have an anti-Christian agenda were the founders of psychology. So its essence is humanistic, and therefore anti-God or anti-Christ. We are just touching on some of the objections to raise awareness about them. This is where some Christian people are coming from. Some of them have very valid concerns. There is the historical long history of pastoral care in the church. The church caring for the church has done well throughout church history, but it may not be doing as well with addressing issues when the church becomes perpetrator or enabler of harm⁶³. Some believe and teach that when the church goes for secular help for pastoral (soul) care, it is because the church has failed at doing its job. It is seen as going to other gods just to seek for outside help. So you do have some Christians who do believe outside is bad, but that is not the majority. Many Christians have found help in therapy because some of the prohibitions of legalism in different church groups have made it difficult to confide in peers and admit real and honest life issues. Because secular people and groups, even those in the recovery movement, have precedent for listening and valuing their members more than some abusive churches, and there is usually more permission to be transparent, this is a strong reason for Christians to seek help. This well could be the church not operating as it should, but therapy is filling that gap for some. Many Christians believe the two - Christianity and psychology - cannot be reconciled. Some are open to scientific psychology (i.e. study of vision, hearing, information processing, and sometimes evidenced based therapeutic interventions) but believe the application in therapy is not often scientific. In our society's tendency toward multicultural relativism, the statement "Just because it's in a garage, doesn't mean it's a car," would apply. Just because the helping modality is done in a church or carried out by a church leader, doesn't mean the therapy or help modality is Christian, and therefore it is often suspect.

"Christian" psychology is not a recognized classification in this field. Textbooks and reference manuals list hundreds of psychologies (Freudian, Jungian, Rogerian, humanistic, etc.), each named after its founder or its founder's chief theory. But there is no school of psychology that was founded by a Christian and is therefore called "Christian" and recognized as such in university libraries.⁶⁴

Christians are not only dealing with issues surrounding therapy and psychology by degreed and licensed individuals. Christians have a long history of caring for souls in a

62 Bradshaw, John ***On the Family: A Revolutionary Way of Self Discovery***, Health Communications. 1988 ISBN 978-0932194541.

63 McCarthy, Tom And Singer, Josh, Writers/Producers ***Spotlight*** (motion picture), Universal Studios 2015

64 Hunt, Dave & Mac Mahon, T.A. ***Psychology And The Church: Critical Questions, Crucial Answers*** TBC Publishing, 2007

peer and church context, including anything from meeting practical needs that we would consider social services, feeding, housing and clothing people, to crisis services and ministry. There are whole groups of people interested in helping others spirit, soul and body, and not everything done in the church to help, including non-psychology care, is beneficial. Some of the “inner healing” modalities such as Theophostics also bring up the same concerns about the source of the power of the technique, and the openness to suggestibility. The problems Christians can have with secular forms of help often exist within the church as well. There are plenty of supposedly Christian or biblical modalities of emotional health and healing which could also be considered occult, or which involve hypnosis-like transformational techniques.

If we remove the marketing and hype and confidence gained through influence, it does not damage an effective method, nor an effective people-helper. This is just for informational purposes, the discussion of “sin” for Christians is not so much one of laying guilt and shame on people, but understanding where things are personal responsibility and where they are the result of environment or circumstances beyond one’s locus of control. Granted, the Christian spiritual cosmology sees things differently than genetics vs. environment or nature vs. nurture, and would more closely match the newer scientific fields of epigenetics. Christian modes of helping that address “sin” do so with the intent of liberating people from undue burdens of guilt, shame and feeling constantly accused. There are groups of Christians, such as when you observe a cult, that do just the opposite and burden their members with guilt, shame and phobias, but Christians who genuinely help others are not in the business of improper blame shifting. Perhaps, in due season, helpers within the Christian community and those in secular helping fields can dialogue to increase the common ground of helping Christians recognize and exit from abusive religious groups. The ICSA has opened venues for presentation and dialogue. The education and openness to dialogue has made cult recovery information available for those who are people helpers within the church context. The contributions of others who have written information in the cult recovery field is providing needed understanding and information to those exiting high demand and high control Christian groups and relationships. We’ve covered a lot of ground in this discussion and it is hoped that lack of a perfect presentation won’t deter you from gaining the maximum benefit in your awareness and your ability to reach, be receptive to, and help a broader base of Christians.

A secondary purpose in this paper is to leave us with lots of new and yet unanswered questions combined with new motivation to seek out answers. Even if some sacred cows were subject to a bit of scrutiny, perhaps we can focus on the “why” behind the exposure. What we don’t take a look at can bite you in the end. Hopefully the ideas presented here can be evaluated on their own merit, as they challenge presuppositions and issue the invitation to all helpers to also become explorers. As in any awareness training, the encouragement is toward making conscious that which was there, but may not really have been visible. Now that possible missing information, bias and prejudice have been brought set out on the table for observation, you have empowered choice in terms of where to go from here.

Suggested Guidelines For Those Working To Help Christians Recover From Cults & Other High Demand Or High Control Groups & Relationships

Appendix I: Suggested Guidelines For Those Working To Help Christians Recover From Cults & Other High Demand Or High Control Groups & Relationships

- Take time to be aware of your personal life experience of Christianity and Christians.
- Understand how the stories of those who have come to you for help have influenced your thoughts and feelings about specific Christian denominations, subgroups and practices.
- Understand how personal life experience, professional training, peer group, media and social media have each influenced your thinking about Christianity and Christian practices.
- When helping a person with a Christian background, begin with the same respect for their faith that you would have when traveling to a foreign country to explore its culture. Although Christianity is a common identification, we tend to assume familiarity we often don't have. There's a reverence we tend to have for indigenous cultures that preserves the honor and dignity of the people group we visit and explore. We respect their customs, even ones that are very different from our own.
- We can choose to have the attitude of being learners, instead of experts. This can facilitate goodwill while helping someone.
- Identify any Christian practices that you now believe are inherently pathological, allowing room possibility that you have prejudged some of them.
- Take time to study the history of the particular stream of Christianity of those you are helping.
- Learn about the historical context and how the group or practice came to be. Look into multiple sources from within and outside that group to help you understand the intent and value of their beliefs and practices.
- In those areas where you do have known bias and prejudice, make a proactive effort to look at things from the vantage point of those you are helping.
- Draw a pie chart of your internal representation of world religions, Christianity being one of them.
- Draw a pie chart of your internal representation of the different branches of Christianity.
- Do some internet research of census bureaus and other statistical data of religious faith, and see how your impressions line up. Compare the results of several surveys to see where they agree and how they are different.
- View the list of "trigger" words and phrases in Appendix II. Add some of your own. Examine your responses to these words. Are they neutral or do they evoke a strong response?
- Examine whether you are affected by descriptions of affiliations of those you help. Perhaps they identify as "fundamentalist" and you immediately read that as "cult-like". Remember the map is not the territory.
- As a tool for increasing rapport and understanding, remove any habits you might have of labeling or depersonalizing Christians or subgroups of Christianity.
- Recognize that some coming to help will look to you for cues, and try to please you. Try not to make giving up their Christian identity or practices part of the plan for

helping them recover.

- Be aware of prematurely placing blame on a religion or branch of religion for the problems caused by individuals in the high demand and high control Christian group unless it proves to be true.
- Don't assume something is a "trigger" for the person you are helping until they tell you so or until it proves to be one. It will help to evaluate the pros and cons of recommending any kind of "time out" on a Christian practice. The practice may also have beneficial function in the person's life.
- It may not be helpful to suggest alternate Bible versions. It can be sometimes, but not always, especially if a person has taken time to come to a conclusion about a preferred version.
- It may not be helpful to not work with a recovery modality or technique that goes against deeply held beliefs (i.e. if they consider it occult, "energy medicine," or trance inducing).
- Honor the boundaries of people you help. Some have strong beliefs against hypnosis, and other therapy, grounding or relaxation strategies, either because of their non-Christian spiritual origin or because they are similar to things practiced in the high demand or high control group.
- Make a list of ways you can help restore dignity and respect to those whom you help or educate. You might think of how the abusive religious group invalidated their self worth or trusting their own thinking. Strategize ways to affirm and honor those who seek your assistance.
- Seek to legitimize the person and their genuine interests and pursuits. Help rebuild confidence and appropriate self trust, including where that is connected to faith and their belief in God.
- Recognize that for some Christians to seek help outside their church, it is a very high risk activity. The person has probably suffered being treated as "less than" on a repeated basis in the church.
- Beware of your own body language and what you are communicating through vocal intonation. Rolling eyes, mocking, expressions of disdain will destroy trust and discourage people from seeking outside help. Take care not to signal the same rejection cues they received the cult.
- In the high demand and high control group, the person substituted the leader's and peer group's validation for a point of reference. Explore how the person's faith in God and belief system can be part of that a sense of self regulated value and worth.
- Examine the positive function of Christianity in the life of people you help who wish to retain their faith.
- Take time to understand what you personally consider a religious addiction and why.
- Remember that most Christians are not as polarized in their faith and practice as the media makes them out to be. However strong someone's beliefs appear, they are not as black and white as you have been led to think. It is likely that your beliefs are not that black and white, either.
- Remember you are dealing with a whole person, not just a set of religious programming, even if the cult created some of that. That whole person has dreams, desires and reasons for their faith that may have come before, after or as part of their cult experience.
- It may not help to assume that you are already knowledgeable about Christianity.

Investing your time in learning can expand the opportunities for those you help to utilize their faith in recovering from the damage of high control and high demand groups.

- Consider the longevity and prevalence of the Christian faith, even in a people-helping context. Have a healthy respect that 126 or more years ago there was no formalized “talking cure.” The the human race did flourish and thrive in many ways. Sometimes when we see too much runoff from abusive Christian groups, we forget this wider point of view. The helping professions are facilitators of health and recovery, but not the only source of it.
- Explore avenues for cooperation with other Christian sources of help. Often another ex-member, peer or other minister can be an advocate and ally in an ex-member’s support system.
- Remember that expressing negative feelings (toward God or religion) is part of the process some people go through in exiting an abusive group. It is not necessarily an enduring desire to become an atheist, nor to reject all things Christian. It’s common to go on a pendulum swing, and to throw out anything remotely associated with the cult, some of which they will later want to reclaim.
- If your bias is pro-Christian, allow people to be mad at God and other people as they may find a place for forgiveness down the road. It is very helpful to refrain from specifying someone’s time table or process in healing. Rejecting something that may later be retrieved is part of someone’s process of free choice. He may later freely decide something that was initially chosen for him.
- Suggesting atheism may not be the best response to a bad experience in a cult (i.e. could be like suggesting that women should swear off all men because of a bad relationship when one mans abuse was the source of her problems). Is it God or people that are the problem?
- Leave room for the possibility that people may not really want to shut the door on God or Christianity. They may — over time — want to evaluate different facets of their belief system and practice, then continue to discard the dysfunctional, and retain or reclaim the good.
- Develop the desire to understand the positive function of faith in the person’s world without assuming this is invalid because it is part of what you see as their cult identity
- Be a safe space for people to explore belief system change without directing or bounding that system in ways that are motivated by your own prejudices.
- Examine whether you have any “doctrine over person” stances with respect to what you believe are destructive and counterproductive elements in Christianity which impede healthy living.
- Make a list of Christian practices that you would think will be non-negotiable with people whom you are working (i.e. any practices that you think are seriously self-harming to warrant sanction)
- Explore how you and those you help are influenced by media, peer groups and the cult.
- Be aware of how you and the people you help may have adopted polarization on socio-political issues that relate to Christianity. Most people are not that black and white, but there are pressures to become so.
- Give time and space for expression of beliefs on love and hate, war, guns, sexual preference, abortion, sexuality, equality, environmentalism, authority, other religions and a variety of generally “heated” issues as pertains to Christianity.

- Employ your listening skills not only to understand, but to allow a person to hear their own thoughts and feelings in the presence of a caring witness. This facilitates the restoration of a person's dignity and encourages more flexibility and tolerance
- Be aware of some of the inherent anti-Christian prejudices in the history of psychology, and take steps to mitigate them for Christians you help.
- If you have strong biases, say so, and share how that might effect your helping them.
- If you can't coexist with the strong views of the person you are helping, then refer them to someone who can make a safe space available.
- Be aware of some of the reasons some branches of Christianity have for mistrust in psychology.
- Be respectful of the right of those you help to say "No," to some cherished methods in your helping repertoire.
- As a resource someone seeks out as part of their recovery from a high demand group, remember that you have been entrusted with the care of someone's emotional well being. It is a great risk for some former members to seek help outside of some branches of Christianity. Usually they only do so when attempts within the church have proven unsuccessful.
- Consider that some Christians from more conservative or fundamentalist backgrounds may well have been abused in the cult. Social prejudice from secular media and other branches of Christianity can subject a person to a "one-two-punch," of getting it from multiple sources. Part of helping can be buffering and mitigating the real effects of this social sanctioning.
- Think about how you can be welcoming of someone and not replicate their prior negative experiences when they sought help and it did not work.
- Recognize that there are real historical and social reasons some Christians will avoid psychology therapy or anything influenced by it. These people are often more open to education in critical thinking. You also can earn trust over time by how you act toward — and respond to — them.
- Do recognize that you belong to a population of people known to be unsafe to some Christians. To make it safer for them, you may have to alter your style or approach to therapy or education.
- Respect others boundaries, even if you believe a helping technique to be safe and "know" it to be effective.
- Take time to learn about the religious and personal world of those you seek to help. When done from a desire to understand — and not manipulate — It engenders great trust that paves the way for cooperative relationships. Study their personal journey as well as the history of the forms of Christianity they practice.
- Don't push.
- Someone who disagrees but has the ability to allow and encourage someone else to have the space to be themselves, can be a powerful ally in another person's healing process. It takes mindful intent to become a better helper. Include this in your own goal setting as it fits for you.
- Inherent in the Christian faith's foundations — and the goals of most helping professions — is the principle of Love. We all make mistakes in our attempts to practice what we believe. It helps to be reminded that Love is part of our shared intent. If we really care about a person we are helping, and they know we do, it gives breathing room to the art of helping Christians and non-Christians.

- Unless necessary, refrain from telling people to “stay away from anything religious for a while.”
- Don’t do anything to de-legitimize the person’s sense of worth, value, credibility or legitimacy. They’ve had enough of that in the cult.
- If you have a negative view of Christians or Christianity or a prejudice against “fundamentalist” Christianity or “new religions” and are strongly biased against them, be honest with yourself and the person who wants some help, and refer them to someone who you believe can help them.
- This paper has gone deep into territory that is challenging. Give yourself a pat on the back and a big hug for being willing to examine your own feelings and process in working with Christians.

Appendix II: Trigger Words & Phrases. Which, If Any Of These, Are Trigger Words For You?

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Biblical” • “Mainstream” • “Catholic” • “Jesus Christ” • “New Religion” • “Adultery” • “Obedience” • “Salvation” • “Fringe Religious Group” • “Christian” • “Fundamentalist” • “Witnessing” • “God” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Protestant” • “Sin” • “Holy Spirit Inspired” • “Evangelist” • “Liturical” • “Anti-Christ” • “Ecumenical” • “Crusade” • “Apostle” • “Born Again” • “Saved” • “Right” • “Pastor” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Reformed” • “Worship” • “Submission” • “Satan” • “Priest” • “Traditionalist” • “Baptist” • “Mainline” • “Angels” • “Speaking In Tongues” • “Reformation” • “Hell” • “Heaven” |
|--|---|---|

Appendix III: Questions To Ask Ourselves: For Christian And Non-Christians Who Help Christians

Questions For Increased Awareness

1. If I were to divide up a pie chart to represent the different branches of clinical psychology or therapeutic practice, how would I do it? [Draw a pie chart or other diagram on a piece of paper]
2. What forms of Christianity do I consider mainstream and why?
3. Do I believe a Christian recovering from an abusive religious group should be steered toward agnostic, atheist or other religious options? Do we I that as an essential part of recovery?
4. Do I have an anti-Christian or anti-fundamentalist or anti-[other Christian subgroup] agenda?
5. Do I believe people who are abused in religious groups should “stay away from religion?”
6. What do I think of someone who sees Jesus as the only way to salvation or heaven? Do I have a problem with that?
7. Am I intolerant of those whom I believe are intolerant?
8. Do I equate mutually exclusive belief systems with intolerance or can I separate the

two?

9. If someone I am helping comes to me and says "I hate God and I'm never going back to the Christian religion," what would I say? What information would I need in order to respond to that question in a way that gives the person room to reevaluate that decision at a later date?
10. Do I fear certain Christian groups in the sense that I believe their inherent bias would make them more likely to be abusive and to fit the stereotype of bigotry and small-mindedness portrayed of some groups in the media?
11. Do I project that thinking onto other unknown groups I have not yet investigated personally?
12. What bothers me about Christianity? To what part or subset of Christianity does this apply?
13. What do I like about Christianity? To what part or subset of Christianity does this apply?
14. Do I feel motivated to control their beliefs?
15. Do I feel motivated to stop them and change their thinking?
16. Do I consider someone who can't embrace my point of view as equally valid as theirs is a bigot?
17. How would I want to respond if someone I'm trying to help holds this view (not able to accept my beliefs as much as I can make room for theirs)?
18. Do I think I "know" what "The" Christian religion is? How would I describe it explicitly (making conscious my thoughts by being explicit and putting them down on paper)
19. What Christian words or phrases are "triggers" for me? And why? [See Appendix II for a start]
20. Which Christian practices do I consider to be inherently problematic and unhealthy?
21. What do I believe is healthy and positive in the practice of Christianity?

Questions For Awareness of How Biases May Have Been Formed:

22. What forms the source of my personal opinions about Christianity and its practices?
23. What was my family religious upbringing? What was positive about it? What was not?
24. What is my experience in other spiritual traditions or faiths?
25. How many religious faiths or traditions are there in which have I participated deeply in my lifetime? Which ones and what branches of them?
26. What is my current religious or spiritual path, if any? Does it play an important part in my life? A minor one? Is it not significant at all?
27. If I was Christian, and now am not, why?
28. Where did I receive education and training about Christianity? Who contributed to the knowledge and opinions I have about it?
29. Do I feel I have been victimized by Christians or a group of them? If so, do those sentiments transfer to other groups of Christians I don't know as well?
30. Am I helping people who feel victimized by Christianity or God? Does that inform my thoughts and feelings about groups that appear similar by association?
31. Do I exhibit any avoidance behavior toward Christians? If so, can I pinpoint which experiences precipitated those choices? Do all Christians do those things?
32. In my clinical training, as I think about professors, mentors and supervisors, which of them took a favorable view toward Christianity? Which took a negative view? Which were neutral or unknown?
33. How have my colleagues and peer group contributed to my views on Christian belief and practice?

- 34.If I think about the media reports of Christians and Christian activity do they lean in a favorable or unfavorable view towards Christian groups?
- 35.If I think about what I've read, watched or listened to over the past year, concerning Christianity, was the material predominantly positive or negative?
- 36.Is there a media bias that is somewhat anti-Christian, or is that thinking unfounded?
- 37.Have I read any books or studies that inform me about the degree of influence media and social media have in the shaping of public and personal opinion?

Egalitarian Or Authoritarian

- 38.Do I believe and see those who come to me for help as equals? Does that change based on their religious background or which form of Christianity they practice?
- 39.Do I view those with mutually exclusive religious views to my own as more in need of education than those who have agreeable harmonious views with my own?
- 40.Do I see socio-political change (i.e. stopping bigotry, stopping the subjugating of women, uncompensated child labor or regulating education...etc) as part of my role in people helping?
- 41.Could those goals ever put me at odds with the immediate needs of a Christian I am helping?
- 42.Is helping the individual Christian in front of me with their recovery my top priority?
- 43.What do I believe about religious addiction, and how do I determine the difference between someone who has deeply held values which are different than mine versus someone unhealthily addicted to religion?
- 44.In my own thinking, do I correlate a higher degree of mental illness with those who have strong religious convictions?

Neutrality Or Disclosure

- 45.Am I completely neutral regardless of what religious background or current beliefs someone has?
- 46.Do I feel comfortable disclosing my prejudices or biases with those who come to me for help?
- 47.Do I see myself as a change agent influencing their belief system?
- 48.Am I okay with referring someone elsewhere if I do have strong prejudices that don't agree with — and might interfere with — those I am helping?

Building On the Positive

- 49.What do I have in common with the Christian person or people who seek my assistance?
- 50.Why would a Christian find me a valuable resource?
- 51.How can I ensure I am not someone who — in the process of trying to help — de-legitimizes and discounts another person's faith, God, values or person-hood?
- 52.What can I do to convey more honor, respect and dignity to those Christians who come to me for help regardless of whether I agree or disagree with their belief systems?
- 53.What helpful and life giving functions do their beliefs and practices serve for them?
- 54.If I have a negative view of religion — or Christianity in particular — what can I do to find out the parts of a person's faith and practice which are positive? How can I help them within the positive part of their faith, rather than just focus on the parts of it I believe are dysfunctional in it?
- 55.If I discovered that I had some unconscious bias which was not my intention, what can I do to become more educated about the varieties of Christian experience?

- 56.What can I do to increase my ability or repertoire to be a better facilitator of Christians exiting cults and abusive religious settings or relationships?
- 57.In what ways has this paper invited me to think about how I can better help Christians exiting from cults and high demand relationships who may come through my doors for help?

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