

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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Cults Are Rising

Dr. H. T. Spence

As we begin another year in the providence of God, it is evident that the powers of darkness are ever increasing and that the global apostasy is escalating in its influences. Religions are flourishing in the earth, and Neo-Christianity has become the norm of belief in the United States of America. Amidst these religions, more and more sects and cults are appearing even within Neo-Christianity. How is a Christian to view these many religious identities that now are proliferating in number throughout the world?

Definitions of Terminology

In regard to today's global

religions, the terms *church*, *sect*, *fundamentalist*, and *cult* should first be clearly delineated.

Church

The Greek word for church *ecclesia* ("to call out") refers to an assembly of people who have separated themselves from a populace. The Christian church is to be comprised of redeemed individuals who have separated themselves from the world and have come together in their own identity. Our English word *church*, like the Scottish word *kirk*, comes from the Greek word *kurios*, meaning "Lord." When both definitions are placed together, we are given the full

This edition includes a second article

"Living on the Line"

understanding of the "real" or "true" church—those redeemed individuals who have separated themselves from the world and belong to the Lord. This definition gives a clear presentation of not only separating *from* the world but also being separated *unto* the Lord.

According to First Timothy 3:15, the church of the living God is "the pillar and ground of the truth." Unto the true Church (*true* referring only to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ) God has deposited the preaching and teaching of the Truth of His Word. The false church, as seen in the institutional church of our times, is under the authority of the Devil; the false church is that abundance of tares that has been sown among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-40). Neo-Christianity, the public popular Christianity of our times, is *not* "the pillar and ground of the truth." To the contrary, it is an apostasy, a defection from the truth. One may hear the false church give

"some" truth, but the addition of error to the truth becomes a part of the delusion God has sent in the last days to those who have not the "love of the truth" (II Thessalonians 2:10-11).

Sect

The term *sect* literally means "to follow." A religious sect is a minor departure from historic and orthodox Christianity. The term sect was used in the early days of the Church in the book of Acts, for many people believed Christianity was an offspring of Judaism. But of course, Judaism was an apostasy, and the new wine of Christianity had to be poured into a new skin rather than into old Judaism. The Jews in Rome called Christianity a sect (Acts 28:22). Paul was considered by the Jews as "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5). The Pharisees and Sadducees were viewed as a sect of Judaism (Acts 15:5; 5:17). Although the Baptists and the Methodists have become unique in their distinctive, they began as a sect from mainstream Christianity.

Fundamentalist

The word *fundamentalist* has come to prominence in recent decades in a variety of religious contexts. A fundamentalist can be found in any religion. This term describes anyone who desires to return to the root or the "fundamentals" of his religion. We are seeing this movement in the Muslim religion among those who desire to get back to the principles of

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the Koran in dress, prayer, and in terrorism against anything that is against Allah. Especially since Vatican II, there has also been a movement within Roman Catholicism seeking to return to the Tridentine belief and practices of Romanism.

The Christian fundamentalist movement that began back in the 1800s desired to return to the fundamentals of Christianity found within the Scriptures. David O. Beale quotes Kirsopp Lake, a prominent liberal, who makes the following important observation:

It is a mistake, often made by educated persons who happen to have but little knowledge of historical theology, to suppose that Fundamentalism is a new and strange form of thought. It is nothing of the kind: it is the . . . survival of a theology, which was once universally held by all Christians.

Beale then goes on to quote Lake as acknowledging,

The Fundamentalist may be wrong; I think that he is. But it is we who have departed from the tradition, not he, and I am sorry for the fate of anyone who tries to argue with a Fundamentalist on the basis of authority. The Bible and the *corpus theologicum* of the Church is [*sic*] on the Fundamentalist side (*In Pursuit of Purity*, 1986, p. 4).

Cult

Finally, there is the word *cult*, meaning "to worship." In our day

this alarming word should be guardedly applied only where appropriate. My father, in *Fundamentalism: Not a Cult*, gives the following distinction between the terms *cult* and *sect*:

A religious cult is a *major* departure from historic and orthodox [fundamental] Christianity. A religious sect is a *minor* departure from historic and orthodox Christianity. Examples of these, respectively, may be found in the Seventh Day Adventist *cult* and the Seventh Day Baptist *sect*. In the former, we see a major departure from Christianity in an absolute, dogmatic belief in the keeping of the Sabbath Day as Sabbatarians of the actual seventh day of the week rather than the first of the week, Sunday, in commemoration of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the latter, on the other hand, the Seventh Day Baptist Church is endeavoring to keep and reverence the Lord's Day in a respectful manner as a holy day. The Seventh Day Adventists are indeed Sabbatarians, and as historic Christians we would reject such a definition of Sabbath. The Seventh Day Baptists are simply desiring to avoid desecration of the Lord's Day, and yet they are possibly too dogmatic and zealous for some of us (p. 13).

The View of Fundamentalism Today

The world now views any belief that adheres to standards in any dogmatic form as being a "cult." The American media has come to

view Fundamentalism as a cult in contrast to the true historic character of the movement itself. It associates the word with anyone who loses his sanity or anyone who quotes the Bible to substantiate what he does. Thus, in the eyes of the modern day media, "fundamentalism" is a cult, and would include snake handlers, Islamic radicals, or anyone who in the secular society takes a stand for righteousness and against the status quo. But it must be stated unreservedly that "biblical" fundamentalism is not a cult! A biblical fundamentalist is not of the persuasion of men like the late David Koresh or Rev. Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church. These men truly can be identified with "cults." Yet it must be acknowledged in our country that even a cult is granted the liberty of religious conviction *until* that liberty takes away the rights of others. Therefore, with candor one must examine carefully just what makes a "cult."

What Makes a Cult?

What are those characteristics that mark a cult or a group that has cultic tendencies? As we unfold this view, one must realize that cult members place themselves (as a group or their teachings) between man and God. They make themselves the mediator between man and God. Therefore, Roman Catholicism also must be placed in the category of a cult. Although not all the following characteristics are necessary to define a cult, most cults

generally take on some aspect of each.

1. *Authority Outside the Bible*—A clear characteristic among all cults is their denial of what God has said in the Bible. Cults tend to shift their view of authority away from God's complete and infallible written Revelation—the Scriptures, the Bible—to their own unique views about the Bible. This shift of authority, by default, only promotes themselves. Although they may often use parts of the Bible to promote their views, ultimately they have their own unique, subjective revelation they view as superior to the Bible. Although they may acknowledge the Bible as from God and will even quote it to support some beliefs, they proclaim and defend the leader's unique interpretation and slant of the Scripture in order to control the people.

2. *Unbiblical View of Works*—Cults strongly teach that eternal life (if they believe in such life) requires more than the provision of the Atonement of Christ, the finished Work of Christ at the Cross. They teach that human works and human responsibility are needed as well. While being vague about a true work of salvation from God, they press their teachings of absolute obedience to their leadership as a requirement for salvation. This is legalism, believing that one is saved by the keeping of the law or by adding to the grace of God.

3. *The Infallibility of the Leader*—

The cult leader is strongly looked upon as the infallible interpreter of Scripture. The Hindu concept of a guru views certain men as sent from God with infallible words that no follower must violate. The people who follow such men are often blind to the obvious lies and sins of their leader; they believe he can do no wrong. Such a leader often teaches that it does not matter whether he is right or wrong; God only honors the people who follow everything he tells them. He presents himself as the vicar of God, explaining that the phrase "to obey God rather than men" means that by obeying him they are obeying God's appointed authority for them.

4. *No Assurance of Salvation*—The preaching or teaching of cultic leadership never allows followers to have an assurance of their salvation. Followers are told, "Yes, there is the grace of God, but you must ever do what I tell you." Followers are held in constant fear that they have a continual, unchanging obligation to their leadership and teachings. There is ever present a spiritual bondage and mental oppression upon them, as they continue to come short of the leadership's favor. There is no liberty of Christ in the followers' hearts.

5. *"We Are the Only Ones Right" Exclusivism*—This belief eventually comes to the forefront of every cult. It is the persuasive belief by the leaders that their group is the

only one right. This is prominent in Roman Catholicism, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormonism. The parishioners have been taught that their church is the only true group and that all other groups are false. They are brainwashed to believe that one cannot serve God or even be saved unless he is part of that group. Cult leaders tend to spend much time in denouncing other groups or churches, believing they are all false and that without membership in their specific group one cannot be saved. It is one thing for a preacher to take a stand against a false church and its leaders, but it is another thing for a leader to constantly condemn and seek to destroy the true character of a good ministry in order to instill fear in followers. It is often hard for a member of such a group to leave; they are told this would be equivalent to leaving God. The depths of such instilled fears can even convince a wife to remain behind as her husband sees the need of escape. She may even be lauded for losing her husband and children in order to save her soul. Cult leaders tend to divide husbands and wives, with a persuasive power over the women that produces greater allegiance to the leader than to the husband. This is how Eve was drawn away by the serpent from her husband (II Corinthians 11:3; I Timothy 2:14).

6. *Fluid and Ambiguous Teachings*—One great problem cults have to face is the questioning eye of the public.

In order to be accepted and with the hope to get new members, they tend to give false and deceptive claims concerning their true beliefs. Even to their own members they are ambiguous in their responses to questions of weighty concern. Any absolute response could reveal that what they really believe is against the true Word of God.

7. *Additional and Open Revelations*—A growing concern that arises in Neo-Christianity is the additional revelations that leaders say they receive from God apart from the Scriptures. To give greater credibility in the eyes of his followers, Oral Roberts claims to have received over 28 audible voices from God throughout his ministry. The Book of Mormon came through a revelation received by one man, Joseph Smith. Mohammed was the only one to receive the Koran. In contrast, the Word of God was given through 40-44 different writers over 1600 years. The Bible truly was of no private interpretation (II Peter 1:20-21). Cult leaders believe their "word from God" is above the written Word of God or is a special interpretation from God that may even contradict Scripture.

8. *Taking Scripture Out of Context*—Cult leaders often tend to lay hold of one verse or passage of the Bible to the exclusion of others. Additionally, they regularly disregard the context in which the Scripture is given. Although their teaching is adorned with Christian terminology,

they carry their own private definitions to such terminology.

9. *Total Commitment to the Group*—The less Truth that a church or group has, the more it seems to organize itself in powers and authorities. The necessity of being fully committed to the group, even to the point of instilling fear of leaving, and restrictions of what one can and can't do are constantly asserted. The passionate commitment is not to Christ but to the organization.

10. *The Control of Finances*—A cult's concept of money is one of the leadership's having absolute control, often using their finances illegally. Rarely is there any open accountability of that organization's finances. At the same time, they imply that the giving of the money will earn the contributor special privileges with God.

11. *Unbalanced View of Christ and Man*—Cults have a false view of the Person of Jesus Christ, either denying His deity, His humanity, or perverting the perfect union of these two natures. They also view man as more of an animal without a soul. Some cults will even posture the belief that its followers will become a god one day.

12. *Unbiblical Beginnings*—Cults often begin with a leader who has had a problem with a specific truth somewhere in his life. In denying this truth he makes himself independent in his thinking from

historical Christianity. He then endeavors to gain a following that will exclusively be drawn unto his unique view. All cults are against the true Body of Christ around the world and throughout history.

Conclusion

In a denominational context whose backsliding convinced my dear earthly father and me to make an exodus, a group of ministers was told, "You don't need to think; we will do the thinking for you." When individuals are told not to question what is being taught or are forced to allow someone else to make life choices for them, it is evident that a cultic movement is beginning. When one is told that there is no other church, that he will go to hell if he tries to leave, this is another cultic sign. When one is constantly told his failures, without the hope of grace, and that his living is never up to standards, this is another warning of a cult. And a final obvious indication of a cult is when a leader tells his people that he knows what they are thinking, he knows their motives for what they do, and he knows them better than they do themselves.

The Lord knows we need godly pastors to assist us through these last days with the Word of God. At the same time, God's people need to respect and be thankful for such a godly leader. Such biblical leaders will acknowledge that the people are God's people, His flock. The pastor

is an under-shepherd of the Great Shepherd:

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (I Peter 5:2-4).

There is ever the potential for a minister to begin honorably in his leadership and over the years gradually create a cult. Our salvation is found only in the God-Man, Christ Jesus; it is not found in the unreserved obedience and allegiance to a man, no matter how seemingly godly. It is honorable to follow a godly man to the ends of the earth if he is following Christ (I Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; I Thessalonians 1:6). Only the Word of God is the test of whether this man is truly following the Lord!

Fundamentalists must be strong and take their stand against the apostasy. We may come across as dogmatic in our beliefs in the Word of God because of our jealous love for the Lord Jesus Christ, yet we are adamantly opposed to the cultic ways and beliefs. As a fundamentalist, I am not a cultist or a leader or part of a cult. Our ministry is not a cult. As a created social being, I refuse to be an isolationist; as a separated Christian, I refuse to

compromise with the world. Though Christ must absolutely consume and control my life, I cannot allow any other man to have such absolute authority in my life. Though I must be a strong defender and proclaimer of the Word of God, there is a line I cannot cross in assisting the lives of God's people. Only the Lord can say and do certain things.

The cults are aggressively rising in the earth, and they are increasingly rising from within the ranks of Neo-

Christianity. Many of the Charismatic leaders have become cultic in their powers over their followers. But though these and other cults such as Islam, Roman Catholicism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormonism are preparing men for the manipulative powers and control of the coming Antichrist and the False Prophet, may we as Christians not refuse the controlling powers of Christ and His Word over our lives. May our conscience ever be captive to the Word of God!

Fundamentalism: Not A Cult

A Personal Testimony

by O. Talmadge Spence

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Chapter Three

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The Battle Is the Lord's

Written in 1983 for the
Third World Congress of Fundamentalists

O.T.S.

O. Talmadge Spence

1. Days are pass - ing; saints are sigh - ing; Sa - tan leads a - pos - ta - sy.
2. Cul ts are ris - ing; pro - phets ly - ing; Church - es cease to take a stand.
3. Na - tions an - gry; peace is leav - ing; Cha - os stalks a - cross the land.

The Word of God, our hope and lead - ing light; Be of cour - age in the fight.
And peo - ple change from for - mer, bless - ed ways, In the pass - ing of the days.
And fal - len man seeks dark - er, deep - er sin; Tri - bu - la - tion brings the end.

Je - sus stands near - by, As earth's voic - es cry; An - ti - christ is in the womb.

Un - sheath the sword; Cry a - loud God's Word. The bat - tle is the Lord's.

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After much prayer and countless hours of preparation on the part of the Audio Ministries Department of the College, FBC Radio inaugurated its broadcasts throughout the world on Monday morning, January 15, 9:00 a.m. The burden for FBC Radio was prompted amidst the travels of the president and pastor of Foundations, Dr. H. T. Spence, to various parts of the world. He has had a growing concern for the Body of Christ around the world and especially for those who have no consistent biblical preaching or true Bible church to attend.

As more and more churches are turning to the contemporary rock music sound, Foundations desires to maintain its historical roots with biblical Christianity. Thus the broadcasting format of FBC Radio is of classical, sacred Christian music along with Bible preaching from a variety of men.

For further information about FBC Radio, the schedule of programming, or other, visit the web site.

Living on the Line

Dr. O. Talmadge Spence

The more we observe the apostasy in politics and religion, the more we realize the need of a balanced biblical separation. Once again, we need to recognize that separation has two sides: the horizontal, which separates us by the grace of God from sin, error, and compromise; and the vertical, which separates us in the grace of God unto purity, unity, and Christ.

A number of years ago we read the story about a little city named Bristol: one side of the city was in Virginia; the other side in Tennessee. The state line ran along the center of the main street. There were two corporations, two mayors, two governing councils, two sets of police, two systems of public schools, two plants for water supply, two everything. For a long time the main street was not paved because the line ran up next to the houses on the Virginia side. The Virginia corporation would not pave the northern half because it did not belong to them, and the Tennessee corporation would not pave it because they received no taxes from the property adjoining it.

Much trouble arose, too, from criminals who would commit some offense in one state and hurry over into the other, the officers having to get a requisition from the governor in order to bring them to justice. This delay gave opportunity for escape, and in case of minor offenses they were neglected.

At one time the Virginia side, in a local option election, voted out the saloons, believing that Tennessee would do the same; but the “Drys” in a state election were out-voted by other sections, and lost. So though one side had no saloons, it was only necessary to cross the street to get all the drinks wanted.

The strict marriage laws of Virginia and the lax laws of Tennessee made this city a great mecca for “runaway couples,” and many amusing as well as sad cases were constantly coming to light. Arrests by officers of the law due to telegrams from pursuing parents broke up fond hopes, for the trains stopped on the Virginia side.

The Tennessee water company tried to run its pipes into Virginia property. The president was arrested. A test case was made, and it finally went to the United States Supreme Court. The line between Virginia and Tennessee, beginning at the Atlantic, runs straight west until it reaches White Top Mountain. Virginia claimed that this line should have continued straight west, and sued Tennessee for nine miles of territory. People often did not know where they lived, whether in Virginia or Tennessee; and those who had married in Tennessee did not know what Virginia’s attitude would

be toward those marriages which her own laws did not approve. The people over in Lynchburg or Petersburg or Richmond had no such questionings.

Needless to say, living on the line between Virginia and Tennessee was quite complicated. There are problems caused by living on the line. There are problems living on the line which would be no problems at all if the person did not live there. Where do you live, friend? Are you living on the line?

These observations suggest a few of the many problems that come to those living on the line. We must live over in the State of Righteousness and Grace, away from the line. Doubts as to the conversion and victory in a Christian's life come often from doubtful things. The Bible teaches us to live away from the questionable borderline. We should not live our lives simply at the border of good and evil; we must see the blessedness of living away from the border, over in the State of Grace—good and best! We should cease trying to live as near the devil's territory as we can. It is not simply a matter of our personal salvation; it is a matter of that which truly exalts the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Christian lives on the borderline, others will get the idea that to be a Christian is to give up pleasure. In reality, the Christian gains great joy! The Christian life is not to be understood as a way to have more fun; it is a cross-bearing life that gains great joy! Those who live on the line carry religion around like a sick headache and are the most unhappy people you would meet. This kind of "Christian" is more unhappy than an outright sinner. Unhappiness of the biblical kind comes as a result of trying to serve God and the devil at the very same time. With Christ, the world loses its charm. Many think they have lost Christ when, in reality, they have lost the manifestation of His presence simply because they are living on the line. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

If you are living on the line, move away today. Allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in your life, so others will see Christ and it will allow them to rejoice with you.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (II Cor. 6:17-18).

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Casualties of the War

H. T. Spence

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The Evidence Of A War.
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Casualties Of The War!
What Within The Soul
Caused Fear To Take Control?
What Within The Life
Brought Weakness In The Strife?
God, As Soldiers Of Thy Cause, Make Us Strong!
Keep Our Souls From Falling Prey To The Wrong!
May Our Captain's Grace Empow'r
Our Souls To Meet The Hour
So We'll Not Be A Casualty!

Sounds From Clashing Swords Now Fill The Battlefield;
The Evidence Of A War.
See! There Lies Another Wounded On The Field;
A Casualty Of The War.
How His Sword Did Ring!
But Life Was Not Kept Clean!
Now He Lies A Sore
For Truth To Fight No More!
God, As Soldiers Of Thy Cause, Make Us Pure!
Only Then Can We E're Hope To Endure!
May Our Captain's Blood Be Nigh
To Cleanse And Sanctify,
So We'll Not Be A Casualty!

Fighting Now Increases On The Battlefield!
The Cries Are Heard From The War.
Bitterness Now Takes Its Toll Upon The Field,
Casualties Of The War!
Militant For God!
But Bitterness Did Laud!
Attitude Did Sin;
The Fight It Did Not Win!
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May No Bitterness Cause Death To Enue!
As We Stand Before The Fire,
May Christ Our Souls Inspire,
So We'll Not Be A Casualty!

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