

## Part One: 'Cults of Catholicism,' The Operation of Error

### *Are You at Risk?*

© Copyright 2009, revised 2022; T. Stanfill Bennis (*None of what appears below — in whole or in part — may be used without the express and written permission of the author.*)

#### Introduction

The Catholic Church requires that when Her teachings are violated, the faithful must defend the truths of faith even if it means sacrificing their lives. The Church requires it, and She is our first priority and allegiance. Every ethical journalist has the obligation to demand responsibility and honesty from public figures. And for this reason, we present what appears below.

Those operating destructive religious groups are not just guilty of endangering the faith of Catholics; they also endanger the basic rights of all Americans, under the U.S. Constitution, to freedom of speech and belief, freedom of worship and freedom of the press. In this they violate the civil law (which Catholics are obliged to obey whenever this does not violate Church teaching) and the consciences of those invincibly ignorant, at least, (since all Catholics know that **no one is ever “free” to worship as they please**). They do this by resorting to the tactics common to all who would, by unethical and occult means, deceive others concerning their true intentions, beliefs, past histories and present agendas. In modern day parlance, where religion is concerned this is known as cultism and is separate from genuine religious doctrine itself.

It is the false use and pretense of such doctrines to coerce others into harmful and destructive behaviors that endanger their physical, emotional and spiritual well being and that of others in the specific cult in question. It is the subtle employ of those very mind-altering tactics condemned as the stock in trade of Communists by Pope Pius XI, and hence a practice that is, itself, at least proximate to heresy if not actually heretical. Heresy concerns primarily the violation and falsification of dogma; cult practice concerns the psychological methods used to induce others to follow the heretical teachings of one using unethical, illegal and dishonest methods to propagate these false doctrines, and preying on the vulnerable, the uneducated, the compromised and the gullible to do this.

St. Paul foretold in 2 Thess. 2:10 that in the latter days, those who did not sufficiently love the truth would be sent the operation of error to believe in lies, and this prophecy has been fulfilled. No better description of cults can be found, since in countless underhanded ways, cult leaders attenuate the truth, cloak it with believable trappings, conceal it, rearrange it and in many cases simply do away with it altogether and/or replace it with their own “truths.” Many of us have at one time accepted such cunning and cleverly formulated lies for the truth. It has perhaps taken months or years to sort the heretical flyspeck from the pepper. Once the methods and maneuvers of cult leaders are revealed, however, those faced with deciding whether this or that group is a practicing cult or a destructive religious sect becomes much easier. Below we will examine cult practice and demonstrate that not only are many claiming to offer Catholics the truth today false

prophets, they are the leaders of actual cults, according to the research and definitions of the experts.

## Definition of a cult

From the Latin, the word cult means to adore, to venerate, to worship or to till, as in to cultivate (Attwater's "A Catholic Dictionary"). In the early ages of Christianity, the word was used interchangeably in reference to the *cultus* of the pagan gods or the Christian God. A cult is devoted to a specific person or persons, a particular thing, a certain carefully defined ideology or all of these things. This is the definition found in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Fifth Edition. Today this definition is necessarily extended to also include a literary work or movie, some new movement, fad or craze, devotion to a rock group or movie star and so forth. Experts point out that cults can be sociological and theological; Christian and non-Christian. But originally the term cult was used in a religious, not a sociological context, and this is the sense in which we use it here. In his work "Unmasking the Cults," author Alan Gomes, a Protestant, states that *cult* is a good word to describe "religious heterodoxy," which for Catholics means the denial of some truth found in the Deposit of Faith, (not always necessarily schismatic or heretical in nature).

Because the Church forbids Catholics to hold those beliefs also proximate to heresy, Gomes basic definition of a "cult of Christianity" is true of a cult of Catholicism: "a group of people, which claiming to be Christian, embraces a particular doctrine system taught by an individual leader, group of leaders, or organization, which (system) denies (either explicitly or implicitly) one or more of the central doctrines," of the Catholic faith. So basically a cult of Catholicism, while its origins may be Catholic, deviates in some way from those doctrines held by the original parent group. The leader or leaders usually tweak these doctrines in some way to suit their own purposes. They also incorporate some variation of coercive persuasion/behavioral change tactics. Dr. Margaret Singer, recognized as a world authority on cults, describes these tactics below.

"The coercive psychological influence of these programs aim to overcome the individual's critical thinking abilities and free will – apart from any appeal to informed judgment. Victims gradually lose their ability to make independent decisions and exercise informed consent. Their critical thinking, defenses, cognitive processes, values, ideas, attitudes, conduct and ability to reason are undermined by a technological process rather than by meaningful free choice, rationality, or the inherent merit or value of the ideas or propositions being presented." It is mainly these behavioral changes and the techniques used to induce them that constitute the "sociological" or scientific aspect of cults. Many of the volumes written on cults that are condemned as "New Age" by conservative Catholics overemphasize the scientific aspect and underemphasize doctrinal perversion. This allows cult leaders to condemn them out of hand or place them on "the forbidden book list."

Yet far from rejecting the use of psychology, the Church has used it responsibly to train priests and religious, to better understand human behavior. Before the death of Pope Pius XII many advised that the Church should send those aspiring to be priests and religious for psychological evaluation before accepting them into the convent, monastery, or seminary. Had this been done, the abuse issues and other scandals plaguing the Church could have been prevented. To help determine who today is not suited for the leadership stature they have assumed in the Church, the

following description of cults of Catholicism has been compiled for those confused by the more sociologically oriented literature and the rantings of cult leaders.

## Cults of Catholicism

**A Distinctly Separate Group** – A breakaway or brand new group with its own teachings, whether from the Church as it existed after the death of Pope Pius XII or the Vatican II church under John 23 or Paul 6.

**Change in Doctrine and Theology** – Different for each group

**One True Church** – Often claims to be the sole possessor and interpreter of truth

**One Special Leader** – or one small group running cult

**Mystical appointment** – The leader insists that God Himself, the Blessed Virgin, a saint or an angel is the source of his power or enlightenment. Followers cannot successfully corroborate the leader's beliefs from the sources of revelation or Catholic teaching. Must believe in leader's *entire set* of beliefs for things to make any sense.

**Only way to verify truth** – The leader's claim to mystical appointment gives followers the impression that the leader has specialized Divine knowledge and is the only one who can verify and substantiate, adjust or revise Church teaching. This leads to followers' dependence on personal credibility only — not the clear teachings of the Church — for certainty.

**Enforced "Confession," spiritual direction** – The leader uses mandatory "general confession" to intimidate followers, bind them to him and obtain blackmail material for future use. In some "Catholic" cults these leaders also demand that followers subject themselves to spiritual direction, and consult him for his ruling or advice, even when making minor decisions

**Enforced Financial Support** – Uses Scripture or Church teaching to exact tithes and other donations to group as a Scriptural precept binding under pain of sin.

**Separation from Others** – To exert control, the leader isolates members in order to exploit their intellect, finances, and emotions

**Manipulation** – This is a topic that deserves a special section of its own. Various tactics used in manipulation as described in the link that follows. (See link below).

**Coercive persuasion** – Unethical means used to propagate and affirm cult beliefs. False arguments are advanced, and the views of others are misrepresented, unfairly derided or presented in a false light.

**Prescribed prayers or rituals** – This varies from group to group; with Catholic oriented groups, it can be the insistence, dependent on group membership, to attend Mass and receive the Sacraments, even when this is not necessary and otherwise violates Church law. It can be

mandatory belief in private revelations (over dogma), received by the leader or others, when the Church says private revelations are not binding on the faithful.

**Method of Operation** – Use of slogans or catch phrases, practices such as meditation and the performance of leader assigned penances, “assigned reading” and/or production of cult propaganda.

**Regulating sleep and food** – Prescribing a special or limited diet and assigning prayer and work tasks that make it impossible to think properly for lack of sleep and adequate nutrition. This can be done subtly or in more rigid cults, can be more severe

**Persecution Ruse** – Uses claims of unjust persecution as an excuse for objections to the cult; warns followers that if they are not persecuted for their beliefs, they are not believing as they should and are not the chosen ones.

Followers often cannot successfully corroborate the leader's beliefs from the sources of revelation or Catholic teaching. The leader insists that God Himself, the Blessed Virgin, a saint or an angel is the source of his power or enlightenment. Must believe in leader's *entire set* of beliefs for things to make any sense

End times orientation, expectation – Many predict the end of the world is coming soon or anticipate the restoration of the Church.

This results in the leader being the only one who can verify and substantiate his own teaching, leading to his followers' dependence on his personal credibility only — not the clear teachings of the Church — for certainty.

### **Cult Leaders**

Often (but not always) are charismatic and unique or set apart in some way because: • The leader is specially marked or chosen by God

Often (but not always) are charismatic and unique or set apart in some way because: • The leader is specially marked or chosen by God.

- The leader was designated by some saint or angel, even God or the Holy Ghost Himself • The leader claims he has received a Divine mission.

- The leader believes himself possessed of special abilities.

- The leader cannot be questioned or criticized.

### **Cult operations, member behavior**

- Present as anxious to give good example, spread the faith, perform corporal and spiritual works of mercy

- Generally follow accepted standards of faith and morals, but leaders often dispense themselves from these rules
- Use Church teaching, Canon Law, Holy Scripture but add to the Deposit of Faith or do not follow the Law
- Holy Scripture, Tradition, Church teaching subject to private interpretation, even change.

### **How Cults Differ**

- Some are extremely pious, others violate moral teachings
- Some use only basic doctrine to appeal to the simple; others appeal to intellectuals with more highly developed theological hypotheses
- Some cults cater to the wealthy and those in positions of power; others to the lower socio-economic classes who tend to be more docile and gullible.

### **Those most vulnerable to cult influence**

Everyone is vulnerable. Atheists, agnostics, the godly and the not-so-godly; both upper and lower classes; from all walks of life, every age group and every intelligence level — all can be seduced by cults.

Which Catholics are most likely to become cult members? (some or all of the following):

- Those who believe the Church in Rome is no longer Catholic
- Catholics confused over the Church's true teachings on faith, morals, philosophy and other issues
- Those who feel Freemasons and other enemies have successfully infiltrated the Church
- Those needing reinforcement in the correctness of their belief • The scrupulous and those with a tender conscience
- Those seeking to spread the Faith
- The poor, who Christ says will always be with us

### **Recruitment techniques**

Cult leaders find a need and fill it. One of the ways they do this is that they...

- Emphasize charity, (later they de-emphasize justice). Promote a perversion of the Catholic teaching concerning charity, above all in early stages, as the best means to reach heaven and

frown on all “negative” comments as “gossip.” Later this is extended to even justified criticisms or objections to the group as mortal or venial sins (calumny or detraction) or as disobedience

- Encourage members to practice fraternal correction among themselves but this does not extend to leader, group hierarchy
- Stress practice of external religion, devotions
- Flatter and groom new members; praise their devout demeanor and good morals (Done first with me, then the others; done for ulterior motives.)

### **Theological gymnastics**

- Interpret truths of faith, opinions of theologians in a way not intended by the Church.
- Introduce leader’s private dogmas gradually (How do you boil a frog...)
- By insistence and repetition enforce practice of leader’s ideas on dogma
- Eventually members either believe these dogmas are consistent with faith or become weary of the rhetoric and accept them.
- Use the testimony of other cult members to impose these teachings on the reluctant.

### **What makes Catholics join?**

The cult satisfies various needs:

- Intellectual confusion about which church is the true church (Or, “Where is the Church?”);
- Psychological difficulties – Easily led, not well instructed in faith, lack of confidence, inability to make decisions on their own;
- Recent emotional upheaval – Divorce, death in the family, problems with the law, substance abuse, exit from another cult or destructive sect;
- Leader and members of cults offer unconditional approval (we are all sinners) remedies for their problems, spiritual goals and a sense of Catholic community.

The group espouses goals they want to achieve, such as:

- Instruction in faith and morals
- Help with family and finances
- “Little way” to achieve salvation, closer personal relationship with God, advancement in spiritual life

## **Reasons people stay in cults**

### **Denial**

Members want to see things as they believe them to be, not as they really are, because they have been through so much and made so many sacrifices

### **Lack of social skills**

Members feel weak and threatened by outside influences inimical to their beliefs; don't feel able to adequately live or promote their faith without help. Thus they are easily persuaded to isolate themselves, which then allows leader to enforce an "us vs. them" mentality.

### **Coercive persuasion**

Members are convinced of past laxity in faith by leader(s) and re-educated not necessarily according to Catholic beliefs, but the leader's *perception/interpretation* of those beliefs.

### **Dependency issues**

Cult leaders bind followers to them by teaching that no one else can be trusted to give right answers; members not able to decipher the vast deposit of Church teachings themselves; spiritual direction unable to be received from anyone but the priest in confessional/pulpit or the "pope" speaking infallibly

### **Guilt trips**

Necessary loyalty to God, the priest or pope, the Mystical Body, used to keep people from leaving or objecting to policy and practice

### **Retribution**

Threats of retribution by God for abandoning his truth; sanction, excommunication, rejection by relatives and friends used as incentives to stay.

### **Retaliation**

Cult leaders and members often pursue those who leave, harassing them, threatening them, and ruining their reputations. It is one of the most telling marks of a cult. What respectable religious organization would do this to former members?

## **Helping others exit the cult**

If you see a leader or leaders exhibiting any of the signs or exerting any of the influences described above on others, try to dissuade them from joining to begin with. For those already in the group, outsiders or former members must:

- Go individually to members who have expressed doubts and then tackle leader
- Be willing to devote the time, effort and lend moral support necessary to convince them they are in a cult
- Show them what the true Church teaches • Replace the false with the true

- Demonstrate all inconsistencies in cult teaching and practices compared to Church teaching.
- Closely examine the group, its leader and cult history to gather useful information and arguments to use against the cult concerning what one is to do when there are doubts about any matter, and what must be done to resolve those doubts.
- Encourage them to do as the Church commands if they admit doubts: that is, suspend active membership and judgment until they can thoroughly study the situation.
- Provide emotional support and counseling options or other resources.
- Explain that the Church does NOT teach that leaving such groups will condemn them to hell or cost them Church membership; the opposite is true.
- Realize that cult members will retain a loyalty to and respect for the leader and proceed cautiously, but don't be afraid to:
- Confront them with any blatant dishonesties and inconsistencies. God and HIS rights are superior to the cult's existence.
- Do not encourage cult members to join another group; don't supervise or dictate their spiritual re-creation. This is a highly personal matter that can take months, even years. The choice is theirs. There is nothing wrong with simply praying at home and trying to lead a good life. In fact it is the only thing the Church recommends as not fraught with danger in these times.

### Traits of cult leaders

The following is a summary of traits possessed by leaders heading destructive religious groups/cults, taken from the various works of leading experts on cults and mind control. They state that the leaders of these groups:

1. Demand absolute obedience; tolerate no criticism, correction or dissent; refuse to admit they can err or need to correct their behavior.
2. Often have been the victims of cults/destructive religious groups themselves.
3. Are adept at exploiting turmoil, (such as the crisis in the Church).
4. May be charismatic or possess the ability to easily persuade.
5. Are good at convincing others to accept glib answers to the most complex problems.
6. Befriend, flatter, take into confidence those they intend to make their allies.
7. Possess a sense of entitlement; what is required of most people is beneath them. Others must recognize their superiority and cater to them, support them accordingly.
8. Present as "geniuses," have been "wunderkind" or required special attention in childhood.
9. Practice a type of pathological lying, which some leaders really believe to be true and others use only to deceive. It often is difficult to tell whether they are fully aware of these lies and their effects or not.



10. Shamelessly use others to achieve their goals. In their *Captive Hearts Captive Minds*, Madeline Landau Tobias and Janja Lalich write on pp. 67-79: “***These manipulators are rarely original thinkers...[Cult leaders] have an innate ability to attract followers who have the skills and connections that they themselves lack... Plagiarists and thieves, they seldom credit the true originators of ideas, often co-opting authorship. They are extremely convincing, forceful in the expression of their views,*** and talented at passing lie detector tests. ***For them, objective truth does not exist. The only ‘truth’ is whatever will best achieve the outcome that meets their needs,***” (all emph. within quotes in this section is mine).
11. Exhibit a frightening absence of normal emotions; are emotionally blank. Cult leaders are generally cold, resent the ability of others to experience a full range of emotions and pass off their inability to experience or relate to these emotions as a sort of “supreme control.”
12. ***Make targets of those who dare disagree with or criticize the leader by singling them out for surveillance, character assassination and punishment.***
13. ***Accuses targeted followers, nearly always, of the very things of which he himself is guilty.***

## Part Two: Cult Leader or Catholic Leader?

*(Based on guidelines provided by various cult experts)*

Here we provide the true teaching of the Church on what is owed to those claiming to lead the faithful and what is not owed to them.

### 1. *The cult leader may be judged by no one; all must obey without question*

If it is absolutely certain that one elected pope has been validly and canonically elected by legitimate ecclesiastical authority, according to all the norms of the current election law in effect, (Pope Pius XII’s “Vacantis Apostolicae Sedis”); if the one elected possesses all the qualifications demanded by the Divine and natural law; and if the one elected has been accepted by the faithful as a true pope, then it is assumed that no one can question a papal election, (see the truth about papal claims under false popes on our articles page.) If these conditions are not in place, then the faithful are not required to hold the one elected as a true pope, but they must work to resolve the question of the election. A certainly qualified, validly and licitly elected Pope accepted by all must be obeyed absolutely, unless, St. Thomas Aquinas says, he deviates from the faith. Then, Pope Paul IV teaches, the faithful can leave him without any fear of censure. A doubtful pope may be judged and deposed by the bishops and clergy in council, and cannot demand obedience.

### 2. *Not even legitimate objections or the correction of mistakes detected in presenting Christian doctrine can be tolerated by the leader.*

Even the popes have faithfully documented all their decisions and teachings, as evident from the abundant footnotes in their papal documents. It has never been a teaching of the Catholic Church that the pope is infallible as a private person. In normal times, the Popes had an entire staff of eminently qualified assistants to help research and cross-reference every doctrinal and moral detail that goes into these decisions and teachings. ordination.

*3. No meaningful financial disclosure regarding budget, expenses such as an independently audited financial statement.*

The Vatican always had a separate department of qualified individuals to do all of this and the faithful never had any reason to question them. Parish priests also had to keep careful financial records and make an accounting to their bishops, who then had to make an accounting to Rome.

*4. Cult leaders preach a plethora of disasters and calamities, as well as promoting an “us vs. them” mentality.*

In these times there are valid and reasonable fears on the part of the faithful, and the Church Herself has warned of the Masonic conspiracy and its undeniable and self-proclaimed aim to destroy the Church. The Church has been the object of persecution throughout Her entire existence. There is every reason to believe today that we live in the latter days according to the Church's own teaching. But cult leaders exploit and capitalize on these rational fears to promote themselves, their own agendas and keep their followers in a state of spiritual and emotional dependency. As Alan Schefflin and Edward Apton wrote in their “The Mind Manipulators,” this continued catastrophe talk enhances, “mobilization of guilt and anxiety and intensifies...inhibition of judgment processes that leads to heightened suggestibility.”

*5. There is no such thing as an amicable departure from these groups. Followers never have a good reason for leaving.*

True Catholics under an unquestionably true and legitimate pope never have a valid reason to leave the Church and are always considered heretics and/or schismatics for doing so. Those unwittingly or otherwise become involved in heretical or schismatic sects are always under a strict obligation to leave these sects. But if they do not, they are never pursued or harassed and ordinarily they are never even personally named by the Church as heretics or schismatics.

*6. Those who have left the group all have the same objections to the leader and share similar stories.*

Those involved in various cults of Catholicism all have similar stories to tell and there several of these groups have been identified by others as cults since the death of Pope Pius XII. These include the Feeneyites, the Shuckhardt group, the Jovites in Canada, Tradition, Family and Property, Opus Dei, the Legionnaires of Christ, Briton's Catholic Library, the Little Pebble in Australia, at one time various branches of the Pope St. Pius X and Pope St. Pius V groups as well as others.

*7. There are records, books, news articles, or television programs that document the abuses of the group/leader.*

Many Traditionalists who have published on this topic do not do a good job of pinning down the problem. To the best of my knowledge, no TV shows or documentaries have ever comprehensively treated these issues as they exist in Catholic fundamentalist groups. One international cult expert has stated that no truly objective documentary on cults has ever been

produced, and that generally speaking, those creating documentaries on cults fail to understand the damage that they do and the cunning involved in deceiving and retaining their followers. Like many others at first, they become completely taken in by the cult leader.

*8. Regardless of what followers do, it is never good enough.*

Followers generally believe that these leaders will direct them, teach them, advance the truths of faith and defend them, and be a voice for the continuation of the Church of Pope Pius XII. These imposters have done none of these things, first of all because they are not valid and licit leaders nor teachers. Not being valid or licit, they cannot solicit and receive such tithes or other benefits in the name of the Church. They have no right to command or guide the faithful, who are told to avoid them as wolves in sheep's clothing.

*9. Cult leaders are never wrong.*

A doubtful pope is no pope because, as Rev. Cicognani tells us, it is essential that the faithful have certainty in matters necessary to salvation. A *true* pope is to be believed even when stating only an opinion on secular affairs, although the faithful are free to believe that a future pope could teach the opposite, (in matters of opinion only). Even so, until such a future pope expresses a contrary opinion, Catholics must follow the opinion of the last presiding legitimate pope. If a person refused to follow the opinion of even a certainly valid pope or the hierarchy as a matter of conscience for a very serious reason, however, the Church says they may do so without fear of sin. This is especially true where the case of a pope who has expressed manifest heresy is concerned, and all these men were either public heretics or schismatics who expressed such heresies prior to their election.

*10. The cult leader has a monopoly on the truth and controls the methods and means by which it is disseminated to followers.*

Even the faithful may respectfully and cautiously question teachings of the Church which are not infallible, or may ask that even infallible statements be clarified or expanded upon. Until the pope issues a normative decision on a disputed or previously undefined matter, Catholics are free to research and develop opposing opinions under the direction of their respective bishops/superiors. Above all, Catholics are taught that their consciences must be followed in all things, even where papal teaching and the pope's validity is concerned, since conscience is the voice of God.

It is easy to see here that even if a true pope could be validly and canonically elected in opposition to the Roman usurpers, and unquestionably valid and licit bishops and priests surfaced to restore the papacy, this could be falsely construed as cultistic. This is true because of the "changes" made at the false Vatican II council, where the "papacy" relinquished much of its sovereignty. In contrast any other organization, true or not, will appear tyrannical and even schismatic by comparison. The true Church is not and cannot be a cult or ever portrayed as such. But the powers that be, those very principalities and powers spoken of by St. Paul, have successfully labored for years to paint Her as such, and in the process have Her perceived by all as dictatorial, a transgressor of human rights and a threat to "true" freedom of religion, speech

and worship, (as these are mistakenly understood by non-Catholics). When false popes and other leaders muddy the waters and insist on being recognized as true clergy or popes, they become cult leaders and this makes the claims of the Church's enemies appear to be true. This is one of the reasons why theologians commonly teach that even doubtful popes have *no rights* and can never be counted as true, hence capable of ruling the Church validly or lawfully in any way. This is true provided that serious reasons exist concerning the doubtfulness of an election, the person of the pope himself and/or the qualifications of the electors.

“The pope has [jurisdiction] immediately from God on his *legitimate* election. The legitimacy of his election depends on the observance of the rules established by previous popes regarding such election...In the *absence* of legitimate election, *no jurisdiction whatsoever* is granted, neither *de jure*, nor despite what some have tried to maintain, *de facto*... A doubtful pope may be really invested with the requisite power, but he has not *practically* in the Church the same right as a *certain* pope — he is not entitled to be acknowledged as Head of the Church, and may be legitimately compelled to desist from his claim,” (*“The Relations of the Church to Society — Theological Essays,”* Rev. Edmund James O’Reilly, S. J., as quoted by John Daly; from the chapter *“The Pastoral Office of the Church,”* all emphasis by Rev. O’Reilly in the original. Rev. O’Reilly was the theologian of choice in Ireland for local Irish Councils and Synods, was a professor of theology at the Catholic University of Dublin and was at one time considered as a candidate for a professorship at the prestigious Roman College by his Jesuit superior. The Catholic Encyclopedia under “O” has this to say about him: “Dr. Ward wrote of [ *“The Relations of the Church to Society — Theological Essays,”*]: ‘Whatever is written by so able and so solidly learned a theologian, one so docile to the Church and so fixed in the ancient theological paths, cannot but be of signal benefit to the Catholic reader in these perilous times...’” (See also the criteria to necessary to determine doubtful popes [here](#)).

Rev. O’Reilly also solves the question of an extended interregnum as follows: *“That the Church should remain thirty or forty years without a thoroughly ascertained Head and representative of Christ on earth, this could not be, [Catholics reason]. Yet it has been, and we have no guarantee that it will not be again...We must not be too ready to pronounce on what God will permit...We, or our successors in future generations, may see stranger evils than have yet been experienced...contingencies regarding the Church, not excluded by the Divine promises, cannot be regarded as practically impossible, just because they would be terrible and distressing.”*

The best way to explain the situation in which we find ourselves is expressed in the words of a respected Jesuit professor who taught Scholasticism for many years: *“Authority is not the last criterion of truth or motive for certitude...Authority clothed with the necessary conditions is true authority; false authority makes the same claims, although it lacks these conditions...[Even] lunatics are very logical if you grant them their first premises,”* (Rev. A. C. Cotter, S. J. *“ABC of Scholastic Philosophy,”* 1949; all emph. his. Rev. Cotter taught theology and philosophy for over 30 years at Weston College, Weston, Mass.)

Exposure to destructive religious groups can take a heavy toll mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Some never recover from their experiences with these groups, or never recover completely, experts say. Many have sought and win damages for their abuse in court. They report that they often find it impossible to ever trust a spiritual leader again. But they must never

lose their trust in God. If sect members can somehow manage to break the spell of the “operation of error” these sects practice by using the graces God grants, one’s mind can be opened once again to receive and believe the Truth.

## Part Three: Manipulative maneuvers in cults

(Before reading what follows, please visit <https://www.gotquestions.org/spiritual-manipulation.html>).

### Process of Victimization

Especially at first, cult leader aggression is not obvious. Such aggression often becomes more obvious only in retrospect. The signs are there after the fact, but are easily missed at the time.

Cult leaders are careful to have a plausible enough explanation to squeak by, even though some may feel they are being dishonest about their real motives. They keep others off balance by failing to react to what is really important or key to an issue and overreacting to those things that stand in the way of what they want to do or don’t want to do. They push others “buttons,” and push them to good effect.

Cults of Catholicism often preach charity, charity, charity, the better to excuse their own misbehavior, my dear. Yet all the time they violate every rule in the book ever written about charity. Those acting on actual knowledge and well-founded intuition or experience are accused of rash judgment. Telling it like it is it is always detraction, not trying to make others aware of dangerous company or dangerous situations. Contradicting anything they think or say is always calumny. Failing to give others the benefit of the doubt, is uncharitable and exercising a critical spirit. If fears and intuitions prove to be justified, it is a fluke or coincidence. If the cult leader is proven wrong, the issue can never be addressed. In short, members are eventually plagued with self-doubt, some more than others.

### Offensive tactics aggressors use

**Denial** — Alcoholics Anonymous long ago defined this term, and cult leaders have many traits in common with alcoholics. Cult leaders deny that their operations are in any way unchristian or unCatholic. They refuse to hear the criticisms of their members and others that the treatment they are receiving is unfair or abusive. They retaliate when confronted, projecting blame for unpleasant and worrisome situations onto others. Members of the group play all the roles usually played in individual alcoholic scenarios. Some cult members act as enablers by going along with things and not complaining, even though deep down they know there are serious problems. Others are victims who unwittingly protect or bail out the cult leader(s) by covering up for inadequacies, making excuses and cleaning up the messes. Provokers, often the wives or mothers of the alcoholic (or cult leader), keeps the alcoholic dependent and needy by presenting him to others as a responsible adult. These people “run the show,” and make things at home seem normal to others, when in fact they are anything but.

**Selective Inattention** — When approached or upbraided for refusing to face reality, provokers simply deny it. “This ‘Who... Me?’ tactic is a way of ‘playing innocent,’ and invites the victim to feel unjustified in confronting the aggressor about the inappropriateness of a behavior. It’s also the way the aggressor gives him/herself permission to keep right on doing what they want to do,” George K. Simon says in his book “In Sheep’s Clothing.” This tactic also is called avoidance. Provokers are, in actuality, usually controllers, and they view heeding any advice as an act of submission. They cannot lose power and control or be shown to have erred or misinterpreted anything wrongly. They will not listen and will not learn, no matter how many people may tell them the exact same thing.

**Rationalization** — Catholic psychologists define this psychological maladjustment as “Seeking sound reasons and good excuses for wrong or unworthy actions,” (“Psychology in Questions and Answers,” by Rev. Hilarion Duerk, O.F.M.) Any “excuse” made to cult leaders often are called rationalizations by the cult leader, even though he may engage in the same activity or more damnable activities. Canon Law admits that circumstances and conditions of persons can mitigate or excuse entirely from liability and even penalties, (Can. 2218-19). Cult leaders magnify the faults of their followers to hide their own misdeeds. Shaming, guilt-tripping, and mixing in just enough truth to appear to justify any of their actions that a conscientious person feels are wrong are what cult leaders *do*. Cult leaders often are expert at convincing others to ignore the voice of conscience. Some tell followers that even if they are not true leaders the followers have no worries, since superiors can take people’s sins on themselves, excusing followers from personal sin.

This is contrary to what the Catholic Church teaches, for as Rev. Alan McCoy observes, an excusing spiritual necessity exists when “a real command, given in virtue of true authority recognized by law and intimated to one who is really a subject” is given, (“Force and Fear in Relation to Delictual Imputability and Penal Responsibility”). “When an ecclesiastical superior possessing *true jurisdiction* gives a command which contravenes a spiritual law [telling others to disregard any doubts about validity and follow the command to accept and obey] then all criminal imputability is taken away from an inferior, if the action commanded is within the superior’s power, and its malice be not altogether certain and evident to the subject.” Current Trad leaders and “popes” are not valid or licit and possesses no authority whatsoever; they have no real subjects and possesses no jurisdiction of any kind. So the criminal imputability is not taken away from inferiors, who are simply being bullied into ignoring their God-given consciences.

**Diversion** — Changing the subject or diverting attention to the “bad” behavior of others is a tactic used to deflect deserved blame or criticism. If the leader is criticized by a member or outsider, the accuser immediately becomes the instigator, the scapegoat and the focus of attention, not the leader’s lame behavior. Failing consistently to answer questions directly and honestly, arguing in circles, ambiguous answers, evasive responses all are part and parcel of this behavior, and are forbidden by the eighth commandment, also Catholic teaching on Scholasticism.

**Lies** — “Covert-aggressive personalities... lie in subtle, covert ways... Manipulators often lie by withholding a significant amount of the truth from you or by distorting the truth. They are adept

at being vague when you ask them direct questions. This is an especially slick way of lying omission.” What is produced is either beside the point, assumes as true that which has yet to be proved (begging the question) or evades the issue entirely.

**Covert Intimidation** — Shaming, scapegoating, guilt tripping, withholding spiritual goods or favors (annulments or the “Sacraments” for one; permission to act in some special capacity in the group another) and threats of sanction, excommunication or damnation of self or others — all is used to good effect.

**Guilt-tripping** — Some have larger guilt buttons than others and are more likely to respond to guilt cues. Cult leaders use this vulnerability to good effect, meaning such people often are kept in submission and abeyance longer than others.

**Shaming** — Shaming members to others and using guilt to produce the desired results is a favored tactic of cult leaders. This may be done without the victim member’s knowledge, causing trouble in personal and other relationships that is not understood because the calumny is secret. Children may be shamed in the presence of parents, thus subtly suggesting parents are not really in control of their children and ultimate control belongs to the leader. Wives may also be shamed in the presence of (often complicit) husbands, friends in the presence of friends.

**Playing the Victim Role** —When cult leaders are investigated, it often becomes clear that they have suffered from problems leading back even to childhood or adolescence. They were unable to assimilate into society and often were loners. They have lost jobs, positions and often have no commensurate education or work history to support the role of leader. They will tell members that these difficulties all arise from persecution or circumstances beyond their control.

**Vilifying the Victim** —Cult leaders vilify their victims and impute their valid fears and defenses to evil motives to escape scrutiny and mutiny among their ranks. They demonize certain followers to avoid being demonized themselves.

**Playing the Servant Role** — Even though leaders often lie back and rest on their adulation by members and often do not work a steady job to support themselves, they present to members and the world as servants of their group or cause, busy in the service of God and the faithful. They cunningly coerce others to do their work and later take credit for what their followers actually do.

**Seduction** — This type of seduction becomes a finely honed skill and is accomplished in many ways: by flattery, praise, encouragement, support and recommendation of others as going above and beyond. Cult leaders invite loyalty and confidence then later use these confidences and member loyalty as tools to shame followers, threaten them and unduly influence them to do things against their better judgment.

**Projecting blame** —Catholic psychologists describe this maladjustment to adverse situations as, “The mind’s attempt to defend itself against the painful experience of self- condemnation by transferring blame to someone or something else.” Cult leaders cannot admit mistakes, and will go to any lengths to make it appear they cannot be blamed.

**Minimization** — This is related to denial, the favored tactic of cult leaders. When they are not denying things outright, they are minimizing the harm done to others and especially to the Church. This is particularly true where minimizing dogma is concerned. These leaders consistently refuse to present dogma in its entirety, or reduce it to absurd conclusions.

## Conclusion

Manipulators and especially cult leaders target easy-going, conscientious people who will overlook their foibles and excuse any missteps by exercising “charity.” They know just how far to push and when to pull back, how to cover their tracks, how to disguise their motives, when and how to provoke sympathy and most importantly, how to get others to do exactly what they want them to do and believe exactly as they wish them to believe. Power is the name of the game. It is the old story of how power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

## Part IV: How to Spot a Liar

Lying is something that cult leaders have perfected to a fine art. So what are the signs that someone is lying? Various articles written on the subject by law enforcement and judicial

- Failure to make eye contact.
  - Being fidgety, nervous or acting uncomfortable.
  - Inconsistencies and contradictions; story changes over time.
  - Exhibiting a pleasant manner and relying on others’ assumptions, (nodding lot, allowing others to assume agreement or at least not disagreement)
  - Accusing others of lying when they are not and it is *obvious* they are not, (projection).
1. Increase in anger and defensiveness, (arms crossed, evasiveness, vague statements).
  2. Lack of detail or “pat answers” (easier to keep stories straight).
  3. Pausing, looking to left.
  4. Protesting too much; clear over reaction to certain statements.
  5. Unpleasant manner, abruptness, rudeness.

Those who convert to a specific person or religion over the Internet are especially vulnerable to the lies of cult leaders. Internet “converts” will never understand the importance of personal contact; how different things appear up close. As one magazine article states, “Lies told on the printed page or on a TV screen [also a computer screen or documentary] may be the hardest to detect. When a journalist at a respected publication tells a tall tale...those of us without reams of time on our hands aren’t likely to uncover it on our own,” (Forbes Magazine, November 2006). So beware of truncated and false presentations of the Catholic truth, the demonization of former followers and salacious tales of their personal lives. Demand positive proofs, verification of personal information and check out facts on the *other* side. Omission is as much a sin as commission. If you are missing these clear signs, *why* are you missing them? Is it possible that lies are easier to believe than the truth, or that it conflicts with something you really *want* to believe? This is how cult leaders become cult leaders and why they remain in power. Demanding



an accounting is the only way to avoid being trapped in their web of deceit and eventually becoming their victims.

What does the Church offer in way of evidence that someone is lying? Rev. Joseph Walsh S.J. lists Traditional and Conclavist methods as fallacies in his 1940 work *Logic*. Under the heading "Ignoratio elenchi" (Missing the Point at Issue, Arguing Beside the Point, Avoiding the Issue, Proving the Wrong Conclusion) Walsh comments, "Debaters and attorneys with a weak case sometimes resort to it deliberately." He then lists the subordinate forms of ignoratio elenchi as "a.) argument ad balculem, or appeal to physical force by threats, actual violence, violent demonstration, to win one's point...and f.) argument ad hominem, or personal attack, effected by abusive language or ridicule of an adversary, or charges of inconsistency, etc..." *Logic* is a science that supplies us with the rules that govern scholastic philosophy. No science or art can be said to be true if its rules are disobeyed. Unfortunately others do not seem to hold these rules in high esteem. Below we will demonstrate how these rules can be violated.

### **I. Fallacies in diction**

A. **Equivocation:** Using the same word(s) in different senses within the same argument.

B. **Amphiboly:** A sentence or phrase whose structure makes its meaning ambiguous.

C. **Composition:** Taking collectively what should be taken separately.

D. **Division:** taking separately what should be taken collectively.

E. **Accent:** When two similar words are confused by wrong accentuation or when a wrong meaning is given to a sentence by stressing the wrong words, (in verbal argument only — Walsh).

### **II. Fallacies extra dictionem**

A. *Accident or A Dicto Simpliciter ad Dictum Secundem:* Assuming that what is true generally is true in every circumstance, when circumstances alter the case.

B. *A Dicto Secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter* or **Special case:** Concluding what is true in a certain restricted case or cases is true generally.

C. *Ignoratio Elenchi:* Missing the point, arguing beside the point, evading the issue, proving the wrong conclusion.

1. Appeal to the populace by arousing passions and prejudices.

2. Appeal to the venerated positions of those holding the same opinions.

3. An appeal to the ignorance of the hearers, tricking them by statements they are unable to test. ignorance. Thus Pope St. Pius X, and Pope Benedict XIV before him rightly taught: "We declare that the greater part of those who are damned have brought the calamity on themselves by ignorance of the mysteries of the faith, which they should have known and believed, in order to be united with the elect."

4. Argumentation *ad miseracordium*, or an appeal for sympathy.
5. Argumentation *ad hominem*, including personal attack, abusive language, ridicule of an adversary, charges of inconsistency.
6. Argumentation *ad balculum*: appeal to physical force by threats...
7. *Petitio principii* or **begging the question**: Assuming as true that which has yet to be proved.
8. *Consequent*: An ill-constructed syllogistic demonstration resulting in a false conclusion.
9. *False cause*: reducing a proposition to an absurd consequence.
10. *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc*: Attributing an effect not to its true cause, but to something antecedent in time.
11. *Many questions*: So phrasing a question that to answer either way will affirm or deny something the one asking doesn't wish to confirm or deny.
12. *False analogy*: When an argument is drawn from another subject which only in appearance resembles the subject in question.

If one can demonstrate that at least an attempt has been made to follow the rules of Scholastic philosophy, then certain conclusions can be drawn from this. For an opponent who cannot follow the rules of scholastic philosophy most likely does not possess the proofs necessary to establish a defense. As the rule of law goes, facts are not presumed; they must be demonstrated. Here we have readily demonstrated the facts not from merely probable sources, but from unimpeachable sources. These infallible sources themselves cannot be questioned, as Rev. J. C. Fenton explained in his work *Sacred Theology*.

"Since the certitude of theology is from divine knowledge, it cannot be explained merely in function of the syllogistic process by which its conclusions are derived...Theological demonstration is a complex process, and the theological conclusion is not extrinsic to the body of actually revealed doctrine...The meaning of divine revelation, as it is proposed in the infallible magisterium of the Church, is so clear that demonstrations directed toward bringing out that meaning can possess a superior certitude...It was precisely the certitude of sacred theology that led to the unmasking of the various heresies which have appeared during the course of Christian history."

## Part V

***(COPYRIGHT NOTICE: This material is copyrighted. Free, unrestricted use is allowed on a non-commercial basis. The author's name and a link to this Website must be incorporated in any reproduction of the material for any use and by any means.)***

### Proposed Amended Criteria for the Narcissistic Personality Disorder

(by Dr. Sam Vaknin <http://samvak.tripod.com/>)

Feels grandiose and self-important (e.g., ***exaggerates accomplishments, talents, skills, contacts, and personality traits to the point of lying, demands to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements***);

Is ***obsessed*** with fantasies of unlimited success, ***fame, fearsome power or omnipotence, unequalled brilliance (the cerebral narcissist)***, bodily beauty or sexual performance (the somatic narcissist);

Firmly convinced that he or she is unique and, being special, can only be understood by, ***should only be treated by***, or associate with, other special or unique, or high- status people (or institutions);

Requires excessive admiration, ***adulation, attention and affirmation - or, failing that, wishes to be feared and to be notorious (Narcissistic Supply)***;

Feels entitled. ***Demands automatic and full compliance*** with his or her unreasonable expectations for special and ***favorable priority*** treatment;

Is "interpersonally exploitative", i.e., ***uses*** others to achieve his or her own ends; ***Devoid*** of empathy. Is ***unable*** or unwilling to identify with, ***acknowledge, or accept*** the feelings, needs, ***preferences, priorities, and choices*** of others;

Constantly envious of others ***and seeks to hurt or destroy the objects of his or her frustration. Suffers from persecutory (paranoid) delusions as he or she*** believes that they feel the same about him or her ***and are likely to act similarly***;

Behaves arrogantly and haughtily. ***Feels superior, omnipotent, omniscient, invincible, immune, "above the law", and omnipresent (magical thinking). Rages when frustrated, contradicted, or confronted*** by people he or she considers inferior to him or her and unworthy.

## The Narcissist as a Cult Leader

The narcissist is the guru at the centre of a cult. Like other gurus, he demands complete obedience from his flock: his spouse, his offspring, other family members, friends, and colleagues. He feels entitled to adulation and special treatment by his followers. He punishes the wayward and the straying lambs. He enforces discipline, adherence to his teachings, and common goals. The less accomplished he is in reality – the more stringent his mastery and the more pervasive the brainwashing.

The – often involuntary – members of the narcissist's mini-cult inhabit a twilight zone of his own construction. He imposes on them a shared psychosis, replete with persecutory delusions, "enemies", mythical narratives, and apocalyptic scenarios if he is flouted.

The narcissist's control is based on ambiguity, unpredictability, fuzziness, and **ambient abuse**. His ever-shifting whims exclusively define right versus wrong, desirable and unwanted, what is to be pursued and what to be avoided. He alone determines the rights and obligations of his disciples and alters them at will.

The narcissist is a micro-manager. He exerts control over the minutest details and behaviors. He punishes severely and abuses withholders of information and those who fail to conform to his wishes and goals.

The narcissist does not respect the boundaries and privacy of his reluctant adherents. He ignores their wishes and treats them as objects or instruments of gratification. He seeks to control both situations and people compulsively.

The narcissist claims to be infallible, superior, talented, skilful, omnipotent, and omniscient. He often lies and confabulates to support these unfounded claims. Within his cult, he expects awe, admiration, adulation, and constant attention commensurate with his outlandish stories and assertions. He reinterprets reality to fit his fantasies.

His thinking is dogmatic, rigid, and doctrinaire. He does not countenance free thought, pluralism, or free speech and doesn't brook criticism and disagreement. He demands – and often gets – complete trust and the relegation to his capable hands of all decision-making. He forces the participants in his cult to be hostile to critics, the authorities, institutions, his personal enemies, or the media – if they try to uncover his actions and reveal the truth. He closely monitors and censors information from the outside, exposing his captive audience only to selective data and analyses.

The narcissist's cult is "missionary" and "imperialistic". He is always on the lookout for new recruits... Often, his behavior on these "recruiting missions" is different to his conduct within the "cult". In the first phases of wooing new admirers and proselytizing to potential "conscripts" – the narcissist is attentive, compassionate, empathic, flexible, self-effacing, and helpful. At home, among the "veterans" he is tyrannical, demanding, willful, opinionated, aggressive, and exploitative.

As the leader of his congregation, the narcissist feels entitled to special amenities and benefits not accorded the "rank and file". He expects to be waited on hand and foot, to make free use of everyone's money and dispose of their assets liberally, and to be cynically exempt from the rules that he himself established (if such violation is pleasurable or gainful).

In extreme cases, the narcissist feels above the law – any kind of law. This grandiose and haughty conviction leads to criminal acts...Hence the narcissist's panicky and sometimes violent reactions to "dropouts" from his cult. There's a lot going on that the narcissist wants kept under wraps. Moreover, the narcissist stabilizes his fluctuating sense of self-worth by deriving Narcissistic Supply from his victims. Abandonment threatens the narcissist's precariously balanced personality...

The narcissist sees enemies and conspiracies everywhere. He often casts himself as the heroic victim (martyr) of dark and stupendous forces. In every deviation from his tenets he espies malevolent and ominous subversion. He, therefore, is bent on disempowering his devotees. By any and all means.

The malignant narcissist is dangerous.

### Can narcissism be reconciled with a belief in God?

The narcissist likes to belong to groups or to frameworks of allegiance. He derives easy and constantly available *Narcissistic Supply* from them. Within them and from their members he is certain to garner attention, to gain adulation, to be castigated or praised. His False Self is bound to be reflected by his colleagues, co-members, or fellows. If a clergyman, he is overly devout and orthodox and places great emphasis on the proper conduct of rites, rituals and ceremonies...

The narcissist develops a reverse (benign) form of paranoia: he feels constantly watched over...If a religious man, he calls it divine providence. This self-centered perception also caters to the narcissist's streak of grandiosity, proving that he is, indeed, worthy of such incessant and detailed attention, supervision and intervention.

From this mental junction, the way is short to entertaining the delusion that God...is an active participant in the narcissist's life in which constant intervention by Him is a key feature. God is subsumed in a larger picture, that of the narcissist's destiny and mission. God serves this cosmic plan by making it possible.

Indirectly, therefore, God is perceived by the narcissist to be at his service...The narcissist is likely to say that he *IS* the army, the nation, the people, the struggle, history, or (a part of) God...As opposed to healthier people, the narcissist believes that he both represents and embodies...his God...or anything else he feels a part of. This is why individual narcissists feel completely comfortable to assume roles usually reserved to groups of people or to some transcendental, divine (or other), authority.

This kind of "enlargement" or "inflation" also sits well with the narcissist's all-pervasive feelings of omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. In playing God, for instance, the narcissist is

completely convinced that he is merely being himself. The narcissist does not hesitate to put people's lives or fortunes at risk. He preserves his sense of infallibility in the face of mistakes and misjudgments by distorting the facts, by evoking mitigating or attenuating circumstances, by repressing memories, or by simply lying.

In the overall design of things, small setbacks and defeats matter little, says the narcissist. The narcissist is haunted by the feeling that he is possessed of a mission, of a destiny, that he is part of fate, of history. He is convinced that his uniqueness is purposeful, that he is meant to lead, to chart new ways, to innovate, to modernize, to reform, to set precedents, or to create from scratch.

Every act of the narcissist is perceived by him to be significant, every utterance of momentous consequence, every thought of revolutionary caliber. He feels part of a grand design...and its ideology must conform to his pre-conceived opinions and prejudices.

In short: the group must magnify the narcissist, echo and amplify his life, his views, his knowledge, and his personal history. This intertwining, this enmeshing of individual and collective, is what makes the narcissist the most devout and loyal of all its members.

The narcissist is always the most fanatical, the most extreme, the most dangerous adherent. At stake is never merely the preservation of his group – but his very own survival... In extreme cases, he might even wish to destroy it (as a punishment or revenge for its incompetence in securing his emotional needs).

The "small people", the "rank and file", the "loyal soldiers" of the narcissist - his flock, his nation, his employees - they pay the price. The disillusionment and disenchantment are agonizing. The process of reconstruction, of rising from the ashes, of overcoming the trauma of having been deceived, exploited and manipulated - is drawn-out. It is difficult to trust again, to have faith, to love, to be led, to collaborate. Feelings of shame and guilt engulf the erstwhile followers of the narcissist. This is his sole legacy: a massive post- traumatic stress disorder.

Confabulations are an important part of life. They serve to heal emotional wounds or to prevent ones from being inflicted in the first place. They prop-up the confabulator's self- esteem, regulate his (or her) sense of self-worth, and buttress his (or her) self-image. They serve as organizing principles in social interactions...

His very self is a piece of fiction concocted to fend off hurt and to nurture the narcissist's grandiosity. He fails in his "reality test" - the ability to distinguish the actual from the imagined. The narcissist fervently believes in his own infallibility, brilliance, omnipotence, heroism, and perfection. He doesn't dare confront the truth and admit it... The narcissist countenances no disagreement, alternative points of view, or criticism. To him, confabulation *IS* reality.

The coherence of the narcissist's dysfunctional and precariously-balanced personality depends on the plausibility of his stories and on their acceptance by his Sources of Narcissistic Supply. The narcissist invests an inordinate time in substantiating his tales, collecting "evidence", defending his version of events, and in re-interpreting reality to fit his scenario. As a result, most narcissists are self-delusional, obstinate, opinionated, and argumentative.

The narcissist's lies are not goal-orientated. This is what makes his constant dishonesty both disconcerting and incomprehensible. The narcissist lies at the drop of a hat, needlessly, and almost ceaselessly. He lies in order to avoid the Grandiosity Gap - when the abyss between fact and (narcissistic) fiction becomes too gaping to ignore.

The narcissist lies in order to preserve appearances, uphold fantasies, support the tall (and impossible) tales of his False Self and extract Narcissistic Supply from unsuspecting sources, who are not yet on to him. To the narcissist, confabulation is not merely a way of life - but life itself.

We are all conditioned to let others indulge in pet delusions and get away with white, not too egregious, lies. The narcissist makes use of our socialization. We dare not confront or expose him, despite the outlandishness of his claims, the improbability of his stories, the implausibility of his alleged accomplishments and conquests. We simply turn the other cheek, or meekly avert our eyes, often embarrassed. Moreover, the narcissist makes clear, from the very beginning, that it is his way or the highway...

Gradually, the narcissist distorts the personalities of those he is in constant touch with, casts them in his defective mould, limits them, redirects them, and inhibits them. When sufficiently cloned, the narcissist uses the people he affected as narcissistic proxies, narcissistic vehicles of vicarious narcissism.

The narcissist provokes in us emotions, which are predominantly negative and unpleasant. The initial reaction, as we said, is likely to be ridicule. The narcissist, pompous, incredibly self-centered, falsely grandiose, spoiled and odd (even his manner of speech is likely to be constrained and archaic), often elicits smirks in lieu of admiration.

...At the first sign of trouble, he goes missing. This vanishing act is not necessarily physical or geographical. The narcissist is actually better at disappearing emotionally and at evading his moral and legal obligations (despite his constant self-righteous moralizing).

It is then and there that his family and coterie discover his true colors: he uses and discards people off-handedly. To him, people are either "functional" and "useful" in his pursuit of Narcissistic Supply – or not. But, in both cases, to him, they are not human but objects, or mere cartoons. Of all the hurts that the narcissist inflicts this abrupt and contemptuous disregard, probably, is the strongest and most enduring one.

### **Control by Proxy**

If all else fails, the abuser recruits friends, colleagues, family members...in short, third parties – to do his bidding. He uses them to cajole, coerce, threaten, stalk, offer, retreat, tempt, convince, harass, communicate and otherwise manipulate his target. He controls these unaware instruments exactly as he plans to control his ultimate prey. He employs the same mechanisms and devices. And he dumps his props unceremoniously when the job is done.

One form of control by proxy is to engineer situations in which abuse is inflicted upon another person. Such carefully crafted scenarios of embarrassment and humiliation provoke social sanctions (condemnation, opprobrium, or even physical punishment) against the victim. Society, or a social group become the instruments of the abuser.

Abusers often use other people to do their dirty work for them. These - sometimes unwitting - accomplices belong to three groups: The abuser's social milieu, the victim's social milieu or the system.

## Narcissistic supply

...The normal person is likely to welcome a moderate amount of attention – verbal and non-verbal – in the form of affirmation, approval, or admiration. Too much attention, though, is perceived as onerous and is avoided. Destructive and negative criticism is avoided altogether.

The narcissist, in contrast, is the mental equivalent of an alcoholic. He is insatiable. He directs his whole behaviour, in fact his life, to obtain these pleasurable titbits of attention. He embeds them in a coherent, completely biased, picture of himself. He uses them to regulate his labile sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

To elicit constant interest, he projects to others a **confabulated**, fictitious version of himself, known as the **False Self**. The False Self is everything the narcissist is not: omniscient, omnipotent, charming, intelligent, rich, or well-connected.

But the picture is more complicated. There are two categories of Narcissistic Supply and their Sources (NSS):

The **Primary Narcissistic Supply** is attention, in both its public forms (fame, notoriety, infamy, celebrity) and its private, interpersonal, forms (adoration, adulation, applause, fear, repulsion). It is important to understand that attention of any kind – positive or negative – constitutes Primary Narcissistic Supply. Infamy is as sought after as fame, being notorious is as good as being renowned.

To the narcissist his "achievements" can be imaginary, fictitious, or only apparent, as long as others believe in them. Appearances count more than substance, what matters is not the truth but its perception," (*end of Dr. Vaknin's quotes*).

## Conclusion

Doctrinal error is one thing. All of us have seen groups totally invincibly convinced that the doctrine they teach and the beliefs they hold are entirely Catholic or Christian when this is certainly not the case. These groups are dangerous doctrinally to those who follow them but they are benign in the sense that they do not resort to unethical, immoral or deceitful means to convince, hang on to or pursue their members. They do not manipulate their followers, are relatively transparent and at least try to practice what they preach.



If we read St. Paul's verse on the operation of error, (2 Thess. 2:10), we realize that it is God who sends it as a punishment for failing to love the truth. While error entrapped us, how many times did we feel uncomfortable and look the other way? Failed to speak up when we disagreed with something out of human respect? Knew we were wrong and refused to admit it? Ignored the urgings of conscience to avoid reprimand or ridicule? Allowed others to be reviled in our presence because we secretly resented or disliked them? Neglected to study the faith to confirm our doubts? There is no victimization here; only God's loving and correcting hand. By allowing us to be deceived, He forced us to seek the truth in order to end our pain; He captured our complete attention.

God's grace alone allowed us to find the truth. He used the repercussions of finding it and seizing it to teach us humility and patience. As so often happens, He used evil that good may triumph, and continues to do so still. Seek and you shall find, and the finds have been many and mind-blowing. It is humiliating to discover that one has been scammed. But it is gratifying to learn how and why the deception succeeded and how to prevent others from being deceived in the future. I included a section on cults in the pre-election book, but the analysis provided did not really go into any detail and did not pinpoint the various manipulative tactics that can wreak so much havoc over time. And over the years, as cult tactics are refined and evolve, cult leaders learn to be more careful once their operations and methodology are revealed. I needed to update my information on this, and have learned a great deal in the process. I thank God for affording me the opportunity to warn others. I pray always that He grants me the grace to persevere in the truth and grants others the grace to escape the enslavement of error and sin.

***Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have pity on us!***