

Langone, M. D. (1993). *Recovery from cults: Help for victims of psychological and spiritual abuse*. New York: W.W. Norton. By Patrick J. Knapp

This text combines the expertise and experience of 22 different authors that have worked widely in the field of recovery from cults. Some of these authors have 30 years' worth of experience in assisting various families and individual in their course of finding healing from various forms of religious abuse. All the authors are well known and respected in the academic world. They include mental health practitioners, investigative journalists, clergy, law enforcement personnel, lawyers, a medical doctor and various educators. Most have at least one book in print and many have multiple professional journal articles addressing their particular area of interest related to abuse that is found in a religious context. The central focus of the book is "to help former members of cults and related groups, their families, and helping professionals increase their understanding of the post-cult recovery process" (p.1). The book suggests principles related to understanding cult conversion, post-cult problems and recovery.

The book draws from: psychological literature related to thought reform, commonly known as "brainwashing;" clinical reports by psychotherapists and pastoral counselors and finally from the many clinical experiences of the book's various contributors. This text carefully provides the reader with a clear overview of the cult phenomenon. This overview starts with the problem of defining popular terms from a secular-psycho/social perspective, answering the question why people join cults, how they typically leave, post-cult needs and special issues. After a brief, on chapter, historical introduction, these four basic foundational concerns comprise the core of the text. The first section of the book, addresses what cults typically do to those who become members. This section proposes that the experience of various levels of mind control behaviors, as describes by the eight themes of thought reform as found in the work of Robert J. Lifton. The second section provides the reader autobiographical accounts of people who have left their religiously abusive system, describing the typical problems associated with this difficult venture. Various elements of exit counseling are discussed as primarily including education directed toward braking down patterns of manipulation and information control. The book contends that people leave because they find that they have been duped and manipulated. I found this incredibly reductionistic and unconvincing. This section concluded with successful case examples of interventions.

The third of four sections, speak directly to the "meat and potato" issues of how to facilitate recovery. Included in this section are contributions from psychologists, social workers, pastors and ex cult members. The final section, addresses specific abuse and neglect issues for both adults and children. Ritualistic abuse and severe issues of trauma, the difficulty of induced false memories and common legal problems that occur as a result of various abuses are also discussed and evaluated. The intent of these four sections is to provide the reader with differing windows of opportunity on the broad landscape of cult recovery in the hope of providing a well-rounded and comprehensive perspective view into post-cult recovery.

I found this book well researched conforming to many sociological and psychological issues of cult recovery. It provides many helpful guidelines to understand both cult involvement and recovery. The broad and consistent contributions from the various contributors I found very

helpful. The denial of the important role of beliefs and the lack of importance placed on viewing involvement and recovery from a systems perspective were my greatest criticisms. I would still highly recommend this text so long as a companion book endorsing a theological rich systems oriented book could help act as a corrective counter-balance and philosophical context.