

News from Info-Cult

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I Choose: Subtlety in Cults

By [Isabelle Renaud*](#)

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In this article I want to explain why I wrote the book *I choose : Subtlety in cults* and briefly show how easily someone can get trapped in a controlling group or relationship. My book is not about religion, it is about the organizational structure and emotional manipulation.

I control my life. I come from a good family. I do well in school. I have friends. I am sure of what I believe in. Thus, no one can manipulate me. That's what I thought before I spent more than three years in a controlling group that some describe as a cult.

I came into contact with the group in University. I wanted to know the Bible to be sure of what I believed. So I started Bible studies. At the beginning, I was so sure of what I knew of the Christian faith, that I did not even ask where the learning material came from. I have sometime tried to understand why I trusted missionary Mary so easily. I knew that there are people who will lie to you and will seem honest. I knew that Christian cults existed. It never even occurred to me to go and search for information on that group. I would make my own opinion. I know now that I would have spotted some lies earlier if I would have done some research. But when I was at the study, I always felt comfortable.

After a few months, I began wanting to spend more time with the group. The students were nice, as were the missionaries. I was more and more interested in the Bible and in the Korean culture of most of the missionaries. Missionary Mary invited me to the Friday testimonies. The students would share what they had learned from the last Sunday passage.

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Benefits of Dialogue

Info-Cult has added to its website the article [Dialogue and Cultic Studies: Why Dialogue Benefits the Cultic Studies Field](#), a message from the Directors of the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA). The Board of Info-Cult agrees with the views expressed in this article and for a number of years have been pursuing a similar course in its approach to dealing with cultic phenomena.

The dialogue begun in the late '90s has continued and expanded. The communication has enriched the views of people on both sides of what once was, but is no longer, a great divide.

The changes happened gradually. The more time I spent in the group, the more I believed what I was told.

I Choose: Subtlety in Cults *(continued)*

After the singing and the testimonies, missionary Peter would go to the stand where others had shared and he would comment on some testimonies. The comments could be positive or negative. They were meant to help you become a better Christian in the way that particular group defined the term.

It was during my first year living with two other group members that I really became part of the Church. In the course of that year, my behavior changed more than it had before. I started listening to missionary Mary more and more. I had become a full fledge member since I was now living in the sisters' house. It meant more responsibilities toward other members. I was expected to participate in more activities, especially recruiting and teaching the Bible to younger members. During that time, I had a burn-out and missed work for a few weeks. I used this time to reconnect with my family with whom I had slowly grown apart, because I was seeing my parents less and less.

The night I realized that I had to leave, I cried for many hours. It wasn't that I wanted to leave. I had to leave. I cried because I knew I would miss my friends. If I stayed, my personal relationship with God would take the back seat to assigned activities. I had been deceived. I had to leave this group or I knew I could fall into depression. There was too much to give and too little to receive. During my three years in the group, part of me was a willing participant. If everything in the group had been negative, I would never have stayed so long!

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Education

2015 Annual International ICSA Conference, Stockholm, Sweden, June 25-27 (Pre-Conference workshops June 24th).

The [International Cultic Studies Association](#) (ICSA) is conducting its 2015 Annual International Conference with [Info-Secte/Info-Cult](#) of Montreal and [Hjälpkällan](#) (Help Source - a support organization for people leaving closed religious movements).

This year's theme is **Children in High-Control Groups**. There will be a track on the conference theme as well as tracks addressing the needs of mental health professionals, former members, researchers, families, and others.

[Call for Papers](#)

Info-Cult has been co-organizing the Annual ICSA Conferences for more than a decade. ICSA conferences are unique because they bring together an enriching mix of academics, students, mental health professionals, former and present group members, and families. In addition to scholarly papers, student research posters, and workshops for former members, there are sessions for anyone having an interest in "cults", "new religious movements" and related phenomena.

In 2012, Info-Cult hosted the International [ICSA Conference in Montreal](#).



**International ICSA
Conference,
Stockholm, Sweden**

I Choose: Subtlety in Cults (continued)

Unfortunately, I have often heard people saying things like: "Only weak people get fooled by cults" or "I would never enter such a group". The reality is that most people that do end up in cults or destructive groups would have said the same thing. EVERYONE has at least one weak point and NO ONE is perfect. So, I believe that anyone could potentially be manipulated or deceived and enter a destructive group. It doesn't mean that everyone would stay for many years in a group that has no or little respect for their freedom of thought. It means that we can fool ourselves in believing others and enter a group that we may end up calling a cult.

The love of power, the hunger for approval, recognition and a sense of purpose can push the members to close their eyes on some practices that clearly infringe on the liberties of individuals. In wanting to belong and please God, I ended up pleasing first and foremost my shepherd, the director and the organization as a whole. The changes happened gradually. The more time I spent in the group, the more I believed what I was told. I absorbed the group ideas and they become my own. For example, I could honestly say to new members that there was no pressure to conform to the group. I thought that I had more freedom of thought than I actually had. So, I ended up being a willing participant in the continuity of the group.

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Isabelle Renaud,

[I Choose: Subtlety in Cults](#), Bookbaby, 2013, ISBN 9781483514345

The names of the people in the group are changed to protect their privacy.

[*I Choose: Subtlety in Cults](#)

is the e-book she wrote about her experiences
and the above article is based on it.

Isabelle Renaud

is a member of Info-Cult and has been a dedicated volunteer for the past 12 years. Among her many activities for Info-Cult, Isabelle has translated articles and documents from English to French and from French to English. As well, Isabelle was not only instrumental in Info-Cult's decision to create a FACEBOOK page; she volunteered to set it up and take responsibility for updating it on a regular basis. Finally, Isabelle is helping to further Info-Cult's mission to educate the public by sharing her own cult experience * with students and community groups, in addition to granting media interviews.



Education (continued)

INFO-CULT WEBSITE

Different pages on our website are updated on an ongoing basis and a number of documents and programs are available in their entirety. For example:



Documentaries and programs that have already been broadcast on TV and Radio including a 2-part program on the history of Roch "Moses" Theriault, in which [Christophe Nowakowski](#) an Info-Cult board member was interviewed:
<http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ic-events.html>



A **THESIS** by David Hoffman: *A historical case study analysis of the establishment of charismatic leadership in a Protestant Reformation cultic group and its role in the recourse to violence* / Accessible in its entirety with the permission of the author): at:
<http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ic-selacq.html#theses>

An **Italian translation** of a talk given by Mike Kropveld "Cults" and Globalization: *Reflections and Questions - "Culti" e globalizzazione: Riflessioni e domande* at:
<http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ICPubs.html>



Recent documentaries on the group Lev Tahor that have been shown on TV, Information on **Conferences and Workshops** and more at:
<http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ic-events.html>

Government reports such as the recent one from the Netherlands: *State of affairs regarding abuses in new religious movements and the way they are tackled in the Netherlands* at: <http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ic-gov.html>



Information on Info-Cult, such as:

Info-Cult's Annual Report and Financial Statements (2013 - 2014)
<http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ic-finan.html>

News from Info-Cult: Past editions at:
<http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ic-news.html>

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Info-Cult on Facebook



Find us on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/InfoCult.InfoSecte>



Info-Cult E-mail Information Lists (English and French)

Info-Cult's **free email service** offers subscribers: articles on cults, new religious movements and related subjects, announcements of upcoming conferences, television programs and updates about Info-Cult. For more information about this service:

http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/Options_EN.html



Info-Cult on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/InfoCult.InfoSecte)



Info-Cult's videos can be accessed on our YouTube page:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/infosecte>



Info-Cult is a registered charitable organization and is recognized for its role in responding to a real need in our society. Info-Cult is able to carry out its activities thanks in large part to the support of people like you who believe we provide a vital community service. Please consider donating to Info-Cult today.

Online at:



<https://www.canadahelps.org/services/wa/dnm/en/#/page/16231>

Or by:

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Go to www.infocult.org and click on **DONATE NOW**

Or by mail to

Info-Cult at 5655 Park Ave., Suite 208, Montreal, QC, Canada H2V 4H2.

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