

Christianity is not about mind control but instead about freedom of the mind and will. As the apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 5:1, Christ set us free for freedom. Paul added that because Christ set us free and wants us to remain free, we should stand firm against the things that formerly enslaved us. Those things that enslave are sins, the primary one of which is to reject God, rebelling against God's commands, to do as one desires rather than to pursue God's desires. Christianity is about escaping the things that enslave us, giving us a foundation in Christ from which to discern and act, rather than letting the sins that control others also control us. Christianity supplies the comprehensive spiritual and ethical system that guards against the influence of a cult, which must supply its own self-serving system.

To avoid mind control by others, one must be able to think apart from others. To think apart, one must have a foundation, a perspective or set of commitments, apart from others. That superior, independent, supernatural set of commitments is exactly what Christianity supplies. The Bible gives a comprehensive set of commands, rules, and principles that supernaturally address the world's peculiar challenges, including popular deceptions. Christians thinkers are not subject to dogma but instead uniquely capable of recognizing and rejecting it. They do not think with the masses but differently from the masses. Christians are the first to recognize propaganda and thus the first whom the dictator must silence and eliminate.

Those who attempt to control the minds of others, to obtain from the manipulated ones their worldly things such as approval, assent, obedience, power, money, property, or other advantage, must use worldly means of influence. To get people to do as they wish, abusive leaders must manipulate the truth of freedom into the deception of slavery, create and punish with fear, control with anxiety, reward with material provision and physical security. Leaders who wish to move people away from truth, away from liberty, away from strength and independence, and into dependence and subjection, cannot do so by using the truth that produces freedom. As Jesus put it in Matthew 12:29 to the religious leaders, anyone who wants to plunder another's house must first tie up its strong man. Jesus is that strong man, preventing others from plundering his follower's house.

Christianity produces independent thinkers who follow God's will, which is not for sin, slavery, and subjection, but for eternal liberty. Christians are free in Christ and

so not fearful of material manipulations. Christians are free in their spirits and so not fearful of enslavement in their bodies. Magistrates had Paul and Silas beaten and jailed for depriving owners of their slave's business, as Acts 16:16-40 records, but Paul and Silas did not fall into subjection. They did not remain silent, intimidated, controlled. They instead sang hymns to God because they were free in their spirits. And their joyful prayers led not only to their physical freedom but also the salvation and spiritual freedom of their jailer and his household.

Christianity is the story of freedom over control, liberty over intimidation. The religious leaders demanded testimony from Jesus, but Jesus remained silent, knowing that they held no sway over him. Pontius Pilate demanded answers and Herod magic from Jesus, holding over Jesus his physical freedom, even his physical life or death, but Jesus remained free of their demands. The religious leaders demanded that Peter and John remain silent about the good news of Jesus, imprisoning and threatening them, but they instead testified to their freedom in Jesus. Romans held the apostle Paul in prison, waiting for him to bribe them, but Paul remained free in Jesus. The Bible shows example after example of the courageous liberty that Christians exercise against mind control.

Christians haven't been weak but instead strong in the face of occupiers, intimidators, and dictators. Leaders have burned Christians at the stake and boiled them in oil to get them to forgo their testimony, but the Christians persisted in glorifying Christ. Terrorists have even recently crucified, drowned, and beheaded Christians to get them to forgo their testimony, but the Christians persisted in glorifying Christ. Christians have famously opposed Nazis, fascists, communists, imperialists, terrorists, and warlords, many paying for it with their lives, others with their physical freedom, none with their freedom in Christ.

The cults to which the questioner may refer have not been Christian in nature but instead gross distortions of the good news available to any in Jesus Christ. Cults arise out of fabrications from any cloth, whether political, social, ethnic, or spiritual, whether ostensibly Christian or of any other religion or worldview. If the cult members had held to Jesus Christ, then they would have known that they were free of any leader's influence, whether that influence depended on mind or body control, or any other manipulation. They would have recognized the nature of the cult, to

shift allegiance to a human leader from devotion to God. Those who know Christ, worship no one other than him, never any charismatic leader.

The Spirit of Christ raises leaders from time to time who do share the gospel effectively, even to thousands. But they do so in extraordinary humility, like the humility of Christ, not charismatically, like a cult leader. The Spirit moves the human heart to Christ, not to the charismatic personality of a cult leader. The Spirit protects the heart from worldly influence, from the personality of a popular leader. Christians are less likely than others to fall sway to politicians, entertainment stars, business leaders, or any other popular figure, because they know the one glorious God in Jesus Christ. Once Christ satisfies the soul, one has no need of chasing human glory.

Even if Christianity were to control the mind to the detriment of the believer, which it does not but instead to the believers' independent benefit, Christianity does not, with that putative control, serve itself. No worldview is so selfless, so other-centered, as Christianity is. No other institution gives itself away so wholly and consistently as Christianity does. No one lived for others so completely and effectively, rather than for himself, as Christ did. Wherever it goes, Christianity produces greater benefit and greater liberty than anything that preceded it or anything that follows in its glorious wake. For freedom, Christ set us free.