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To: tilman@berlin.snafu.de
Newsgroups: alt.religion.scientology,alt.support.ex-cult
Subject: Cult apologist FAQ
From: Tilman Hausherr <tilman@berlin.snafu.de>
Date: Thu, 27 Dec 2001 19:10:36 +0100

The cult apologist FAQ: exposing the cult's willing defenders

In the last few years I had a look at cults and cult members; recently I had a look at the species of the "cult apologist". This is a work in progress to expose the "arguments", and investigate what drives these unpleasant people.

also at
<http://home.snafu.de/tilman/faq-you/cult.apologists.txt>

Please do not copy or translate since it is likely to be changed.
(recent additions):

- Shupe mentioning "my friend and colleague Kendrick Moxon" (27.6.2001)
- Hadden about Cooper (8.8.2000)
- Uri Geller endorses Jeffrey Hadden (16.5.1999)
- Martinez URL corrected
- More on James T. Richardson (24.5.1999)
- More on Hubert Seiwert (24.5.1999)
- More on Frank Flinn (31.5.1999)
- More on Bryan Wilson (5.6.1999, 12.6.1999)
- More on Anson Shupe (12.6.1999)
- More on Lonnie Kliever (12.6.1999)
- More on Dean Kelley (12.6.1999)
- More on the Skeptic article
- More on Anson Shupe (14.6.1999)
- Review of "Verfassungsfeindlich" (20.6.1999)
- More on Melton (17.7.1999)
- Corrected <http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/referral/> URL
- More on CESNUR (8.8.1999)
- Slightly modified Hexham review
- Corrected Freedommag URL (20.8.1999)
- Added quote from MrsRat
- More on Melton (including education) (3.9.1999)
- Criticism of Shupe "atrocity tale" study (12.9.1999)
- More on James T. Richardson (12.9.1999)
- Update on CESNUR funds (21.9.1999)
- Update ("but it's really a party") on Melton & Introvigne

scholarly work on vampires

- Flinn quote on moon (3.10.1999)
 - Rachel Storm (23.10.1999)
 - Added INFORM URL, new funding, new director (29.10.1999)
 - Added "JGM supporting preventive actions against cults" (29.10.1999)
 - Added another James T. Richardson www site
 - More on Melton (13.11.1999)
 - More on Bromley (14.11.1999)
 - Lingua France letter (19.11.1999)
 - Added Bromley admiring the moonies & JZ Knight expertise (20.11.1999)
 - Added Melton sitting in scientology front (20.11.1999)
 - Added link to "Skeptic" article (21.11.1999)
 - mentioned OBE to Eileen Barker (30.1.2000)
 - added e-mail of Bryan Wilson (4.2.2000)
 - corrected Wessinger article URL (11.2.2000)
 - Added Wessinger recommended by new CAN (21.3.2000)
 - Added MSIA e-mail address of James Lewis (21.3.2000)
 - mentioned Mary Poppins article (2.4.2000)
 - Updated Wessinger (10.8.2000)
 - Updated Barker websites, corrected entry about funding (11.10.2000)
 - Added wife of Frank Flimm (1.11.2000)
 - Corrected <http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/referrals.html> URL, removed Introvigne from CAN referral (10.1.2001)
 - Updated Kehrer (4.3.2001)
 - Added perjury of Frank Flinn (12.4.2001)
 - URL for Hexham article (21.5.2001)
 - REMID website corrected (21.8.2001)
 - James Richardson websites corrected (7.9.2001)
 - Introvigne and Guyard appeal (10.9.2001)
 - Introvigne is a "sociologist" and Guyard appeal (27.12.2001)
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"I've been raped, robbed, stabbed, lied to, cheated on, abused, and burned out of my home. Those things healed easily compared to the mental healing required to escape a cult."

(From "MrsRat", former member of TWI)

1. What is a cult apologist?

For this, it is just needed to get the word "apologist":

On-line Medical Dictionary
<http://www.graylab.ac.uk/cgi-bin/omd?apologist>

apologist

One who makes an apology; one who speaks or writes in defense of a faith, a cause, or an institution; especially, one who argues in defense of Christianity.

In general, cult apologists are people who are not cult members, but who support cults and defend their unethical activities.

2. What are the motives of cult apologists?

It is hard to guess what drives someone. Here are some suggestions:

a) Money

Cults can pay good money for friendly opinions. Alternatively, they organise "conferences" where they can meet other cult apologists, all expenses paid. Academics welcome this, since their universities do not have the money to send them to conferences all the time. These are advance payments to secure positive opinions in the future. Positive books are bought by the cults themselves. The most reliable cult apologists are also invited to make affidavits in court cases, or provide support when the cult is under attack by the government, the press and the courts.

While it is of course important to debate the arguments of cult apologists, it is also important to "follow the money" to see whether these people are really independent or just mouthpieces for hire.

b) Fear

Some cult apologists are themselves members of minority religions and face intolerance. Although this intolerance is rather driven by beliefs instead of valid criticism, it drives these people into seeing all criticized groups similarly.

c) Misconception of religious freedom

Some cult apologists genuinely support religious freedom, and because of their belief that religious freedom is of utmost importance, give less concern for the negative aspects of religion run amok, for fear of

damaging their "cause."

Scientology critic Rod Keller attended a session with Dr. Ben Zablocki at CultInfo 1999. Zablocki's opinion is that the great majority of American sociologists of religion (a tiny minority of all sociologists) can be called cult apologists. They want protect religious liberty by protecting the most offensive groups, and believe that the anti-cult movement would destroy, if possible, the most offensive groups, and there would be a domino effect, destroying religious liberty for everybody.

d) Self-promotion

Some cult apologists create fancy "institutes" to get into the media, become famous, etc. These institutes are a reflection of their own ego, even if there is a giant "board of directors" or whatever, of course staffed with fellow cult apologists.

e) Academic stupidity

This is a result of an "ivory tower" mentality: academics support cults because the cult critics do not use "scientific methods". This will be elaborated on later. Another problem is that because of this "ivory tower" mentality they are too lazy to do research on their own, i.e. weighting all the sources against each other; instead they rely on "feeding" by smooth cult PR agents who play "nice guy" with them and simulate a personal friendship.

Most cult apologists have or allege an academic background.

3. What is an "apostate"?

Online medical dictionary
<http://www.graylab.ac.uk/cgi-bin/omd?apostate>

apostate

1. One who has forsaken the faith, principles, or party, to which he before adhered; esp, one who has forsaken his religion for another; a pervert; a renegade.

2. One who, after having received sacred orders, renounces his

clerical profession.

This word is being used by cult apologists to mean someone who has left a group and speaks out against it. "Apostates" are considered unreliable because they "have a motive". Of course, cults like this modified definition. What is also said is that "the anti-cult movement" turns ex-members into "apostates", i.e. that someone who leaves is turned into a militant propagandist by some dark forces.

The logic behind this is that someone who has a motive to make a certain allegation is therefore unreliable. This is a standard of evidence that would never get through in a court - groups of people are simply labelled as liars.

The normal logic is simply to investigate an allegation. If it is untrue, the "victim" of the false allegation can and should sue.

In Japan, "apostates" did speak out for years before the Tokyo subway gassing. They did report to the police - who did nothing, because AUM was a "religion".

About Jonestown, an "apostate" even *predicted* the possibility of a mass suicide! Affidavit of Deborah Layton Blakey:
<http://www.icehouse.net/zodiac/blakey/blakey1.html>

An excellent summary was written by Prof. Beit-Hallahmi:

"Recent and less recent NRM catastrophes help us realize that in every single case allegations by hostile outsiders and detractors have been closer to reality than any other accounts. Ever since the Jonestown tragedy, statements by ex-members turned out to be more accurate than those of apologists and NRM researchers."

Rod Keller (a scientology critic) mentions a theory he heard from Dr. Ben Zablocki: that if the apostate theory was valid, some former members would take a second look eventually. They might say at first that they were brainwashed, but over the years, or even decades, they might recant that claim. They might accept personal responsibility for their time in the group, and that there was no real brainwashing. He said that in his entire research, he has never found such a recanter. Descriptions of mind control do change over the years, but nobody has ever recanted to him their previous claims of brainwashing.

4. How successful are cult apologists?

Many cult apologists have jobs at universities, so they can use state money for their work, while cult critics must use their own funds or donations. Additionally, some cult apologists get funds or services from cults.

Books by cult apologists do not sell very well in the *open* market. The internet bookseller amazon.com shows statistics (low number = high sales), that demonstrate that the books by cult apologists aren't selling. (1.11.1998)

Steven Hassan
Combatting Cult Mind Control 9,271

Margaret Singer, Janja Lalich
Cults in Our Midst 25,783

Eileen Barker
New Religious Movements, an introduction 726,153

Bryan Wilson
The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism 513,671

David Bromley
The Role of Apostates 535,042

Sometimes, such books are bought by the cults themselves, and then distributed to the media as a defense.

In the media, cult apologists are sometimes interviewed; this is because media tries to be "balanced", instead of doing a hard piece of investigative journalism. Usually, US media brings a statement from J. Gordon Melton, and UK media brings a statement from Eileen Barker.

5. Who are the cult apologists?

This is only a small sample of the industry. The criteria is simply: everyone who is here said something very illogical and made me very angry. Not everyone is here.

a) Dean Kelley

Dead; when he was living, he was often quoted as if he speaks for the "National Council of Churches" - which was false.

Claims scientology is a religion
<http://www.neuereligion.de/ENG/Kelley/rsv1.htm>

Copyright expert:
<http://www.theta.com/copyright/kelley.htm>

b) Eileen Barker <E.Barker@lse.ac.uk>
Information Network Focus on Religious Movements (INFORM)
<http://www.inform.ac>
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/sociology/staff/barker.htm>

http://www.lse.ac.uk/cgi-bin/experts?last_name=BARKER&first_name=Eileen&type=full
INFORM@LSE.AC.UK
born 21.4.1938
Source: The Guardian - it is also the birthday of QE2
received an OBE award at the beginning of 2000

The "mother of cult apologists", sometimes named "Camilla" by her critics. A well-known moonie supporter, teaches at the "London School of Economics". (She teaches sociology, *not* economics!). Claims that INFORM "counsels" people, although no one, not even her supporters has ever been able to detail what this "counselling" is about. In media interviews, she says that the anti-cult movement is the problem.

In 1995 Reverend Thomas Gandy met her in Moscow. He asked her the question she probably hears often: "Eileen, who paid for your trip?". She answered "The Duma". Problem is that all people attending the hearing of the Duma had to pay the cost themselves, foreign experts had not really been planned. (Berliner Dialog 3/95, page 28; the article does not make any allegation about who actually did pay for the trip, but mentions that Moonies were selling her book "New Religious Movements") She spent so much time on the hearing attacking the people disagreeing with her work, that her time was over before she could present her *own* work!

Participated in the filing of an amicus brief in the Molko case "for" the APA/ASA (American Psychological Association / American Sociological Association). Both the APA and the ASA later withdrew their names.

She claimed in 1994 in an interview (The Independent, 9.10.1994) that INFORM is supported by the UK home office; but in her own annual report, she says INFORM is not. I did ask her about this on a mailing list where we both are, she did not respond. According to recent info from a critic, the home office pays her £2000.00 for the use of their library.

Claimed under oath in the Moscow trial against Prof. Alexander Dvorkin that a person can belong simultaneously to scientology, the Moon organisation, Krishna, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, CoG, the Local church (Witness Lee), Mother of God center, and the Vissarionites. (Dvorkin had made a booklet partly based on Steve Hassan's "questions for the educated consumer", and was sued by an inter-cult group. He won the lawsuit and it was upheld on appeal)

On a mailing list she said that her organisation, INFORM, does not accept money from cults. She never answered the questions whether this would also apply to the officers/chairs of INFORM.

Most surprising is a statement from the Anglican Church (Bishop Richard Chartres, quoted in "Berliner Dialog" 1/98): it says that INFORM's actual activity is to warn students and others about cults!

Eileen Barker is on the referral list of the scientology-run Cult Awareness Network
<http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/referrals.html>

and of "The Family"
<http://www.thefamily.org/dossier/referrals/experts.htm>

In October 1999 I learned that INFORM has a new director, one Rachel Storm. She is a student of Eileen Barker. It is unclear if Eileen is still involved officially. According to george@iofw.demon.co.uk, INFORM is again funded by the Home Office. According to organise@freenetname.co.uk INFORM are to receive £60,000.00 from the UK Government, £20,000.00 from the Metropolitan police and £20,000.00 from the churches alliance.

c) Anson Shupe
SHUPE@ipfw.edu

Professor of Sociology at the Indiana Purdue University. Testified against CAN in their trial. Here is what CAN said about him in their appeal brief:

During cross-examination, Dr. Shupe admitted to having had interviews with only two CAN personnel over his twenty years of anti-cult "study." (RT 4/66). (Without explanation, however, he completely discounted what he had been told by these people.) Dr. Shupe admitted that he never tried to talk to anyone at CAN about a referral and has never spoken to anyone who has been referred to a deprogrammer by anyone associated with CAN. (RT 4/69). In summary, Dr. Shupe has no specific knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education with respect to CAN upon which any expert opinion about CAN could be based.

The deposition of Prof. Shupe is available online, and is quite revealing: <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/4497/shupedepo.tif>

Sadly, CAN failed to properly object to his testimony at trial; this error could not be corrected on appeal. The judge did admit Shupe at the trial, he said it was the job of the jury to accept or disregard his testimony.

But at the trial itself, the district court judge expressed curiosity regarding "why there were no objections to Dr. Shupe's testimony" by CAN's attorneys. The judge stated, "[a]bout 90 percent of what I heard there [in Shupe's testimony] I would have sustained objections to" ("Scott v. Ross, et. al.," 1995b, 54; see "Scott v. Ross, et. al.," 1998, 3223-3224). In other words, had CAN's counsel objected to Shupe's answers, then the district judge may have struck most of them.
[Stephen Kent in "The Skeptic", 3/1999]
<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/c25.html>

Shupe said about Germany in "The Skeptic" 3/1999:

"I did write an editorial on the German Republic's neo-Nazi discrimination against Scientologist celebrities and entertainers"

Shupe about unindicted scientology co-conspirator Kendrick Moxon:
"my friend and colleague Kendrick Moxon"
http://www.cesnur.org/2001/CAN_corresp.htm

d) David G. Bromley <dbromley@saturn.vcu.edu>
<http://saturn.vcu.edu/~dbromley/>

Professor of Sociology at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond and Shupe's academic twin. He and Shupe regularly publish books together

about the nastiness of "apostates".

Participated in the filing of an amicus brief in the Molko case "for" the APA/ASA (American Psychological Association / American Sociological Association). Both the APA and the ASA later withdrew their names.

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and of "The Family"
<http://www.thefamily.org/dossier/referrals/experts.htm>

He supports scientology misrepresenting its beliefs in this "Expertise on Confidential Religious Writings":
<http://www.theta.com/copyright/bromley.htm>

The following is a book excerpt quoted by scientology, from his book "The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements":

"...One critical result of external intervention is that dispute and non-dispute precipitated exits are converted into the former as external opponents actively recruit exiting members into the oppositional coalition, provide social networks through which exiting members can reinterpret personal troubles as organizational problems, and control role transition on favorable terms. There is likely to be a price for re-entry. Former members have to confess to disloyal conduct or plead loss of free will as a result of subversive influence. The burden of proof is on the organization to refute claims by exiting members, and there may be little opportunity to do so."

Here an article excerpt from "Linking social structure and the exit process in religious organizations: Defectors, whistle-blowers, and apostates", Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, March 1998:

"Protracted conflict between the organization and oppositional coalition creates possibilities for extended apostate careers. Apostates may pursue a variety of strategies to solidify their careers: acquiring various credentials that support a more permanent social niche; inflating prior organizational status to enhance the value of their testimony to control agencies; modifying the narrative content to appeal to specific interests

within the oppositional coalition; and embellishing the narrative so as to heighten audience interest."

Here is one of his theories why mind control does not exist:
<http://saturn.vcu.edu/~dbromley/paper-satanismandanticultism.htm>

"There is no plausible explanation for how such a diverse array of groups from different parts of the world and with no connection to one another -- the Hare Krishnas from India, the Unificationists from Korea, The Family in the United States -- all discovered and implemented this psycho-technology at precisely the same moment."

The "technology" for mind control is well explained (Lifton, see <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/b07.html>). It is Prof. Bromley's problem that he hasn't found out why all these different groups use the same methods. I guess Prof. Bromley also doubts that e.g. children manipulate their parents at the cash register waiting line; after all, millions of children cannot all have discovered and implemented this "technology".

David Bromley admiring the moonies:

"Some new religions seek to nurture strong autonomous individuals. The Unification Church, however, takes the approach of creating a better family, or church, in the expectation the group will shape and improve the character of individual members. The idea is that a stronger family, or group, will expand outward in concentric circles to influence people, churches and organizations outside the Unification Church."

(Insight, 6.7.1998)

e) Dr. James Richardson <jtr@unr.edu>

<http://www.unr.edu/artsci/soc/jtr.htm>

<http://www.unr.edu/artsci/socpsy/richardson.html>

<http://equinox.unr.edu/homepage/jtr/about.html>

Professor of Sociology and Judicial Studies at the University of Nevada in Reno (!). He is the President of the American Association of University Professors.

Says that Leo Ryan is "not a hero", but a "tragic figure like Jim Jones", and that he was co-responsible for what happened, and that he

was "as mad as Jones". <http://bernie.cncfamily.com/ryan1.htm>

In the article "Print Media Coverage of New Religious Movements: A Longitudinal Study" (Journal of Communication 38(3), 1998, pp. 37-61) he says on p.45:

The People's temple was not included in our sample because it is an atypical NRM in term of its origins, the characteristics of its members, its organisational structure, the amount of social contact between the group and the "outside world," the recruitment and resocialization techniques it uses, and its theology and ideology.

As evidence for amazing allegation (Jonestown is a very typical example of a destructive cult!), he quotes himself: "People's Temple and Jonestown: A Corrective Comparison and Critique", Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 19(3), 1980, pp. 239-255.

This is not the only scurrilous allegation. He also starts the same article by claiming that the media functions as an institution of social control that marginalizes and discredits oppositional movements. (Funny, my experience with media is that they primarily *report* on them)

He participated in the filing of an amicus brief in the Molko case "for" the APA/ASA (American Psychological Association / American Sociological Association). Both the APA and the ASA later withdrew their names.

Testified against legislation in Nevada that would have brought "consumer protection" for potential cult members. (Review of Religious Research, 28(2), December 1986)

Claimed under oath in the Moscow trial against Prof. Alexander Dvorkin that a person can belong simultaneously to scientology, the Moon organisation, Krishna, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, CoG, the Local church (Witness Lee), Mother of God center, and the Vissarionites. (Dvorkin had made a booklet partly based on Steve Hassan's "Questions for the Educated Consumer", and was sued by an inter-cult group. Dvorkin won the lawsuit and it was upheld on appeal).

James Richardson is on the referral list of the scientology-run Cult Awareness Network
<http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/referrals.html>

and of "The Family"
<http://www.thefamily.org/dossier/referrals/experts.htm>

f) Dr. J. Gordon Melton <jgordon@rain.org>
aka The Institute for the Study of American Religion (ISAR)
<http://www.americanreligion.org>
aka CESNUR USA

The "father of cult apologists". Minister of the Emmanuel United Methodist Church in Evanston, Illinois until 1985. Graduated from Garrett Theological Seminary and Northwestern University (Ph.D., 1975). Is often quoted by the media. Has a library, and runs "ISAR", the "Institute of the Study of the American Religion". No other member except him known by me. No info about funding. Compiles reference works on religions that critics say are no more than puff pieces for the featured organisations. He was on the board of APRL, a scientology front.

Testified that the Chicago street gang "El Rukns" were "not a religion" but "more like a fraternity", but that their beliefs were "very close to orthodox Islamism and very close to black nationalistic tradition."
(Chicago Tribune 21.11.1985, 2.6.1986)

Testified in trial and later a book funded by JZ Knight that she is sincere and not a fraud. (See LA Times 26.7.1998 and
<http://www.users.fast.net/~szimhart/ramtha.htm>)

Melton was allowed to teach at the University of Santa Barbara after he donated his library.

Testified at the trial of Neil Duddy, a critic of the "Local Church".

Took a trip to Japan in 1995 to investigate the "persecution" of AUM (together with James Lewis, Barry Fisher and Thomas Banigan). Through his friend Introvigne, he is now trying to redefine this "visit" as a trip to protest the mistreatment of average members.

Said that the white supremacist hate group "The World Church of the Creator" is "a real church" although they are atheists. (The Telegram & Gazette Worcester, 9.7.1999)

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<http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/referrals.html>

and of "The Family"

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His hobby: vampires. He is the founder of the American Chapter of the Transylvanian Society of Dracula. He claims that it is educational, but articles and photographs show how it really is:

"There are 100 scholars coming to present papers on vampires, but it's really a party," said J. Gordon Melton, who is organizing the event with Massimo Introvigne. "The majority of people coming are just like us - people who like vampire and horror movies. It's going to be fun - a bunch of silly people dressing up and biting each other on the neck."

(The Los Angeles Daily News 23.7.1997)

<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/TSD/pics1.html>

<http://www-lib.usc.edu/~melindah/Drac97/elvira.htm>

<http://www.fsbassociates.com/books/videovampires.htm>

JGM on former members:

[From the expert testimony of J. Gordon Melton in Lee vs. Duddy et al, a lawsuit involving the Local Church and the Spiritual Counterfeits Project. Quoted from <http://www.hightruth.com/experts/melton.html>]

"DR. MELTON: When you are investigating groups such as this, you never rely upon the unverified testimony of ex-members.

MR. MORGAN: Why?

DR. MELTON: To put it bluntly, hostile ex-members invariably shade the truth. They invariably blow out of proportion minor incidents and turn them into major incidents, and over a period of time their testimony almost always changes because each time they tell it they get the feedback of acceptance or rejection from those to whom they tell it, and hence it will be developed and merged into a different world view that they are adopting."

JGM on Jonestown:

"The tragedy at Jonestown ... in spite of having little relationship to

nonconventional religions in general, was transformed by the anti-cult movement and the media into the definitive cult horror story."
(Chicago Tribune, 25.11.1988)

"The People's Temple was a congregation in a Christian denomination recognized by the National Council of Churches," he said. "This wasn't a cult. This was a respectable, mainline Christian group."
(Milwaukee Journal, 3.12.1988)

"Jones became a cult leader and the Peoples Temple became a cult, literally overnight. And what was forgotten was that this was actually a church in a mainstream religion.... He was about as mainstream as you could get." (The Sacramento Bee, 15.11.1998)

JGM the inquisitor:

"Witches are a benign, nature-oriented group," he says. "Members tend to be urban dwellers with a lot of potted plants and a couple of pets."
(Los Angeles Times, around 13.10.1998)

[I do not disagree with his evaluation, only with his "scholarly" method to count plants and pets]

JGM the realtor:

White supremacists don't come to Massachusetts because "Property values in the Bay State are too high" (The Telegram & Gazette Worcester, 9.7.1999)

JGM supporting preventive actions against cults:

(From "Israel Struggling to Tell Pious Pilgrims From Dangerous Cults", San Francisco Chronicle 27.10.1999)

"Israelis authorities need to err on the side of caution."

"They are sitting on a powder keg in Israel"

"Here it would be a gross violation of civil rights. But given the situation there, it is not as mean as it appears. There are Jewish and Muslim groups with long histories of violence, and the Israelis are afraid these (apocalyptic Christian) groups will spark violence."

JGM on the anti-cult movement:

"The killings [of the solar temple] suggest that authorities everywhere should listen more to serious religious scholars and pay less attention to militant anti-cult movements, who focus their attention on law-abiding movements, such as the Unification Church"

(Los Angeles Times 13.10.1994)

(The UC is neither a "law abiding movement" nor did the "serious scholars" prevent or predict the Solar Temple murders)

Melton nevertheless managed to say two things about scientology I agree with:

"They have a tendency to fight until they win and to try and punish their opponents". (Boston Globe 9.12.1997)

"They turn critics into enemies and enemies into dedicated warriors for a lifetime." (New York Times 21.12.1997)

g) Massimo Introvigne <cesnur@tin.it>
mintrovigne@jacobacciperani.com
CESNUR
<http://www.cesnur.org>
Transylvanian Society of Dracula - Italian Chapter
<http://www.cesnur.org/dracula.htm>

He is an Italian attorney, specializing in intellectual property, especially software.

<http://www.jacobacciperani.com/who/abboard.htm#7>

According to the newspaper "L'Espresso", he had an income of about \$500000 in the year 1999.

Has no formal education related to cults (although he has education in the philosophy of religion and in law, and teaches about "new religions" a few days a year). He has no degree in sociology, but insists in being "sociologist". He told me that he is now a real sociologist since September 2001, because the Italian Association of Sociology (AIS) invited him to become a member because of his "outstanding contribution to the field".

He runs "CESNUR" (Center for the study of new religions - see extensive description below). His name is so closely associated with it and vice versa, that I believe it is mostly a one-man operation - an opinion that is contradicted by presented evidence.

Massimo Introvigne looks similar to Silvio Berlusconi. He/CESNUR organises conferences on cults. He claims that if cults do anything illegal, they should be brought to trial; he testified for the *defense* at the French trial, where a scientologist and father of two children had been driven to suicide as a result of the Scientology "hard sell" coercive tactics. (This is very embarrassing to him: he regards himself as a witness "on", not "for" Scientology. In 1998 he testified for the CSCE in Washington, and was confronted by an ex-scientologist wearing a "\$SCIENTOLOGY KILLS" T-Shirt).

His articles or press releases often make the following points: that he/CESNUR own 10,000 books, that he/CESNUR are influential, that he is quoted, that he is misquoted, that he is attacked by unscientific anti-cult activists. In e-mail exchanges, he showed intelligence, the ability to communicate, and an ego of galactic proportions. Introvigne, the successful sociologist, media wizard and frequent traveller.

He is not just only a cult apologist - he is a "cult apologist apologist". In his article "Blacklisting or Greenlisting" <http://www.cesnur.org/testi/greenlist.html> he "apologizes" for the activities of other cult apologists - unnamed because of restrictions by the magazine where he sits on the board. Most funny is a segment where he says that the money paid by Scientology to willing "scholars" is "minimal". No numbers are mentioned. But if the \$\$ really is minimal, it would not only mean that these people are corrupt, but they are stupid, too!

Introvigne disagrees with the strategy of secular anti-cult groups not to discuss the beliefs of cults and to focus on their activities. He says - without explaining why - that the "deeds, not creeds" approach does not work. (Montreal Gazette 16.8.1996) I believe he said somewhere that cults should only be attacked from a theological point of view, but can't remember where.

His texts often name many academic people in the main text and use many additional footnotes, which is normally typical for academic papers. But Introvigne's papers are often shallow: the names are often not needed in the main text (footnote would be enough), and the really needed footnotes or names are painfully missing. (Past examples include him mentioning the MSIA trial without reference (corrected shortly after

being mentioned in this FAQ!), the allegation that "cult critics claim that cults are not religions", the allegation that the book "The Missionary Position" by Christopher Hitchens says that one needs to be 'brainwashed' to help mother Teresa in Calcutta, the undocumented allegation that the author of "Marry Poppins" met one "Gurdjieff" (see at <http://www.cesnur.org/testi/marypoppins.htm>, see footnote 6) and more examples can be found at any time, probably even in *any* document by him - challenge me!)

I have had the opportunity to browse through some of his Italian books on cults. They are superficial to the max and do not bring the information that is actually needed.

All this gives the appearance that he is just a guy who feels important. But recently evidence came up showing that he is actually connected to an obscure right-wing cult, the Brazilian "Tradition, Family and Property", and suggest that criticism against TFP is his original motivation. Introvigne has been thoroughly exposed by anti-cult activists:

<http://www.kelebekler.com/cesnur/eng.htm>

Introvigne successfully pressured their ISP to close the site, which resulted in several mirrors around the world and the reappearance on another ISP. However, he never sued the people who wrote the materials.

His other hobby: vampires. He is the president of the Italian chapter of the Transylvanian Society of Dracula, which he claims "promotes serious scholarly studies on the vampire mythology". Example:

"There are 100 scholars coming to present papers on vampires, but it's really a party," said J. Gordon Melton, who is organizing the event with Massimo Introvigne. "The majority of people coming are just like us - people who like vampire and horror movies. It's going to be fun - a bunch of silly people dressing up and biting each other on the neck."

(The Los Angeles Daily News 23.7.1997)

In 1999 he presented a paper on "Anti-Cult Terrorism via the Internet"
http://www.cesnur.org/testi/anticult_terror.htm
In it, he first redefines Terrorism by explaining that free speech is actually "verbal terrorism". Part of this paper is also a "limited covert participant observation study" of the Usenet. Under different names, people associated with CESNUR posted pro-CESNUR material and also

libellous allegations against critics of CESNUR. This is like making a "study" on the implications of terrorism by throwing a bomb on a crowded place. The rest of the paper is just whining that cult critics criticize him and his dubious organisation.

This paper was presented at the annual conference of the Association for Sociology of Religion (ASR) in Chicago on 5.8.1999. It shows that this group has a low standard both for contents and for authors - Introvigne is neither a sociologist nor a religious scholar.

Intrigue likes to put newspaper articles on his website, but is very one-sided. An example: Jacques Guyard, a member of parliament, was convicted of libel in March 2000 for having criticized the Steiner movement. When the conviction was removed on appeal, Intrigue did not update his website.

http://www.cesnur.org/testi/guyard_fr.htm

http://www.cesnur.org/testi/guyard_en.htm

(Decision: 6.9.2001; Last time I looked: 27.12.2001)

On 26.12.2001 he e-mailed me about a usenet article in which I had mentioned this - but not about the Guyard case, but because I had said that he is not a sociologist.

The following information on CESNUR was submitted by Massimo Intrigue and reorganised by me, as part of a long e-mail exchange:

There are currently four different CESNUR organisations that are not linked by licensing or franchising contracts, and do not solicit nor receive funds from religious organisations old and new. They receive royalties from publishers, contributions of the members, and registration fees on conferences they organise. Decisions are made according to the by-laws (and national laws) by Boards of Directors and other appropriate organs. The founders were the board members, with the exceptions mentioned below.

CESNUR International: founded 1988, non-profit, publicly recognized association (re-incorporated) in 1996, legal person (Decree 150-11310 of the Government of Piedmont). Funded by the State of Piedmont, located in Torino. [When people started to point out that this funds are obviously used for unethical activities (e.g. the terrorism "study"), Massimo suddenly restricted his statement and said that the funds are earmarked for the library (excluding electricity) and the conferences organizational costs] Manages the website www.cesnur.org. The by-laws provide that it can be designated as "CESNUR", "CESNUR International",

"CESNUR Piedmont" and "CESNUR Torino".

Managing Director: Massimo Introvigne.

President: Father Luigi Berzano, Professor of Sociology of Religion at the University of Turin

Board: Luigi Berzano, J. Gordon Melton, Eileen Barker, Massimo Introvigne,
Michael Homer, Reender Kranenborg, Gianni Ambrosio.

CESNUR Italy: founded 1988, incorporated 1990 as non-profit private association, registration number 1486/1, located in Foggia and Torino.

Managing Director: Massimo Introvigne.

President: Monsignor Luigi Casale (a Catholic historian and archbishop)

Board: Giuseppe Casale, Michele Di Cesare, Massimo Introvigne, Jean-François Mayer, Régis Ladous, Gianni Ambrosio
Giovanni Sangiorgio and Giorgio Frascella left the board, Prof. Roland Chagnon died.

CESNUR France: founded 1996, non-profit association "loi 1901", registration number 126189 P, located in Paris.

President: Sorbonne Professor Antoine Faivre ("History of Mystical and Esoterical Doctrines")

Executive Secretary: Olivier-Louis Séguy (attorney)

Board: Antoine Faivre, Roland Edighoffer, Olivier-Louis Séguy

CESNUR USA: unincorporated.

It has a secretary, Michael W. Homer (attorney).

Disclosure of information about trade and service marks was refused.

h) Frank Flinn

Professor of religious studies at Washington University in St. Louis and a Roman Catholic.

Wife Alice Bloch is a associate professor of dance at Lindenwood University (St. Louis Post-Dispatch 28.10.2000)

Testified for scientology that the RPF (a scientology slave camp) can be compared to a "spiritual retreat",
<http://www.freezonetruth.com/flinn2.html>

"Contrary to the generally second-hand opinions of outsiders and to the claims of disaffected members, whose motives are suspect, I would say that submission to such practices is not due to browbeating on the part of church leaders but follows as a natural consequences from a free religious commitment to spiritual discipline in the first place."

Testified for scientology in the Armstrong case that the (positive) lies about L. Ron Hubbard by scientology are OK because they are "Hagiography". (Source for this allegation: Gerry Armstrong)

He also claims that scientology is a form of Buddhism:

Frank K. Flinn, "Scientology as Technological Buddhism" in Joseph H. Fichter, editor, Alternatives to American Mainline Churches, New York: Paragon House, 1983, pages 89-110.

(This has been debunked by Prof. Stephen Kent in
<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Library/Shelf/kent/eastern.html>)

He "deplores the example of official German intolerance of Scientology", "independently" from other scholars.
<http://www.scientology.de/scnnews/press/eng/aug/96082101.htm>

He also testified in defense of scientology in the French scientology suicide trial.

About compatibility of scientology to other religions:

<http://germany.freedommag.org/experts/eng/flinn01.pdf>
(part 4)

"Scientology does not require members to renounce prior religious beliefs or membership in other churches or religious orders. This is in keeping with the pluridenominational temper of our times. Nonetheless, as a practical matter, Scientologists usually become fully involved with the Scientology religion to the exclusion of any other faith."

In other words, Frank Flinn ignores that scientology has policies about "mixing practices" / "other practices", e.g. in #15 of the auditors code:

"I promise not to mix the processes of Scientology with other practices except when the preclear is physically ill and only medical means will serve."

Or this about ministers from other religions:

"Scientology is an applied philosophy designed and developed to make the able more able. In this sphere it is tremendously successful.

Efforts to involve philosophy with medical imperialism, psychiatric sadism, the bigoted churchman, bring about a slowing of our progress."

(Source: HCOPL 27.10.1964R, Rev. 15.11.1987)

Frank Flinn about "worship" in scientology:

He bends over backwards to explain that about every religious practice on the planet is also "worship" (e.g. meditation, or studying religious texts). Therefore, he finds a "worship" in scientology:

<http://germany.freedommag.org/experts/eng/flinn01.pdf>
(part 5)

"As a scholar of comparative religion I can assert without hesitation that auditing and training are central forms of worship in the belief system of the Scientologist. Secondly, the places where auditing and training are ministered to adherents are unequivocally Scientology houses of worship."

However, both auditing and training can be done everywhere. This is why there are "field auditors", and that scientology home study "courses" are sold to the public.

He is member/participant at Moon-linked organisations, New ERA, ICUS and IRF. However he said one thing about Moon that I can agree with:

"Moon is not a model for his own sermons"
(Christianity Today 16.11.1998)

Frank Flinn is on the referral list of the scientology-run Cult Awareness Network
<http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/referrals.html>

He committed perjury (in my opinion) in the case RTC v. Dell Liebreich,

by claiming that the Sea Org is not an organisation or a group of individuals acting in an organized capacity, but "is merely a way of describing members' spiritual commitment and undertaking to serve and advance the Scientology religious faith"

However, even scientology itself says:
<http://faq.scientology.org/page16.htm>

"The Sea Organization is a fraternal religious order and is not incorporated or otherwise organized as a legal entity."

and

"they still wear maritime-style uniforms and have ranks and ratings."

i) Jeffrey Hadden <jkh8x@virginia.edu>
<http://www.relfreedom.org>

Of all cult apologists, he is probably the dumbest. Nevertheless, he somehow managed to become Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia. Once wrote a paper for scientology that said that it is against the US first amendment to expose the "secrets" of a religion. If he had even basic knowledge of religious history, i.e. the roots of Protestantism, he would not have written this:
<http://www.theta.com/copyright/hadden.htm>

He is also the author of the infamous memo about neutralizing the AFF's "project recovery" and accepting money from cults "no strings attached" (on behalf of Eileen Barker and David Bromley, which he later disputed, i.e. he says he speaks only for himself). This infamous memo can be found at <http://www.rickross.com/reference/apologist19.html>). I believe that Barker and Bromley were simply too lazy, and used Hadden as scribe.

The funniest is his response after his memo came on the internet. He wrote on 18.10.1998:

"I have experienced the pain of having my own mind temporarily warped by those who preached hate against those who believe differently than they."

later in the same text, he says:

"I find the mind control thesis to be totally lacking in empirical support."

(full text on http://www.snafu.de/~tilman/prolinks/hadden_response.txt)

Jeffrey Hadden is on the referral list of the scientology-run Cult Awareness Network
<http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/referrals.html>

and of "The Family"
<http://www.thefamily.org/dossier/referrals/experts.htm>

You can read his lectures online:
<http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/course/lectures.htm>
he tries to compensate the lack of substance by using large fonts.
Consider this lecture about the Moon organisation:
<http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/lectures/moonies.html>

"To this date, Moon had never declared that he was, indeed, the Lord of the Second Advent, i.e. that he was Christ returned" and "Unification Church members have always believed this to be the case, but Moon has carefully avoided a public declaration."

Compare it with this public declaration:
<http://www.unification.net/pr-mes/pr-mes-2.html>

"We pray that over and over again, continuously throughout all 24 hours. "They say there is a new Messiah coming: find out about it!" It is the True Parents. "TP," and the True Nation, "TN." To understand the possibility of saving the nation, we must understand about our parents. This is synonymous: the reappearance of the Lord of the Second Advent means that now he has completed the perfection of his family."

It is also mentioned in the Unification News dated August 24, 1992 (mentioned by Dennis Smith, but also at
<http://www.unification.net/1992/920824.html>):

"In early July I spoke in five cities around Korea at rallies held by the Women's Federation for World Peace. There, I declared that my wife, WFWP President Hak Ja Han Moon, and I are the True Parents of all humanity. I declared that we are the Savior, the Lord of the Second Advent, the Messiah."

Sometimes he promotes outright falsehoods:
http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/lectures/leave_dpm.html
"Galen Kelley convicted of kidnapping in Northern Virginia in 1993".

His name is Kelly, and he is *not* convicted of kidnapping. Quite the opposite - after a conviction he got a new trial and the prosecutor was fired for improper conduct. Kelly pleaded guilty to a lesser charge, and got "time served".

<http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/nrms/scientology.html>
"Paulette Cooper, a well-known Scientology apostate..."

Paulette Cooper was never a Scientologist.

In the Times of London he finally got recognition: spoonbender Uri Geller endorses him. He wrote:

"For a week, I have been in the grip of the Branch Davidians. And the Snake Handlers, the Promise Keepers, the Knights of Columbus and the Church of the New Jerusalem. Praise be, hallelujah - I have been shown all the true ways of the Lord by Professor Jeffrey Hadden."

He quotes Hadden's website:

"a site backing his belief that we have to "tolerate deviant, and often troublesome, new religions ... religion is the final line of defense against every form of tyranny"

j) Bryan Wilson
bryan.wilson@all-souls.ox.ac.uk

Not a member of the Beach Boys, this one is a former professor of sociology in Oxford. He is a very faithful sock puppet for scientology, often willing to appear when needed.

<http://germany.freedommag.org/experts/eng/wilson01.pdf>
http://members.xoom.com/charlie_j/longwilson/hom.htm

Stephen Kent (not a cult apologist) cites a paper by him that says that Scientology may still be called a religion even if the religious appearance was added only for legal reasons. (Cited by Stephen Kent in http://www фактнет.орг/Scientology/is_this_religion.htm).

In his work, "Scientology: An Analysis and Comparison of its Religious Systems and Doctrines", he writes:

<http://www.neuereligion.de/ENG/collection/Scientology/point62.htm>

"A distinctive feature of Scientology is that members are not required to abandon other religious beliefs and affiliations on taking up Scientology."

While he later admits that "while exclusivity is not required, it comes about as a matter of practice", he forgets to mention that scientology has policies about "mixing practices" / "other practices", e.g. in #15 of the auditors code:

"I promise not to mix the processes of Scientology with other practices except when the preclear is physically ill and only medical means will serve."

Or this about ministers from other religions:

"Scientology is an applied philosophy designed and developed to make the able more able. In this sphere it is tremendously successful.

Efforts to involve philosophy with medical imperialism, psychiatric sadism, the bigoted churchman, bring about a slowing of our progress."

(Source: HCOPL 27.10.1964R, Rev. 15.11.1987)

He "deplores the example of official German intolerance of Scientology", "independently" from other scholars.

<http://www.scientology.de/scnnews/press/eng/aug/96082101.htm>

He also testified in defense of scientology in the French scientology suicide trial.

He traveled to Sweden when Zenon Panoussis exposed the "secret" scientology documents:

<http://www.modemac.com/nots/media4.txt>

He is Moon linked (New ERA participant)

He says about "apostates":

<http://www.neuereligion.de/ENG/Wilson/index.htm>

Informants who are mere contacts and who have no personal motives for what they tell are to be preferred to

those who, for their own purposes, seek to use the investigator. The disaffected and the apostate are in particular informants whose evidence has to be used with circumspection. The apostate is generally in need of self-justification. He seeks to reconstruct his own past, to excuse his former affiliations, and to blame those who were formerly his closest associates. Not uncommonly the apostate learns to rehearse an 'atrocity story' to explain how, by manipulation, trickery, coercion, or deceit, he was induced to join or to remain within an organization that he now forswears and condemns. Apostates, sensationalized by the press, have sometimes sought to make a profit from accounts of their experiences in stories sold to newspapers or produced as books (sometimes written by 'ghost' writers). [Bryan Wilson, *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, p.19.]

Wilson the copyright expert:
<http://www.theta.com/copyright/wilson.htm>

k) Lonnie Kliever (Mr.)

Similar to Bryan Wilson, this one is a professor in the Religious Studies Department at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

<http://germany.freedommag.org/experts/eng/kiever01.pdf>

He "deplores the example of official German intolerance of Scientology", "independently" from other scholars.

<http://www.scientology.de/scnnews/press/eng/aug/96082101.htm>

Lonnie Kliever is on the referral list of the scientology-run Cult Awareness Network
<http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/referrals.html>

Claims that scientology is a religion:
<http://www.theta.com/goodman/kiever1.htm>

Kliever the copyright expert:
<http://www.theta.com/copyright/kiever.htm>

He is member/participant at Moon-linked organisations: New ERA, ICUS, AWR and co-signed a "proud to know him" ad.

l) REMID, Steffen Rink, Thomas Schweer, Thomas Hase

<http://www.remid.de>

Steffen.Rink@t-online.de

remidmail@aol.com

hase@rz.uni-leipzig.de

Not much is known about these except that they consider cults "quite normal", in the way that fraud and abuse is a normal part of society. German cult apologists are trying to keep a low profile because the media can be rather nasty with them (rightly so!)

Thomas Schweer is somehow affiliated with the publisher "Diagonal Verlag" that has published a German translation of Massimo Introvigne's infamous book ("Pour en finir avec les Sectes").

m) Hubert Seiwert <seiwert@rz.uni-leipzig.de>

Professor of religious studies at Leipzig University. According to a REMID member, his original qualification is Chinese religions of the 16th century.

In a conference at the Goethe Institute in December 1995 in Lisbon, Portugal, he claimed that scientology is persecuted and that there were no judicial decisions against them (this is a lie). He was the "expert" for the green party in the German parliament commission.

According to info I have, his wife works or worked at Süddeutsche Zeitung, which printed articles/interviews. (I do not know in which department). One of his articles was reprinted in a scientology magazine. (It is possible that this was done without his knowledge; nevertheless, it shows who *likes* his ideas).

In an interview with that newspaper, he said that if his daughter would want to become a scientologist, he would have to accept it, just as if she'd want to become a nun. (SZ 23.11.1996)

In conversation with Alexander Dvorkin during the Bundestag hearing in Bonn he said that he considers Massimo Introvigne to be his role model.

In an article about the french report on cults and review of the book "Pour en finir avec les sectes" in FAZ 10.9.1996, he claimed about Melton and Introvigne:

"The scientific competence of the authors is beyond any doubt.
They are recognized specialists in the field of cult research"

He also claimed that the book is a "scientific publication". However, when the book was published in German in 1998, it contained only 1/7 of the original content! (See BD 3-98)

n) Rainer Flasche

<under construction>

See early work:

<http://www.unification.net/german/texte/dossier2.htm>

o) Günther Kehrer

Prof. of religious studies at the Universität Tübingen

Claimed in an interview with Sonntags Aktuell, 15.6.1997 that scientology is persecuted, and that the persecuting politicians are even dumber than normally expected, and that scientology is not a social problem.

According to http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~religion/remid_report2.htm :

Because "new religions" have so many texts, traditional scholars in religious studies do normally not consider them.

p) George Chryssides <G.D.Chryssides@wlv.ac.uk>

<http://www.wlv.ac.uk/sed/rsnet.htm>

Cult apologist for Moon, but also signed a paper for scientology in 1998; also claims that his copyright was violated by a book of Nansook Hong. Did not explain how he got her book before it was available in Europe (Shipping takes time!)

q) <removed because I'm too lazy to provide more data>

r) Catherine Wessinger <wessing@loyno.edu>

<http://www.loyno.edu/~wessing/>
Professor of Religious Studies at Loyola University in New Orleans

See her with fellow cult apologists (the usual suspects!)
<http://www.loyno.edu/~wessing/law.html>

Read her article about Jonestown:
<http://www.und.nodak.edu/dept/phirlrel/jonestown/jt1978.html>

She blames the anti-cult movement for what happened, she blames Ryan and his staff. Very revealing is the portrayal of Don Harris, one of the people murdered.

"At the end of the visit while the camera filmed in Jim Jones' face, reporter Don Harris aggressively questioned Jim Jones for 45 minutes about weapons, physical punishment, and drugs."

(The guy was simply doing his job, and cameras do *always* film in the face when interviewed - why should they film the feet?).

Compare it with this accurate media article from the Washington Post of 21.11.1978:

"Later, NBC correspondent Harris "made a peripheral tour and people approached him about leaving Jonestown," Lane said. As Harris and then Ryan gathered their names, Lane and Garry said, Jones grew more distressed."

And with the report from MSNBC, 27.11.1998:

As the music started up again, NBC correspondent Don Harris was approached by one of the happy-looking Jonestown audience members.

"Don Harris called us to move aside," says Sung. "I said 'What's going on?' And then he showed us a little piece of paper. The paper said 'Help us to get out of this place.' And we ask him 'What's going on? Who wrote this letter?'" It was written by a longtime People's Temple member. It was the first defection of the trip, and it was proof that there were people in Jim Jones' "utopia" who wanted to get out. Correspondent Harris would wait until the next day to question Jim Jones about the note.

What happened is that some of the people in this "paradise" were passing notes to the team, in the hope of escaping. Wessinger does not mention these people in her article!

In other messages, she looks from the point of view of the people who "feel" persecuted. She says: "vociferous opposition and tactics of anti-cultists can become contributing factors to a tragic outcome". To be fair, she also says "The Jonestown residents bear responsibility for their choice in how they responded."

She also wrote an article saying "Religious Intolerance - not "Cults" - Is the Problem", can be read at <http://fic.ic.org/cmag/88/3288.html>

She likes to use the word "millennial" for certain cults. It is amazing how much television influences people.

Wessinger is recommended by the scientology-run cult awareness network:
<http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/Uganda.html>

Example of her "research" skills:

<http://www.loyno.edu/~wessing/law/Encyclopedia/8.persecution.html>

She claims:

"The Branch Davidians were assaulted by ATF agents although their investigation had found no evidence that the Davidians possessed illegal weapons."

Truth is of course that eight surviving Davidians were convicted on weapons charges. Even Dick DeGuerin, attorney for David Koresh, testified to Congress: "He told me had illegal weapons there".

s) Jonas Alwall

[Thanks to *** for pointing me to him].

Alwall is listed in the Swedish report as cooperating for INFORM, CESNUR and ISAR. He believes that the government should avoid informing about various cults, since this would be infringing on religious freedom. He claims that there is no scientific proof that new religious movements generally harm people's mental health. (GöteborgsPosten 5.10.1998)

It goes further. In an interview on P1-radio on 28.8.1998, he claimed that Germany prohibits [scientology] artists from entering the country (this is a blatant lie). He says also that "scientologists are accused of, what the scientology movement is said to be doing, is not in proportion to the size or power of the movement." (Never mind that scientologists have been convicted for government infiltration both in the US and in Canada) He also claims that scientology is religious, and

that it has "rites" and "kind of religious services", and that the government should not define the concept of religion.

t) James R. Lewis
jim@ndh.org
Executive Director
Association of World Academics for Religious Education (AWARE)

Another AUM-paid tourist.

He wrote an article in issue #2 of the conspiracy publication Prevailing Winds Magazine <http://www.silcom.com/~patrick/JAPANwaco.htm> that promotes scurrilous conspiracy theories to explain the events. The date of the WWW page is 19.6.1996.

Another example of his "scholarship" (WP 9.5.1995):

"Lewis said it was "outrageous" that some children had been removed by police from an AUM dormitory, where they were housed apart from their parents. Lewis said he was not familiar with details of how the children were treated at the cult."

(That is scholarly work: making a statement before knowing the facts.
And here are the facts, from the same article:)

"The children of AUM members have said that they are permitted two meals a day and four hours of sleep per night. They said they never go to school, never get to contact friends or relatives who are not cult members, and are not permitted to play outside because the cult's leader says his enemies are attacking the group with poison gas."

James Lewis is also cooperating with the scientology-run Cult Awareness Network
<http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/JAPAN.html>

James Lewis has also written a descriptions of different cults, that is basically a whitewash:
<http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/GROUPS.html>

He is also is on their referral list
<http://www.cultawarenessnetwork.org/referrals.html>

The e-mail address of James Lewis <jim@ndh.org> is on the domain of the

MSIA cult.

6. What are the arguments of the cult apologists?

- a) Apostates turn to the anti-cult movement (ACM), which dismisses them of any responsibility, instead using unscientific "brainwashing" theories.

It is said that "apostates" shift the responsibility of their stay from themselves to the cult, which they falsely blame for their own shortcomings. This is nothing more than the "her skirt was too short" argument, and saying about a rape victim "she asked for it".

The "brainwashing" theories - actually, called "mind control", are actually very common sense, and explain how people are deceived. The phrase "mind control" is often defined differently, depending who is asked. The best is to see what methods are used to "persuade", and ask if these methods are fair.

The APA (American Psychological Association) does neither accept nor reject the theories of "mind control", although one paper by Singer et al was rejected as "lacking scientific merit and that the studies supporting its findings lacked methodological rigor". But that APA memo said also that "BSERP does not believe that we have sufficient information available to guide us in taking a position on this issue". (The Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility for Psychology (BSERP) was the board of APA that was evaluating this issue). Read also the Zablocki article, mentioned below in this document.

Anti-cult activists do not dismiss people of their responsibility. It is widely accepted that people in cults are often both victims and perpetrators at the same time. This is especially so for high-level former members.

b) There is an "anti-cult movement", the "ACM".

This is a rhetorical attempt to portray very different people and groups as being all the same, probably as a response to the members of the "ACM" using a common descriptive word ("cults") for different groups (e.g. by Singer, Hassan and Lifton). But note that "cults" means *several* groups, and "movement" means only one. That a common word ("cults") is used for different groups is because all these groups practice similar methods to succeed in "thought reform". This is *their*

choice to practice these methods.

(For more about Thought Reform, see "Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of 'Brainwashing' in China." by Robert Jay Lifton
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0807842532/thexenubookstore/>,
read excerpt at <http://www.xs4all.nl/~ahein/b07.html>)

Another rhetorical feat is to call anti-cult activists "anti-cultists", which is implying that these movements are cults by their own definition.

c) Members of the "ACM" only look at apostates, not at the satisfied members.

This may be true but has a good reason. Anti-cult groups look at harm. Looking at people who (really) had a good time is useless, since these people have not been hurt. One could as well accuse a doctor of only looking at people who are ill, or accuse the Better Business Bureau of only looking at consumers who have been defrauded. Also, they do not look just on isolated cases; rather, they research whether the alleged abuse is systematic, i.e., is it likely to happen again.

d) Methods used by cults are part of the practice of religion.

Imagine a guy in political science talking about torture in Latin-American countries, that while it may be unpopular with some, it is a legitimate method of influencing opinions. And the ones who protest are always those who actually disagree with the political opinions of the torturers, so they are not credible.

The truth is that most religions do not use any coercive tactics, or deceptive persuasion. Some religions do not even proselytize!

One big difference between cults and "harmless" groups is that cults attempt to change the personality of their followers into one designated target personality, usually similar to the one of their leader.

e) Waco/Jonestown wasn't a cult.

The argument (not by JGM here but by other cult apologists) goes like this: it wasn't a cult because they did commit mass suicide, and very few cults do commit suicide.

Of course, the definitions of a cult widely used (by Hassan/Singer/Lifton) have nothing to do with suicide, but rather how the cult and its followers interact.

Another argument for the same allegation is that the two groups were "officially" part of respected groups (Disciples of Christ / Seventh Day Adventists). This argument is also flawed, as such affiliations are in name and spirit only, there is no licensing and control mechanism as for a McDonald's franchise.

f) The "ACM" sees only the "atrocities tales" instead of gathering data with scientific methods.

This argument (coming from the Bromley/Shupe corner and gladly taken up by the rest of the cult apologist world) is that the stories of former members are "atrocities tales" and are not sober, realistic accounts but stories meant to present something out of the ordinary, and this is the reason why they are more successful in persuading the public that cults are dangerous.

Let's use the word "rape" instead of cult membership, and we get this: these raped women do not tell a sober, realistic account but they want to present something out of the ordinary, and this is the reason why they are more successful at criticizing something natural. The women do not present a representative picture. It is well known, and also admitted by the ARM (anti-rape movement), that only a fraction of raped women speak out. So an objective account about rape cannot be based on the minority that complains.

One day in 1998, a German cult apologist posted an off-topic message on a mailing list for "new religious movements" about Chinese Indonesian women being raped and killed, based on news reports. He had to be asked (without response) if there was any scientific evidence about it, or only anecdotal reports, that have no scientific value, i.e. where no scientific methods of gathering data was used? Has anything about the activities been printed in peer-reviewed journals? Has anyone been convicted? Has the Indonesian government been allowed to present its side of the story? None of these were researched, so by the logic of the cult apologists, these murder and rape stories should be ignored. Obviously, sources for these rape and murder allegations are people who do not tell a sober, realistic account, and did not mention the thousands of Chinese Indonesians who have *not* been raped or killed, who are perfectly happy to live there. So, it is a very distorted

picture.

A third example would be smoking. "Smoke apologists" would argue that doctors who warn against smoking only consider the few deaths in smoking, and paint all brands of cigarettes with the same brush. Members of the "anti-smoke movement" do not consider that many smokers are quite happy, and enjoy the advantages of smoking: concentrating better, keeping a low weight, hanging around with friends, feeling "cool". The experiences of those who die of lung cancer is not definitive - it is just anecdotal evidence, and just part of the overall evidence. And those who stop smoking and warn others (apostates!) about smoking do not understand the concept of sociological and anthropological study of smoking.

A fourth example of such logic would be to say that the work of Amnesty International is unscientific; after all, most people who work there did not graduate in political science, and also did not work together with the governments involved. Instead, they (AI) believe in one-sided allegations by disgruntled citizens in trouble with the law.

Sounds silly and stupid? Yes. But that is how cult apologists think, when a self-proclaimed "minority religion" complains about criticism.

g) We should use "new religious movement" (NRM) instead of "cult".

NRM means "new religious movement". Cult apologists prefer to use this word because it is not negative. One of the "scholars", J. Gordon Melton, even declared a "moratorium" (for whom?) on the word "cult".

This language is an excellent example of cult apologists declining to see anything negative about groups that hurt people, or to find a classification for such groups. It also means that criticized groups are religions, implying that people who criticize these groups are anti-religious.

The word "cult" is indeed negative and is not used lightly. And as for all negative words, the person/group being called a name disagrees. A minority religion where the leaders are honest and don't defraud people, don't destroy families etc, would simply be ... a minority religion. Just being weird or not Christian doesn't make it a cult. For example, the old Cult Awareness Network had this complex definition:

<box>

MARKS OF A DESTRUCTIVE CULT

Mind Control (undue influence): Manipulation by use of coercive persuasion or behavior modification techniques without informed consent.

Charismatic Leadership: Claiming divinity or special knowledge and demanding unquestioning obedience with power and privilege. Leadership may consist of one individual or a small core of leaders.

Deception: Recruiting and fundraising with hidden objectives and without full disclosure of the use of mind controlling techniques; use of front groups.

Exclusivity: Secretiveness or vagueness by followers regarding activities and beliefs.

Alienation: Separation from family, friends and society, a change in values and substitution of the cult as the new family; evidence of subtle or abrupt personality changes.

Exploitation: Can be financial, physical, or psychological; pressure to give money, to spend a great deal on courses or give excessively to special projects, or to engage in inappropriate sexual activities, even child abuse.

Totalitarian Worldview (we/they syndrome): Effecting dependence, promoting goals of the group over the individual and approving unethical behavior while claiming goodness.

</box>

7. Where are interesting papers by or about cult apologists?

In this chapter I have reviewed a few papers by or about cult apologists. You can read these reviews with or without the actual papers, which you can find in some university libraries if you are lucky, or sometimes through the authors.

Websites about cult apologists:

By Rick Ross:
<http://www.rickross.com/apologist.html>

By the (German) Dialogue Center:

<http://www.religio.de/dialog/496/496s4.html>

a) The Zablocki article

THE BLACKLISTING OF A CONCEPT: THE STRANGE HISTORY OF THE BRAINWASHING CONJECTURE IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION. Nova Religio, October 1997.

This is a more neutral view of the dispute, starts somewhat boring, but gets better and better. He argues that a majority within the discipline has acted with a fair degree of success to block attempts to give the concept of brainwashing a fair scientific trial. Footnote #29 is the infamous Hadden memo.

b) BRAINWASHED! SCHOLARS OF CULTS ACCUSE EACH OTHER OF BAD FAITH, in

Lingua Franca 12/98, by Charlotte Allen

<http://www.linguafranca.com/9812/allen.html>

Letters to the editor with cult apologists whining:

<http://www.linguafranca.com/9903/letters.html>

This excellent article examines the whole issue, especially the impact of the Zablocki article. It also mentions the infamous Hadden memo.

c) Debates about new religions in Russia

This paper was presented on a conference at Jagellonian University in March 1998 and is apparently unpublished. It was done by Marat Shterin, James Richardson and Eileen Barker. It seems that Shterin (a pupil of Eileen Barker) did the data gathering and typing while the others provided the footnotes, quoting the usual people.

The paper is a must-read for anti-cult activists because it is so full of "sour grapes". The authors display their sadness that the "anti-cult movement" has successfully influenced the media and the government.

Some claims are fantastic. For example, it claims that the negative image of these groups was created by the Western ACM (compare page 2 and page 9, where the paper denies its own allegation!). One could as well claim that in Russia the idea that "smoking causes cancer" is constructed by the Western "anti-smoking-movement"! The negative image of cults is created by the cults, not by the critics. They had the opportunity to come to Russia and be really honest, peaceful, good

citizens, etc. But no, they do exactly the same things that got them into trouble in the West.

Readers will appreciate page 4, where it is said

"The ACM has been adroit in handling the mass media".

This is of course good news, considering that cults and cult apologists have much more resources! And the reason is also given on page 5:

"The ACM became quite adroit at explaining its position concerning "cults" in a way that was understood by media representatives as well as the general public and public policy makers at all levels of the government".

This is an admission by cult apologists that nobody is "buying" their arguments. Page 14ff explains how a Russian inter-cult lobby lost a court case against a cult critic, and (what a crime!) disregarded the testimony of the cult apologists, and instead considered the testimony of anti-cult activists and relied on Western government reports.

d) Integrity and Suspicion in NRM Research.

This paper is by Prof. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi <RSPS707@UVM.HAIFA.AC.IL> of the University of Haifa, a revised version of a paper presented at the 1997 SSSR annual meeting. It is an article critical of colleagues who have crossed the line and are obviously no longer independent. While the paper does not bring new facts, it uses a simple language to express opinions that I also share. My favourite parts:

About Moonie paid conferences:

"At such conferences, academics from all over the world met to discuss what united them, most obviously the readiness to accept a free vacation, all expenses paid, from the Unification Church."

About the Hadden memo:

"What is striking in the clear sense in which the leading members of the NRM research network regarded NRMs as allies, not subject of study. It seems that the scholars were more eager than the NRMs to lead the fight for NRM legitimacy".

About apostates:

"Ever since the Jonestown tragedy, statements by ex-members turned out to be more accurate than those of apologists and NRM researchers. (...) In every case of NRM disasters over the past 50 years, starting with Krishna Venta, we encounter a hidden world of madness and exploitation in a totalitarian, psychotic, group, whose reality is actually worse than detractors' allegations."

The paper is unpublished but can be requested from the author. A summary is available at

<http://www.gospelcom.net/apologia/mainpages/WhatsNews/Beit-Hallahmi/Beit1.html>

e) "Atrocity Tales, the Unification Church, and the Social Construction of Evil", by Bromley, Shupe, Ventimiglia, Journal of Communication, Summer, 1979, p. 42-53.

There is no abstract, but a subtitle says:

"By evoking outrage at the alleged acts of a religious group, newspaper accounts of atrocities serve to validate "evil" and thereby legitimate social control".

From the title one can already see that the authors consider the "evil" not as "reported" by newspapers, but as "constructed". The authors analyzed 190 newspaper articles between 1974 and 1977. The sampling was done by the Unification Church(!). The authors classify the "atrocity tales" of these articles, making a difference between physical, psychological, economic, associative, political-legal and general-cultural. A subtitle says:

"The most frequently reported atrocity was the psychological violation of personal freedom and autonomy".

Other examples of abuse allegations are also described. They found a total of 709 "atrocities" (I prefer the word "abuse") in 188 articles of the 190. They do not consider it "important" whether these stories are true or false - they consider it "irrelevant". Newspapers are blamed for negative headlines (p. 46) like "Moonie experience not sunny". The authors do not offer a reason why a negative article should have a positive headline.

Page 49 contains a blatant error: "love-bombing" is explained as

"lobbying for South Korea".

The article then alleges that these "tales" contribute to "punitive" actions against the Unification Church, i.e. to "deprogram" members, by providing a sort of "excuse" (the atrocity tales) for something that would normally be illegal. (No difference between legal and illegal deprogrammings is made). Amusingly, the allegation that illegal operations are done, is itself an "atrocity tale" (*) by the standard of the authors, but the authors don't seem to "catch" this. The abuse allegations by the former moonies are not considered to be true - the authors even put the word "victim" in quotation marks on p. 49.

The authors allege - without explaining how - that the ones who have been "deprogrammed" are the "apostates", who will *< i>paint a caricature of the group which is shaped more by their current role than by actual experiences in the group</i>*. The "evidence" for this scurrilous allegation is one paragraph from a single newspaper article from 1975, in which a former member compares his former life to his current life. (Never mind that another paragraph of the same article is quoted earlier that focuses entirely on the life inside the cult).

People who allege abuse but simply walked away on their own without being "deprogrammed" are not mentioned in this article. I doubt that every of the 188 articles was about deprogrammed members and never about walk-away's.

To finish, I wonder if the authors live in a different universe. They have reviewed 709 cases of abuse (especially loss of personal freedom), have been able to show that many of these abuse allegations are similar, have described the abuse allegations on several pages of the article, but didn't bother to ask themselves if "maybe" there might be something wrong with such a "church".

This article was criticized by fellow cult apologist James T. Richardson in "Print Media Coverage of New Religious Movements: A Longitudinal Study" (Journal of Communication 38(3), 1998, pp. 37-61) on p.51:

- The definition of "atrocity tale" is broad and vague;
- Representativeness cannot be assessed because sampling was done by the Unification Church.

f) Anson Shupe, Jeffrey Hadden (1995): "Cops, News Copy, and Public Opinion". In the book by Wright, S.A. (Ed.), "Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict" (pp. 177-202). Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

The subtitle is "Legitimacy and the Social Construction of Evil in Waco". This suggests that "evil" in Waco was *constructed*, instead of "happening". David Koresh wasn't a sexual predator, murderer and cult leader; the media and other dark forces made him one. The authors state that <i>news, like all social reality, is socially constructed</i>.

While it is true that facts can be distorted by reporters, the goal of an honest journalist is to deliver accurate news instead of constructed stories. The news is not constructed; a presentation is. One should remark that none of the authors claim any experience in journalism.

The article states its goal is to <i>develop a conceptual model that is capable of objectively describing and analyzing both the accounts rendered by government agents and the story as it was reported by mass media</i> (p. 178). Not only is no such model presented, but the article also misses the goal of objectivity.

The article uses several pages to provide an academic background for something quite normal: different sources tell different narratives. To show this, the authors tell the Waco sequence of events as narratives from different people's perspective. This interesting technique comes from the Japanese movie "Rashomon"
<http://us.imdb.com/Title?Rashomon> by Akira Kurosawa, in which a crime is told by four different sources; the movie does not attempt to portray one narrative as more credible than another.

Life isn't a movie; in the real world one can "get to the facts" by evaluating evidence and cross-examining witnesses to "poke holes" into false narratives.

The problem is that in this book, none of the "narratives" was from the respective sources' point of view, rather *all* narratives are from the authors' point of view. The goal of providing the story from different perspectives is also missed, since the authors do not just make evaluations, but also often mix one narrative with details that clearly belong to another one.

For example, on page 194, in the "media narrative", the media is criticized for relying on the evidence given by former members, instead of relying on "academic scholars of religious movements". This part of the text would, at best, belong to the "anti-cult narrative". That narrative is similarly tainted by the opinions of the authors: they allege that the "ACM" pays "lip service" to the notion that not all movements are alike (in other words, the "ACM" does make distinctions, but the "scholarly" authors consider it to be PR), and although the

authors admit that the "ACM" is actually a "loose confederation" of organisations, they are called "monolithic". No explanation for the use of the word "confederation" is given.

On p. 195, Priscilla Coates, a CAN official, is quoted saying that nobody from CAN was consulted by the FBI/BATF. The book mentions a contradiction by one Nancy Ross and one Linda Green, saying that CAN was consulted. The report by Ross & Green is widely available on the internet, sadly thanks to myself because I posted it as an example of propaganda and it was copied on different websites, both pro and contra cults, e.g. http://www.lifeway.org/can_1.htm :

"When asked the same question by a reporter from the National Alliance, however, an FBI spokesperson answered in the affirmative."

So the report quotes an (unnamed) reporter from "National Alliance", who quotes an (unnamed) FBI spokesperson: with Ross and Green, we have now a "triple hearsay" and this hardly "academic" (or is it?). The authors have a good reason to not identify Ross & Green. Ross & Green is a PR firm (the authors claim it is a "legal firm") that works for the "National Alliance party", an organisation itself seen as a "political cult": <http://www3.l0pht.com/pub/blackcrwl/patriot/cults.txt> This actually belongs to another narrative.

The argument from the "media narrative" is then taken up again: the FBI has said that the FBI had consulted with "cult experts" - yet, none of the "academic social scientists who specialize in new religions" were invited to the "event"! Instead of seeing this as evidence that these social scientists aren't seen as cult experts at all, the FBI and the media is blamed for not relying on them, and instead, on the (actual) cult expert Rick Ross. More "we weren't invited at the party" sour grapes are displayed because the Fort Worth Star Telegram dared to publish a book relying on "ACM activists", including Rick Ross, instead of, for example, the authors of the article.

The footnotes are poorly done: there aren't any. There is only a bibliography at the end, without reference to what book is a source for what allegation.

At best, this chapter is an opinion piece; at worst, it is a piece of social fiction.

g) "The accidental expert", by James T. Richardson, published in

Nova Religio, October 1998, p. 31

The article has no abstract; if it had one, it would be "I didn't plan to become the great guy I am now, and why are these people against me?"

From the title, one might assume that an "accident", or "coincidence" happened that James Richardson became the "expert"; for example, that an anti-cult person had dropped an anvil on his head, so he decided to become an expert on cults. But no accident or coincidence is described in the article.

James T. Richardson "found out" that people participated in cults because they "wanted to", no method of deceptive or coercive influence is mentioned (he later contradicts himself by admitting, in the unrelated note#22, that "strong psychological pressure" is used). So his work was to debunk "brainwashing" because he felt this concept to be an attack on his discipline. Sadly for him, jurors weren't buying it in court. (p33)

His sadness went away only after the experts responsible for it weren't able to appear in court anymore (p.34). He says that this change was accomplished "only after considerable effort". What he does not mention, however, was that this effort included conspiring with the cults that they were assumed to study.

On p.35, he says that he speaks for all "NRM scholars" and says that they all believe that newer religions should be left alone unless it can be proved that they are harming others. However, he admitted in note#1 that he testified for a cult that had ruined the health of a person, for a cult that is known for having abused children (See note#10 on Kent's article in same publication), and for a case where groups, among them some *proven* to have hurt people, sued for libel.

His contradictions get "curiouser and curioser" in note#25, where he again speaks in the name of all and says that "this group of scholars would accept the idea that intervention would be justified". One wonders if Anson Shupe is part of "this group of scholars", since he succeeded in destroying the cult awareness network - the trial was about being involved in such an intervention. However, he does not want another "Waco". This scholar did obviously not yet notice that it was Koresh & co who did the murders and set the fire.

In the world of "scholars", a journal article is like a time-delayed usenet reponse. In note#3, he claims that Singer cashes \$350 per hour (without mentioning evidence for it), in note#4, he accuses Zablocki of

having misrepresented his work in the "blacklisting" article; however, Richardson is almost not mentioned at all, nor is his specific work debated there. Then he responds to the often-made allegations that "cult apologists do it for the \$\$", by telling us that he made no more than \$3000 and often works pro-bono. What he does not mention, however, are the cult sponsored conferences.

He does admit that there is one "scholar" (note #27) who depends on money for his work because he does not have an academic position. This mysterious person is sadly not mentioned by name.

On p.36 he concludes by saying that he is proud to have supported what he calls "social experimentation". Considering the people who have been hurt by the organisations he supports, I wonder if we should call the murders in the Balkan an example of "ethnic experimentation", or nazi germany a "political experimentation". For me, a "social experimentation" is rather something like "The Wave", or the "Zimbardo prison experiment", but certainly not organisations who work to alter the personality of their parishioners.

h) "Academic Compromise in the Social Scientific Study of Alternative Religions", By Stephen A. Kent and Theresa Krebs, published in Nova Religio, October 1998, p. 44. Similar articles appeared in "The Skeptic", and in "Berliner Dialog" 2/98. (The "Skeptic" article is the best)

<http://www.rickross.com/reference/apologist28.html>
<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/c25.html>

This short article analyzes several examples where "scholars" have made "studies" that were basically a whitewash of cults, and that the cults were so delighted with the results that they spread these "studies" themselves.

One blatant example is the Children of God, which had arranged "media homes" for the "scholars", where everything was staged, living conditions perfect, and members fully briefed.

The "media home" story, which was news to me, reminds me of "day one" at Jonestown, when Jim Jones had staged an event for Leo Ryan's group. The effort was initially successful: Leo Ryan was impressed how happy the people were. But later, people approached Ryan's group to ask them to get them out, and the next day, several people, including Ryan, were killed. The concept of a "media home" for the press is not new - the

nazis had "media camps" too, before WW2 broke out.

Another example of a cult-friendly study was ordered by the CUT, which had begun to be scrutinized for stockpiling arms. Two people involved in the "study" later made a "study of the study" which was highly critical.

The authors also mention Shupe helping to destroy CAN, and Melton supporting scientology's effort to keep its documents secret.

(The "Skeptic" article also details where Shupe got his "data" on CAN - from Rick Moxon, scientology attorney - and shows that Shupe had no knowledge about CAN)

J. Gordon Melton later "responded" to the similar "Skeptic" article on <http://www.cesnur.org/melton98.htm> - amusingly, he admits all accusations, and makes a pathetic attempt to allege "I did the right thing", and even claims at the end to be a critic of cults. He first calls the "media homes" a "fantasy" and then admits that they exist and that they are just one part of many "flavors" of homes the CoG have and that he and his colleagues are too smart to be fooled. What he does not explain, however, is why a media home was needed at all.

The next issue of "The Skeptic" (1/1999) has Melton's, Shupe's, and Lewis' answer, and the rebuttal by Kent. Shupe and Lewis do not really deal with the article but make attacks on Kent. The rebuttal by Kent deals with these attacks, and makes the three look even more foolish.

i) James T. Richardson (1995): Manufacturing Consent about Koresh
In the book by Wright, S.A. (Ed.), "Armageddon in Waco: Critical
Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict" (pp. 153-176).
Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

The subtitle is "A Structural Analysis of the Role of Media in the Waco Tragedy".

The author first mentions what he calls the "official" view, i.e. that David Koresh was a religious fanatic who was willing to die and take his followers with him, so he is to blame.

The author cannot accept this (I can!). His theory is instead that Koresh and his groups were victim of their bad reputation (p.155, italic segment), which was a cause for the activities of the authorities. This bad reputation has been created by an "anticultist ideology", which influences the media.

The author then goes on to spin a mass media conspiracy which influences everyday life. The media is run by corporate america, and their reporting is consistent within narrow bounds, once the media has decided how to report. An evidence for this is that many people have never met a "moonie", but they know of them and have a negative opinion. (Never mind that many people have also never met the president of the United States, but they do have an opinion on him)

I'd recommend to the author to read the Washington Post and the Washington Times for a few days. Maybe he will notice that the reporting is quite different.

He then blames the mass media for reporting about what he calls "cults stealing innocent children" (p.158). However, he does not blame cults for stealing innocent children, but blames various government agencies for having taken a critical attitude to this, and sees the freedom of religion at risk.

His next targets are AFF and CAN (p.159). They are guilty for making press releases that have very high credibility with the media; AFF is guilty for publishing a popular newsletter (*The Cult Observer*) and even a professional journal (*The Cultic Studies Journal*). CAN and AFF are also to blame for working closely with government, politicians, lawmakers, law enforcement agencies, and professionals. According to the author, AFF and CAN were highly visible in the media and were being listened to as experts. [read: the author wasn't invited to the "event"]

Next allegation is a link between anti-communism and "anti-cultism". The link presented is the brainwashing activities of Korea on US soldiers. Further "evidence" is presented in footnote 10 (p.168), this "evidence" is taking a sentence of another author, replacing "anticommunism" with "anticultism", printing it, and claiming that this is accurate. Although he blames the public for not having met a moonie, he neglects to mention that the moonies (until recently) have been anti-communists themselves. The author does also not present any evidence about where "anti-cultists" stand politically.

Additionally, the author says that the Davidians were dehumanized: the media did not present them as individuals with goals, hobbies, etc. If his wish became true, each news report would include texts like of a playboy centerfold:

"Samantha, 90-60-90 (that's 36-24-36 in inches!), cup B,
likes cats, bicycling, AK47 guns, David Koresh, solving

puzzles, dislikes cops, the cult awareness network, Rick Ross, CNN, Microsoft, men wearing white socks and cellular phones in restaurants"

Correct is of course that the public is not interested in reading the life stories of 50 different people regardless whether they are cult members or victims of a plane crash, nor are cult members expected to practice their personal hobbies on a regular basis, unless this hobby is the teaching of this cult leader.

Although the author blames the mass media conspiracy for the events, he then becomes an expect in law enforcement, and blames the FBI for preventing this same media from getting close to the Davidians, and controlling the communications of the media. I wonder if in the future, people who take hostages will also be allowed to issue press releases, have their own PR managers, all this while negotiating with the police.

On p.165 the author blames the BATF for making a "spacegoat" of media early on for having notified the cult about the impending raid. However, such notification is contrary to any law enforcement strategy, and it had a crucial influence on the events; had they not been notified, then they wouldn't be able to prepare and shoot the four agents.

On p.167 in his concluding comment, he finishes his 180° turn and attacks official reports who blame the media, although he blamed the media himself on p.156.

The footnotes are interesting as well, both for what is included and for what isn't. He takes a shot at the late Louis Jolyon West (p161) and accuses him of having done research for the CIA about mind control. However, no footnote is given that explains what this research was. Footnote 6 is libellous. He claims that Galen Kelly was found guilty of federal kidnapping in 1993 and was sentenced to 7 years. However, the conviction was overturned in 1994 due to foul play of the prosecution, one year before the book was published, and Kelly pleaded guilty to a lesser charge and got "time served", which was 16 months.

j) "Verfassungsfeindlich": Church, State and New Religions in Germany, By Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, in Nova Religio, April 1999, pp.208-227
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~nurelweb/papers/irving/Verfas.htm>

The abstract says: "This paper examines the ideology of the German anti-cult movement. It also discusses the unique problem facing the

German government resulting from right-wing extremism and the role of German cult experts in defining new religions as <i>verfassungsfeindlich</i>, hostile to the constitution."

Prof. Dr. Irving Hexham teaches Religious studies at the University of Calgary; Prof. Dr. Karla Poewe teaches Anthropology at the same place. They are a husband-and-wife team. He also runs the NUREL-L mailing list, on which I participated before he had enough and kicked out all non-academics.

The article begins by mentioning books by Bromley and Shupe as documentation on the anti-cult movement, and claims himself that most anti-cult writers fail to meet scientific standards: of course, this shows us already what low quality is to be expected on the next pages.

The authors claim that <i>verfassungsfeindlich</i> (hostile to the constitution) is the primary argument by the German anti-cult movement. No evidence is provided to support this argument (I would expect a survey among the many different groups critical of cults). My impression from the contact to such people is that <i>verfassungsfeindlich</i> is just one of many arguments; it is used mainly to justify observation by the <i>Verfassungsschutz</i>, or to prevent such people from being hired in state jobs; these two are just a narrow part of the cult discussion.

The authors criticize on p.212 that the government employs people whose work involves "minority religions", that it creates a "large government-funded bureaucracy" (of course no numbers are given to justify the word "large"), and that "its only justification is the assumption that new religions are dangerous" (of course no evidence is given that the government has *ever* made such a statement).

The authors mention scientology's booklet comparing anti-Jewish with anti-scientology cartoons; however, the authors do not mention that Scientologists were convicted for distributing this booklet, after a Jewish organization filed a criminal complaint. The authors ignore also that the usage of one image (the octopus) was upheld by two German courts, which quoted scientology literature as evidence of scientology's own aims.

On p.213, we finally find a pointer to the German constitution (footnote 27); however, it is an outdated version (although not in relation to the attempted argument), and no Internet page is given, although I mentioned it several times (<http://www.jura.uni-sb.de/law/GG/gg0.htm>) while I participated in NUREL-L. Later, in footnote 57, a different but also outdated source is given. I suspect that the authors do not want people

to get the data for themselves. The authors mention that "they" (most ordinary Germans, the German media, members of the German Government) claim that scientology is not a genuine religion. However, the authors "forget" to mention that this is not only a "popular" opinion, but has been decided in 1995 by the federal labor court (Decision of 22.3.1995, to be found at <http://home.t-online.de/home/Ingo.Heinemann/azb21-94.htm>), and that scientology did not appeal to the Supreme Court.

On pp.214 and 215 the authors waste space for a scurrilous theory: that spiritual movements before WW2 who opposed the nazis actually *furthered* nazi aims, by attacking the Weimar Republic and undermining democracy. Because of that, the authors call these religions "proto-nazi". It should be mentioned that one member of NUREL-L was Peter Kratz, whose career is to write scurrilous articles about conspiracies of "nazi sects" that exists till this day, accuses even left-wing politicians of being member of such groups, etc.. When I was on the list, his theories were admired by Hexham and Poewe, although Kratz publicly declined to provide requested evidence.

The authors associate the forced closure of one movement in 1965 ("Bund für Götterkenntnis") with the criticism of "new religions" - that all new religions are evaluated in terms of their relationship with the constitution (never mind that almost no one has ever heard of the movement mentioned above). From the way it is written, one might think that this is somehow bad. But what is a constitution worth if the people can't use as a measure for individual freedom?

(Besides, people told me that the closure was reversed by a later court decision)

Continuing in their legal expertise, the authors explain on p.216 that the anti-cult movement base their criticism on §20 (4): "All Germans shall have the right to resist any person seeking to abolish this constitutional order, should no other remedy be possible." This is the first time that I have ever heard this theory, and the authors omitted the segment ", should no other remedy be possible". Criticism of cults is simply based e.g. on §2 (1) ("Everyone has the right to the free development of his personality insofar as he does not violate the rights of others or offend against the constitutional order or the moral code"), §4 (Freedom of religion), §5 (Freedom of expression), §9 (Freedom of association). Had the authors done any research, they would know that §20 (4) is meant to be a "last resort" against a state that wants itself to take away the constitutional order.

The authors provide several rather disgusting quotes by L. Ron Hubbard,

which support the allegation that scientology is indeed "verfassungsfeindlich". Having shot themselves in the feet, they attempt to "unshoot" them by criticizing that German critics take the writings at face value and do not interpreting them. However, the authors fail to mention that Scientologists themselves are not allowed to <i>discuss</i> Scientology (see HCOPL 9.2.1979, HOW TO DEFEAT VERBAL TECH - "if it isn't written, it isn't true" and HCOPL 15.2.1979 VERBAL TECH PENALTIES "Any person found to be using verbal tech shall be subject to a court of ethics").

On p.218 the authors explain that the German critics claim that scientology "is simply a more durable and popular version of the type of new religion that caused havoc in the past". However, they had already stated on p.213 that the German critics do not consider scientology to be a religion at all! (the authors do of course also fail to provide the slightest evidence for the existence of the "similar new religion" allegation).

Later two "German anti-cult figures" are mentioned, Reverend Thomas Gadow and me (with my name incorrectly spelled), and tell that we "appear to be motivated by a deep sense of social concern and a strong desire to preserve democracy", and continue on p.219 explaining that the rhetoric of "the German anti-cult movement to discredit Scientology mirrors the rhetoric used by National Socialists Nazis to attack Jews", and this is said to be "clear and worrisome". Irving Hexham had twice the opportunity to meet me in Berlin (*), but didn't seize it - great example of scholarly behavior! Had he ever asked me about my motivation, I would have answered (and maybe I have even mentioned this to him before anyway) that my motive is simply "human rights". Democracy is just a small part of the human rights palette; freedom of the mind is another. The "similar rhetoric" argument is similar to the one saying that everyone with a German shepherd dog is a Nazi, since Hitler had such a dog. Besides, the rhetoric mentioned "Scientologists are said to threaten civil order by opposing liberalism and democracy" is supported by Scientology literature. Such rhetoric is part of free speech; the authors apparently haven't realized that critics of Scientology are entitled to it.

Another reason why the critics are said to be "wrong" is that "Hubbard is quite explicit in his rejection of racism". This allegation shows the lack of research: L. Ron Hubbard supported Apartheid (see at <http://wpxx02.toxi.uni-wuerzburg.de/~cowen/essays/apartheid.html>) and many other racist quotes are known, like this:

"The South African native is probably the one impossible person

to train in the entire world - he is probably impossible by any human standard."

(see also here <http://thingy.apana.org.au/~fun/scn/racism/>)

On p.219, the authors attack the German church-related cult investigators, claiming that these "marry the notion of totalitarianism with concepts of heresy", again without any evidence for this allegations. My own experience with these folks is that their arguments are amazingly "secular". On p.220, they continue this by blaming critics for citing court rulings that confirm that scientology is not a religion, in which cult investigators have given expert testimony - this is said to be a self-reinforcing process. However, the authors ignore that such a "circle" is pretty normal: if a court agrees with the opinion of an expert, it is quite natural that he and his colleagues will quote such a court decision. We see this done by the "other side" too: cult apologists successfully managed to influence the "Fishman" trial, and since then, they have gleefully quoted the court decision denying Margaret Singer the right to testify.

The authors had their own attempt to give "expert testimony"
<http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~nurelweb/germany/way.html> for a small cult (700 members only, description at
http://www.sensjs.berlin.de/familie/sektene/sektene_teil712.htm), see . The cult did of course lose the case. It is not difficult to see why, when reading the text: the quality of the two "expert testimonies" is so poor that one wouldn't notice that two university professors have written it.

The authors do see hope in some younger researchers, e.g. from the infamous REMID - but admit that most of these have neither a PhD nor are they Professors. In other words, these "researchers" aren't really scholars at all.

On p.222, the authors suggest that "new religions" should reject or "clarify" their founder's statements. Had the authors done a minimum of research, they would know that it is a "high crime" in scientology to "adding comments to checksheets or instructions labelling any material 'background' or 'not used now' or 'old' or any similar action" (HCOPL 17.6.1970)

The article is a shame for "Nova Religio", especially the parts where the authors fail to provide evidence for their allegations, since it shows the magazine has neither a peer review nor a fact checking worth to speak of.

(*) This has been done in 2001 :-)