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Moral Panics and Anti-Cult Terrorism in Western Europe

MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

Religious minorities in Western Europe today are often perceived as threatening. After Solar Temple suicides and homicides, parliamentary and other official commissions investigated the dangers of 'cults' or 'sects'. The article reviews reports published between 1996–1999 and argues that they may be classified into two categories. 'Type I' reports (more prevalent throughout French-speaking Europe) rely on anti-cult models and stereotypes, and may perpetuate moral panics by seeing all unfamiliar religious minorities as uniformly dangerous. 'Type II' reports, while still maintaining elements of the anti-cult models, appear to be more balanced and concentrate more attention on academic findings. 'Type I' reports, and anti-cult models in general, generated 'anti-cult terrorism' (an expression first used in one of the Swiss 'Type II' reports) in the form of both verbal and actual violence, with extremist groups acting as self-appointed anti-cult vigilantes. While there are actually and potentially dangerous religious minorities, anti-cult rhetoric in official documents may incite and provoke violence both *against* the assaulted movements and *by* the movements threatened. Law enforcement, the article concludes, should focus on the minority of violent religious and millenialist movements and the small extreme anti-cult fringes.

Sociological Background

The social construction of the role of religious minorities has important implications for law enforcement and for scholars of terrorism. Religious minorities in Europe today are more often perceived as a social problem than a social resource. Social scientists traditionally view a social problem as 'a condition which is defined by a considerable number of persons as a diversion from some social norm which they cherish'.[1] A larger and more recent scholarship suggests that, while social problems start from conditions open to empirical verification, they develop, are represented, constructed, or negotiated, in ways which are very complicated social processes.

In the 1970s, a concept of 'moral panic' was developed[2] to explain how some social problems become 'overconstructed' and generate exaggerated fears. Moral panics are problems characterized by a reaction, both in media representation and in political forums, out of all proportion to the actual threat. They are often based on folk statistics that, although not confirmed by scholarly studies, are passed on from media to media, and may ultimately inspire political measures. According to Philip Jenkins, 'the panic reaction

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does not occur because of any rational assessment of the scale of a particular menace'. Rather, it is 'a result of ill-defined fears that eventually find a dramatic and oversimplified focus in one incident or stereotype, which then provides a visible symbol for discussion and debate'.[3] Jenkins also emphasizes the role of 'moral entrepreneurs', who have vested interests in perpetuating these fears.

'Sects' and 'cults' have often been studied as quintessential targets of moral panics.

> Sects perform a convenient integrative function by providing a common enemy, a "dangerous outsider" against which the mainstream can unite and reassert its shared standards and beliefs. Depending on the legal and cultural environment of a given society, the tension between sects and mainstream community might result in active persecution or it can take the form of ostracism and negative stereotyping.[4]

Moral panics are never without some sort of objective basis. Nobody would seriously deny that some new religious movements have been consistently guilty of criminal activities, ranging from obvious cases of fraud to the horrors of the Solar Temple. But one must distinguish prevalence from existence. Most scholars of new religious movements would subscribe to the conclusion of the Swiss federal report on Scientology that 'the immense majority of these groups ['sects' or 'cults'] represents neither a danger to their members nor to the State'.[5] Only a very small minority of scholars, on the other hand, would agree with the French[6] or Belgian[7] parliamentary reports that listed dozens of groups – from Mormons to Quakers and Baha'is – as 'sects' or 'cults' as dangerous or potentially so. Occasionally individuals are listed as 'notorious cultists'.[8]

Moral panics start with a basis in reality, but escalate through exaggeration and folk statistics when comments appropriate to one or more particular incidents are generalized. This happened in the United States after Jonestown (1978) and is currently evident in Europe following the Solar Temple incidents (1994, 1995, and 1997). During the escalation of moral panics, moral entrepreneurs with vested interests enter the picture. They include a whole range of different anti-cult movements, and some of them currently receive an unprecedented degree of public support in several European countries.

'Type I' Official Reports on 'Sects' and Cults' in Western Europe

Some European parliamentary and other official reports, generated in the wake of the Solar Temple incidents, have adopted an interpretive model,

that offers a virtual guarantee of inflating, rather than deflating, moral panics. 'Type I' official documents include the French reports (1996 and 1999), the Belgian report (1997), large parts of the Canton of Geneva report (1997)[9] and certainly all that is known of the deliberations of the French Prime Minister's Observatory of Sects (1998) and of its successor, the Mission to Fight Against Sects (MILS)[10]. A four-stage interpretative model lies at the core of the Type I reports.

a. 'Cults or sects are not religions'

Firstly, the model indicates that some minority religious groups are not really 'religions' but something else: namely, 'cults' or 'sects' (i.e. something different from 'genuine' religions). Because religious liberty is recognized in Western Europe as a value and constitutionally safeguarded (including by international treaties and declarations), the only way to discriminate against a religious minority is to argue that it is not religious at all. Defining religions is an easy task. One may agree with sociologist Larry Greil that, from a certain point of view, 'religion' is 'not (...) a characteristic which inheres in certain phenomena, but (...) a cultural resource over which competing interest groups may vie. From this perspective, religion is not an entity but a claim made by certain groups and – in some cases – contested by others to the right of privileges associated in a given society with the religious label'.[11] Still legitimate debates on how to define religion are, at any rate, rather different from the quick dismissal of any unpopular religious minority as not 'really' religious.

b. Brainwashing and mind control

Secondly, the model posits that what distinguishes genuine religions from groups falsely claiming to be 'religious' is something called 'brainwashing', 'mental manipulation', or 'mind control'. Since religion is, by rhetorical definition, an exercise of free will, it is argued that a non-religion can only be joined under some sort of coercion. The hypnotic paradigm used against Mormonism and other groups by early 19th century counter-cultists resurfaced in the 1970s cult wars in the United States and elsewhere when the Cold War had conveniently supplied the metaphor of brainwashing. By the end of the 1980s, the first 'crude' theories of brainwashing had been largely debunked in the English-speaking debate.[12] 'New' brainwashing theories have recently been proposed by some authors. Although otherwise controversial, they do not claim to explain why people join certain movements (rather, they try to explain why groups may make it more difficult for members to leave by means of maximizing their exit costs). They also make no claim to have found a formula to distinguish 'genuine' religions from non-religions, such as 'sects' or 'cults'. 'Crude', old-

fashioned theories of brainwashing (with or without the use of the word 'brainwashing' itself), on the other hand, are used in Type I European official documents, and are part and parcel of the model.

c. 'Apostates'

Thirdly, because brainwashing theories are the object of considerable scholarly criticism, the model requires as a third step discrimination in terms of sources and narratives. The French and Belgian reports, however, make little, or no, use of scholarly sources. The Belgian report repeatedly states that it is aware of scholarly objections against the mind control model, but has made the 'ethical' choice of preferring the actual accounts of 'victims' to these objections. By 'victims', the Belgian Commission means those people normally defined by social scientists as 'apostates'. These are former members who have become active opponents. Although many resent being called 'apostates', the term is technical rather than derogatory, and has been used for some decades, as documented *inter alia* in a recent volume edited by David Bromley.[13] Although other terms may be used in the future, some such term will always be necessary if we are to distinguish between those who turn against their former groups and other ex-members who do not. Empirical evidence on the prevalence of apostates among former members is available only for a limited number of new religious movements, but uniformly suggests that they represent a minority, perhaps somewhere between 10 per cent and 20 per cent.[14] Most ex-members have mixed feelings about their former affiliations and, at any rate, are not interested in joining a crusade against the group they have left. 'Apostates' are an interesting minority, and no serious scholar would suggest that they should be ignored. The model, however, wrongly regards them as representatives of the total larger category of former members.

d. Anti-Cult Movements

Objections that 'apostates' are not necessarily representative are met by the fourth stage of the model. 'Cults' or 'sects', we are told, are not religions because they apply brainwashing techniques, whilst religions by their very nature are 'free', because people may join or leave them at will. We know that 'cults' and 'sects' use brainwashing because we have the testimonies of their 'victims' (i.e. 'apostates'). 'Apostates' are said to represent the groups' general membership, or at least their former general membership, because they are screened and selected by private and reliable watchdog organizations. One easy objection to the Belgian report (unlike its French counterpart, the proceedings have been published in full), is that for most 'cults' or 'sects' the Commission was only able to hear a very limited number of ex-members, and sometimes only one or two. Why they should

be regarded as representative of the larger category of ex-members as a whole, is not really explained. In the light of comments contained in the report itself, it is at least likely that in most cases Apostates were handpicked and introduced to the Commission by anti-cult organizations, whose role was both praised and supported by the report. Anti-cult organizations, are said to be more reliable than academics because the former, unlike the latter, have 'practical' experience on their side, and actually work with the 'victims'.

This four-stage model plays an important role in perpetuating the moral panic, and is apparently strictly adhered to in official documents and institutions throughout French-speaking Europe. It also pops up in other places.

'Type II' Reports

Scholarly criticism directed against Type I reports[15] seems to have exerted some influence in other countries. These countries have published what I propose to call 'Type II' official reports. Although different from each other, 'Type II' reports share a number of general features acknowledging that:

- It is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to define terms such as 'cults', 'sects' or 'religion', and it may not be the province of States to attempt such a definition.
- Although some new religious movements exert excessive psychological pressures on their members, there is no agreement among scholars on the definition of 'brainwashing' or 'mind control', and most scholars deny its very existence (at least in its common popular representation).
- Militant ex-members are not the only reliable source of information about groups that they have left. Those who report positive experiences should also be heard.
- Private anti-cult organizations may perform a legitimate function, but should not become the only source of information for governmental agencies.

We have, in fact, seen what I would call 'Type II' reports published in 1998 by the German Parliament,[16] the Italian Ministry of Home Affairs[17] (although this latter report was perhaps not originally intended for public consumption), the Swiss Canton of Ticino[18] and the Swedish Commission that investigated new religious movements,[19] and in 1999 by the Council of Europe[20] and the Commission on Management of the Swiss Parliament.[21] I would also include the general part on 'sects' of the Swiss report on Scientology[22] in the larger Type II category, and the Berger report[23]

presented to, but ultimately not adopted by, the European Parliament. Although these reports do not have the same emphasis (with the German report perhaps better seen as transitional between Type I and Type II), and are the subject of considerable debate, they do not apply the same model which inspired the Type I reports and concentrate more attention on academic findings.

One area in which Type II reports are still very uncertain is 'mind control' (see point b above). These reports seem to suggest that a real problem exists and that something should be done about it. Apparently, the radical criticism surrounding the brainwashing theories voiced by most (English-speaking) scholars, has not yet been appreciated even by Type II reports. Behind these labels, however, Type II reports often reveal a legitimate concern in terms of consumer protection. US-headquartered religious movements, operating mostly through the sale of seminars or courses for a fee, should perhaps consider how different consumer protection law and consciousness are in some European countries in comparison to the United States (where the same movements certainly had their share of legal problems).[24] On the other hand, applying consumer protection laws and ideas to spiritual consumers is a very difficult exercise indeed. We cannot require religions to prove the existence of the spiritual benefits they promise without encouraging gross discrimination (what if we should require Christianity to 'prove' the empirical reality of eternal salvation?). It is not unreasonable, however, to protect spiritual consumers, to some extent at least, by requesting religious movements to announce beforehand, and as clearly as possible, what will be required of prospective members and what financial obligations, if any, will be attached to their membership.

Deviance Amplification and Anti-Cult Terrorism

It is also important to recognize that violence may also erupt from organized opposition to new religious movements. Deviance amplification theories predict that a group publicly maligned in a moral panic environment may react by perpetuating and accentuating precisely those of its features publicly perceived as less desirable. On the other hand, Eileen Barker recently wondered whether we should not include in our definition of 'new religious movements': 'even the anti-cult movement – sections of it certainly exhibit several of the characteristics that "anti-cultists" themselves attribute to "cults"'.[25] In this respect, legitimate criticism of certain features of some movements should not be confused with hate campaigns, often conducted via the Internet.

The Swedish report lamented that 'in France the State has on the whole made common cause with the anti-cult movement', ignoring that 'the great

majority of members of the new religious movements derive positive experience from their membership'.[26] The Swiss Canton of Ticino Report, also of 1998, claimed that, while co-operating with anti-cult movements may occasionally be appropriate, governments 'should avoid becoming accomplices in the work of spreading generalized prejudices', or even in promoting an 'anti-cult terrorism'.[27] While in this Swiss document the expression 'anti-cult terrorism' was used metaphorically, acts of terrorism in the most strict sense of the word were perpetrated in France in 1996 and later. Premises of both the Unification Church and New Acropolis (a movement headquartered in Argentina) were bombed in Paris. Nobody has suggested that the largest anti-cult organizations were involved in the bombings. On the other hand, as noted by Usarski, the publication of inflammatory documents in Germany by private organizations sponsored by government and by the government itself, proclaiming that literally hundreds of cults are pure evil, and at war with society, is dangerous.[28] It may inadvertently create a background favourable to extreme (and occasionally violent) manifestations of discrimination and hate.

This danger is not purely theoretical in Europe, where the anti-cult fight has been picked up by fringe movements whose language and, occasional deeds were violent. At least four such movements may be identified. Firstly, an extreme form of anti-Catholic and anti-religious language exists in a somewhat lunatic fringe of the secular humanist movement in French-speaking Europe.[29] Secondly, a left-wing anti-globalization discourse sees cults, as well as transnational corporations, as agents of an evil design aimed at destroying Europe's socialist identity in the name of American free-market economy. Thirdly, the same anti-globalization discourse exists at the other end of the political spectrum, by right-wing groups. What we may call a European Identity Movement similarly attacks US-led globalization plans, regarding however the European identity as intrinsically spiritual and religious (rather than intrinsically socialist). Fourthly, some Islamic fundamentalist groups have also welcomed a violent anti-cult discourse, both as a tactical manoeuvre in order not to be involved in the anti-cult public repression, and because cults may target Moslems for proselytization. An example is the anti-cult activity of www.ummah.net, a London-based megasite associated with the fundamentalist Islamic Brotherhood Movement. Although ummah.net hosts a variety of Islamic organizations, most of them are strictly fundamentalist. Anti-cultism is encouraged because 'the agents of Shaytan (Satan) are many. Many efforts are put forth to mislead masses into darkness via Satanic philosophies, ideologies, and schisms brought forth to divide and keep humanity divided'.[30] Although ummah.net also hosts organizations that are not anti-Semitic, you can download from there[31] the infamous *Protocols of the*

Elders of Zion, with a caveat that they are 'currently being forced upon Western society', and a conclusion in red lettering: 'Now, you determine who is the real terrorist!'. Although very different from each other, these groups occasionally cross-fertilize. An exemplary case is the Italian magazine *Orion*, published since 1984 as 'an anti-globalist monthly (...) against the planetary homologation of the New World Order'.[32] It publishes both right-wing and left-wing anti-globalization tirades, promotes a 'national communism' as well as authors connected with Nazism and anti-semitism (such as Holocaust negationist Robert Faurisson).[33] *Orion* has been quite active in the anti-cult fight, seeing cults as one of the most dangerous agents of US-led globalization projects. Another interesting Italian case concerns a small political organization, *Forza Nuova*,[34] that participated to the elections for the European Parliament of 1999 in association with the controversial Southern League. The latter should not be confused with the larger Northern League, and is led by a former mayor of Taranto charged in June 1999 with racketeering and co-operation with organized crime. *Forza Nuova* calls for the promotion of a 'European identity' with extreme anti-American and anti-Jewish tones. Terrorism in Italy is attributed to covert operations of US and Israeli intelligence services. On May 15, 1999 *Forza Nuova* launched its electoral campaign in Milan with a conference on 'Lodges, lobbies, and cults' where it called for laws banning cults, freemasonry, and 'New Age anti-national forces'. Although it was able to enlist some respectable anti-cultists (including an anthropology professor associated with the mainline anti-cult movement in Italy), they had to share the podium with anti-Jewish activists and Holocaust negationists such as Jürgen Graf,[35] sentenced to 18 months of imprisonment in Switzerland in 1998 for racial discrimination. In turn, Graf is promoted by www.radioislam.org, the Stockholm-based Web site of Moroccan Islamic fundamentalist Ahmed Rami, well-known for his rabid anti-semitism and interest in 'cults' and 'brainwashing'.

In the present European political context, 'cults' and 'sects', especially those headquartered in the US, are at risk from the point of view of terrorism, when they are exposed as agents of a world globalization plan threatening national identities, led by the CIA, NATO, the UN or the US State Department. Both left-wing and right-wing extremists have targeted 'sects' and 'cults' among the agents of US-led globalization, together with Freemasons, Jews, multinational corporations, and professors of economics advocating free-market politics. On 20 May 1999 in Italy a group claiming to represent a new generation of the 1970s 'Red Brigades' assassinated a (left-wing) scholar of economics on the accusation of his being an agent of globalization. One could not help but notice how similar the language of the 28-page manifesto of these new Red Brigades was to earlier tirades accusing

'sects' and 'cults' of being agents of Americanization and up to no good. Similarities include the idea that globalization is not a process but a conspiracy; that it is guided by a hidden hand in the United States; that it is aimed at destroying national identities and cultures; and that a variety of US businesses and organizations have joined the conspiracy as agents of globalization. There are important differences, too. Nobody could seriously accuse mainline anti-cultists of colluding with terrorists. As far as the extreme fringe of anti-cultism is concerned, its violence remains, more often than not, at the verbal stage (raising questions about the relationship between physical and non-physical violence). However, reading in France that the Church of Scientology and McDonalds are both agents of an anti-European American infiltration network – no matter how well-intentioned the authors of these tirades may be – offers no reassurance to those of us who remember Mormon missionaries being targeted (and occasionally killed) by left-wing terrorist groups in Peru, Bolivia and other Latin American countries.

It is in this context, then, that Type II reports – even without their being entirely satisfactory when examined from the point of view of religious liberty – represent a step in the right direction when compared with Type I reports, and prove that cooler tempers may ultimately prevail. On the other hand, the fact that official bodies in some countries, particularly France, keep publishing hit lists of 'cults' and 'cultists' raises important general questions. Governments may carry a heavy responsibility in generating violence both against and by assaulted minorities. The extreme discourse of the most lunatic anti-cult fringe may claim legitimation by the similar rhetoric used in French or Belgian official documents. Violence, as Sprinzak comments, 'does not just originate from *below*, from individuals who do not respect the law. Governments and government agencies are responsible for the generation of large amounts of violence'. 'The deeper the sense of delegitimation' experienced by a minority 'vis-a-vis the government or another political rival, the higher its readiness to use physical force against the perceived foe. Intense delegitimation has in fact a double effect on the likelihood of violence. Not only does it increase the chances of violence against the object of delegitimation, but that object, sensing the imminent threat, is likely to consider counter-violence'.[36] In other words, and even apart from such deviance amplification scenarios, political and religious 'violence is not a product of inherently violent people but of social and political circumstances'.[37]

Why the Moral Panics?

Why have moral panics about religious minorities become more frequent in recent years in Western Europe? The Solar Temple incidents, horrible though they were, were a catalyst rather than a cause.

General accounts of post-modernization normally include a discussion of the emergence of a critical attitude against rationalization, rationalism, and the modern concept of science. Although we are frequently warned against regarding post-modernization as simply 'irrational', the crisis of modern rationalism opens the way to a new attitude towards the sacred. This attitude does not necessarily revitalize mainline religion, because the latter has often had to adjust itself to rationalization and modernity. 'Irrational' post-modern religion occurring mostly outside the mainline churches (and sometimes within them, albeit in the form of new movements) has been called 'new religiosity', or 'new religious consciousness'. Not everybody is happy with the post-modernization processes. Institutions exist to protect the core values of modernity. Almost everywhere, 'official' science warns against 'pseudo-science'. 'Mainline' religion, having accommodated itself to modernity, exposes the dangers of 'new' and 'bizarre' religious movements. While in other countries organized secular humanism is reduced to a small phenomenon, in French-speaking countries the century-old revolutionary heritage of '*laïcité*' is taken very seriously. In the French Observatory and MILS documents, we are told that secular values are threatened by 'cultic' ideas. In fact, in its first (and last) annual report the French Observatory quoted as potentially dangerous both the New Age and the activities of American evangelists in France.[38] 'Sects' and 'cults' are easily singled out as agents of irrationality. Moral panics about religious minorities may thus be seen, particularly in French-speaking and German-speaking countries, as a form of reaction against post-modern religion. This reaction stems from (a) secular humanism, institutionalized as '*laïcité*' throughout French-speaking Europe; and (b) mainline religions, feeling threatened (particularly in Germany[39]) by what they perceive as an 'explosion' of fringe religions. (A rather incorrect perception, since new religious movements have, in fact, gathered to their fold only around 1 per cent of the total population in Western Europe, the real competition for mainline churches emanating from non-institutionalized religion, or 'believing without belonging'[40]).

From the point of view of religious liberty, opposition to post-modern religion through legal means (as opposed to cultural campaigns, or renewed evangelism by the mainline churches) is clearly illegitimate. State-imposed secularism is no more acceptable than State-imposed religion. What is legitimate, on the other hand, is an assessment of the potential risks of violence emanating from a small segment of post-modern religion. While moral entrepreneurs focus on large (and largely law-abiding) religious movements, law enforcement agencies seem more interested (and rightly so) in identifying the kind of post-modern religion, particularly in the area of 'catastrophic millennialism',[41] which may actually provoke violence.[42]

The comparative study of groups that 'went wrong', such as the Solar Temple, Aum Shinrikyo[43] or Heaven's Gate, is a promising area. Developing scholarship in this field shows, first of all, that certain comparatively small groups living in seclusion from the larger society around them, are more likely to be candidates for violence. And, secondly, that groups do not 'go wrong' alone. Their ideas are provocative which is why dealing with these groups is so delicate. It is, at any rate, on these small, reclusive (and occasionally well armed) groups that a study of potentially dangerous new religious movements should focus. Potentially dangerous anti-cult fringes (not to be confused with the larger and largely law-abiding community of cult critics) should also be investigated. This may be part of a normal process whereby societies learn to identify and assess in a more realistic way the objective conditions at the roots of moral panic. Thus, real evils will be confronted on the basis of what they are, and lunatic fringes exposing imaginary evils will slowly but surely be marginalized, as they rightly deserve to be.

NOTES

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2. See Philip Jenkins, *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1988).
3. Philip Jenkins, *Pedophiles and Priests: Anatomy of a Contemporary Crisis* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996) p.170.
4. Jenkins (note 3) p.158.
5. Département Fédéral de Justice et de Police, *La Scientologie en Suisse. Rapport préparé à l'intention de la Commission Consultative en matière de protection de l'État* (Bern: Département Fédéral de Justice et de Police 1998) pp.132–33.
6. Assemblée Nationale, *Les Sectes en France. Rapport fait au nom de la Commission d'Enquête sur les sectes (document n. 2468)* (Paris: Les Documents d'Information de l'Assemblée Nationale 1996); Assemblée Nationale, *Rapport fait au nom de la Commission d'Enquête sur la situation financière, patrimoniale et fiscale des sectes, ainsi que sur leurs activités économiques et leurs relations avec les milieux économiques et financiers (document n. 1687)* (Paris: Les Documents d'Information de l'Assemblée Nationale 1999).
7. Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, *Enquête parlementaire visant à élaborer une politique en vue de lutter contre les pratiques illégales des sectes et les dangers qu'elles représentent pour la société et pour les personnes, particulièrement les mineurs d'âge. Rapport fait au nom de la Commission d'Enquête*, 2 voll. (Bruxelles: Chambre des Représentants de Belgique 1997).
8. This is particularly the case in the 1999 French report (note 6).
9. *Audit sur les dérives sectaires. Rapport du groupe d'experts genevois au Département de la Justice et Police et des Transports du Canton de Genève* (Geneva: Editions Suzanne Hurter 1997).
10. Observatoire Interministériel sur les Sectes, *Rapport annuel 1997* (Paris: La Documentation Française 1998); Mission Interministérielle de Lutte contre les Sectes, *Rapport (Janvier 2000)* (Paris: Mission Interministérielle de Lutte contre les Sectes, 2000).
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'Religion as Claim: Social and Legal Controversies', in Jan G. Platvoet and Arie L. Molendijk (eds.), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion: Contexts, Concepts and Contests* (Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill 1999) pp.41–72.

12. See James T. Richardson, 'A Social Psychological Critique of "Brainwashing" Claims about Recruitment to New Religions', in David G. Bromley and Jeffrey K. Hadden (eds.), *The Handbook of Cults and Sects in America* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press 1993) pp.75–97; James T. Richardson, 'Sociology and the New Religions: "Brainwashing", the Courts, and Religious Freedom', in Pamela J. Jenkins and Steve Kroll-Smith (eds.), *Witnessing for Sociology: Sociologists in Court* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger 1996) pp.115–134; Dick L. Anthony, 'Brainwashing and Totalitarian Influence: An Exploration of Admissibility Criteria for Testimony in Brainwashing Trials', Ph.D. Diss. (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union 1996).
13. David G. Bromley (ed.), *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements* (Westport, CT: Praeger 1998).
14. See Trudy Solomon, 'Integrating the Moonie Experience: A Survey of Ex-Members of the Unification Church', in Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony (eds.), *In Gods We Trust: New Patterns of Religious Pluralism in America* (Princeton: Rutgers University Press 1981) pp.275–294; James R. Lewis, 'Reconstructing the "Cult" Experience', *Sociological Analysis* 47/2 (1986) pp.151–159; James R. Lewis, 'Apostates and the Legitimation of Repression: Some Historical and Empirical Perspectives on the Cult Controversy', *Sociological Analysis* 49/4 (1989) pp.386–396; and my own 'Defectors, Ordinary Leave-takers, and Apostates: A Quantitative Study of Former Members of New Acropolis in France', *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 3/1 (Oct. 1999) pp.83–99.
15. See, for scholarly criticism of the first French report, Massimo Introvigne and J. Gordon Melton (eds.), *Pour en finir avec les sectes. Le débat sur le rapport de la commission parlementaire*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Dervy 1996).
16. Deutscher Bundestag – 13. Wahlperiode, *Endbericht der Enquete-Kommission 'Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen'* (Bonn: Deutscher Bundestag 1998).
17. Ministero dell'Interno, Dipartimento della Pubblica Sicurezza – Direzione Centrale Polizia di Prevenzione, *Sette religiose e nuovi movimenti magici in Italia* (Rome: Ministero dell'Interno 1998).
18. Dipartimento delle Istituzioni, Repubblica e Cantone del Ticino, *Interrogazioni sulle sette religiose* (Bellinzona: Dipartimento delle Istituzioni, Repubblica e Cantone del Ticino 1998).
19. *In Good Faith. Society and the New Religious Movements* [Official English-language Summary, Report of the Swedish Commission] (Stockholm: Norstedts Tryckeri AB 1998).
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22. Département Fédéral de Justice et de Police (note 5).
23. European Parliament, Committee on Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs, *Draft Resolution on Cults in the European Union* (Brussels – Strasbourg: European Parliament 1997).
24. See James T. Richardson, 'Legal Status of Minority Religions in the United States', *Social Compass* 42/2 (1995) pp.249–264.
25. Eileen Barker, 'New Religious Movements: Their Incidence and Significance', in Bryan Wilson and Jamie Cresswell (eds.), *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response* (London and New York: Routledge 1999) pp.15–31.
26. *In Good Faith* (note 19) p. 2.
27. Dipartimento delle Istituzioni (note 18) pp.17 and 39.
28. Frank Usarski, 'The Response to New Religious Movements in East Germany after Reunification', in Wilson and Cresswell (note 25) pp.237–254.
29. See, for a controversial account, François David, *Les Réseaux de l'anticléricalisme en France* (Chartres: Bartillat 1997).
30. See http://www.ummah.net/moa-on-line/conspiracies. ummah.net also mirrors one of the extreme anti-cult sites, the Italian kelebekler.com, mostly devoted to personally assault

scholars labeled as 'cult apologists', yet another form of anti-cult violence via the Internet.

31. http://www.ummah.net/moa-on-line/conspiracies/zionism.html.
32. See its Web site at http://space.tin.it/lettura/vileonar/orion.html.
33. *Orion*, as a number of similar publications, also does not very much care for copyright. It reproduced an interview with Swiss scholar Jean-François Mayer from a Belgian magazine without his (or the Belgian magazine's) knowledge or permission (Jean-François Mayer, personal communication, June 1999).
34. See its Web site: http://www.forzanuova.org.
35. Information on the conference appeared on *Forza Nuova*'s Web site (note 34).
36. Ehud Sprinzak, *Brother against Brother: Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination* (New York: The Free Press 1999) pp.311–312.
37. Sprinzak (note 36) p.317.
38. Observatoire Interministériel sur les Sectes (note 10).
39. See Usarski (note 28), and Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, '"Verfassungsfeindlich": Church, State, and New Religions in Germany', *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 2/2 (April 1999) pp.208–227.
40. See Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell 1994).
41. See, on the notion of 'catastrophic millennialism', Catherine Wessinger, 'Millennialism With and Without the Mayhem', in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (eds.), *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem* (New York and London: Routledge 1997) pp.47–59; Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (New York: Seven Bridges Press 2000).
42. This is the focus of the FBI's document *Project Megiddo* (Washington D.C.: FBI Domestic Terrorism Analysis Unit 1999).
43. On Aum Shinrikyo as a terrorist 'cult' see Robert Jay Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save It: Aum Shinrikyo, Apocalyptic Violence and the New Global Terrorism* (New York: Metropolitan Books – Henry Holt and Company 1999). Although Lifton moves from a quite standard (anti-cult) definition of 'cult', later in the book he usefully introduces a new category of 'world-destroying cults', applied only to those 'cults' that systematically engage in extreme violence. For a different assessment of Aum Shinrikyo, based on a more detailed analysis of Japanese-language sources, see Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo* (London: Curzon Press, and Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 2000).