

News from Info-Cult

No. 34, March 2016

Dealing with Cults: Question of Balance

In this Issue

Dealing with Cults: Question of Balance

Education

Info-Cult staff and members

ICSA International Conference 2016

Website Updates

New acquisitions

Email Information Lists



DONATE NOW

The recent attempt to pass a law in Israel¹ dealing with cults and a forthcoming bill to curb sects in Russia² reminds us of a response to an editorial in La Presse³ newspaper that Info-Cult's Executive Director wrote in **2000**.

Info-Cult has been helping individuals who have been affected by cultic phenomena, and informing the public about this issue, for over 35 years. During this time, there have been numerous tragedies involving extreme and marginal groups where people have committed suicide or were killed. There have also been occurrences of fraud, and physical and sexual abuse of members of several groups. Media reporting of these dramatic cult-related events has often sparked a public outcry for something to be done to deal with those groups. The call for government intervention is frequent, with some advocating for drafting new laws geared towards controlling or outlawing groups from abusing their members and impacting on society at large. This is understandable in light of the countless families who have had to painfully endure the impact of a loved one being harmed.

We believe that governments have a role to play, albeit not simply embracing the implementation of new laws. The following text, written 16 years ago, and in our view, still relevant today, suggests specific ways in which governments can be effective in dealing with cultic phenomena.

...continued on page 2

Education

Talks, media and conferences of Info-Cult staff and members

Info-cult staff and members are often invited to speak or are involved in organizing conferences. Here are some events:

- June 30 – July 2, 2016 - *Identity and the Cultic Experience: About Changes, Transformations and Consolidation*, **Dianne Casoni (Psychologist, Psychoanalyst, Professor, University of Montreal and Info-Cult Board member)** International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) annual conference – Dallas, Texas – <http://www.icsahome.com/events/conferenceannual>
- April 16, 2016 – **Panel on Policy Implications**, Mike Kropveld (Info-Cult Founder and Executive Director) Moderator, the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) conference [Cults and Sex Trafficking](#). He assisted in the organizing of this conference, Los Angeles, CA.
- April 14, 2016 **Le châtime nt corporel des enfants. Des points de vue des protestants conservateurs québécois francophones** Adriana Pacheco (Info-Cult Member) conference, **The Best Interest of the Child: at the intersection of Law and Religion**, Université de Sherbrooke, Longueuil campus

...continued on page 3

Dealing with Cults: Question of Balance: Response to La Presse Editorial by Mike Kropveld November 17, 2000 [4](#)

(continued from Page 1)

Pierre Gravel's editorial, "Sectes: l'information avant les lois" which appeared on Sunday October 29, 2000, in La Presse raises a number of important points.



Mike Kropveld
Info-Cult Founder
During an interview

M. Gravel mentions France's initiative to give the government the right to disband groups and to consider mind manipulation (*manipulation mentale*) as an offence. He indicates that such an initiative would be difficult to accomplish in Canada because of the Charters of Rights and Freedoms. Instead of new laws, he states that public support should be given to organizations that provide information that will enable people to make informed choices.

Info-Cult has been doing this throughout Quebec for the past 20 years. We agree with Mr. Gravel's idea of limiting the government's power to legislate in this area. Existing laws are sufficient in dealing with the multiple problems associated with cults and cultic groups. There are laws in place to deal with fraud, physical and sexual abuse etc. What is lacking, however, is a political willingness on the part of those responsible to pursue cases involving "cults" when they occur. This means that they must be informed about the cult issue so as to aid those who are in distress or who have complaints. Creating new laws is not the answer.

To begin with, the "cult" phenomena begs to be examined more closely in all its nuanced complexities. In recent years, whenever the word "cult" is used to describe a group, images of death and destruction, like those associated most often come to mind. It is these gruesome and tragic acts that reinforce the public's perception of cults as with the Branch Davidians in Waco, Aum Shinri Kyo in Japan, and the Order of The Solar Temple in Quebec, m being dangerous. This leads people to look to the government to resolve the problem.

Pierre Gravel points out that Quebec has had its share of cult-related incidents, using as examples the Solar Temple, the disciples of Roch "Moise" Theriault and the Apostles of Infinite Love. But, it is important to realize that these events represent a very small percentage of the landscape of movements. The majority of new groups, even those that may be considered cults, are not potential tragedies waiting to happen; neither will every person involved in such a group be harmed. Every year there are new groups that form - religious, spiritual, educational, therapeutic, human potential, occult etc. A number of them may, at first glance, appear bizarre because their beliefs or lifestyles are different from the norm. This does not necessarily mean that the group is a "cult" and constitutes a threat to its members or others. The issue is not a group's belief, but rather its actions and conduct. Does the group harm individuals, physically or psychologically? Do they pose a threat to society? If the response to these questions is in the affirmative, the government can and should intervene.

In responding, one of the important challenges facing democratic government bodies is that fine line between implementing Draconian measures which would infringe on individual freedoms, and doing nothing.

Information, as M. Gravel states is one remedy open to a democracy. We strongly support the idea of making information about "cults" available to the public, as well as implementing educational programs about this issue.

Education

As early as 1980, a 780-page government report, entitled "The Study of Mind Development Groups, Sects and Cults in Ontario", highlighted the need for information and public education.

These recommendations have been echoed by our own provincial government representatives, professional organizations and others, here in Quebec. Other countries have produced similar reports. With such a broad consensus regarding the need for information and education, what has been the stumbling block toward providing such a service to the public?

Government agencies can play a more active role and consult with groups and individuals already providing this much needed public service. The government could also serve as a catalyst in:

- providing adequate professional mental health services to "cult" members, former members, and their families,
- providing funding for research to study the impact of "cults" in Quebec,
- encouraging public debates and discussions on the cult phenomena.

By taking these important preventative measures, unnecessary tragedies and abuse in all its forms, might be prevented or significantly limited. The time has come to address the concerns raised by the actions of "cults" and to respond in a democratic fashion respecting the rights and needs of everyone.

¹ MKs bid to tackle 'harmful cults' that ensnare 20,000 Israelis. But it's not so simple
<http://www.timesofisrael.com/will-israels-first-anti-cult-legislation-harm-religious-freedom/>

² Duma launches work on bill to target & curb divisive sects
<https://www.rt.com/politics/332974-duma-launches-work-on-bill/>

³ Editorial by Pierre Gravel, La Presse, October 29, 2000
<http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/secte.htm>

⁴ <http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/RESPONSE.htm>

Talks, media and conferences of Info-Cult staff and members

(continued from page 1)

Info-cult staff and members are often invited to speak or are involved in organizing conferences. Here are some recent past events:

- March 17 & 18 2016 - **Religions minoritaires et médias au Canada**, Presidence: Mike Kropveld, (Executive Director, Info-Cult) « **Nouveaux mouvements religieux, minorités et médias** » Conference, Université de Montréal
- March 5 & 6 2016 - « **Comment entre-t-on dans un groupe extrémiste et comment en sort-on ? Réflexions depuis une perspective psycho-criminologique** » Dianne Casoni (Psychologist and Psychanalist- Professor, École de criminologie, Université de Montréal, member of Info-Cult board) **Penser l'Islam des jeunes d'aujourd'hui entre quête spirituelle et géopolitique**, Conference, Université du Québec À Montréal (UQAM)
- March 1, 2016 - **The link between ISIS and pimps**, Mike Kropveld, – **CTV News Montreal** -The issue being addressed in this video clip is a complex one and not easily addressed in a few minutes. We must not forget that when anyone falls prey to a pimp, a cult, a gang or an extremist group bent on violence, the impact is enormous and devastating for families, in particular, and the larger society in general. Policy makers' primary responsibility before all else, is to do everything they can to ensure the safety and security of their citizens. They must not only respond to these groups, but also make every effort to prevent them from fermenting violence that tears apart the very fabric of a democratic, civilized society. Interview can be viewed [here](http://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=819531&playlistId=1.2803350&binId=1.810401&playlistPageNum=1&binPageNum=1#_gus&gucid=&gup=Facebook&gsc=mB1GLzZ):
http://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=819531&playlistId=1.2803350&binId=1.810401&playlistPageNum=1&binPageNum=1#_gus&gucid=&gup=Facebook&gsc=mB1GLzZ

Education

2016 Annual International ICSA Conference, Dallas, United States, June 30-July 2 (Pre-Conference workshops June 29th).

The [International Cultic Studies Association](#) (ICSA) is conducting its 2016 Annual International Conference with [Info-Secte/Info-Cult](#) of Montreal.

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

Call For Posters: <http://www.icsahome.com/events/callforposters>

To **register for the conference, and other information** such as the program, hotel reservations, etc...:

<http://www.icsahome.com/events/conferenceannual>



*International ICSA
Conference 2016
Dallas, Texas*

Info-Cult's Web Site

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

Governmental Reports

This page <http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ic-gov.html> provides a range of government studies and reports, legal decisions and other documents from 19 countries and the Council of Europe.

Publications and Documents by Info-Cult and Colleagues

Recent additions are available in their entirety at:
<http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ICPubs.html>

Bookmark our site: www.infocult.org and keep up to date

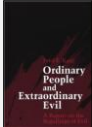
New Acquisitions:

The combined list which includes the library acquisitions since 1999 can be found here:
<http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ic-selacq.html>.

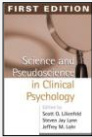
If you would like to know about the rest of our collection (journals, newsletters, file, videos, etc...) please contact us. Additional information on these acquisitions can be found on our web site at:
www.infosecte.org See: Info-Cult's Library Collection.

New Acquisitions, March 2016

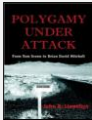
BOOKS



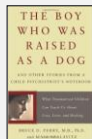
Katz, Fred E.
[*Ordinary People and Extraordinary Evil: a Report on the Beguiling of Evil*](#)
 State University of New York Press
 C1993, Albany



Lilienfeld, Scott O., Steven Jay Lynn & Jeffrey M. Lohr, Editors
[*Science and Pseudoscience in Clinical Psychology*](#)
 The Guilford Press
 C2003, New York



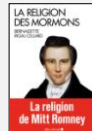
Llewellyn, John R.
[*Polygamy Under Attack: From Tom Green to Brian David Mitchell*](#)
 Agreka Books
 C2004



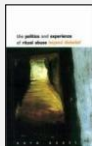
Perry, Bruce D. & Maia Szalavitz,
[*The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog and Other Stories from A Child Psychiatrist's Notebook*](#)
 Basic Books
 C2006, New York



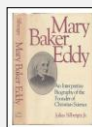
Reiss, Steven
[*The 16 Strivings for God: The New Psychology of Religious Experiences*](#)
 Mercer University Press
 C2015, Macon



Rigal-Cellard, Bernadette
[*La religion des Mormons*](#)
 Albin Michel
 C2012, Paris



Scott, Sara
[*The Politics and Experience of ritual abuse: beyond disbelief*](#)
 Open University Press
 C2001, Buckingham



Silberger, Julius Jr.
[*Mary Baker Eddy: An Interpretive Biography of the Founder of Christian Science*](#)
 Little, Brown and Company
 C1980, Boston, Toronto



Stevenson, Jeff C.
[*Fortney Road: Life, Death, and Deception in a Christian Cult*](#)
 Freethought House
 C2015 Minneapolis-St. Paul

THÈSE/THESIS

Kendall, Lois
[*A Psychological Exploration into the Effects of Former Membership of 'Extremist Authoritarian Sects'*](#)
 (Two Volumes)
 A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Buckingham Chilterns University College, Brunel University
 May 2006

Info-Cult on Facebook



Find us on Facebook at:

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



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

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

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



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



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

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

DONATE NOW

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

Online at:



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

Or by:

PayPal

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

Or by mail to

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

Donations to Info-Cult are tax deductible and are greatly appreciated.