



THE CULT PHENOMENON HOW GROUPS FUNCTION

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*Relations  
avec les citoyens  
et Immigration*

Québec 



Patrimoine  
canadien Canadian  
Heritage

Canada 

This book was made possible through the financial support of the Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration. However, the opinions expressed herein are those of the authors. The translation from the French version (*Le phénomène des sectes: L'étude du fonctionnement des groupes* ©2003) into English was made possible through the financial support of Canadian Heritage.

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ISBN: 2-9808258-1-6

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## Preface

Cult... A word, that is sometimes considered to imply a group that is strange and bizarre and that brainwashes its members and is prone to violence. But, what, in fact, is a cult? A cult can be defined as a group having: great devotion to a person, idea, object, movement, or work.<sup>1</sup>

To understand how “cults” operate, like other groups that people encounter in their everyday life, Info-Cult has published this book on groups, their functioning, and the problems that can arise among members as they interact.

For a long time, Info-Cult wanted to produce a text that could be accessed via the Internet. Conceptualizing, researching and completing this project in French and then in English was a five years endeavor. This book was made possible thanks to the financial support of the Québec Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration \*, and Info-Cult is grateful to the Ministère for its contribution.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Canadian Heritage for their financial support which covered part of the costs of translating this book into English. Their support has made this publication possible. We first published the French version of this book in December 2003. While going through the process of translating a decision was made to update and revise certain parts of the English version.

To produce an informative text that accurately conveys the reality of groups in a democratic society like Québec, it was necessary to enlist the cooperation of a number of people familiar with “cultic” groups. Info-Cult would like to thank those who shared their experiences and their thoughts on the presence of these groups in our society. They include Guy De Grandpré and Michael Crelinsten. We would like to especially thank Michael Langone for his valuable advice and comments in both the English and French versions.

The form and content of this text have changed many times since the project's first hesitant steps. Throughout the process of writing and correcting this text, several collaborators have devoted time to reading and critiquing it. Info-Cult owes a special debt of gratitude to Christine Éthier, Marie-Hélène Frappier, Johanne Gagné, Dyane Provost, Barbara Raymond, Robert Seely and Danielle Vincent.

Production of the guide required the combined efforts of many people. Info-Cult is grateful for the continued collaboration of Dianne Casoni, Caroline Mireault, Isabelle Renaud and Carolle Tremblay, who cast a critical eye on the different versions of this book or shared their knowledge of the cult phenomenon.

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<sup>1</sup>Definition in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary: <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=cult>.

\* The content and opinions in this book are the responsibility of the authors and not those of The Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration.

The Cult Phenomenon: How Groups Function

Collecting the information used in some sections of the text required the cooperation of specialists from outside Canada. Info-Cult thanks all those who provided us with answers to our numerous questions and to a number of colleagues in Europe who provided us with additional information that helped in updating Appendix 6

A number of other collaborators took part in preparing this book and we would like to thank all of them for their sound advice and constructive criticism.



## Introduction

Since the beginning of time, human beings have been attracted to individuals who proclaim divine messages. They have also felt the need to share their beliefs and practices with others. Therefore, the existence of groups referred to as “new religious movements,” “spiritual groups” or “cults” is not a new phenomenon.

Since the 60s, these groups have elicited reactions from the media, the public, academics and governments. For some, they are innovative organizations trying to respond to the needs of specific groups of people and should not be the object of monitoring or special attention. For others, they warrant closer observation in order to better understand the experiences of their members and to step in when members are being harmed.

When tragedy strikes, fear of these groups is re-ignited. Examples include the deaths of 913 members of Jim Jones’ People’s Temple in Guyana in 1978; the violent deaths of members of the Branch Davidians in Waco in 1993; the murder, arson and suicide carried out by members of the Order of the Solar Temple in 1994, 1995 and 1997; the sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway by members of Aum Shinrikyo in 1995; and the suicide of Heaven’s Gate members in California in 1997. These dramatic events reinforced the idea that “cults” are dangerous.

While these events (arson, murder or suicide) are extremely rare, they do occur and are a serious issue that merits attention.

The “cult” phenomenon is first and foremost a group phenomenon. Understanding how groups operate and the rules that govern interpersonal relations can provide insight into all of the organizations termed “cults” or “new religious movements.”

Info-Cult produced this publication to address these various issues and to inform the public about the internal and external functioning of groups.

Work on this publication began in 1999, which coincided with the 25th anniversary of the National Assembly’s adoption of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the 20th anniversary of the creation of Info-Cult. Four years later, the project has become a reality. This book, inspired by the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms as well as a desire to understand how these groups operate in a democratic society, explores various aspects of the “cult” phenomenon. Here are some of the objectives:

- Inform the reader about the position of groups in a democratic society;
- Understand the internal and external operations of groups as well as some of their problematic aspects;
- Foster discussion and debate about groups in general and on the “cult” phenomenon;
- Promote the development of critical thinking about groups in our society.

To achieve these objectives, each chapter addresses a different aspect of how groups operate in a democratic society.

Chapter 1 offers an historical overview of Info-Cult, from its creation to the present. It also traces the organization's understanding of the cult phenomenon, its services, its clientele and relations between Info-Cult and national and international organizations.

Chapter 2 provides a summary of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and explains the role of the Commission (Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse).

Chapter 3 focuses on how groups operate. How they serve as places of social participation, reassurance and exchange, but also as places of exclusion and psychological brutality. This chapter provides an introduction to the general knowledge of how groups operate and their effects on their members.

Chapter 4 looks at how three groups function: Roch "Moses" Thériault's group, the Order of the Solar Temple (OTS) and Heaven's Gate. These portraits provide a history of each group, from its inception to the violent acts that lead to the physical abuse or death of their members.

Chapter 5 provides answers to some of the most frequently asked questions received by Info-Cult.

Six appendices complete the publication.

The "cult" phenomenon is a vast topic that can be approached from a number of different angles. This book does not address all of the questions that can be asked on this subject but the objective is to present a different view of the "cult" phenomenon.

## Chapter 1: History of Info-Cult

Info-Cult has been operating in Quebec for 25 years. Since its establishment in 1980, the organization's knowledge of the cult phenomenon, how groups function, the reasons why individuals join such groups and the nature of the relationship between leaders and their members has changed. The evolution of Info-Cult's understanding of these questions is reflected in the organization's history.

This chapter provides a chronological history of Info-Cult, from its founding to the present. There are three distinct periods:

- The 1980s, when Info-Cult was known under the name Cult Project;
- The 1990s, when Info-Cult developed a network of exchange and collaboration;
- From 2000 on.

### Cult Project

#### Description

As the '70s drew to a close, the need for information on the cult phenomenon was growing in Quebec and in other parts of the world. After 913 members of the Peoples Temple tragically perished in Jonestown, students at McGill University and others started to ask questions about "cults" and their consequences for individuals and society. The questions they raised included:

- Why does someone become a member of a "cult"?
- Why do young adults radically change their lifestyle upon entering a group?
- Why do these young people accept without question the orders of a charismatic leader?

To respond to these questions and better understand the phenomenon of cults, Hillel, a Jewish student association active on college and university campuses, organized conferences at McGill University to sensitize students and the public to this issue.

Four conferences, sponsored by various associations, were organized around this theme.

The success of these conferences and the public's need for information and assistance inspired a handful of individuals to develop a proposal to set up a permanent resource centre on cults. The leadership of Hillel acknowledged the value of this proposal and presented a funding request to the Montreal Jewish community.

In 1980, Cult Project was founded. It offered a non-denominational service to the community at large. Its operating costs and some of its projects were also subsidized by grants from the provincial and federal governments.

### **Cult Project's objectives**

The organization's objectives were to: <sup>2</sup>

- Prepare young people in particular to anticipate the techniques and practices of cult recruitment.
- Create amongst young people, parents, parent groups, professional and community institutions, a consciousness of the ramifications of membership in cults.
- Reveal to the public the duplicity of cult propaganda, the hidden aims of various cult groups and the damaging influences they can exert upon individuals, family and society.
- Assist families who are affected by this problem.
- Aid and assist ex-cult members in their reintegration into society.
- Develop a resource centre with information in English and French on the subject, available to the general public.
- Use volunteers as a resource to educate the public. This volunteer group, composed of parents who have been affected by this problem as well as ex-cult members, also serves as a self-help group to assist others with the same problem.

On a day-to-day basis, these objectives translated into:

- Collecting information on groups and on cult phenomena;
- Supporting families and friends of cult members and ex-members;
- Offering information sessions on the cult phenomenon in Montreal community and the surrounding area.

### **Initial understanding of the cult phenomenon**

#### *Vocabulary*

From its inception, Cult Project used the terms "cult" and "destructive cult" to describe cultic groups present in the community. They were defined as follows:

#### **Cult:**

- A group of people united around a particular ideology;
- A group of people who have split from a dominant religious group.

---

<sup>2</sup> These are the objectives cited in the funding application submitted by Hillel for Cult Project to the Quebec Ministère des Affaires sociales for the 1984-1985 financial year.

### **Destructive cult:**

- A **destructive cult** is a highly manipulative group that exploits its members and can inflict psychological, physical or financial harm upon them.

When Cult Project was founded, contemporary studies and scientific papers described a member of a destructive cult<sup>3</sup> as a victim of a leader who was depicted as a tyrant. Many parents and researchers were seeking to understand what prompted the radical behavioural change of cult members. One of the hypotheses put forth to explain their involvement was the use of mind control (brainwashing<sup>4</sup>) to get members to submit to the daily life of the group.

At its inception, Cult Project subscribed to the belief that destructive cults could be harmful to some of their members. It did not, however, believe that all cultic groups were problematic.

### *Deprogramming*

During the '70s and '80s, families and friends of cult members felt a growing sense of urgency to intervene and save their loved ones from the clutches of manipulative leaders.

To help members leave a cult one method that became popular was "deprogramming." Two types of deprogramming strategies were employed:

- Coercive, whereby a member is physically removed and kept in an isolated location where a deprogrammer tries to persuade the individual to leave the group.
- Non-coercive, whereby a member voluntarily meets with a deprogrammer.<sup>5</sup>

Cult Project never considered coercive deprogramming as a solution and counselled families against this choice.

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<sup>3</sup>R. Delgado, "Religious Totalism," *Southern California Law Review* 15 (1977), pp. 1-99;

M.T. Singer, "Therapy with Ex-Cult Members," *Journal of the National Association of Private Psychiatric Hospitals* vol. 9, no.4 (1978), pp.14-18;

P.A. Verdier, *Brainwashing and the Cults* (Hollywood, CA: Wilshire Book Company, 1977);

L. West, M. Singer, "Cults, Quacks, and Nonprofessional Psychotherapies," in I. Harold, A. Kaplan, M. Freedman and B.J. Sadock, *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, Co., 1980), vol. 3, pp. 3245-3258;

L. J. West, "Cults, Liberty, and Mind Control," in D.C. Rapoport and Y. Alexander (eds.), *The Rationalization of Terrorism* (Frederick, Md: Alethia Books, 1982), pp.101-107.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1: Mind Control and Groups.

<sup>5</sup> Deprogramming currently implies a coercive approach and "exit counseling" is used to refer to the non-coercive approach.



### *Nature of the information available on the cult phenomenon*

In the early '80s, former cult members were the primary source of popular information about the functioning of destructive cults (books, newspaper articles, etc.).

Given the limited research or sources of information on the functioning of cults and destructive cults, Cult Project placed a lot of importance on collecting varied information on cults. Consequently, its documentation centre gradually diversified its sources, and started to collect information on new religious movements and sociological studies of religious and political groups.

In 1986, Cult Project received two government research grants and published the following two reports:

- Les difficultés reliées aux consommateurs dans certains Nouveaux Mouvements Religieux (NMR) dans la province du Québec (April 1986);
- Non Profit and Charitable Solicitation in Canada: Review of Techniques and Ethical Considerations (April 1986).

### **Services offered**

#### *Prevention and awareness programs*

According to Cult Project, certain destructive cults can cause their members physical or psychological harm or financial loss. This view of the cult phenomenon prompted Cult Project to set up prevention and awareness programs on the dangers of destructive cults and mind control techniques. During the 1980s, information programs on cults were offered in various places, including high schools, CEGEPs (colleges), universities, community organizations and professional associations in Montreal and the surrounding area.

#### *Documentation centre*

In 1980, Cult Project set up a documentation centre open to the public in an effort to inform the population about the cult phenomenon. The centre contained books, newspaper and magazine articles and audiovisual material.

#### *Telephone service*

From its inception, Cult Project offered a telephone service that responded to questions about cults from relatives, ex-cult members, students and the media.

### *Active listening and support to families and ex-members*

From its very beginnings, Cult Project staff advised and supported thousands of families of cult members. The organization's goal was to support relatives and friends of cult members and ex-members in their efforts to understand the cult phenomenon and to help them with problems related to their experiences. Staff and volunteers assisted families by phone or during group meetings.

### *Employees and volunteers*

Over its 10-year history, Cult Project employed three full-time staff members, two of whom were funded by government grants. They were responsible for various research projects on the cult phenomenon.

Cult Project's first volunteers were almost all members of Info-Cult, an association of parents of cult members. This parent organization no longer exists.

Gradually, the pool of volunteers grew, and was composed of:

- Relatives or friends of someone who was or had been directly or indirectly involved in a cult;
- Ex-members who wanted to use their experience to advise others of the potential danger of getting involved in a cult;
- Individuals who were interested and informed on the cult phenomenon.

Cult Project believed that providing assistance to the parents or friends of members helped to bring together individuals who were experiencing or had experienced similar challenges. They were able to understand the consequences of the trauma caused by a child or friend joining a cult, and could help each other. For their part, volunteers who were ex-members knew the difficulties involved in leaving a group and could share their experience and offer support to members who wished to leave or had left such a group.

### **Cult Project's clientele**

Over the first 10 years, the centre's clientele was mostly composed of:

- Relatives of cult members;
- Ex-cult members;
- Students and teachers.

At that time, discussions with cults and their members were rare. It was only in the mid-eighties that certain cult members started to approach Cult Project to:

- Obtain information on their group;
- Provide information on their group ;

- Criticize the functioning of Cult Project;
- Obtain information on how to leave their group;
- Find out about help available once they left their group.

During its 10-year existence, Cult Project had few ties with groups identified as cults and destructive cults, primarily because:

- Cult Project was perceived as an anti-cult organization;
- Cult Project's interventions were focused on ex-cult members and the families of members;
- Cult Project was rarely approached by cults, and did not, for its part, initiate discussions with these groups.

## **Info-Cult**

### **Transition from Cult Project to Info-Cult**

Cult Project was founded to respond to the demand for information from students and the community. Under the auspices of Hillel, Cult Project responded to a growing number of calls. In fact, over the course of 10 years, the number of calls grew, on average, from 250 to 1000 per year. Gradually, the idea of founding an independent organization headed by a board of directors sensitized to the cult phenomenon took hold among Cult Project staff and volunteers.

In 1990, Cult Project was dissolved and Info-Cult was born. This independent, bilingual and non-denominational centre, headed by a board of directors, adopted the name and charter of the old parents association, and reformulated its objectives as follows:

"To promote the dignity and integrity of the individual, the respect of collective and individual rights, the freedom of thought and expression, and the right of access to information, the objectives of Info-Cult are:

- To promote the study of cult phenomena;
- To sensitize, inform and educate the public about these phenomena;
- To assist people with problems related to these phenomena."<sup>6</sup>

These new objectives reflected an evolution based on Info-Cult's 10 years of experience.

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<sup>6</sup> These objectives are stated in the corporation's regulation number 1990-C.

## Understanding of the cult phenomenon in the 1990s

In the early nineties, Info-Cult modified its definition of the term cult:

A **cult** is a highly manipulative group that exploits its members and can cause psychological, financial and physical harm. It dictates in an absolute manner the behaviour, thoughts and emotions of its followers. Manipulation techniques are used to transform the new recruit into a loyal, obedient and subservient member. Cults claim a special status for themselves or their leaders that usually sets them in opposition to mainline society and/or the family. Cults conceal their real nature and goals from prospective members by adopting deceptive behaviour in order to attract new recruits.<sup>7</sup>

Info-Cult listed criteria to identify cults with the potential to cause physical or psychological harm to their members. The following characteristics distinguish these groups:<sup>8</sup>

- The group is focused on a living leader to whom members seem to display excessively zealous, unquestioning commitment;
- The leadership dictates, sometimes in great detail, how members should think, act and feel. For example, members must get permission from leaders to date, change jobs, get married; leaders may prescribe what types of clothes to wear, where to live, how to discipline children, and so forth;
- The group is preoccupied with making money. The group teaches or implies that its supposedly exalted ends justify means that members would have considered unethical before joining the group (for example, collecting money for bogus charities);
- The group's leader is not accountable to any authorities;
- Members' subservience to the group causes them to cut ties with family and friends, and to give up personal goals and activities that were of interest before joining the group;
- Members are encouraged or required to live and/or socialize only with other group members;
- Questioning, doubt and dissent are discouraged or even punished. Mind-numbing techniques (such as meditation, chanting, speaking in tongues, denunciation sessions, debilitating work routines) are used to suppress doubts about the group and its leader(s).

In the mid-'90s, Info-Cult staff considered the utility of the concept of "cultic thinking." It conducted research and held discussions to try to understand the meaning and usefulness of this concept in distinguishing groups that had the

<sup>7</sup> Excerpt from the information pamphlet distributed by Info-Cult in the 1990s.

<sup>8</sup> Taken from the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA), *Mind-Manipulating Groups: Are you or a Family Member a Victim?* [http://www.csj.org/infoserv\\_articles/langone\\_michael\\_checklis.htm](http://www.csj.org/infoserv_articles/langone_michael_checklis.htm)

potential to harm their members from others that did not. The organization defined cultic thinking as:

A way of conceptualizing reality and society by dividing them in two monolithic blocks (black/white, saved/damned, good/evil). Within this framework there is no room for grey areas. Individuals and movements with this kind of thinking automatically classify themselves in the category of the pure and the saved. Subsequently, they look for scapegoats in order to explain problems experienced by them or by society. Cultic thinking can lead to intolerance and extremism, and is particularly prevalent in times of personal, social or economic crisis.<sup>9</sup>

The term “cultic thinking” is used by Info-Cult to better understand the thinking process of members which can influence their behaviour and the practices of groups, but it is not used as a criterion to distinguish groups that can harm their members.

### **Special activities and projects organized by Info-Cult in the 1990s**

During the 1990s, Info-Cult was very active in Quebec, across Canada and occasionally elsewhere. It promoted the dissemination of information on the cult phenomenon and responded to the public’s questions about cult abuses. Projects implemented by Info-Cult include:

- In **1991**, a Quebec-wide media campaign was organized to raise public awareness about the cult phenomenon. In addition, a bilingual information pamphlet was published by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in collaboration with Info-Cult. The pamphlet, *Are You Vulnerable?* was distributed throughout Canada.
- In **1992**, Info-Cult made public its findings on the Médecins du Ciel (a group of healers/channelers). This led to complaints being lodged with the Quebec College of Physicians by individuals who had been harmed. Subsequently, three of the healers were convicted and fined for the illegal practice of medicine.
- In **1993**, Info-Cult released an educational documentary video in French, entitled *Au-delà des Mirages*.
- In **1994**, *Beyond the Mirage*, the English version of the video was launched. The goal of the documentaries was to raise awareness among youth about the cult phenomenon. During this same period Info-Cult submitted a report to a Quebec parliamentary commission on “alternative therapies” in which concerns about the harm associated with the practices of certain alternative therapies were raised.
- In **1999**, Info-Cult entered the cyber age with the launching of [www.infocult.org](http://www.infocult.org). Among other contents, the site offers links to articles,

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<sup>9</sup> Excerpt from an information pamphlet distributed by Info-Cult in the 1990s.

books and reports on the cult phenomenon as well as a list of the latest publications.

### **Info-Cult services**

Info-Cult offers a telephone service, educational programs, an active listening service and support to ex-members as well as to the family and friends of members.

### **Centre's clientele**

In the 1990s, Info-Cult staff noted a diversification of its clientele. Members of religious, spiritual, esoteric and personal growth groups, for example, were increasingly contacting the centre. They were seeking to:

- Find out about the nature of the information available on their group;
- Talk about their group and its practices;
- Obtain information on available resources (psychological and educational assistance).

### **Info-Cult and its contacts**

#### *Contact with government and non-profit organizations*

Over the years, Info-Cult has established contact with many public and private organizations and has built a network with which it exchanges information, assistance, resources, referrals etc., either on a regular basis or according to the need. These organizations include the Office de la protection du consommateur (consumer protection bureau), CLSCs (local community service centres), Communication-Québec, various police forces, youth protection services and health professionals (psychologists, physicians and social workers). In the last few years, Info-Cult staff has noted an increase in requests from these organizations.

#### *Contacts with the international community*

Since its founding, Info-Cult has been in contact with various organizations and individuals that share its concerns. These contacts with individuals and groups from various Canadian provinces as well as other countries, including Australia, England, France, Spain, and the United States have helped to diversify the information available at the documentation centre and to foster a better exchange of knowledge, perspectives and innovations with regard to the cult phenomenon.

Sharing knowledge and views of the cult phenomenon with professionals, researchers and organizations has been beneficial for both the public and the

organization. The more information circulates, the greater is the opportunity to deepen our knowledge of this vast phenomenon.

In the years to come, Info-Cult hopes to maintain and expand its connections with organizations and academics in an effort to continue these discussions and share knowledge.

### **Financing**

Info-Cult obtains its funding from:

- The provincial government through the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (Ministry of Health and Social Services);
- Discretionary funds from various government ministers;
- Foundations, private organizations, businesses and individual donations;
- Service fees.

### **Info-Cult and the choice of vocabulary**

The choice of vocabulary used to describe the cult phenomenon is in itself problematic when it comes to researching and understanding it. Historically, the term “cult” has been used to describe groups that have severed ties with an established religious group.

Today, the term “cult” has taken on a whole new meaning in the public mind, and tends to have a pejorative connotation. Consequently, some argue against its use.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the term “cult” can lead some to mistakenly view certain groups as “dangerous.” While this term is not ideal, it is highly improbable at this point to eliminate it as it has become entrenched in the popular language.

Info-Cult argues that groups should be distinguished on the basis of their internal and external functioning, their world vision and their behaviour, and not solely on the basis of a cursory evaluation.

Info-Cult focuses on the internal and external dynamics of groups to better understand:

- The general functioning and evolution of a group;
- The relationship among its members;
- The leader's influence on the members;

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<sup>10</sup> R. Bergeron, *Vivre au risque des nouvelles religions* (Montreal: Médiaspaul, 1997);  
R. Campiche, *Quand les sectes s'affolent. Ordre du temple Solaire, Média et fin de millénaire* (Geneva-Lausanne: Labor et Fides-Institut d'éthique Sociale, 1995);  
J.P. Willaime, *Sociologie des religions*, 2nd ed. (Paris: P.U.F., 1998).

- The characteristics that help to identify groups that, at certain periods in their history, may harm some of their members or pose a risk to public security.

### **Assessment of the 1990s**

While in its early years Info-Cult had very few calls or meetings with “cult” members, during the 1990s the number and diversity of calls from members of these groups increased.

There has also been more and more contact with professionals in Quebec’s social services’ network. Various collaborative efforts have enabled the organization to offer assistance and information services that are adapted to the reality of members, ex-members and friends and family of members.

### **Info-Cult in the 21st century: Current views**

For 25 years, Info-Cult’s board of directors and staff have reflected upon and asked questions about the cult phenomenon. On the basis of numerous written works and discussions with researchers, professionals and others a number of observations can be made. They include:

- Cults are not a new social phenomenon. Throughout history, such groups have been viewed on and off by their community not only as minority groups but also, from the perspective of dominant normative groups, as deviant sub-groups that have the potential to cause physical or psychological harm or financial loss to their members;
- Info-Cult acknowledges that not all groups identified as cults pose a risk to their members. It is, however, important to recognize that certain groups can violate the rights of their members;
- Info-Cult recognizes that participation in the life of a group constitutes an opportunity for social participation, socialization and solace, but also recognizes that certain groups can also become places of psychological and/or physical exclusion.

Info-Cult recognizes that the risks posed by a group to its members vary:

- From one person to another;
- According to the situation and circumstances ;
- From one group to another;
- From one region to another, in the case of international groups;
- Depending on the particular developmental stage of the group;
- Depending on internal or external conflicts.

Info-Cult considers that existing laws adequately respond to the various problems associated with cults and cultic groups.



Info-Cult believes that new research is required to further our understanding of this phenomenon and to intervene more effectively when responding to calls for help.

Consequently, Info-Cult supports research that contributes to a better understanding of this phenomenon.

### **Conclusion**

Like a human being, Info-Cult has evolved over its 25 years of existence. Like the groups that it observes, visits and studies, Info-Cult has developed and modified its perception and understanding of the cult phenomenon. Furthermore, connections with the international scientific community and with various spiritual and esoteric groups have helped to improve the organization's understanding of groups and how they function.

Info-Cult has collected a broad range of information on the cult phenomenon, making it the largest centre of its kind in North America. With the advent of the 21st century, Info-Cult is pursuing its reflection and search for information on the phenomenon, while continuing to provide assistance and referrals to all those looking for information on this phenomenon.

## Chapter 2: The Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms

All societies have laws, rules and codes that govern the conduct of their citizens. These numerous laws and regulations frame our life within society, regardless of where we live. In Quebec,<sup>11</sup> the rights and freedoms of all human beings are protected by various laws, including the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms,<sup>12</sup> the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,<sup>13</sup> the Civil Code and the Criminal Code. In this chapter, we focus our analysis on the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

In Quebec, all laws and regulations must respect the first 38 articles of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. The Charter is, therefore, a legal document that influences the daily lives of Quebec citizens. To understand the rights and freedoms that it protects, this chapter provides a summary of almost all the articles in the Charter, followed by a synopsis of the role of the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (the Commission).<sup>14</sup>

### The goal of adopting the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms

Quebec's National Assembly adopted the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms on June 27, 1975. The Charter represents the ethical framework that ensures a balance between individual and collective rights within Quebec society. The rights and freedoms cited in the Charter affect all spheres of life and the Charter's articles apply to all areas of activity that fall under provincial jurisdiction. For this reason, the Charter can be invoked when an organization gives directions, offers services or conducts itself in a way that can be considered discriminatory.

The Charter seeks to guarantee the respect of all fundamental rights and freedoms. It sets out the principles of dignity, equality and liberty, which are the foundations of justice and peace.

### The Charter's guiding principles

In its preamble, the Charter sets out the following specific principles that govern the entire legal document. They are:

- “Whereas every human being possesses intrinsic rights and freedoms designed to ensure his protection and development;

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<sup>11</sup> A province in Canada.

<sup>12</sup> The complete text of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms is available on the Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse website, at: <http://www.cdpcj.qc.ca/en/commun/docs/charter.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> The complete text of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is available on the Department of Justice Canada website, at: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/>

<sup>14</sup> There is no official English name.

- Whereas all human beings are equal in worth and dignity, and are entitled to equal protection of the law;
- Whereas respect for the dignity of the human being and recognition of his rights and freedoms constitute the foundation of justice and peace;
- Whereas the rights and freedoms of the human person are inseparable from the rights and freedoms of others and from the common well-being;
- Whereas the fundamental rights and freedoms may be guaranteed by the collective will and better protected against any violation.”

**Who is protected under the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms?**

The Charter applies to all human beings in the territory of Quebec.

The Charter’s guiding principles enjoy broad consensus and organizations tend to respect these principles when adopting their own regulations. However, if a regulation contradicts the Charter and constitutes discrimination or exploitation, two possible recourses are available to individuals who feel they have been wronged:

- Legal: the individual may decide to appeal to the courts;
- Administrative: the individual may decide to appeal to the Commission.

**Intrinsic rights and freedoms**

The Charter states that each human being is entitled to:

| <b>Fundamental rights</b>   | <b>Fundamental freedoms</b>  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The right to life, personal security, inviolability and freedom, as well as the recognition of the legal personality of every human being [s. 1].</li> <li>• When life is in peril, the right to assistance [s. 2].</li> <li>• The right to protection of personal dignity, honour and reputation [s. 4].</li> <li>• The right to privacy [s. 5].</li> <li>• The right to peaceful enjoyment and free disposition of personal property [s. 6].</li> <li>• The right to inviolability of the home [s. 7 and 8].</li> <li>• The right to professional secrecy [s.9]</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The freedoms of conscience, religion, opinion, expression, association and peaceful assembly [s. 3].</li> </ul> |

## Exercising fundamental rights

Article 9.1 of the Charter limits the exercise of individual rights and freedoms:

“In exercising his fundamental freedoms and rights, a person shall maintain a proper regard for democratic values, public order and the general well-being of the citizens of Québec.”

Individual rights and freedoms must respect **democratic values, public order** and the **general well-being**. The meaning of the expression “democratic values” stated in the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms was established by the Supreme Court.<sup>15</sup> Democratic values are thus understood as:

- Respect for the dignity of the human being;
- Justice;
- Respect for social equality;
- Respect for each culture and each group;
- Faith in social and political institutions that promote the participation of individuals and groups in society.

This article in the Charter thus recognizes that the rights and freedoms of the individual are inseparable from the rights and freedoms of others. In exercising one’s rights and freedoms, one has a social responsibility to respect those of the persons with whom he or she coexists. A group cannot, therefore, in the name of its convictions, conduct itself or express attitudes that run counter to democratic values, public order and general well-being.

When the exercise of freedom of expression conflicts with democratic values, it is possible to limit the exercise of that freedom on the basis of the general principle set forth in Article 9.1.

## Right to equality

The Charter seeks to guarantee all individuals’ protection against any form of illegal discrimination. Thus, articles 10 and 10.1 state that every person has a right to full and equal recognition and exercise of his or her rights and freedoms without distinction based on specific criteria such as race or sex.

Article 10 of the Charter specifies 14 grounds upon which a person cannot be excluded or distinguished. These include:

Age, social condition, political convictions, civil status, pregnancy, handicap, language, sexual orientation, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, sex.

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<sup>15</sup> Her Majesty the Queen Appellant and David Edwin Oakes Respondent [1986] 1 S.C.R., 103.

The Charter also specifies the locations or contexts in which any form of discrimination or exclusion is forbidden:

- In advertising (Article 11);
- In a judicial act (articles 12 to 14);
- In access to public places (Article 15);
- In employment (articles 16-18.1, 19 and 20);
- In a situation that would penalize a person in his or her employment owing to the mere fact that he or she was convicted of a penal or criminal offence, if the offence was in no way connected with the employment or if the person has obtained a pardon for the offence. (Article 18.2).

The Charter thus asserts the equality of all human beings by specifying the factors and contexts under which a person cannot be distinguished, excluded or favoured.

### **Political rights**

The Charter guarantees all citizens certain political rights, namely:

- Every person has a right of petition to the National Assembly for the redress of grievances (article 21).
- Every person legally capable and qualified has the right to be a candidate and to vote at an election (article 22).

### **Judicial rights**

The Charter also protects the upholding of a just and equitable process of arrest, search, detention and court appearance of anyone accused of breaking the law. The various legal rights are stipulated in articles 23 to 38 of the Charter. Here is a summary of these articles:

- The right to a public and impartial hearing by an independent court [s. 23].
- The right not to be deprived of liberty or rights, except on the grounds provided by law and in accordance with prescribed procedure [s. 24].
- The right to protection from unreasonable search or seizure [s. 24.1].

In the case of arrest or detention

- The right to be treated with humanity and respect [s. 25].
- The right to a form of detention appropriate to one's sex, age and physical or mental condition [s. 26].
- The right to be kept apart from prisoners serving a sentence until final judgment of the case [s. 27].

- The right to be informed promptly, in a language understood, of the grounds for arrest or detention [s. 28] and of the specific offence in question [s. 28.1].
- The right to be informed of one's rights, to notify one's relatives and to obtain assistance from legal counsel [s. 29].
- The right to be brought promptly before a court or released [s. 30].
- The right of recourse to habeas corpus [s. 32].

#### Before a court

- The right to be released on undertaking, with or without deposit or surety [s. 31].
- The right to be tried within a reasonable time [s. 32.1].
- The right to be presumed innocent [s. 33].
- The right not to be compelled to testify at one's own trial [s. 33.1].
- The right to be assisted or represented by legal counsel [s. 34].
- The right to a full and complete defence, and to examine and cross-examine witnesses [s. 35].
- The right of the accused to free assistance from an interpreter, including an interpreter for the deaf [s. 36].
- The right not to be tried for an offence that, when committed, did not constitute a violation of the law [s. 37].
- The right not to be tried twice for the same offence [s. 37.1] and to the least severe punishment if the law has changed since the offence was committed [s. 37.2].
- The right not to be incriminated by one's own testimony, except in the case of perjury or contradictory evidence [s. 38].

#### **Economic and social rights**

The Charter assures the upholding of certain economic and social rights, namely:

- The right of children to the protection, security and attention that their parents or the persons acting on their stead are able to provide [s. 39].
- The right to free public education [s. 40].
- The right, in public educational institutions, to receive religious or moral education [s. 41].
- The right to choose approved private educational institutions [s. 42].
- The right of people belonging to ethnic minorities to maintain and develop their cultural interests with the other members of their group [s. 43].
- The right to information [s. 44].
- The right of every person in need to sufficient financial and social assistance to provide an acceptable standard of living [s. 45].
- The right to fair and reasonable conditions of employment with proper regard for the person's health, safety and well-being [s. 46].

- The equality of spouses within a marriage and their equal responsibility in the moral guidance and material support of the family and the education of their common offspring [s. 47].
- The right of elderly and disabled people to security and to the protection of their families or the people acting in their stead, and the right to protection from all forms of exploitation [s. 48.]

### **The Charter is a living text! The example of religious freedoms**

The definition and the scope of the rights and freedoms stipulated in the Charter would seem to be clearly delineated in the Charter's sections summarized above. However, the exact meaning of each right and freedom cited in the Charter is defined gradually as legal cases are brought before the courts. A set of judgments helps determine how the laws in question are interpreted.

The rights and freedoms set out in the Charter change in relation to the prevailing values at the time when the case is being heard. Thus, over time, as complaints are brought before the courts, the meaning or scope of a right will change.

The Charter assures, for example, the protection of freedom of religion, but does not define what it means by the term "religion." One has to turn to jurisprudence to understand the meaning of this word and this right. Decisions rendered by different Quebec courts do not provide a precise definition. Certain judgments such as the R. C. Big M Drug Mart case do help to establish the limits of religious freedoms:<sup>16</sup>

- The right to believe whatever one wishes in the religious realm;
- The right to express one's beliefs through worship and practice;
- The right to propagate one's beliefs.

According to this judgment, religious freedom has two dimensions:

- A positive dimension: individuals are free to believe what they wish and to profess those beliefs;
- A negative dimension: no one can be forced to embrace a religious idea or to act contrary to what he or she believes.<sup>17</sup>

Individuals can also ask that their personal beliefs be considered by their community to be a religion. This acceptance gives them the right, for example, to

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<sup>16</sup> Commission des droits de la personne, The definition of religion in Article 10 of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, working document, (1984), pp. 36.

<sup>17</sup> P. Bosset, Mémoire à la Commission de l'éducation de l'Assemblée nationale sur la place de la religion dans les écoles, Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse du Québec, (1999). Available at : <http://www.cdpcj.qc.ca/fr/publications/liste.asp?Sujet=51&noeud1=1&noeud2=6&cle=0>

have certain practices recognized by an employer. Personal beliefs can be considered religious beliefs according to the law under two conditions:<sup>18</sup>

- The belief invoked by the individual constitutes a religion in his or her life;
- The individual shows sincerity in the preceding contention.

This right, however, is limited. Individuals cannot justify all of their conduct in the name of religion. Actions must respect the democratic values protected under the Charter. For example, in the Harrold affair,<sup>19</sup> the Court found a member of the religious group guilty of contravening Vancouver's anti-noise by-law, ruling that the member could not, under the guise of his religion, contravene a municipal by-law.

An individual or group's freedom to worship is limited when it runs contrary to peace and public safety. The Charter can, therefore, establish the scope of religious freedom and how it is exercised so as to protect public order, democratic values and the general well-being of citizens (Québec Charter, Section 9.1).

As complaints are brought before the courts, the Charter becomes more and more specific. This fundamental law is flexible since it adapts to the changing times and cultural realities.

### **The Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse<sup>20</sup>**

“The mission of the Commission is to ensure that the principles set forth in this Charter are upheld, that the interests of children are protected and that their rights recognized by the Youth Protection Act (R.S.Q., c. P-34.1) are respected; for such purposes, the Commission shall exercise the functions and powers conferred on it by this Charter and the Youth Protection Act.” (Section 57)

The Commission seeks to assure the promotion and respect of the principles set forth in the Charter (Section 71). It should be noted, however, that the Commission only has the power to investigate and make recommendations and, if needed, to refer a matter to a court. The following is a list of the Commission's extensive roles and powers:

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<sup>18</sup> Funk v. R.S.M., 76 c.I.I.c. 14006 (Man of Appeals; Staub v. Canadian Union of Public Employees), as cited in the report by the Commission des droits de la personne (1984). The definition of religion in Article 10 of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, working document, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> 1971, 3. W.W.R. 365 as cited in the report by the Commission des droits de la personne (1984). The definition of religion in Article 10 of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, working document, p. 36.

<sup>20</sup> To contact the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse:  
<http://www.cdpcj.qc.ca/en/home.asp?noeud1=0&noeud2=0&cle=0>



- It can launch an investigation on its own initiative or in response to a complaint. The complaint can relate to any situation that appears to constitute:
  - discrimination (articles 10 to 19 and 89) or
  - a violation of the right to protection against the exploitation of an aged or handicapped person, as stated in the first paragraph of Article 48;
- It must encourage resolution between the two parties involved (the person whose rights have been infringed and the person responsible for the infringement);
- If necessary, it communicates to the Public Curator the need for protection under the Curator's jurisdiction in the case of exploitation of an aged or handicapped person;
- It develops and implements an information and education program on the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Charter;
- It directs and promotes research and publications on fundamental rights and freedoms;
- It identifies provisions of Quebec laws that run counter to the Charter and makes appropriate recommendations to the government;
- It receives suggestions, recommendations and requests concerning human rights and freedoms;
- It cooperates with all organizations committed to the promotion of human rights and freedoms in Quebec and elsewhere;
- It investigates any attempts or acts of reprisal as well as any other fact or omission that it deems a violation of the Charter and reports it to the attorney general.

### **Who can file a complaint with the Commission?**

“Any person who believes he has been the victim of a violation of rights that is within the sphere of investigation of the Commission may file a complaint with the Commission. If several persons believe they have suffered a violation of their rights in similar circumstances, they may form a group to file a complaint” (Section 74).

### **Children and groups**

The Youth Protection Act (sections 38-39) requires that any threat to a child's safety or development be reported to the Director of Youth Protection (DYP). This obligation applies, for example, in a situation in which the parents' lifestyle constitutes a threat to the child's safety or development.

The Commission does not receive these reports. It can, however, investigate how the DYP is respecting children's rights when a case is brought to its attention.

## **Conclusion**

The Charter is an ethical framework that governs the balance between individual and group rights within Quebec society. It seeks to ensure that all fundamental rights and freedoms are respected, including equality, access to equitable legal assistance, economic and social equity, the right to education and the right to justice. Individual rights and freedoms must, however, be respected within a framework of respect for democratic values, public order and the general well-being of all of society. Thus, a member of a group or an individual cannot invoke the respect for his or her fundamental freedoms in order to avoid sanction for breaking the law.

Individual rights and freedoms are guaranteed under the Quebec Charter. When these rights are violated, the Commission must ensure that the Charter's principles are respected and, in the case of children, that the interests and rights of children are protected under the Youth Protection Act. When an individual, group or organization believes that its rights and freedoms have been violated, it can file a complaint with the Commission or the courts.

## Chapter 3: How groups function

Examining the phenomenon of “cults” or “new religious movements” is a difficult endeavour. How can these terms be defined without labelling groups as “good,” “bad,” “manipulative” or “violent”? To avoid seeing these groups simply in those terms this chapter proposes to return to basics. Since cults or religious movements are groups which bring together a variety of individuals who share common values, the study of “cultic” phenomena should start by an understanding of group functioning.

In daily life, groups<sup>21</sup> can provide a reassuring space for social participation and exchange, but also for exclusion and psychological brutality. We will, therefore, examine the elements that influence group functioning and individual experience of members in order to understand why some experiences are harmonious and others problematic. In order to shed light on this question, this chapter provides an introduction to a general understanding of how groups function and their effects on the experience of individual group members.

We will look at the internal and external functioning of groups. The term “internal functioning” is used to describe the internal group dynamic, that is, its structure, socialization process and the relationships among group members. “External functioning” refers to relationships between groups and other organizations.

### Internal functioning

To understand the structure of a group and its effects on the members, certain concepts such as norms, social roles, communication and intragroup relations, are presented in this section.

#### Norms

In daily life, whether at school, at work or during leisure time, individuals generally respect various norms, rules or laws in order to adapt themselves to the environment or group to which they belong. But what are norms? How do they influence the daily lives of members? The following section provides some answers to these questions.

#### Definition of a norm

Norms are rules or behavioural models that are established and accepted by individuals who belong to the same culture or group.<sup>22</sup> Since they reflect the group’s values, they may:

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<sup>21</sup> See Appendix 3 regarding the various types of groups.

<sup>22</sup> B. Richard. *Psychologie des groupes restreints* (Quebec City: Presses interuniversitaires, 1995).

- Define the nature of interpersonal relations promoted among members or with non-members;
- Determine the skills required by each individual in order to accomplish specific tasks in the group;
- Establish acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the group.

To find out what norms the group has adopted, it is important to ask questions about its core values, conduct and practices.

A punishment and reward system may be a good indication of the norms preferred by a particular group.

### *The role of norms in a group*

The purposes of norms are:<sup>23</sup>

- To help the group reach its objectives. As members share the same code of conduct the group's norms dictate the responsibilities and obligations of each member. This combination of choices, decisions and behaviours generally fosters a harmonious functioning among group members;
- To foster relationships among members and internal group cohesion. Norms indicate what attitude members should adopt in various circumstances. They may, for instance, help members settle a conflict by providing them with possible resolutions to problems or misunderstandings. As a result, misunderstandings can be avoided and harmonious relationships among members preserved;<sup>24</sup>
- To help members gain a better understanding of their experience. By suggesting or prescribing acceptable and unacceptable attitudes or behaviours as well as the roles and functions of each group member, norms enable members to better understand the behaviours of their co-members. Norms also allow members to identify those who do not respect the rules enforced in the group.

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<sup>23</sup> Z. Cartwring, *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

C.R. McCauley, M.E. Segal, "Social Psychology of Terrorist Groups," in C. Hendrick (ed.), *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations: Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 9 (1987) pp. 231-256.

<sup>24</sup> C. Leclerc, *Comprendre et construire les groupes*. *Chronique sociale*. (Quebec City: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1999), 322 pp.

J. Jetten, R. Spears and A.S.R. Manstead, "Intergroup Norms and Intergroup Discrimination: Distinctive Self-Categorization and Social Identity Effects," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 71 (1996), pp. 1222–1233.

H.P. Young, "Social Norms and Economic Welfare", *European Economic Review*, vol. 42 (1998), pp. 821–830.

### How group norms affect individuals

In daily life, each individual develops a unique and personal way of judging situations and people.<sup>25</sup> A person's judgment may be shaped by participation in group life and the internalization of rules that exist in the group.<sup>26</sup>

The influence that a group may have on a member's perceptions or representations of reality is not, from the outset, good or bad. It is, however, important to understand that becoming a member of a group and adopting its rules and practices changes an individual's view of the world in different ways. A group's ability to assert its influence over a member may, however, vary depending on the individual and group in question.

The following section describes the different influence processes that can exist in a group.

### Adapting to the group: from socialization to conformism

A person who decides to become a member of a group must necessarily adapt to life in the group by subscribing to its values, norms and beliefs.<sup>27</sup> One of the processes in which individuals model their behaviour on that of the other members is known as socialization.<sup>28</sup>

Coordinating the behaviour of group members in their interactions with one another reduces the chance of disagreement and conflict among members and, ultimately, fosters a sense of unity, cohesion and true companionship.

Once the members have adopted similar values, practices and behaviours, four changes may occur within the group.<sup>29</sup>

- Sense of unity: relationships among group members become more harmonious and a sense of belonging to the group develops. Members are proud to identify themselves with the group and its participants;
- Stability: once conflicts are resolved and harmony is maintained, the number of members stabilizes;

<sup>25</sup> S. Moscovici and W. Doise, *Dissensions, Consensus. Une théorie générale des dissensions collectives* (Paris: PUF, 1992).

G. Mugny, D. Oberlé and J. L. Beauvois, *Relations humaines, groupes et influence sociale* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1995).

<sup>26</sup> R.B. Cialdini, R.E. Petty and J. T. Cacioppo, "Attitude and Attitude Change," *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 32 (1981), pp. 357-404.

R.B. Cialdini, M.R. Trost, "Social Influence: Social Norms, Conformity, and Compliance" in D. Gilbert, S. Fiske and G. Lindzey (eds.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998), pp. 151-192.

<sup>27</sup> S. E. Asch, *Social psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

J.M. Levine, R.L. Moreland, "Small Groups," in D. Gilbert, S. Fiske and G. Lindzey (eds.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, 4th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), pp. 415-469.

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix 4 for an example of the socialization process in a small group.

<sup>29</sup> J.M. Levine, R.L. Moreland (1998), *op.cit.*, pp. 415-469.

- Satisfaction: group cohesion and the satisfaction of members who participate in the life of the group are closely related. The greater the sense of belonging to the group, the more its members are happy to live within it. They feel privileged to be recognized as participants of this particular group;
- Internal dynamic: groups with strong internal cohesion enjoy greater influence over their members. When internal cohesion is strong, members more readily accept the goals, objectives and norms imposed by a leader or by co-members.

Although group cohesion can have positive effects on the life of the group, its intensity can sometimes have a negative impact. Some group members may become intransigent with regard to those who demonstrate deviant behaviour. Consequently, the slightest nonconformist behaviour may lead to sanctions.<sup>30</sup>

Members who disregard the group's norms tend to be less valued by the other members. In some cases, those who deviate from the norm and create friction in the group may expose themselves to:<sup>31</sup>

- Hostility;
- Isolation from the other members;
- Being the scapegoat for the group's problems;
- Rejection by the group.

Behaviour based on an established set of norms may, therefore, have a positive effect on the group, its functioning and interactions among members. It may improve the group's productivity,<sup>32</sup> but it may also lead to the isolation and rejection of deviant members.

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<sup>30</sup> H. Tajfel, "Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations", *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 33 (1982), pp. 1-39.

M.E. Turner, A.R. Pratkanis, P. Probasco and C. Leve, "Threat, Cohesion, and Group Effectiveness: Testing a Social Identity Maintenance Perspective on Groupthink", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, no. 63 (1992), pp. 781-796.

J.C. Turner, "Towards a Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group," in H. Tajfel (ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 15-40.

M. Hogg, *The Social Psychology of Group Cohesiveness: From Attraction to Social Identity* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

M. Hogg, "Group Cohesiveness: A Critical Review and Some New Directions," *European Review of Social Psychology*, vol. 4 (1993), pp. 84-111.

<sup>31</sup> S. Schachter, "Deviation, Rejection, and Communication," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, vol. 46 (1951), pp.190-207

M. Gold, E. Douvan, *A New Outline of Social Psychology* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1997).

<sup>32</sup> E.H. Witte, *Group Performance. The Solution of Two Divergent Tasks*, (handout presented at the 1994 Groups, Networks, and Organizations Conference, Nags Head, NC).

### *Conformism*

When individuals integrate into the life of a group, they often adopt the values, norms and behaviours valued by the group in order to be accepted. People who model their behaviour on other group members can be described as conformist.<sup>33</sup>

Unlike socialization, in which individuals adapt to group life while preserving their autonomy — conformism requires individuals to accept a set of group requirements and modify their behaviour to duplicate that of the other members in order to be accepted.

Conformism can be described as a process of submission to the majority which can reveal a need for security, a search for identification through membership to a group or a strategy for avoiding conflict.

Here are three processes through which individuals adapt their behaviour to group norms: <sup>34</sup> acquiescence, internalization and identification.

#### *Avoiding conflict through acquiescence*

In some cases, the possibility of conflict arising among members or the possibility of being recognized as a nonconformist influences group members to acquiesce to the demands expressed.<sup>35</sup>

Members may feel peer pressure, prompting them to acquiesce to the demands expressed by individuals in the group. In this case, when individuals are eager to please group members or to make friends, they may acquiesce to the requirements imposed by the members in exchange for their friendship.<sup>36</sup> The more individuals are attracted to a group or to its participants, the more eager they will be to adhere to requirements, even if they are contrary to their personal philosophy of life or beliefs.

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<sup>33</sup> R.B. Cialdini and M.R. Trost (1998), *op.cit.*, pp. 151-192.

J.M. Levine, R.L. Moreland (1998), *op.cit.*, pp. 415-435.

S. Moscovici, "Social Influence and Conformity," in G. Linzey and E. Aronson (eds.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (New York: Random House, 1985), pp. 397-412.

B. Mullen, "Operationalizing the Effect of the Group on the Individual: A Self-Attention Perspective," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 19 (1983), pp. 295-322.

<sup>34</sup> R.B. Cialdini, M.R. Trost (1998), *op.cit.*, pp. 151-192.

J.M. Levine, R.L. Moreland (1998), *op.cit.*

S. Moscovici (1985), *op.cit.*

<sup>35</sup> V. Kent, "Social Influence," in Hare et al., *Small Groups: An Introduction* (London: Praeger, 1996), pp. 58-78.

A. Inski, "Conformity and Group Size: The Concern with Being Right and the Concern with Being Liked," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 11 (1985), pp.41-50.

H.C. Kelman, "Compliance, Identification and Internalization: Three Processes of Attitude Change," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 2 (1958), pp.51-60.

<sup>36</sup> H.C. Klemm (1958), *op.cit.*

In this context, conformism may be short lived. Members may acquiesce to the group's demands in public but refuse to conform to group norms when they are no longer in contact with other members.<sup>37</sup>

### *Internalization*

Individuals may also modify their behaviour if they believe, for instance, that the group is right or holds "the truth."<sup>38</sup>

Individuals, who have internalized the opinions, preferences or actions of the group into their own value system, accept the group's norms and demands both in their public and private lives.

### *Identification*

The process of identification occurs when individuals consciously or sub-consciously agree to give in to group pressure because they want to attain the qualities or characteristics that certain members possess.<sup>39</sup>

## **Violating norms**

Despite the influence a group may have on its members, some participants may adopt behaviour that interferes with the group's activities. Under these circumstances, the group is likely to react to the nonconformist who may be subjected to different forms of pressure designed to modify his or her behaviour.<sup>40</sup>

## **Sanctions**

The violation of a norm elicits different reactions depending on the importance of the norm to the group.

If a person breaks a new rule or one that is of less importance to the members, the reactions and sanctions may be minimal.<sup>41</sup> However, if a person breaks a well-established rule that is deemed important by the members, the group's reaction and the ensuing sanctions may be more stringent.

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<sup>37</sup> H.C. Klemm, op.cit.

<sup>38</sup> H.C. Klemm, op.cit.

<sup>39</sup> H.C. Klemm, op.cit.

<sup>40</sup> E. Goffman. *Asylums: essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates* Chicago: Aldine (1961).

H. Becker, *Outsider* (Paris: Les Métallés, 1985).

<sup>41</sup> P. Robert., F. Soubiran-Paillet and M. Van De Kerchove, *Normes, normes juridiques et normes pénales*, vol. 2 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998).

S. Porter, "The Social Interpretation of Deviance," in M. Birchenall and P. Birchenall (eds.), *Sociology as Applied to Nursing and Health Care* (London: Bailliere Tindall, 1998), pp. 130-149.



In order for one or several norms to be transgressed, there has to be:<sup>42</sup>

- An established norm;
- A person who transgresses the norm;
- A person recognized by the group as nonconformist.<sup>43</sup>

A person can violate a norm without provoking a reaction if:

- There is no witness to confirm the violation;
- The person's deviant behaviour is recognized as involuntary or unintentional.<sup>44</sup>

Consequently, the sanctions and severity imposed on individuals who are recognized as a nonconformist varies according to the nature of the deviant act committed. The greater the violation committed in the view of group members, the greater the sanction will be.<sup>45</sup>

A person who violates the rules of the group may be perceived as an evil force or a threat to the group's equilibrium. In this case, the other group members may have a negative or even hostile reaction to the individual. The deviant member may be ignored for a period of time, isolated, insulted or even expelled from the group.<sup>46</sup>

It is important to note that, the reactions and sanctions of members vary from one group to another.

### **The importance of deviant or nonconformist members**

The deviant member plays a particular role in the group since he or she becomes a symbol, representing behaviour or ideas that are ill-advised or prohibited in the group. This person may, therefore, serve as an example of what members must not do.

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<sup>42</sup> L. Muchielli, "Les champs de la sociologie pénale. Vingt ans de recherches et de débats," *Déviance et société*, no. 1 (1999).

L. Muchielli, *Histoire de la criminologie française* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997).

<sup>43</sup> P. Robert., F. Soubiran-Paillet, M. Van De Kerchove, *op.cit.*

<sup>44</sup> P. Robert., F. Soubiran-Paillet, M. Van De Kerchove, *op.cit.*

<sup>45</sup> M. Janowitz, "Sociological Theory and Social Control," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 81 (1975), pp. 81-108

M.A. Myers, "Social Contexts and Attributions of Criminal Responsibility," *Social Psychology*.

J. Pinatel, *La pensée Criminologie d'Émile Durkheim* (1987).

<sup>46</sup> E. Goffman. *Asylums: essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates* Chicago: Aldine (1961). E. Goffman, *Stigmaté* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1975).

## Roles in a group

A role consists of a set of behaviours, conducts or functions expected from a person in a group.<sup>47</sup>

Roles are varied and enable the activities and tasks of each member to be differentiated. Some, for instance, are assigned administrative, management, publicity or basic tasks to be performed for the group.

Each role requires specific skills. The concept of roles implies specialized tasks within a specific group. Some group members will never have an opportunity to assume certain roles within the group because they have been identified as not having the necessary skills. In some groups, for instance, a woman's role is limited to educating children, while men assume the role of provider.

## Status

To understand group functioning, it is also important to examine the status associated with the roles established in the group. Each role may enable access to a particular social position. Power and prestige vary according to the role being performed. For instance, in a large restaurant, the roles of head chef and waiter are not assigned the same powers, privileges and responsibilities. Similarly, the social situation of a child, a woman or a man in a group may vary in terms of the roles they are allowed to assume.<sup>48</sup>

## Evaluating the power of individuals in a group

Individuals can have power in a group if they possess one or more of the following:<sup>49</sup>

- The ability to reward and punish deviant members;
- Knowledge valued by the group;
- A skill coveted by the group;
- Privileged information;

<sup>47</sup> P. Hare, "Roles and Relationships," in P. Hare, *Small Groups: An Introduction* (London: Praeger, 1996).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> C. Argyris, "Empowerment: The Emperor's New Clothes," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 76, no. 3 (1998), pp. 98-105.

J.R.P. French, B. Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," in D. Cartwright (ed.), *Studies in Social Power* (1959), pp. 150-167.

G. Yukl and B.J. Tracey, "Consequences of Influence Tactics Used with Subordinates, Peers, and the Boss," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 77, no. 4 (1992), pp. 525-535.

J.A. Conger, "Leadership: The Art of Empowering Others," *Academy of Management Executive*, vol. 3, no.1 (1989), pp. 17-24.

R.E. Quinn, G.M. Spreitzer, "The Road to Empowerment: Seven Questions Every Leader Should Consider," *Organizational Dynamics*, vol. 26, no.2 (1997), pp. 37-49.

D.E. Bowen, E.E. Lawler, "Empowering Service Employees," *Sloan Management Review*, vol. 36, no. 4 (1995), pp. 73-85.

- Exemplary behaviour;
- Seen by the group as a good advisor;
- Influence over other members' choices, decisions and behaviour.

### Members and their personalities

Although several members occupy similar roles in a group, each one has a unique personality. The diversity of individual personalities has a definite impact on how the group functions.<sup>50</sup> Here are some of the variations that exist among members:

- **Active or passive attitude or behaviour in the group:** not all members share the same level of involvement in the group. Some play an active role and express their opinions while other members are more timid and less vocal during discussions. Group members can be anywhere in between these two poles (active and passive);
- **Positive or negative attitude in the group:** not all members of a group are congenial and sociable. Some members appear to be congenial and warm, while others are indifferent or cold. Some may constantly disagree with their co-members, while others are more friendly and open to new proposals. Sociability, therefore, varies a great deal from one member to another;
- **Attitude or personality that causes the group to advance or to stagnate:** members invest differently in the activities of the group. Some take their involvement seriously, while others are more focussed on their own needs than the attainment of common objectives.

Some members help the group attain its objectives by:<sup>51</sup>

- Fostering cooperation among members, through their behaviour;
- Seeking to respond to requests made by members;
- Coordinating the actions of group members;
- Facilitating the group's orientation or restating its objectives;
- Stimulating the group and enabling it to progress.

Other members occupy roles that tend to maintain positive social interactions among members by:<sup>52</sup>

- Supporting and encouraging others, and praising the work or personalities of co-members;

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<sup>50</sup> D. Anzieu and J.Y. Martin, *La dynamique des groupes restreints* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1982).  
R.F. Bale, *Interaction Process Analysis: A Method for the Study of Small Groups* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1950).

<sup>51</sup> G. L. Wilson and M. S. Hanna, *Groups in Context: Leadership and Participation in Small Groups* (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1990).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

- Maintaining harmony among members and minimizing tensions and disagreements;
- Helping to reconcile diverging opinions and proposing new options.

There are also individuals whose roles can become problematic for the group and its pursuit of common objectives by:<sup>53</sup>

- Rejecting the ideas of co-members and thereby preventing the group's advancement;
- Competing for prestige;
- Discouraging discussion among members and encouraging long monologues.

### **Leadership and the leader**

Leadership can be defined as a process of social influence by which an individual is able to solicit and obtain the participation of group members in performing a common task.<sup>54</sup> A person who has this power to influence others is called the leader.

Acting as the leader of a group means that this person has authority and responsibilities that differ from those of the other members. Consequently, the status of group leader is unique since he or she may:<sup>55</sup>

- Influence or control interactions among members;
- Encourage others to quickly adopt his or her ideas;
- Make decisions on behalf of the group;
- Impose sanctions or punish members who do not contribute to accomplishing a task.

Each group seeks specific qualities in a leader. Based on the interactions of its members, the group reaches a consensus with regard to the leadership qualities valued, sought or expected:

- In some groups, the behaviours and attributes sought in a leader are extremely specific and leave little space for any form of personal expression. The person who assumes the leadership must therefore remain effective, or risk losing his or her position;
- Other groups may grant the leader more latitude. The leader may therefore be allowed to modify the group's requirements and reconfigure the leader's role based on his or her personality and skills.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> M.M. Chemers, *An Integrative Theory of Leadership Contributors* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates publishers, 1997).

<sup>55</sup> M. Sherif, C.W. Sherif, *Attitude, Ego-Involvement, and Change* (New York: Wiley, 1967).

When members recognize the unique quality of the leader, his or her influence on the members can increase over time.<sup>56</sup> The leader of a group can influence members' choices, decisions and behaviour through mystic powers that he or she claims to possess and that are accepted by the members. For instance, a spiritual group leader can declare to the members that he or she has the ability to communicate with God. Since no one else in the group has this ability, the members may attribute disproportionate importance to the ideas and suggestions put forward by the leader.<sup>57</sup>

### *The leader's personality*

While it is difficult to recognize qualities specific to a leader, certain characteristics are often associated with leaders who are able to maintain their role at the helm of a group:<sup>58</sup>

- **The ability to create emotional ties with group members:** effective leaders often have the ability to quickly forge friendships with group members, and tend to favour warm interpersonal relationships. This helps to ensure better internal functioning of the group;
- **The ability to structure the group:** leaders tend to be creative in their methods for managing the group and intragroup relations;
- **The ability to promote production:** leaders favour a task-oriented approach and succeed in motivating members to pursue common objectives;
- **The ability to show compassion:** leaders are or appear to be tolerant and compassionate when conflicts arise among group members.

Aside from specific personality traits, a leader's success may also depend on his or her ability to facilitate the attainment of the group's objectives<sup>59</sup>. In order to focus members' attention on attaining objectives, the leader may stimulate them by identifying a common enemy. This creates a sense of belonging to the organization and a desire to rally against the group's enemy.

The role of leader varies from one group to the next. To understand the full scope of a leader's power in a group, it is important to observe, among other things, his or her ability to make decisions on behalf of the entire group as well as his or her power to impose sanctions on group members.

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<sup>56</sup> M.A. Hogg, "A Social Identity Theory of Leadership," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, vol. 5, no. 3 (2001), pp. 184-200.

<sup>57</sup> W.E. Rosenbach, *Contemporary Issues in Leadership* (New York: Westview Press, 1998).

M. Galanter, *Cults, Faith, Healing and Coercion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>58</sup> B. Richard, (1995), *op.cit.*

S.A. Kirkpatrick, E.A. Locke, "Leadership: Do Traits Matter?" *Academy of Management Executive*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1991), pp 48-60.

D. Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?" *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 76 (Nov.-Dec. 1998), pp. 92-102.

<sup>59</sup> W. E. Rosenbach (1998). *op.cit.*

## Group communication

In a group, each member becomes versed in the language used and understands the cultural references employed by co-members. Participants in groups usually share common linguistic keys which allows them to understand each other.<sup>60</sup> Take, for example, this conversation between two teenagers:

Nancy says to Julie: “That’s a wicked T-shirt you’re wearing!” Julie understands that Nancy really likes her T-shirt, even though the word “wicked” means “unpleasant” or “evil.” Teenagers understand that this slang term really means “fantastic” or “beautiful.”

Two members from different groups can have difficulty understanding each other even though they speak the same language because the meaning attributed to certain words can vary from one group to the next. Furthermore, cultural differences such as norms and philosophies on life impede fluid communication and language comprehension between members of different groups.<sup>61</sup> Sharing a common language enables members of the same group to understand each other and creates an additional bond uniting them.

## The decision-making process in a group

Group life involves making decisions together. The decision-making process varies among groups. Decisions may be:

- **Imposed by the group’s authority.** This is a quick approach which can also be useful to resolve routine issues. However, when employed abusively, members may gradually feel manipulated by the leader(s) of the group. The fact that the other members are not consulted can hamper the group’s effectiveness and members’ motivation;
- **Made by the group’s authority, following consultation with members.** This solution enables the points of view of several members to be taken into consideration before choosing the most appropriate solution;
- **Made by a person labelled a specialist.** This method of functioning may be effective if the person’s judgement is satisfactory to the other group members. However, the very choice of a specialist can be a source of conflict and controversy. A specialist’s decisions may be contested or rejected;

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<sup>60</sup> V. Aebischer, D. Oberlé, *Les groupes en psychologie sociale* (Paris: Boudas 1992).

J. Deschamps, J.L. Beauvois, *Des attitudes aux attributions : sur la construction de la réalité sociale* (PUG).

S. Moscovici, “L’ère des représentations sociales,” in W. Doise and W. A. Palominari (eds.) *L’étude des représentations sociales* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1986), pp. 1-12.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

- **Made by the majority of the group.** This process may be satisfactory to the members, but may create conflicts with the group's minority who disagrees with the decisions adopted;
- **Formulated by a minority of individuals in the group.** This process is effective when the decisions being made are of no major consequence, but may become a source of conflict if the decisions have a direct impact on the daily lives of the majority of group members;
- **Adopted through consensus.** The participation of all group members may increase the quality and popularity of the decisions being made. However, since this process can take a long time, the group's productivity may be reduced. Furthermore, tensions among members can hinder the chance of finding solutions to difficulties encountered during the decision-making process.

The way in which groups arrive at decisions is, therefore, crucial since it can be a source of conflict or harmony among the members.

### **Mistakes in decision-making**

Mistakes in group decision-making can result from strong group cohesion. The effect of cohesion on decision-making is referred to as the "Janis" effect,<sup>62</sup> after the name of the author who described this phenomenon.

The "Janis" effect occurs when a group tries to establish a consensus around a solution considered to be the most acceptable. In order to safeguard the group's cohesion and avoid any discussion that could lead to conflict, members prefer to adopt a more simplistic but consensual solution than a complex one that could trigger a conflict.

In some groups, maintaining a climate of complicity is so important that participants avoid taking initiative or making counter suggestions in order to prevent any potential conflict. The initial solution, even if it does not seem adequate, is often retained. In this situation, the group is blinded by group loyalty which tends to stifle any critical or independent thinking. Added to this are other conditions in the decision-making process which favour the "Janis" effect:

- The group does not explore alternative solutions.
- The group does not consider all the objectives of the task being accomplished or does not determine the objectives that must be attained.
- The costs and consequences of the decision are not explored. Truths are quickly affirmed without any proof of what is or is not adequate or effective.

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<sup>62</sup> I.L. Janis, *Groupthink* (Boston: Houghton, 1982).

- The search for information is superficial. The members forget or disregard incoherent aspects of their decisions and are only interested in the elements that correspond with their common vision.
- The group is not interested in the difficulties that may be encountered during implementation of the program or project. The group minimizes, or even disregards, any ideas pertaining to these difficulties under the pretext that these situations are extremely rare.

Two major factors can be found in the context of a problematic decision-making process:

- Collective illusion of morality, rationale, unanimity or invariability leads the group to believe that its role is of such high moral calibre that it is incapable of making any mistakes.
- Collective censorship reigns and is self-imposed as well as imposed on others.

As a result, members do not express their ideas in order to preserve the group's harmony.

### **Reasons for becoming a member of a group**

Human beings search for ways to understand their life experiences.<sup>63</sup> In this search for meaning, the beliefs transmitted by a group or its world vision may help some people find the answers they are looking for or bring new meaning to their daily lives.<sup>64</sup>

In a crisis situation, becoming a member of a group enables a person to relieve the tension or stress they are feeling. By joining a group, individuals who have been confronted by a disturbing event, such as the death of a loved one or the end of a relationship, may be better able to understand the event and come to terms with it. For instance, becoming a member of a spiritual group that believes in the existence of life after death may provide an explanation for a person who is grieving the loss of loved one.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> J. Duhaime, "L'adhésion à la conscience de Krishna de 1965 à 1977 aux États-Unis : Un point de vue des sciences sociales," in *Croyances et sociétés*, Collection Héritage projet (Montréal: Fides, 1998), pp. 247-263.

<sup>64</sup> C.Y. Glock, "Origine et Évolution des groupes religieux," *Archives de sociologie des religions*, vol. 8 (1963), pp. 29-38.

C.Y. Glock, "Religion," in *Essays in Empirical Study of Religion* (Belmont CA: Wadsworth, 1973), pp. 455-487.

C.Y. Glock, "Consciousness Among Youth: An Interpretation," in C. Glock and N. Bellah (eds.), *The New Religious Consciousness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 353-366.

<sup>65</sup> K. Pargament, *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, Practice* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 548 pp.

J. Lofland, *Doomsday Cult* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1996).

J. Lofland, N. Skonovd, "Conversion Motifs," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 20, no. 4 (1981), pp. 373-387.



Even though individuals cannot, for instance, bring a deceased child back to life, the beliefs transmitted by the group may allow them to interpret this event in a new light. In this situation, death perceived as unjust takes on a new meaning. An unacceptable death becomes a less painful reality and, in some cases, a tolerable event.<sup>66</sup>

The group offers a framework to help people interpret their problems from a different standpoint. Once they have adopted the group's doctrine or philosophy, difficult challenges may no longer be perceived as insurmountable and, indeed, may take on a new meaning.

In a crisis, some people may find it easier to manage their emotions by being part of a group that provides plausible explanations for their problems and suffering. The group therefore responds to the needs of the person in exchange for the individual's commitment to join the other members in pursuit of the group's objectives.<sup>67</sup>

For some people, belonging to a group allows them to adopt a more harmonious approach to daily problems. Unemployment, for instance, is no longer perceived as a disaster, but as a challenging opportunity for individuals to acquire new skills.

Integrating into group life offers some people a chance to better adapt to stress, physical and psychological exertion, ageing or death.<sup>68</sup> Joining a group can also help some people overcome drug addiction and alcoholism.<sup>69</sup>

#### *Becoming a member to satisfy a need*

A group of people may also share certain beliefs in order to respond to hardships.<sup>70</sup> The various types of hardships experienced by an individual prior to joining a group may include:

- **Organic or physical.** Individuals who are suffering from a disease or live with someone who is suffering from physical problems may turn to a

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<sup>66</sup> M.-A. Pelland, *Récits de vie des membres actifs et d'anciens membres de groupes sectaires* (collection of personal accounts by active and former cult members as part of a dissertation presented to the Faculté des Études supérieures de l'Université de Montréal) 2000, 156 pp.

<sup>67</sup> J. Duhaime, *op.cit.*

<sup>68</sup> K. Pargament, *op.cit.*

<sup>69</sup> J. Richardson, "Psychological and Psychiatric Studies of New Religions," in L.B. Brown, *Advances in the Psychology of Religion* (New York: Pergamon, 1984).

J. Richardson, "Religiosity as Deviance. The Negative Religious Bias in the Use and Misuse of the DSM III," *Deviant Behavior*, vol. 14, no. 21 (1986), pp. 34-65.

J.T. Richardson, "A Sociological Critique of Brainwashing Claims about Recruitment to New Religions," in J. Hadden and D. Bromley, *The Handbook of Cult and Sect in America* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1993), pp. 243-271.

<sup>70</sup> J. Duhaime, *op.cit.*

C.Y. Glock, (1973), *op.cit.*

group for help. Belonging to a group can respond to this type of suffering by offering the promise of a remedy or of a healthier lifestyle.

- **Economic or material.** Individuals may be experiencing financial difficulties or may have material needs. The group can share its resources.
- **Social and community.** Individuals may feel that their relationships with others are unfulfilling. The group offers the possibility of engaging in positive interpersonal relationships, particularly through active participation in community life.
- **Moral.** Individuals may experience confusion with regard to their value system which they may consider to be contrary to socially accepted values. A group may provide them with another moral code to fill this gap.
- **Existential or psychological.** Individuals who are dissatisfied with their lives or their roles in society may be distressed and searching for the meaning of life or for an intense emotional connection. The group may, in these circumstances, provide a lifestyle that responds to their existential angst or sense of emptiness or boredom.

*Becoming a member for reasons of similarity, reciprocity or social status*

Given the diversity of groups, what factors influence a person to choose a particular group over another? Here are some of the reasons that can motivate a person's choice:

*Similarity*

Individuals may decide to join certain groups due to similarities they feel they share with the group. This attraction can be based on values, lifestyle or physical appearance.<sup>71</sup>

*Reciprocity*

Individuals who feel a sense of value through their participation in the group, or who are complimented by the members for their skills, personality or appearance will be more likely to join a particular group, as opposed to another one which is critical of their lifestyle or personality. Conversely, a group will celebrate the arrival of a new candidate if it feels that the individual's skills will contribute to achieving the group's objectives.

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<sup>71</sup> G. P. Parks and L. J. Sanna, *Group Performance and Interaction* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1999).

### *Social status*

A group's social status may be a determining factor in encouraging a person to become a member. A person may decide to become a member because the group is considered to be prestigious in the eyes of the community.<sup>72</sup> A person who becomes a member of an influential group becomes, by association, a prestigious and important person.<sup>73</sup> Limited spaces in a group may heighten some people's desire to join the group.<sup>74</sup>

### *Proximity*

Individuals often choose a group based on the groups available in their community. Obviously, they cannot become members of groups that do not exist or which are unknown to them.<sup>75</sup>

### *Interpersonal relationships in a group*

This section describes the different types of relationships that exist between members and their leaders in Eastern style groups.

#### **Leader-follower relationship**

##### *Relationship with a good guru*

It is difficult to describe the leader of a group as good or bad. Every guru or leader can have harmonious or problematic relationships with certain members of the group.<sup>76</sup>

A "good" leader:<sup>77</sup>

- Has good knowledge of the group's writings;
- Has been the disciple of several masters, and asks many questions during the learning process;
- Lives according to his or her teachings.

##### *The condescending guru*

This type of leader has a paternalistic attitude toward members of the group, and is overprotective and secretive about the leader-follower relationship. Although

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<sup>72</sup> A. Trognon, *Le Groupe : évolution des théories et des pratiques* (Ramonville Saint-Agne: Érès, 1997).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> For a more complete description of the influence processes that can underline integration into group life, see Appendix 1.

<sup>76</sup> In this section, the term "guru" is synonymous with leader. P. Pelletier (2000) uses the term to designate spiritual leaders.

<sup>77</sup> P. Pelletier, *Les gourous et les Maîtres* (Montréal: Édition Fides, 2000).

the leader's intention is to protect and reassure members, in exchange, he or she sometimes demands extreme submission from members. In this situation, spiritual or personal growth occurs through the leader's teachings and the leader-follower relationship. The objective of the group is to promote the leader's spiritual growth so that the participants can share in his or her higher knowledge.

### *The spiritual abuser*

The spiritual abuser may be described as a leader who uses spiritual, biblical or other writings to inflict feelings of guilt on members. The leader uses divine language or prayers to address social, psychological or health problems.

### The swindler guru

Swindler gurus can be described as leaders who constantly ask their followers for money. These leaders live in luxury while their disciples lead an ascetic life, sometimes below the poverty line. This type of guru often does not accept questions from members and expects them to follow whatever he or she tells them.

### *Interdependent relationship*

For some, a unique bond is created between the leader and the follower.<sup>78</sup> This relationship is born out of the following complementary needs between the leader and the members:

- Leaders feel the need to be elected and vested with a mission. They see themselves as guides, leading their followers to salvation.<sup>79</sup> This need to be elected is fulfilled by the members' fervent commitment to follow a leader.
- Members, for their part, want to be recognized as different from the rest of the population through their membership in the group.<sup>80</sup> They feel the need to associate with a person whom they consider to be inspiring in order to follow an ideal.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> D. Casoni, *Les sectes : De la promesse du paradis à l'expérience de l'enfer* (1996 Symposium in Interlaken, Switzerland).

D. Casoni, *Du Paradis à l'enfer : étude des mécanismes psychologiques associés aux dérives sectaires* (Conférence ACFAS, 2000).

D. Casoni, "The Relation of Group Philosophy to Different Types of Dangerous Conduct in Cultic Groups," *Cultic Studies Journal*, vol. 17 (2000b), pp. 143-167.

J.Y. Roy, *Le Syndrome du berger, essai sur les dogmatisme contemporains* (Montréal: Boréal, 1998).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> D. Casoni (1996). op.cit.

These complementary needs and aspirations can create a powerful bond between the leader and the follower who may, over time, become mutually dependent.

In some relationships, the member becomes increasingly dependent on the leader. Membership in the group can eventually encroach on all aspects of an individual's life. Gradually, the members lose their ability to judge and become completely subjected to the leader.

Dependence on a leader becomes problematic when both the members and the leader cannot imagine life without the other.<sup>82</sup> In some cases, leaders feel that it is their duty to preserve the members' fervour. To maintain this bond, the follower may be obliged to respond to all of the leader's demands. In this extreme interdependent relationship, group members can commit criminal acts.<sup>83</sup>

### **Group relationships: possible effects on members**

The following sections deal with the negative effects of group life.<sup>84</sup>

#### *Feeling depersonalized*

Members can feel a sense of loss of identity as they become anonymous in the group. Co-members do not recognize them for who they are, but in terms of what they expect from them.

#### *Feeling threatened*

During the course of their membership in the group, some members may at times feel that they are being judged by co-members in terms of their behaviour, attitude or choices. Members who feel threatened in this way may decide to:

- Conform;
- Revolt;
- Leave the group.

#### *Feeling dependent*

Individuals who participate in group life tend to forge ties and to conform to the demands of others. They also have a tendency of internalizing common rules and images and feel that they belong to a community. This dependence can range from cooperation to fusion. Sometimes members fear the loss of love and support from the other group members and may agree to all of the demands made by the group so as not to be rejected.

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<sup>82</sup> D. Casoni (1998), op.cit.

<sup>83</sup> D. Casoni (1996, 2000a, 2000b), op.cit.

<sup>84</sup> A. Blanchet, A. Trognon, La psychologie des groupes (Paris: Nathan, 1998).

## Group illusion

The illusion is created through statements such as: “We are happy together; we have created a strong group; we have a good leader.”<sup>85</sup> This illusion serves to replace individual identity with group identity. This esprit de corps promotes close relationships among members who all feel important even though they are essentially identical. This state of mind is often accompanied by feelings of euphoria. Two conditions are necessary in order for a group illusion to be created:

- Scapegoat: this allows the group to transpose its internal aggression onto an external body and to enjoy group life free of conflict. The group may perceive another group or non-member as the representation of evil, while the group and its members represent good.
- An egalitarian ideology: this favours the melding of individual differences into a single identity.

## External functioning or intergroup relations

Relationships between groups can foster a sense of social value, and provide advantages for communities, but can also serve to alienate certain groups or their members by promoting relationships based on prejudice, discrimination and conflict. This section examines the question of intergroup relations.

### Creating prejudice and its effect on group relationships

Prejudice in intergroup relations can be explained by two factors: competition between groups for access to available resources and the social identity theory.

### Intergroup competition

Intergroup competition can play a significant role in creating prejudicial or discriminatory ideas, attitudes or behaviour. According to conflict theory, resource scarcity and intergroup competition to acquire them are the source of prejudices against members of opposing groups. When groups engage in this kind of competition, negative or prejudicial attitudes toward their competitors can be observed among group members.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> D. Anzieu, *Le groupe et l'inconscient: l'imaginaire groupal* (Paris: Dunod, 1997).

<sup>86</sup> G.V. Kinloch, *The Comparative Understanding of Intergroup Relations: A Worldwide Analysis* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1999).

P.A. Hare, H.H. Blumberg, M.F. Davies, M.V. Kent, *Small Groups an Introduction* (Connecticut: Praeger, 1996).

### Social identity of members

Social identity theory explains that the mere fact of belonging to a particular group or specific social category encourages the development of prejudices toward members of other groups.<sup>87</sup>

In fact, participating in group life is designed to help members build a positive self-image. To achieve this, groups compare themselves to members of other groups. This comparative evaluation process is designed to satisfy the need to establish a positive identity. As a result, group favouritism emerges as individuals spontaneously consider their co-members to be of high-calibre and denigrate the members of other groups. Depending on the situation, members of adversary groups may be perceived as perverse or amoral. This perception sometimes leads to prejudice or discriminatory behaviour.

A sense of group cohesion can therefore serve to accentuate differences between groups.<sup>88</sup> Gradually, the group may divide the world into two categories— us and them:<sup>89</sup>

- “Us” being group members.
- “Them” being non-members or members of another group who share distinct values, ideas, etc.

In short, when members of a group develop prejudices against members of another group, they also create a glorified image of themselves. By comparing themselves with other groups that are perceived, for instance, as mean-spirited, they feel more confident about their own skills and their ability to overcome any obstacle along their path.

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<sup>87</sup> M. A. Hogg, “A Social Identity Theory of Leadership,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, vol. 5, No. 3 (2001), pp. 184-200.

J.C. Turner, “Towards a Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group,” in H. Tajfel (ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 35-40.

J.C. Turner, M.A. Hogg, P.J. Oakes, S.D. Reicher and M. Wetherell, *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

H. Tajfel and J.C. Turner, “The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour,” in S. Worchel and W. G. Austin (eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986), pp. 7-24.

J.C. Turner, “Social Categorization and the Self-Concept: A Social Cognitive Theory of Group Behaviour,” in E.J. Lawler (ed.), *Advances in Group Processes: Theory and Research*, vol. 2 (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1985), pp. 77-121.

<sup>88</sup> D. Casoni (1996), *op.cit.*

D. Casoni (2000 a), *op.cit.*

G. Krauss, “The psychodynamics of constructive aggression in Small Groups,” *Small Group Research*, vol. 28 no.1 (1997), pp. 122-145.

<sup>89</sup> C. Leclerc (1999), *op.cit.*, pp. 81.

M. Hogg (1992). *op.cit.*

This glorification can be useful in building a strong team spirit. It may, however, become problematic when it leads to the manifestation of discriminatory behaviour.<sup>90</sup>

### **Stereotypes in groups**

Stereotypes are more or less consensual beliefs that individuals share with regard to the behaviour and personality of a group.<sup>91</sup> By definition, stereotypes are generalizations that serve to attribute a specific set of personality traits to members of a particular group and accentuate the differences between groups.

Stereotypes distort reality:<sup>92</sup>

- Group members perceive members of other groups as identical. Members of group A will say, for example, that members of group B are all evil and self-serving. These prejudices can develop even if the members of group B share the same physical and personal features as those of the members of group A.
- By overestimating the differences between groups, members see themselves as unique individuals, while they consider participants of other associations to be identical.

It is much more important to examine how members apply stereotypes than to focus on the stereotypes themselves. Stereotypes become destructive when they lead to racism and discriminatory behaviour toward a group and its members.

### **Discriminatory behaviour**

Discriminatory behaviour can be an attempt to restrict the rights of members of adversary groups. Some situations widen the gap between groups and create a context that lends itself to discriminatory behaviour, such as:<sup>93</sup>

- A group that defines itself as autonomous and self-sufficient and considers relations with other groups to be futile.
- Members who belong to a different language group, for instance, or who enjoy a different institutional role and status.
- Conflicting interests between groups, for example gains by one group which imply a loss for another group.

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<sup>90</sup> R.M. Pyncheon and R. Borum, "Assessing Threats of Targeted Group Violence: Contributions from Social Psychology," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, vol. 17 (1999), pp. 339-355.

<sup>91</sup> V. Yzerbyt and G. Schadrin, *Connaître et juger autrui : Une introduction à la cognition sociale* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1996).

<sup>92</sup> B. Richard (1995), *op.cit.*

<sup>93</sup> M. A. Hogg, *Attitudes, Behavior, and Social Context: The Role of Norms and Group Membership* (Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 2000).



- When the members of each group believe that they have the only true, rational and fair solution.

### Identifying an external scapegoat

The group may also adopt discriminatory behaviour toward a person or a group in order to free itself from existing internal tensions. The group therefore projects all of its tensions onto a scapegoat who is considered to be the cause of all the problems within the group.<sup>94</sup> The scapegoat serves as a call to arms that rallies and unites group members in order to tackle the problems created within the group by this negative force.<sup>95</sup>

### Escalating conflicts

The intergroup problems described in this section (competition and discriminatory group identity) can sometimes heighten intergroup conflicts. This escalation results from growing negative attitudes and behaviour toward other groups.

Due to mounting confrontations and tensions, groups become fearful and feel increasingly threatened by their enemy. They may, therefore, feel the need to react to the enemy group.<sup>96</sup>

In extreme cases, the group may adopt a defensive attitude toward the behaviour and reactions of an enemy group and may, as a result, become more vigilant with regard to the enemy. While observing the opposing group, members may gather evidence in order to prove the other group's ill intentions. The accumulation of evidence may modify or legitimize discriminatory behaviour toward the other group.

### Intergroup conflicts<sup>97</sup>

Intergroup conflicts can take various forms. In a community, the divisions between group interests can lead to polarization and hostilities. Low-intensity conflicts between ethnic, racial and religious groups can be expressed by prejudice, discrimination and social protest.

Intergroup conflicts are not always the result of unfounded perceptions or misunderstanding; they may be based on real differences with regard to power between groups, access to resources, values or significant incompatibilities. Sources of conflict may however, be exacerbated by the subjective process

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<sup>94</sup> P. Mannoni, *La psychologie collective* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1985).

<sup>95</sup> D. Sibony, *Le groupe inconscient: le lien et la peur* (Paris: C. Bourgois, 1980).

<sup>96</sup> R. J. Fisher, "Intergroup Conflict," in M. Deursch and P. T. Coleman, *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), pp. 166-184.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

through which individuals interpret the world and by group functioning in relation to perceived differences and threats.

The differences perceived by groups with regard to access to resources may lead to destructive conflicts. This type of conflict can be described as a social situation in which two groups confront each other. The groups may be opposed due to the incompatibility of their perceptions, goals or values and may, therefore, take steps to control each other. Antagonistic feelings can emerge from this dynamic and prompt one group to take extreme actions to control the group perceived as dangerous or problematic.

### *Sources of intergroup conflicts*

Conflicts can be **economic** when groups vie for the same, often limited, resources. To avoid losing these resources to other associations, some groups may adopt violent strategies.

Conflicts can be based on **values** which involve opposing beliefs and preferences. These conflicts may arise around the meaning of values and the corresponding behaviour.

A variety of groups with different practices and beliefs co-exist daily within a community. **Relations** between these groups can create a climate of misunderstanding and incompatibility which, ultimately, can lead to hostility and discriminatory behaviour.

Conflicts may arise from issues of **power** when groups seek to maximize their influence and control over others. This type of conflict may be perceived as a struggle for domination and control over other groups.<sup>98</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Group functioning and the experience of members may vary according to the:

- Group's objectives;
- Norms that shape behaviour;
- Role and status acquired by each member;
- Presence or absence of a leader;
- Leader's style of authority;
- Type of sanctions condoned by the group;
- Communication among members;
- Decision-making process;
- Bonds that unite members.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 4: Examples of problematic group functioning

Explanations of how groups function internally and externally, presented in Chapter 3, sheds light on how difficulties can arise when living in a community. In this chapter, we apply these theories to three case studies.

These examples explore the path towards violence of three groups: Roch “Moïse” Thériault’s group, the Order of the Solar Temple (OTS) and Heaven’s Gate.

Although many groups exist in our society, only a minute number of them end in tragedy. The three cases examined here help to illustrate the process by which a group, with a philosophy similar to other organizations, can ultimately resort to violence to achieve its goals.

Each case study provides a history of the group, an analysis of how the group functioned internally and externally as well as an examination of the group’s behaviour through the lens of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

### **Roch “Moïse” Thériault’s group**

Between the late 1970s and the end of the ‘80s, a small group of men and women accepted Roch Thériault as their leader.

Roch Thériault believed that God had entrusted him with a special mission to build a better world in preparation for the impending apocalypse, followed by the dawning of a new world.

The group’s initial goal was to offer detoxification services, an initiative that attracted a few people who followed Roch Thériault across various regions of Quebec. Most of these individuals believed that this project would bring new meaning to their lives.<sup>99</sup>

Over a period of about 12 years, some 20 people left their family and friends to live what they believed to be a pure existence, sheltered from temptation and sin. While members were initially motivated to save people from their addictions, their reasons for participating in the group gradually changed. After a few months, they were not only committed to helping people in their detoxification process, but also to helping Roch Thériault achieve his “divine” mission.

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<sup>99</sup> F. Laflamme, *Roch Thériault dit Moïse* (Quebec City: Stanké, 1997), 229 pp;

G. Lavallée, *L’alliance de la brebis* (Montreal: Édition JCL, 1993), 438 pp;

R. Thériault, *L’affaire Moïse, La montagne de l’Éternel* (Montreal: Les éditions du nouveau monde, 1983), 173 pp.

During this period, the members of the group pursued the dream of becoming God's chosen people. For some, the experience was difficult at times but generally satisfying. For others, however, the pursuit of the ideal became a nightmare. Some of the members suffered enormously in order to be seen as obedient followers, deserving of acceptance into the Kingdom of God. Others continue, to this day, to suffer physical, psychological and financial scars from their experience. The following section tells their story.

## **Group history**

### *Foundation*

At the end of the '70s, Roch Thériault was a member of the 7th Day Adventist Church. Driven by a desire to help people free themselves from drug and nicotine addiction, Roch Thériault searched for effective means to achieve that end. He decided to offer health seminars for smokers across Quebec. He described his service as follows:

I organized detoxification sessions in several cities across Quebec, in the counties of Beauce, Lotbinière, Dorchester, Bellechasse. A five-day program based on healthy eating, psychology and group therapy achieved excellent results.<sup>100</sup>

Thériault talked about his seminars during meetings organized by the 7th Day Adventist Church as well as his plan to help Quebecers overcome their addictions. Following a number of such meetings and discussions, a few Church members decided to join Thériault and pursue his mission of detoxifying Quebecers.

While Thériault did not set out with the objective of founding a group or commune, several members decided to live with him and pursue his mission. According to Thériault, the idea of creating a commune was fortuitous, rather than part of a plan:

The fact that colleagues came to live and work with me led to some serious organizational problems. They had all left paid jobs to devote their time to this new work. Since my courses had no set fee and participants paid what they could at the end of each session, it was impossible for me to pay my helpers. That is what prompted us to create a commune.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Note: All quotations in this section on Roch Theriault are independent translations from French.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

*Daily life: the beginnings of group life*

At its inception, the group organized free banquets for the underprivileged. In one case it took in a young girl suffering from multiple sclerosis, providing her with care and comfort.

According to Thériault, the free care that was offered to the population created a conflict with members of the 7th Day Adventist Church. Following much discussion between the Church, Thériault and his disciples were banned from the Church.

Despite this conflict, the members continued to offer their detoxification services in various regions of Quebec. After a few months, however, the drop in participants led the members to withdraw to a remote region of Quebec. Thériault perceived that the public had an uncompromising attitude toward his group and asked his members to cut off all contact with family and friends. Referring to the Bible, he justified his demand by stating, "Keep Evil at arm's length."<sup>102</sup>

During this period, he also asked all the members of the group to wear identical clothes.

On June 5, 1978, a few members talked about exploring the Gaspé region in eastern Quebec to find a new home. Roch Thériault explains his decision to leave the Beauce region in southern Quebec, for the Gaspé:

We had been living all together for close to a year when I decided to move there, without entertaining the idea of bringing the rest of the group with me. I have to admit that my desire to isolate myself in this magical place was irrational, inexplicable and very personal. But time had strengthened our bonds and we were united more than ever in this endeavour. While I had been the catalyst of the group, every major decision concerning the life of the group was always made with the consent of the majority of the members. Thus, I was not surprised that all of the members decided, without hesitation, to join me in preparing for our departure for the mountain.<sup>103</sup>

On July 9, 1978, the group settled in an isolated area of forest in the Gaspé. Two days later, the group began building a chalet.

Shortly after their arrival in the Gaspé, Roch Thériault decided to give each member a new name to mark their new beginning. Members were asked to draw names from a hat such as: Cain, Judah, Gideon, Rachel, Shuah, Thina, Salome,

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<sup>102</sup> G. Lavallée (1993), op.cit., p. 108.

<sup>103</sup> F. Laflamme (1997), op.cit., p. 81.

Elon, Keturah and Ahab. As for Roch Thériault, the members decided to rename him Moïse (Moses).<sup>104</sup>

On January 3, 1979, Moses fathered his first child in the commune.<sup>105</sup> In the ensuing 12 years more than 20 children were born to five women in the group. Moses fathered most of them.

*The end of the world*<sup>106</sup>

Roch Thériault had announced that the world would end on February 19, 1979. When this date came and went, and nothing happened, Thériault explained to his members that God had indicated that date to him but that nothing was certain. He added that one second in the life of God could be 40 years of life on earth and, inversely, one second on earth could be 40 years in God's life, thus, the most likely explanation was that there had been a miscalculation.

The members were not troubled by Thériault's mistaken prediction and together they continued to pursue their goal to assist him in his divine mission.

*Roch Thériault's problems with the law and social services*

Following a radio interview with Roch Thériault, the police located the group and enforced an existing court order against one of its members. They took him to the hospital for psychiatric evaluation. The police also took Thériault and three other members to the police station for questioning.

The members were freed shortly thereafter but Thériault was accused of obstructing justice for having refused to release the member who was the target of the court order. Following his own psychiatric evaluation, Thériault was deemed unfit to stand trial and was transferred to a psychiatric institution in the Quebec City area.

A second psychiatric evaluation reversed the initial assessment, and Thériault was brought to trial on charges of obstructing justice. He was found guilty and given a suspended sentence. Roch Thériault returned to the commune on April 27, 1979.<sup>107</sup>

Soon after, physical abuse within the group began. Thériault beat a member (Gabrielle Lavallée) with a belt, punishing her for falling asleep in the bathroom during one of his speeches.

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<sup>104</sup> G. Lavallée (1993), op.cit., pp. 138-139.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp. 160-161.

<sup>106</sup> P. Kaihla and R. Laver, *Savage Messiah* (Seal Books/McClelland Bantam, 1994), p. 115.

<sup>107</sup> G. Lavallée (1993), op.cit.

Following this episode, physical punishment of members was meted out more and more frequently. Members even participated in these punishments. Gabrielle Lavallée describes one such episode in which she was the victim:

– Admit that you are less than nothing! (Moses) – It’s true, Papy! (Gabrielle) – So then I should punish you? (Moses). – Yes... Actually no... I don’t know! (Gabrielle) He turns to the others. – You punish her. Do what you think you should do to her. (Moses) Everyone surrounded me, kicking me, pulling my hair, my pubic hair, my armpit hair. I screamed. I was so scared, I soiled myself. Schua screamed and Moses punched her, knocking her off her feet. – When you punish a friend you shouldn’t do that. Now hit Tirzah [Gabrielle] the way you deserve to be hit (Moses). She got up off the floor, shaking, walked over to me and kicked me hard in the stomach, which made me double over.<sup>108</sup>

Roch Thériault increasingly viewed himself as all-powerful. He even believed he had the powers of a shaman and healer. He started forcing treatments on members who were sick. In one case, he gave an enema using warm wine to cure the illness of one of his disciples.

During one wintertime punishment session, he told two members to go outside naked. When one of the punished members exclaimed: “But, Papy, we’re freezing outside, we’re going to get sick,” Moses answered: “You won’t get sick unless I decide you will. Nothing happens here without my consent, as is my Master’s desire. Get out! Babylonians.”<sup>109</sup>

Moses demanded absolute obedience from the members of his group. During one punishment session, he asked a male member to cut off his wife’s toe. He obeyed the order. Then, Moses asked this man to cut off Gabrielle’s finger, which he also complied with.<sup>110</sup>

One of the children in the group, named Ezekiel was beaten by another member and injured. To heal him, Moses, assisted by Gabrielle, injected rubbing alcohol into his stomach and partially excised the child’s foreskin. On March 23, 1981, a few days after this “operation,” the child died.

With Gabrielle’s assistance, Moses then castrated the man who beat the child, believing that this would purify the aggressor.

On November 12, 1981, the police showed up at the commune. They questioned some of the members about an altercation that had taken place between the members and some lumberjacks.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., pp. 182-183.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp. 214.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., pp. 215-216.

On December 9, 1981, the police returned to the commune after the member who had been castrated told them his story. The police arrested four members, including Moses, for Ezekiel's death. On December 18, they were charged with criminal responsibility for the child's death.

In addition, Gabrielle Lavallée was accused of having deliberately assisted Moses during the castration, and that as a nurse she should have known that the procedure could be dangerous.

On December 23, Judge Jean-Roch Roy sent the disciples of the group an eviction notice. On January 18, 1982, the members who were still living in the commune were evicted by forest rangers.

On September 28, 1982, the four accused members were found guilty of illegally practising medicine, causing the death of young Ezekiel. They all received jail sentences ranging from nine months to one year. During his incarceration, Moses wrote a book about the group's life in the Gaspé forest.<sup>111</sup>

#### *Departure from Quebec*

On May 1, 1984, the group left the Gaspé for Burnt River, Ontario, where the members built a new settlement in a field far from the village.<sup>112</sup>

But the move did not bring a stop to the group's morbid activities and, on January 26, 1985,<sup>113</sup> Gabrielle's son died. The autopsy concluded sudden infant death syndrome. Shortly after this death, a child fled after having been severely beaten. He told police he had been sexually assaulted by Moses. Following this incident, 17 children born in the commune were taken from the group and put in the care of the Children's Aid Society.

On September 29, 1988, a female member (Solange Boilard) died following an operation by Moses for a stomach ache. The group buried her then disinterred her a few days later. This happened three times before her final burial. Moses kept a piece of one of her bones tied on a string around his neck, concealed by his beard.

The group raised money for its basic needs by making and selling bread and pastries door-to-door. On November 5, 1988, Moses extracted eight of Gabrielle's teeth to punish her for low pastry sales. Gabrielle fled after this event, but returned to the group a few days later.

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<sup>111</sup> This book was published a few months later. See, R. Thériault, *L'Affaire Moïse : La montagne de l'Éternel* (Quebec City: Éditions du Nouveau monde, 1983), 173 pp.

<sup>112</sup> G. Lavallée (1993), *op.cit.* p. 262.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.



Following this episode, Gabrielle left and returned to the group several times. After a visit to her brother's home on May 23, 1989, Gabrielle returned to the group. By then she had acknowledged that she was scared of Moses but could not live without him.

Shortly after her return, Moses noticed that one of Gabrielle's fingers was paralyzed. He ordered her to show it to him. When she did so, he punctured her hand with a hunting knife. He then insisted that he needed to amputate her hand to prevent gangrene, and proceeded instead to amputate her arm.

Following this event, Gabrielle stashed her clothing and waited for the right time to leave the group. On August 14, she fled the commune for good. Once she arrived in town she was immediately hospitalized and told the police her story.

Five days after Gabrielle's hospitalization, Moses, two of his wives and two children were stopped by the police while trying to flee to the United States. In October 1990, Thériault was found guilty of:

- Extracting eight of Gabrielle's teeth using pliers;
- Injuring her hand;
- Amputating her arm;
- Cauterizing her wound.

Moses was also accused and found guilty of murdering Solange Boilard. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Here is Roch Thériault's account of the events that led to his imprisonment:

A lot of things happened in Burnt River. My alcoholism accounts for much of it, serving as a catalyst for my psychosomatic imbalances. I was criticized in particular for my exploratory surgery on Simone (Solange Boilard), my dear love, when she was at death's door. She died the next day, and I have never recovered. I was also criticized for amputating the arm of one of the members of the group. In addition to the brutal acts I committed under the influence of alcohol and the ascetic fury that possessed me, my illegal practice of medicine exacerbated the situation.<sup>114</sup>

*Roch Thériault's situation in 2005*

Roch "Moses" Thériault is still in prison. Since his incarceration in 1989, he has been transferred several times to different Canadian prisons. In each of these

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<sup>114</sup> F. Laflamme (1997), op.cit., p. 143.

prisons, he has received frequent visits from three female members of his group and has fathered four children.<sup>115</sup>

On July 12, 2002, the National Parole Board refused Thériault's request for parole. It based its decision on various psychological and psychiatric evaluations and concluded that Thériault still represents a danger to society. At that hearing Thériault stated that he was not seeking parole because of his fear of reprisal from the community.<sup>116</sup>

## **Analysis of the internal and external functioning of the group**

### **Group norms**

Initially, the group's norms consisted of endeavouring to live free of sin. To achieve this, the members had to cut to a minimum their possessions and share what they had.

Some of the norms in place in the early years included:

- Living the lifestyle of the early Christians;
- Living free of sin;
- Renouncing all possessions;
- Devoting one's time to community work;
- Eating as little as possible in order to avoid the sin of greed;
- Submitting to communal confessions;
- Consulting with Moses on any decision;
- Respecting Moses' dress code: a tunic with no undergarments.

Gradually, Moses' control over the members grew, as did the number of rules governing, among other things, their sexual life, daily decisions and interactions with non-members. For example:

- Members wishing to engage in sexual activity had first to be blessed by Moses through the sacraments of marriage, and then obtain his approval for any reproductive activity. Thériault decided which members would have sexual activity and with whom;
- Members were required to have as little contact as possible with people outside the commune, since they were considered impure;
- Mothers were not allowed to personally look after their children. In the group, children's education was the exclusive responsibility of one or two women;

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<sup>115</sup> K. Gagnon, "Sur la trace de Moïse Thériault trois femmes suivent toujours leur maître," *Journal de Québec* (2002), pp. 2-3.

<sup>116</sup> K. Gagnon, "Roch Thériault ne veut pas sortir," *Journal de Montréal* (2002), pp. 4-5.

- Members had to learn to follow Moses' every word. They were not allowed to listen to their inner voice, which was considered the voice of the Devil.

### **Double standard**

A few weeks after the group was created, Thériault established one set of norms for the group, and another for himself. For example, while the members could only eat grains and vegetables, Thériault's diet included all four food groups. And while members were not allowed to engage in extramarital sexual relations, he freely engaged in relations with most of the women in the group.

He justified his right to deviate from the established norms by pointing to the sacred nature of his role in the group. As a representative of God, he was permitted to have sexual relations with all of the women so as to sow God's seed on earth. As for his more complete diet, he explained to the group that consuming fresh produce had a devastating effect on his body and, thus, his diet was in fact a way of suffering, and not a sin of greed.

### **Punishments**

To avoid being punished by Moses, members had to adhere to all of the rules and control their behaviour. Thériault viewed himself as a judge, scrutinizing the members' purity and ability to respect the group's norms. Transgressions resulted in beatings by Moses and sometimes by other members. In fact, purification sessions through violence were one of Moses' favoured methods of punishment.

There were purification periods when, completely naked, Moses would tear us to pieces until we could find the inspiration we needed to write about our wrongdoings in the *Journal des enfants d'Israël*, our community newsletter. Following these sessions, we would lay all over the house, so wounded that, once, I had to fill a five-gallon pail five times with water to wash away the puddles of blood on the floor.<sup>117</sup>

Thériault would dissuade members who expressed a desire to leave. Here is an excerpt of one particular episode:

She returned, walking in front of him, holding her back, her face twisted in pain and covered in tears. I realized with shock that he had beaten her. "It's for her own good. I beat her because I love her. Nothing like taking a stick to the back. Roberte no longer

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<sup>117</sup> G. Lavallée (1993), op.cit., p.192.

wishes to leave; I wrenched the stray sheep from the Devil's clutches and brought her back into the flock."<sup>118</sup>

Moses' demands for conformity in the commune became more and more extreme. And the sanctions he imposed encouraged extreme submission from the members.<sup>119</sup> A former member states:

Today, I realize that the interactions between members of the group, including its leader, were based in large part on a kind of camouflage, a kind of hide-and-seek with the self. All of this was going on under the lofty and sincere pretext of achieving divine Grace through the intercession of the presumed representative of the Supreme Being—a most serious game. As for the so-called representative, the privilege of guarding his flock enabled him to achieve the triumph of heavenly glory.<sup>120</sup>

I would like to point out that during this entire communal existence, our voyage took place in total silence; conversation among the members was nonexistent. The members followed their zeal inspired by their faith and devotion to a cause that, over the years, had become more and more obscure, a game that had become more and more dangerous. His followers, in their respective roles as dramatic actors, carried out dangerous stunts as part of various episodes in a script for their own salvation from catastrophe. Some tried to initiate dialogue, but in vain; we had fallen victim to fanaticism. We were all stuck in the ideal of a sacrifice that would make us God's children. Daily tasks, in addition to other work, were our only salvation. In our ignorance, we were slipping into the depths of personal degeneration. And this created traps in our relationships; affection for each other had disappeared. Each of us wallowed in dreadful and depressing isolation.<sup>121</sup>

This is how Moses explained why the members had to follow his rules to the letter:

If you are ready, I want you to promise that you will not complain, whatever happens. In this venture, you need a guide; the Hebrews were not able to free themselves from Egyptian slavery without Moses; the same applies to you. Even if I don't understand why—in any event, my role is not to interpret the Lord's ways—my Master chose me to guide you. If you follow, you must follow my

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>119</sup> F. Laflamme (1997), *op.cit.*, pp. 186-187.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.186-187.

teachings and refrain from criticizing them, whatever happens. I am not acting on my will but on the will of the Master. You are not following me, but the Master through me. I am therefore asking you now, before we go any further toward the mountain that the Master is giving us to protect us from His wrath, I am asking you to take an oath.<sup>122</sup>

This is one member's assessment of Thériault's expectations:

I realized that Papy was asking us to renounce all forms of democracy, to put our life in God's hands through him, to recognize from now on a kind of new alliance with him as the Shepherd, and us as the sheep.<sup>123</sup>

### **Worldview**

The group viewed the world as divided into two universes: good and evil; members and non-members; members who respected the norms and those who did not. This worldview had the effect of isolating the members from the outside world, so as not to be influenced by their impurity.

### **The leader's role**

Roch Thériault came to believe he had a special mission on earth and that he was different from other human beings. He described himself as the one chosen by God:

Don't take this badly, but you are all at degrees of spiritual development distinctly inferior to mine; that is why you cannot accompany me up there. I am the last prophet on this earth and my Master speaks directly to me as he did to my distant ancestor, Moses.<sup>124</sup>

The fact that he perceived himself as different from the masses justified, in his mind, all of the demands he made on his disciples. For example, the fact that he was God's representative on Earth and spoke with God, allowed him to engage in sexual relations with the women in the commune:

I must announce to all of you that my Master has ordered me to take many wives in order to instruct them (...). My Master has authorized me to take as concubines the women who will follow me so that I can teach them true love.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> G. Lavallée (1993), op.cit., pp. 124-125.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., pp. 145-146.

Thériault believed that he possessed mystical powers and considered himself a shaman and healer, despite the fact that he had no medical qualifications. This new talent gave him the right to impose treatments that he deemed appropriate to heal the members of his group. This was another means to impose his power over the members' lives.

In one instance, Moses' insistence that he operate on a boy to heal him.

He injected rubbing alcohol into his stomach; then he sterilized a pair of scissors and, while I held Ezekiel, he carried out a partial circumcision of a part of the foreskin that had a lump filled with serous fluid.<sup>126</sup>

This "treatment" led to the boy's death.

### **Leader-follower relationship**

A complex relationship bound Roch Thériault and the members of his group. From the inception of the group, members talked about their love and admiration for this man who they described as infinitely good and all-powerful. This description by an ex-member illustrates the love for this "representative of God."

I was fascinated by this man, and in love with him. However, I knew that he was one of those exceptional beings who you could never really be close to, but can only respect.<sup>127</sup>

Thériault saw himself as superior to the members of the group and he had a constant need to be reassured of his this. As time went on, his demands for this recognition became more extreme and physically destructive to his disciples. For example:

– Cain, faithful servant, said Moses, will you obey me right to the end? – Of course, Papy! – Prove it to me, Cain. Cut off one of your unruly wife's toes. I couldn't believe my eyes: while the others held Salomé down, her husband put her toe between the blades of the pliers and, in one clean cut, the toe fell off, followed by a gush of blood.<sup>128</sup>

While certain members were starting to have qualms, no one left the group.

I remembered the Charles Manson cult in the United States, and wondered if this was the same thing. Then I'd shake myself: no! This is not the same thing, it can't be the same. Moses is a good

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>127</sup> F. Laflamme (1997), op.cit., p. 187.

<sup>128</sup> G. Lavallée (1993), op.cit., pp. 214-215.

person. Didn't the voices tell me that he would see it through to the end! And who am I to judge him? Isn't it written in Matthew: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get."<sup>129</sup>

Who was crazier? Me or Roch? We both were. He claimed to be the only representative of God, and I believed I was a child of the Lord, obedient before his representative. We both ate from the same plate, that of ignorance and illumination.<sup>130</sup>

It was only later, in the commune's last three years that I started to see him differently and to suspect that he did not at all correspond with my image of him. Once I realized this, watching his behaviour more and more closely, it became increasingly clear to me that Thériault had a serious problem that I could not explain. That's when I felt something very poignant grip my very being, as if the veil of divinity and legend had just been torn away, and my dream shattered, leaving only my natural love for him to show through.<sup>131</sup>

### **Relationships between members**

The members felt love towards one another and the cohesion among the followers fostered a feeling of separateness from the outside world.

We formed a kind of cloistered, very intimate community. One of the features of our belief was to observe Sabbath. Thus, all work stopped on Saturday.<sup>132</sup>

When the group was first formed, conflicts arose among the members. But harmony was quickly restored and disagreements were attributed to the flawed behaviour of members who were still attached to their impure ways.

Days would go by and certain conflicts would arise for nothing. Someone would stay in the bathroom too long, someone's whistling would irritate another member. We all had our personal habits and these clashed with the communal life we were trying to build that reproduced how real Christians would live [...] His words [Roch] were wise and generally served to patch things up between members who were arguing over a grunt or slammed door. All he

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>130</sup> F. Laflamme (1997), op.cit., p. 21.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>132</sup> G. Lavallée (1993), op.cit., p. 91.

had to do was remind us of our past errors for us to realize that what we were doing here was good for all of us.<sup>133</sup>

Gradually, the ideal pursued by the group—to live in a pure world free of sin—had significant effects on the relationships among members. Vigilance and jealousy became more and more pronounced. Each member monitored the behaviour of the others to prevent the emergence of deviant behaviour.

With every passing day, I found Moses a little harsher. He explained this by telling us that it was only through mortification that we would overcome the weaknesses of the flesh, but even so...sometimes I felt that love was lacking. Little by little, the wonderful camaraderie of the early days turned into suspicion. As if each one wanted to gain Moses' approval. And some members joined forces. I had the impression that our community was divided into two groups: the favourites and the others. What could I do to win back his esteem?<sup>134</sup>

With time, it became clear that there was a division among the members of the group: the favourites and the victims. This split contributed to conflicts between members. It even led some members to accept the violence that Moses used against other members as proof of his favouritism towards them.

I was conflicted. I could not approve of this treatment and, yet, part of me felt that because he punished his favourites, I felt like he was closer to me. That maybe he would allow me to get closer to him. I knew I was wrong, but I so wanted to be closer to him. Was it the same for the others when it was my turn to be punished?<sup>135</sup>

The history of the group as well as a partial analysis of its functioning reveals a radicalization of the group's rules and an increase in Thériault's power. While the group started out with norms that were similar to those of other spiritual groups, conformism and extreme submission by members to Thériault's authority led to the acceptance of the use of violence to punish deviant members.

### **The Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the members of Roch Thériault's group**

Life in Roch Thériault's group was often alienating for certain members. In fact, some of the information provided by Gabrielle Lavallée to police led to an investigation and criminal charges against Roch Thériault who was sentenced for a number of crimes, including the murder of Solange Boilard.

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., pp. 80-81.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., pp. 140-141.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., pp. 197-198.



Besides the criminal proceedings against the leader of this group, would a preliminary intervention have protected the life and the safety of certain members? This is difficult to determine. A number of officials came into contact with Thériault's group during its period in the Gaspé: police officers, forest rangers, psychiatrists and so on. Not one of them noted any psychological or physical violence in the group. It was only following a complaint by a male member who had fled the group, after being castrated by Thériault, that the leader of the group was imprisoned and the members were evicted from their forest dwelling in the Gaspé.

Could these officials have acted any differently? It is important to point out that the "law of silence" reigned among the members. Consequently, it was difficult for the police and forest rangers to obtain information, except what was provided by Roch Thériault himself. The members' living conditions were, therefore, difficult to evaluate. Furthermore, at that time, the members constantly repeated that life was beautiful and that they were happy together. The group cohesion was so strong that it was difficult to believe that a member would have been able to express any dissatisfaction with life in the group. In addition, shortly after his release from prison in 1985, Thériault and his group left the Quebec jurisdiction for Ontario, effectively ending the capacity of Quebec officials to monitor the group.

The intervention by Ontario's Children's Aid Society, following the flight of one of the children from the group, meant that school age children from the group were able to go to school and live a more stable life with new families.

The violence perpetrated against the members, the healing sessions, the operations: could these have been avoided? While the police certainly had their concerns about the treatment that was reserved for members of the group, they could do nothing without proof and the cooperation of group members.

In conclusion, life in Roch Thériault's group was difficult for the members. On numerous occasions, their rights and freedoms were violated. Indeed, Thériault was incarcerated for several criminal acts that he committed against group members. Nevertheless, the numerous interventions by government agencies in Quebec and Ontario were not able to prevent the physical, psychological and monetary damage inflicted on the members. Lack of proof and the absence of cooperation from the victims prolonged the suffering of men, women and children. The law of silence imposed by Thériault and the extreme submission of his disciples protected him for a long time from being accountable for his acts.

## **Order of the Solar Temple (OTS)**

The Order of the Solar Temple (OTS, *Ordre du Temple Solaire*) gained international notoriety following the murders, suicides and arson that occurred in Switzerland and Quebec in 1994, in France in 1995 and again in Quebec in 1997. The group's history can be traced back to well before the 1990s. The group was founded in France in 1984 by Jo Di Mambro and Luc Jouret.<sup>136</sup> What follows is a summary of the history of the group.

### **Group history**

#### **Golden age of the OTS**

The beliefs and traditions elaborated by Jo Di Mambro were inspired by his experience between 1956 and 1969 with the Ancient and Mystic Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC), or Rosicrucian Order.<sup>137</sup>

In 1976, Jo Di Mambro founded the Centre for the Preparation of the New Age. Shortly thereafter, a small group of men and women came to live with Di Mambro. He transmitted his knowledge and beliefs to them so that together they could prepare for the arrival of the new age. Their daily schedule was organized around propagating the group's philosophy, preparing for the new age and performing esoteric ceremonies.

In 1978, Di Mambro founded a second centre, in Geneva, called the Golden Way Foundation. As with the first group, the members of this centre believed that the universe was going to be transformed. Participation in this group would enable the members to prepare their bodies and spirits for passage into the new world.<sup>138</sup>

In the early 1980s Di Mambro met Luc Jouret and saw in him the charismatic man who could present the group's philosophy to the public. Luc Jouret was rapidly integrated into one of Di Mambro's groups.<sup>139</sup>

#### **Foundation of the OTS: The active period**

In 1984, the Golden Way Foundation approved and financed Jo Di Mambro and his spouse's move to Canada. Jouret and Di Mambro then founded the Order of the Solar Temple.

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<sup>136</sup> The history of the Solar Temple in this section is based in large part on the research done by Jean-François Mayer.

<sup>137</sup> J.F. Mayer, *Les Mythes de l'ordre du Temple Solaire* (Geneva: Georg, 1996), p. 38.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>139</sup> J.R. Hall, "The Mystical Apocalypse of the Solar Temple," in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer, *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 291-292.

While Di Mambro led the group behind the scenes, Luc Jouret was its public face. He gave lectures in France, Switzerland and Canada and participated in radio shows where he talked about various themes addressed in the group's public lectures.<sup>140</sup>

Between 1983 and 1984, Jacques Breyer, a neo-templar from another order, suggested that the leaders create various structures that would enable the group to propagate its ideology and strengthen its concrete actions. Three structures with different functions were thus created<sup>141</sup> and were active from 1984 to 1990:

- 1st structure: Amanta Club

The goal of this club was to disseminate the group's philosophy and to bring together a spiritual elite in order to achieve a higher state of consciousness. This club offered lectures on various themes in Canada, the Caribbean, the United States, Spain, France and Switzerland. While these lectures drew large numbers, few joined the group or were selected to be part of its elite.

- 2nd structure: Archedia Club

After recruiting a small number of individuals to the Amanta Club and giving them some basic knowledge, certain participants were invited to join the Archedia Club. The objective of this club was to provide members with more advanced knowledge that would enable them to move towards a higher consciousness.

- 3rd structure: International Knighthood Organization

Access to this structure was even more restricted. Its members had access to special publications and to initiations exclusive to this structure.

From 1984 to 1990, the number of members in each of these structures grew. Membership peaked in 1989 at 442 members.<sup>142</sup>

Di Mambro presented himself to the members as a representative of higher beings and the receiver and transmitter of divine messages, which he would receive during group ceremonies.

During this period, the group's idea to build health centres in Europe and Canada prompted certain members to donate more money to the organization.

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<sup>140</sup> J.F. Mayer, *op.cit.*, p. 33

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54

### Conflicts and decline

In the early '90s, some members started to question Jo Di Mambro's authority and mystical powers. Di Mambro's own son, Élie, questioned the visions and messages his father claimed to receive from the Masters. Élie discovered that the spiritual visions, witnessed by several members, were staged by his father and that the divine beings and messages received were actually produced by special effects and holograms. He decided to share his discovery with the other members of the group.

This denunciation prompted the departure of some 15 members. Others, however, were sceptical of Élie's claims and continued to believe that the manifestations of the spiritual Masters were real.<sup>143</sup>

Some members also began to question Di Mambro's change in lifestyle and behaviour. While all of the group's members lived humbly in the early years of the group, Jo Di Mambro lived in increasing opulence. For example, he travelled first-class and owned several luxurious homes. He also no longer participated in the centre's daily tasks as he once had.

Some members even noted a change in Di Mambro's attitude towards them. Where once he had been tolerant and open to criticism, he had become authoritarian, demanding unconditional obedience. He was suspicious of competitors, and certain members felt that he was trying to divide them in an effort to increase his control over the group. Others were critical of the fact that the group never fulfilled its plans to open health centres.

In the early 90s, these criticisms led to a drop in membership and financial contributions, and the group's revenue dropped from 483,683 Swiss francs in 1991 to 89,000 Swiss francs in 1993.

An internal report found in one of the group's computers also showed that some of Di Mambro's followers who had doubts about him still wanted to maintain their ties with the group and its members.

I personally believe in a cosmic law. I believe that messages were received 2000 years ago, and I am striving to live by them. I believe in a life ethic that my parents taught me and that I am working hard to apply. I believe in a consciousness that I am capable of finding. If I follow this path, I can't go wrong. And these claims, whether true or false, will not derail me from what I must do. I will continue to work in the Order and for the mission for as long as you need me and I am able to do so.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p. 61.

In 1994, two members of the Order of the Solar Temple wrote a letter denouncing Di Mambro's behaviour. Among other things, they criticized him for using video material to persuade members of his mystical powers. For them, Di Mambro's fraudulent actions had destroyed the fraternity built by the members. The disappearance of funds from the group's coffers and the use of holograms to simulate Di Mambro's powers had destroyed their confidence in the group, which in turn, led them to question their path toward a higher consciousness.

### **Social reactions**

The group also generated reaction from the wider community. In 1991, when several members from Martinique decided to abandon their worldly possessions and move to Canada, Lucien Zecler, president of ADFI Martinique (Association for the Defence of Families and Individuals), investigated the OTS.<sup>145</sup> In fact, a former OTS member travelled to Martinique to raise awareness of the dangers of this group.

In this period, a number of Quebec organizations, including Info-Cult, received a letter from ADFI Martinique, in which Zecler expressed his doubts about the group. In particular, he was concerned about the use of mind control to subjugate members.

In 1993, Quebec's provincial police (Sûreté du Québec - SQ) was investigating the threats of an unknown terrorist group in Quebec. At the same time, the SQ was informed of an attempt by an OTS member to purchase three firearms equipped with silencers. This led the SQ to investigate the activities of this group.

When the SQ began tapping the telephone conversations of group members, it started to suspect that it was the OTS that was threatening the terrorist attacks. However, upon further investigation, this theory was discounted. Nevertheless, Luc Jouret and two other OTS members were sentenced to one year probation and a \$1,000 fine for possession of illegally purchased firearms.

The events around the arrest and sentencing of Jouret and two others captured headlines in Quebec for weeks. Police surveillance and the publicity confirmed Di Mambro's feeling that the leaders of the group were being persecuted.

In this same period, an investigation was underway on the possibility of illegal currency dealings involving Di Mambro and his spouse, which made it difficult for her to renew her French passport. The French fraud squad was on the case and France's general consulate in Montreal was also investigating the couple with regard to the renewal of their passports. These events further contributed to a feeling of persecution.

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<sup>145</sup> J.R. Hall, "The Mystical Apocalypse of the Solar Temple," in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer, *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 291-292.

In spring 1994, some of the group's members claimed that they were being increasingly rejected by their surrounding community and the world in general:

We are rejected by the whole world. First by the people, the people can no longer withstand us. And our Earth, fortunately she rejects us. How would we leave [otherwise]? We also reject this planet. We wait for the day we can leave . . . life for me is intolerable, intolerable, I can't go on. So think about the dynamic that will get us to go elsewhere.<sup>146</sup>

Jo Di Mambro also felt that the group was under international surveillance:

We don't know when they might close the trap on us a few days? a few weeks? We are being followed and spied upon in our every move. All the cars are equipped with tracing and listening devices. All of their most sophisticated techniques are being used on us. While in the house, beware of surveillance cameras, lasers, and infra-red. Our file is the hottest on the planet, the most important of the last ten years, if not of the century. However that may be, as it turns out, the concentration of hate against us will give us enough energy to leave.<sup>147</sup>

### **Preparing for transit**

In the early 1990s, the concept of transit was introduced in the group.<sup>148</sup> This term was used to describe the voluntary departure of members to another planet in order to create a new world.

While the method of transport between the planets was still unknown to Di Mambro, he described the transit as a passage across a mirror or travel in a spaceship.

When members asked Di Mambro what the transit meant, he spoke in terms of returning to the Father.

Over time, the concept of transit changed. In a statement, one member explained that transit was initially conceived as a change in consciousness.<sup>149</sup> In the 1990s, however, change in consciousness was conceived as requiring preparation for transfer to another universe. Di Mambro explained to certain members that one day they would be called to a meeting to accomplish the transit. He told them to be on 24-hour alert.

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<sup>146</sup> J.F. Mayer, "Our Terrestrial Journey is Coming to an End: The Last Voyage of the Solar Temple," *Nova Religio*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1999)

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> J.F. Mayer (1996), *op.cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>149</sup> J.F. Mayer (1998), *op.cit.*, p. 82.

### **The desire to communicate a message: Preparing for what will be bequeathed**

Documents obtained by police in France, Switzerland and Quebec reveal Di Mambro's desire to mythologize the OTS's transit. He wrote letters to various public figures, explaining their departure. He also tried to destroy all of the group's documentation in order to try to preserve the mystery around their departure.

In 1993, various paper and video versions of the myth were produced to explain the group's departure for Sirius.

But six months before their departure, the tragic events in Waco<sup>150</sup> stole their thunder. During its investigation of the OTS, the Swiss police found an audio cassette of a conversation between Di Mambro and Jouret on the Waco events. Here is an excerpt of that conversation:<sup>151</sup>

Jo Di Mambro: People have beaten us to the punch, you know.

Luc Jouret: Well, yeah. Waco beat us to the punch.

Jo Di Mambro: In my opinion, we should have gone six months before them . . . what we'll do will be even more spectacular.

On October 3, 1994, Di Mambro gave 300 envelopes to a Swiss member to mail on October 7, 1994 to various locations around the world. These envelopes contained OTS texts, a copy of a letter addressed to the French Minister of the Interior and a video tape.

The objective of the letter to the French Minister was to establish the truth regarding the facts that precipitated the transit. Di Mambro wrote that the OTS held the French government responsible for the deaths of several members.

We accuse you of having attempted to deliberately destroy our Order for reasons of state. Mr. Pasqua, we accuse you of premeditated group murder. As a result, we have decided to leave the terrestrial plane ahead of time because we are aware of your desire to destroy the Work we have accomplished.

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<sup>150</sup> On February 28, 1993, the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) tried to arrest and search the residence of David Koresh, leader of a group called the Branch Davidians, in Waco, Texas. He was suspected of illegal firearm possession. During the police attempt, shots were fired and four BATF agents were killed, and 16 others injured. A few members of the Branch Davidians were also killed. Following this, the FBI intervened and tried unsuccessfully to negotiate with David Koresh to turn himself in to authorities. For 51 days, the FBI watched the group day and night, until April 19 when the FBI tried to evacuate the group from the compound. There was an exchange of gunfire between the FBI and group members. Group members lit fires inside the compound and a few shots were heard from inside. In total, 75 members of the group, including 25 children under the age of 15 died at the end of this 51-day siege.

<sup>151</sup> J.F. Mayer (1999), op cit. p.187

In the group, those who violated the code of honour were considered traitors. According to some group members, traitors were and would be suitably punished for centuries to come.

### **The transits**

#### *1<sup>st</sup> transit*

##### In Quebec

On October 4, 1994, the police in Morin Heights, Quebec, arrived at the scene of a fire. Two charred bodies identified as Collette RoCHAT and Jerry Genoud were found in a cottage. Two days later, the bodies of two adults and their baby were found in a closet in the same cottage.

Autopsies performed on the bodies confirmed that the victims had been murdered on September 30, 1994. The police investigation revealed that the killers had fled to Switzerland following the murders. The other victims were identified as Tony Dutoit, his wife, Suzanne Robinson, and their young son, Christopher Emmanuel Dutoit, identified as the antichrist by Di Mambro.

##### In Switzerland

Shortly before midnight, on October 4, 1994, in the Swiss village of Cheiry, a fire broke out in a home. A few hours later, in Granges-sur-Salvan, fires broke out in three different cottages. Twenty-three bodies were pulled from the rubble in Cheiry and another 25 in Salvan.

Documents found at the locations of the fires enabled investigators to reconstruct events. They reported that:

- The Cheiry victims had been called to a meeting on October 2, 1994 and were probably dead before October 3, 1994;
- Most of the victims found in Cheiry had ingested a sedative;
- Autopsies revealed 65 bullets in the victims' bodies.

The police investigation in Switzerland and Quebec revealed that some of the 53 OTS members had been murdered. While the deaths by firearms in Cheiry can technically be considered murder, it is difficult to distinguish those who consented from those who were murdered.

In this first transit, between October 4 and 6, 1994, 53 OTS members died (5 in Quebec and 48 in Switzerland). Three different methods were used to carry out the transit:



- In Quebec, members were stabbed and burned;
- In Cheiry, victims ingested sedatives and were shot;
- In Salvan, they were poisoned.

### *2<sup>nd</sup> transit*

Fourteen months after the first transit, on the night of December 15 to 16, 1995, 16 people (13 adults and three children) were immolated in a clearing on a plateau in Vercors, France.

The police investigation revealed that 14 of the 16 victims had ingested sedatives and were then shot twice. Two of the members had been assigned the job of killing the 14 others. They sprayed the bodies with an accelerant to burn them. The two then sprayed their bodies with the accelerant, set it on fire as they shot themselves in the head.

Witness accounts collected by the Swiss and French police show that shortly after the 1994 transit, the remaining members continued to meet. Some regretted that they had not been part of the first transit. While some had been outraged by the circumstances surrounding the first transit, they gradually came to the conclusion that the methods used by Luc Jouret and Jo Di Mambro were in fact positive. The members had sacrificed themselves in order to save the world and pave the way for future transits. Some of the remaining members decided to use the same methods for their own passage to the new world.

### *3<sup>rd</sup> transit*

On March 22, 1997, in St. Casimir, Quebec, five people, four OTS followers and the parent of one of the members committed suicide. Police discovered a letter explaining that they had taken this action to ensure a path to the new world.<sup>152</sup>

## **Analysis of the internal and external functioning of the group**

### **Group beliefs and their influence on the transit**

The beliefs of the Order of the Solar Temple are diverse. Some originate in neo-templar dogma,<sup>153</sup> while others are derived from environmental and esoteric influences.

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<sup>152</sup> Letter sent by the group to three Quebec newspapers: La Presse, Le Devoir and Le Soleil.

<sup>153</sup> The group's neo-templar beliefs can be traced back to Jo Di Mambro's participation in the group of Jacques Breyer, who announced in 1952 the dawning of a new era for the temple. The neo-templar concept refers to a new religious knight. This group's values originate in part in the values of the Templar Order founded in 1118 in Jerusalem. This Order's mission was to keep watch over routes under threat and to carry out defensive military operations as necessary.

In 1952, Jo Di Mambro joined AMORC (Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis). He used many of this group's beliefs when he created the various structures of the OTS.

In October 1987, during two lectures, Luc Jouret presented the OTS's beliefs. He described them as follows:<sup>154</sup>

- Re-establish the correct notions of authority and power in the world;
- Affirm the primacy of the spiritual over the temporal;
- Give back to man the consciousness of his dignity;
- Help humanity through its transition;
- Participate in the assumption of the earth in its three planes: body, soul and spirit;
- Work towards the union of the Churches and to works toward the convergence of Christianity and Islam;
- Prepare for the return of Christ in solar glory.

The group had other beliefs around other themes including survival, the apocalypse, the environment and the specific nature of their mission in the universe.

### **Transformation of discourse and beliefs: From survival to the apocalypse**

Some of the group's beliefs displayed a growing apocalyptic vision.<sup>155</sup> Luc Jouret's speeches often focussed on human health problems and the deterioration or destruction of the earth by natural forces such as volcanoes, pollution, etc.

Initially, Di Mambro and Jouret sought to recruit men and women who would be strong enough to survive the deterioration of planet Earth.<sup>156</sup> Analysis of lectures given by OTS followers<sup>157</sup> in 1987 shows that the group already held apocalyptic beliefs. The leaders and members believed that Earth would one day be destroyed and they would be the sole survivors.

In the early 1990s, the concept of transit became important in the group. The idea of living on Earth was becoming increasingly unthinkable, and the group's transition to another place became more and more logical for both leaders and members.

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<sup>154</sup> J.F. Mayer (1996), op.cit., p. 47.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-78.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

### **The chosen people**

The members of the OTS described themselves as noble travellers awaiting their return to the source of consciousness.<sup>158</sup> They saw themselves as unique beings, set apart from the masses through their discovery of the truth. They believed that they had a special mission to accomplish.

Gradually, the feeling that they were different led them to believe that they had little in common with the rest of the world. Furthermore, Jo Di Mambro managed to depict the OTS as a very important group in the history of the world. In fact, he believed the group was being monitored and followed by the highest international authorities just prior to the 1st transit. This idea bolstered the members' sense of worth and their belief that they must be very important to merit so much attention.<sup>159</sup>

### **Actualization of apocalyptic belief**

Di Mambro's style of authority, the group's internal functioning and conflicts and its external relations are all elements that, taken together, created a context conducive to the suicide and murder of group members.

### **The leadership**

Jo Di Mambro was the sole authority in the group. In fact, he was recognized as the human being chosen by the divine powers to transmit their messages.<sup>160</sup> This power gave Di Mambro major influence in the group, a power that grew when he communicated with divine beings in the presence of members. He was seen as having mystical power that enabled him to demand growing submission from the members.

He grew to hate members who questioned his power or authority. In the early '90s none other than his son questioned his powers of communication. Some members believed that Di Mambro had conned them by using special effects to simulate the presence of spiritual beings.

After this denunciation, Di Mambro became more controlling over the remaining members of the group. Certain documents even mention his intention to punish those who had harmed the organization. Those who left the group in this period were considered enemies who deserved to be punished.

Several events led to the deterioration of ties between Di Mambro and certain members. The sources of internal conflict were:

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> J.F. Mayer, "Cults, Violence and Religious Terrorism: An International Perspective," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 24, no. 5 (2001), pp. 361-376.

<sup>160</sup> J.F. Mayer (1996). op.cit.

- Reduced revenues of the group;
- Departure of several members,
- Discovery of the use of special effects to simulate spiritual communication;
- Denunciation of Di Mambro by certain members, which created a climate of suspicion;
- Questioning by certain members of the change in Di Mambro's behaviour, lifestyle, financial management, and growing authoritarianism;
- Conflict between Luc Jouret and Di Mambro.<sup>161</sup>

### **Relationship between the group and society**

During the 1990s, the group encountered problems with former members, representatives of government organizations and representatives of institutions of social control. These difficulties contributed to a sense of persecution among the leadership, and eventually among members.

Di Mambro and the membership sensed growing social hostility towards the group. This feeling contributed to the perception that transit was an acceptable solution. The following events helped to develop and heighten the feeling of persecution:

- In 1991, ADFI Martinique investigated the decision of many of their citizens to abandon their worldly possessions and move to Canada. ADFI sent a letter expressing its concerns to several organizations in Quebec and France;<sup>162</sup>
- Media coverage of a witness account by a former OTS member highlighting the group's negative influence;
- In 1993, the SQ investigated the OTS and arrested and sentenced Luc Jouret and two other members to one-year probation and a fine of \$1,000 for the purchase of firearms and silencers;
- Di Mambro's wife had difficulties renewing her passport due to suspicions that she and her husband were illegally transferring large sums of money to Australia. France's general consulate in Montreal investigated the couple in order to determine if their visas should be extended.

In conclusion, an analysis of the internal and external functioning of the group points to various factors that may have influenced the group's first transit:

- The group's apocalyptic beliefs;
- The belief in mystical power: the existence of an original source of consciousness to which members of the group would one day return;

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<sup>161</sup> Letter from the OTS written by Jo Di Mambro and sent to several key figures, newspapers, etc.

<sup>162</sup> J.R. Hall (1997), *op.cit.*, pp. 296-301.

- The mission: the members of the group believed they had a special mission, which was to spread the knowledge to the world and then to return as the chosen people to the original source of this consciousness;
- The growing tensions within the group;
- The acceptance of transit as the only solution to their problems.

### **The Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and protection of the rights of members of the Order of the Solar Temple**

On the basis of various studies on the Order of the Solar Temple, it is possible to identify behaviour by the leaders and members that violates the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Charter.

Clearly, the right to life of the members and children who were murdered was not respected. Furthermore, the rights of certain members and ex-members to the enjoyment and free use of their property was violated because they were not able to recover the money they had invested in the group.

In light of the history provided above, it is difficult to determine a specific point at which the police or courts could have intervened to prevent Di Mambro's spiritual simulations that were designed to convince the group's members of his mystical power or what kind of interventions could have prevented the murders, suicides and arson.

As for the tragic deaths of children in the group, no complaints of poor treatment or negligence were ever received by authorities before the transit in 1994.

While it is hard to believe that the freedoms of the OTS members were maintained within the group, it is difficult to speculate on this point. The lives of Tony Dutoit, his wife and child could have been protected, but only if he had filed a complaint with the police.<sup>163</sup>

In conclusion, for many people, participation in the Order of the Solar Temple turned out to be fatal. Although seemingly simple, predicting the tragic destiny of OTS members was in fact difficult because no information about the leader's intentions had been transmitted to public or private organizations or anyone else on the outside.

Protecting members of the OTS would have required members or ex-members of the group filing a complaint. No such action was ever taken. It is difficult to intervene without concrete information about activities planned or already carried out by a group.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 303.

## Heaven's Gate

On March 26, 1997, thirty-nine bodies were discovered in a residence in Rancho Santa Fe, California. Notes left by the deceased explained that the victims were members of Heaven's Gate who had departed to find the mother ship hidden behind the Hale-Bopp comet.

The members of this group believed that death would enable them to make their passage from Earth to a higher level. On March 24, 1997, after 24 years of preparation for their departure to a better world, Marshall Herff Applewhite and the members of his group took the ultimate step in their passage to an extraterrestrial world.

To understand their deadly choice, it is first necessary to look at the history of this group.

### Group history

#### Meeting of the two group leaders<sup>164</sup>

Marshall Herff Applewhite, co-founder of Heaven's Gate, was born and raised in a conservative family by a father who was a Presbyterian minister. In his early years, Applewhite strove to conform to his parents' expectations. He studied music and became a professor.

Although a homosexual, he married and had two children. During this time, he taught at the University of Houston in the Department of Music. He was unable, however, to completely repress his homosexuality and, while married, had a series of homosexual relationships.

Applewhite lost his job after an affair with a student came to light and caused a scandal on campus. In an effort to "cure" his homosexuality, he appealed to the doctors of a psychiatric hospital.

During his hospital stay, Applewhite met Bonnie Lou Nettles, a nurse, who also practiced astrology. They soon became inseparable. At the time of their meeting, Nettles was married with four children. Raised as a Baptist, in her adult years she

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<sup>164</sup> G. Niebuhr, "On the Furthest Fringes of Millennialism," *New York Times* (March 28, 1997). Available at (accessed November 24, 2004): <http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/mass-suicide-cult.html>;

R. Balch, "Bo and Peep: A Case Study of the Origins of Messianic Leadership," in R. Wallis (ed.) *Millennialism and Charisma* (Belfast: Queen's University, 1982). pp 13-72;

S. O'Leary, *Heaven's Gate and the Culture of Popular Millennialism* (Center for Millennial Studies, 1997);

D. Potz, *The Cult, the Comet, and the Web: From Rancho Santa Fe to Heaven's Gate* (March 28, 1997) Available at (accessed on November 24, 2004) <http://slate.msn.com/id/2583>;

T. Purdum, "Former Heaven's Gate Member Commits Suicide," *New York Times* (May 7, 1997); W. Davis, "Heaven's Gate: A Study of Religious Obedience," *Nova Religio* Vol. 3, No. 2 (2000).

became a member of the Theosophical Society and learned astrology. She also sought, with a small group of people, to receive messages from higher spirits.

Applewhite and Nettles decided to leave Houston on a spiritual quest. While they were in the desert, they claimed to have received a message from extraterrestrials, asking them to spread the message to earthlings about the destiny of the universe.

Both of them believed that they had been chosen to carry out a special mission, to prepare a group of men and women for a voyage to the planet of the extraterrestrials. According to the message received from divine beings, those who agreed to follow Applewhite and Nettles would be picked up by a spaceship and brought to another world, the universe of extraterrestrials.<sup>165</sup>

### **Formation of the group**

In 1973, Nettles left her husband and children and set out with Applewhite to discover her destiny. After reflection and research, Applewhite and Nettles concluded that they were the two witnesses mentioned in the Book of Revelation. They travelled across the United States to spread the word. A few people joined the group and they lived together using the money and goods supplied by the new members.

Around this time, Applewhite and Nettles were arrested and charged with credit card fraud and automobile theft. Applewhite was sentenced to six months in prison for the latter charge. Both charges against Nettles were dropped and she was released.

After serving his prison term, Applewhite and Nettles headed for Wyoming to preach the extraterrestrials' message.

The objective of the members in this period was to purify their souls. To attain this goal, the members had to submit to a strict regimen based on:<sup>166</sup>

- The elimination of all forms of sexual relations;
- Self-denial of their human needs (affection, food, comfort, etc.).

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<sup>165</sup> J.S. Phelan, "Looking for the Next World," *New York Times Magazine* (1976), available at (accessed November 24, 2004) <http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/mag.html>

<sup>166</sup> R. W. Balch, "Waiting for the Ships: Disillusionment and Revitalization of Faith in Bo and Peep's UFO Cult," in James R. Lewis (ed.), *The Gods Have Landed: New Religions from Other Worlds* (Albany: SUNY, 1995);

D. Winston, *op.cit.*

C. Wessinger, "1997, 1998 - Heaven's Gate," in *How the Millennium Comes Violently: from Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (New York: Seven Bridges, 2000), pp. 229-252;

B. Steiger H. Hewes, *Inside Heaven's Gate* (New York: Bradford Publisher, 1997).

At this point, the members of the group embarked on a crusade. They crossed the United States to preach their message to the public. Here are a few of the laws the leaders preached during their lectures:<sup>167</sup>

- The human body will be abandoned for The Evolutionary Level Above Human (TELAH), a place of higher consciousness where the inviolable spirit will live;
- Traditional religions should not be trusted;
- The flight is nearing, and will only take place when the members give their power to the extraterrestrials.

The group travelled from city to city, offering information sessions. During this period the leaders presented themselves as guinea pigs that the extraterrestrials were using for various tests.

Each lecture they gave was presented to their audience as an opportunity to join the group in order to attain a higher consciousness and thereby access to the Promised Land in a universe of extraterrestrials.

In March 1975, Applewhite and Nettles mailed out pamphlets to the public to spread the extraterrestrials' message. A professor of new age religions received this pamphlet and invited Applewhite and Nettles to present their ideas to his students. Following this meeting, 23 students converted to the group.

As the group travelled across the country the number of members grew, peaking at about 1000.<sup>168</sup>

### **Becoming a member**

To join the group, members had to cut ties with their past, separate from their material possessions and cut all contact with family, friends and acquaintances. They also had to agree to completely submit to the rules established by Applewhite and Nettles.

According to the teachings of Ti and Do (names assumed by Nettles and Applewhite), the members had to be flexible, which was seen as synonymous with being compliant, enabling them to control their personalities and bodies and become distinct from others.<sup>169</sup>

Members thought of themselves as students and had to share their daily lives with a partner who could monitor their actions.

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<sup>167</sup> R. Balch (1982) op.cit.

<sup>168</sup> G. Niebuhr (1997), op.cit.

<sup>169</sup> W. Davis (2000), op.cit.



Complete immersion in the group's routine was required to be considered a good member. Knowledge of the various purification processes ensured that members would be ready when the spaceship arrived. Since the exact arrival time was not known, members always had to be in a state of purity.

It was forbidden to have any friends in the group. If members wanted to be accepted into the higher level of being, they were expected to show no human feelings. Their daily lives were devoted entirely to abandoning their human habits in order to attain a level of purity necessary to be accepted by the extraterrestrials. Thus, the idea of departing for a better place was a notion that existed right from the inception of the group.

### **Daily life: Quest for the purity of the soul**

Members' lives were governed by several rules designed to limit human reactions. They carefully followed various diets with the goal of renouncing their need for food. Each day was punctuated by frequent changes in activity. On some days, members had to meet their partners every 12 minutes to ensure that their behaviour conformed to the group norm. Other days, they were required to wear a cone on their heads to simulate the effect they would experience when they received their extraterrestrial cones.<sup>170</sup>

### **Emergence of conflicts**

Shortly after their arrival in Wyoming, one of the group's young male members questioned the group's philosophy and the power of its leaders. This dissident believed that once the apex of purity had been achieved and dependency on human behaviour had been broken, members should be able to resume typical human conduct, including sexual relations and alcohol consumption.

His proposal was quickly embraced and most of the members proceeded to engage in sexual relations while some smoked and others took drugs. In reaction to this behaviour, Ti and Do changed their tactics in order to better control the members who were deviating from the norm. At this point, several members left the group.

In 1985 Nettles died of cancer and Applewhite interpreted her death as a sign of her great power. He concluded that as one of the oldest members, she had departed more quickly to the higher level.

In 1991, the group produced a television program called *Beyond Human - The Last Call*, which helped to recruit some new members.

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<sup>170</sup> R. Balch (1982), op.cit.  
D. Winston (2000), op.cit.

On May 27, 1993, the group drew media attention with an advertisement it published in the U.S. daily USA Today.<sup>171</sup>

In January 1994, the group visited 22 U.S. states and 63 cities to recruit passengers for the final voyage. The group held its last lecture in Boston, in 1994. At the end of this tour, the group returned to a life of seclusion and moved to a residence in Rancho Santa Fe, in the San Diego area.

The group opened a lucrative Web page design business, which attracted some area businesses and helped them to spread their ideas on the Internet.

In the 1990s, the number of prohibitions grew, and included:<sup>172</sup>

- Lying to professor Do;
- Keeping an offence to oneself and not sharing it with others;
- Acting on sensual desire;
- Violating procedure;
- Not checking with another member if an action one is about to take is acceptable;
- Trusting one's own judgement;
- Being defensive with class partners;
- Criticizing others;
- Being selfish;
- Suggesting an action or behaviour;
- Exaggerating the reaction of one's vehicle (body);
- Having preferences;
- Seeking approval; wanting to be perceived as good;
- Being too familiar with the other students;
- Being aggressive;
- Being concerned with appearance;
- Being curious.

Members were expected to question their personal needs. For example, if a member wanted a new deodorant, he or she had to submit a written request to Do, indicating that to the best of his or her knowledge there was no more deodorant.<sup>173</sup>

Members did, however, engage in some leisure activity. Each week, they watched episodes of the television series Star Trek and X-Files. On one occasion, the group visited Las Vegas and stayed at the Stratosphere Hotel.

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<sup>171</sup> W. Davis (2000), op.cit.

<sup>172</sup> J. Wambaugh, "Meanwhile, back at the ranch," Time, Vol. 149, No. 14 (April 7, 1997), pp. 34-35.

<sup>173</sup> S.Hettena, "Heaven's Gate Survivor Keeps Faith," Guardian Unlimited (Tuesday, March 26, 2002) : (Accessed on April 7, 2005) <http://www.rickross.com/reference/heavensgate/gate38.html>

Despite these diversions, the members were instructed by Applewhite to be on high alert at all times since the spaceship could arrive at any moment. The members, therefore, prepared themselves every day for their departure to the new world.

In 1995, the members built a fortress using tires. They also bought arms but resold them shortly thereafter.

From 1994 to 1997, the members became more androgynous. All had identical hairstyles and clothing. Some of the male members even castrated themselves in order to better control their bodies.

On November 15, 1996, a radio host announced that an amateur photographer had taken a photograph of a mysterious object trailing the Hale-Bopp comet. Applewhite stated the object was the extraterrestrials' spaceship coming to pick them up.

The members' suicide coincided with the time at which the comet passed closest to Earth.<sup>174</sup>

On March 26, 1997, twenty-one women and 18 men were found dead, in a state of advanced decomposition. They had ingested applesauce laced with barbiturates and vodka. However, their deaths were attributed to suffocation with a plastic bag that covered their heads. They were all dressed identically in black pants and sweaters, and white running shoes.

## **Analysis of the internal and external functioning of the group**

### **Basic beliefs and their influence on the norms**

Analysis of the texts available on the group's Internet site reveals the group's core belief:<sup>175</sup>

- At the right moment, only the real believers will be picked up by the extraterrestrials, namely, the members of Heaven's Gate.

This belief led to the requirement of constant purification of the body. For the members, their vehicle (the human body) was an envelope, a container for their real identity, which had to be completely pure for passage into the new world.

The requirement of purity spurred the creation of a number of rules, including:

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<sup>174</sup> S. O'Leary (1997), op.cit.

<sup>175</sup> W. Davis (2000), op.cit.

- Negating human needs, including the need to eat, express emotions, have physical contact with other members; such as handholding, caressing and sexual relations;
- Eliminating distinctive personality traits, for example gender traits, by wearing identical clothing and similar hairstyles;
- Severing contacts with family and friends.

### **Chosen people**

The belief that members would be the only ones chosen by the extraterrestrials gave them the strength to tolerate such a controlled lifestyle. The members a few days before their suicide, stated in videotaped testimonials that they were leaving their bodies voluntarily and without fear.

### **Division of the world**

In their daily existence, members divided individuals into two groups: pure members and impure non-members. This dichotomous view influenced Applewhite's decision to minimize contact with non-members. For example, during the numerous lectures given by the group, it was forbidden to talk or socialize with members of the audience. Members had to neutralize the negative effects of Lucifer who was in the room in the form of audience members.

For Applewhite, society was imbued with the workings of the Devil and evil spirits directed individuals' actions. The Earth's inhabitants accepted the responsibilities dictated by the body and evil forces in order to maintain world stability.<sup>176</sup>

Applewhite believed that inferior forces had made human beings dependent on their bodies and on satisfying their sexual desires. He viewed all consumer goods, from toothpaste to clothing as accentuating men's and women's sexuality. He considered society to be perverse, permeated as it was with sexuality.<sup>177</sup>

To respect to this worldview, Heaven's Gate members had to make the difficult choice of rejecting their responsibility to be human beings.

### **Submission to authority<sup>178</sup>**

Members constantly had to prove their total submission to the dictates of their leaders, leading to a gradual loss of their identity. Here are a few aspects of the internal functioning of the group that promoted members' extreme submission to their leaders:

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<sup>176</sup> R.W. Balch, op.cit.

D. Winston, op.cit.

C. Wessinger, op.cit., pp. 229-252.

<sup>177</sup> R.W. Balch, op.cit.

<sup>178</sup> W. Davis, op.cit.

- Total acceptance of the leaders' dictates;
- Severance of all contact with friends and family;
- The constant presence of another member;
- Abandonment of human knowledge and needs in order to become pure beings.

Constant fear of not being pure enough to be admitted into the other world contributed to the members' complete subjugation to their leaders.

### **The Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the protection of the rights of members of Heaven's Gate**

Analyzing the experience of Heaven's Gate members from the perspective of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms shows that no Charter articles were violated. Even at the time of the members' deaths, they (all adults) left video testimonies of their free choice to leave this world for a higher level.

Despite the publicity in a few American newspapers and the launch of their Web page announcing their departure, no information pointed to their intention to leave this world for a better one through suicide.

### **Conclusion**

In the examples of the Order of the Solar Temple and Heaven's Gate, the pursuit of an ideal gradually led members to choose to depart for a better world. In both cases, death for the members did not signify the end of life, but rather the beginning of a new life. Thus, most of the members of the two groups did not commit suicide believing that it would lead to their deaths, but rather of them being reborn in a heavenly new world.

In the three cases described, the idea of living in paradise influenced many members to abandon everything—their families, friends, jobs, and so on—in order to belong to a group of chosen people. For some, this was accomplished through fasting, vegetarianism and a life free of sin, while, for others, it involved accepting physical abuse. All of the groups shared the notion that access to paradise required total submission to the group leader.

While the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms or the constitutions of various countries ensure the protection of individual rights and freedoms, it is difficult to intervene unless a complaint is made to the authorities. Furthermore, despite fears expressed by ex-members, the families of members or the surrounding community, it is difficult to intervene on the basis of concerns or conjecture.

Prompt intervention by the police or social workers to prevent abuse requires sufficient proof and knowledge of how a group in question functions in order to ensure that the rights of all are protected.

## Chapter 5: Frequently Asked Questions

Since its founding, Info-Cult has responded to tens of thousands of inquiries about “cults” and the cult phenomenon. This chapter provides answers to some of the most common questions asked.

### **Is the group I or a member of my family belongs to a cult? Is the group dangerous?**

These are two of the most common questions received at Info-Cult. In spite of the desire for a simple yes or no answer, the complexity of the cult phenomenon makes it impossible to give a short explanation. Identifying the possible risks to members posed by a given group requires an in-depth analysis of the group.

### **What is a cult?**

The word “cult” can be used to describe:

- Individuals grouped around a common religious ideology or doctrine;
- A system of religious beliefs or rituals;
- Groups that adopt behaviours or practices that appear strange or dangerous from the point of view of the observer.

The current public utilisation of the term “cult” has a pejorative connotation.<sup>179</sup>

### **How can I find information on a particular group?**

Information on groups can be obtained from:

- The group itself;
- Former members;
- Sites on the Internet;
- Information or research centres on the cult phenomenon and/or new religious movements;
- Individuals who have studied and are familiar with these groups and the cult phenomenon, such as lawyers, researchers, journalists, psychologists, social workers, etc.

When forming an opinion about a given group, it is always a good idea to use as many different sources of information as possible.

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<sup>179</sup> See Appendix 2.

### Can groups, in certain situations, be harmful to their members?

Some researchers try to quantify and categorize forms of victimization in certain cultic groups;<sup>180</sup> however, these statistics are not complete since it is impossible to identify all cultic groups in a given environment.

Despite uncertainties as to the number of victims of cultic groups, various testimonials<sup>181</sup> and studies on the victimization of group members<sup>182</sup> suggest the presence of different types of harm in some of these groups.

### Who becomes a member?

It is difficult to pinpoint specific personalities that lend themselves to life within a particular group. However, certain people at certain times in their lives join groups that require a significant investment of time and money. This can occur for example when individuals are:

- In a period of transition, such as young adults;<sup>183</sup>
- Adults experiencing mid-life crisis;<sup>184</sup>
- Individuals with addictions, for instance to drugs, sex or alcohol;<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> J.M. Abgrall, *La mécanique des sectes* (Paris: Payot, 1996);

S. Rosen, "Gender Involvement That Affect Women's Attraction to and Involvement in Cults," *Cultic Studies Journal*, 14, no.1 (1997), pp. 22-39;

M.D. Langone, *Recovery From Cults* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993);

M.T. Singer, J. Lalich, *Cults in Our Midst* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995);

L. West and P.R. Martin, "Pseudo-Identity and the Treatment of Personality Change in Victims of Captivity and Cults," *Cultic Studies Journal*, 13, no. 2 (1996), pp. 125-152.

<sup>181</sup> Final report of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, Department of Public Works and Government Services (1995); Council of Europe, *Illegal activities of sects*, Report, Doc. 8373, Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (1999);

A. Guyard, M. Guest, *Les sectes en France*, Report prepared for the Commission d'enquête sur les sectes, Assemblée nationale, France (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1996);

D.G. Hill, *Study of Mind Development Groups, Sects and Cults in Ontario*, A Report to the Ontario Government (Toronto, 1980).

<sup>182</sup> W. Chambers, M.D. Langone, A. Dole and J. Grice, "Group Psychological Abuse Scale: A Measure of Cultic Behavior," *Cultic Studies Journal*, 11, no. 1 (1994), pp. 88-117;

C. Giambalvo and H. Rosedale (eds.), *The Boston Movement: Critical Perspectives on the International Churches of Christ* (Bonita Springs, FL: American Family Foundation, 1996);

P. Martin, M.D. Langone, A. Dole and J. Wiltrout, "Post-cult Symptoms as Measured by the MCMI Before and After Residential Treatment," *Cultic Studies Journal*, 9, no. 2 (1992), pp. 219-250;

J. Lalich, "Women in Cults," *Cultic Studies Journal*, 19, no. 4 (1997), pp. 37-52.

<sup>183</sup> E. Barker, *New religious movements: their incidence and significance*. In B. Wilson & j. Cresswell (eds.). *New religious movements: challenge and response*. (London: Routledge, 1999) pp. 16-31.

<sup>184</sup> J.T. Richardson. *Consumer protection of deviant religion: a case study*. *Review of Religious Research*, 28(2), 1986, pp. 168-179.

J.T. Richardson. *Definitions of cult: from sociological-technical to popular-negative*. *Review of Religious Research*, 34(4), (1993) pp. 348-356.

J.T. Richardson. *Clinical and personality assessment of participants in new religions*. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 5(3), (1995), pp. 145-170.

<sup>185</sup> M. Galanter, *Cults: faith, healing and coercion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 1999).



- Individuals experiencing psychological distress from a traumatic event such as the break-up of a relationship or the death of a loved one.

### Why join a group?

There are many reasons why people join groups. The motives and explanations provided by members and researchers help to understand why some individuals decide to join a group.

### Circumstances that can influence an individual's decision to join a group

Here are a few situations that can influence a person's decision to join a group:<sup>186</sup>

- Being sick, spending time with people who are sick or considering one's lifestyle to be unhealthy;
- Being in a difficult financial situation;
- Feeling confused about one's values or that one's values conflict with socially accepted ones;
- Feeling that something is lacking in one's interpersonal relationships, for example, feeling lonely;
- Feeling that one's life and role in society are unsatisfactory.

### A question of relationship

To understand the process by which an individual becomes a member and commits to a group, it is important to look at the relationship that binds the member to the leader.

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<sup>186</sup> R. Chagnon, *Conversion aux nouvelles religions: libres ou forcées ?* (Quebec City: Éditions Fidès, 1988);  
 J. Curtis and M. Curtis, "Factors Related to Susceptibility and Recruitment by Cults," *Psychological Report*, 73 (1993), pp. 451-460;  
 F.J. Daner, "Conversion to Krishna Consciousness: The Transformation From Hippie to Religious Ascetic," in R. Wallis (ed.), *Sectarism* (New York: Holstead, 1975), pp. 53-69;  
 R. Delgado, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-99  
 J. Duhaime. (1998), *op.cit.*, pp. 247-263;  
 I. Gasde, R.A. Block, "Experience: Psychological Abuse, Distress, Personality Characteristics, and Changes in Personal Relationships Reported by Former Members of Church Universal and Triumphant," *Cultic Studies Journal*, 15, no. 2 (1998), pp. 192-221;  
 C.Y. Glock, (1963), *op.cit.*  
 C.Y. Glock, (1973), *op.cit.*  
 C.Y. Glock, (1976), *op.cit.*  
 J. Lofland, *op.cit.*  
 J. Lofland, N. Skonovd, *op.cit.*  
 A. Siskind, "Child-Rearing Issues in Totalist Groups," in B. Zablocki and T. Robbins (eds.), *Misunderstanding Cults: Searching for Objectivity in a Controversial Field* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 415-451.

## A process of influence

The decision to join a group may be based on free choice or the result of a leader's techniques of psychological persuasion.<sup>187</sup>

## Which aspects of a group's functioning can influence a child's development and safety?

Life in a group can be a very enriching and fulfilling experience for all members. However, what are the implications for children who grow up in totalist groups<sup>188</sup> or in a group with a charismatic leader?<sup>189</sup> Here are some of the elements of internal group functioning that can have an impact on a child's development and safety:

### The image of children in the group

The image and social position of children put forth and promoted by the group can have a direct influence on a child's quality of life.<sup>190</sup> For example, a bible group may believe that a child is a fundamentally bad being. In such groups, the child may be viewed, from his or her birth, as a sinner who must be saved. In this case atonement for being a sinner may involve corporal punishment.

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<sup>187</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>188</sup> E. Goffman. *Asylums: essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates* Chicago: Aldine (1961).

**Goffman's definition of total institutions** (1961): "A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life." pp. 45-46.

Here are a few of the **distinguishing characteristics of the total institution** (Goffman, 1961): A basic social arrangement in modern society is that the individual tends to sleep, play, and work in different places, with different co-participants, under different authorities, and without an over-all rational plan. The central feature of a total institution can be described as a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating these three spheres of life. First, all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second, each phase of the member's daily activity is carried on in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. Third, all phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled, with one activity leading at a prearranged time into the next, the whole sequence of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials. Finally, the various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution (Goffman, 1961: p.6).

<sup>189</sup> R. J. Lifton, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

See Appendix 1: definition of mind control.

M. Galanter's definition of a cult milieu (1999): "Charismatic groups are highly cohesive. They impute transcendent powers to the group's leader or its mission, and they strictly control members' behaviour by means of shared system of beliefs. Among these groups are cults and zealous religious sects; some highly cohesive self-improvement groups; and certain political action movements, among them some terrorist groups".

M. Galanter, *op.cit.*, p. 2

<sup>190</sup> D. Capps, "Religion and Child Abuse: Perfect Together," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 31, no. 1 (1992), pp. 1-14;

C. Ellison and D. Sherkat, "Conservative Protestantism and Support for Corporal Punishment," *American Sociological Review*, 58 (1993), pp. 131-144;

R. E. Rochford and J. Heinlein, "Child Abuse in the Hare Krishna Movement: 1971-1986," *ISKCON Communications Journal*, 6, no. 1 (1998), pp. 41-69.

In other situations, the age at which a child is believed to become an adult can influence the child's development within a group. For instance, an organization that considers girls as adults at the age of 10 could mean that these girls engage in relations that could prove traumatic. They may be required to marry a man they do not know, engage in sexual relations at a very young age, and assume responsibilities similar to those of older women in the group.<sup>191</sup>

### **The role and meaning of family in the group**

The importance accorded to the family in a group can have a direct impact on a child's daily life. It is more likely that a child's needs will be met in a group that values family and the parent-child bond than in a group that values total devotion to the leader.<sup>192</sup> For example, children who grow up in a group that believes that the leader's mission is hindered by the family may be separated from their parents.<sup>193</sup>

When examining the role of the family in a group, it is also important to consider parental authority.<sup>194</sup> Who has the authority to make decisions regarding a child's education? In totalist groups, the parents' role may be redefined and they may exercise only limited decision-making power regarding the education of their children, how they are disciplined and even the amount of time they spend with their children.<sup>195</sup>

### **What possible kinds of harm can members of a group suffer?**

#### **Types of harm**

Members of a group can be harmed in different ways, including:

#### **Financial**

- Fraud
- Financial demands by the group that threaten the individual's financial well-being
- Non-remunerated work

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<sup>191</sup> A. Siskind. (2001), op.cit.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

M. Katchen, "The Roles of Dissociativity and Dissociative Disorders in Former Members of High Demand Religious Movements," PhD Dissertation, Australia, 1997.

<sup>194</sup> C. Ellison and D. Sherkat, "Conservative Protestantism and Support for Corporal Punishment," *American Sociological Review*, 58 (1993), pp. 131-144.

D. Capps, op.cit.

<sup>195</sup> A. Siskind. (2001), op.cit.

### **Physical**

- Physical abuse
- Food and sleep deprivation
- Refusal to provide access to adequate medical treatment
- Sexual abuse

### **Psychological**

- Denial of affection
- Attacks on self-esteem
- Limited or restricted access to information
- Limited or restricted access to education
- Child neglect
- Elder neglect

### **Why does an individual leave a group?**

A number of factors may prompt an individual to leave a group:

- The group's values no longer correspond to the individual's;
- The group expels the individual;
- Troubled relations arise among members;
- The individual is a victim of physical and/or psychological abuse;
- Outside intervention.

### **How can I assess if the group I belong to or plan to join corresponds to my needs?**

It is important to seek out information about the group from different sources.

The following list of questions should not be used as a way to determine whether or not a given group is a cult, but rather if the group can meet your expectations and needs. Answering these questions can help you make an informed choice.

### **Leadership and power**

- Who wields the power in the group?
- Who is the leader/founder?
- What kind of training does the leader have?
- What is the leader's personal history?
- How are decisions made regarding the lives of each member?
- How is power distributed in the group?
- Do members, other than the leader, hold any power?

**The group**

- Is the group controversial? If so, why?
- What demands does the group make on members?
- What are the group's concerns? Money? Purity?

**The members**

- Do members have criticisms of their group?
- What are these criticisms?
- How many hours a week does a member devote to the group?

**The financial participation of members**

- Are fees charged for joining the group?
- Are members required to hand over a portion of their salary to the group?
- Do members have to work for the group?

**Perception of the world**

- How does the group and its members describe their social environment and non-members?
- Are there restrictions on what a member can read, listen to or see?

**Relations**

- What is the nature of relations between the group and the wider community?
- What is the nature of relations among members?
- What is the nature of relations between members and their family and friends?
- What is the nature of relations between members and non-members?
- What is the nature of relations between the leader and his or her followers?

**Children**

- What is the social status of children in the group?
- What is the role of children in the group?
- Do children have contact with the outside world?
- Do school-age children go to: public or private school; home schooled; or to the group's school?
- Can children receive medical care offered by a public health service?
- Are children allowed to play with children who are non-members?

### **Health**

- Do group members have access to medical care provided by a public health service?
- Does the group have its own health practices?

### **Women in the group**

- What is the role of women in the group?
- What is the group's view of women?

### **Intimate relations**

- What is the group's view of sexuality?
- Can members of the group freely marry?
- How is a life partner chosen and who makes the choice?

## Conclusion

"Some groups may harm some people sometimes, and some groups may be more likely to harm people than other groups."

– Michael Langone, CSJ, Vol. 18, 2001, p. 1.

The main objective of this book is to present “cults” not as bizarre or problematic groups, but rather as groups that are present in our daily lives.

In this context, understanding how these groups function and the violence that sometimes erupts in certain groups requires an understanding of how groups function in general. Setting aside the theories on cults and new religious movements, we focussed on group dynamics.

Each of us, at some point in our lives, becomes a member of one or several groups, such as a family, artistic, musical, sport, work or a spiritual group. While current research does not allow us to accurately predict which groups may cause certain members physical or psychological harm or financial loss, existing knowledge does allow us to understand the general functioning of these groups as well as certain potential risk factors.

It is not enough to suspect that a group is “problematic” or “dangerous.” It is necessary to provide evidence that a group is involved in unethical behaviour or breaking the law before making any accusations.

Living in a democratic society means ensuring that the rights and freedoms of all of its members are protected. It is, therefore, our duty as citizens of a democratic society to protect individual and group rights. Protecting these rights and freedoms is possible as long as the behaviour of groups and their members respects these principles.

While groups are generally places for personal growth, in some cases the internal functioning of a group can be harmful for certain members. In order to prevent any form of harm, it is crucial to understand how groups function.

## **Appendices**

The appendices presented in the second part of this book provide additional information on how groups function and the "cult phenomenon."



## Appendix 1: Mind Control and Groups: Definition and Controversy

### Mind control

“Brainwashing” and “mind control” are popular expressions that are often used when speaking of thought reform and coercive persuasion. These terms were first used by researchers<sup>196</sup> to describe the Chinese Communist thought reform program. At the time, these techniques were used in universities, education programs and prisons to change individual political views.

Mind control techniques drew public attention when American prisoners pledged their allegiance to the Communist Party after being incarcerated in a Chinese prison. Studies<sup>197</sup> revealed that the American prisoners’ change in thinking was associated with specific techniques of manipulation employed by Chinese prison guards.

Robert J. Lifton studied the system of manipulation used in Chinese prisons and the results of his study have been used since the end of the 1970s to understand the experiences of members who belonged to “cults.”<sup>198</sup>

In his 1961 book *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*, Lifton describes the process by which a group uses specific techniques to reshape a member’s personality. To begin with, in order to transform an individual’s personality, he or she must participate in the life of the group which has a totalist philosophy. This type of group has the following guiding principles:

- Group unity;

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<sup>196</sup> E. Hunter, *Brainwashing in Red China* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1951).

R.J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism* (New England: University of North Carolina Press, 1961).

W.W. Sargant, *Battle for the Mind: A Physiology of Conversion and Brain-Washing* (Cambridge, MA.: Malor Books, 1957).

E.H. Schein, “The Chinese Indoctrination Program for Prisoners of War,” *Psychiatry*, vol. 19 (1956), pp. 149-172.

E.H. Schein, *Coercive Persuasion* (New York: Norton and Co., 1961).

P.A. Verdier, *op.cit.*

<sup>197</sup> F. Conway and J. Siegelma, *Snapping: America's Epidemic of Sudden Personality Change* (New York: Delta Book, 1976).

T.W. Keiser, J.L. Keiser, *The Anatomy of Illusion: Religious Cults and Destructive Persuasion* (Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1987).

M.D. Langone, *Recovery From Cults* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993).

J. Rudin, M. Rubin, *Prison or Paradise? The New Religious Cults* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

M.T. Singer. J. Lalich (1995), *op.cit.*

<sup>198</sup> S. Hassan, *Combatting Cult Mind Control*. (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 1988).

J. Lalich (1996).

M.T. Singer & Marsha E. Addis (1992) *Cults, coercion, and contumely*. In A. Kales et al. (eds.), *The mosaic of contemporary psychiatry in perspective*, Zurich: Springer Verlag; pp. 130-142.

M.T. Singer, “Thought Reform Today,” in C.B. Strozier and M. Flynn (eds.), *Trauma and Self* (Savage, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1996), pp. 69-79.

- The belief that the group's members are the only members of society that possess the **truth**;
- Integrate the group's specific values into daily life and adopt specific behaviour;
- Abandon one's individuality within the group.

Totalist ideology creates ideal conditions for the use of coercive persuasion techniques to mould the individual's personality. These techniques are briefly described below.

### **Milieu control**

This technique involves controlling the individual's daily environment:

- All of the information available to the individual is controlled;
- The individual does not determine what is good and bad, since the group knows what is good and bad for the individual. The group among other things provides members with details on what thoughts, actions, places and clothes are acceptable;
- The individual must not keep anything from the group leader or the other members. All information regarding the member's past life, daily activities, and personal history is revealed to the leaders and, in some cases, to all group members.<sup>199</sup>

Geographic isolation can facilitate control over an individual's milieu.<sup>200</sup> Training sessions and internships for recruits are conducted in isolated areas so that they cannot leave the training location without notifying another member of the group.

### **Mystical manipulation**

Mystical manipulation involves:

- Persuading group members of the leader's divine power. Members willingly comply with the leader's demands, sometimes without any hesitation whatsoever. The supernatural power or exceptional knowledge which the leader claims to possess legitimizes his or her demands in the eyes of group members;<sup>201</sup>
- This technique allows the leader to impose his or her choices on the members.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> R.J. Lifton (1961), op.cit.

<sup>200</sup> R.J. Lifton, "Beyond Armageddon: New Patterns of Ultimate Violence," *Modern Psychoanalysis*, vol. 22(1) (1997), pp. 17-29.

<sup>201</sup> R.J. Lifton (1961), op.cit.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

J. Lalich (1996), op.cit.

## The demand for purity

In a totalist environment, the world is divided into two blocks:



This division of the world influences the group's judgment. In this environment, the world is defined as either pure or impure by the leader or the group. This categorical division of the world is clearly black or white, with no grey zone for any form of compromise.<sup>203</sup>

This vision of the world influences:

- Choices;
- Decision-making;
- Behaviours;
- Perception of others.

Groups that idealize purity often use various forms of deprivation to achieve this utopian vision. The types of deprivation, which destabilizes individuals and strips them of their defences, can include a lack of.<sup>204</sup>

- Sleep;
- Food;
- Rest (through intense sports or prayer sessions that last for hours in order to cleanse body and mind).

These groups see purity as the ultimate state that members must strive to achieve. With this goal in mind, all actions committed in the name of purity or against impurity are justified and considered morally sound. The vigilance of some members who monitor any impure behaviour on the part of other group members can be a major source of conflict.

This ideology attempts to create feelings of guilt among participants who are unable to improve their impure or imperfect condition. In this context, the leader is often the only arbitrator who judges the behaviour and attitude of the group's members. When a member deviates or fails, the leader may have the power to humiliate, punish or instil feelings of guilt among members.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>203</sup> R.J. Lifton (1961), op.cit.

<sup>204</sup> J.L. Valatx, "Sleep Deprivation," *Cultic Studies Journal*, vol. 11(2) (1994), pp. 211-216.

M.T. Singer, J. Lalich. (1995), op.cit.

<sup>205</sup> R.J. Lifton (1961), op.cit.

### The cult of confession

Members of a totalist group are often forced to confess impure or evil thoughts and behaviour. These confessions are usually conducted in front of the other members in an effort to:<sup>206</sup>

- Abolish privacy and make the personal public;
- Make secrecy impossible;
- Reinforce feelings of guilt.

### The “Sacred Science”

In a totalist group, a particular doctrine is presented as the **truth**, which cannot and must not be contested by its members.<sup>207</sup>

This doctrine therefore becomes the only frame of reference according to which members must adjust their daily lives. Each member must base his or her choices, decisions and behaviours on this **truth**.

In this context, group leaders or gurus justify their demands by telling members that they are based on the **truth**. Belonging to a group that possesses the **truth** can make individuals:

- Feel comforted or reassured because they believe that they have found the answers to their questions.
- Feel more at peace since life is defined in absolute terms.
- Limit critical thinking since the **truth** now prevails and a model exists to determine what is good and bad.

### Loading the language

A substitute language is taught within totalist groups, which becomes the common language and has the affect of:<sup>208</sup>

- Creating a sense of unity and a shared identity.
- Setting themselves apart from non-members.

Adding new words and meanings to a person’s standard vocabulary can isolate members from non-members, since only members of the group can understand this person’s discourse.<sup>209</sup> Group members may therefore find it difficult to communicate with non-members.

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> M. Boudier, *Sectes : les manipulations mentales* (Lyon: Chronique sociale, 1994).

Taken to the extreme, communication between members can become so rigid that the group dictates a set of communication rules that govern interactions.

### **Doctrine over person**

A totalist group's doctrine supersedes all personal beliefs and values. Individuals must adopt the group's philosophy of life and its mission as their unique point of reference. Any form of personal values or opinions can therefore be considered egocentric or unhealthy.<sup>210</sup>

### **The dispensing of existence**

An individual or group with a totalist vision of human existence defines the community according to two categories of people: those who share their ideology and everyone else. This vision of humankind also shapes interpersonal relations among group members. As a result of this mindset, in which non-members are described as different and therefore evil, members of totalist groups minimize or sever ties with non-members.<sup>211</sup>

The members of a totalist group share the conviction that their path is the only path. This notion of reality can create fear among people who wish to leave the group, since living outside the group becomes synonymous with death.

Taken to the extreme, the members of a totalist group can be led to believe that people who share the **truth** have the right to live. Taken a step further, they may even believe that they have the power to decide who has the right to live and who must die among non-members and non-believers.

In conclusion, individuals who take part in the life of a group that subscribes to this form of control undergo a complete transformation of their way of life. The group provokes an identity crisis among individuals prompting them to question their former lifestyle according to the values transmitted by the group to which they now belong.

Gradually, the person reacts to the pressures of their environment by adopting a personality moulded and sought by the group. Their former attitudes, expressions and habits are submerged in favour of those valued by the group so that the consequence is that the individual loses his identity. Each new member becomes a carbon copy of the other group members.

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<sup>210</sup> M.T. Singer, J. Lalich, (1995), op.cit.

<sup>211</sup> R.J. Lifton (1961), op.cit.

## Some criticisms

The use of mind control techniques are used to explain the degree of commitment of certain members to their group. This explanation has, however, been the subject of criticism.

The main contention is that the theory of mind control should be regarded as a working hypothesis. Since there is no research to prove the existence or use of mind control techniques by the leader or members of a group, it is not legitimate to apply this theory to group functioning.

Criticisms often see mind control techniques as interchangeable with, brainwashing, which is a process that involves personality change which occurs only in situations where individuals are held against their will, often under the threat of torture.<sup>212</sup>

Indeed, many authors consider the notion of brainwashing or mind control to be inadequate,<sup>213</sup> as they consider that individuals freely choose to join a group. In their view, the concept of social influence is more appropriate than coercive persuasion or mind control. However, during the process of group integration, individuals may be persuaded to make certain decisions or change aspects of their behaviour in order to fit into the group's way of life.

## Processes of influence

In our daily interactions, we are all influenced by certain behaviours and attitudes adopted by those around us. These are some of the processes of influence examined in the field of social sciences.

### Conformism

Conformism is based on the principle that every individual in a social situation conforms to a group's opinion in a thoughtful manner informed by objective reasoning.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> D. Anthony, "Religious Movements and Brainwashing Litigation: Evaluating Key Testimony," in T. Robbins and D. Anthony (eds.), *In Gods We Trust* (New Brunswick: NJ: Transaction Books, 1990), pp. 295-344.

<sup>213</sup> M. Introvigne, "La notion de manipulation mentale," presentation at the CESNUR symposium held in Paris in 1997. (accessed on April 5, 2005) <http://www.cesnur.org/testi/Lavaggio.htm>

J.G. Melton (1995). The changing scene of new religious movements: observations from a generation of research. *Social Compass*, 42(2), pp. 265-276.

A.D. Shupe and D.G. Bromley, *The Modern Anti-Cult Movement 1971-1991: A Twenty Year Retrospective* (1994), pp. 3-31.

<sup>214</sup> S.E. Asch, "Studies of Independence and Conformity: A Minority of One Against a Unanimous Majority," *Psychological Monographs*, 70(9 and 16) (1956).

S. Moscovici, "Social Influence I: Conformity and Social Control," in C. Nemeth (ed.), *Social Psychology: Classic and Contemporary Integrations* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1974), pp. 179-216).

S. Moscovici and C. Nemeth, "Social influence II: Minority Influence," in C. Nemeth (ed.), *Social Psychology: Classic and Contemporary Integrations* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1974), pp. 217-249.

Some of the techniques used in our social interactions may, however, influence the choices, decisions and behaviours of others. A person in a group setting is more likely to accept statements expressed by the majority and to conform since the assumption is that a group of people must have better judgement than he or she alone. Despite the fact that some individuals feel that their ideas are correct, they may conform to what the other members think simply because they do not want to stand out.

A minority group or a minority of people may also influence the behaviour of a majority,<sup>215</sup> particularly when:

- The minority group subscribes to a reality or philosophy espoused by mass society.
- The group has undermined the beliefs and convictions shared by the majority.
- The majority admires the courage of the minority in defending its convictions.

Accepting the opinion of the minority may elicit questions among individuals who subscribe to the vision of the majority,<sup>216</sup> causing them to question their values and those of the minority.

When individuals accept and conform to the vision shared by the minority, they may encounter resistance to these changes. Friends and family who have not changed their attitudes often put pressure on the person who has adopted a new vision.

A minority that presents ideas and actions that are logical and flexible has a greater chance of changing the behaviour and opinions of the majority without sparking a strong social reaction.<sup>217</sup>

### **Acquiescence or how to obtain consent**

Various mechanisms can also be used to influence an individual's behaviour and obtain their consent. In fact, the person using these techniques can sometimes convince others to fulfil his or her demands. Some authors<sup>218</sup> have defined the nature of these techniques of social influences. The principal ones are:

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S. Moscovici, "Toward a Social Psychology of Science," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 23(4) (1993), pp. 343-374.

<sup>215</sup> S. Moscovici, *Social Influence and Social Change* (London: Academic Press, 1979).

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> S. Moscovici, *Psychologie sociale des relations à autrui* (Paris: Nathan, 1994).

<sup>218</sup> R.B. Cialdini, *Influence: Science and Practice* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993).

R.B. Cialdini, "Interpersonal Influence," in S. Shavitt and T. C. Brock (eds.), *Persuasion* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994), pp. 195-217.

R.V. Joule and J.L. Beauvois, *Petit traité de manipulation à l'usage des honnêtes gens* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1987).

- Reciprocation
- Commitment and consistency
- Social proof
- Liking
- Authority
- Scarcity.

These techniques can be harmless when extreme demands are not being made. In some cases, however, the use of these techniques can cause harm. The following sections provide a brief explanation of each of these social influence techniques.

### *Reciprocation*<sup>219</sup>

Reciprocation can be defined as the rule that exists between two people based on an implicit agreement that the person who does something for the other can expect something in return. Based on this rule, a person may deliberately decide to do something for the other person with the intention of asking for a favour in the future. This future obligation, implicit in many of the social rules that form our interactions, makes possible the development of an exchange of favours.

Reciprocation can also be used to get a person to agree to a demand. Once a person has done something for another person, he or she will likely do it again. This technique, known as the **foot-in-the-door technique**, consists in asking very little in the beginning, then increasing the demands.

### *Commitment and consistency*<sup>220</sup>

People want to be perceived as consistent in their words and action. Based on this premise, a person can convince someone to act in a certain way, if he or she can show that the desired behaviour is logical in the eyes of the person being asked to conform.

### *Social proof*<sup>221</sup>

In our social interactions, we try to understand the thoughts and actions that others believe to be appropriate. Often, a person perceives a particular behaviour to be appropriate, normal or correct if it is adopted by many individuals.

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R.V. Joule and J.L. Beauvois, *La soumission librement consentie* (Paris, PUF, 1998).

<sup>219</sup> R.B. Cialdini (1993), *op.cit.*

R.V. Joule (1998), *op.cit.*

<sup>220</sup> R.B. Cialdini (1993), *op.cit.*

R.V. Joule (1998), *op.cit.*

<sup>221</sup> R.B. Cialdini (1993), *op.cit.*



The principle of social validation is to convince an individual to agree to a demand by explaining that many others have adopted the same behaviour in the past. When facing an unfamiliar situation, human beings are inclined to observe others and accept their behaviour as the appropriate response.

*Liking*<sup>222</sup>

There is often a willingness to accept proposals made by people that we know and respect.

Physical attraction can also be used to convince another person to accept a request. We are more likely to accept requests from people we find attractive or charming than from those who are not considered interesting or appealing.

*Authority*<sup>223</sup>

In our society, individuals are more likely to agree to demands that come from a figure of authority. For instance, since childhood, we are accustomed to respecting the authority of our elders and teachers, and to agree to their suggestions as well as their demands. Similarly, group leaders use respect for authority figures as a technique to make members adopt certain behaviour.

*Scarcity*<sup>224</sup>

According to the principle of scarcity, individuals place greater value on rare opportunities. For instance, ads often warn that there are “limited quantities” of a given product in order to add greater value to the item.

The group may therefore say that there is a limited number of individuals who will gain access to paradise and that only those who can accept the **truth** espoused by the leader will be admitted. This scarcity makes membership in the group even more attractive. Securing a position where there are limited places makes individuals feel special because they have been singled out among a large number of candidates.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

## Appendix 2: Definition of “Cult” and “New Religious Movement”

This Appendix presents definitions of the term “cult” and the expression “new religious movement.”

### Definition of cult

#### Origin of the word cult

The word cult comes from the Latin word *cultus*, which is a form of the verb *colere* and the French word *culte* meaning “to worship or give reference to a deity.”

#### “Cult” as defined by Weber<sup>226</sup>

In a cult, members freely join the group. The rules and norms are validated by the group’s followers, rather than being imposed by a group of leaders through a power structure. The cult comes together in opposition to a religious organization.

#### “Cult” as defined by Troeltsch<sup>227</sup>

A cult is a group that is often created on the fringes of the Church. The cult is born out of an opposition to established ecclesiastical practices. Cults often emerge at times of reform within the Church.

#### “Cult” as defined by Wilson<sup>228</sup>

A cult is a group of people in opposition to another clerical group.

Individuals aspiring to join a cult must participate actively before being accepted as a member of the group.

#### A “destructive cult” as defined by Abgrall<sup>229</sup>

Abgrall distinguishes between “cults” and “destructive cults.”

A cult is a group of individuals that unites around a shared ideology and whose social development takes place under a veil of secrecy. It does not pose any danger to its members.

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<sup>226</sup> M. Weber, *General Economic History* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1927).

<sup>227</sup> E. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of Christian Churches*, Vol. 2 (New York: MacMillan, 1931).

<sup>228</sup> B.R. Wilson, *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

<sup>229</sup> J.M. Abgrall (1996), *op.cit.*

A cult becomes dangerous to an individual when it employs manipulative techniques to ensure ongoing membership. In this case, a group initially considered inoffensive can, through the course of its development, become a dangerous and coercive cult.

### **Historical study of the use of the term “cult” by Isser<sup>230</sup>**

Isser provided an historical and comparative portrait of cults, making a distinction between sects and cults. She notes that “sects” are separate groups that exist in opposition to a majority religious group as well as to their social environment.

She argues that “cults” are groups led by a charismatic leader who often claims to be divine and omniscient. These groups generally reject a previous lifestyle by extolling the adoption of new existential principles. The group’s daily life is organized on the basis of the needs and demands of the leader. According to Isser, the leader manipulates his or her followers to satisfy his or her needs. Isser argues that this second type of group poses a greater danger to the physical or psychological well-being of its members.

### **American Family Foundation (AFF) and the use of the term “cult”**

The AFF (presently known as the International Cultic Studies Association, ICSA), a professional organization founded over 20 years ago, argues that the public uses the term “cult,” properly or improperly, to refer to a wide variety of phenomena,<sup>231</sup> including the following:

- Religious, political, psychological or commercial groups in which the leader appears to exert undue influence over followers, usually to the leader’s benefit;
- Fanatical religious and political groups, regardless of whether or not the leaders exert a high level of psychological control;

<sup>230</sup> N. Isser, “Why Cultic Groups Develop and Flourish: A Historian’s Perspective,” *Cultic Studies Journal*, 8, no. 2 (1991), pp. 104-121.

Note on the use of the term “sect” in English and French: In the English literature, two terms are often used when discussing the cult phenomenon, namely “sect” and “cult.” In French, the term “secte” is used to describe “an organized group of followers sharing the same elitist belief, that tends to be closed to the outside world, and led by a charismatic leader or a hierarchical, centralized and authoritarian administration, with religious, political, economic or other intentions” [translation] (*Le grand dictionnaire terminologique*, <http://www.granddictionnaire.com>). In English, however, the term “sect” is used to describe a religious splinter group, particularly one that is regarded as extreme or heretical or as a religious denomination or a group that follows a doctrine or leader. The term “cult” is used to describe 1. formal religious veneration; 2. a system of religious beliefs and ritual; 3. a religion regarded as unorthodox ([www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com)). In French, the term “culte” is used to describe “adoration, attachment, devotion and veneration” [translation] (*Le petit Robert*, pp 610 (2002)). The term “cult” in English and the term “secte” in French are often used the same way.

<sup>231</sup> For AFF’s use of the term cult, see: [http://www.csj.org/infoserv\\_cult101/essay\\_cult.htm](http://www.csj.org/infoserv_cult101/essay_cult.htm); and for their discussion of the ambiguity of the concept of cult, see: (Accessed April 7, 2005) [http://www.csj.org/infoserv\\_cult101/aff\\_termdefambiguity.htm](http://www.csj.org/infoserv_cult101/aff_termdefambiguity.htm).

- Terrorist organizations, which induce individuals to commit acts of extreme violence;
- Religious groups deemed heretical or unorthodox by an observer of this group or its members;
- Non-traditional religious groups, benign or destructive;
- Physically isolated communes;
- A group in which a relative, friend or spouse participates that is perceived (correctly or incorrectly) by loved ones as destructive to the individual;
- Groups that use aggressive sales and recruitment techniques;
- Authoritarian social groups in which members exhibit a high degree of conformity and submission to the leader’s demands;
- Extremist groups that advocate violence, racial separation bigotry or the overthrow of the government;
- Familial or dyadic relationships in which one member wields a high and apparently harmful degree of influence over the other members, for example, certain forms of dysfunctional families or battered women’s syndrome.

The AFF argues that in light of the wide range of meanings the public attributes to the term “cult,” they suggest three choices exist with respect to how the term could be used:

- Pretend that the term “cult” is more precise than it actually is, thereby inviting misuse of the concept to which the term refers;
- So narrowly define the term that it becomes useless in a practical sense;
- Strive for a practical level of precision while acknowledging the unavoidable ambiguity in our terminology.

The AFF points out that it would be difficult to eliminate the term “cult” given its frequent use in popular language. Consequently, it suggests using it judiciously while acknowledging its ambiguity.

### **Definition of “new religious movement”**

#### **“New religious movement” as defined by Wilson<sup>232</sup>**

The expression new religious movement refers to all new spiritual groups that have emerged since the end of the Second World War.

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<sup>232</sup> B. Wilson (1992); B. Wilson, “Introduction,” in B. Wilson and J. Cresswell, *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 5-21.

**Three different types of religious organizations according to Melton<sup>233</sup>**

**Primary** groups are small groups that allow members to have a direct relationship with the leader and with each other. It gives members an opportunity to regularly venerate the leader. This group guides members throughout their life cycle and assists them in marriage, spousal relations, childbirth, death and so on. When the number of members increases, these groups tend to create sub-groups.

**Secondary** groups offer a set of limited religious functions such as education, social service and social action. They do not offer the complete range of services provided by primary groups.

**Tertiary** groups are groups of organizations. They organize dialogue among primary groups, for example, the World Council of Churches.

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<sup>233</sup> J.G. Melton (1995), op.cit.

## Appendix 3: Types of Groups

### What is a group?

“A group can be defined as a gathering of people who share certain common objectives” [translation].<sup>234</sup>

On the basis of this definition, several types of groups exist, including:

- The audience in a concert hall, where the common objective is to listen to a singer.
- Patients in a waiting room, where the common objective is to see a doctor.
- Employees of a company, where the common objective is to offer a service in exchange for a monetary reward.
- Members of a sports team, where the common objective is to have fun or to beat the opponent.
- Members of a spiritual group, where the common objective is to live in harmony with cosmic laws.

This is an extremely broad definition that can be used to describe many different groups, without providing any means to distinguish between them. The following categorizations, however, help us to distinguish various types of groups that exist in our community.

### Small groups

“A small group is a psychosocial group that can be composed of 3 to 20 people, who meet and interact with a view of attaining a common goal” [translation].<sup>235</sup>

Compared to the first description, this definition specifies the number of people that make up this small group. But is a small group defined solely on the basis of the number of people that form the group? Here are some of the characteristics that define a small group.

- The members of the group all know each other personally and have a direct relationship with one another. A member can, for example, name each member and describe his or her daily life.
- The group values certain goals and the members of the group jointly pursue the achievement of these goals.
- The members develop friendly relations with each other.

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<sup>234</sup> C. Leclerc (1999), *op.cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>235</sup> S. Landry, “Les groupes restreints : prémisses conceptuelles et modélisation,” *Revue québécoise de psychologie*, vol. 16, no.1 (1995), pp. 52-53.

- The members become dependent on one another even when they are not meeting as a group.
- Different roles develop within the group. As such, each member has a different function. Some members can be leaders, others recruiters, workers or spectators.
- Norms or specific rules emerge within the group. A group may, for example, require that each member attend all weekly meetings in order to maintain their status as members.
- The group creates its own culture. Indeed, over time, it may adopt its own system of beliefs, rituals and language.

In short, the characteristics most often used to describe small groups are: low numbers, face-to-face interaction, the development of interpersonal relationships, a sense of belonging, the development of a structure and systems of norms and roles.<sup>236</sup>

### **Crowds**

A crowd is a very large number of people brought together by a combination of circumstances, such as an outdoor concert. A crowd does not allow people to structure their interactions toward a common objective. This group forms with the beginning of the event and dissolves once it ends.

This type of group is different from a small group in that it is a one-time, short-term occurrence that does not involve direct relationship among the people present.<sup>237</sup>

### **Organizations**

“Organizations, big or small, can be defined as a social formation deliberately and formally established or structured by individuals. The functioning of organizations is based on prescribed decision-making, execution and control processes, all geared towards a specific objective that underpins the general meaning of all interactions” [translation].<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> D. Anzieu and J.Y. Martin, *La dynamique des groupes restreints* (Paris: PUF, 1982);

D. Boisvert, F. Cossette and M. Poisson, *Animateur compétent, groupes efficaces* (Cap Rouge, Québec: Presses Inter Universitaires, 1995), p. 402;

R. Muchielli, *La dynamique des groupes*, Collection Formation permanente en science humaine, 13e édition (Paris: ESF Éditeur, 1992).

<sup>237</sup> S. Moscovici and W. Doise, (1992), *op.cit.*

<sup>238</sup> P. De Vissicher, *Avatars et métamorphoses de la dynamique des groupes*, Collection Vies sociales (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1991), p. 33.

Organizations differ from small groups in a number of ways, including:

- The number of members.
- The very institutionalized nature of relations among members. For instance, pre-established methods or structures exist within the group to resolve conflicts or to make decisions.
- The relations among members who are influenced by the group's different hierarchical levels and the status of its members.
- The possible geographical isolation among members of the organization.

Organizations are sometimes similar to small groups in that direct interaction exists among members, between staff and management, among a work group or members of a board of directors.

### **Possible contrasts among groups**

Various studies<sup>239</sup> on cultic groups and new religious movements mention that groups can be distinguished by their degree of openness to their surrounding environment. Accordingly, groups that are open will freely accept interaction between members and non-members.

In a closed group, however, ties with the outside environment are limited. In an extreme case, this type of group may isolate itself geographically or socially in order to avoid interaction between members and non-members.

In conclusion, while these opposing characteristics cannot be used to distinguish all groups from one another, they do provide a better understanding of the subtleties between various types of groups.

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<sup>239</sup> E. Barker, Plus ça change. *Social Compass*, vol. 42, 2 (1995), pp.165-180.  
J.P. Willaime, (1998), op.cit.  
B. Wilson, op.cit.



## Appendix 4: The Developmental Phases of Small Groups

“A small group is a psychosocial group that can be composed of 3 to 20 people who meet and interact in view of attaining a common goal” [translation].<sup>240</sup>

### Phase 1: Group formation and orientation

In the beginning, a number of people consider the idea of creating a group with a set of general and specific objectives. Their actions are underpinned by the idea that the group must fulfil their needs.<sup>241</sup>

The first meetings with potential members can be extremely tense, as each person evaluates the skills and attributes of the others. In this initial phase, objectives and norms of how the group functions are defined. When a majority accepts the rules and objectives put forward, the group is formed.

This formation process is complete when most of the people assembled agree to join together to form the group.<sup>242</sup>

### Phase 2: Conflict

After it has been founded, the group experiences a sense of courteous interdependence. Each member recognizes the positive potential of the participation of the other members in attaining common objectives.

The fact that conflicts emerge within a group is natural. However, when the group is first formed, members tend to avoid any form of conflict.

The group's formation period often ends in conflict. The behaviour of certain members and the appropriateness of their attitudes may come into question. These individuals may be perceived as obstacles to achieving the group's mission. Once expressed, these perceptions, may lead to conflict which is a new stage in the group's development. Conflicts can have various sources.<sup>243</sup>

- A conflict can be rooted in a disagreement between two people who misinterpret each other's positions,<sup>244</sup>

<sup>240</sup> S. Landry (1995), op.cit., pp.52-53

<sup>241</sup> S. Guimond, “Les groupes sociaux,” in R.J. Vallerand (ed.), *Les fondements de la psychologie sociale*, Boucherville, G. Morin Éditeur, p. 655-705.

*Les fondements de la psychologie sociale*, (Montréal: Gaétan Morin éditeur, 1994).

<sup>242</sup> B. Richard (1995), op.cit.

<sup>243</sup> R.L. Moreland and J.M. Levine (1982), op.cit.

<sup>244</sup> M. Deutsch, *The Resolution of Conflict: Constructive and Destructive Processes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973).

D.W. Johnson, *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills*, Fifth edition (Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1994).

- Conflicts may also result from a situation that can be quickly remedied. For instance, a member who always arrives late;
- A conflict may be caused by a small disagreement and escalate into a major problem which prompts members to express difficulties they are experiencing in the group.

While the changes that result from conflict increase stress and altercations among members, they also often have a beneficial impact on the group's dynamic. Conflicts may destroy a group, but may also reinforce a sense of belonging among members. After a conflict, the group may be more resilient and better able to handle the problems it encounters.<sup>245</sup>

A harmonious relationship among members cannot be achieved until hostilities have been brought out into the open and resolved.<sup>246</sup>

Some groups may, however, avoid any form of conflict out of fear of the changes that may result from these altercations. Groups that reject any form of change may exercise a great deal of control over their members to ensure that they adhere to the group's rules and do not change their behaviour in any way.<sup>247</sup>

At first glance, groups that do not experience conflict may appear to be organizations whose members enjoy positive relationships. However, this absence of conflict is often the result of members controlling their reactions. The absence of conflict within a group may also reflect the fragility of an organization.

Conflict is more apparent within groups that are stable and united and provide members with an opportunity to vent feelings of hostility. Once disagreements have been resolved, members of the group can enjoy more harmonious or stronger relationships.

### **Phase 3: Group cohesion<sup>248</sup>**

When conflicts and disagreements among members are resolved, a sense of cohesion and true camaraderie emerge with the following effects.<sup>249</sup>

- **Unity:** This is the most important change that emerges once the group has attained cohesion. Gradually, relationships among the group members

<sup>245</sup> R.P. Abelson, "Modes of Resolution of Belief Dilemmas," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 3 (1959), pp. 343-352; R.P. Abelson, "Psychological Status of the Script Concept," *American Psychologist*, vol. 36 (1981), pp. 715-729.

<sup>246</sup> W.G. Bennis and H. Shepard, "A Theory of Group Development," *Human Relations*, 9(4) (1956), pp. 415-437; M. Deutsch (1973).

<sup>247</sup> B. Richard (1995), *op.cit.*

<sup>248</sup> H. Tajfel and J.C. Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior," in S. Worschel and W. G. Austin (eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1986).

<sup>249</sup> C. Leclerc. *Comprendre et Construire les groupes*. *Chronique Sociales*. Québec. Les Presses de l'Université Laval, (1999)

become more harmonious and a sense of belonging develops. Members are proud to identify themselves with the group;

- Stability: Once conflicts have been resolved, the group maintains its members;
- Satisfaction: The group's cohesion and the satisfaction of its members are interrelated. Consequently, the greater the sense of belonging to the group, the happier and more privileged the members feel;
- Internal dynamic: Groups that achieve strong internal cohesion may have greater influence over their members. When internal cohesion is strong, members more readily accept the goals, objectives and norms imposed by a leader or by the other members;

Although cohesion among members of a group has positive consequences for the life of the group, the intensity of this cohesiveness can have some negative effects. Members may become intolerant of certain disagreements, conflicts or behaviours. The slightest disagreement or deviation in behaviour may be severely punished.<sup>250</sup>

Members who violate a group's norms are generally less liked by the other members.<sup>251</sup> Cohesion may lead to:

- Increasingly hostile reactions towards deviant members.
- Isolating deviant members;
- Scapegoating;
- Deviant members becoming the target for psychological and physical violence;<sup>252</sup>
- Rejecting deviant members.

The members of the group work together toward a common goal and, to varying degrees, commit to the group.<sup>253</sup>

The positions and emotions that members express and the validation they receive from co-members in their daily interactions significantly reinforce their

<sup>250</sup> P. Corcuff, *Les nouvelles sociologies* (Paris: Nathan, 1995).

<sup>251</sup> S. Schachter, "Deviation, Rejection and Communication," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 46 (1951), pp. 190-208.

<sup>252</sup> J.R.P. French and B. Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," in D. Cartwright (ed.), *Studies in social power* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1959), pp. 150-167;

M.A. Lieberman, I.D. Yalom and M.B. Miles, *Encounter groups: First facts* (New York: Basic Books, 1973);

M. McCollom, "Reevaluating Group Development: A Critique of the Familiar Models," in J. Gillette and M. McCollom (eds.), *Groups in Context* (1995), pp. 131-154;

M. McCollom and J. Gillette, "The Emergence of a New Experiential Tradition," in J. Gillette and M. McCollom (eds.), *Groups in Context: A New Perspective on Group Dynamics* (1990), pp. 1-12;

A. Pepitone and G. Reichling, "Group Cohesiveness and the Expression of Hostility," *Human Relations*, 8 (1955), pp. 327-337.

<sup>253</sup> H. Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981);

H. Tajfel and J.C. Turner. (1986), *op.cit*

J.C. Turner et al., *Rediscovering the Social Group: a Self-Categorisation Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

sense of belonging. Through exchanges and interactions the members travel the same path and rally around the same collective positions. Collective agreement usually leads to increased energy, heightened assurance and stronger conviction among members.

The sense of cohesion that develops within the group may spur hostility to groups that do not subscribe to their logic.

#### **Phase 4: Group performance or productivity**

Productivity or performance arises when the group has attained a certain maturity. It is important to note that not all groups reach this phase. During this period, the group attains some of the goals it had initially set for itself. The group may alternate between this phase and the conflict phase throughout its development until conflicts become insurmountable or all of the initial goals have been attained.

#### **Phase 5: Dissolution**

The last phase of development may be planned or spontaneous, and occurs when the group has attained the objectives around which it was formed. Therefore, through consensus, group members decide to dissolve the group. The group may also dissolve when an unexpected problem arises.

The development and maturation of a group are presented here as a linear succession of phases. A group may, however, repeat certain phases or alternate between periods of conflict and productivity throughout its development. Certain phases may recur or the group may jump from one phase to another and repeat phases. The group may therefore travel the road to maturation several times.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> W.R. Bion, *Experiences in Groups* (London: Tavistock, 1961).

## Appendix 5: Process of group Socialization

Membership in a group helps to fulfill certain needs.<sup>255</sup> It is helpful in daily life to have the support of people who share one's views on life. Everyone feels the need at some point to feel close to a person or group that shares similar goals.<sup>256</sup>

Coming into contact with a group, joining it, participating in its daily activities and leaving it are common stages in the experience of a member. Of course, each member's experience is unique, but all members usually go through the following stages: contact with the group, evaluation, socialization, re-socialization and departure. This appendix explores each of these stages.

### Contact between the group and the individual: Getting to know each other

The first few contacts between the individual and the group represent a period of evaluation during which everyone gets to know each other. This period varies in length from one individual or group to the next. During this phase:

- The group evaluates the individual's qualities and assesses his or her skills in order to determine if this candidate has the necessary qualities to become a member of the group;
- The individual evaluates the group to determine if it can fulfill his or her needs.

The group and the individual essentially conduct an analysis of the costs versus the benefits of becoming associated with one another. This evaluation is based on characteristics—emotional, behavioural, intellectual, etc.—that vary depending on the group and the individual.

### Commitment

After this initial evaluation process, an individual and a group may jointly decide to associate. In this case, the individual chooses to commit to the group and to accept the norms that govern life within the group.<sup>257</sup> An implicit contract may be forged between the individual and the group, in which:

<sup>255</sup> J. Duhaime, (1998), op.cit. pp. 247-263.

<sup>256</sup> S. Moscovici (Ed.), *Psychologie Sociale des Relations à Autrui* (Paris: Nathan, 1994).

<sup>257</sup> R.L. Moreland and J. M. Levine, "Socialization and Trust in Work Groups," *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 5 (2002), pp. 185-201;

J.M. Levine, R. L. Moreland and H.S. Choi, "Group Socialization and Newcomer Innovation," in M. Hogg and S. Tindale (Eds.), *Blackwell Handbook in Social Psychology*, vol. 3, *Group Processes* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Limited, 2001), pp. 86-106;

J.M. Levine, R.L. Moreland and C. Ryan, "Group Socialization and Intergroup Relations," in C. Sedikides, J. Schopler and C. Insko (Eds.), *Intergroup Cognition and Intergroup Behavior* (Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1997), pp. 283-308;

M. Hogg and R.L. Moreland (Eds.), *Social Processes in Small Groups*, two special issues (32:1,2) of the *British Journal of Social Psychology* (1993);

- The member agrees to accept the norms and to participate in achieving common goals;
- The group commits to fulfilling its promises to the new member.

### **The adaptation process**

Once an individual has become involved in a group there is a period of adaptation in which:

- The new member and the group must be flexible to satisfy each other's needs;
- The individual must accept the group's norms, values and views. He or she must adhere to and internalize the group's method of functioning;
- The member now communicates the group's values through his or her words and behaviours;
- The group must also try to fulfill the needs of the new member.

When the adjustment period is over, the transition to acceptance is complete and the person becomes an integral member of the group. However, in some groups, a member's transformation during the socialization process has created a great deal of controversy.

- Some argue that the transformation of choices, decisions, behaviour and personality of group members is the result of mind control. The member is viewed as a victim. The member's association is not voluntary, but rather the result of undue influence through techniques employed by other members and their leaders;<sup>258</sup>
- Others claim that the transformation of members during the socialization process is a normal part of life within the group.<sup>259</sup> Moreover, members often seek this transformation or conversion.<sup>260</sup>

### **Maintaining the relationship between the member and the group**

During this phase, the individual and the group negotiate the nature and quality of their respective participation. If the member and the group are satisfied, then the relationship can be long lasting.

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R. L. Moreland and M. Hogg, "Theoretical Perspectives on Social Processes in Small Groups," *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 32 (1993), pp. 1-4.

<sup>258</sup> M. Tobias and J. Lalich, *Captive Hearts, Captive Minds: Freedom and Recovery from Cults and Abusive Relationships* (Alameda, CA: Hunter House, 1994);

M.T. Singer, J. Lalich, (1995), op.cit.

<sup>259</sup> R. Chagnon (1988), op.cit.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

Roy (1998), op.cit.

However, relationships between members and the group can sometimes deteriorate. Disagreements may arise, for example, when a member is no longer able to fulfill the role assigned to him or her or when a member is no longer satisfied with his or her place within the group.

When divisions emerge between the group and one of its members, the member in question may undergo a period of re-socialization

### **Re-socialization<sup>261</sup>**

During re-socialization, the member renegotiates his or her role within the group. The identity of the member is also redefined, as a marginal member with an uncertain future within the group.

The group tries to re-socialize the marginal member by encouraging him or her to correct errant behaviour in order to restore his or her good standing within the group.

This negotiation process can end with the reintegration of the individual as a full member or the member's departure from the group.

### **Departure or expulsion from the group<sup>262</sup>**

Former members may recall why they joined a group and why they decided to leave or were expelled. Furthermore, they may reinterpret their experience based on the difficulties encountered at the time of their departure. Ex-members remember their departure differently depending on how they feel about their overall experience within the group, which may have been:

- Positive;
- Neither good nor bad;
- Physically, spiritually or psychologically abusive, or financially draining.

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<sup>261</sup> J.M. Levine, R. L. Moreland and H. S. Choi (2001).

<sup>262</sup> D.G. Bromley. *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1997);

D.G. Bromley, *Falling from the Faith* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1988); H. R. F. Ebaugh, *Becoming an Ex: Process of Role Exit* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988);

J. Jacobs, *Divine Disenchantment: Deconverting from New Religions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989);

J.M. Levine, R. L. Moreland, "Progress in Small Group Research," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 41 (1990), pp. 585-634; R.

L. Moreland and J.G. McMinn, "Gone, But not Forgotten: Loyalty and Betrayal Among Ex-Members of Small Groups," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25 (1999), pp. 1484-1494;

S.Wright, "Post-Involvement Attitudes of Voluntary Defectors from Controversial New Religious Movements," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 23 (1984) pp. 172-182.

The group may question its own method of functioning. For example, it may:

- Question the experience it had with the ex-member. This member's participation within the group may become a living example of a "bad member" in the eyes of existing and future members.
- Change existing norms to prevent the recurrence of a similar situation.



## Appendix 6: Governments and the cult phenomenon

Since the Jonestown tragedy in 1978, which claimed the lives of 913 members of the Peoples Temple, a number of other tragic events have made headlines around the world. These events include the suicides, murders and arson related to the Order of the Solar Temple in 1994, 1995 and 1997; the confrontation between David Koresh's group and the U.S. authorities in 1993; the Aum Shinrikyo group's sarin gas attack and murders in Tokyo's subway in 1995; and the suicides of Heaven's Gate members in 1997. These dramatic events sparked various reactions from both the public and governments.

To understand a specific government's decision to intervene or not in dealing with "cults", here are some aspects that help us to understand a government's response concerning this phenomenon:

- Historical context (culture, political landscape, tragic cult-related events that have occurred in the country, etc.);
- The relationship between religion and government;
- Privileges granted to certain religious groups, if any;
- Presence or absence of a State religion;
- State financing of certain religious groups;
- The issue of cults in relation to the country's history;
- The government's usual method of intervention and public pressure.

Four aspects will be examined in order to help us understand the government responses presented in this appendix:

- Modern historical context;
- The State's position with regard to religious groups;
- Commissions on cults and parliamentary reports;
- The definition of "cult" under the law or in a parliamentary report.

### Modern historical context

A country's historical context can have a significant impact on the actions a government chooses to take with regard to the cult phenomenon. The following considerations help to shed light on a government's decision to act or not to act:

- During the course of its modern history, has the country come up against an anti-democratic or totalitarian group?
- Has the government been confronted by violence (group suicides or murders, terrorist attacks, etc.) perpetrated by alternative religious groups or cults?
- Have there been many confrontations between "cults" and the State?

For example, the murders, arson and “assisted suicides” carried out by members of the Order of the Solar Temple elicited different responses in Canada, Quebec, France and Switzerland.

- The French government set up a parliamentary commission.
- Switzerland’s federal government set up a commission of inquiry.
- The governments of Canada and Quebec did not set up a parliamentary commission.

### **The State’s position with regard to religious groups**

The State attitude to religion differs from country to country. In some countries, the roles of religion and the State are clearly defined, whereas in other countries the relationship between religion and the State is more ambiguous.

In many countries, mechanisms for recognizing religious groups are clearly set out. Groups that wish to obtain status as a religious organization must meet specific criteria. In most democratic countries, there is a clear separation between State and religion—in other words, they are secular states. In some countries, however, there is still a strong link between the State and the State religion.

#### **Secular state**

Several countries describe their relationship with religion and religious groups as secular. A secular state:<sup>263</sup>

- Adopts a neutral attitude toward religion, which means that it does not support any religion to the detriment of another;
- Tends to restrict religious groups’ implication within public social services or social institutions;
- Allows its citizens to practise or not the religion of their choice. Freedom of religion is the norm;
- May reserve in their constitution a special place for God;
- May have a specific process of recognition of religious and non religious groups.

<sup>263</sup>M. Juergensmeyer. *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

S. Garnet, *Religion and Politics: Major Thinkers on the Relation of Church and State* (1990)

S.Rodney. 1999. “Secularization: RIP.” *Sociology of Religion* 60 (3): 249-273.

L. Voye. “Secularization in a Context of Advanced Modernity.” *Sociology of Religion* 60 (3):p. 275-288. 1999

R. Stark, R. Finke. “Beyond Church and Sect: Dynamics and Stability in Religious Economies.” In Ted G. Jelen (ed.), *Sacred Markets, Sacred Canopies: Essays on Religious Markets and Religious Pluralism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield) 2002

These characteristics are not all present in each country. Each state has their own way to express their secular status.

### **Laic state**

Since the 1905 law, France describes itself as a laic country, which can also be understood as a synonym for a secular state. What that means in France is that there is a total separation between church and state. France sees religious beliefs as a personal and individual matter. Religious beliefs are ignored by governmental structures. Symbols of religiosity must stay private, and therefore, are not present in social institutions such as schools.<sup>264</sup>

### **Countries with a State religion**

A country with a state religion is a state where a religion is declared "dominant" by the Constitution. Argentina, Denmark and United Kingdom have a State religion.<sup>265</sup>

Legislating a specific method for differentiating religious groups from other groups may have an impact on the religion-State dynamic. The following table describes the position taken by each of the states examined in this appendix with regard to religion.

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<sup>264</sup> M. Gauchet. La religion dans la démocratie : parcours de la laïcité Gallimard, "Le débat", 1998.

J. Baubérot. Histoire de la laïcité en France. PUF, "Que sais-je ?", 2003.

<sup>265</sup> F. Champion, les rapport Église-État dans les pays européens de tradition protestante et de tradition catholique: essai d'analyse. Social Compass, vol. 40, no. 4, 1993, p. 589-609.

**Table: The State's position with regard to religious groups**

| <b>North America</b> |   |  |   |
|----------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>Canada</b>        | <b>Church and state relations</b>   | <b>Religious groups and Government status</b>  | <b>State funding of religious group activities</b>  |
|                      | <p>Canada is a secular country where religion does not have an official influence on government decisions.</p> <p>There is an obligation of neutrality between religion and government, however, the constitution protects religious rights but also recognises the supremacy of God. This element of the Canadian constitution is a symbol of its religious roots.<sup>266</sup></p> | <p>A religious group can incorporate as a non-profit Corporation which gives it access to certain privileges.</p> <p>The group can be given the status of a non-profit corporation if they include in their charter objectives which are of a charitable nature. This can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relief of poverty;</li> <li>• Advancement of education;</li> <li>• Advancement of religion;</li> <li>• Certain other purposes that benefit the community.<sup>267</sup></li> </ul> | <p>The status of religious corporation gives certain privileges such as tax exemptions.<sup>268</sup></p> |

<sup>266</sup> P. Bosset, "Laïcité" et pluralisme religieux : du bon et du mauvais usage de la perspective française dans le débat Québécois. Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, 2004. <http://www.cdpdj.qc.ca/fr/publications/liste.asp?Sujet=51&noeud1=1&noeud2=6&cle=0>

P. Bosset, *Les symboles et rituels religieux dans les institutions publiques*, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, novembre 1999. <http://www.cdpdj.qc.ca/fr/publications/liste.asp?Sujet=51&noeud1=1&noeud2=6&cle=0>

<sup>267</sup> Canadian Commercial Corporation Act ( R.S. 1985, c. C-14 ) <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/C-14/text.html>

<sup>268</sup> D. Lyon and M. Van Die, *Rethinking Church, State, and Modernity: Canada Between Europe and America* (2000); D. Marquand, R. Nettler, *Religion and Democracy* (2000), op.cit.

J. Verrette, *Dictionnaire des groupes religieux aujourd'hui : religions, églises, sectes, nouveaux mouvements religieux, mouvements spiritualistes* (2002).

| Cuba | Church and state relations  | Religious groups and Government status   | State founding of religious group activities                         |
|------|---|--|--|
|      | <p>Cuba is a secular country.</p> <p>Cuba allows its citizens freedom of religion, but the government closely controls the activities of religious organisations. For example, The Cuban Government does not allow Churches to have an independent media. The government controls: the number of religious scholars trained; the visit of foreign clergy; and the establishment of social institutions (schools, hospitals and clinics, and nursing homes).<sup>269</sup></p> | <p>Churches and other religious groups can obtain an official status. Groups want to obtain this status to have freedom of practice. To acquire their status they must register with the provincial Registry of Associations within the Ministry of Justice.<sup>270</sup></p> <p>Once they have the status they are allowed to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become a member of the Cuban Council of Churches (CCC),</li> <li>• Have permission to travel abroad and receive foreign visitors,</li> <li>• Receive religious literature through the CCC,</li> <li>• Have official places of worship.</li> </ul> | <p>The government does not found religious groups or activities.</p> |

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Twenty-two denominations are members of the Cuban Council of Churches such as Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists and the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Another 31 denominations are officially recognized (but are not members of the CCC), including Jehovah's Witnesses and the small Jewish community. Even if groups haven't gained an official status, the government tolerates their presence, for example: The Baha'i Faith and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). List found at: <http://www.cubanet.org/ref/dis/12220301.htm>

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Quebec<br/>(Canadian<br/>Province)</b> | <b>Church and state relations</b>  | <b>Religious groups and Government status</b>  | <b>State founding of religious group activities</b>   |
|   |  | A group must obtain the legal status of religious corporation to have access to tax exemptions. <sup>271</sup><br>In article 2 the Law on Religious Corporations says that in order for a group to acquire this status it must be composed of at least three members. In addition, the goals of the corporation must be charitable, educational, religious or for the well being of others. <sup>272</sup> | Tax exemptions.   |
| <b>United<br/>States</b>                  | <b>Church and state relations</b>  | <b>Religious groups and Government status</b>  | <b>State founding of religious group activities</b>   |
|   | First Amendment of the American constitution stipulates that: "Congress shall make no law regarding the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof". <sup>273</sup><br><br>Different judgments of the Supreme Court give the meaning of "non-establishment" as a sense of a wall of separation between church and state. Sometimes this free exercise clause is viewed as a non-preferential neutrality in regard to all religion. <sup>274</sup> | Research did not reveal any relevant information.  | In 2001 the first Presidential action of Georges W. Bush was to create an Office of Community and Faith-Based Initiatives to facilitate funding of religious groups' social programs.<br><br>This Office's goal is to facilitate funding of faith based organisations in order to compete with secular agencies for public funds. <sup>275</sup><br><br>Tax exemptions. |

<sup>271</sup> L.R.Q., chapitre C-71, Loi sur les corporations religieuses, Éditeur officiel du Québec,  
[http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/C\\_71/C71.html](http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/C_71/C71.html)

<sup>272</sup> L.R.Q., chapitre C-71, Loi sur les corporations religieuses, op.cit.

<sup>273</sup> The United States Constitution. as site in M.O. Manion, Churches and States : The Politics of Accommodation, Journal of Church and State, vol. 44, 2002, p.317-343.

<sup>274</sup> M.O. Manion, Churches and States : The Politics of Accommodation, Journal of Church and State, vol. 44, 2002, p.317-343  
Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, Engel v. Vitale, 370 U. S. 421, 431 (1962).

<sup>275</sup> D.A. Davis, President Bush's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives: Boon or Boondoggle? Journal of Church and State, vol 43, 2001, p.411-422

| <b>South America</b> |  |   |  |
|----------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>Argentina</b>     | <b>Church and state relations</b>  | <b>Religious groups and Government status</b>   | <b>State founding of religious group activities</b>  |
|                      | <p>State religion: Roman Catholicism.</p> <p>The constitution recognizes the special status of this religion.</p> <p>Since 1994, the republic recognised that it is not necessary to be a member of the Roman Catholic Church to be President or Vice-president of the Republic.<sup>276</sup></p>   | <p>The Secretary for Religious Affairs maintains that "non-catholic creeds have other status, not inferior, but different."<sup>277</sup></p> | <p>The Roman Catholic Church is sustained by the state and holds a dominant place in society<sup>278</sup>.</p>  |
| <b>Brazil</b>        | <b>Church and state relations</b>  | <b>Religious groups and Government status</b>   | <b>State founding of religious group activities</b>  |
|                      | <p>Brazil is a secular country.</p> <p>Brazil's constitution stipulates that it is written "... under the protection of God..."<sup>279</sup></p> <p>In its constitution Brazil describes the type of neutrality the State must have toward churches: it can't establish churches, it can't facilitate or complicate church activities, and it can't have alliances with church representatives.</p> | <p>Research did not reveal any relevant information.</p>  | <p>Churches can obtain tax exemptions regardless of their faith. They can also have access to public funds when they provide social services to the population such as medical care or education. In this case the state maintains its neutrality by accepting and giving money to viable projects regardless of the faith of the group who solicits public funds.<sup>280</sup></p> |

<sup>276</sup> A Brief Historical and Legal Description of Religious Liberty: <http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/rihand/Brazil.html>

<sup>277</sup> Handbook on Religious Liberty Around the World <http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/rihand/Argentina.html>

<sup>278</sup> Handbook on Religious Liberty Around the World <http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/rihand/Argentina.html>

<sup>279</sup> Federal Republic of Brazil Constitution 1988. Available at: <http://webthes.senado.gov.br/web/const/const88.pdf>

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

| <b>Europe</b>              |  |  |  |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>European Parliament</b> | <b>Church and state relations</b>  | <b>Religious groups and Government status</b>            | <b>State founding of religious group activities</b>      |
|                            | <p>This Parliament recognised the diversity of beliefs.</p> <p>Article 10 of the European Parliament Charter protects freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Article 21 also protects against discrimination based on sex, race, skin colour, social and ethnic origins, religious or political beliefs.<sup>281</sup></p> | <p>Research did not reveal any relevant information.</p> | <p>Research did not reveal any relevant information.</p> |

<sup>281</sup> Charte des Droits Fondamentaux de l'Union Européenne. [http://www.europarl.eu.int/charter/pdf/text\\_fr.pdf](http://www.europarl.eu.int/charter/pdf/text_fr.pdf)



| Austria | Church and state relation                           | Religious groups and Government status  | State founding of religious group activities  |
|---------|---|---|---|
|         | <p>Church and State are separate.<sup>282</sup></p> | <p>The State recognizes 12 official religions on its territory.<sup>283</sup> To be recognized as a religion groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must have at least 16,000 members ;</li> <li>• Teachings must be not be considered dangerous by the government ;</li> <li>• Can then obtain the statute of religion 10 years after they first apply. Religions who have applied after 1997 must wait 20 years before acquiring this statute under a new law.<sup>284</sup> This law identifies non-traditional religions as a second class of religions called "Confessional Communities,"</li> </ul> <p>To be recognized as a "Confessional Community": 300 members who are residents of Austria must apply with the Minister of Education. The group must provide a description of their religious beliefs and these beliefs must be different from other lawfully recognized religions. Their beliefs must respect public safety and order, the health and morals of the society and assure the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.</p> | <p>The twelve recognized religions enjoy benefits that unrecognized religions do not.</p> <p>Confessional Communities are not entitled to the full benefits and protections afforded by traditional religions</p> |

<sup>282</sup> B. Schinkele. Church Autonomy in Austria. <http://www.uni-trier.de/~ievr/konferenz/papers/schinkele.pdf>

<sup>283</sup> Austria's 12 official religions: Roman Catholic; Protestant (Lutheran and Calvin); Greek, Serbian, Romanian, Russian, and Bulgarian Orthodox; Jewish; Muslim; Old Catholic; and, more recently, Methodist and Mormon.

C.J. Miner, Losing my religion: Austria's new religion law in light of international and European standards of religious freedom, Brigham Young University Law Review, 2000. [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3736/is\\_199801/ai\\_n8766034/pg\\_1p.265](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3736/is_199801/ai_n8766034/pg_1p.265).

<sup>284</sup> C.J. Miner, op.cit.

| Belgium | Church and state relations   | Religious groups and Government status   | State founding of religious group activities   |
|---------|--|--|--|
|         | <p>Reciprocal independence marks the relationship between Church and state.</p> <p>Since 1993 their constitution states that the country is a secular State (paragraph 2 article 181).<sup>285</sup></p> | <p>The state currently recognises six religions.<sup>286</sup></p> <p>To be recognized as a religious community the group must acquire the right according to the law “le temporel des cultes” of March 4, 1870. To acquire this legal recognition a group must have thousands of members; they must be have a structure; have been established in the country for a long period; and be of certain social relevance.</p> <p>Other religious communities can be recognised as non-profit associations of common right. These groups can profit from the constitutional protection of the free exercise of worship.<sup>287</sup></p> | <p>To be recognise as a religious community gives access to public funds.</p> <p>The state pays the salaries and the pensions of religious ministers, as stated in the constitution of 1831.<sup>288</sup></p> |

<sup>285</sup> Sénat, services des affaires Européennes. Le financement des communautés religieuses. 2001. <http://www.senat.fr/lc/lc93/lc93.html>

<sup>286</sup> F. Champion, op.cit.

They are Roman Catholicism, Protestants, Orthodox, Jewish, Anglican and Islam. Information available at: <http://www.diplomatie.be/en/belgium/belgiumdetail.asp?TEXTID=1756>

<sup>287</sup> Sénat, services des affaires Européennes, op.cit.

<sup>288</sup> Sénat, services des affaires Européennes, op.cit.

S.J. van Bijsterveld, Church and state in Western Europe and the United States: Principles and perspectives, Brigham Young University Law Review, Janvier 2000.

| Denmark | Church and state relations  | Religious groups and Government status   | State founding of religious group activities  |
|---------|---|--|---|
|         | <p>Denmark has a State religion: the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The statute of this religion is recognized in paragraph 4 of the Constitution. It also recognizes that this church must be supported by the State. The Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs is the highest administrative authority.<sup>289</sup></p> <p>The Evangelical Lutheran Church clergy acts as registrar of births, deaths, and marriages.<sup>290</sup></p> | <p>Apart from the state religion there also exists the status of officially recognised "religious communities".<sup>291</sup> This statute enables them to celebrate marriages that are legally recognized, to record births and deaths...<sup>292</sup></p> | <p>The ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church are recognized as state employees.<sup>293</sup> The government collects a special tax from citizens who have been baptized in the State religion and who did not fill a request to be exempted from it (varies between 0.39 % and 1.5 % of assessed income).</p> <p>Other religious communities: their status does not give them the right to be given public financing.</p> |
| France  | Church and state relations  | Religious groups and Government status   | State founding of religious group activities  |
|         | <p>Since 1905 France is a laic (secular) country. French identity includes the belief that the state protects its citizens from religious excesses.<sup>294</sup></p>   | <p>Research did not reveal any relevant information.</p>   | <p>Article 2 of the 1905 law states that the: "Republic does not recognize, does not pay, and does not subsidize any worship".<sup>295</sup></p>  |

<sup>289</sup> A.W. Geertz, M. Rothstein. Religious Minorities and New Religious Movements in Denmark. Nova Religio. April 2001, Vol. 4, No. 2, Pages 298-309

<sup>290</sup> F. Champion, op.cit.

<sup>291</sup> These religions are the Roman Catholic Church, the Danish Baptist Church and the Pentecostal Seventh Day Adventists, the Catholic Apostolic Church, the Reformed Churches in Fredericia and Copenhagen, the Salvation Army, the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church and the Russian Orthodox Church in Copenhagen, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons).

<sup>292</sup> Sénat, services des affaires Européennes, op.cit.

<sup>293</sup> Sénat, services des affaires Européennes, op.cit.

<sup>294</sup> F. Champion, op.cit.

<sup>295</sup> Loi du 9 décembre 1905 Loi concernant la séparation des Eglises et de l'Etat.

| <b>Germany</b> | <b>Church and state relations</b>  | <b>Religious groups and Government status</b>  | <b>State founding of religious group activities</b>   |
|----------------|--|--|---|
|                | Church and State are separate since the Weimar Reich constitution of 1919. <sup>296</sup>  | To obtain this status a group must meet certain criteria such as: the number of members, the group's longevity, etc. <sup>297</sup>  | As stipulated in the Art. 137-6 of the Weimar Constitution, churches who have been recognized by the government can receive worship tax. These taxes are collected by the State from citizens who have been baptized by those religions and who did not fill a request to be exempted from it (varies between 8 and 9% of assessed income). <sup>298</sup>  |
| <b>Italy</b>   | <b>Church and state relations</b>  | <b>Religious groups and Government status</b>  | <b>State founding of religious group activities</b>   |
|                | <p>Church and State are separate.<sup>299</sup></p> <p>In 1984 the Italian Government and the Catholic Church signed an agreement decreeing that the Catholic Church is no longer the state religion.</p> <p>Bonds between the Catholic Church and the government are still strong. The government recognises the important historical role that the Church has played in Italy.</p> | <p>The Italian system recognizes three categories of religions: the Catholic Church, which enjoys a privileged position, religions which sign an agreement with the State and which occupy an intermediate position, and other religions.<sup>300</sup></p> <p>Other religions that are not Catholic can obtain the status of "person moral sui generic". To obtain this status their principles should profess respect for law, order and moral values.</p> | The Catholic Church, as well as the six religious communities which have concluded agreements with the State, are given public funding. They receive a fraction of state received income tax. In addition, donations to the religions are tax deductible and they also profit from a rather advantageous tax system. <sup>301</sup> Other religious communities don't receive direct or indirect funding from the State. However, they benefit from the same advantageous tax system as the recognized religious communities. |

<sup>296</sup> C.R. Barker, Church and State: Lessons from Germany? The Political Quarterly. 2004

<sup>297</sup> Sénat, services des affaires Européennes, op.cit.

<sup>298</sup> Sénat, services des affaires Européennes, op.cit.

<sup>299</sup> F. Champion, op.cit.

<sup>300</sup> Sénat, services des affaires Européennes, op.cit.

<sup>301</sup> Sénat, services des affaires Européennes, op.cit.

| Netherlands | Church and state relations  | Religious groups and Government status   | State founding of religious group activities   |
|-------------|---|--|--|
|             | <p>Church and State are separate since the Dutch Constitution of 1848. The government does not interfere with the internal affairs of religious or ideological organizations.<sup>302</sup></p> | <p>In accordance with Article 2, Book II of the civil code, religious communities constitute a “person moral sui generic”. They are organized within the framework of private law and run their own affairs.<sup>303</sup></p> | <p>The traditional obligations of the State relating to the salaries and the pensions of religious ministers was abolished in 1983, when the Parliament voted a law to end the financial relations between the State and the Church.</p> <p>No form of government funding is permitted to religious communities. However, they can benefit from indirect funding such as: public donations which are tax deductible; religious structures are maintained by the State, the provinces and the communities; many social activities organized by the religious communities, are financed by the State or local communities.</p> |

<sup>302</sup> Tobias Andreas Maria Witteveen, Overheid en nieuwe religieuze bewegingen Tweede Kamer, vergaderjaar, a report by the Dutch government published in Dutch, with a conclusion and summary in English (1983-1984): <http://www.math.mcgill.ca/triples/infocult/DutchReport.pdf>

Features: Dutch Horizons: Elements of Dutch Life :<http://www2.rnw.nl/rnw/en/features/dutchhorizons/elementsofdutchlife/religion.html>

<sup>303</sup> Sénat, services des affaires Européennes, op.cit.

| Russia | Church and state relations  | Religious groups and Government status  | State founding of religious group activities             |
|--------|---|---|--|
|        | <p>Up until the 1990's, the official doctrine of the state was "Atheism". The Communist Party tried to introduce Scientific Atheism to replace religious beliefs. They presented it as a philosophical worldview.<sup>304</sup> During the communist era many religious groups lost a large part of their membership.<sup>305</sup></p> <p>Since then Russia describes itself as a secular country.</p> | <p>In 1997 a new bill was voted on by the Duma (Parliament) of Russia which recognised the Russian Orthodox denomination as the pre-eminent religion. It also assigned second-class status to Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and other Christian denominations.</p> <p>All other faiths or groups must exist for 15 years before acquiring the right to publish or distribute religious literature or invite speakers from outside the country or to preach in hospitals, senior citizens' homes, schools, orphanages, prisons, etc.<sup>306</sup></p> | <p>Research did not reveal any relevant information.</p> |

<sup>304</sup> P. Froese, Forced secularisation in Soviet Russia: Why an Atheistic Monopoly Failed. Journal for Scientific Study of Religion, vol. 43, n.1, 2004. pp. 35-50

<sup>305</sup> The work of the Keston Institute, " at: <http://www.keston.org/infoframe.htm>

<sup>306</sup> P. Froese, op.cit.

| Spain  | Church and state relations   | Religious groups and Government status   | State founding of religious group activities  |
|--------|--|--|---|
|        | Church and State have been separate since 1978.  | <p>Article 16-3 of the constitution<sup>307</sup> denies the existence of any religion of State, but affirms necessary collaboration between the State and the various religious communities. This implies a particular place for the Catholic Church.</p> <p>An agreement passed between the state and the Catholic Church on September 4, 1979 gave it the right to act: in matters of legal and economic areas, teaching, and cultural questions.</p> <p>Other Churches: groups can be recognized as churches if they respond to certain criteria, (religious goals, methods of organization etc...). Currently there are three agreements with the Protestant, Jewish and Islamic religions.</p> | <p>The State ensures its financial support of the Catholic Church from money collected through taxes and by also giving indirect subsidies such as tax exemptions.<sup>308</sup></p> <p>Other Churches do not profit from any income tax, but they can benefit from the same indirect subsidies and the same tax exemptions as the Catholic Church.</p> |
| Sweden | Church and state relations   | Religious groups and Government status   | State founding of religious group activities  |
|        | <p>Since 1999 Sweden is a secular country. The Lutheran Church was formerly recognized as the State religion.<sup>309</sup></p> <p>Since 1996, Swedish citizens do not automatically become members of the Lutheran Church at birth.</p> | Research did not reveal any relevant information.  | Research did not reveal any relevant information.   |

<sup>307</sup> Spain's Constitution : [http://www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/sp00000\\_.html](http://www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/sp00000_.html)

<sup>308</sup> Sénat, services des affaires Européennes, op.cit.

P. Salarrullana, P. "Estado actual de las resoluciones aprobadas en el Congreso de los Diputados sobre las sectas destructivas" Ponencia del II Congreso Internacional AIS. Barcelona. 1994

V. Honrubia, J.M. "El Código Penal de 1995 y las organizaciones sectarias" Infosect, AIS, Noviembre 1997

<sup>309</sup> Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, op.cit

| Switzerland | Church and state relations   | Religious groups and Government status  | State founding of religious group activities                                       |
|-------------|--|---|--|
|             | <p>Each canton (province – there are 26 cantons) has the authority to regulate the relationship between Church and State.<sup>310</sup></p> <p>Certain cantons recognize religious communities.</p> <p>Certain cantons have a strict separation between church and State such as Geneva and Neuchâtel.</p> <p>Other cantons have a form of union such as Vaud. This union is characterized by certain State services which are given by religious communities.<sup>311</sup></p> | <p>Each canton has its own criteria to recognize religious communities. There a few common criteria which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longevity of the group. Cantons oblige the group to have existed for a certain period that can be as long as 20 to 30 years before giving them the status of religious community.</li> <li>• The group must respect the legal order.</li> <li>• The group must be composed of a certain number of members.</li> </ul> | <p>Each Canton has laws that legislates the use of public funds.<sup>312</sup></p> |

<sup>310</sup> S. Cattacin, C.R. Famos, M. Duttwiler, H. Mahnig. (2003) État et religion en Suisse. Luttés pour la reconnaissance, formes de la reconnaissance. Étude du forum suisse pour l'étude des migrations et de la population (FSM). <http://www.edi.admin.ch/ekr/dokumentation/shop/00019/00070/?lang=fr>

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.



| United Kingdom | Church and state relations  | Religious groups and Government status   | State founding of religious group activities  |
|----------------|---|--|---|
|                | <p>The United Kingdom recognizes two Churches: the Church of England (Anglican) and the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian).<sup>313</sup> The dignitaries are named by the monarchy.</p> | <p>Other Churches are completely independent of the State; they are organized within the associative framework.<sup>314</sup></p> <p>Religious organizations must register as an enterprise if they wish to be recognized as such and benefit from tax exemptions.<sup>315</sup> Under the law, advancement of religion is a charitable purpose, provided this advancement is non-profit and for the public benefit, which includes being non-political.<sup>316</sup></p> | <p>Non-profit, non-political charitable groups which advance religion for the public benefit qualify for privileges afforded by governments in the UK, including tax-exempt status.</p> <p>Places of worship are exempt from local taxes even if the religious institution involved is not a religious charity.<sup>317</sup></p> |

<sup>313</sup> P. Puaud. Le financement des religions en Allemagne, en Angleterre, en Belgique, au Danemark, aux Pays-Bas, en Espagne, au Portugal et en Italie. Bulletin de La Libre Pensée en Vendée - supplément au numéro 29 - février 2003. <http://www.laicite-republique.org/documents/loi1905/lp85.htm>

S.B. Mutch. Cults and Religious Privileges in England and Australia: Can the Wheat be Separated from the Chaff? Cults and Religious Privileges in England and Australia: Can the Wheat be Separated from the Chaff? Cultic Studies Review. Vol. 3, No. 2, 2004

P. Weller. Identity, Politics, and the Future (s) of religion in the U.K: The Case of The Religion Questions in the 2001 Decennial census. Journal of Contemporary Religion, vol. 19 no. 1, pp. 3-21, 2004

<sup>314</sup> F. Champion, op.cit.

<sup>315</sup> Annual Report on International Religious Freedom (2001), p. 397.

<sup>316</sup> Champion, op.cit.

<sup>317</sup> S.B. Mutch. Cults and Religious Privileges in England and Australia: Can the Wheat be Separated from the Chaff? , Vol. 3 no. 2 Cultic studies Review, 2004.

As Stark and Bainbridge,<sup>318</sup> and Wilson and Creswell<sup>319</sup> have noted religious groups have to fight in a society to have access to privileges. The more difficult that status and privileges are to acquire, the more religious groups can become engaged in conflicts with the state. In light of church and state relationships between the countries mentioned in this appendix, it can be concluded that a state's relationship with religious group is influenced by three characteristics: Status that a group can acquire, difficulties related to the process of acquisition of their status, and privileges associated with each of these status.

### Reports on cults

The following section presents an overview of the main conclusions presented in these reports as well as a summary table of the conclusions drawn by each of the parliamentary commissions or of the studies conducted by government institutions.

The States that have been analysed in the following demonstrate four reactions to cults:

- No official governmental reaction (Argentina; Brazil; Cuba; Russia);
- No parliamentary committee but governmental action (Austria)
- Parliamentary commissions that published a report which concluded that the country's laws are able to respond and protect citizen from cults. (Canada 1980, 1999; The United States (1990,1995,1999); Germany (1980, 1998); Denmark (1984); Netherlands (1984); Switzerland (1999).
- Parliamentary commissions that published a report which concluded that action must be taken by the state. (Belgium (1996); France, (1985, 1995); Spain (1989)).

In many of the countries examined in this appendix, the government has responded to the issue by setting up a commission of inquiry or by calling on social control agencies to study the potential risk of these groups in regards to the safety of its citizens and society as a whole. Looking into the countries where there has been a governmental reaction, is it possible to conclude that North or South American or European countries have their own way of responding to cults? Or is there a secular, laic or state religion approach in responding to cults?

At this point, it can be said, that except for the Hill report in Ontario (Canada), North American governments haven't established Parliamentary commissions to investigate the cult phenomenon. United States and Canada's reaction can be

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<sup>318</sup> R. Stark and W.S. Bainbridge. *The future of religion: Secularization, revival and cult formation*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1985

R. Stark, W. S. Bainbridge. *A Theory of Religion*. New York: David Lang. 1987

R. Stark, W. S. Bainbridge, and D.P. Doyle. *Cults of America: A Reconnaissance in Space and Time*. Sociological Analysis 40: 347-459. 1979

<sup>319</sup> B. Wilson and J. Cresswell. *New religious movements challenge and response*. NewYork: Routledge, p. 5-21, 1999

described as situational. This means that they study a specific question or event related to a cult or religious group instead of the cult phenomenon in general.

The European reaction can be described as global, meaning instead of looking at one tragedy or a unique situation; they tried to understand cult phenomena and to assess the risk that cults represent for their society.

### **Common Conclusions Drawn by Parliamentary Commissions in European Countries**

#### *Information*

In most of the parliamentary reports examined, providing the public with access to information about cults, new religious movements or spiritual groups is the solution most widely recommended.

Reports by government commissions emphasize the need to educate the public about how these groups function, their recruitment methods as well as their philosophies. The objective of this solution is to provide the public with as much information as possible so that individuals can make informed choices about whether or not to become a member of a group.

In their reports, Switzerland, France, Belgium and Germany propose the creation of information centres open to the public. In addition to providing free access to information about cults, these centres would also carry out research on “cults” and “new religious movements”.

#### *Protection*

Switzerland, France, Belgium and Germany recognized that some individuals must be protected from the potential danger of certain “cults”:

- In Germany consumers should be made aware that treatment given by some therapists or practitioners of alternative medicine could cause psychological, physical or financial harm to their clients. Public awareness campaigns are, therefore, an effective tool to educate the population and to prevent victimization.
- In France the Gest and Guyard Commission recommended improving the supervision of minors who are members of such groups.
- In Belgium, France and Switzerland reports recommended that there be better protection of children whose parents are members of cults.

### *Dangers related to being a member of a cult*

France, Belgium and Italy identified in their reports some of the dangers that members of cults can be exposed to:

- Indoctrination, persuasion and manipulation, in a way that members are influenced to respond to the leader;
- A full schedule of activities that can influence their thought process and their ability to make a rational choice;
- Financial exploitation;
- A rupture with his or her family.

### *Legislation*

Following their commission reports, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands recognized that their respective laws are sufficient in order to protect members and punish deviant members. Consequently, they did not feel the need to adopt any special legislation with regard to cults.

The Gest and Guyard Commission recognized that France's existing laws, for the most part, are sufficient to punish cults that break laws. However, the Commission also recognized that by improving France's legal framework, French authorities would be better prepared to deal with the challenge of cults.

According to the Commission, it is important to further develop or amend some of the points set out in specific laws in order to enable a more effective response to abuses perpetrated by cults. On the basis of this observation, France's National Assembly adopted a bill designed to strengthen the State's ability to prevent and suppress the problems associated with cult-like groups. In 2001, France's Senate reviewed and accepted the proposed bill which became known as the About-Picard law.

This law allows for:

- The dissolution of a group;
- A group to be held responsible when a member has committed an infraction or a crime;
- Law enforcement agencies to act when they have proof that a person or a group uses a person's state of ignorance against them;
- Law enforcement agencies to intervene in a way to limit cultic group publicity.

Since the About-Picard law in France, Belgium and Spain have taken action and proposed similar bills.

**Table: Selected parliamentary commission reports and government interventions**

| North America |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>Canada</b> | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>   |
|               | The government did not create a parliamentary commission to examine cults or new religious movements.   |
|               | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>   |
|               | <p>Some government institutions explored the issue of “cults” and domestic security.</p> <p>In 1993, <b>the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women</b><sup>320</sup> interviewed women from across Canada to acquire knowledge on various forms of violence experienced by women. This report notes that some of the women interviewed in each province were members of cults. They describe that violence within a cult can take various forms: physical, psychological, spiritual and sexual. These forms of violence are inflicted on a frequent basis throughout group ceremonies and collective activities. These ceremonies and activities are described in this research as religious, magical or supernatural. This report also observed that in Canadian society victims of cults are often misunderstood, their abuse is questioned and seen as impossible.</p> <p>In their recommendations, this report states that institutionalised religious organisations must modify their practices to do away with discrimination against women. Religious groups and institutions must recognize equality between men and women and be reinforced by allowing women a better social position in religious organisations.</p> <p>The <b>Canadian Security Intelligence Service</b> published three reports in which cultic groups were mentioned. Here are some of the conclusions presented in each of these reports.</p> <p><b>Trends in terrorism:</b><sup>321</sup> After examining the question of religious extremist groups, the report concluded that international cooperation is a crucial element in the fight against terrorism. However, given the wide range of strategic attacks employed by terrorist groups, intelligence services must play a front-line role in preventing such events. Consequently, improved cooperation between various intelligence and security organizations is needed in order to learn and counter terrorist plans[0].</p> |

<sup>320</sup> Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence-- Achieving Equality. Final Report of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, Minister of Supply and Services, Cat. no. SW45-1/1993E, 1993.

<sup>321</sup> Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Trends in Terrorism (1999). <http://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/en/publications/perspectives/200001.asp>

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Canada</b>                      | <p><b>Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism:</b><sup>322</sup> Following the sarin gas attacks in Tokyo's subway, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service published a report on the likelihood of a similar attack in Canada. The report concluded that it is difficult to evaluate the potential risk of a biological attack and, therefore, the focus should not be on whether the threat is real but, rather, on how to prevent the next attack.</p> <p><b>Doomsday religious movements:</b><sup>323</sup> This report addressed the relationship between public security and doomsday religious movements (movements that predict and wait for the end of the world). They are described as more or less organized groups of individuals who share the same non-traditional spiritual belief systems. The report recommends that the Canadian government and the various law-enforcement organizations learn to recognize pre-incident indicators of future violent acting-out within doomsday groups. Some of the indicators listed in the report include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensification of illegal activities;</li> <li>• Humiliating circumstances for the group;</li> <li>• Relocation to a rural area;</li> <li>• Increasingly violent rhetoric; struggle for leadership.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Ontario (Canadian province)</b> | <p><b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b></p> <p>In 1978, Ontario's Attorney General created a Parliamentary Commission to examine cults. Members of the Commission were asked to determine whether or not there was a need to introduce legislation with regard to these groups and to assess potential danger in terms of the physical and psychological well-being of their members. The Commission's work led to the publication of the Hill Report.<sup>324</sup></p> <p>In its conclusions, the report rejects: the idea that: new religious groups may represent a danger to its members; that belonging to one of these groups leads to psychiatric problems among members and ex-members; and that the State must modify existing laws to protect the public from cults. Instead, the Commission recommended informing the public about new religious movements and cults.</p> <p><b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b></p> <p>Research did not provide any relevant information.</p>  |

<sup>322</sup> Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Terrorism (1999). <http://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/en/publications/perspectives/200002.asp>.

<sup>323</sup> Canadian Security Intelligence Service. Doomsday Religious Movements (1999). <http://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/en/publications/perspectives/200003.asp>.

<sup>324</sup> D. Hill, Study of Mind Development Groups, Sects and Cults in Ontario: A Report to the Ontario Government (Toronto, 1980).

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Quebec (Canadian province)</b> | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>   |
|                                   | The government has not set up a parliamentary commission to examine cults or new religious movements  |
|                                   | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>   |
|                                   | Quebec's council on the status of women (Conseil du statut de la femme) touched on the issue of women and cultic groups and reported on practices that violate human rights, such as physical and psychological violence and financial loss. <sup>325</sup>                   |
| <b>Cuba</b>                       | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>   |
|                                   | No parliamentary commission   |
|                                   | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>   |
|                                   | Research did not provide any relevant information.  |
| <b>United States</b>              | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>   |
|                                   | The federal government did not set up a commission to examine the issue of cults or new religious movements.  |
|                                   | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>   |
|                                   | The government has published various reports following tragedies involving "cults" or "new religious movements". For instance, a report was published about the Jonestown tragedy <sup>326</sup> and the tragic events involving the Branch Davidians in Waco. <sup>327</sup> |

<sup>325</sup> D. Guibault, Diversité culturelle et religieuse: recherche sur les enjeux pour les femmes (Gouvernement du Québec: Conseil du statut de la femme, 1997).

<sup>326</sup> C.J. Zablocki, The Assassination of Representative Leo J. Ryan and the Jonestown, Guyana Tragedy Report of a Staff Investigative Group to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, May 15, 1979 96th Congress, 1st Session U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1979

"Findings of GAO study on California placement and federal funding of foster children under guardianship of members of Peoples Temple religious group in Jonestown, Guyana" In Abuse and Neglect of Children in Institutions, 1979 Hearings before the Subcommittee on Child and Human Development U.S. Senate Committee on Labour and Human Resources, May 31, 1979. "Investigation Report on Peoples Temple," Department of Social Services, State of California, Sacramento, CA, November, 1979

"Report of Investigation of Peoples Temple," Office of the Attorney General, State of California, Sacramento, CA, April, 1980 "The Performance of the Department of State and the American Embassy in Georgetown, Guyana in the People's Temple Case" aka "The Crimmins Report" U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., May, 1979.

<sup>327</sup> A.A. Stone, To Deputy Attorney General Philip Heymann Report and Recommendations Concerning the Handling of Incidents Such As the Branch Davidian Standoff in Waco Texas, November 10, 1993. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/waco/stonerpt.html>

J.C. Danforth, Interim Report to the Deputy Attorney General Concerning the 1993 Confrontation at the Mount Carmel Complex, Waco, Texas (2000): <http://www.cultfaq.com/wacoreport.pdf>

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| <p><b>United States</b></p> | <p><b>Jonestown</b></p> <p>The Jonestown Staff Investigative Group to the Committee on Foreign Affairs report<sup>328</sup> had many goals. A brief summary of the goals and conclusions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After interviewing ex-members and members who survived, they concluded that Jones was a master of mind control. To gain trust, respect and submission of members he used a variety of tactics such as physical isolation and deprivation; he obliged members to wed strangers; he broke the bonds between parents and their children and spread rumours. He gained the respect of outsiders through the use of effective public relations. The report concluded that a principle strategy of Jim Jones, with members and people outside the group, was to divide and conquer.</li> <li>• At the beginnings of People's Temple the group could be described as a church but over time it became more a socio-political movement. Throughout its existence they used their church status to obtain tax exemption.</li> <li>• One question that the report had to answer: <i>"Was there a conspiracy against Jim Jones perpetrated by the U.S. Government or some other organization?"</i> Since the foundation of the group, Jones perceived that certain people were opposed to his views. Over time he became paranoid. Research showed that there wasn't any government plot to destroy People's Temple. However, Jones used the idea of a conspiracy as a means of generating fear within his group. This tactic was useful to gain a better control over the members. This tactic also helped to keep opponents on the defensive.</li> <li>• This report had to assess if Representative Ryan had been adequately advised on the potential for danger, and if government agencies could have predicted the degree of violence employed by this group. Representative Ryan was advised on more than one occasion of the possibility of violence inherent in his trip to Jonestown. The report concluded on those questions: "Some members of Mr. Ryan's staff as well as the media group had gut feelings of the possibility of violence. They ranged from advising Mr. Ryan that Jones had a "capacity" for violence, to a general concern based on allegations of guns in Jonestown, and finally, to the thought that a bomb might be placed on the plane on which the entire party flew to Guyana. At the most extreme end of such intuitive hunches and feelings was Miss Jackie Speier's premonition of fear that led her to write her own will".<sup>329</sup></li> <li>• The report also had to establish if a conspiracy to kill Representative Ryan was planned by the group. Circumstantial evidence accumulated permitted the conclusion that Jones planned to eliminate Representative Ryan if he was a menace to Jonestown.</li> <li>• The report also concluded that lack of action on the part of the U.S. Department of State contributed to the chain of events at Jonestown and that Guyana government representatives facilitated Jim Jones activities.</li> </ul> |
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<sup>328</sup> The Assassination of Representative Leo J. Ryan and the Jonestown, Guyana Tragedy Report of a Staff Investigative Group to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, May 15, 1979 96th Congress, 1st Session U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1979

<sup>329</sup> The Assassination of Representative Leo J. Ryan and the Jonestown, Guyana Tragedy Report of a Staff Investigative Group to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, op.cit.



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| <p><b>United States</b></p> | <p><b>Waco</b></p> <p><b>Reports on Waco , an overview :</b></p> <p>The first report published on the Waco events by representatives of the Deputy Attorney General and the F.B.I was an extended description of the chain of event and reaction of law enforcement agencies and Koresh's group.<sup>330</sup></p> <p>Alan Stone's report on the Branch Davidian's had as an objective to try and understand how law enforcement agencies must intervene when they have to deal with a group which has unconventional motivation and thought process.<sup>331</sup> In the report's conclusion :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F.B.I behavioural experts had understood the particularity of Koresh's group but decision-making agents at Waco did not listen to those experts. The report concludes that the agents in charge at Waco did not follow the advice of the FBI behavioural experts and "Tried to show him [Koresh] who was the boss."<sup>332</sup></li> <li>• FBI's tactics may have precipitated Koresh's and his believers' decision to commit mass suicide.</li> </ul> <p>This report recommended that the FBI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Needs to make better use of past experiences and existing behavioural science capacity.</li> <li>• Needs a clear policy on third party negotiators/intermediaries</li> <li>• And the Justice Department need a systematic policy for dealing with information overload in a crisis.</li> <li>• Needs a better knowledge base about the medical consequences of C.S. gas.</li> <li>• Needs a specific policy for dealing with unconventional groups."</li> </ul> <p>The <b>Heymann Report (Deputy Attorney General)</b><sup>333</sup> studied the Waco event to review law enforcement abilities to handle hostage/ barricade incidents and recommend, if necessary, improvements. This report recognized that the Waco hostage situation was different from other hostage/ barricade incidents. Koresh believers were armed and they didn't want to leave the compound. The situation was also complicated after ATF agents were killed in their first attempt to capture Koresh. Koresh didn't want to surrender because it meant losing everything he had established. Law enforcement agents didn't have much to offer Koresh. The report gives seven recommendations to improve future interventions in hostage/ barricade incidents.</p> |
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<sup>330</sup> R. Scruggs, V. Gonzalez, S. Zipperstein, H. Cousins, R. Lyon R. Beverly. Report to the Deputy Attorney General on the Events at Waco, Texas, February 28 to April 19, 1993. October 3, 1993. <http://www.usdoj.gov/05publications/waco/wacotocpg.htm#toc>

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| <p><b>United States</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In hostage/barricade situations, law enforcement agencies must be able to provide four tactical elements: 1) a Tactical team equipped to intervene; 2) an experienced negotiator must be accessible to negotiate a peaceful end to the conflict; 3) behavioural experts who can advise negotiators on suspect's behavioural patterns; and 4) a command structure that can put this intervention team together.</li> <li>• The F.B.I. must be able to perform the tactical side of such an intervention.</li> <li>• Double the number of F.B.I SWAT team members and increase the number of tactical specialists to help and promote research on the development of non-lethal technology.</li> <li>• Increase the number of negotiators that the F.B.I can provide.</li> <li>• If needed intervention teams must be able to consult with experts from the social sciences such as specialists in religion, sociology, psychiatry...</li> <li>• Need of a field manager who can lead and take decisions to coordinate such an elaborate team.</li> <li>• Other law enforcement agencies must participate in "First Response Training Programs" among other programs to be able to respond to hostage/barricade situations.</li> </ul> <p>The <b>Interim Report to the Deputy General</b><sup>334</sup> concluded that the U.S government and its representatives weren't responsible for the tragedy at Waco (April 19, 1993). The report recognized that agents: "did not cause the fire; did not direct gunfire at the Branch Davidian complex; and did not improperly employ the armed forces of the United States".<sup>335</sup> The report attributes the responsibility of this tragedy to the Branch Davidians and their leader, David Koresh.</p> <p>The <b>final report of the Deputy Attorney General</b><sup>336</sup> arrives at the same conclusion. However, the Special Counsel concludes that FBI representatives and the Department of Justice officials did not recognize that they used pyrotechnic tear gas rounds during the siege at Waco. The report also concluded that some FBI and government representatives manifested behaviour that obstructed the investigation.</p> |
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<sup>331</sup> A.A. Stone, Report and Recommendations Concerning the Handling of Incidents Such As the Branch Davidian Standoff in Waco Texas, To Deputy Attorney General Philip Heymann Submitted November 10, 1993, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/waco/stonerpt.html#i>

<sup>332</sup> Op cit. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/waco/stonerpt.html#i>

<sup>333</sup> P.B. Heymann, Deputy Attorney General. Lessons of Waco: Proposed changes in Federal Law Enforcement. October 8, 1993.

<sup>334</sup> J.C. Danforth of the Attorney General Special Counsel, Interim Report to the Deputy General Concerning the 1993 Confrontation at the Mt. Carmel Complex Waco Texas, no. 2256-99, July 2000, p.4

<sup>335</sup> J.C. Danforth, op.cit.

<sup>336</sup> J.C. Danforth, op.cit.

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| <p><b>United States</b></p> | <p><b>Project Megiddo</b></p> <p>As the year 2000 approached, the FBI published the Megiddo Report.<sup>337</sup> This report evaluates the potential of terrorist activity that could be committed by individual or extremist groups who have an apocalyptic world view and believe that the end of the world is near. This report mentions indicators that could help law enforcement agencies identify potential threats to domestic security. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Militias and people who share a racist belief system such as Christian Identity or Odinism or groups who perceive the arrival of the new millennium as a time for action. Groups who are storing weapons and goods to defend themselves and survive in time of siege. Individuals or groups can take action on their own motivated by a specific group philosophy.</li> <li>• Cult related violence can also represent a threat with the arrival of the new millennium. The danger can come from biblically driven cults, but the commission of violent act is determined only by the leader's impulse. In this case law enforcement agencies must observe the leader and the power that he has over his members. They also must be aware of the cult's activities, sudden changes in daily activities can be a sign that the group is preparing for action.</li> <li>• In their analysis the leader and followers' perception matters in their decision to commit or not a crime. A group can wait for specific signs before taking action, such as industrial problems or natural catastrophes.</li> </ul> <p>According to this report, the date of the arrival of the "New World" varies from one group to the next and from one sacred text to another. It is therefore difficult to predict the exact moment when millennial groups will take action to usher in this "New World" and to predict their criminal activity. The report concluded that Law enforcement agencies must be aware that the arrival of the new millennium could increase the likelihood that extremist groups would use violence as a means to achieve their ends. Social control agencies may be ideal targets for these groups because they symbolize the government in power. Extremist religious groups may carry out violent acts against social control agencies in order to precipitate the end of the world. The report's conclusion is a reminder to law enforcement agencies to be particularly vigilant when dealing with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups that foment plans against government institutions;</li> <li>• Glorification of the status of martyr in order to attain the group's objectives;</li> <li>• Escalating conflicts between groups and social control agencies during routine activities conducted by these control agencies.</li> </ul> |
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<sup>337</sup> F.B.I. Project Mediggo. 1999. <http://permanent.access.gpo.gov/lps3578/www.fbi.gov/library/megiddo/megiddo.pdf>

| <b>South America</b>       |   |
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| <b>Argentina</b>           | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>   |
|                            | No parliamentary commission   |
|                            | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>   |
|                            | Research did not provide any relevant information.  |
| <b>Brazil</b>              | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>   |
|                            | No parliamentary commission   |
|                            | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>   |
|                            | Research did not provide any relevant information.  |
| <b>Europe</b>              |   |
| <b>European Parliament</b> | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>   |
|                            | <p>The government has not set up a parliamentary commission to examine the issue of groups known as “cults” or “new religious movements” but has addressed the issue and made some recommendations. For example in :</p> <p><b>1984:</b> The European Parliament adopted a resolution that addressed problems associated with groups called cults. Four recommendations were made: facilitate exchanges of information on those groups between member states; start an international data pool on cults; draft a code of conduct; and that member states discuss and establish a code of conduct to approach cults.<sup>338</sup></p> <p><b>1992:</b><sup>339</sup> Among recommendations from The European Parliament to its member States was that they inform their citizens and educate children about religion, new religious movements and cults and that groups be able to obtain an official governmental status.</p> <p><b>1999:</b><sup>340</sup> Recommendation 1412. In relation to illegal activities by cults the Parliament recognizes that :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member States must use available civil and criminal procedures to prosecute groups who are accused of illegal conduct;</li> <li>• In order to protect human dignity it is important to provide information on such groups.</li> </ul> |

<sup>338</sup> D. Wilshire. Cults and the European Parliament: A practical Political Response to An International Problem. Cultic Studies Journal. Vol. 7, no. 1, pp 1-15. 1990.

<sup>339</sup> European Parliament. Recommendation 1178 (1992). Doc. 6535, February 5 1992

<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=http%3A%2F%2Fassembly.coe.int%2FDocuments%2FAdoptedText%2Fta92%2FEREC1178.htm>

<sup>340</sup> European Parliament. Illegal activities of sects Recommendation 1412 (1999) Doc. 9220 21 September 2001

<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=http%3A%2F%2Fassembly.coe.int%2FDocuments%2FWorkingDocs%2FDOC01%2FEDOC9220.htm>

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|                       | <p><b>2004:</b> <sup>341</sup> The European Parliament recommends to its member states to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure that their judicial and fiscal systems are adequate to prevent unlawful actions by cults;</li> <li>• Make sure that the process to acquire the status of religion isn't automatic and that groups who are condemned of criminal acts can't obtain this status;</li> <li>• To facilitate the exchange of information on cults between member states;</li> <li>• Use articles of the Treaty on European Union to control and combat criminal activities by cults;</li> <li>• Ensure that communities' funds aren't given to cults.</li> </ul>   |
|                       | <p><b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b></p>  |
|                       | <p>Research did not reveal any relevant information.</p>  |
| <p><b>Austria</b></p> | <p><b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b></p> <p>The government has not set up a parliamentary commission to examine the issue of groups known as "cults" or "new religious movements".</p> <p><b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b></p> <p>In a brochure distributed to the public, the Ministry of Family and Education stated that between 500 and 600 religious groups (cults) pose a potential danger to members and non-members within its territory.<sup>342</sup> Here is a list of the four types of organizations that this ministry recognizes as potentially problematic for its members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups led by a guru;</li> <li>• Psychogroups;</li> <li>• New movements;</li> <li>• Groups with a Christian orientation.</li> </ul> |

<sup>341</sup> European Parliament. Cults in Europe, Directorate-General for Research Working Paper People's Europe Series W-10, [http://www.europarl.eu.int/workingpapers/cito/w10/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.eu.int/workingpapers/cito/w10/default_en.htm)

<sup>342</sup> Austrian Ministry of Family Affairs, Wissen schützt (knowledge protects) (1996) as cited in: (accessed on March 17, 2005) <http://www.religiousfreedom.com/Conference/DC/Brunner.htm>

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| <b>Belgium</b> | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>   |
|                | In 1996, a Ministerial Commission tabled a report before the Belgian Chamber of Representatives on the issue of “cults” in Belgium and their potential danger for Belgian citizens. The Commission’s objective was to recommend a strategy to stop, if it was the case, the illegal practices of cults and their potential danger to members (particularly minors) and to society as a whole. <sup>343</sup>                                |
|                | The Parliamentary Commission recommended that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The government establishes a policy to deal with the potential danger of cults to society.</li> <li>• The creation of information centres on harmful cultic organizations. These centres would gather information on the various cult groups in order to provide information to the public on the nature of these movements’ activities.</li> </ul> |
|                | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>   |
|                | Belgian’s Parliament created a centre called Centre d’Information et d’Avis sur les Organisations Sectaires Nuisibles (CIAOSN). <sup>344</sup>  |
| <b>Denmark</b> | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>   |
|                | In 1984, the State set up a parliamentary commission to obtain information about cult activities and determine the relevance of government intervention into their activities. The Commission concluded that the groups examined were not a threat to security and public order. <sup>345</sup>   |
|                | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>   |
|                | Research did not reveal any relevant information.   |

<sup>343</sup> Duquesne, Willems, Enquête parlementaire visant à élaborer une politique en vue de lutter contre les pratiques illégales des sectes et le danger qu’elles représentent pour la société et pour les personnes, particulièrement les mineurs d’âge, 1997. <http://www.lachambre.be/FLWB/pdf/49/0313/49K0313007.pdf> and <http://www.lachambre.be/FLWB/pdf/49/0313/49K0313008.pdf>

<sup>344</sup> This organisation can be find at : [http://www.agenda-respect.be/fr/ppublic/presentation/Centre\\_Sectes-nuisibles/Centre\\_Sectes-nuisibles.htm](http://www.agenda-respect.be/fr/ppublic/presentation/Centre_Sectes-nuisibles/Centre_Sectes-nuisibles.htm)

<sup>345</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Annual Report on International Religious Freedom (2001): <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2001/>.

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| <b>France</b> | <p><b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b></p> <p>In the 1980s, the French government examined the problem of religious cults and pseudo-religions.<sup>346</sup> After public hearings, the report by Alain Vivien was published. In its conclusion, he recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointing a high-ranking official to examine, assess and coordinate the discussion around the issue of cults. In case of difficulties, this official must mobilize all of the government departments concerned.</li> <li>• Promoting seminars and training sessions, followed by debates, in schools of social work, parent associations, social movements, youth associations, etc.</li> <li>• Promoting research on cults: an ongoing and ever-evolving phenomenon.</li> <li>• Promoting secularism in order to encourage debate, public presentations and, if necessary, a comparative look at various religious and philosophical ideologies.</li> <li>• Providing better information to the public about the cult phenomenon by promoting unbiased coverage of cults in the media.</li> <li>• Creating a mediation body to help maintain the relationship between parents and their children or between spouses when one of them joins a cult.</li> <li>• Affirming the rights of the child. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child is designed to reaffirm the fact that parents do not have absolute ownership of their children, even if the child is directly dependent on the parents and even if education is a parental right and responsibility.</li> <li>• Ensuring that the State is more assertive in promoting adherence to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.</li> <li>• Ensuring that children receive an education outside of the cult environment.</li> </ul> <p>Following the tragic events involving the Order of the Solar Temple, a Commission was created in 1995. The objective of the Gest and Guyard Commission<sup>347</sup> was to evaluate the scope of the cult phenomenon. Although difficult to fully grasp, this phenomenon appears to be growing, and there is a need to find ways of responding effectively to the danger posed by these groups. Based on an analysis of the information gathered, the Commission recognized 172 parent organizations that could be described as potentially dangerous cults, and 800 affiliated groups.</p> |
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<sup>346</sup> Alain Vivien, Les sectes en France : expression de la liberté morale ou facteur de manipulation (Documentation française: 1985).

<sup>347</sup> A. Gest, J. Guyard. Commission sur les sectes en France, 1995 : <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/rap-enq/r2468.asp>

According to the Commission, these are some of the dangers cult members expose themselves to:

- Persuasion;
- Manipulation or any physical means to destabilize individuals and place them under the control of a leader;
- Weakening of the individual by imposing extremely rigorous discipline;
- Diminishing critical thinking by forcing members to pray or perform repetitive acts in order to obtain total obedience;
  - The use of techniques, from deep hypnosis to prescribing drugs, in order to—in the words of Colonel Morin—“psychologically rape” the follower;
  - Financial exploitation;
  - Forcing members to sever ties with their former lives.

According to the report some cults have an anti-social rhetoric from the outset and some movements encourage practices that are illegal and amoral. When facing groups that are problematic for both the individual and society, the Commission recommends:

- A highly pragmatic approach based primarily on strong preventive action, more effective application of the law and improving certain aspects of the existing legal framework;
- Information be given to the public about these groups through campaigns, especially on public television stations;
- Better application of existing laws and the creation of an interministerial monitoring agency under the Prime Minister, in collaboration with the administrative departments concerned, to study and monitor the cult phenomenon.

In 2001, France adopted a law that came to be called The About-Picard Law. It reinforced the penal code. The law allows for :

- The dissolution of a legally registered group;
- Holding the group legally responsible for certain infractions ;
- Limiting publicity by cultic movements;
- Provisions relating to the fraudulent abuse of an individual’s state of ignorance or weakness.

#### **Reports and interventions by other government institutions**

Creation of a cult monitoring agency (Observatoire des sectes) in 1996, which became in 1998 the Interministerial Mission to Combat Cults (Mission interministérielle de lutte contre les sectes) and, in 2002, was changed to the Interministerial Mission to Monitor and Combat Cultic Abuses (Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires).



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| <p><b>Germany</b></p> | <p><b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b></p> <p>In 1980, the Federal Department of Youth, Family and Health published a report on cults and youth.<sup>348</sup> The report concluded that Law enforcement agencies can and should intervene only if these groups infringe on the rights of a third party or cult follower.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the report specified the difficulty in gathering sufficient evidence to incriminate the individuals who are victimizing members of a cult or any other group. The report states how important it is for the government ministry to inform the population about the phenomenon of cults and religious movements.<sup>349</sup></p> <p>In 1998, the German Commission on cults and “psychogroups” published a report.<sup>350</sup></p> <p>According to this Commission, the emergence of new religious movements and new ideologies is a normal phenomenon in any society where religion is not controlled by the State. In these societies, membership in a religious group is, therefore, an act of freedom of expression and individual choice.</p> <p>The Commission did, however, examine the role of government and society with regard to an individual’s decision to join a religious movement.</p> <p>Does the State have the right to prevent or minimize the risks that a person is taking?</p> <p>According to the Commission, the government cannot decide which religious beliefs are beneficial or detrimental to an individual. The State cannot allow itself to defend a particular ideology as opposed to another. The State must, however, ensure that the laws that govern life in society are respected.</p> <p>From the Commission’s perspective, every individual has the right to criticize and defend his or her convictions or those of others provided that his or her statements do not breach any laws.</p> <p>Following its study on cults and “psychogroups”, the Commission concluded that there is no evidence that religious movements use techniques of social control or mind control different from those employed by other social groups accepted by German society.</p> <p>There is no information to conclude that new religious movements or ideological movements are a threat to members, society or government.</p> |
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<sup>348</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Annual Report on International Religious Freedom (2001) <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2001/> or Enquete Commission on “So-called Sects and Psychogroups,” New Religious and Ideological Communities and Psychogroups in the Federal Republic of Germany (Bonn: 1998)

<sup>349</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Annual Report on International Religious Freedom (2001) <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2001/> or Enquete Commission on “So-called Sects and Psychogroups,” New Religious and Ideological Communities and Psychogroups in the Federal Republic of Germany (Bonn: 1998):

<sup>350</sup> Final Report of the Enquete Commission on “So-called Sects and Psychogroups,” New Religious and Ideological Communities and Psychogroups in the Federal Republic of Germany (Bonn: 1998). <http://www.math.mcgill.ca/triples/infocult/Zs0598.pdf>

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| <b>Germany</b>     | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>  |
|                    | The 1980 report by the federal department of youth, family and health led to: <sup>351</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding of a conference;</li> <li>• The distribution of brochures about youth in cults;</li> <li>• Research on the reasons why youth join cults as well as the damage caused by these groups.</li> </ul>   |
|                    | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>  |
|                    | The Commission on constitutional affairs published a report entitled <i>Cults and New Magical Movements in Italy</i> .<br><br>The report describes the activities of these groups in Italy. From the perspective of social control agencies, the report identifies five potential risks that these groups represent for individuals and society: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainwashing and coercive persuasion;</li> <li>• Fraud;</li> <li>• The use of spirituality as a pretext to conceal illegal or immoral activities;</li> <li>• Preaching an irrational doctrine that can lead members to perform dangerous activities that jeopardize domestic security;</li> <li>• Subversive political plans and actions.<sup>352</sup></li> </ul> |
|                    | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>  |
|                    | Research did not reveal any relevant information.  |
| <b>Netherlands</b> | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>  |
|                    | A Dutch report from 1984 from a Parliamentary Commission on new religions examined the effect of special policies on these groups. The report comprised two sections: the first includes a description of several new religions and the second examines how State authorities deal with these groups.<br><br>The Commission concluded that there is no evidence to prove allegations of the use of coercive persuasion techniques by members of new religions to convert new members. It seems that, generally, members of these groups join new religions after a period of reflection. According to the Commission, it is not necessary to set up centres to help former members of these groups. <sup>353</sup>   |

<sup>351</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Annual Report on International Religious Freedom (2001): <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2001/>

<sup>352</sup> M. Introvigne and CESNUR, Much Ado About Nothing? The "Italian Report on Cults" (1998): <http://www.cesnur.org/testi/Report.htm>

<sup>353</sup> Tobias Andreas Maria Witteveen, Overheid en nieuwe religieuze bewegingen Tweede Kamer, vergaderjaar, report by the Dutch government published in Dutch, with conclusion and summary in English (1983-1984): <http://www.math.mcgill.ca/triples/infocult/DutchReport.pdf>

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| <b>Netherlands</b> | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>  |
|                    | Research did not reveal any relevant information.  |
| <b>Russia</b>      | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>  |
|                    | No parliamentary commission  |
|                    | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>  |
|                    | Research did not provide any relevant information.   |
| <b>Spain</b>       | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>  |
|                    | A Spanish report published in 1989, <sup>354</sup> was intended to determine if legislation would enable an adequate response to cult groups. The Commission concluded that existing laws were sufficient to protect public order and members of cultic groups. The Commission recommended launching information and awareness campaigns about cults. In 1989, a law was adopted to allow police forces to investigate the activities of cultic groups.  |
|                    | In 1999, the government passed a motion to take measures to protect against destructive cults. This law allows the suppression of these groups. <sup>355</sup> This motion was proposed by a Catalan Parliamentary Group, to promote a law very similar to the French About-Picard law. The main suggestions were: coordination of civil services, creation of a national observatory on cults, supporting associations specialized in cultic phenomena, developing some measures to prevent illegal activities, increasing technical formation to different professionals (police services, judges, lawyers, etc.). |
|                    | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>  |
|                    | In 1999, parliament approved a resolution to strengthen protection measures against destructive cult activities.   |

<sup>354</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee of Foreign Relations, Annual Report on International Religious Freedom : [http://www.state.gov/www/global/human\\_rights/1999\\_hrp\\_report/spain.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1999_hrp_report/spain.html)

<sup>355</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee of Foreign Relations, Annual Report on International Religious Freedom (2001): <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eur/875.htm>

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| <b>Sweden</b> | <b>Reports of government commissions on cults</b>   |
|               | The strategy adopted by the Government's report was to create a dialogue to promote mutual understanding and not to remain passive when suspicious or criminal activities are being committed in the name of religious freedom. <sup>356</sup>  |
|               | In its report, the Commission recognized that members who have chosen to leave a new religious movement need assistance. Centres specializing solely on post-cult trauma are not necessary, professionals at regular crisis intervention centres should be trained to deal with the particular circumstances of former cult members. The Commission recognizes the urgent need for information. To meet this demand, it proposes the creation of KULT, the Swedish acronym for the centre for the study of beliefs.   |
|               | The Centre's mission is to promote further research into new religious movements so that scientifically valuable information can be transmitted. The Commission highlighted the issue of children in new religious groups. It firmly believes that children and adolescents living within closed groups should enjoy the same assistance, protection and rights as other children.<br>The Commission recommends the adoption of guidelines to evaluate the situation of children in new religious movements. It proposes that teachers receive special training and information on new religious groups. The Commission recommends that the term "improper influence" be included in Sweden's criminal code in order to better protect members who may be victims of new religious movements. |
|               | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>   |
|               | Research did not reveal any relevant information.   |

<sup>356</sup> The Swedish government's report on new religious movements (1998): [http://www.cesnur.org/testi/swedish\\_fra.html](http://www.cesnur.org/testi/swedish_fra.html)

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| <b>Switzerland</b>    | <b>Reports on government commissions on cults</b>   |
|                       | <p>In the wake of the Solar Temple (O.T.S.) tragedy, Switzerland created a Commission of Inquiry which concluded that the State must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bolster security personnel specialized in cults;</li> <li>• Set up a collaborative structure with French police forces;</li> <li>• Better inform the public through courses on the history of religions;</li> <li>• Create a centre for the dissemination of information;</li> <li>• Provide support for support groups.</li> </ul> <p>In 1999, a report by the National Council was published.<sup>357</sup> This report emphasized the importance of respecting human rights. The Swiss government examined the need to create a policy on cults that takes into account the importance of indoctrination. The Federal Council stipulated that it is important to ensure the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination of the various social actors involved;</li> <li>• Creation of a Swiss information and consultation service so that every citizen can make an informed choice;</li> <li>• Promotion of research and cooperation.</li> </ul> <p>The Commission was not of the opinion that the fight against the destructive effects of indoctrinating groups requires new legislation. However, there are some gaps in Switzerland's legislation regarding cults that must be bridged, particularly with respect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The protection of children;</li> <li>• Consumer protection through regulations on spiritual assistance for profit;</li> <li>• Health legislation.</li> </ul> <p>Following publication of this report, the Federal Council (2000) did not deem necessary to create a specific policy on cults. The Federal Council considers that a clear and coherent policy on cults and indoctrinating movements has been in effect in Switzerland for several years.</p> |
|                       | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>   |
|                       | Research did not reveal any relevant information.   |
| <b>United Kingdom</b> | <b>Reports by government commissions on cults</b>   |
|                       | The government of the United Kingdom did not set up a parliamentary commission to examine cults or new religious movements.   |
|                       | <b>Reports and interventions by other government institutions</b>   |
|                       | Research did not reveal any relevant information.   |

<sup>357</sup>The Swiss National Council's Report on Cults, Cults and Indoctrinating Movements in Switzerland (1999): [http://www.cesnur.org/testi/sette\\_f.htm](http://www.cesnur.org/testi/sette_f.htm).

### The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports

The term cult is defined in only certain parliamentary reports or legislation and is indicated in the following table.

**Table: Terms used in various reports to describe the groups being examined**

| <b>North America</b>               |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Canada</b>                      | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>  |
|                                    | Canada does not define the term cult in legislation or in a parliamentary report.  |
| <b>Ontario (Canadian province)</b> | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>  |
|                                    | In the Hill report, the Commission discussed the terms used but did not recommend the use of a specific term.  |
| <b>Quebec (Canadian province)</b>  | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>  |
|                                    | Quebec does not define the term cult in legislation or in a parliamentary report.  |
| <b>Cuba</b>                        | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>  |
|                                    | Research did not reveal any relevant information.  |
| <b>United States</b>               | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>  |
|                                    | The United States does not define the term cult in its legislation or in a parliamentary report  |
| <b>South America</b>               |  |
| <b>Argentina</b>                   | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>  |
|                                    | Research did not reveal any relevant information.  |
| <b>Brazil</b>                      | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>  |
|                                    | Research did not reveal any relevant information.  |
| <b>Europe</b>                      |  |
| <b>European Parliament</b>         | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary report</b>   |
|                                    | In Recommendation 1412 (1999) in a report on illegal activity of cults the assembly concluded that it is not useful to define the term cult or to decide if a group is or isn't a religion. <sup>358</sup> |

<sup>358</sup> Council of Europe. Parliamentary Assembly. Illegal activities of sects. Recommendation 1412. (1999)  
<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=http://assembly.coe.int/%2FDocuments%2FAcceptedText%2Fta99%2FEREC1412.htm>

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| <b>Austria</b> | <p><b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b></p> <p>The expressions “religious sect” and “cultic method” are used.<sup>359</sup> Research did not reveal any other sources in French or in English that defined those terms.</p>   |
| <b>Belgium</b> | <p><b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b></p> <p>In the Commission’s report, the term cult describes two types of groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups that split away from a religious majority;</li> <li>• Harmful cultic organizations, or a group that claims to have a psychological or spiritual vocation and carries out or organizes harmful illegal activities, harms individuals or society or impacts on human dignity.<sup>360</sup></li> </ul>  |
| <b>Denmark</b> | <p><b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b></p> <p>Denmark does not define the term cult in legislation or in a parliamentary report.</p>   |
| <b>France</b>  | <p><b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b></p> <p>In the Gest and Guyard Commission report they provide indicators to classify a group as a cult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental destabilization;</li> <li>• Exorbitant financial requirements;</li> <li>• Forcing members to sever ties with their former lives;</li> <li>• Physical harm;</li> <li>• Indoctrination of children;</li> <li>• Anti-social rhetoric, disturbance of public order and legal disputes;</li> <li>• Misappropriation of funds;</li> <li>• Infiltrating public bodies.</li> </ul> <p>In the About Picard Law (2001), the term sectarian movement is used but not defined.<sup>361</sup></p> |

<sup>359</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee of Foreign Relations, Annual Report on International Religious Freedom (2001): <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2001/>.

<sup>360</sup> Chambre des Représentants de Belgique. Enquête parlementaire visant à élaborer une politique en vue de lutter contre les pratiques illégales des sectes et le danger qu’elles représentent pour la société et pour les personnes, particulièrement les mineurs d’âge. (1995). <http://www.lachambre.be/FLWB/pdf/49/0313/49K0313007.pdf>

<sup>361</sup> Assemblée Nationale. Commission sur les sectes en France. (1995). : <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/rap-enq/r2468.asp>

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| <b>Germany</b>     | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>   |
|                    | In their report of 1998 the commission recommends limited use of the term “cult.” Instead, they propose to distinguish between “conflict-prone” and “non-conflict prone” groups. <sup>362</sup><br><br>For instance, they recommend the terms “psychogroup” and “pseudogroup” to describe psychological and pseudo-psychological services offered outside of professional health and psychological services. <sup>363</sup> This spectrum includes activities which are as diverse as psychological success courses for business managers, esoteric courses offering advice for coping with money problems, astral journeys, contact through a medium with extraterrestrial intelligent life, and the return to earlier lives. <sup>364</sup> |
| <b>Italy</b>       | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>   |
|                    | In its 1998 report, Italy’s Parliamentary Commission discussed the use of the term cult. It concluded that it is preferable to use the terms “new religious movement” and “new magical movement”. <sup>365</sup> Research did not reveal how the government defined these terms. <sup>366</sup>   |
| <b>Netherlands</b> | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>   |
|                    | In its 1983 Parliamentary Commission report, the term new religious movement is used. This expression describes a group or individuals with a spiritual mission. The members may form a group around a charismatic leader, a specific religious ideology or a particular lifestyle. In this context, the term religion takes on a broad meaning, such as the acceptance of the existence of a superhuman power over our daily lives. The report identifies three distinct movements: Eastern, Evangelical and Syncretic. <sup>367</sup>   |
| <b>Russia</b>      | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>   |
|                    | Research did not reveal any relevant information.   |
| <b>Spain</b>       | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>   |
|                    | The expression “destructive cult” is used. These groups harm their members and, in some cases, the community around them. <sup>368</sup>  |

<sup>362</sup> Final Report of the Enquete Commission on “So-called Sects and Psychogroups,” New Religious and Ideological Communities and Psychogroups in the Federal Republic of Germany (Bonn, 1998): <http://www.bundestag.de/ftp/9000500a.html>. P.30

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., p.31

<sup>365</sup> Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, op.cit.

<sup>366</sup> La Répression du phénomène sectaire en Italie. Juriscope - novembre 1998 : <http://www.juriscope.org/publications/etudes/pdf-sectaire/OKIT.pdf>

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, op.cit.



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|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Sweden</b>         | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>   |
|                       | The term cult is avoided, in favour of “religion,” “new religious movements” and “personal faith.” <sup>369</sup> Research did not reveal how the government defined these terms                      |
| <b>Switzerland</b>    | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>   |
|                       | The Parliamentary Commission recommends that the State avoid using the term cult. It recognizes that “cult” is used with the intention of exclusion and it has a negative connotation. <sup>370</sup> |
| <b>United Kingdom</b> | <b>The definition of cult in legislation or parliamentary reports</b>   |
|                       | The United Kingdom does not define the term cult in legislation or in a parliamentary report.   |

<sup>369</sup> Report by the Swedish government on new religious movements (1998): [http://www.cesnur.org/testi/swedish\\_fra.html](http://www.cesnur.org/testi/swedish_fra.html).

<sup>370</sup> Swiss Parliamentary Commission, report on cults and indoctrinating movements in Switzerland presented to the National Council (1999).  
<http://www.admin.ch/ch/ff/1999/9188.pdf>

## Conclusion

The countries looked at all claim to recognize and protect the rights and freedoms of their citizens such as, the freedom of religion. The protection of these rights and freedoms can appear in a country's constitution, in their Charter of Rights or in international agreements such as:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948);<sup>371</sup>
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966);<sup>372</sup>
- Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981).<sup>373</sup>

In reality, each country regulates their relationship with religion and religious groups. To understand a country's reaction we have to go further than them being signatories to international declarations. We have to understand who grants religious status and which groups can have access to obtaining it. We also have to learn more about the privileges granted to groups who have acquired an official status. In addition, we need to understand what a government says and how it is translated into practice in its everyday dealings with religious groups.

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<sup>371</sup>Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/index.htm>

<sup>372</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: [http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_ccpr.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm)

<sup>373</sup> Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief: [http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d\\_intole.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d_intole.htm)