

# ICSA E-NEWSLETTER

PRINT VERSION

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## ICSA

*Founded in 1979, the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) is a network of people concerned about psychological manipulation and abuse in cultic groups, alternative movements, and other environments. In order to help affected families and individuals, enhance the skills of helping professionals, and forewarn those who might become involved in harmful group situations, ICSA collects and disseminates information through periodicals and Web sites, conducts and encourages research, maintains an information phone line, and runs workshops and conferences.*

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## EDUCATION & RESEARCH NEWS

### Upcoming ICSA Workshops and Conference

- Surviving and Moving on After a High Demand Group Experience: A Workshop for Second-Generation Former Members. Friday 3:00 p.m. April 25, 2008 to Sunday 2:00 p.m. April 27, 2008. Trinity Conference Center, West Cornwall, CT.
- ICSA Annual Conference. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. June 27-29, 2008. Preconference workshops for ex-members, families, and mental health professionals on Thursday, June 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Recovery Workshop for Former Group Members. Friday 3:00 p.m. July 25, 2008 to Sunday 3:00 p.m. July 27, 2008. Franciscan Retreat/Conference Center, Colorado Springs, CO.

### Professor Stephen Kent Debates Scientology in Ireland

*Cultic Studies Review* editorial board member Dr. Stephen Kent, a professor in the University of Alberta Department of Sociology, was invited by the Literary and Historical Society of University College Dublin to participate in a debate centered on whether Ireland should support Scientology's right to organize in the Irish state. "Scientology (representatives) did not show up for the event, so student debaters took its side; and the vote was overwhelmingly against the motion," said Kent. Debate societies in Ireland and the United Kingdom have a long tradition of training up-and-comers for careers in politics and social policy, said Kent. "Consequently, these debating societies don't have any official status, but they have a fair amount of social prominence." And the debate is just part of a much larger discussion going on throughout the European Union. Kent noted, "Court decisions in Russia and Spain seem to support Scientology's efforts to be identified as a religion, whereas countries such as Belgium are moving toward a criminal case against the organization. Both the French and German governments remain very suspicious about Scientology, and it has increased its activities recently in the United Kingdom."

### Professor Doni Whitsett at USC Educational Event

As part of Parents Weekend, the University of Southern California Department of Sociology presented "Sects in the City: Protecting Your Children from Cults" October 11, 2007, with the aim of educating parents about how to help their children avoid cult recruitment techniques. *Cultic Studies Review* editorial board member Dr. Doni Whitsett, Clinical Associate Professor at USC, spoke at the event. Whitsett prefers not to use the term "cult" because she says it's a loaded word fraught with controversy. She said better descriptions are "high-demand" and "destructive" groups. They require exceptionally high levels of dedication and sacrifice from their members, and they manipulate members by not disclosing that the group is a cult. "The techniques are subtle," Whitsett said. "They use mind control techniques, and one hallmark of them is that you don't know it's happening."

Whitsett said experts agree that college students are especially vulnerable to destructive groups for a variety of reasons. They are transitioning to adulthood, searching for acceptance and direction, and are open to innovative ideas. Students and parents said they were drawn to Thursday's lecture out of curiosity. After Whitsett finished lecturing, a discussion followed. Parents said their students spent hours completing AlcoholEdu and asked why a session about cults couldn't be offered as well.

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**Cultic Studies Review, Vol. 6, No. 3**

- The PRC and the Falun Gong (M. D. Langone)
- Falun Gong and the World: How Many Eight-Years Do We Need? – Comment on Langone (F. T. Xie)
- Reply to Xie (M. D. Langone)
- Cultish Religious Sects and Politics: The Brethren v. Greens Contest and Other Controversies Involving Minor Religious Sects Down Under (S. Mutch)

**Film on Children of God**

"Filmmaker Noah Thomson was raised in the elusive Children of God cult, a Christianity-based communal living society also known as the Family. . . In the past two decades, however, several former members of the cult have come forth and alleged that the cult's sex-fuelled gospel was often a front for the systemic physical and sexual abuse of the children. . . In an attempt to process what happened to him, to his siblings and to the many former Family members he has tracked down and interviewed, Thomson has created the chilling documentary *Children of God: Lost and Found* (making its debut Nov. 7 on The Movie Network), a film that is half scathing *j'accuse* and half bittersweet road movie, with Thomson playing the role of the pensive, sometimes goofy twentysomething trying to find his way in the world." From *Toronto Globe and Mail*, November 2, 2007, R.M. Vaughan.

**My Year Inside Radical Islam: A Memoir**

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Tarcher, 2007, hardcover, 304 pages. The author reflects on his experience of converting to Islam—a process that began with a desire to connect with both a religious community and a spiritual practice, and eventually led him to sympathize with the most extreme interpretations of the faith, with the most radical political implications.

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## BOOKS, ARTICLES & WEB SITES

### Government-Sponsored Report on Meditation

The University of Alberta Evidence-based Practice Center prepared a report on meditation for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The report's objectives were: "To review and synthesize the state of research on a variety of meditation practices, including: the specific meditation practices examined; the research designs employed and the conditions and outcomes examined; the efficacy and effectiveness of different meditation practices for the three most studied conditions; the role of effect modifiers on outcomes; and the effects of meditation on physiological and neuropsychological outcomes." Conclusion: "Many uncertainties surround the practice of meditation. Scientific research on meditation practices does not appear to have a common theoretical perspective and is characterized by poor methodological quality. Firm conclusions on the effects of meditation practices in healthcare cannot be drawn based on the available evidence. Future research on meditation practices must be more rigorous in the design and execution of studies and in the analysis and reporting of results."

### Childhood Familial Experiences as Antecedents of Adult Membership in New Religious Movements

Sebastian Murken and Sussan Namini, *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 10(4), 2007, 17-37. "Is it possible to identify specific familial patterns as antecedents of adult membership in new religious movements? Can the choice of an NRM be predicted by the childhood experiences of individuals joining such movements? This international literature review seeks to answer these questions, investigating the assumption that early family experiences affect adults' decisions to join NRMs. . . Whereas many studies found problematic family backgrounds and absent fathers in converts' biographies, suggesting a compensatory function of membership, some point to a continuation or restoration of early experiences. More interdisciplinary comparative research on NRMs is needed to gain a better understanding of the psychodynamic processes and psychological offers of different groups."

### Muslims Call for Peace with Christians

In an unprecedented letter to Pope Benedict and other Christian leaders, 138 Muslim scholars said finding common ground between the world's biggest faiths was not simply a matter for polite dialogue between religious leaders. "If Muslims and Christians are not at peace, the world cannot be at peace," the scholars wrote. "With the terrible weaponry of the modern world; with Muslims and Christians intertwined everywhere as never before, no side can unilaterally win a conflict between more than half of the world's inhabitants. . . Our common future is at stake. The very survival of the world itself is perhaps at stake," they wrote, adding that Islam and Christianity already agreed that love of God and neighbor were the two most important commandments of their faiths. (Peter Graff in London, October 12, 2007)

### Muslim Groups Draft Rulebook for Mosques to Drive Out Extremists

The first attempt by British Muslims to set out the core standards and constitutions for Britain's 1,350-plus mosques and Islamic centres has been drawn up by a new body representing four leading groups. . . It comes as new research found fundamentalist literature encouraging hatred of Christians, gays and Jews in many British mosques. Researchers for the thinktank Policy Exchange found extremist literature in a quarter of the 100 mosques and Islamic institutions they visited. . . Mosques that sign up to the core standards framework would receive practical advice, guidance and support from Minab, a body first recommended by an official government inquiry in the wake of the 7/7 bombings in London." From *The Guardian*, October 30, 2007.

### Understanding Contemporary Millenarian Violence

John Walliss, *Religion Compass*, Volume 1 Issue 4, Page 498-511, July 2007. This article reviews the academic literature that has emerged over the last few decades on millenarian violence, focusing on the key recurring characteristics and dynamics . . . playing a significant role in both predisposing millenarian groups to volatility/violence, and also in precipitating these incidents of collective violence.

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The main basis for the *Südwest* Network is the insight that we cannot work alone. So we decided to establish some kind of a network in a rather small region in the southwest part of Germany, which allows us to communicate very closely.

. . . When we decided to establish a network, we quickly came to the conclusion that our offerings of help should be as professional as possible. We carried out extensive further education. We invited well known specialists and found a way to finance the education.

We need three main kinds of specialists:

**Professional advisers.**

We are staying in contact with professional advisers. In Germany we have state facilities and church facilities. The churches in Germany are investing money to establish professional church advisors. We maintain regular contact with them.

**Psychologists** who have experience treating people leaving a cult.

**Lawyers** who have gained experience with problems relating to cults; for example, to deal with questions of custody rights.

In any way, as volunteers, take care of your comrade-in-arms. . .

Give them the feeling that their depressing experiences may be helpful for others. . .

Organize meetings that not only deal with the problematic questions but also give opportunities to laugh. . .

Organize your meetings in a way that allows time for small talk. The best way is to spend a weekend together in a place which does not allow you to spend the night in your own home.

Lomb, Otto. **The Work of the German *Südwest* Network**

## EXCERPTS FROM THIS ISSUE'S ONLINE ARTICLES

Certain social, cultural, and historical factors can help us understand why some governments decide to intervene and deal with "cults," whereas some do not. For example, a country's **historical context** can have a significant impact on the actions a government chooses to take with regard to the cult phenomenon. Consider the following:

During the course of its modern history, has the country come up against an antidemocratic or totalitarian group? For example, many European countries have had the first-hand experience of being occupied by a Totalitarian movement. The experience of "Nazism" during World War II has had a profound impact on the psyche of many European countries, and therefore it should come as no surprise that many of these countries have a lower tolerance to groups that are viewed as totalitarian. A totalitarian group, in contrast, has never occupied North America. . .

Another consideration is whether or not a particular country has ever witnessed violent acts such as mass suicides or murders or terrorist attacks, perpetrated by "cult" leaders, and if so, how they have reacted to these tragedies. . .

One factor that might account for this difference is that Canada and the United States were settled by immigrants from different countries with diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, and, in the case of the United States, separation of church and State was institutionalized early on. Over the years, this multicultural mosaic might have led, in part, to a more tolerant—some would say permissive or laissez-faire—approach toward "cults" and new religious movements. In contrast, Western European countries were, until relatively recently, mostly homogenous societies with a dominant secular-humanist tradition; a belief that governments could handle any situation; anxieties about national integration in a **globalist** context, including a new Euro-nationalism; anti-American nationalism; and a tradition of anticlericalism that can be perceived as being displaced to reactions against totalistic "cults."

Kropveld, Michael. **A Comparison of Different Countries' Approaches to Cult-Related Issues**

Those who work in this field are often asked, "Is such-and-such group a cult?" The inquirers often imply that if we tell them it is a cult, they will then know a lot about the group, while if we tell them it is not a cult, they won't have to worry. The fact is, however, that, as noted above, the term "cult" is vague and does not transmit a lot of reliable information. It is not a diagnostic or classificatory category, such as "pneumonia," which functions as a short-hand description for a specific medical disorder with known characteristics (symptoms), etiology, and treatment.

In many ways, the label "cult" is similar to personality labels, rather than medical diagnoses. Suppose, for example, I said, using the personality classification system of the Middle Ages (i.e., the "four humors"): "All phlegmatic people sit in the back left corner, all choleric people sit in the front left corner, all sanguine people sit in the back right corner, and all melancholy people sit in the front right corner." You probably wouldn't know where to go. We've all experienced at some point in our lives all four of these moods, but few of us would feel comfortable being classified by any one of these labels. Nonetheless, each of these adjectives remains active in common usage. They have, however, descriptive, not classificatory, meaning.

A particular group, which some may call a "cult," may vary across time and, especially if it is a large group with centers in different geographic locations, on each of the variables used to define the term. Hence, some variables may apply to some controversial groups and not others. For example: some groups may actively recruit members, while others may not; some groups may routinely lie, while others don't; some groups may be obsessed with collecting money, while others aren't; some groups may insist that members break all family ties, while others don't.

Langone, Michael, & Kropveld, Michael. **Introduction to the ICSA 2007 Annual Conference**

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## GROUP NEWS

**Jacques Robidoux**, formerly a leader of The Body, in Massachusetts, has appealed his murder conviction and life sentence for the 1999 starvation death of his infant son, on the grounds that his trial lawyer should have used an insanity defense, or at least presented testimony from experts about Robidoux's mental impairment. At the time, Robidoux refused to be examined by a psychotherapist, maintaining that modern medicine was among satanic "counterfeit systems." He now wants a new trial or reduction of the charges to assault and battery. His lawyer says, "Jacques was under the delusional brainwashing of this cult, and he was incapable of independent thought."

Six Catholic nuns in Arkansas, followers of the **Community of All Nations**, also known as the **Army of Mary**, have been excommunicated by the Vatican for becoming "entranced and deluded with a doctrine that is heretical," according to the administrator of the Diocese of Little Rock. The nuns, associated with the **Good Shepherd Monastery of Charity and Refuge**, in Hot Springs — which they own and will not leave — believe that the Community's 86-year-old Canada-based founder, **Marie Paul Giguere**, is the reincarnation of the Virgin Mary, and that God speaks directly through her.

**Mel Gibson's Holy Family Catholic Church**, in Agoura Hills, CA, which is not recognized by the Vatican, now has \$37 million in its coffers, thanks to a recent \$10 million gift from the actor-director. Following sixteenth century Catholic practices, women among the 70 member families must conform to a strict dress code by wearing veils and long skirts, and shunning trousers.

Members of the **House of Yahweh** sect in Kenya, who took refuge in holes in the

*Additional information on news reports may be available in the ICOSA E-Library.*

**The Legion of Christ**, a fast-growing world-wide Roman Catholic religious order, is suing former member John Paul Lennon in a Virginia court to block him from disseminating, on his group's website ([regainnetwork.org](http://regainnetwork.org)), material the Legion considers "malicious disinformation," as well as private letters and documents that the Legion says is stolen property. Lennon, a child and family therapist in Arlington, and head of Regain, an association of former Legion members, their relatives, and friends, calls the order a dangerous cult. The internal Legion documents that appeared on the web page reveal rules of conduct that include directives on how members must butter their bread, sit in a chair, and part their hair, as well as vows they must take never to criticize the order and to report anyone who does. Order members, says Lennon, "can watch only certain television programs, they don't have radios, and they can't use the phone without permission from their superiors." Phone calls are monitored, he adds. Lennon, who has analyzed the daily lives of Legionaries for the International Cultic Studies Association, likens the Legion's lawsuit to "a 21<sup>st</sup>-century Inquisition" that aims to shut down Regain through litigation. Lennon's lawyers have filed a motion to have the case dismissed.

The Legion, with U.S. headquarters in Connecticut, consists of some 750 priests, 2,500 seminarians, and 70,000 lay people in the affiliated Regnum Christi movement. Pope Benedict recently disciplined the Legion's founder, the Rev. Marcial Maciel Delgado, following an investigation of sexual abuse charges against him, and Lennon says that the number of victims is greater than the number of accusers that Vatican sources have acknowledged. A forthcoming documentary about the Maciel case, "Vows of Silence" (also the title of a 2004 book on the Legion), calls him "arguably the greatest fundraiser in the history of the modern church" and "one of the worst pedophiles in the history of the church."

**Legionaries' "private vows" abolished?** *Catholic World News*, December 14, 2007. Mexico City, Dec. 14, 2007 (CWNews.com) - Pope Benedict XVI has directed the Legionaries of Christ to do away with the "private vows" by which members of the religious order bound themselves to avoid any criticism of their superiors, according to a Mexican newspaper story. The Rorate Caeli blog calls attention to a story in the daily *La Jornada*, which backed reports that circulated earlier this year. The *Jornada* story said that the Pope had "personally asked for the repeal of the private vows," which had been taken by all Legionaries studying for the priesthood. The Legionaries of Christ have not formally commented on the reports. The "private vows," which required members to avoid taking part in any conversation involving criticism of the order or its superiors, were regarded by critics as an impediment to reform of the Legionaries. The *Jornada* story suggests that the abolition of these vows was recommended in May 2006, when the Vatican announced that the founder of the Legionaries, Father Marcial Maciel, had been removed from priestly ministry and asked to spend his remaining days in "penitence and prayer" in the wake of sex-abuse allegations.

A Belgian prosecutor, following a ten-year investigation that concluded the **Church of Scientology** is a criminal organization, recommended that the church stand trial for fraud and extortion. Jean-Claude Van Espen said Scientology's Brussels office and its missions conducted unlawful practices in medicine, violated privacy laws, and employed illegal business contracts. . . Several Scientology volunteers were in Samoa in September to provide "disaster response specialist courses" for government and local church council personnel. Reporting on the training, Radio New Zealand said, "The followers of Scientology are fighting problems such as disaster management, manmade, natural or personal disasters, communication problems, violence, and drug or alcohol abuse." . . . The Rev. Charles Kennedy, whose Glorious Church of God in Christ, in Tampa, is among a number of churches around the U.S. that have adopted certain Scientology programs, travels the country touting the wisdom of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard. And in St. Petersburg, FL, Imam Sadiki's mosque has participated in a Scientology-sponsored human rights campaign built on a Hubbard text. In Houston, meanwhile, a church drug treatment program based on Scientology principles refers addicts to Scientology's Narconon rehabilitation arm. Some clergy have complained that Scientology has tried to use them to suggest to the public that they favor the program, when they do not. . . A Russian court in July ordered the Scientology center in St. Petersburg to close because it allegedly violated its charter by engaging in "auditing" and "purification" activities and gave visitors tests aimed to recruit them as members.

ground last year to escape a prophesied nuclear war, say that nothing has changed save that the prediction was misunderstood by the press, and that the world is still on the verge of a catastrophe that will take the lives of two-thirds of the earth's population. The leader of a recent House of Yaweh church service read from pamphlets written by the U.S.-based **Yisrael Hawkins**, and said, "Ours is a religion and not a doomsday cult as widely believed," adding that church teachings are based on Hawkins's prophecy and Yahweh's laws of morality.

Police have arrested eight young immigrants from the former Soviet Union, founders of a **neo-Nazi** cell who documented attacks in which "they beat innocent and helpless people, including homosexuals, Orthodox Jews, and drug addicts," in the Tel Aviv area during the past year. The eight, none of them born to a Jewish mother — the Orthodox definition of a Jew — but who had at least one Jewish grandparent, also painted swastikas on several synagogues. Police report the group has strong ties to neo-Nazis in Germany and elsewhere. An official said the alleged cell members were likely suffering from "immigration shock" and emulating behavior they may have witnessed in the Soviet Union.

Ten leaders of the Iraqi **Soldiers of Heaven** doomsday cult have been sentenced to death, 54 have been released, and 394 have been jailed for terms ranging from 15 years to life. In January, the group, under messianic leader **Dhia Abdel Zahra Kadhim Al Krimawi**, fought U.S. and Iraqi forces outside the holy city of Najaf. Authorities said the Soldiers of Heaven planned to seize control of holy sites in anticipation of the return of the Mahdi, whom Shiites believe will bring justice to the world.

The **Swaminayan** sect recently dedicated a huge \$19 million Hindu temple on a 29-acre site in Atlanta. Sect

Justin Moon, a son of **Unification Church (UC)** leader The Rev. **Sun Myung Moon**, has built Kahr Arms into one of America's top privately owned handgun manufacturers — he designs most of the company's guns — and observers say this makes it seem likely that he will succeed his father as leader of the church and its business empire. Justin, a magna cum laude graduate of Harvard, obsessed with guns and shooting, and a strong advocate for carrying personal side arms as protection, is also chairman of the UC-linked Tongil Group, which manufactures M16s and anti-aircraft guns in South Korea. Says Steve Hassan, a former UC member and counselor to ex-cult members, "Kahr arms is a part of [The Rev.] Moon's plan for taking over the world." Former UC member Gordon Neufeld maintains that Moon believes guns will play a role in saving the world during a period of great crisis.

The employment of an educational stream using **Steiner** teaching methods in a number of public schools in Victoria, Australia, has led to controversy. Many parents think their children are benefiting, while some complain of the "spirituality" implicit in the Steiner system. One parent, who took his son out of the stream, was upset that a Steiner teacher said his son's soul was not yet fully incarnated, and that the child's drawings indicated his soul was hovering over the earth. The teacher, therefore, felt that the boy wasn't ready to move on to the next grade. Others complain that their Steiner-influenced children tell their parents that they [the children] have been reincarnated, that they've chosen their parents, that "You're not the boss of me, God's the boss of me." Speaking about the legal injunction to keep religion out of public schools, a Steiner representative said that neither the spirituality underlying early twentieth century Austrian founder Rudolph Steiner's "anthroposophy" philosophy, nor his pedagogy, promotes any particular religion or doctrine. A Uniting [sic] Church minister, "a recognized authority on cults," whose daughter attended what he called a "secularized private Steiner school," said there is no place for Steiner teaching in public education. "If you're making some sort of ritualistic address to God, then it's very difficult to say it's not prayer. I don't really accept that there is a clear division between Steiner's educational teachings and his underlying philosophical-religious system."

The Alberta Court of Appeal has reversed a lower court decision and permitted Lawrence Hughes, the father of a **Jehovah's Witnesses** teenager who died of leukemia, to sue his late daughter's lawyers. He says they advised her to reject blood transfusions prescribed by her doctors, and that in doing so they were unable to differentiate their role as counsel for his daughter from their role as lawyers who act for, and are members of, the Jehovah's Witnesses, which condemns blood transfusions. The attorneys, denying that they advised the girl to refuse transfusions, argue that their religious beliefs had nothing to do with the way they represented her, and that the charges stem from religious prejudice and the popular assumption that any member of the Jehovah's Witnesses would pressure a fellow member not to accept transfusions. Hughes's lawyer questions the extent to which religious freedom subsumes actions taken in "non-religious areas," such as the provision of legal and medical advice.

The appeal court wrote, "The boundaries of freedom of religion are too unclear to warrant striking out the plaintiffs claims" . . . It is not at all clear to what extent a religious adherent can convince another person to take actions for religious reasons that will cause him or her bodily harm or even death, even if the religious belief is sincerely held." The court also said that the charges don't require an examination of the truth of the defendants' beliefs about blood transfusions, since the charges of misrepresentation allege that the lawyers falsely represented that blood transfusions are an experimental treatment, and ineffective. "The objective validity of the belief of the respondents that blood transfusions are prohibited by scripture is not an issue in this litigation," the court said. Hughes says his approval of his daughter's medical treatment led his wife and other children to shun him, and his Witnesses congregation to excommunicate him.

**Former students suing Grenville.** *Toronto Globe and Mail*, November 6, 2007, by Michael Valpy. A lawsuit alleging decades of abuse of former students has been launched against Ontario's Grenville Christian College, the Anglican Church of Canada and two of its priests, and a Massachusetts group known as the Community of Jesus. The suit, filed as a class action, claims students at the now-closed school near Brockville were physically, emotionally and psychologically abused and harassed sexually by those who were responsible for their welfare. The statement of claim, filed by the Burlington law firm Haber and Associates, declares that the Anglican Church had a close affiliation with Grenville but failed to respond to reports that students were being abused, and permitted, either expressly or tacitly, school staff to abuse students. It says that the

leader **Swami Maharaj**, in the presence of special guest Congressman Henry Johnson, Jr., said that the temple was open to all, not just followers of the Swaminarayan faith. Most members, spread worldwide, are from the Indian state of Gujarat, and the new temple has a wing for Gujarati social and cultural activities.

BBC Panorama program journalist John Sweeney has apologized for losing his temper and screaming with rage at a Scientologist while filming an investigative report on **Scientology**. Scientology actually filmed the outburst — an example of so-called "video ambushing," in which organizations being investigated turn the camera on the film makers — and posted the footage on YouTube and distributed 100,000 DVDs containing the incident to MPs, civil servants, religious groups, media organizations and business leaders. Panorama then posted a clip on YouTube showing a Scientologist losing his temper at Sweeney's use of the term "sinister cult." Actress Ann Archer, also a Scientologist, is said to have snapped at Sweeney when he asked her if she might have been brainwashed.

Sweeney says his outburst — which came as he was filming a segment on a Scientology anti-psychiatry exhibit — came after a Scientologist had hounded him for six days about what he was doing. "I felt like I was being brainwashed, and if people see the full clip I think they will have more sympathy with me." The outburst "was like an animal reaction to a series of images and pressures. I felt they were trying to control my mind. I can't wait to get back to Zimbabwe [where] hiding in the backs of cars from Robert Mugabe's goons is a damn sight easier." The incident is not the first time Scientology has been accused of "bull baiting," a technique members use to remain calm even when extremely provoked. BBC says Sweeney did nothing, apart from his shouting, to violate its

Community of Jesus — which U.S. news media have labelled a cult — provided financial support to Grenville and approved "incompetent and immoral persons" to serve as directors, teachers and non-teaching staff and that Grenville's students were instructed in the community's "dogma, rites and discipline," which the statement calls "inappropriate religious practices." It says Rev. Al Haig and Rev. Charles Farnsworth, Ontario Anglican priests who between them headed the school from 1970 to 1998, sanctioned physical beatings and approved and participated in verbal abuse and humiliation of students. It also says Mr. Farnsworth participated in beatings. It says the former students suffered impairment of emotional health and well-being and the ability to trust other people and form or sustain intimate relationships. It asks for \$1-billion in damages. None of the allegations have been proved in court. No statements of defence have yet been filed. The statement of claim is only the first step in what may well be a lengthy legal process.

**Diocese investigates abuse claims.** *Anglican Journal*, October 1, 2007. The Anglican diocese of Ontario has launched an investigation into allegations of psychological and physical abuse involving two of its priests, one of whom served as headmaster for 20 years at Grenville Christian College, a recently-closed private school in Brockville, Ont., in eastern Ontario. George Bruce, the diocesan bishop, said he has received a number of written complaints from former Grenville students about two clergy, "one retired, and one (who went) on leave from the diocese to become headmaster of Grenville Christian College." The church denies that Grenville was an Anglican school, but former students dispute this, citing the frequent attendance at school ceremonies by senior Anglican dignitaries, the former headmasters who were Anglican clergy, and compulsory Anglican worship in the school's chapel.

Maia Szalavitz's new book — **Help at Any Cost: How the Troubled-Teen Industry Cons Parents and Hurts Kids** — is an exposé of the epidemic of abuse suffered by 10–20,000 children annually in unregulated "tough-love" programs — also called "**boot camps**," "emotional-growth centers," and "behavior modification programs" — that ostensibly aim to reform problem kids whose parents are unable to control them. (The book is available through ICSA's online bookstore, [www.cultinfobooks.com](http://www.cultinfobooks.com).) The very expensive programs, says Szalavitz — who traces the origins of the industry to Synanon, the drug treatment program that turned into a cult — "operate on the premise that teens in trouble need to be broken down and rebuilt." To this end, critics say, the programs, staffed usually by young, untrained, non-professionals, employ beatings, extended isolation and restraint, public humiliation, food, sleep, and sensory deprivation, forced exercise to the point of exhaustion, and lengthy maintenance of "stress" positions.

This kind of treatment — often referred to as "pain compliance," and apparently not illegal if practiced by private corporations — recently killed Aaron Bacon, who died while in a rural facility run by **North Star Expeditions**. He'd been sent there by his parents, who were worried about his smoking marijuana and taking psychedelics, and concerned by his falling grades. They also suspected that he was involved with gangs. Believing North Star's assurance that it employed trained therapists who would use gentle methods, the Bacons allowed their son to be taken forcibly from their home and, unbeknownst to them, into the care of young survival guides in a wilderness setting where he starved and froze to death within a few weeks. "

**Terrorism: Jihadi propaganda on 4,800 websites, says study.** AKI – *Adnkronos International*, December 6, 2007. There are 4,800 jihadist websites that are recruiting terrorists, claims a prominent Saudi scholar. Faiz Abdullah al-Shahri, an expert on Saudi extremism was speaking at a new technology conference at Riyadh University and was quoted in an article published in the Riyadh newspaper, Okaz. "There are 4,800 internet sites that disseminate jihadist propaganda and recruit terrorists around the world," he said. Al-Shahri estimates the sites attract around 250,000 visitors from all around the world every week. "The forums are crowded especially at weekend or after a particular attack," he said. The Riyadh convention was told around 900 internet sites linked to al-Qaeda were being set up every year.

**Doomsday cult remains defiant.** *Russia Today*, December 4, 2007. Members of a doomsday cult are defying all attempts to get them out of underground tunnels in Russia's Penza region. Thirty-two people, including four children, have been holed up in a bunker for four weeks - waiting for end of the world. All attempts to coax them out have so far failed. And authorities are increasingly worried about the fate of the four children. There is little evidence to date that they have any plans to emerge. They have threatened to blow themselves up if the authorities attempt to storm their hideout. Negotiations have been painfully slow, and have so far proved unsuccessful. Local

guidelines.

**Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS) leader**

**Warren Jeffs** was found guilty by a jury in St. George, Utah, in September, on charges he was an accomplice to rape when he arranged a marriage between an older man and an underage girl, against her will, and threatened her with a loss of heavenly salvation if she disobeyed. The defense characterized the case as a political campaign against an unpopular religion. Warren Jeffs could spend the rest of his life in prison under a sentence imposed by a judge who ordered him to serve two prison terms of five years-to-life for performing a child bride marriage. Defense attorney Wally Bugden said Jeffs will seek a new trial and file an appeal.

Anti-polygamy activists in Canada celebrated Jeffs' conviction, hoping that the Canadian government will now move against British Columbia FLDS offshoot leader **Winston Blackmore**, who admits to having married 20 women. Although polygamy is illegal in Canada, authorities are reticent to bring charges, fearing a conflict over constitutional principles. . . Fifteen of the "lost boys" — among the great many young men who have fled or been thrown out of Utah and Arizona FLDS communities — are renovating "The House Just Off Bluff," where they wish to live while going to school or work until they can find places of their own. "They do excellent work," says Michelle Benward, clinical director of Tropic-based New Frontiers for Families, a non-profit assisting the displaced teens. It's variously estimated that from 400 to 2,000 boys have left the polygamous settlements over the last six to 10 years, either because they didn't want to follow the faith or didn't like the idea of being assigned a wife. Advocates say some were driven out to reduce competition for wives.

priests and special mediators arrived in Penza last week, but have failed to make a breakthrough. The cult believers appear to be adamant. In fact, they are obsessed with the belief that doomsday is on its way. They say they have abdicated from the world and cut themselves off from reality. Authorities hope the cult's leader Kuznetsov may be able to help. He's being held in a mental hospital. He's expected to be taken to the cave in an attempt to persuade his followers to at least release the four children. . . Once they are freed, there will be less pressure to convince the rest of the group to leave the cave.

**Mount Vernon leukemia patient, 14, dies after rejecting transfusions.** *Seattle Times*, November 29, 2007, by Carol M. Ostrom, Health Reporter. A 14-year-old boy who refused blood transfusions in his fight against leukemia — based on religious beliefs — died Wednesday night in Seattle, hours after a Skagit County judge affirmed his right to reject the treatment. Dennis Lindberg, of Mount Vernon, died around 6 p.m. at Children's Hospital & Regional Medical Center in Seattle, according to KING-5 television. As a Jehovah's Witness, Lindberg objected to receiving blood. Doctors had said he needed it to survive his cancer treatment. In court Wednesday, Superior Court Judge John Meyer said that Lindberg, though in the eighth grade, was old enough to know that refusing blood transfusions might amount to a "death sentence," and that he had the right to make that decision. . . Years ago, courts routinely supported transfusions of children against the wishes of parents, Diekema said. While adults have the right to refuse any medical treatment, the courts ruled, that right doesn't extend to their children. "The principle there is that parents can make martyrs of themselves, but they can't make martyrs of their children," Diekema said. With an adolescent, the situation is much more complex, he said. "We all know that 14-year-olds change their minds; they become adults, and they have completely different belief systems. And that makes you nervous."

**8,040 young Kenyans executed during police crackdown on outlawed sect.** *International Herald Tribune*, November 25, 2007. As many as 8,040 young Kenyans have been executed or tortured to death since 2002 during a five-year police crackdown on an outlawed sect, according to a report by a group of Kenyan lawyers. A further 4,070 young men have gone missing between August 2002 and August 2007 after being held in police custody, said the report by the Oscar Foundation Free Legal Aid Clinic-Kenya released Saturday. The report does not offer evidence on who was responsible for the deaths and disappearances but said most of the missing were last seen in police custody. Police spokesman Eric Kiraithe dismissed the report as "a document not worth responding to." "It is fictitious and the people disseminating it have a questionable character and motive," Kiraithe told The Associated Press. Police began a crackdown on a sect called Mungiki when it was outlawed in March 2002 after at least 20 people were killed in fighting between it and a rival gang. Mungiki claims to have thousands of adherents, all drawn from the Kikuyu, Kenya's largest tribe. The group, whose name means "multitude" in the Kikuyu language, was inspired by the bloody Mau Mau rebellion. Mungiki began as a group promoting traditional Kikuyu practices, including female genital mutilation, but gradually became involved in extortion, murder and providing hired muscle to politicians.

**Senate Panel Probes Six Top Televangelists.** CBS News, November 6, 2007, by Laura Strickler. CBS News has learned Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa, the ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, is investigating six prominent televangelist ministries for possible financial misconduct. Letters were sent Monday to the ministries demanding that financial statements and records be turned over to the committee by December 6th. According to Grassley's office, the Iowa Republican is trying to determine whether or not these ministries are improperly using their tax-exempt status as churches to shield lavish lifestyles. The six ministries identified as being under investigation by the committee are led by: Paula White, Joyce Meyer, Creflo Dollar, Eddie Long, Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn. Three of the six — Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland and Creflo Dollar — also sit on the Board of Regents for the Oral Roberts University.

**Sri Chinmoy, Athletic Spiritual Leader, Dies at 76.** *New York Times*, October 13, 2007, by Corey Kilgannon. "Sri Chinmoy, the genial Indian-born spiritual leader who used strenuous exercise and art to spread his message of world harmony and inner peace, died Thursday at his home in Jamaica, Queens, where he ran a meditation center. He was 76. The cause was a heart attack, said representatives of his organization, the Sri Chinmoy Center."



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## **GROUP NEWS (CONTINUED)**

**15 members of Kigenkai religious group indicted for death of member.** *Japan Today*, Kyodo News Service, November 6, 2007. NAGANO — Prosecutors indicted 15 of the 21 arrested members of the **Kigenkai** religious group for inflicting a deadly group beating on a female member in Nagano Prefecture in September. Prosecutors also sent four of the 21 to a family court because they are minors aged between 15 and 17, and suspended indictments for and released two members aged 81 and 72 because of their limited involvement. Senior member Yasuko Kubota has denied ordering the beating of Motoko Okuno, 63, at a facility of the Shinto-linked religious group on Sept. 24, but the other 20 have allegedly admitted to beating Okuno under Kubota's instruction, prosecutors said.

**In China, new crackdown on dissidents.** *Christian Science Monitor*, October 15, 2007, by Peter Ford, Staff Writer. Scores of arrests are to ensure a protest-free Party Congress, say rights groups. As China's ruling Communist Party holds its most important conclave in five years, the government has launched an unusually harsh crackdown on potential troublemakers, say Chinese and international human rights groups. Scores, perhaps hundreds, of petitioners, democracy activists, religious figures, and human rights workers have been abducted, imprisoned, or confined to their homes over the past six weeks, according to rights monitors. "This definitely seems to be the worst in years," says Phelim Kine, a Hong Kong-based researcher with Human Rights Watch. "It is much, much more comprehensive and wide-ranging" than earlier sweeps. . . The goal of keeping Yu, and others like him, away from the capital "is to sterilize Beijing of potential public protests that would embarrass the party" during the Congress, says Mr. Kine. "It seems to reflect a desire by some elements in the Chinese government to put a very calm facade over public events." . . Earlier this year, a Chinese human rights group published what it said was the text of an internal speech by Yu Hongyuan, deputy head of the Beijing Public Security Bureau, advocating "harshly penalizing one person in order to ... frighten many more into submission. Human Rights Watch is worried, Kine adds, that "this might be a dry run for the Olympics," when the government will also be concerned to keep potential troublemakers out of public view. "They have the template," he says. "Given the relative success they have had in sweeping people off the streets this time, there is no reason why they won't do it again ahead of the Olympics."

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