

INFORMATION EXACTE

A propos d'Alain Stoffen

Les ex-membres des nouveaux mouvements religieux sont les interlocuteurs privilégiés des associations dites “anti-sectes.” Leurs témoignages sont peu crédibles et généralement mis en doute par les experts (sociologues, historiens des religions, etc...) qui abordent l'étude des nouveaux mouvements religieux de façon scientifique et non émotionnelle.

Feu Pr. Bryan Wilson (Université d'Oxford) décrit le phénomène en ces termes :

Les informateurs qui sont de simples contacts et qui n'ont aucun motif personnel de parler doivent être privilégiés par rapport à ceux qui cherchent à utiliser l'enquêteur à leurs propres fins. Le mécontent et l'apostat sont des informateurs dont les témoignages doivent être utilisés avec circonspection. L'apostat a généralement besoin de se justifier. Il cherche à reconstruire son passé, à excuser ses récentes affiliations et à blâmer ceux qui étaient autrefois ses compagnons les plus proches. Il n'est pas rare que l'apostat apprenne à débiter un récit d'atrocités pour expliquer comment, par manipulation, par ruse, par coercition ou par duperie, il a été forcé à se joindre ou à rester dans une organisation qu'il désavoue et condamne maintenant. Les apostats, mis en valeur par la presse, ont parfois cherché à tirer profit des récits de leurs expériences en vendant leurs histoires aux journaux ou en les publiant sous forme de livres (parfois écrits par un « nègre »).
[Bryan Wilson, *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism* (Les dimensions sociales du phénomène sectaire), Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1990, p. 19.]

L'histoire d'Alain Stoffen illustre très bien cette situation. La meilleure réponse aux accusations portées par M. Stoffen dans les médias se trouve dans les conclusions du Premier juge d'Instruction du Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris figurant dans son ordonnance de non-lieu en date du 4 septembre 2006.

Indiquant que l'instruction ne permettait pas d'établir que Monsieur Stoffen, scientologue pendant une durée de 15 années, avait été “*contraint à effectuer des actes qu'il reniait aujourd'hui*”, l'ordonnance met en lumière que son mécontentement envers l'Eglise s'est manifesté au moment de son divorce.

“*Paroissien actif, rédacteur d'articles pour le compte de l'église, il [Monsieur Stoffen] avait même, au cours du dernier trimestre 2000, soit après le paiement final en juin 2000 de sa dette envers l'Eglise de Scientologie, rédigé dans la revue “Celebrity” un article pour le compte de celle-ci, écrit dans lequel il vantait les mérites du programme de “Purification”.*

[...]

“*Les développements de l'information mettaient par ailleurs en lumière que la plainte de Monsieur STOFFEN avait fait immédiatement suite à l'assignation en divorce que lui avait fait délivrer son épouse le 17 janvier 2002, après deux années de très graves difficultés conjugales, au cours desquelles l'Eglise de Scientologie avait, à la demande du couple semble-t-il, été amenée*

à servir de médiateur, notamment en raison du conflit aigu lié à l'exercice d'un droit de visite sur l'enfant commun.”

Le juge n'a retenu aucun des chefs d'accusation :

“Les faits de chantage et d'extorsion n'étaient pas davantage caractérisés, car l'information n'apportait aucun élément susceptible de corroborer les allégations de Monsieur STOFFEN, qu'il convenait de replacer dans le contexte de rupture conjugale sus-évoqué.

Et attendu qu'il n'existe dès lors pas de charges suffisantes contre quiconque d'avoir commis les délits d'escroquerie en bande organisée, de chantage avec cette circonstance que la menace a été mise à exécution et d'extorsion en bande organisée,

Déclarons n'y avoir lieu à suivre en l'état ...”

En ce qui concerne le dossier d'éthique, précisons que la Scientologie distingue nettement ce qui relève de l'éthique et ce qui relève de la justice ecclésiastique. L'éthique est une question avant tout personnelle : il s'agit d'avoir une conduite la plus rationnelle pour mieux survivre. L'Eglise de Scientologie ne met pas l'accent sur l'aspect répressif, mais sur la responsabilité personnelle. La personne doit d'abord elle-même entreprendre des actions pour avoir un comportement éthique.

Le dossier d'éthique des membres n'est pas secret. Il est consultable par la personne concernée qui peut non seulement y ajouter des commentaires mais demander sa purge. Un fidèle peut, en proposant un projet d'amendement, obtenir l'effacement de son dossier d'éthique.

Les allégations de M. Stoffen tendent à créer une confusion entre l'éthique et la Cour du Chapelain. La Cour du Chapelain a été saisie par une plainte de l'épouse de M. Stoffen. En toute indépendance, elle a constaté que celui-ci avait menti de très nombreuses fois à son épouse sur les questions d'ordre financier, ce qu'il a d'ailleurs reconnu lui-même dans plusieurs rapports écrits. Ce comportement étant tout à fait contraire à l'éthique d'un scientologue, la Cour a ordonné que M. Alain Stoffen entreprenne sur lui-même des actions visant à corriger ce comportement.

Les fidèles de toute église sont tenus de mener une vie conforme aux recommandations de leur église.

Documents

***Expertise du Professeur Bryan Ronald Wilson, Apostates
and New Religious Movements, 3 décembre 1994
Témoignage d'un détracteur de la Scientologie***

Professor Bryan Ronald Wilson is the reader Emeritus in Sociology in the University of Oxford. For more than 40 years, professor Wilson has conducted studies of Scientology, Christianity and many other beliefs. He is one of the most well-known British scholars of religion and provides here a thought provoking study on the subject of apostates and apostasy. It is highly pertinent here given the amount of controversy on this newsgroup generated by apostates.

* * *

Apostates and New Religious Movements

Every religion which makes claim to a definitive body of doctrine and practice which it regards as exclusively its own, is likely to be faced with the fact that from time to time some erstwhile members will relinquish their allegiance and cease to subscribe to the formalities of the faith, in at least some, perhaps all, of its teachings, practices, organization, and discipline. Apostasy has been a common phenomenon in the history of the various denominations of the Judaeo-Christian-Muslim tradition. Each new schism from an already established organization of faith has been likely to be seen, by those from whom the schismatics have separated, as a case of apostasy. There have been dramatic instances on a large scale, as in the so-called "great schism" of the eastern (Orthodox) and western (Catholic) churches, and in the emergence of Protestantism at the Reformation. (It needs to be added, if only for the record, that the dissentient and departing parties have generally no less often accused those remaining in the earlier established body of apostasy from some earlier putative standard of faith and practice.) Given the number of religious bodies in Christendom which originated in schism, it must be clear that apostasy has been of widespread and common occurrence.

Not every incident of apostasy results in the formulation of a deviant and separate religious party or sect, however. Apostasy may be considered no less to occur when a single erstwhile believer renounces his vows and his former religious allegiance. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, at a time of crisis in Christian belief, there were some celebrated cases of apostasy from the Roman Catholic Church. They were represented as occurring in that church because of the rigour of its requirements of belief and practice; because of its resistance to modernism; and in particular because it encouraged the most devoted of its votaries to join monastic orders or congregations. Some of the lurid stories of monastic life, purportedly related by apostated monks and nuns -- the celebrated case of Maria Monk was widely publicised -- turned out to be largely fictional, but were much used by the anti-Catholic propagandist media of the day. In the present age of religious pluralism, in which a spirit of ecumenism prevails among many of the major Christian denominations, and in which the so-called "switching" of allegiance from one of these movements to another is not uncommon, the charge of apostasy is less frequently heard. But since c. 1960, with the appearance in western society of various new minority movements which have distinctive religious teachings and which require a strong sense of specific commitment, a member who departs is likely to be regarded as apostatizing, and all the more so, of course, if that member then proceeds to ridicule or excoriate his former beliefs and to vilify those who were previously his close associates.

In recent decades, given the emergence of so many new religious bodies which make strong demands on the loyalty of their members, instances of apostasy have become matters of considerable attention for

the mass media. The apostate's story, in which he is usually presented as a victim, is seen as good news-copy for the media, particularly if he offers to "reveal" aspects, and perhaps secrets, of the movement to which he formerly belonged. In consequence, apostates receive perhaps an unwarranted amount of media attention, particularly when they are able to present their previous allegiance in terms both of their own vulnerability and the manipulation, deception, or coercion exercised by the leaders and members of the movement into which they were recruited. Because these accounts are often the only information normally available to the general public about minority religions, and certainly the most widely disseminated information, the apostate becomes a central figure in the formation (or misformation) of opinion in the public domain concerning these movements.

Academic scholars interested in religious minorities, and in particular sociologists, in whose field this subject matter particularly lies, normally pursue their scholarly enquiries by a variety of well-recognized methods. They gather their data not only by archival research and the study of printed matter and documents, but also by participant observation, interviews, questionnaire surveys and, directly to the point at issue here, from informants. Apostates are often very willing informants, but sociologists generally exercise considerable caution with respect to this possible source of evidence. As I have written elsewhere, in discussion of the sociologist's techniques of inquiry:

Informants who are mere contacts and who have no personal motives for what they tell are to be preferred to those who, for their own purposes, seek to use the investigator. The disaffected and the apostate are in particular informants whose evidence has to be used with circumspection. The apostate is generally in need of self-justification. He seeks to reconstruct his own past, to excuse his former affiliations, and to blame those who were formerly his closest associates. Not uncommonly the apostate learns to rehearse an 'atrocious story' to explain how, by manipulation, trickery, coercion, or deceit, he was induced to join or to remain within an organization that he now forswears and condemns. Apostates, sensationalized by the press, have sometimes sought to make a profit from accounts of their experiences in stories sold to newspapers or produced as books (sometimes written by 'ghost' writers). [Bryan Wilson, *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, p.19.]

Sociologists and other investigators into minority religions have thus come to recognize a particular constellation of motives that prompt apostates in the stance they adopt relative to their previous religious commitment and their more recent renunciation of it. The apostate needs to establish his credibility both with respect to his earlier conversion to a religious body and his subsequent relinquishment of that commitment. To vindicate himself in regard to his volte face requires a plausible explanation of both his (usually sudden) adherence to his erstwhile faith and his no less sudden abandonment and condemnation of it. Academics have come to recognize the "atrocious story" as a distinctive genre of the apostate, and have even come to regard it as a recognizable category of phenomena [A.D. Shupe, Jr., and D. G. Bromley, "Apostates and Atrocious Stories", in B. Wilson (ed.), *The Social Impact of New Religious Movements*, New York, Rose of Sharon Press, 1981, pp. 179-215.] The apostate typically represents himself having been introduced to his former allegiance at a time when he was especially vulnerable -- depressed, isolated, lacking social or financial support, alienated from his family, or some other such circumstance. His former associates are now depicted as having prevailed upon him by false claims, deceptions, promises of love, support, enhanced prospects, increased well-being, or the like. In fact, the apostate story proceeds, they were false friends, seeking only to exploit his goodwill, and extract from him long hours of work without pay, or whatever money or property he possessed. Thus, the apostate presents himself as "a brand plucked

from the burning," as having been not responsible for his actions when he was inducted into his former religion, and as having "come to his senses" when he left. Essentially, his message is that "given the situation, it could have happened to anyone." They are entirely responsible and they act with malice aforethought against unsuspecting, innocent victims. By such a representation of the case, the apostate relocates responsibility for his earlier actions, and seeks to reintegrate with the wider society which he now seeks to influence, and perhaps to mobilize, against the religious group which he has lately abandoned.

New movements, which are relatively unfamiliar in their teachings and practices, and the beliefs and organization of which are designed in terms that are new or newly adapted, are most susceptible to public suspicion; If they have secret or undisclosed teachings, or appear to be exceptionally diligent in seeking converts, or have a distinctive appeal to one or another section of the community (e.g., the young; students; ethnic minorities; immigrants, etc.) or if the promises of benefit to believers exceed the every-day expectations of the public at large, then they may easily become objects of popular opprobrium or even hostility. The atrocity stories of apostates, particularly when enlarged by the sensationalist orientation of the press, feed these tendencies, and enhance the newsworthiness of further atrocity stories. Newspapers are well known to recapitulate earlier sensationalist accounts when locating new stories in similar vein about particular movements -- a practice designated by some sociologists as the use of "negative summary events." ["This refers to the journalistic description of a situation or event in such a way as to capture and express its negative essence as part of an intermittent and slow-moving story. An apparently isolated happening is thereby used as an occasion for keeping the broader, controversial phenomenon in the public mind." -- James A. Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to New Religious Movements*, London, Tavistock, 1985, p. 235.] By this means, the dramatic import of each apostate's story is reinforced in its significance, to the detriment of objective and ethically neutral enquiry into religious phenomena of the kind undertaken by academic sociologists. Contemporary religious bodies, operating in a context of rapid social change and changing perceptions of religious and spiritual belief, are likely to be particularly susceptible to the disparagement and misrepresentation which occurs through the circulation and repetition of the accounts of apostates.

Neither the objective sociological researcher nor the court of law can readily regard the apostate as a creditable or reliable source of evidence. He must always be seen as one whose personal history predisposes him to bias with respect to both his previous religious commitment and affiliations, the suspicion must arise that he acts from a personal motivation to vindicate himself and to regain his self-esteem, by showing himself to have been first a victim but subsequently to have become a redeemed crusader. As various instances have indicated, he is likely to be suggestible and ready to enlarge or embellish his grievances to satisfy that species of journalist whose interest is more in sensational copy than in a objective statement of the truth.

Bryan Ronald Wilson
December 3, 1994
Oxford, England

UN APOSTAT EXPLIQUE COMMENT LES DÉCLARATIONS FAITES SONT
DES MENSONGES POUR INFLUENCER LES AVOCATS ET LES JUGES

DECLARATION OF VICKI J. AZNARAN

I, VICKI J. AZNARAN, hereby declare as follows:

1. I am over 18 years of age and a resident of the State of Texas. I have personal knowledge of the matters set forth herein and, if called upon to do so, could and would competently testify thereto.

2. From 1972 until 1987, I was a member of various Church of Scientology ("Church") entities. During that time I held a number of important positions in the corporate and ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Church. I was also a devout believer in the religion of Scientology. In March of 1987, my husband Richard Aznaran and I left our positions with the Church and returned home to Texas from California. At the time we left, Richard and I voluntarily executed certain releases and waivers in full settlement of any and all disputes we had with the Church. In April 1988, notwithstanding our execution of those releases and waivers, Richard and I filed a lawsuit against several Church entities and individuals in the United States District Court for the Central District of California.

3. During the time I was a senior Church executive, I gained first hand knowledge of the manner in which some apostate former Church members had pursued civil claims against the Church, and obtained successful verdicts or judgments or favorable settlements notwithstanding the merits. The courts consistently allowed the Church's adversaries leeway to introduce allegations without regard to the normal rules of procedure and evidence. At the time, this was a source of great concern to me, both as a Scientologist and a Church executive, particularly

1 since my staff duties included responsibilities regarding certain
2 areas of litigation.

3 4. Thus, having participated in Scientology litigation
4 both as a Church executive and as a litigant against the Church,
5 I bring two distinct, but related, perspectives to this
6 declaration from my personal knowledge and observation. First,
7 at the time my husband and I brought our own suit I understood
8 that the legal system could be used to pursue my position.
9 Later, upon having sued various Scientology churches and having
10 allied myself with other litigants and their counsel suing
11 Scientology churches, I observed first hand the ways in which the
12 legal system is successfully used by litigants and counsel
13 opposing the Church.

14 5. The fundamental premise upon which the Church's
15 adversaries and their lawyers operate is the likelihood that
16 courts and juries are willing to believe any allegation made
17 against the Church by a former member, without regard to
18 plausibility, contrary evidence or the true facts. That concept
19 was most succinctly expressed, on videotape, by anti-Scientology
20 litigant, Gerald Armstrong, when he stated that a lack of
21 documents or evidence was no impediment to litigating against the
22 Church when the litigant can "just allege it." The active
23 pursuit of that litigation approach has now led to the formation
24 of a small group of disaffected Scientologists who are now
25 employed by an even smaller number of attorneys who are making a
26 practice of litigating against the Church. This stable of
27 witnesses can be relied upon to furnish "corroboration" for any
28 allegation which an attorney wishes to make against the Church in

(...)

5- Le principe de base sur lequel les adversaires de l'Église et leurs avocats opèrent est la probabilité que les tribunaux et les jurés sont prêts à croire n'importe quelle allégation faite contre l'Église par un ancien membre (...). Ce concept a été exprimé de la façon la plus succincte sur un enregistrement vidéo, par l'ancien membre de l'Église Gérald Armstrong, quand il a déclaré qu'une absence de documents ou de preuves ne constituait pas un obstacle pour intenter des poursuites à l'encontre de l'Église et qu'il suffit de le prétendre (...)

6- Il est bien connu que ce sont les avocats qui ont dicté le contenu des témoignages faits sur l'honneur par les anciens scientologues (...) parce que la tactique s'est avérée si efficace pour influencer les tribunaux et les jurés contre l'Église.

1 pleadings, and deposition, in affidavits, and ultimately in trial
2 testimony.

3 6. The abusive device most consistently utilized by
4 litigants and counsel adverse to the Church occurs in connection
5 with the filing of declarations or affidavits. It is common
6 knowledge among the stable of disaffected ex-Scientologists who
7 supply such sworn statements that the attorneys dictate the
8 desired content of such testimony with the primary, often sole,
9 purpose of presenting inflammatory accusations that prejudice the
10 Church in the eyes of the court. In such declarations or
11 affidavits, context, the truth, and relevance to the issues in
12 the case are disregarded altogether. As time has passed and this
13 technique has evolved, anti-Church litigants and their counsel
14 have become more and more emboldened in making such declarations
15 and affidavits because the tactic has proven to be so effective
16 in poisoning courts and juries against the Church.

17 7. The most common and probably the most devastating
18 manifestation of this tactic is the use of allegations concerning
19 the so-called "Fair Game" policy of the Church. The term "Fair
20 Game" has been misrepresented and repeatedly used by the Church's
21 litigation adversaries as a means to create prejudice against the
22 Church. To accomplish that end, counsel fashions a declaration
23 in which the witness identifies an ugly event -- real, imagined,
24 or just plain invented -- and then alleges that it was a
25 deliberate act which was committed by the Church. The idea is to
26 create the false impression that the Church is committing acts of
27 retribution in pursuit of "Fair Game."

(...)

Au fur et à mesure que le temps est passé et que cette technique a évolué, ceux qui font des procès à la Scientologie et leurs avocats ont été de plus en plus encouragés à faire de telles déclarations et de tels témoignages parce que la tactique a prouvé qu'elle était très efficace pour réveiller l'hostilité des tribunaux et des jurys contre la Scientologie. (...)

"Fair Game" tactic

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exists only as a litigation tactic employed against the Church.

I declare under the penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, and under the laws of each individual state thereof, including the laws of the states of California and Texas, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed this 19th day of May, 1994 in Dallas, Texas.

Vicki J. Aznar
VICKI J. AZNAR