

FFWPU EU: Canada - Dangerous Advocacy Journalism

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It goes without saying that objective reporting about a religion involves not getting a large part of your information from an organization founded in order to destroy that religion. And yet that is exactly what reporters Brigitte Bureau and Sylvie Robillard from Radio-Canada actually have managed to do. Their long report titled "Canadian Friends of the 'Moon Cult'" (Les amis canadiens de la "secte Moon"), published 18th May 2023, is completely lacking in objectivity, to the extent that the article must be a perfect example of anti-religious propaganda presented as factual reporting.

This kind of advocacy journalism is dangerous, indeed. When big media corporations like Canada Broadcasting Corporation uncritically publishes hateful rhetoric against a small religious minority and politicians who at some point have been indirectly associated with it, that is exactly what may well lead to terrorist attacks.



Massimo Introvigne

After the mass-killing of Jehovah's Witnesses in Hamburg, Germany in March this year, famous Italian expert on new religious movements Massimo Introvigne [called for an investigation](#) of hate-mongering "cult experts" regularly featured and quoted in mainstream media. Such investigations would no doubt reveal the key role played by such experts in firing up a perpetrator to commit atrocities.

The scholar points out,

"I would, however, suggest also investigating those who, by publicly slandering the Jehovah's Witnesses and depicting them as an evil to be eradicated at all costs, might have slowly pushed the assassin's fingers to pull the trigger." ([Bitter Winter](#), a magazine for religious freedom and human rights, 18th March 2023.)



Fumio Kishida and Shinzo Abe in 2020

In light of this, it is really shocking that large and influential media outlets like Radio-Canada irresponsibly publishes the kind of hate speech that according to Introvigne and others may have led to the assassination of Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and an attempted terror attack against current Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. Radio-Canada even lists former Canadian prime ministers and other politicians who have spoken at events indirectly associated with the [Family Federation](#). This is total absence of responsible publishing, indeed.

Already in the headline of the Radio-Canada article, the derogatory term "Moon cult" is used. Few lines down this is expanded to "strange cult". In the words of Yoshifu Arita, well-

known [Family Federation](#) opponent and author of two Japanese books highly critical of the movement, "Everyone knew that the [Unification Church](#) was a rather strange cult".



Yoshifu Arita

It is easy to call a religion "strange". Some would apply that description to a Christianity that believes in the virgin birth and physical resurrection. Others may call Islam strange because of Islamist suicide bombers.

And it is easy to use the cult label about a faith that is not the majority's religion. Distinguished expert on new religious movement, Italian sociologist of religion Massimo Introvigne has this to say,

"But what is a 'cult'? A large majority of scholars of religion agree that there are no cults. 'Cult' is just a label used to discriminate against groups that powerful lobbies, for whatever reasons, do not like." ([The Abe Assassination. The Word "Cult" Is A Tool for Discrimination](#), Bitter Winter 2nd Sept. 2022)

And there are such influential lobby groups in Japan, and in Canada, that do not like the [Family Federation](#) because of its powerful criticism of God-denying, totalitarian Communism.

The Canadian article gives considerable space to Takashi Yamaguchi, presented as a Tokyo-based lawyer who is part of "National Network of Spiritual Sales Lawyers". What the one-sided piece of journalism does not say one word about is that the activist network was founded by communists and radical leftwing lawyers out to destroy the [Unification Church](#) because of its anti-communist teachings.



Masumi Fukuda

Award-winning investigative Japanese journalist Masumi Fukuda reveals that the network of lawyers for more than 30 years was deeply involved in abducting and confining members of the [Unification Church](#) in order to force them to denounce their belief. (Monthly magazine Hanada, January 2023 issue).

To present those lawyers the way Radio-Canada does, hides key facts in the story, in order to put the [Family Federation](#) in a bad light. It is the age-old technique of half-truths used to paint the picture you want.



Stephen Kent

Reporters Brigitte Bureau and Sylvie Robillard use the same deceptive technique when describing Professor Emeritus Stephen Kent of the University of Alberta as "an expert witness in numerous cases involving religious groups."



Irving Hexham

Irving Hexham, author of numerous books and professor of religious studies at the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, wrote critically about Kent in an article published in 2001 in *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, "The one exception to the generally neutral tone of Canadian academics and their rejection of anticult rhetoric is Stephen Kent, who has been outspoken in his criticism of many new religions, [...] and who works closely with various anticult groups. Although Kent's views are widely known, few Canadian academics agree with his findings and most disagree quite strongly because of his tendency to use the testimony of ex-members."

Another so-called expert the Radio-Canada reporters interview is Yoshifu Arita. He is presented as journalist, member of the National Assembly and "author of a book on the [Unification Church](#)". Not one

word is said about him having close ties to the anticult movement and having campaigned against the [Unification Church](#) since the early 90's.

It's apparent that the journalists intentionally have dug up only hostile "experts". Jeffrey J. Hall falls into that category. He comes from the world of politics and is an expert on Japanese politics at the private research institution Kanda University of International Studies near the city of Chiba. Although he is employed by a university that has its reputation to guard, he certainly does not display much of the neutrality and impartiality we associate with academic integrity. Judging by the Radio-Canada article, his statements echo extreme anticult rhetoric and display the same tendency to often use hostile statements by ex-members as above-mentioned Canadian Stephen Kent does. That's why serious scholars tend not to accept the research of such academics.



Radio-Canada/CBC Building. License: [CC ASA 2.0 Gen](#). Cropped

So why does Radio-Canada do it? Well, the two writers certainly seem to have very little insight into the religious landscape. The report undeniably stinks as it seems that the two behind it may well have been

served the bulk of the content by the anticult movement. All the so-called "experts" are part of it or associated with it in some way, and their statements are not questioned in a critical manner at all. This is not objective journalism. It is amazing that Canada's national public broadcaster have sunk to such depths as to present hostile anti-religious propaganda as factual reporting.



According to the 2011 Ethics Guidelines of the Canadian Association of Journalists, "We do not allow our own biases to impede fair and accurate reporting." The Radio-Canada report is a glaring example of disrespect of such guidelines for fairness in reporting.

The same guidelines say, "We avoid stereotypes of race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status." Why then does Radio-Canada give ample space for anti-religious activists portraying the [Family Federation](#) as "strange", "extremist", "deceptive", "dishonest". Those are stereotypes the anticult movement uses about any new religious movement. A "sect" or "cult" is defined by the anticultists by those stereotypes.

The guidelines for journalists point out, "We give people, companies or organizations that are publicly accused or criticized an opportunity to respond before we publish those criticisms or accusations. We make a genuine and reasonable effort to contact them, and if they decline to comment, we say so."

According to the journalists behind the Radio-Canada report, they asked the President of the [Unification Church](#) of Japan for an interview, but he declined. The journalists visited Japan in March, and the article was published 18th May. That would allow the reporters plenty of time to find another spokesperson for the movement willing to be interviewed. They quote Canadian "experts" in their report. Why then not ask someone from the Canadian [Family Federation](#) for comments? Obviously that was not an option in a report that may well be called advocacy journalism, known to intentionally adopt a non-objective viewpoint. This style of journalism is often used for political purposes, like major Japanese media outlets have done in the aftermath of the assassination of Shinzo Abe, when a largely communist-orchestrated media campaign did its best to discredit the political party that Abe led.

Featured image above: Radio Canada display at Salon du Livre de Montreal 2017. Photo: ActuaLitté / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 2.0 Gen](#)

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In a Nutshell

The Unification Church

Name: Unification Church

Founded: 1954 in Seoul, South Korea

Founder: Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012)

Faith: The **Unification Principles**, a series of revelations **Father Moon** received from 1935 to 1944.

See: **Brief about the teachings**. See: **In a nutshell**

Goal: A **Kingdom of Heaven** on Earth, a harmonious world family, where everyone can experience peace, security, freedom and love.

Distribution: Largest in South Korea and Japan, but widespread throughout the free, democratic world. Representatives to 120 countries already in 1975

Europe: First representative here in 1965.

Discontinued: 1997. The **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** took over many of the tasks of the Unifications Church.

Frequently asked questions: See: **Faq**

History:

The Unification Church was **founded** by **Sun Myung Moon** (1920-2012) and a handful of followers in 1954 in Seoul as the "Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity".

It was established based on **Sun Myung Moon's vision** of creating a big global family under **God**, where all people become like brothers and sisters in a world of freedom, peace, happiness and love.

The Unification Church was dissolved 43 years later, in 1997. The **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** took over many of the Unification Church's functions.

Father Moon first turned to the Christian world, which he believed should have a central role in the work to realize such a vision. Large parts of Christian teachings coincide with his own message. At that time, he explained what he was teaching, by frequent use of Bible quotations. Many Christians then also began to follow **Father Moon**.



this name, although he never intended to establish any church.

Those who opposed him, eventually began to call the movement a sect. However, a narrow-minded, introverted sect that believes it has a monopoly on the truth, is about as far from his vision as you can get.

Because the leaders of the Christian world in Korea were not open to his message and did not cooperate with him, he decided to create his own organization.



The movement began to be called the "Unification Church", which is far easier to say than the original long name. **Sun Myung Moon** himself also began to use

The Unification Church was the first of several organizations that came into being as the movement grew





and became what we call the Unification Movement, of which the Unification Church was the

central part.

However, the Unification Church was discontinued in 1997. Then **Father Moon** declared that it had served its purpose. He claimed that the age of the different religions was over, and that we therefore no longer needed a movement that had been founded for the unification of world christianity.

The required foundation had been laid for a much larger and universal movement more in line with his original **vision**. Therefore, from the end of the 90s, he started to set up many peace organizations. The **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** took over many of the tasks of the Unification Church. In many countries, e.g. in the USA and Japan, people continued, often for purely practical reasons, to use the name Unification Church long after 1997.

The **Family Federation** sees the family as the key to world peace. If there is harmony in the family, there can also be harmony in society and the world in general.

So the name, and also the times we live in, have changed, but the goal is still the same: to create a big global family under **God**, where all people become like brothers and sisters in a world of freedom, peace, happiness and love.



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