

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Julian Gray on Scholar Warns Against Revival of Stereotyping

Knut Holdhus
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Stereotyping Catholics as trying to take over the world: Here, the "Whore of Babylon" by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553) in the September 1522 publication of Luther's translation of the New Testament. The "Whore of Babylon" mentioned in the Book of Revelation in the New Testament is here depicted wearing the papal tiara



Julian Gray

Revival of religious stereotypes as Japanese authorities base their oppression of large religious minority on historic prejudices used in witch hunts since medieval times

Part 2 of a series written based on a report by Julian Gray, former editor of the [FFWPU](#) publication Today's World, currently translator for the [Family Federation](#)'s new international administrative HQ, known as Cheon Mu Won, located in Gapyeong, South Korea.

See part 1: [England Dropped Its Case in 1988; Why Isn't Japan?](#)

Text: Knut Holdhus / Julian Gray

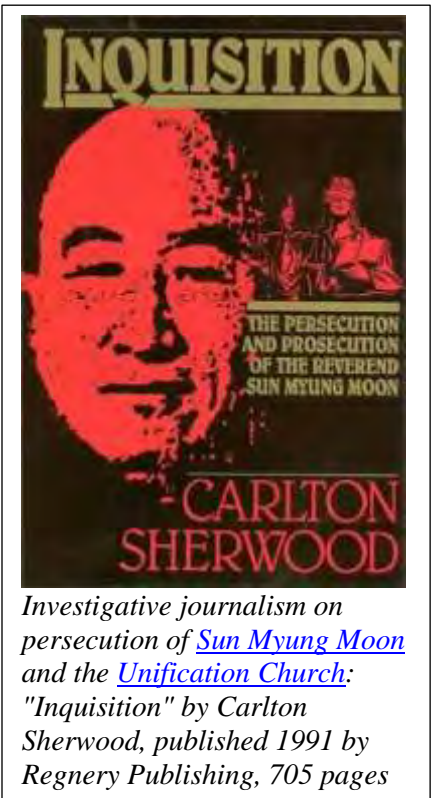
Academic Scrutiny and Witness Credibility

One contributing factor to the British government's retreat was the mounting criticism of its witnesses and methodology. Scholarly observers raised significant doubts about the reliability of the evidence submitted by former members and anti-[Unification Church](#) activists.

Sociologists and religious studies scholars who had observed the [Church](#) firsthand testified that the government's characterization of the [Unification Church](#) was often exaggerated or distorted. They noted that the portrayal of the [Church](#) as inherently deceptive, coercive, or immoral did not align with their empirical observations or broader religious studies frameworks.

Moreover, they pointed out that former members - while often sincere in their criticism - were not necessarily objective or disinterested parties. Some had left the [Church](#) in highly emotional or contested circumstances and might not be credible witnesses in a court of law.

This skepticism regarding witness reliability undermined the government's case in the UK and could do the same in Japan, where much of the action is based on similar types of testimony.



Several notable scholars took time to write lengthy affidavits. They addressed specific points of the government's complaint against the [Unification Church](#) based on their vast experience with new religious movements (NRMs).

These are the objective voices of people who study new religions (and older ones), and who also monitor and analyze the public response to these faiths and their adherents. They did not gain any personal benefit through signing an affidavit but wished to support the cause of religious freedom.

One of the scholars who submitted affidavits was Bryan Ronald Wilson (1926-2004), Reader Emeritus of Sociology of the University of Oxford. He served as President of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion (SISR), 1971-1975.

In his first affidavit, he writes on the history of stereotyping,

"4.0 Religion is a frequent subject of stereotyping throughout the world. A stereotype is a constructed model or image of a social group or class (or of some other phenomenon) to which the stereotype uncritically ascribes certain stock descriptions which are one-sided, exaggerated, or biased.

The ascribed attributes may or may not be empirically validated, but even where they exist in fact the stereotype presents them in an exaggerated and/or distorted form to which fixity is also ascribed. The stereotype conforms to prevailing prejudices, reflecting and reinforcing them. For this reason it is resistant to change, even in the face of disconfirming factual evidence.

Stereotypes are most frequently used with respect to social groups or movements groups or movements about which there is widespread ignorance, and which differ from conventional assumptions. Typically, the stereotype presents a simple but biased image of a complex phenomenon.

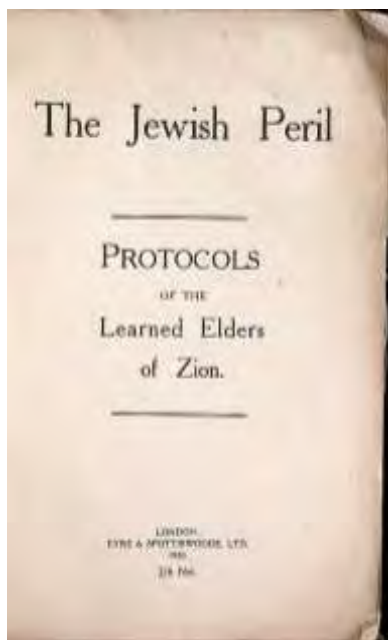


Colored version of the "Whore of Babylon" illustration from Martin Luther's 1534 translation of the Bible. The term refers to both a symbolic female figure and a place of evil as mentioned in the Book of Revelation of the New Testament. She is described more fully in Revelation 17:5 as "Mystery, Babylon the

Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth". Leading reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Knox taught that the figure represented the Catholic Church. Author: From the workshop of Lucas Cranach

Stereotypes of unfamiliar or new religions have almost always been negative. Religious bodies which today have acquired respectability in the public eye were regularly presented as alien, harmful, deceitful or evil in the early days of their development. It sometimes took many decades or even centuries before negative stereotypes were abandoned.

4.1 Thus, the movements which are stereotyped change over time, although the stereotype itself may not. For example, in the 19th century, Scottish and American Presbyterians sought to prove that the papacy ('the whore of Babylon') was seeking to take over the world.



Stereotyping Jews as trying to take over the world: Here the title page of the 1920 British publication of the anonymous edition of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, an antisemitic fraudulent publication describing an alleged Jewish conspiracy to take over the world

*After the First World War, a new candidate for this 'conspiracy' stereotype was Jewry. Jews were accused of seeking a stranglehold on the world. The fraudulent Protocols of the Elders of Zion were produced by anti-Semites as evidence of such a conspiracy. **Today, various new religious movements including the [Unification Church](#), are subject to stereotyping.***

4.2 New Religious Movements (NRMs) are those which have newly emerged as separate organizations, outside the mainline churches, or as new styles in devotional practice within those churches (of this latter type, Charismatic Renewal in many churches, Catholic and Protestant, and Opus Dei, in the Roman Church, would be examples).

NRMs today are numerous and highly diverse in form, belief, organization, ritual, and provenance. None the less, such is the ignorance involved in stereotyping that all NRMs are frequently lumped together and labeled as 'cults'. Even when NRMs are differentiated, however, ignorance about individual movements is still fully evident in the stereotypes that are projected.

4.3 Prejudicial stereotypes used historically to characterize new or unpopular religions, include the accusations of loyalty to a foreign power: the amassing of wealth; irregularity; deception; enticing or kidnapping children; and sexual irregularities. Catholics were long accused of being disloyal, their true alliance being to the Pope."

To be continued. Part 3 coming soon.

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England Dropped Its Case In 1988; Why Isn't Japan?

- June 5, 2025
- Knut Holdhus

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Very similar legal and evidentiary weaknesses: In England, a surprisingly relevant legal precedent exists to the dissolution order case in Japan

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Text: Knut Holdhus / Julian Gray

In 2024, the Japanese government moved to revoke the legal corporate status of the **Family Federation**




Julian Gray. Photo: Private


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for [World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)). The case has sparked national and international debate. But **a surprisingly relevant legal precedent exists** – one that might influence the outcome in Japan: **the 1984-1988 UK charitable status case against the [Unification Church](#)**. A close review of the English case may offer insights into the legal and evidentiary weaknesses now playing out in Japan.

Parallels and Lessons from the English Case

In 1984, then-Attorney-General [\[England's chief law officer and senior legal adviser to the government\]](#) Michael Havers (1923-1992) instigated proceedings to challenge the charitable (not-for-profit) status of the [Unification Church](#) in England. The case was significant and complex, involving claims about the church's religious status and moral standing. But after several years of investigation and preparation, the **British government suddenly dropped the case in 1988**. Why?



Facsimile from *Unification News* March 1988, page 1, published in New York, USA.

Attorney-General Patrick Mayhew (1929-2016) addressed the *House of Commons* on 3rd February 1988, explaining the government's decision to discontinue the proceedings. His reasoning – and the process behind it – could bear directly on **how Japan's courts view the reliability of government evidence in their current case**.

The Attorney-General's Statement in Parliament

Mayhew's remarks were revealing. First, he affirmed that under English law, there is a strong presumption that a trust for the advancement of religion is charitable, regardless of how controversial the religion may be:

"Whatever view may be taken of its tenets, the [Unification Church](#) must, as a matter of law, be regarded as a religion. In English law there is a strong presumption that any trust for the advancement of any religion, without distinction, is charitable unless the contrary is proved by evidence admissible in court proceedings. Teachings that are in their very essence contrary to morality would be an example. It is for any challenger to bring forward such evidence: the burden is on him."

He further admitted that **despite exhaustive efforts** – including soliciting testimonies from former members and others involved in the church – the government failed to meet this burden of proof:



Went to immense lengths to find evidence, but found none: The Treasury Solicitor's Department, since 2015 called the Government Legal Department. Here, their HQ building in London. Photo: Government Legal Department, Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster by Bryn Holmes/ Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 2.0 Gen](#)

"The evidence available to my predecessor in 1984 properly led him, with the advice of leading counsel, to conclude that there were sufficient prospects of an appeal succeeding. That evidence included testimony of witnesses called for the successful defendants in a libel action against Associated Newspapers Group Ltd. tried in 1981. In addition, there were statements by former members of the [Unification Church](#) that had been offered when it came generally known that charity proceedings in the High Court were under consideration.

Since the proceedings were begun, the Treasury Solicitor [\[See editor's note below\]](#) has gone to immense lengths in seeking out additional evidence from those who have been associated with the [Unification Church](#). Some further potential witnesses have approached him on their own

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initiative. Further statements have been taken from other persons, who had been closely involved in comparatively recent activities of the [Unification Church](#) in this country, and who had wanted to assist in the challenge to charitable status of the trusts.

The most careful analysis has now been made of the totality of the evidence available to me, set against the legal presumption to which I have referred. **Some of it, when tested in the light of all the material now available, has proved to be insufficiently reliable.**

The remainder, when seen in the overall context, **is shown to be of insufficient weight to rebut the legal presumption.** I have now been advised by leading counsel that it is most unlikely that, if the appeal proceeded to trial, I should be able to dislodge that strong legal presumption of charitable status. After the most careful consideration, I agree with that advice.

The trial is due to start on 12 April [1988]. It would last an estimated three to six months and occasion great expense. In these circumstances, **I have decided to seek the court's leave to discontinue these proceedings**, and the Treasury Solicitor [[See editor's note below](#)] has this morning so informed the defendants."

Attorney-General Mayhew emphasized that **even after years of investigation and legal consultation, the case had little hope of success. Continuing would have cost the government a great deal in time, resources, and public credibility.**

The Attorney-General here explains that **because the evidence the government had gathered was shown to be unreliable or weak, he was advised to discontinue the case.** He does not clarify in detail which particular evidence influenced him the most.

This report examines some of the evidence, brought by the defense, that probably influenced the Attorney-General.



The entrance to the UK headquarters of the [Family Federation](#) in Lancaster Gate, London. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

Continued in [part 2](#).

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Featured image above: Facsimile from *Unification News* March 1988, page 1, published in New York, USA.

[Editor's note: The **Treasury Solicitor** was the head of the *Treasury Solicitor's Department* (TSol), a non-ministerial government department that provided legal services to the majority of central government departments in England and Wales. In April 2015 it became the *Government Legal Department* (GLD).]

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