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States Provide Refuge to German Scientologists?" *International Journal of Refugee Law* 11, no. 2 (1999): 310-28.

53. Steve Bruce, *Choice and Religion: A Critique of Rational Choice Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

54. Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

55. Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 15, 18.

56. Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 232f.

57. The claim that "[i]t is now proposed by some officials that Jehovah's Witnesses also be placed under secret service watch" (233) begs the question of what kind of officials those might be, if they are in a position of influence on that issue, and if the requirements for surveillance actually have been met.

58. Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 233.

59. Freedom House, *Freedom in the World* (Boston: University Press of America, 1995), 265.

60. Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 233.

61. The background to this allegation probably is the state of Bavaria's screening of applicants for public service on Scientology membership, which does not exclude them from service. Equally unsupported is Stark and Finke's claim (233) that an article in *Stern* magazine, 4 May 1995, would characterize members of charismatic Christian sects as potential terrorists. While the article itself certainly constitutes a journalistic all-time low, the only reference to terrorists is a passage on Aum Shinrikyo.

62. Steve Selthoffer, "German Charismatic Churches Face Persecution, Threats of Violence," *Charisma* (November 1995): 18-20.

63. United States Department of State, *Germany Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998*, released 26 February 1999, section 2c, at <http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1998_hrp_report/germany.html>.

64. United States Department of State, *Germany Country Report*, section 2c.

65. The original passage by Steve Selthoffer in "German Charismatic Churches Face Persecution," 18, reads: "New charismatic churches are not recognized as legitimate by the German government. The churches are permitted to have tax-free status only if they organize as clubs, such as rowing, athletic or environmental clubs." Religions are, of course, free to choose any legal form provided by private law, and will usually be tax-exempt unless they pursue for-profit goals.

66. Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 233.

67. The *tertium comparationis* (third part of a comparison) denotes what the items compared have in common, as this is the basis for the comparison. In other words, it does not help to compare apples to oranges unless one states clearly in what respect one intends to do the comparison, e.g. content of vitamins. Equally, a comparison of the American constitution with the German mentality is not valid. A similar problem arises when using highly general terms such as "freedom" without discussing how one plans to operationalize the term.

Is Germany Different?

A Comment on Hexham and Poewe's Interpretation of German Anticult Policy

Hubert Seiwert

ABSTRACT: The article comments on Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe's analysis of German anticult policy. It argues that the concept of *verfassungsfeindlich* (hostile to the constitution), which according to Hexham and Poewe is central in German anticult rhetoric, is used only against Scientology, and it does not play any significant role in other cases. The anticult climate in German public and government reactions to minority religions does not appear to be more intense than in many other European countries. It is not convincing, therefore, to explain them with specific German historical experiences. However, religion does hold a lower position on the scale of constitutional rights than in the United States. Freedom of religion may not impinge upon other constitutional rights. Government involvement in anticult activities does not seem to be due to shortcomings of the political or legal system. Rather it reflects deficiencies in actual policy-making and in particular a lack of reliable information about new religious movements.

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe's article, "'Verfassungsfeindlich': Church, State, and New Religions in Germany," appeared in early 1999,¹ about half a year after the German Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Sects and Cults (Enquete Kommission "Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen") had published its final report. The installation of this commission of inquiry was the climax of a public campaign against new religious movements (NRMs) and religious minority groups (indiscriminately labeled *Sekten*) that had gained momentum in the early 1990s after the unification of the two German states. Around 1995 news about the alleged dangers posed by these groups appeared almost

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daily in German newspapers. The main target of these attacks was the Church of Scientology, which was perceived as a threat to internal security. Scientology was accused of attempting to infiltrate enterprises, political parties and public services, and to turn its followers into remote-controlled zombies. Absurd as these allegations may seem, however, they were supported by senior politicians and state governments. It was against the background of this collective fear that the Commission of Inquiry was established by the German Bundestag as a response to the strong public demand for some kind of government action.²

Hexham and Poewe developed their arguments in view of the extraordinary attention that the debate about sects and cults received in the German press. They are right in describing the German anticult policy as disquieting to anyone advocating strict neutrality of the state in religious matters and the protection of any religious group or movement against discrimination and defamation. While ideas of what religious liberty means are different in the United States, Germany or other European countries, it cannot be denied that what happened in Germany during these years was at the edge, and sometimes beyond the limits, of what is acceptable even within the German legal frame. I agree with the two authors that it was not the mere existence of anticult propaganda that was embarrassing, but rather the collaboration of state agencies with anticult institutions that was of concern. They are right, therefore, in taking the anticult activities in Germany as a social phenomenon that demands investigation and explanation. While I accept their general description of the problem, I do have difficulties in following some of their arguments.

Hexham and Poewe want to provide insights into the complexity of the German situation by discussing the German fear of NRMs in its historical dimension. They maintain that Germans implicitly or explicitly interpret *all new religions* in terms of their "ideology of constitutional danger."³ This, they explain, must be understood against the background of the German experience with totalitarian regimes and particularly Nazism. I agree that the frightful experience of German history in the twentieth century has shaped the political consciousness of post-war Germany more than any other single factor. And it is true that there is great sensitivity to movements and groups that appear to pursue political goals outside the realm of the established party system. Thus, even the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), which in some federal states is part of the government coalition, is being observed by the Agencies for the Protection of the Constitution (Ämter für Verfassungsschutz, i.e. internal intelligence agencies).⁴ While there may be some obsessive traits in protecting the constitution, Hexham and Poewe are wrong when they state that the Ministries of the Interior use the internal intelligence agencies to observe NRMs. To be cynical: if they only had! Much confusion on the part of government agencies could have been avoided had they gathered reliable information about NRMs.

There is one single exception. In 1997, at the height of the Scientology scare, the Ministries of the Interior decided to put Scientology under observation by the internal security agencies. There was much debate about this decision, but public pressure was high and some states, like Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia, were strongly engaged in the anti-Scientology crusade. This is the only case where a new religious movement was officially treated as *verfassungsfreundlich* (hostile to the constitution). At that time one or two anticult lobbyists attempted to ride on the anti-Scientology wave to apply the label *verfassungsfreundlich* to other religious minorities, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, but these charges were not taken up in the media and had no public effects.⁵ However, some NRMs were in fact charged with having political goals. In particular, Scientology and the Unification Church were said to seek "world supremacy."⁶ Still, the charge of threatening the constitutional order was never central in German anticult polemics. Much more often new and minority religions are accused of being engaged in economic activities and using religion as a pretext for gaining tax-exemption and other privileges. And, of course, in public perception the labels sect and cult usually mean that these groups exploit their members, isolate them socially and make them psychologically dependent.⁷ From the point of view of religious liberty, this does not make things much better, but it shows that Hexham and Poewe's interpretation may put too much stress on the political argument.

Nevertheless, it is true that political considerations play a certain role in the German debate about minority religions. A significant case is the Jehovah's Witnesses' attempt to gain the status of a corporation by public law.⁸ As this status was denied by the State Government of Berlin, they went to the courts. In the first and second instances they won the case, but the Federal Administrative Court decided that they were not entitled to this legal status. The central argument was that Jehovah's Witnesses do not allow their members to participate in public elections. Since the legitimacy of the state rests on democratic elections, it was argued that the Witnesses' refusal to take part negated and undermined this legitimacy.⁹ If this decision had remained valid, it would have implied that only religious communities that show loyalty to the state could be corporations by public law. However, the Federal Constitutional Court quashed the judgment exactly because this argument has no legal basis in the German constitution. It confirms that all religions have equal rights, even if they do not support the existing political system.¹⁰ We must be cautious, therefore, to differentiate between political arguments used against religious minorities in public rhetoric on the one hand, and the actual legal situation on the other. As this case shows, the legal system is strong enough to secure the rights of religious minorities even in cases where the administration and public opinion are opposed to them.

There is certainly nothing unusual about having different opinions on the interpretation of laws in a pluralistic society. This is also true for understanding what religious liberty means and what the right policy towards religions is. For scholars of religion observing conflicts between NRMs and anticult activists, government reactions, and legal rules in Germany and other countries, there often seems to be a methodological ambiguity. We know that there are no scientific methods to pass value judgments or to define political goals, but we are participants in political discourses and maintain certain values such as freedom of religion. Thus we have, as it were, a double identity as scientific observers and analysts, and political participants. I personally experience this double identity, since as an expert member of the Commission of Inquiry on Sects, I was and still am involved in political discourses about religious minorities. In this role I have no difficulty in criticizing many aspects of government policy and court decisions since they do not correspond to my own understanding of religious liberty and a liberal state.¹¹

Hexham and Poewe are not very explicit in their political judgments, but it is evident that they do judge politically. In their conclusion they recommend that German politicians revise their thinking and take steps to prevent the persecution of minority religions. I can understand this view, but I doubt that it is very scientific. There is no such thing as an objective standard that could be taken as a measure to judge what is the correct interpretation of religious liberty. I am convinced that the German policy toward religious minorities is to some degree irrational and certainly ill informed, and I believe that some measures taken against Scientology are unconstitutional; however, I do not think it is justified to talk of religious *persecution*.¹² Of course, these are personal opinions. Hexham and Poewe have a different opinion. These differences are beyond the scope of scientific research and we should, therefore, reserve political judgments to discourses other than scientific.

These remarks are not directed against Hexham and Poewe's article, since the subject of religious freedom is a general problem in international scholarly discourse about NRMs and government reactions. Most scholars, including myself, are inclined to understand religious freedom in the sense of the First Amendment of the United States constitution. But this constitution is not valid as a standard by which to judge German politics. Scholars of law could take international conventions and discuss whether German laws and the actual political practice violate these conventions. As a rule, the protection of religious liberty in the German constitution is much stronger than in any international convention. Hence, violations of these conventions will usually also violate the constitution. From a juridical point of view, the crucial question therefore concerns the functioning of the German legal system. Are there signs that German courts are not willing or not capable of securing the equal treatment of religions and the free exercise of religion as

guaranteed by the constitution? These are questions that cannot be discussed here, since we would have to consider quite a number of cases. It appears that generally speaking, however, the legal system does secure religious freedom, even if there are decisions that are controversial. This is normal in any legal system and not confined to the realm of religion. Different judges may judge differently. As we have seen in the above-mentioned case of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Constitutional Court quashed a decision of the Federal Court of Administration.

There is little reason, therefore, to be concerned about the German legal system. We possibly would prefer another government policy and another public opinion (which is a political issue and not a legal one). While we have no scientific methods with which to criticize political cultures, we can analyze them. In the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses, it became clear that, according to the constitution, the state is entitled to judge the actual behavior of religious communities if they apply for the status of corporation by public law. Of course, it cannot just accept rumors or public allegations. Rather, the Constitutional Court demands a careful investigation and consideration of numerous factors.

In other words, the state is not obliged to treat all religions equally under *any* condition. This legal situation is obviously different from the American one. On the scale of constitutional values, religion holds a lower position in Germany than in the United States. German policymakers and lawyers are more inclined to consider the limitations of religious liberty if they feel it conflicts with other constitutional rights. I do not agree with Hexham and Poewe that government involvement in anticult activities has something to do with an alleged German emphasis on group as opposed to individual rights. Individual rights form the core of the German constitution. But in German political culture, the state is expected to protect individual rights even against religions should religions impinge upon them. It is, of course, a factual question whether such impingement is the case or not, and there may be different views about it. That is why sometimes the courts have to decide. Certainly the German administrations and even some courts occasionally base their decisions on poor or wrong information, which is a real problem. These are not shortcomings of the legal and political system, however, but of practical politics.¹³ German political culture and the legal system do not only allow but oblige the government to warn against a certain religion, if it is convinced that this religious community violates the rights of individuals.

That is not exactly the spirit of the First Amendment. Does that mean that German political culture is hostile to religious liberty? Should it not be the right of any individual to choose his or her religion without government interference? I am personally inclined to this view, even if I do not ignore the fact that some religious communities have been harmful to their members or other citizens, although not in

Germany. Yet there are various views of what freedom means and where its limitations are. As I said, freedom of religion does not hold the highest position on the German scale of constitutional rights. In other political cultures there are other scales. You might be allowed to choose a religion without government interference, but not have the freedom to choose the drugs you like. In Germany you have the freedom to damage your health by smoking, an individual right that is considerably restricted in many American states. Americans may understand the German government attitude towards NRMs better if they compare it to consumer protection. Consumers of religion should have the right to choose the products they want, but they should also be informed about the problems that may occur. Therefore, it is argued, the government can be obliged to warn against certain religions or human potential training groups in the same way it warns against tobacco or alcohol. In fact, to compare sects to drugs is a common argument of anticultists. It is certainly more common than the charge of *verfassungsfeindlich*.

If I understand Hexham and Poewe's article correctly, they do not primarily wish to comment politically on the German anticult climate, but seek to explain it in its historical dimension. Although they do not state it explicitly, one feels that there is a hypothesis behind this: that Germany is different. To be sure, other countries also have anticult movements, and the German one is fairly small.¹⁴ But in Germany there are state administrations engaged in anticult activities. This is certainly different from North America. I agree with Hexham and Poewe that we also have to consider history if we are to understand these differences. However, I am not sure that the historical factors they identify are the right ones. One of them is the concept of *verfassungsfeindlich*, which, as has been described above, seems to be less central than the two authors suggest. The other is the historical heritage of close cooperation between the state and the two major churches. It is true that the German anticult movement was founded by a Protestant churchman and that some of its most prominent activists still are Protestant "sect commissioners." On the other hand, there are also "sect commissioners," both Protestant and Catholic, who are fairly moderate and do what can be reasonably expected from pastors: they try to care for their flocks. Put another way, they help parents and families concerned about relatives who are involved in NRMs. Whether they do a good job or not is hard to say since they do not act in public, but I guess that many of them do it better than most private anticult counselors. In any case, they do their job. What is important to note is that not all of the 190 "sect commissioners" of the churches counted by Hexham and Poewe are anticult activists. Admittedly, some of them are rather aggressive and have succeeded in pushing the anticult issue into the media. But there are also others, less prominent, who organize inter-religious dialogues with NRMs.

Cooperation between the churches and the state is without doubt

one factor contributing to the state's attitude towards religious minorities, but we should not overestimate this point. There are European countries such as England, Norway, and Denmark where the constitutional role of the major churches is even stronger than in Germany since they have established churches. Strangely, in these countries the governments usually are not involved in anticult activities. On the other hand, the strict separation of church and state that we find in France did not prevent the French government and parliament from launching an anticult policy that in Germany would certainly be unconstitutional. Hence, the factor of "churches" is not as clear in its effects as Hexham and Poewe seem to imply.

The question concerning Germany's negative attitude to religious minorities has been revived recently by Derek Davis, who draws a historical line from Charlemagne's bloody Christianization of the Saxons to the Crusades and the Holocaust. He considers today's persecution of religious minorities in Germany as the repetition of a recognizable cycle of events. This cycle starts with the identification of potential targets for oppression by the "official" religion, and it ends with the authorities issuing decrees to remove forcibly the targeted religious groups from specific regions.¹⁵ These are serious considerations, although Davis probably overstresses the role of Germany in medieval and early modern European history. The history of religious persecution in Europe is not confined to the region that today is Germany, nor is modern anti-Semitism. The Holocaust is unique to German history, however. After the crimes of the Holocaust, Germany is indeed different from other countries. There certainly is reason to be watchful of the German state's policy towards minorities. Important as these political considerations are, they lack sufficient social scientific analysis. History does not explain everything. The anticult movement is not a German invention, but an international phenomenon.¹⁶ In France and Belgium the political elites seem to be significantly more occupied with fighting sects and cults than in Germany. This does not make things better, of course, but it shows that there may be factors more important than history. What we have to investigate are the social conditions of intolerance, moral panics and witch-hunts, which may have different targets. Religious minorities are just one of them. Others could be Communists, counterrevolutionaries, Islamists, or unpatriotic elements, depending upon the circumstances.¹⁷

In comparative perspective it does not appear that the anticult climate in Germany is exceptional to the extent that it needs an explanation by specific German historical traditions or experiences. Many European countries have had parliamentary commissions of inquiry into sects and cults.¹⁸ The report of the German commission can be criticized in many respects, but it is not more anticultist than most others.¹⁹ This being said, I do think that Hexham and Poewe are right in pointing to the intensity of the Scientology panic and the influence of some church-affiliated anti-

cult activists on the public debate and government reactions. I do not, however, share the view that the support the anticult movement received from some politicians and parts of the administration reveals fundamental deficiencies in the German legal and political system. The legal system can protect freedom of religion even if it works slowly. And the political system is capable of correcting extreme developments. After publication of the final report of the Commission of Inquiry, the situation changed considerably. Almost overnight the media lost their interest in sects and cults, and the issue was reduced to what it is: a minor theme in which some people are interested for personal reasons.

NRMs are not a political issue of general interest in today's Germany. Even the Scientology scare is only a dim reflection of what it used to be. To be sure, Scientology is still being observed by the internal intelligence agencies (Verfassungsschutz). What they discovered does not confirm the former horror scenarios. But since considerable political prestige has been invested in the fight against Scientology, it seems difficult to admit a mistake and to end surveillance.

This brings me to my last point. How was it possible for German governments to make such big political mistakes and allow the anticult panic to develop into a political issue of some importance? And could this happen again? The answer to the latter question definitely is "Yes." For what happened was the flawed policy of a government that could not react effectively to public pressure simply because it did not have reliable information. German policy-makers—politicians, officials, and journalists—had no means to respond rationally to the dynamics of anticult propaganda launched by lobbyists and the media. The reason is that they got their information from exactly these lobbyists and media without being able to check its reliability. Hexham and Poewe are completely right in observing that there was hardly any empirical research on NRMs in Germany. And the few available studies were ignored by the government. Hence, the government was not in a position to define its own policy on the basis of an adequate analysis of the facts and to inform the public about it. It had no facts to invalidate the arguments of the anticult lobby.

Since this situation has not changed significantly during the last few years, the same could happen again. The effects of the final report will not last forever, and there still is little empirical research on religious minorities. There are several reasons for this lack of research. One of them is that German sociologists generally are not very interested in religion. Germany is a secularized country, and sociologists are among the most secularized. They feel no need to deal with religion, let alone minority religions. In the German academy it is the study of religions that deals with this subject. However, this discipline is extremely rare at German universities, and institutes for the study of religion usually have no more than one or two professors. It is true, as Hexham and Poewe state, that most of them do historical research in ancient and

Asian religions, which is what they are expected to do. The crucial point is that there is no political interest in research into religions and religious minorities. All German universities are state universities, and the state governments do everything they can to cut the costs. Thus, one should not blame German scholars for paying little attention to NRMs. There are hardly any resources for this kind of research since policy-makers do not think it is necessary. This, however, is not a shortcoming of German political and legal institutions, nor is it a heritage of German history. It is simply stupid policy, against which there is no insurance in any country.

ENDNOTES

1. Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, "'Verfassungsfeindlich': Church, State, and New Religions in Germany," *Nova Religio* 2, no. 2 (April 1999): 208-27.
2. For details about the Commission of Inquiry on Sects and Cults see Hubert Seiwert, "The German Enquete Commission on Sects and Cults: Political Conflicts and Compromises," *Social Justice Research* 40 (1999): 323-40.
3. Hexham and Poewe, "'Verfassungsfeindlich,'" 216.
4. Hexham and Poewe render these agencies as "Security Police," which is wrong. The Verfassungsschutz is an internal intelligence service without any police powers.
5. For these cases see Deutscher Bundestag, 13. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 13/8170, 7.7.97, *Zwischenbericht der Enquete-Kommission 'Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen'*, 41 (Minority report of Angelika Köster-Loßack and Hubert Seiwert).
6. Such charges appeared in government publications. See Bundesverwaltungsamt, ed., *Die Scientology-Organisation: Gefahren, Ziele, Praktiken*, 4th ed. (Cologne: Bundesverwaltungsamt, 1996), 6f, 15; and Bundesverwaltungsamt, ed., *Die Mun-Bewegung* (Cologne: Bundesverwaltungsamt, 1996), 34f, 40f. The absurdity and complete loss of reasonable proportions appearing in such charges illustrates the extent of moral panic in the mid-1990s. It is hardly imaginable today that these charges were taken seriously at that time.
7. A good impression of public perception and prejudices against new religious movements can be gained from the intermediary report of the Commission of Inquiry (see note 5 above), 63-77.
8. By German law, religious communities can gain legal status in two ways: first, as private associations, which applies to most new religious communities, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses or Muslim communities; and second, as corporations by public law, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant *Landeskirchen*. The Weimar Constitution of 1919 made it possible for any community to apply for the status of corporation by public law, provided it has a certain number (not exactly defined) of members and exists for some time (not exactly defined) so that it may reasonably be expected it will continue to exist

in the future. Accordingly, most smaller Protestant churches, that is, the traditional denominations, and the Jewish community have corporate status.

9. Bundesverwaltungsgericht, Decision of 26 June 1997, BVerwG 7 C 11.96, 15-17.

10. Bundesverfassungsgericht, Decision of 19 December 2000, BVerfG 1500/97.

11. See my minority opinion to the final report of the Commission of Inquiry: Deutscher Bundestag, 13. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 13 / 10950, 9.6.1998, *Endbericht der Enquete-Kommission 'Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen,'* 159-93. English translation: *Final Report of the Enquete Commission on "So-called Sects and Psychogroups": New Religious and Ideological Communities and Psychogroups in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Bonn: Deutscher Bundestag, Referat Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, 1998), 305-70.

12. One should not ignore that Scientology members successfully went to the courts against the administration if they were victims of unconstitutional discrimination.

13. Even in the United States the legal system did not prevent politicians and legal scholars from participating in anticult polemics and advocating coercive deprogramming in the 1970s and early 1980s. See Thomas Robbins, "Combating 'Cults' and 'Brainwashing' in the United States and Western Europe: A Comment on Richardson and Introvigne's Report," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 2 (2001): 169-77; and Anson Shupe and David G. Bromley, "The Modern Anti-cult Movement 1971-1991: A Twenty-year Retrospective," in *Anti-cult Movements in Cross-cultural Perspective*, ed. Anson Shupe and David G. Bromley (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 3-32.

14. See James T. Richardson and Barend van Driel, "New Religions in Europe: A Comparison of Developments and Reactions in England, France, Germany, and the Netherlands," in Shupe and Bromley, *Anti-cult Movements in Cross-cultural Perspective*, 129-70.

15. Derek Davis, "Religious Persecution in Today's Germany: Old Habits Renewed," *Journal of Church and State* 40, no. 4 (1998): 120.

16. See Shupe and Bromley, *Anti-cult Movements in Cross-cultural Perspective*, 16.

17. In the 1970s and 1980s more than 3 million people were investigated in Germany for Communist sympathies. While the procedure was less spectacular than the McCarthy witch-hunts, the policy of *Berufsverbote* (i.e., excluding suspected Communists from public service jobs) was often unconstitutional.

18. For an overview see James T. Richardson and Massimo Introvigne, "'Brainwashing' Theories in European Parliamentary and Administrative Reports on 'Cults' and 'Sects,'" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 2 (2001): 143-68.

19. See my critique, "Der Staat als religiöser Parteigänger? Zu den Widersprüchlichkeiten des Mehrheitsberichtes der deutschen Enquete-Kommission," in *Die neuen Inquisitoren. Religionsfreiheit und Glaubensneid*, ed. Gerhard Besier and Erwin K. Scheuch (Zürich: Edition Interfrom and Osnabrück, Fromm, 1999), 340-59.

Source Criticism and the Reconstruction of Reality

A Reply to Brigitte Schoen
and Hubert Seiwert

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe

ABSTRACT: This paper responds to criticism of our earlier work on the German anticult debate by Ms. Schoen and Prof. Dr. Seiwert. In it we argue that Schoen misunderstood and misread our article as a result of her obsession with published texts. Both Schoen and Seiwert underestimate the importance of history in creating the ethos that shapes the German debate about new religions.

First we wish to thank Ms. Brigitte Schoen for responding to our article, "'*Verfassungsfeindlich*': Church, State, and New Religions in Germany,"¹ and Prof. Hubert Seiwert for responding to both Schoen's criticisms and our article. Schoen begins by claiming that we "draw far-reaching conclusions from the anticultists' use of the term" *verfassungsfeindlich* (hostile to the basic law or constitution), which she says "is claimed to be causally responsible for extensive state action, including jurisdiction." Then she argues that we "privilege the ideas of" our "informants, who link the term to totalitarianism." These "informants" she further claims are "from either the anticult scene or from more or less deviant minority religions. . . ."²

Anyone who has actually read our article will immediately recognize that we do no such thing. Nowhere in the article do we say that we are discussing the use of "the term" *verfassungsfeindlich* or make causal connections. Rather we argue that this term and the ideology that we believe it symbolizes helps explain what Seiwert rightly recognizes as a "collec-

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