



DO OTHERS CONSIDER THE WATCHTOWER A CULT?

OVERVIEW: FIRST, LET'S LOOK AT WHAT DEFINES A CULT

Webster's Dictionary defines a cult as: A religion regarded as "unorthodox or spurious" but this is only one of many definitions out there. In fact, there are many other types of cults out there (self-help, political, etc.) A religious cult is just one category. For this reason, more important than the label 'cult' is understanding the contents of what comprises an unsafe group.

What typifies an unsafe group or "cult's" leadership and structure? (from the www.rickcross.com website)

A good working understanding has been provided by [cult expert] Dr. Margaret Singer, [Professor at the University of California at Berkeley]: *In most cases, there is one person, typically the founder at the top...decision making centers in him or her.* Illustrating the structure Singer says, *"imagine an inverted T. The leader is alone at the top and the followers are all at the bottom."* There is little if any accountability and as Singer says, *"the overriding philosophy...is that the ends justify the means, a view that allows [such groups] to establish their own brand of morality, outside normal society bounds.*

What specifically would define a group or "cult" as unsafe?

Unsafe groups or "cults" often abuse and exploit their members. This abuse may occur in the areas of finances, physical labor, child abuse and neglect, medical neglect, sexual exploitation and/or psychological and emotional abuse.

Brenda Lee: *To the average person, the Watchtower organization appears benign, but it uses crippling fear to control its members, operating under authoritarian control, with the threat of excommunication/shunning. The religious leaders typically have no accredited pastoral or theological schooling and the members are taught that the directions of God are received by a select few in New York and to disagree with them is to challenge God himself. Questioning what is taught, even if it involves the sexual abuse of a child, have been grounds for excommunication and shunning. This sect runs a multi-million dollar tax-free international corporation utilizing a free sales force and governs nearly every aspect of its 6.6 million members' lives. The long-reaching impact of association with them is felt not only by those who subscribe but also by extended family members who never attempt to join its ranks.*

IS THE WATCHTOWER A CULT? HERE'S WHAT SOME EXPERTS SAY:

When Cultists Ask by Norman L. Geisler (Ph.D., Loyola University of Chicago). Dr. Geisler is president of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. He has published countless articles in academic journals and is the author of more than fifty books. His book includes Jehovah's Witnesses as a cult.

Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements by Dr. Lorne Dawson, Professor of Religious Studies: p. 172: (In referencing the failed 1975 Armageddon prediction



by the leadership), Dr. Dawson writes: *The responses of the leadership of the Jehovah's Witnesses to the failure of their 1975 prophecy and the response of the leader of the Ichigen no Miya were similar...By a rather bizarre turn of logic, the leaders in each of these cases chose to place their followers in a kind of 'Catch 22' by blaming them, after the fact, for having brought on the failure of prophecy by having believed it too literally in the first place.*

The Kingdom of the Cults by Walter Martin. Chapter 4: Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Walter Martin (deceased) held four earned degrees, having received his doctorate from California Coast University in the field of Comparative Religions. Author of a dozen books, he was nationally known as "The Bible Answer Man," host of a popular syndicated radio call-in program which was heard across the country. He was founder and director of the Christian Research Institute, located in Irvine, CA. On page 11 of his book, Martin quotes Dr. Charles Branden, emeritus professor at Northwestern University: *By the term cult I mean nothing derogatory to any group so classified. A cult, as I define it, is any religious group which differs significantly in some one or more respects as to belief or practice from those religious groups which are regarded as the normative expressions of religion in our total culture...a cult might also be defined as a group of people gathered about a specific person or person's misinterpretation of the Bible. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses are, for the most part, followers of the interpretations of Charles T. Russell and J. F. Rutherford.*

After listing other American religions that he considers cults, he comments: *From a theological viewpoint, the cults contain many major deviations from historic Christianity. Yet paradoxically, they continue to insist that they are entitled to be classified as Christians.*

TIME magazine printed an article called, "California Cults" dated March 31, 1930, wherein they focused on the Watchtower organization led by its president, Joseph Rutherford:
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,738983,00.html>

WEBSITES

There are hundreds of "recovery" and informational websites that support "survivors." Many are listed at the bottom of my website: www.outofthecocoon.net. One expert, Steve Hassan, an ex-Moonie and author, focuses on cults on his website and discusses Jehovah's Witnesses at: <http://www.freedomofmind.com/resourcecenter/groups/j/jehovah/>

SO--WHAT'S THE HARM? HERE ARE SOME CULTS THAT MADE MAJOR HEADLINES AROUND THE WORLD:

- 1978: Nearly 1,000 committed suicide or were murdered at the People's Temple in Guyana (Jim Jones).
- Mid-1980's: Followers of Bhagwan Sri Rajneesh were convicted of wiretapping, conspiracy to murder a US attorney as well as the deliberate spreading of salmonella among the local population of Antelope, Oregon.
- 1993: Dozens of people died at the end of a long siege by US federal agents upon the Branch Davidian compound, led by David Koresh.
- 1994, 1995, 1997: Members of the Solar Temple in Switzerland, Canada, and France were murdered or committed suicide.



- 1995: Members of Aum Shinrikyo released Sarin gas in the Tokyo subway, killing twelve commuters and injuring over 5,000.
- 1997: Thirty-nine members of Heaven's Gate committed suicide in Rancho Santa Fe, California.
- 2000: More than 1,000 members of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments (of God) were murdered in Uganda.
- Ongoing: Countless Jehovah's Witnesses die *every year* refusing blood transfusions, many of these children. In addition, thousands of people have come forward in recent years to say that they were sexually abused as children in the Watchtower organization and yet nothing was done to protect them. www.silentlambs.org Bill Bowen, former elder and whistleblower is founder of this website.

DOES THE FOREGOING SOUND RADICAL? IF YOU THINK THE WATCHTOWER ORGANIZATION ISN'T RADICAL, READ WHAT THE WATCHTOWER TEACHES ABOUT 99.9% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION WHO ARE EXPECTED TO DIE WHEN JEHOVAH DESTROYS THE 'WICKED' ANY DAY NOW:

From recent "Watchtower" literature, December 1, 2005: *Many wonder, however, why a God who is the very embodiment of love would inflict death and destruction on much of humankind. The situation might be compared to that of a pest-infested house. Would you not agree that a conscientious homeowner should safeguard the health and well-being of his family by exterminating the pests?*

Similarly, it is because of Jehovah's deep affection for humans that the battle of Armageddon has to be fought. God's purpose is to make the earth a paradise and to elevate mankind to perfection and peace, with "no one making them tremble." (Micah 4:3, 4; Revelation 21:4) What, then, is to be done with those who threaten the peace and security of their fellow humans? God must eliminate such "pests"—the incorrigibly wicked—for the sake of the righteous ones.— 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9; Revelation 21:8.

WHAT OTHERS AROUND THE WORLD WANT OTHERS TO KNOW ABOUT THE WATCHTOWER:

Trevor S and Linda T, Derby, England, UK: *We feel that The Jehovah's Witnesses should be included in any show about cults because, though they don't fit the "cult profile" in one regard, i.e., having a charismatic leader with absolute control, they are run by a body of men, called the Governing Body, who demand absolute adherence to the many rules they impose on their members. Questioning is not permitted and is punishable by harsh disciplinary action, which includes expulsion from the church, and total shunning by other members of the sect, including family of the expelled one.*

Darlene M, Colorado, USA: *I wish...former Jehovah's Witnesses (could) present their own personal journeys so that we as a society could be better educated. The Watchtower has fought many legal battles to have the right to bring their beliefs to our doorstep. Shouldn't former Jehovah's Witnesses be given that same right? Why are people so afraid to talk about them? I wonder where we'd be today if Rosa Parks sat at the back of the bus and remained quiet.*



Kathleen W, California, USA: *I have been waiting for years for someone to have the guts to put the truth on TV about Jehovah's Witnesses. They are a controlling cult. If you do not believe what the leaders of the Watchtower {say} as truth, you will face being shunned. If you do not perform the work they give you to do, knocking on doors, attending all five weekly meetings, you will be shunned. Shunning is not just being talked to. It is not being allowed to say good-bye to a dying parent. It is losing every friend and family member you have ever known. It may mean losing your business and livelihood...your home, your spouse, and your children. They may look like a respectable mainstream religion, but they are a destructive cult.*

Anita S, California, USA: *Regarding the Watchtower, their practices have torn my family apart, causing my two daughters to shun me and be afraid of me because I chose to leave that organization. The world needs to know! Please help tell others!*

Sanne, Denmark: *My sister-in-law is no longer talking to me because I raised contradicting issues with beliefs of the JW's. I was never even a JW.*

Seductive Poison by Deborah Layton (A Jonestown survivor)

In her Epilogue she wrote:

"There are essential warning signs early on. Our alarm signals ought to go off as soon as someone tell us their way is the only right way. When our own thoughts are forbidden, when our questions are not allowed and our doubts are punished, when contacts and friendships outside of the organization are censored, we are being abused for an end that never justifies its means. When our heart aches knowing we have made friendships and secret attachments that will be forever forbidden if we leave, we are in danger. **When we consider staying in a group because we cannot bear the loss, disappointment and sorrow our leaving will cause for ourselves and those we have come to love, we are in a cult.** If there is any lesson to be learned it is that an ideal can never be brought about by fear, abuse, and the threat of retribution. When family and friends are used as a weapon in order to force us to stay in an organization, something has gone terribly wrong."

Even though the Jonestown incident would be considered the ultimate definition of a cult, the above quote has a chilling similarity with the way the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society operates.

From: www.outofthecocoon.net