

[http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis\\_e\\_elliott/2007/09/freedom\\_to\\_speak\\_courage\\_to\\_wi.html](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2007/09/freedom_to_speak_courage_to_wi.html)

## Freedom To Speak, Courage to Witness

ON FAITH - WASHINGTON POST - WILLIS ELLIOTT

When I opened the front door, I was face to face with a young Jehovah's Witness who was holding the hand of a small beaming child. A few weeks before, it was two handsome young Mormons. Now, doorbell-ringing religionists don't get into my digs and don't get any of my time reading their familiar hand-outs, so my answer to their question is no. But since I affirm their freedom to speak and admire their courage to witness to what they most deeply believe, I must say yes. So *how*? They came to bless me: how shall I bless them?

Every religion centers in a CULT (a mode of worship) and is against CULTS (innovative religious movements). These two facts—signaled by the singular and the plural of the same noun—are my opening clarification on the first of this week's "On Faith" questions:

"Various religious groups in America, from Jehovah's Witnesses to Mormons, have been considered cults at some point. What is the difference between a religion and a cult? What constitutes a real religion?"

1. Unfairly, the second question suggests a prejudicial answer to the first question: a cult is an UN-real, phony, pseudo-religion. This pejorative meaning of "cult" is itself pseudo-religious in excluding from "religion" the whole swatch of innovative religious movements in every human generation: "if it's new, it's bad." By this illogic, all religion is bad, since every religion was once new.
2. When we free the first question from the second, we get several answers: (a.) A religion is an old cult, and a cult is a new religion or an innovative deviation from an old religion. (b.) An old religion has the evolved devotional / esthetic / intellectual / ethical / societal characteristics of a **cult-ure**, a cult being a not so fully developed religion and culture (religion being the heart of culture). (c.) The word "cult" can be extended metaphorically from religion to religion-like movements and even fads (examples: "the cult of personality" in the history of Marxist regimes; America's current dismal "celebrity culture"; and "centers" of psycho-therapeutic processes, human-potential education, environmental rituals).
3. Freeing the second question from the judgmental word "real," we face the plain-and-simple "*What is a religion?*" So huge a reality, so many useful definitions. Here's mine for this occasion: A religion is human life centered in and celebrating what the particular religious community considers Most Real—the Most Real, whether or not conceived of as personal. (For me as a Christian, the Most Real is personal: One God—the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit.) While we experience degrees of reality throughout our experiences of the ways of knowing (religious, philosophical, interpersonal, esthetic, experimental-rational), we sense that the Most Real is different in kind, beyond differences in degree. Rene Descartes, a father of modern science and of the modern mind, used the medieval substance/accident distinction to state the difference starkly. "**Only God is real**, for only God has substance."
4. That religion is *most* real which best honors the Most Real through the most human use of the full range of the ways of knowing and of the means of communicating what is believed to be known. That society is most human which best provides freedom of speech for competition and cooperation among ways of seeing-and-living-in the world (which is another definition of religion).
5. Like everything human, religion can be *authentic or fraudulent*. Like everything important, religion can be *beneficial or dangerous*. A current aggressive preachment is that religion is essentially fraudulent and dangerous, and eliminating it would improve the human condition. The irrationality of this antireligion appears first in self-cancellation: "The new atheism" is itself a religious impulse, a reaching out toward what is utopianly believed to be the Better Way toward a Better World. Into its altar is carved "REASON," and its sermon explains that reason has the right and duty to narrow "truth" down to fact and narrow "fact" down to evidence and narrow "evidence" down to the experimentally verifiable/falsifiable. Reason is the only deity, and Science is the only way of worship. One more impoverishing fundamentalism for humanity to beware of.
6. Freedom of speech is a useless right unless we the people have the courage to speak up for what we most deeply believe. For faith is not belief in spite of evidence. Faith has the reasonable support of cumulative evidence that to our species, the reach of spirit is as real as the flow of flesh. (As G.K.Chesterton put it, "Humanity is incurably religious.") No, faith is not belief in spite of *evidence*. It is the courage to live and speak what one believes--in spite of *consequences*.

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007; 8:43 AM

### Comments

Please report offensive comments below.

#### CONGRESS ATTACKS AMERICA

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed HR 1955/S 1959 titled the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007. This bill is one of the most blatant attacks against the Constitution yet and actually defines thought crimes as homegrown terrorism. If passed into law, it will also establish a commission and a Center of Excellence to study and defeat so called thought criminals. Unlike previous anti-terror legislation, this bill specifically targets the civilian population of the United States and uses vague language to define homegrown terrorism. Amazingly, 404 of our elected representatives from both the Democrat and Republican parties voted in favor of this bill. There is little doubt that this bill is specifically targeting the growing patriot community that is demanding the restoration of the Constitution.

The biggest joke of all is that this proposed legislation also says that any measure to prevent violent radicalization and homegrown

terrorism should not violate the constitutional rights of citizens. However, the definition of violent radicalization and homegrown terrorism as they are defined in section 899A are themselves unconstitutional. The Constitution does not allow the government to arrest people for thought crimes, so any promises not to violate the constitutional rights of citizens is already broken by their own definitions.

This bill is completely insane. It literally allows the government to define any and all crimes including thought crime as violent radicalization and homegrown terrorism. Obviously, this legislation is unconstitutional on a number of levels and **MUST BE OPPOSED!**

**CONTACT YOUR SENATORS ASAP - EVERY RIGHT & FREEDOM GUARANTEED IN OUR CONSTITUTION IS AT STAKE!**

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | DECEMBER 9, 2007 9:46 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Bertrand Russell

Fear, the Foundation of Religion

Religion is based, I think, primarily and mainly upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown and partly the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes. Fear is the basis of the whole thing—fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death. Fear is the parent of cruelty, and therefore it is no wonder if religion and cruelty have gone hand in hand. It is because fear is at the basis of those two things. In this world we can now begin a little to understand things, and a little to master them by help of science, which has forced its way step by step against the Christian religion, against the churches, and against the opposition of all the old precepts. Science can help us to get over this craven fear in which mankind has lived for so many generations. Science can teach us, and I think our own hearts can teach us, no longer to look around for imaginary supports, no longer to invent allies in the sky, but rather to look to our own efforts here below to make this world a fit place to live in, instead of the sort of place that the churches in all these centuries have made it. Why I Am Not A Christian. page 22

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | SEPTEMBER 25, 2007 10:43 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Voice of Reason: "Every comment so far is from someone with their own personal axe to grind, claiming all members of a particular religion (or persuasion, 'Christianity') are stupid, selfish, evil... and worse."

"Every comment so far"

Please give an example in every post that verifies this sweeping comment.

"claiming all members of a particular religion are stupid...."

Please give an example from every post that claims all members of a particular religion are stupid, etc.

POSTED BY: REBELS | SEPTEMBER 25, 2007 11:56 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Dear A Believer in X -

Well, here it is a day later and I'm still waiting for you to provide a credible source to back up your statement that, "Several of our first Presidents could literally quote the entire Bible word for word."

Should I hold my breath? Didn't think so. Perhaps one of ABIC's fellow religionists could jump in here to help him out?

POSTED BY: MR MARK | SEPTEMBER 24, 2007 12:00 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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They're all cults. How can people believe the preposterous nonsense of ANY religion/cult?

POSTED BY: TOM POWELL | SEPTEMBER 24, 2007 6:27 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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My goodness. Every comment so far is from someone with their own personal axe to grind, claiming all members of a particular religion (or persuasion, "Christianity") are stupid, selfish, evil... and worse.

Get a grip people. Based on your comments, I think you're all fundamentalists. Yes, this includes you secular humanists, as well.

There are good people and bad people in every group.

Sheesh.

POSTED BY: VOICE OF REASON? | SEPTEMBER 24, 2007 12:57 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

It is my opinion that religion is simply a way for one man to control another or others. Convincing him or them, that there is a higher power and that he, the convincer, is in touch with that higher power.

Because one is in touch with the higher or ultimate power, it is his duty to inform everyone around him about that power. To convert them to this great revelation. To seek converts. Of course everyone must heed his words and directions because he is simply taking orders from a higher level. Punishment of some kind is usually involved for disregarding The God, Devil, or whatever the power is called. This power can do you harm if you disobey.

Those that he can convert become his group, his flock. If he has enough converts, his flock becomes a movement. If the movement becomes really popular, it now could be called a cult or a religion.

This is a unique use of mans verbal communication skills. It is a way to achieve the advantage when there is no physical advantage. Man has developed this particular skill to survive in a world that is dominated by physical power or vast numbers. It is a way to "Tame the Beast." and gain the advantage. The cult or religious group, now has the ability to gain power by sheer numbers. It can protect itself from harm and go on about the business of procreation.

My opinion is that, there is no difference between a cult and a religion, as far as the achievement of it's intended purposes. That being the ability to survive and gain power over others using one's verbal communication skills.

This is what this big brain of man's can accomplish. Neat trick!

POSTED BY: JUAN CASTRO | SEPTEMBER 23, 2007 11:37 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

One can readily understand why Dr. Elliot's screed shows a selfish fear of reason and science.

He is apparently incapable of using the first and of understanding the second, except to the extent that he correctly suspects that the more people learn to trust in the beneficence of either, he loses his power. His view is quite egotistical and selfish as well as cruel because of the harm it does to his fellow man. God is only a word and has no existence beyond semantics and man's fantasy that somewhere a magic entity exists that will save him from reality. The ritualization of this destructive fantasy is what humans call religion. Hitler called his religion the Nazi Party, Stalin called his religion Communism. And they both considered themselves the Gods of their respective religions. So how do Dr. Elliot's views differ from Hitler's and Stalins? True, he doesn't consider himself God, but his statement suggest a belief in his possession of far superior knowledge of what constitutes God, God's purpose, and true religion than is possessed by his fellow human beings. His religion of Christianity, however, has over its long history committed far more atrocities than either Communism and the Nazis. And where was God in stopping any of these atrocities. Is it that God is impotent, indifferent, lazy, sadistic, or is it that God simply doesn't exist--except as a concept in the minds of mankind as a product of faith in magic. The real improvements in the human condition have come from rationality and science. From medicine, with for instance the smallpox and polio vaccinations, the groundwork for which the Christian church fought by torture or by the threat of torture, virtually every step of the way. And so it has been with all sciences historically, and so it is today with the much of Christianity's cruel and ignorant obstruction of stem cell research. I have a question for you, Dr. Elliot. Next time some one you love is seriously ill will you take them only to the church, the place of goodness, for God to treat them, or will you take them only to the Mayo Clinic, the bastion of science and rationality, and, as your statement implies, evil?

POSTED BY: MR. ARNOLD | SEPTEMBER 23, 2007 5:40 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Anonymous: [about pope "on Sunday"]

Thinking about <http://www.hoax-buster.org> makes the pope's head hurt.

All issues are economic even for his highest of holinesses, the most holy of holy fathers, the pope. Now when is he going to return the gold plundered from the western hemisphere at the cost of millions of innocent lives and the destruction of civilizations? Shackling people with the biggest lie ever told, the Bible is not fair exchange. Is it?

For the benefit of those here who don't know, tons of the gold extracted from the WH went to the then only Christian church and is still there. Why? To pay for the sins of the Conquistadors, robbery, murder, and lying about God to name a few.

Lots of Aztec and Inca ghosts appeared in the dreams of the Conquistadors. Why? As a matter of natural consequence all dead go to the next world where the murdered wait the murderer, gives murderers nightmares. Murderers gotta have faith else nightmares. They need Jesus to forgive their sins. Jesus don't work cheap, demands all the loot,, less expenses of course.

Note: the gold plundered from the Spanish by the British on the high seas is free from sin, proper laundered. Not only that, the Brits have their own pope, the Queen.

POSTED BY: BGONE | SEPTEMBER 23, 2007 1:19 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

A BELIEVER IN CHRIST sez:

"Several of our first Presidents could literally quote the entire Bible word for word."

Oh, really? Word for word? Several of them?

Could you please provide a credible source to support your statement? I've learned to not trust Christians when they make such outlandish claims.

Thanks.

POSTED BY: MR. MARK | SEPTEMBER 23, 2007 1:02 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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The two words faith and cult are synonyms. There's no real difference. JW's are just an extreme case. All sects of all three great faiths and many other organizations are all cults because they do mind-control, control the mind through faith. Faith is the key ingredient of the con.

Faiths also do body control with nonsense like faith healing. As REBEL8 points out JW's controlled the health of his body to a point. One can escape the cult but it is difficult. I wonder if REBEL8 feels guilty about leaving JW's.

I never knew much about JW's, just that all one can do is slam the door in their faces. Yes! You can slam the door and you can hang up the phone, both without the necessity of a clean break in the conversation. Fire is fought with back-fire and rudeness can be fought with back-rudeness.

One can be polite even in extreme cases. I suggest holding a mirror in front of the JW and saying something like, "here, talk to yourself. You obviously don't see how ridiculous you look standing there." And to the tele solicitor say, "just a minute. I'm patching you through to yourself. That deal is way too good for you to not get in on it."

POSTED BY: BGONE | SEPTEMBER 23, 2007 12:57 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Plain and simple.

Until you have been a Jehovah's Witness, you have no idea what a real cult is.

The Watchtower Organization, ie Jehovah's Witness is a cult from beginning to end, from top to bottom.

Do not let them trick you. This religious organization is a well-manipulated cult machine.

POSTED BY: CHERYL | SEPTEMBER 23, 2007 1:05 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Something Real...

Pope: Sunday Worship a "Necessity" For All  
September 17, 2007 | From theTrumpet.com

Pope Benedict XVI says your life depends upon worshipping on Sunday.

"Sine dominico non possumus!" "Without Sunday [worship] we cannot live!" Pope Benedict xvi declared during a mass on September 9 at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna.

Speaking on the final day of his three-day visit to Austria, the German pope voiced a strong call for Christians to revive Sunday keeping as an all-important religious practice.

"Give the soul its Sunday, give Sunday its soul," he chanted before a rain-soaked crowd of 40,000.

Benedict said that Sunday, which he stated has its origin as "the day of the dawning of creation," was "also the church's weekly feast of creation."

Warning against the evils of allowing Sunday to become just a part of the weekend, the pope said people needed to have a spiritual focus during the first day of the week, or else leisure time would just become wasted time.

Sunday worship, he warned, was not just a "precept" to be casually adhered to, but a "necessity" for all people.

In the opening greeting, the archbishop of Vienna said a movement in Austria had been initiated to protect "Sunday from tendencies to empty [it] of its meaning."

In Austria, most businesses are restricted from operating on Sunday. However, some business groups are pressuring the government to be allowed to open, a move Roman Catholic groups vehemently oppose.

During Benedict's trip to Austria, he called for Europe to look to its Christian roots, to trust in God and to defend traditional values.

The pope has been very vocal about Europe's Christian-or Catholic-roots, and is pushing to have them included in the European Constitution. Although laws concerning Sunday worship are currently determined by individual nations, look for the European Union to eventually gain jurisdiction over the work week-which is one big reason the Catholic Church is so intimately involved with the evolution of the EU. For more on the Catholic Church and Europe, read "The Pope Trumpets Sunday" by the Trumpet's editor in chief. .

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"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come (the return of Christ), except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalthe himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4

"If protestants would follow the Bible, they should worship God on the Sabbath Day. In keeping the Sunday they are following a law of the Catholic Church."--Albert Smith, chancellor of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, replying for the cardinal in a letter of Feb. 10, 1920.

Does the Papacy acknowledge changing the seventh-day Sabbath? It does. The Catechismus Romanus was commanded by the Council of Trent and published by the Vatican Press, by order of Pope Pius V, in 1566. This catechism for the priests says: "It pleased the church of God, that the religious celebration of the Sabbath day should be transferred to 'the Lord's day.'"--Catechism of the Council of Trent (Donovan's translation, 1867), part 3, chap. 4, p. 345. The same, in slightly different wording is in the McHugh and Callan translation (1937 ed.), p. 402. "Question: How prove you that the Church hath power to command feasts and holydays? "Answer: By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of; and therefore they fondly contradict themselves, by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same Church."--Henry Tuberville, An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine (1833 approbation), p. 58. (Same statement in Manual of Christian Doctrine, ed. by Daniel Ferris {1916 ed.}, p. 67.) "Question: Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept? "Answer: Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her; she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority." Stephen Keenan, A Doctrinal Catechism (3d ed.), p. 174. "The Catholic Church,...by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday."--The Catholic Mirror, official organ of Cardinal Gibbons, Sept. 23, 1893. "Question: Is Saturday the 7th day according to the Bible & the Ten Commandments? Answer: I answer yes. "Question: Is Sunday the first day of the week & did the Church change the 7th day--Saturday--for Sunday, the 1st day: Answer: "I answer yes." "Question: Did Christ change the day? Answer: I answer no! Faithfully yours, "J. Card. Gibbons"--Gibbons autograph letter.

Receiving the mark of the beast or the seal of God in the mind or the hand is not a literal "mark" to be put on our foreheads or our hand but it is our consent to whom we will obey. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey? Romans 6:16

Eternal life and eternal death lay before us and a choice each of us will make.

From this article We get a picture of the goals of the Catholic Church worldwide, and why they are insistent in the U.S. about harboring illegal aliens and promoting the breaking of our nation's immigration laws. The facts are that most of these illegal aliens come from predominantly Catholic countries. If our elected officials and the Catholic church get their way regarding amnesty for millions of aliens that have entered our country illegally with the aiding and abetting of both our government and the Catholic church, the church plans on using the Catholic vote to do the same in our country as what she has proposed for the European nations and that is to have the state enforce her dogma. And the government will get the cheap labor force they want for commerce and profit. World Government & World Church...it's taking shape. History is repeating itself...for centuries it's been the Papacys' goal to regain her lost position of power and control she had in the middle/dark ages.

Notice what Pope Benedict XVI states: "Your life depends upon worshipping on Sunday." Picture of things to come? Prophecy states it will and then the end will come.

The battle is over who we will worship by whom we choose to believe and obey as we see in the last warning message to mankind in Revelation 14:6-12. Will we as God's created beings choose to worship the One and Only True Creator God in His Truth or a False System in it's lies created by a being that fell from his station in heaven because he wanted to be worshipped as God...we are free to choose, one is life, the other death. After everyone has made their choice as to who will receive their worship by who they choose to obey...probation will end, the plagues will fall, and Christ will return. Still doubt it? Read the article again, it's happening just the way our God and Creator revealed it to us. He cares, that's why He stayed involved, that's why He revealed the future to us so that when these things begin to happen as He said they would you would believe and continue your walk in faith. DON'T be fooled....Walk with God in His truth...no other way will be recognized by Him. "BUT IN VAIN (futile, to no purpose or to no benefit) DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN." (Matthew 15:9)

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | SEPTEMBER 23, 2007 12:08 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

The very last thing that many of us would do to attain access to THE MOST REAL is listen to a Southern Baptist preacher rave on.

POSTED BY: ALMADEN | SEPTEMBER 22, 2007 7:44 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I was forced to become a jw as a child. I have a serious medical condition requiring treatment with a medicine made from a blood fraction--a treatment permitted back then according to Watchtower literature.

In cults there are lots of unwritten rules and those who break them are punished. Therefore, I was not allowed to have even preventative medical care, and instructed to lie & hide my symptoms to nurses, teachers, and doctors. I was close to death countless times--they said it's ok because I'd be resurrected.

As a teen all \$ was taken away from me so I couldn't afford to pay the fee for college entrance exams, and I was grounded the day the exams were held. This is because going to college was prohibited.

At 18 I was forced to become a full-time ordained minister. I later escaped with about \$20 I had hidden away and the clothes on my back.

Cult? Controlling? You decide.

POSTED BY: REBEL8 | SEPTEMBER 22, 2007 6:57 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

The best definition of a cult (as far as those which parade under a banner of Christianity) is found in the Apostle Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 11: 3, 4. Paul speaks of those that would come preaching "another Jesus" and "another Gospel" other than what the apostles preached.

JWs believe that Jesus was an archangel named Michael. To Mormons, he is just one of a plethora of gods, to which we also can attain. Neither is the Jesus taught by the apostles.

Furthermore, the cults promote man-made systems of works. This is a different Gospel than the one that the apostles taught, who taught that grace is the means to salvation. The cults do, indeed teach a different Gospel.

POSTED BY: CANDY GWEN | SEPTEMBER 22, 2007 5:41 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Dear A Believer In Christ,

Yes, the United States was built on Christian principles and true, some of our first Presidents could quote the entire Bible. Good for them. They are not the ones running the country today. Do not blame the fact that our country has accepted different religions as the reason why our country is 'weak'. The last things George Washington said as president was 'Don't get involved in foreign affairs.' and 'Don't form political parties.' The first thing we did was form the Whigs and Republicans and say hello to England and France. Our country doesn't know what it wants anymore and that is why we are falling apart. We are not united.

Don't bring religion into politics unless you are defending your beliefs.

Thank you

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | SEPTEMBER 22, 2007 3:31 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

This country was built on Christian principles. That is why "God" is included in so many of our original documents. In fact, several of our first Presidents could literally quote the entire Bible word for word. This country would never have become so strong if it had not been for these beliefs. So I ask you, why are we not so strong any longer? The answer is clear to those who choose to see it.

POSTED BY: A BELIEVER IN CHRIST | SEPTEMBER 22, 2007 2:51 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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POSTED BY: A BELIEVER IN CHRIST | SEPTEMBER 22, 2007 2:50 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

To Anonymous, Im a Baptist. Im free to leave my religion at any time I choose and there would be no forced shunning of me either if I did. I can switch churches anytime I want and my family would still love me and still invite me to their functions, not so with JW's.

POSTED BY: DAVID W | SEPTEMBER 22, 2007 2:50 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

David W: wrote: Jehovah's Witnesses are a cult. Not all religions are a cult.

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I'll wager your religion is not a cult. You're not locked in, can quit any time you feel like it. Good for you. It's all those other radical ones that have people by their short hairs.

You're not a 7th day adventists are you? Quaker? Reformed church of some kind? Reformed?

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | SEPTEMBER 22, 2007 12:26 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

"Freedom of speech is a useless right unless we the people have the courage to speak up for what we most deeply believe. For faith is not belief in spite of evidence. Faith has the reasonable support of cumulative evidence that to our species, the reach of spirit is as real as the flow of flesh."

Jehovah's Witnesses believe in freedom of speech only as long as you accept what they teach. If a current member dares to question any teaching promoted by the Watchtower Society, they are ostracized and often disfellowshipped--meaning that even close relatives may have no fellowship with you unless it is an important family or business matter. I call that a CULT!!!

POSTED BY: L A HALL | SEPTEMBER 22, 2007 11:43 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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POSTED BY: L A HALL | SEPTEMBER 22, 2007 11:43 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

[quote]I opened the front door, I was face to face with a young Jehovah's Witness who was holding the hand of a small beaming child [unquote]

This is shocking how the Watchtower will use their own Jehovah's Witnesses underage children as HUMAN SHIELDS to hock their 'gospel'.

This is child endangerment!

POSTED BY: GLORIA STANLEY | SEPTEMBER 22, 2007 5:29 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Mark Smith:

"Religion is a belief system to explain the unexplainable"

The problem with this definition is that it comes from the preconceptions of \*one\* group of religions, ...ones which hold as tenets of faith that the world is inexplicable and controlled by someone who needs to be explained, which explanations need to be acted upon in certain ways...  
...while in fact, most religions in the world don't actually see that as the priority or purpose of religion, even if in the West we're \*taught\* about them through that particular lens.

Even secular people tend to be secular about \*particular\* unquestioned assumptions about the purpose of religion, and that's why so many world religions are, well, inexplicable to so many of them.

I mean, with things like Classical Paganism, we tend to read the very Victorian translations of parts of it that in fact \*suit\* the belief, "This is trying to explain a fearful, inexplicable world, like Christians do, ...only really badly."

Which, depending on if you believe or disbelieve in the Christian God may seem to be taken certain ways, but are really two sides of the same constructed argument, all embracing the same premises, ...the same argument, the same 'drama' ...however much it doesn't fit... and however much there's no real evidence it really worked that way, unless you accept a version of the premise: "Ancient people were stupid and unreasonable." Abrahamics just qualify it with "Ancient \*Pagans\* were stupid and unreasonable. We, on the other hand, are special." :)

In my experience, people who insist 'Religion serves to explain the inexplicable' share a belief that explanations are the most important thing in life, and are pretty attached to either religion or other things remaining inexplicable.

What if that's not \*actually\* what religion is \*for\*?

Who taught us it was, anyway?

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007 6:27 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I have a better definition of what religion is- one that does not favor mainstream religions.

"Religion is a belief system to explain the unexplainable." 500 years ago people blamed plagues on an angry God, but today we blame them on germs and now God is off the hook. People are just unwilling to abandon their "feel good" religions that give glory, praise and worship to a god that is invisible and gets credit for all all the good things that happen and no blame for the bad things. In my opinion, Secular Humanism is not a bad alternative to religion.

POSTED BY: MARK SMITH | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007 5:19 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I mean, hey.

When 'faith' gets divorced from 'consequences' you get a lot of people hurting each other in the name of 'Truth...'

You get people making excuses... maybe thining their souls depend on making excuses for real injustices and horrors perpetrated on others.

To take an extreme example, people deciding that their 'faith' is 'more real' than the \*consequences\* of flying planes into buildings...

I say that's not \*faith,\* that's \*trying to appease something.\* Regardless of the consequences to others.

In the same way, people who defend and promote injustices that \*really actually hurt people\* because their idea of 'Most Real' says that it'd be worse \*not to try and express their 'moral' disapproval \* than to promote fairness and justice in the real world, \*then\* try and say how much 'better' they are...

Well, they aren't 'courageously' acting out of 'faith' in spite of consequences to themselves...

They're in a cowardly fashion trying to \*appease\* their \*belief\* in spite of the \*consequences\* to others.

I happen to think the Most Real doesn't demand such appeasement.

But I do think what's Most Real does often require us to \*evaluate\* the consequences of what we do and say.

Could be that sometimes that means letting go illusions of control. Or your own importance.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007 4:49 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"No, faith is not belief in spite of evidence. It is the courage to live and speak what one believes--in spite of consequences."

Call it a Wiccan bias, but I'd say a) Faith is not belief period, and b) Faith is not an excuse to live outside of consequences. Sometimes faith just means you can \*accept\* consequences, but it doesn't mean we can \*spite\* consequences, especially when those 'consequences' are things \*others\* will have to live with.

Sometimes we must \*embrace\* consequences, even, but we should certainly always be \*aware\* of consequences.

We live in a world where we must \*evaluate\* potential consequences, not blunder forward doing whatever we feel we can 'justify' cause someone said, 'This idea is 'more real' than \*life.\* '

Somehow I doubt that the Reverend would find it so \*courageous\* and \*faithful\* if someone besides \*his\* religion were going door to door looking for converts.

Cause he thinks that's 'More Real' than the consequences of what he says and advocates for his own 'belief.'

Faith and \*reality\* are \*not\* at odds.

Some beliefs are.

If you have to \*spite\* the consequences of what you do... (as if it's only about you in the first place, as goes the rationale why Christians have special dispensation to proselytize and try and impose their religious laws on others in free societies in the first place) ...then just maybe you're \*not...\*

'keeping it real.'

Someone went and taught a lot of people that 'Most Real' is somehow apart from ...what we all \*see\* as real.

Put "realities" in conflict, instead of seeking further, all too often.

It's very easy to convince people that it's 'More Real' that non-Christians are trying to impose our ways on Wal-Mart shoppers cause Wal-mart people are allowed to say 'Happy Holidays' instead of a mandated 'Merry Christmas,' ...that somehow gay people getting legally married, in some abstract and undefineable way degrades a fifty-dollar-Vegas-drive-in-straight marriage that confers some 3400 federal rights and privileges and untold corporate benefits.....

Maybe I'm just spoiled or something, but I think \*faith\* has more to do with \*participating\* in reality, painful as it can be in real ways, never mind legalistic fears of 'sin,' ...with \*acceptance and awareness of consequences... exercising compassion and justice,\* ...not "believing something" in spite of the consequences to others.

Not that I haven't done a few things in spite of the consequences to me, in my time.

But that's not really \*faith.\* That's \*desperation,\* perhaps. Abandon, in whatever noble cause. When the \*consequences\* are really about \*others,\* then, it's fanatical recklessness and inconsideration.

Sometimes, \*faith\* is about \*not\* needing to think you have some 'message' that is More Real than what you do to get it out.



POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007 4:29 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Jehovah's Witnesses are a cult. Not all religions are a cult.

Jehovah's Witnesses use the family as a tool to blackmail their members from leaving. If a JW leaves the religion and joins another they will be shunned by their family.

Jehovah's Witnesses are not a benign religion, for they leave behind in their wake a legacy of broken homes, psychologically damaged children, suicides, and depression.

POSTED BY: DAVID W | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007 4:20 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Personally, I think the door-to-door JW's, or anyone coming door-to door, is not 'bravely-witnessing,' ...they're showing one of the prime attributes of a 'cult,' ...their priorities and beliefs are 'more real' to them than those of the people whose homes they intrude upon, even at times invade.

Fundamentalists seeking to impose their will through force of government or law or other social compulsions they wouldn't accept upon themselves, also believe their 'religious dictates' are 'more real' than the rules and civilities of society. And they show it.

They'll call it about 'religious freedom' when they want to proselytize in public schools, and as quickly take the opposite position whenever there's a whiff of anyone gay, or Pagan, or nontheist, or liberal, wanting to use the same facilities.

You can't define what's a 'cult' or is 'cultlike' based upon your own idea of what's 'Most Real.'

That's in fact what 'cults' do.

Certainly, as a Pagan, I've often been quite irrationally accused of being in a 'cult,' (usually from the same people who say we can't possibly have 'real religion' 'because' we're so decentralized and 'reality-based' and non-authoritarian.)

Personally, I'd say my idea of 'Most Real' is not a contest vs the 'reality' others live in. It's not 'brave witness' to try to impose your ways on others, whether they like it or not.

It's 'cult-ey.'

This is the major disconnect that I see with Fundies in politics: they think their idea that 'their' ideas are 'that much more real' than real life, that whether it's imposing their religious view on others through law, or thinking that it's a lot more important to peer into the houses of those on their sickbeds, or trying to get some sleep after a nightshift, and bang on their doors like some kind of emergency that overrides the fact that 'people don't do that,'

Well, I question what's more real to them in the first place.

So often they take license to do totally-unacceptable and intrusive things that hurt real people, in the name of some abstract fear or interpretation.

And it comes down to 'control.'

Pretty cultlike, if you asked me. The whole package of it.

Personally, what I find "Most Real" is 'so real' it 'doesn't need to be advertised and coerced like that.'

Just is.

And here we dwell right now.

That's another thing cults do, by the way: they say, "Only through this can you have spirituality or be OK, so obey at all costs."

That's not real. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007 3:57 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

"...When I opened the front door, I was face to face with a young Jehovah's Witness who was holding the hand of a small beaming child..."

HELLO! It is dangerous to send children door to door to sell watchtowers and solicit/recruit for the Watchtower cult.

Please STOP using children!

POSTED BY: MARY | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007 1:37 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

All you need to know about the Jehovah's Witnesses is that they say "Jesus had his return to power" aka his second coming in the year 1914.

What do you think?

Debunking the Jehovah's Witnesses propaganda:

A) They are at your door to recruit you for enslavement to their watchtower corporation, they will say that "we are just here to share a message from the Bible" this is deception right off.

B) The 'message' is their false Gospel that Jesus had his second coming already in 1914. The problem with this, is it's not just a cute fairy tale, Jesus warned of the false prophets who would claim "...look he is here in the wilderness, or see here he is at the temple"

C) Their anti-blood transfusion ban has killed hundreds if not thousands

D) once they recruit you they will "love bomb" you in cult fashion to also recruit your family & friends or cut them off. There are many more dangers, Jehovah's Witnesses got a bad rap for good and valid reasons.

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Danny Haszard Jehovah's Witness X 33 years and 3rd generation

<http://www.freeminds.org>

POSTED BY: DANNY HASZARD | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007 12:11 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Minister Elliott: Correct: "Unfairly, the second question suggests a prejudicial answer to the first question: a cult is an UN-real, phony, pseudo-religion."

Can't we boil the whole thing down to: Cults believe in false Gods while the Gods of religion are true? That makes the question answerable by those who can only take \*true and false\* tests, i.e. is there a God or is there no God,, true or false.

The most significant part of religion is left completely out of the question. Not so fast. Let's identify true God before we go throwing stones at people with false Gods or those who don't even believe there is a God.

Your true God comes from the Bible and nowhere else. How sure are you your God is really true God? What does that make "The Church of Christ" IF it's really false God? Does that make your gang a cult? I think it does make your church a cult.

The story of the fallen angel Lucifer is that of a false God. To Pagans angels are gods. Semantics! The spelling of the word with either an upper case or lower case letter. That's the difference in your church and Pagans.

<http://www.hoax-buster.org/sellyoursoul> is AN interpretation of the Bible. Is that interpretation true or false? Your religion requires it to be false. Why is it false?

A more compelling question concerns whether or not there was a supernatural being in the ball of fire, the source of your true God. IF there was a supernatural being in the fire how do you know IT was God and not Devil, (Lucifer is educated speculation, could have been Gabriel who spoke to Muhammad or Mormoni of the Mormons - it seem that all three want to be true God).

Cults are organizations who's members are under the influence of a mind controller. Transferring the mind controller to a supernatural being and away from the minister is slick,, until the supernatural being is identified to be Devil, He himself, Lucifer. It's also cult-ery and no different than Charles Manson's "cult" as demonstrated by the early Christian church and presently done by Muslims.

The key to understanding the cult is it's number one characteristic, mind control. Claiming the minister's mind is also controlled does not remove the inherent cult nature of religion, mind control at "hell point" (the gun of hell pointed at the head of the mind controlled).

POSTED BY: BGONE | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007 11:12 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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It's odd that in an overall plea for understanding and tolerance, you reserve such vitriol and derision for atheism. Your characterization of it is, to put it mildly, unfair. You describe religion as "human life centered in and celebrating what the particular religious community considers Most Real" - but, of course, religions differ very greatly on what they consider "Most Real".

An atheist differs mainly in that they believe in one less god than you do. After all, you don't consider Zeus to be "Most Real", right? The early Christians were called atheists since they didn't believe in the Roman/Greek pantheon - you would apparently qualify, no?

To use your terminology, atheism is, at most, a statement about what is \*not\* "Most Real", not about what \*is\*. Perhaps there are atheists that match your dismissive description - but I haven't run across them.

POSTED BY: RAY INGLES | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007 11:03 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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## SUMMARIES OF NEARLY 600 JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES LAWSUITS & COURT CASES

The following website summarizes 310 U.S. court cases and lawsuits affecting children of Jehovah's Witness Parents, including 100+ cases where the JW Parents refused to consent to life-saving blood transfusions for their dying children:

DIVORCE, BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS, AND OTHER LEGAL ISSUES AFFECTING CHILDREN OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

<http://jwdivorces.bravehost.com>

The following website summarizes over 275 lawsuits filed by Jehovah's Witnesses against their Employers, and/or incidents involving problem JW Employees:

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES UNIQUE TO JEHOVAH'S WITNESS EMPLOYEES

<http://jwemployees.bravehost.com>

POSTED BY: JERRY JONES | SEPTEMBER 21, 2007 9:35 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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