

religious beliefs and practices are false and merit God's disapproval, it is showing love to bring this to their attention by exposing falsehood." -*Awake!*, July 8, 1988, page 28.

Most people would agree with that statement by the *Awake!* magazine. That is why there is justification in speaking out against the errors of the Watch Tower Society and exposing its falsehoods. When the Society speaks out it is viewed by them as an act of love. But when others point out that they are guilty of the very things they condemn in others they cry: "persecution!" and assign hateful motives to their critics. But their history demonstrates clearly that they have been in error many times and have prophesied presumptuously. It appears to be happening again in relation to the 1914 generation prediction. And what does the Bible say about pushing ahead presumptuously?: "To obey is better than a sacrifice, to pay attention than the fat of rams; For rebelliousness is the same as the sin of divination, and pushing ahead presumptuously the same as [using] uncanny power and teraphim."-1

Samuel 15:22,23 NW.

This does not put into question the sincerity of the millions of Jehovah's Witnesses who loyally preach these predictions received from the Society. They believe them to be true and build their lives and stake their futures on them. How they will react to the failure of the generation of 1914 to bring the end of the world and the start of a paradise earth remains to be seen. If history is any measure of the future then we can expect that some will be stumbled and fall away while others will take it in stride and accept whatever rationalization the Society offers. As time wears on even the most loyal Witness must realize that time is running out for the 1914 generation even with the new point of view in place. But allowing the thought that the Society could be wrong once more is most uncomfortable. If confidence in the organization is shaken then the whole religious house is shaken. This becomes the sad situation with those who put their trust in men. (Ps.146:3,4) .□

The Psychology of Shunning

(Number 45. Originally published July 28, 1988)

Perhaps no single factor is more distressing to disfellowshipped or disassociated Jehovah's Witnesses than is the shunning policy of the Watch Tower Society. In fairness it must be said that there is pain on both sides in this matter. Those loyal to the Society's directives are not without compassion towards family members and former associates. Like those being shunned they, too, experience considerable anguish. In most cases both parties are acting in good conscience. Those who remain loyal to the Watch Tower Society feel they are putting Jehovah God first by cutting off family members. They are led to believe that this is the best way to help disfellowshipped ones come to repentance and be restored to "Jehovah's organization". On the other hand, those who have withdrawn from association for reasons of conscience believe that they have done nothing to warrant this extreme form of punishment. They view the matter of total shunning as nothing more than a political exercise on the Society's part to protect itself against serious examination. They believe that the biblical teaching regarding those rightfully ostracized from the Christian community has been perverted and abused by the Society in a callous, self-serving manner'.

It isn't likely that the situation will change. Each side will continue to hold to these conflicting views.

That means that the trauma connected with this practice will also continue. How the targets of this policy learn to cope with this treatment depends, to a large extent, on their state of mind and heart. If one has withdrawn from the Witnesses due to an allegiance to God and Christ they can draw comfort from the knowledge that suffering for righteousness sake has merit with God. (1 Peter 2: 19-23) It is also possible that their stand may cause others to think more objectively and prompt them to reevaluate their religious position. Especially, would this be true if the disassociated ones demonstrate a Christ-like spirit and avoid a hateful attitude. Attempts to get even or punish the family or organization in some way will only serve to reinforce the notion that the Society is correct in its treatment. Any attempt to justify oneself will also be interpreted as a self-serving exercise. For one's own peace of mind and peace with God there needs to be an acceptance of what cannot be changed. The final resolution must be left with God. (Romans 12: 12-21)

It might be helpful to better understand the psychology of shunning because this practice is a common phenomenon. Established institutions; whether they be religious, political, military or commercial tend to isolate and insulate themselves from critical examination. Especially odious to such

entities are those within the organization who draw attention to unethical or illegal practices. These "whistle blowers", above all others, are singled out for punishment. Even co-workers may turn on them for disturbing their own conscience or upsetting the status quo .. To better understand the psychology of shunning and its undercurrent of fear *The Christian Respondent* is pleased to publish a treatise on the subject prepared by Rod Rayborne of Grover City,

California. It is hoped that what he has to say will be of some help in putting this matter in a broader perspective. Rod and his wife, Penny, are well acquainted with the sorrow caused by the Watch Tower policy of total shunning~having immediate family members cutting them off in this manner.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SHUNNING by Rod Rayborne

Shunning is a practice common to all societies as much today as ever and most individuals shop to a lesser or greater degree. Shunning is well grounded in fear, simply put, and really results from it. Most clinical psychologists will tell you that fear is a protective mechanism. So people who shun other people usually do so because they believe that those persons have the potential of causing harm either to themselves, their loved ones, or their way of life. In most instances our first reaction to fear is the so-called "fight or flight" syndrome. Thus, when we react in fear that reaction can best be described as an instinct to survive or protect-the strongest drive in man. We wish to avoid or shun that which we perceive to be threatening.

Parents, for example, shun things they feel could have a detrimental affect on their children. They may turn down a promotion because it means a transfer to a large city noted for its crime, drugs and gangs. A parent would certainly think twice before inviting a known felon (particularly a violent one) into his home for a meal. And it's a safe bet that he would be less than thrilled to discover that his baby sitter had a history as a child abuser. He would, as a conscientious parent, avoid association with that kind of person. However, shunning is not always the product of ethical analysis or motive. The thing to be shunned need not be people but the light of discovery. The evening news seems filled with cases of persons who, after engaging in incidents of moral or social corruption, endeavor to cover it up; make light of it; or pass the buck. Even some religious leaders have been discovered to have engaged in some of the lowest forms of debauchery

and then shunning discovery have offered hush money to keep it quiet. In this context even Adam and Eve can be found to have shunned God when, after their joint disobedience, they hid themselves from him in fear. (Genesis 3:8) So we can see that shunning is an avoidance of something feared or unwanted.

Jesus stated that some people actually strive to shun what they know to be right in favor of what they know to be wrong. "Here lies the test," he said, "the light has come into the world, but men preferred darkness to light because their deeds were evil." -John 3: 19 *The Living Bible*. The light has a way of revealing transgressions some persons would just as soon leave concealed. This was true with the Water-gate scandal under the Nixon administration, the more recent Iran-Contra cover-up, the PTL Ministries and many others. In each case the need to maintain secrecy in order to preserve the organizational structure was stressed and actions taken to ensure that secrecy. These actions included the removal of persons who believed the wrong should be made public; smearing the reputations of people; the issuance of false statements (disinformation); and, in some cases, the careful deletion or alteration of the record to distort or destroy pertinent and potentially damaging evidence of wrongdoing. In the companion volume to his excellent book, *The Road Less Traveled*, Dr. M. Scott Peck in *People of the Lie*, discusses this drive found in some organizations and governments to sustain their sovereignty by attempting to eliminate that which it perceives as a threat:

"Ordinarily, if our noses are rubbed in the evidence, we can tolerate the painful narcissistic injury involved, admit our need for change, and correct our outlook. But as is the case with certain individuals, the narcissism of whole nations may at times exceed the normal bounds. When this happens, the nation -instead of readjusting in light of the evidence-sets about attempting to destroy the evidence ... which is evil. Evil has already been defined most simply as the use of political (authoritative) power to destroy others for the purpose of defending or preserving the integrity of one's sick self." -*People of the Lie*, page 241.

Among the organizations which make use of this type of behavior in order to preserve its authority, none stand out in my mind quite as prominently as the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. This was once again borne out in the April 15, 1988 Watchtower article: "Discipline That Can Yield Peaceable Fruit". As would be expected with groups which fit the above

picture, the emphasis is on the avoidance of those who would call into question the Watch Tower's claim of divine guidance. Although the Society obligates shunning in the case of those who have committed acts of immorality, clearly the emphasis lies with the shunning of those who challenge Watch Tower assertions in the light of found evidence. Before discussing the Watch Tower's view of shunning though, we need to look at it from a biblical standpoint since this is the source the Society claims its views are based.

Some persons, and especially some of those who have been shunned, cannot equate shunning with the Christian principle of forgiveness and love. Jesus stated that principle again and again. At Matthew 18:21,22 we read: "'Then Peter came up and asked him, 'Lord, how often am I to forgive my brother if he goes on wronging me? As many as seven times?' Jesus replied, 'I do not say seven times; I say seventy times seven.'" -*New English Bible*. Notice that Peter did not ask Jesus how many times he was to forgive his neighbor but his brother. Jesus would not assign a numerical value to the extent a Christian's forgiveness should reach. So he was telling Peter that a Christian's mercy should be endless. We remember that Jesus said: "'Whoever then will acknowledge me before men, I will acknowledge him before my Father in heaven; and whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.'" -Matthew 10:32,33*NEB*. And yet who of us does not recall that Peter the 'Rock' denied Jesus not once but three times with cursing? (Matthew 26:69-75) Still, Jesus did not deny Peter in turn. When he told Peter that he would deny him the three times he knew that in his heart Peter would never deny him. He could see the difference between Peter's cowering disavowals and Judas' cunning betrayal. He knew their heart conditions. The story of the Prodigal Son and the one lost sheep again attest to God's mercy and understanding. As Christians we should "Go and do likewise". (Luke 10:37)

But the Scriptures do allow the shunning of some people at times. One text quoted three times in the above mentioned *Watchtower* article is found at 1 Corinthians 5: 9-13. Here Paul advises: "When I wrote to you before I said not to mix with evil people. But when I said that I wasn't talking about unbelievers who live in sexual sin, or are greedy cheats and thieves and idol worshippers. For you can't live in this world without being with people like that. What I meant .. was that you are not to keep company with anyone who claims to be a Christian but indulges in sexual sins, or is greedy, or is a swindler, or worships idols, or

is a drunkard, or abusive. Don't even eat lunch with such a person. It isn't our job to judge outsiders. But it certainly is our job to judge and deal strongly with those who are members of the church, and who are sinning in these ways. God alone is the judge of those on the outside. But you yourselves must deal with this man and put him out of your church. " -*LB*.

Further' the Scriptures also advise the shunning of individuals who are attempting to create their own religion or who are promoting some sect. Such seems to be the case with Hymenaeus and Philetus.² Tim-othy 2:16-19 tells us: "Avoid empty and worldly chat-ter; those who indulge in it will stray further and further into godless courses, and the infection of their teaching will spread like gangrene. Such are Hymenaeus and Philetus; they have shot wide of the truth in saying that our resurrection has already taken place, and are upsetting people's faith." --*NEB*. One should note in this case that Hymenaeus and Philetus were not merely teaching a false doctrine, they were telling the newly arisen congregations that their faith was in vain because God had . already resurrected his people and the rest were now forgotten and left behind. This is why Paul said that they were up setting people's faith.

Never do the Scriptures mandate the shunning of persons for other than a manifestly wicked, selfish, or immoral heart condition. Even Korah and his like, whom the Society has shown a great fondness for invoking, was cut off, not because he questioned Moses' authority as so many Witnesses have been misled to believe, but because of what really lay behind his questions-his own selfish desire for prominence. Moses even said that Korah and his fol-lowers held, not just he, but God himself in contempt. A desire for prominence, you may recall, also accounted for Miriam and Aaron's challenge of Moses' authority. (Numbers 12) Thus Paul spoke of those who wish to form their own religion as savage wolves, out for their own selfish ends: "Even from your own body there will be men coming forward who will distort the truth to induce the disciples to break away and follow them." ~Acts 20:30 *NEB*. What can we perceive the heart conditions of these men to be? Are these men who really believe that they are fol-lowing God, are struggling despite the consequences to do what they really believe (even if in error) the will of God requires of them? Not hardly! Would God re-ject as wicked a person who genuinely loves him but whose beliefs, though honestly held, may be less than flawlessly accurate? Do we actually believe that recog-nition by God hinges upon the precision with which we interpret the Scriptures? That only upon our

perfectly correct understanding of the Bible rests God's approval of sincere persons earnestly looking to him for their salvation.?

Yes, the Bible does say that we should reject any person who, while claiming to be a Christian, willfully engages in behavior clearly immoral and self-seeking. People who deliberately practice what they know (or believe) to be wrong, all the while proclaiming their piety. So God tells us that the most abhorrent of people are not those who sin outside the congregation, and certainly not those within the congregation who may express an honest belief in a false doctrine or an equally honest skepticism of a true one! Rather, those whom Christians are admonished to shun are those who, while having full knowledge of the depravity of their sin and the effect such hypocrisy may have on believers and unbelievers alike continue, as professed Christians, to either openly or covertly pursue it. These people deserve to be shunned, They alone.

In fact the Scriptures, in a position diametrically opposed to that of the Watch Tower Society, actually recommend questioning. While the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses say (out of necessity) that they are not inspired they paradoxically demand 100% conformity and agreement as though they were inspired. On the other hand, the apostles who were inspired admonished both believers and unbelievers alike to keep on asking -using only the Scriptures as the final arbiter. John announced: "Dearly loved friends, don't always believe everything you hear just because someone says it is a message from God: Test it first to see if it really is. For there are many false teachers around ... " -1 John 4: 1 *LB*. And Paul commended the Bereans when they checked the Scriptures to see if what he was telling them was true: "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining (closely scrutinizing: Greek) the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so." - Acts 17: 11 *New American Standard*.

Jesus laid down the principle we were to follow:

"Keep on asking, and it will be given to you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you. For everyone asking receives, and everyone seeking finds, and to everyone knocking it will be opened."-Matthew 7:7,8 *NAS*. Indeed, not to question (any religious authority) would be nothing less than foolhardy in a world filled with many hundreds of Christian religions-each laying claim to their own

unique perspective if not monopoly on the truth.

When Jesus stated: "You must not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a son's wife against her mother-in-law; and a man will find his enemies under his own roof." -Matthew 10:34-36 It is obvious that the "enemies" he speaks of are not Christians but those family members who disapprove and set themselves against the converted. It is the person who will find his enemies under his own roof who is the Christian, not the enemy! Jesus was therefore saying that it would be because of him that the believers would be shunned by their un-believing family. It would be the unbelievers who would do the shunning-not the reverse. (see Matt. 5:11,12, 39-48; Rom.12:17-21) Jesus also said regarding the sanctity of marriage: "What God has joined together, let no man put apart." ~Matthew 19:6. And he stated that a house divided against itself cannot stand. (Matt. 12:25) It seems unlikely that he would oppose his own logic. Thus we see the wisdom in Paul's warning to: "Make sure of all things."-1 Thess.5:21

That *The Watchtower* appears to recognize their inability to find in the Scriptures support for their extreme forms of shunning can be demonstrated by the fact that they twice found it necessary in the previously mentioned article about shunning to insert into the primary text used, namely, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, brackets within which they expand (in a nebulous way) on the reasons Christians were advised to shun. In their last quotation of that passage we read: "Quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person [or guilty of another gross sin] ... not even eating with such a man." -*The Watchtower*, April 15, 1988, page 28 (emphasis added). By thus adding to the text what they obviously felt was inadequate in the original they open a virtual Pandora's box of "gross sin" for which a person can now be disfellowshipped and then shunned. They are clearly "going beyond the things written". (1 Cor. 4:6)

We now come to a crucial question. Why, if the above is true, does the Watch Tower Society continue to expel from its ranks persons who have neither committed immorality, attempted to wrest the power from the leadership for themselves? And who, in point of fact, continue to express a sincere love both for God and their fellow man? There can be but one explanation. It is simply the implication that any person, religion or government that does not allow

questioning must necessarily have something to hide. This would not be a problem if the organization was traditionally open and up-front about its mistakes. If they had not stressed to their followers their unique position among the churches as that one singled out by God and having virtually claimed their infallibility in everything but name alone. But to have done so would have, rightly, placed their authority as somewhat less than God's and earned them no more respect than any other believer.

So when errors, blatant as they were, arose, they could have under a more honest, open system been forgiven or overlooked as simply mistakes by imperfect men. No one would have been compelled to believe them if his own conscience dissented. But under a system dependent upon total submission to religious authority calling attention to errors is both unacceptable as well as dangerous. Past errors and miscalculations must be covered over. Such was the case with the 1975 speculation, namely, that that year would bring about the dissolution of the world as we know it and usher in a theocratically run earth. (see *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God*, pages 24-30, *The Approaching Peace of 1000 Years*, pages 28-30, *Divine Rulership-The Only Hope of all Man-kind*, pp. 19, *The Watchtower*, 8/15/68, *Awake!*, 10/8/71, and the March, 1968 and May, 1974 issues of *Kingdom Ministry*) When foretold blessings failed to arrive serious problems developed. Not only were Jehovah's Witnesses disappointed that 1975 failed to deliver them into a cleansed earth but the failure cast serious doubt on the Watch Tower Society as God's prophet.

In light of the Society's claim of divine guidance, its oft repeated statements that it was unique among the world's religions as the only one favored by God, and its extraordinary domination over the lives of its adherents based solely and strictly on those claims, is it any wonder that the Society chose to bury the evidence and deny responsibility? More, and something which reveals its duplicity was its careful reworking of one particular sentence in their best-selling book, *The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life*. On page 9 in the 1968 edition of the book we read: "Also as reported back in 1960, a former United States Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, declared that our time is 'a period of unequalled instability, unequalled violence.' And he warned: 'I know enough of what is going on to assure you that, in fifteen years from today, this world is going to be too dangerous to live in.'" [Note: 1960 plus 15 years brings us to 1975] However, in the 1981 edition of this same book the

quotation was altered to read: "Also, as reported back in 1960, a former United States Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, declared that our time is 'a period of unequalled instability, unequalled violence.' Based on what he knew was then going on in the world, it was his conclusion that soon 'this world is going to be too dangerous to live in.'"

Why did the Watch Tower choose to alter this last sentence? Because 15 years from 1960 would be 1975. That was obviously the point they had originally tried to get across. Otherwise, why change it? Additionally, in *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1976 they assumed no responsibility for the failed expectations by arguing that the blame for the false hopes should lie with their followers! It "as Jehovah's Witnesses who got carried away with speculations and expectations regarding a date (1975 as never mentioned).

involved in this kind of self-protecting cover-up, Dr Peck: points out: "One of the tests for criminal responsibility is the question of right and wrong. If a criminal in any way, shape, or form attempts to conceal his crime, it is assumed he knew his action to be a crime-,that is, to be wrong." -*People of the Lie*, page 241.

So again we come to the heart of the question as to why the Society expels from its ranks, under the guise of apostasy, persons who could potentially expose its transgressions. Dr. Peck, with striking accuracy, describes the driving force behind groups like the Watch Tower and its often bizarre and arbitrary policies: "It is almost common knowledge that the best way to cement group cohesiveness is to ferment the group's hatred of an external enemy. Deficiencies within the group can be easily and painlessly overlooked by focusing attention on the deficiencies or 'sins' of the out-group. Thus the Germans under Hitler could ignore their domestic problems by scape-goating the Jews. And when American troops were failing to fight effectively in New Guinea in World War 2, the command improved their *esprit de corps* by showing them movies of Japanese committing atrocious acts. But this use of narcissism whether unconscious or deliberate-is potentially evil. We have extensively examined the ways in which evil individuals will flee self-examination and guilt by blaming and attempting to destroy whatever or whoever highlights their deficiencies. Now we see that the same malignant narcissistic behavior comes naturally to groups."

"From this it should be obvious that the failing

group is the one likely to behave most evilly. Failure wounds our pride, and it is the wounded animal who is vicious. In the healthy organism failure will be a stimulus to self-examination and criticism. But since the evil individual cannot tolerate self-criticism, it is in time of failure that he or she will inevitably lash out one way or another. And so it is with groups. Group failure and the .. stimulation of group self-criticism act to damage group pride and cohesiveness. Group leaders in all places and ages have therefore routinely bolstered group cohesiveness in times of failure by whipping the group's hatred for foreigners or the 'enemy.'" -*People of the Lie*, pages 225-226

In the end, therefore, it becomes obvious that the practice of expelling from the congregation persons who honestly dissent, shunning people who have done nothing worse than to try to more accurately follow the will of God as they perceive it, is itself an act by the leaders of shunning the light of discovery. A clear desire to maintain the rank and file in a state of blissful ignorance. It is an act of fear. The same fear the Jewish religious leaders felt over the threat they understood Christianity to be to their deeply entrenched authority. "All the same, many even of the rulers actually put faith in him, but because of the Pharisees they would not confess [him], in order not to be expelled from the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men more than even the glory of God." -John 12:42,43 *New World Translation*.

For those who are shunned the pain can be intense. Especially so when that one knows that the shunning is wrong but has no opportunity to prove this to loved ones who have turned to them a deaf ear. But the person who has separated him or herself from the

Watch Tower is left with the knowledge, painful though it is, that what was sacrificed was lost on the altar of integrity, peace, and a more sure hope for the future. As Dr. Peck states: "Attitudes have a kind of inertia. Once set in motion, they will keep going, even in the face of the evidence. To change an attitude requires a considerable amount of work and suffering. The process must begin either in an effortfully maintained posture of constant self-doubt and criticism or else in a painful knowledge that what we thought was right all along may not be right after all. Then it proceeds into a state of confusion. This state is quite uncomfortable; we no longer seem to know what is right or wrong or which way to go. But it is in a state of openness and therefore learning and growing. It is only from the quicksand of confusion that we are able to leap to the new and better vision." -*People of the Lie*, page 240. (Rod Rayborne's address is: P.O. Box 1301, Grover City, CA 93433)

*Great truths are greatly won. Not found by chance,
Nor wafted on the breath of summer dream, But
grasped in the great struggle of the soul, Hard
buffeting with adverse wind and stream.*

*Grasped in the day of conflict, fear and grief, When
the strong hand of God, put forth in might, Plows
up the subsoil of the stagnant heart, And brings the
imprisoned truth-seed to the light.*

*Wrung from the troubled spirit in hard hours, Of
weariness, solitude, perchance of pain,
Truth springs, like harvest, from the well-plowed field,
And the soul feels it has not wept in vain.*

-Horatius Bonair- submitted by Elaine Sabatine □