



Manipulation, Abuse, and Maltreatment in Groups

Jehovah's Witnesses and human rights

Palazzo dei Congressi, Stazione Marittima, Molo Bersaglieri, 3 Trieste, Italia

Defending and Legally Establishing the Good News

“ THE intense **persecution** brought upon Jehovah’s Witnesses has resulted in their being haled before police officials, judges, and rulers earth wide. Legal cases involving the Witnesses have numbered many thousands, and hundreds of these have been appealed to higher courts. **This has had a profound effect on the law itself and has often fortified legal guarantees of basic freedoms for people in general.** ”

*** jv chap. 30 p. 678 ‘Defending and Legally Establishing the Good News’ ***

Defending and Legally Establishing the Good News

“ Every American law student well knows the **contribution** made by Jehovah’s Witnesses to the **defense of civil rights** in the United States. ”

- “The Debt of Constitutional Law to Jehovah’s Witnesses”
Minnesota Law Review, March 1944
- “A Catalyst for the Evolution of Constitutional Law: Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Supreme Court”
University of Cincinnati Law Review, 1987.

*** jv chap. 30 p. 678 ‘Defending and Legally Establishing the Good News’ ***

“Basic Freedoms Reclaimed”

“Basic Freedoms”

- Freedom of opinion => Speech, Press, Religion
 - Meeting peacefully
 - Proselytize

Totalitarian nations: no Legal Victories - **regime fall**

- JW not singled out:
 - Nazi Regime
 - Soviet Union

Democratic nations: - **basic constitutional rights**

- Not always granted to ALL

“Persecution”

Totalitarian nations:

- Justified perception
- Wait for **regime fall**

Democratic nations:

- Suggested Clergy interference
- Clear Discrimination
- Basic freedoms **defended in Courts**

Other Rights established legally

In addition to Rights legally protected:

- Meeting peacefully
- Proselytizing

Religious Opinions legally established:

- Flag-salute refusal
- Pledge of allegiance refusal

⇒ **Victories** in front of **Supreme Court**

“Every American citizen can invoke legal precedent”

Other Religious Opinions

Religious Opinions **non legally prosecutable**:

- Keep from Celebrating Birthdays
- Keep from eating blood products
- Believing or not in ... resurrection

Religious Opinions **legally prosecutable**:

- Blood Transfusion Refusal
- Mandatory Military Service Refusal

⇒ Court Cases **Won** - Court Cases **Lost**

Opinion: Blood Transfusions

Court Cases Legally **Won**:

- Right Medical Care Choice
 - Adult patients
 - “Minor Adult” patients
 - => Adrian Yeatts, martyr *Awake!* 22-5-94

Court Cases Legally **Lost**:

- Minor patients
- Medical Guardianship Court Order

Opinion: Christian Neutrality

Totalitarian nations :

- No Court Case Won
- Prisons, executions, suffering

Democratic nations:

- Thousands of Court cases LOST
- Some victories – “ministers of religion”
- Offered “Alternative Civil Service”

Alternative Civil Service: Turned Down

“ An examination of the historical facts shows that not only have Jehovah’s Witnesses refused to put on military uniforms and take up arms but, **during the past half century and more, they have also declined to do noncombatant service or to accept other work assignments as a substitute for military service.”**

*** uw chap. 21 p. 167 par. 14 “They Are No Part of the World” ***
[United in Worship – **1983**]

Alternative Civil Service: Turned Down

*“Representatives of the branch office appeared before the committee, explaining that the **Witnesses could not accept any substitute for military service whatsoever, no matter how praiseworthy the task.**”*

*** **yb91** p. 166 Sweden ***

Religious Opinions Revisited

Opinion on Christian Neutrality:

- Ban on Military Service – **retained**
- **Alternative Civil Service – revisited**

N.B. Majority of democratic nations:

=> Voluntary Military Service introduced

*** **yb91** p. 166 Sweden ***

Religious Opinions Revisited

Alternative Civil Service

What if the Christian's honest answers to such questions lead him to conclude that the national civilian service is a “**good work**” that he can perform in obedience to the authorities? That is his decision before Jehovah. Appointed elders and others should fully respect the conscience of the brother and continue to regard him as a Christian in good standing.

*** **w96** 5/1 p. 20 par. 21 Paying Back Caesar's Things to Caesar ***

Religious Opinions Revisited

Medical Opinion Revisited:

- Ban on Vaccines (*)
- Ban on Organ Transplant (*)
- Ban on **Blood Transfusions**

(*) Abandoned

Religious Opinions Revisited

Ban on Blood Transfusions:

- Use of plasma volume expanders
- State of the art surgical techniques
- For the rest:
=> Religious beliefs Revisited

Religious Opinions Revisited

Ban on Blood Transfusions:

- 1982 => Blood plasma Fractions **authorized** (“immune globulin”; albumin)
- 2000 => Basically all Fractions of Red & White cells, platelets **authorized** (“interferons”; “interleukins”)

“ Such therapies are not transfusions of those primary components; they usually involve parts or fractions thereof. Should Christians accept these fractions in medical treatment? We cannot say. The Bible does not give details, so a Christian must make his own conscientious decision before God . ”

*** w00 6/15 p. 30 Questions From Readers ***

Religious Opinions Revisited

Blood Transfusions:

- **Main Ban Retained!**

“Today, most transfusions are not of whole blood but of one of its primary components: (1) red cells; (2) white cells; (3) platelets; (4) plasma (serum), the fluid part ...

Jehovah's Witnesses hold that accepting whole blood or any of those four primary components **violates God's law.**”

*** w00 6/15 p. 29 Questions From Readers ***

Again in front of the Courts

Pedophilia:

- JW abhor pedophilia, but ...

Internal policies based on deleterious religious opinions

Concerns only cases where the **pedophile is a JW**

*** w00 6/15 p. 29 Questions From Readers ***

Pedophilia

Instructions

- Contact IMMEDIATELY the Branch Legal Department
- Branch Office determines who is “Predator” or “known child molester”
- Inform discretely families with kids
- TWO witness Rule!
- If accusation not proved – event must remain strictly confidential
- No request to inform the authorities

*** BOE 2012-10-01 ***

Pedophilia – emblematic case

Conti Candace – Fremont California

- First instance sentenced
13/14 June 2012
- Ordered to pay **million \$**:
 - WT 24
 - Pedophile 4.3
- To guarantee payment if
Appeal fails WT real
estate frozen for circa 1
billion \$



<http://jwleaks.org/candace-conti/>

Other internal policies in conflict with Civil Rights

Ostracism

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been used by JW as the inspiring source of the claimed basic religious freedoms for their Organization, as an entity

However, the UDHR specifically addresses, not an entity, but “everyone has the right”, meaning each individual

Some internal JW policies do not take into account those rights, for each individual

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 18.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

See also the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms art. 1 & 14

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to **hold opinions** without interference and to seek, receive and **impart** information and **ideas** through any media and regardless of frontiers.

See also the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms art. 1 & 14

Other internal policies in conflict with Civil Rights

Ostracism

Everyone's right, includes members and former members of the movement, but, internal policies established by the Leadership do not always grant those rights, specially not when someone decides to abandon the movement for personal opinions

To the contrary, these are **ostracized** and marked as with a red-hot iron, called names **“dog” “sow” “with a truly bad heart”** (w83 1/1) or **“apostate” “mentally diseased”, “infected with a contagious, deadly disease”** (w11 7/15).

Instead of holding their new religious opinions without interference

“... on the subject of **disfellowshipping**, they know, of course, that the Bible says “to **quit mixing in company with anyone** called ... **not even eating with such a man.**” (1 Cor. 5:11, 13) They also realize that **the word “anyone” in this verse includes family members not living under their roof.**”

The Watchtower July 15, 2011

Instead of holding their new religious opinions without interference

“How should we treat a disfellowshipped person?”

The Bible says ...

We do not have spiritual or social fellowship with disfellowshipped ones”

JW Book “Keep Yourselves in God’s Love” (2008)



Instead of holding their new religious opinions without interference

“What if we have a relative or a close friend who is disfellowshipped? ... we will abide by his command not to have contact with anyone who is disfellowshipped.”

WT 15 April 2012 p.12

“Do not look for excuses to associate with a disfellowshipped family member, for example, through e-mail.”

WT 15 Jan 2013 p.16 § 19

Conclusion

Let us conclude this conference by recalling the paradox:

Yes, in the past, JW have won hundreds of trials in several nations to defend, as an entity, an organization, their religious rights.

Today, unfortunately, their peculiar interpretations of the Bible upon which they have devised their internal policies are such that they leave little room to grant their members and former members, **as individuals**, the same religious rights established by The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Jehovah's Witnesses and Human Rights

Questions?

website: testimoni-di-geova.info



Palazzo dei Congressi, Stazione Marittima, Molo Bersaglieri, 3 Trieste, Italia