
15 MILLION STOLEN LIVES

THE INCALCULABLE COST OF CULT INVOLVEMENT

Approximately 15 million have given their lives to the Watchtower. About 5 million have died in its web. What is the correct term for a crime of this magnitude, the stealing of 15 million lives? Theft? Fraud? Or is stealing a life just another kind of murder? Watchtower leaders will laugh at this accusation. Jehovah's Witnesses, they will maintain, are not compelled either to join or to stay. But surely theft is too mild a term for what the Watchtower gets away with. Leaving aside the purely religious question, the ultimate destiny of these millions, is the Watchtower at all accountable for these three generations that have perished believing promises never realized?

The cult's growth has been exponential. Fewer than 10,000 in 1920. 100,000 in 1945. A million by 1970. Over 4.3 million presently "publishing," as the Watchtower describes its missionary outreach. Fear fuels this growth. Armageddon is the prod. Paradise the carrot. Just as it was in 1874, 1878, 1914, 1918, 1925, 1941, 1975 -- always just over the hill.

Jehovah's Witnesses may not be compelled to join the cult. They are, however, gradually coerced -- perhaps better, cowed -- into lifelong submission and unquestioning obedience to its dictates. The power of the Watchtower leadership is effectively absolute. Jehovah's Witnesses are encouraged to view the "organization" as Mother. Big Mother, to adapt Orwell, inasmuch as the method of manipulation is much the same as 1984's "organization": *he who controls the present, controls the past: he who controls the past controls the future*. Jehovah's Witnesses will be captive as long as Mother keeps the family album. She shrewdly chooses which "snapshots" from the Watchtower past JW's are allowed to see. This airbrushed "history" shapes also the Witnesses' self-image as well as their vision of the future. The Watchtower's official "history" might not be fiction but it IS fraudulent. Enough has been omitted to change the picture completely.

The Watchtower strategy for dealing with accusations by "apostates" who discover this cover-up -- especially the date-setting blunders -- is three-faced: 1) For the public, the Humble Face -- "we never claimed to be infallible." 2) For the loyal membership, the Velvet-Glove-Hides-An-Iron-Fist-In-Your-Face -- "we may not be infallible, but you'd better behave as if we are." 3) For the ex-JW, the Scorned Mother Face -- "You told us we're not infallible. You're dead." Orwellian doublethink indeed.

If I saw this farce in a Peter Sellers picture I might laugh. But in real life it hurts too much. Even if Vivian and I didn't believe the Watchtower "gospel" dooms our family and friends (which we do.) Even if all they are losing is the past, present and future of THIS life. The Watchtower's world can endure only while viewed by candlelight. The second the searchlight is thrown on, the illusion evaporates. Like all authoritarian regimes, the Watchtower survives by squashing scrutiny and dissent. We want to tell those we love the Empress has no clothes. She won't deliver in the future just as she never delivered in the past. We want to tell them that their sacrifices -- education, careers, broken families and families never begun -- are totally in vain. There are no lasting rewards for any of it, not in this life, nor in any other. Aren't those who never received promised wages victims of fraud? Haven't they unwittingly become slaves? We believe the Watchtower should and will be brought to the bar for these stolen lives.

--David Aspinall

BIOGRAPHY:

I served the Watchtower from age 20 to 36, 1970 to 1986, Vivian for her first 27 years. At various times we were full time "pioneer" missionaries, working part-time to support ourselves. I served as an elder in the University congregation (Toronto) from 1979 to 1986, resigning my teaching post after becoming convinced the Watchtower was guilty of deceiving its own workers. We were excommunicated in 1988, after turning over (voluntarily) 200 pages of documentation that demonstrated this deception. The official reason for our excommunication was apostasy, although we were never formally charged before our expulsion. Since 1988 we have been completely shunned by loved ones who remain in the Watchtower's grip, including Vivian's family. We now operate APOLOGIA Book Shop, which serves as a financial support to Apologia Home Mission to New Religions. Our mailing address is 18 Reid Dr. Apt. 505, Streetsville, Ontario L5M 2A9. Call (905) 826-2515.
