

The Pedophile at Your Door

by Mike Pence

You would think that in the safety of your own home, if not at church, your children would be safe from the lurid glances, or worse, of pious pedophiles. You would be wrong.

As revealed this week to some ten million viewers of Dateline NBC, Jehovah's Witnesses often spurn the involvement of outsiders, including police, in dealing with reports of child molesters within their congregations. Their secretive internal religious tribunals apply arbitrary rules lifted from Scripture to deal with any transgression, from celebrating a holiday, to smoking a cigarette, to child rape. If there are not two eyewitnesses to an allegation, in the unsurprising event of a denial by the accused, the matter is dropped. The accusers are then admonished to act as if the accused is blameless in God's eyes. Then they are threatened with shunning from the group if they repeat their charges to any fellow member. This, according to the Witnesses, is divine justice in action.

Their untrained lay ministers must adjudicate these cases armed only with Biblical platitudes. Given the Witnesses aversion to higher education, often these men are window washers by day, amateur jurists of child sex abusers by night.

Only sixteen states mandate that clerics report allegations of abuse to secular authorities.

The results of charging unqualified men with meeting a nearly impossible burden of proof for molestation, avoiding outside intervention, then coercing victims into silence are predictably horrific. Critics claim that it creates a virtual pedophile's paradise.

And even those with a known history of child sexual abuse are encouraged to demonstrate their faith, or repentance, by knocking on the doors of their neighbors. Your door, that your children run to answer.

Leadership of the group has acted swiftly to address the problem. They have simultaneously summoned members who co-operated in the filming of the Dateline NBC segment to face judicial committees this month. Three have been disfellowshipped so far, losing family and friends forever to expulsion and shunning.

Jehovah's Witnesses let the firefighter put out their fires, they let the paramedic rescue them from distress, and they let the doctor cure their ills. Why do they not encourage all of their followers to let the police handle matters of violent crime, including child molestation?

The Department of Justice states that between one and five percent of the population are pedophiles. Congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses typically number around one hundred members, sometimes more, sometimes less. Even rounding in their favor that could still amount to a pedophile per congregation, declaring their faith on the thresholds of our homes.

All jurisdictions should join the group of progressive states who have liberated clerics from the burdens of deliberating over criminal allegations of child abuse, and from liability for abrogating ecclesiastical privilege in those cases. Until that happens, there are steps that you can take to prevent Jehovah's Witnesses from invading your privacy, if not your children's safety.

A little-publicized policy of the Witnesses is the maintenance of a do-not-call list for their preaching territories. Object loud enough to their visits, and you are added to their list. They will not be back. Print this article, put it on your refrigerator, and hand it to Jehovah's Witnesses as your own personal request to be added to their do-not-call list the next time that they come by, or mail it to your local Kingdom Hall.

Pedophiles should find safe harbor in no denomination, least of all one that claims exclusive hold of divine favor on the doorsteps of our homes.

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