

Over the time I have been looking into the abuses and atrocities that have been taking place within the FLDS the ones that are the most disturbing, of course, are the crimes against children. The society has been set up and established expressly for the purpose of carrying on the illegal tradition of joining multiple women to a single man for the purposes of conducting sexual interaction between the participating individuals. That is really the long and short of it. The central tenant of the FLDS Church is to keep the archaic concept of polygamy alive, and in order to do that it is necessary to have a disproportionate ratio of female partners available for distribution to its male adherents. The illegal tenant that the FLDS adhere to is the catalyst for all the other illegal activities of the FLDS Church. It's not that polygamy is a horrible crime in and of itself, it's the other crimes that were and are committed in order to cover it up and support it.

The analogy with the Italian Mafia is a great illustration of the same type of organization. The mob was formed during prohibition because there was a segment of the US population that felt that the government was wrong about taking away their right to have a drink. In much the same way, FLDS adherents believe that when laws were passed that made polygamy illegal, they were not going to allow themselves to be governed by a law that didn't suit their desires. In both cases, the original illegal practices of taking multiple wives and taking a drink precipitated all the other illegal actions that both organizations are now infamous for. In the case of the mob, other illegal practices such as the protection rackets, extortion, high level corruption, blackmail, violence, etc., were all practices that came about in order to further the efforts of the perceived right to have a drink. The fact is that the mob had an interest and agenda in doing so (money and power). Identically, so do the FLDS under the direction of Warren Jeffs and other church leaders.

When the mob has a dissident or a threat arise, a typical response is to put out a "hit" on that person and have them eliminated. The FLDS have become a little more sophisticated in their response. Warren has been able to figure out that not only can he eliminate the threat but also leave the perception that the whole thing isn't his doing but is done by a higher authority. He has refined his "hits" to such a fine art that he is able to preserve and obtain all the "deceased's" assets including his wives and children and, most importantly, his daughters and exploit them for his own nefarious purposes. In so doing he is able to skirt due process and not only devastate the family involved but also give the illusion that the victims themselves chose this for themselves. In any statement that illustrates the illegal and devastating actions of the two organizations, the words "Don" and "Prophet" can be interchanged and still not affect the meaning of the illustration.

In a conversation with Reed Braithwaite, an attorney who represented FLDS clients, he told me of a conversation he had with Willie Jessop, an apparent FLDS leader and spokesman. During Reed's conversation with Willie, the topic came up about the increased scrutiny the Church was coming under with respect to underage marriages. Reed told Willie that if he wanted that kind of scrutiny to end that they should just quit doing underage marriages. Willie tried to find some scriptural basis for continuing the practice and Reed persisted that it wouldn't be a big deal to just stop the practice. Then Willie, in a rare moment of candor said, "We can't stop underage marriage. If we do our religion will fall apart. If we don't get to those girls when they're young they will be exposed to the outside world and we'll lose them. We can't afford for that to happen. If it does, our religion will collapse." If people stop drinking, bootleggers would be out of business as well. The really telling part about that statement is the fact that there is an admission by one of the FLDS leaders that this abhorrent practice is not supported by a spiritual belief in God but rather their desire to traffic little girls to facilitate gratifying relationships with men in the Church. If the Church were to crumble, it would negate any argument that could be made about a group of people practicing their sincere religious beliefs. It is the tail wagging the dog. That is, underage marriage is not a necessary part of a bona fide religion; rather, the church is necessary to continue this abhorrent practice under the guise of religious freedom.

As is the case with the mob, Warren and his cronies have taken advantage of the rank and file members of their respective societies and found the same kind of "hook" in order to keep them obedient and submissive. The mob's foundation for obedience is fear coupled with greed and pay offs. The FLDS leadership has obtained an even higher level of obedience by the same fear tactics only on a more primal level. With the mob it is the threat of death or harm to oneself or a family member. With the FLDS it is the same only the fear of death is replaced by deep-seated, profound, almost mystical fear of spiritual death in addition to the fear of being ostracized from the only family and friends they have ever known and exiled into the unknown and wicked gentile world having no idea what the future holds in store for them. In their minds death is preferable to such a fate and indeed has resulted in the premature deaths of scores of people through suicide, substance abuse and ambivalence to the sorrowful situation they have been thrust into. Greed and payoffs come in the form of providing one's daughters for marriage and taking others' daughters in marriage in order to increase one's prestige in the community. It is also manifest in the way the young men of the society are used up and discarded as well.

In general, divorce is one of the very most traumatic circumstances children and families can find themselves involved in. Some experts say it is even more devastating than the death of a loved one. When that kind of trauma occurs within a family, coupled with the absence of due process as a buffer in that agonizing process, the pain, desperation and helplessness felt by the children increases exponentially. One moment they have a set of siblings and parents that have been the source of comfort and stability throughout their existence, and literally within hours, they are forced into a completely foreign household with new siblings and parents and required to call another man father and another women mother.

I have been asked if it was really necessary to include Warren Jeffs on the same wanted list as Osama Bin Laden and other vicious killers. Upon reflection, I have to say, unequivocally yes. In terms of actual body counts, perhaps Bin Laden has taken the lead, but in terms of actual human suffering, Warren Jeffs has earned his place as one of the most vicious, heartless, creators of suffering in human history. However, by being the man standing behind the curtain and pulling the levers and strings, he has made it appear that it is all a benign alternate lifestyle, asserting those involved should be allowed to practice their religion in peace. Thankfully, the curtain is being drawn back and he is being exposed for the three headed monster that he is.

Hopefully the hearings will lead to new laws that will affect families and especially children in positive ways for generations to come. It is time that some of the less responsible and lecherous members of our society are held to the same standard we all are with regard to our country's most valuable treasure: children.

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