

A principle of separation

Wednesday, January 17, 2007

[Letters](#)

MICHAEL McKenna's article ("Court lets sect kids see dad, but not TV", 15/1) reported on a court case involving a member of the Exclusive Brethren. The Brethren does not want to canvass details of the case but we do want to address some of the broader issues raised.

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The Exclusive Brethren is a fundamentalist Christian church which holds to a principle of separation. The principle is based on our understanding of the Bible. This principle does not mean that members are prevented from all contact with the broader community, as your article suggests.

It's true that members of the Exclusive Brethren Church, which is nearly 200 years old, have strong-held views and beliefs which are not widely shared. Those beliefs are honestly held and our members devote themselves to them.

Our Church does not, however, seek to impose those views on others. At all times, including in Family Court cases, we seek to live out our beliefs while also acting in accordance with the law.

Richard Garrett

Warwick Joyce

Graham Lewis

(Senior national representatives of Exclusive Brethren Church)

 22 Comments

Your Comments

Show Oldest | [Newest](#) first Page 1 of 2 1 [2](#) [>](#)

bg (17 January at 02:08 AM)

You just have to put up with hysterical vilification in this country. The convicts of Botany Bay and Sheik Halili would probably be very compatible bedfellows. Why wait to get the facts before rushing to judgement? One of the joys of freedom of speech is listening to the howls of the lynch mob pursuing the latest minority - "not". Fish and chips anyone?

Winstone Robinson of Adelaide (17 January at 03:25 AM)

What a lot of nonsense from the national representatives of the Exclusive Brethren Church. They claim to be a fundamentalist Christian Church when in fact they are a brainwashing and very dangerous paranoid cult. Their history shows the deliberately breaking up of family's, marriages and removal of children, spiritual damage, loss of faith and guilt inflicted on those who try to leave. Ex-members have been ostracised by their family's and have suffered humiliation from other Brethren who have severe all contact with them.

According to an ex-Brethren member: "It was a known thing ever since you were a child that if you ever left you'd go to hell - you'd burn in hell for ever; and that you'd never be able to speak to any of your family or anyone that you'd ever known through childhood in the Brethren ever again. That you'd just be ignored...like you didn't exist."

Leaving the Brethren can produce psychological problems. It is a traumatic event to leave all your love ones, your whole way of thinking behind and be thrust into a society in which you have been brainwashed and taught is evil.

And this is the same secretive, {don't vote} manipulating, deceitful cult who ran a \$500,000 campaign against New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, the NZ Greens and the Greens in Tasmania. They also strongly supported John Howard in the 2004 elections prompting Bob Brown and Christine Milne to call for a senate inquiry into the Exclusive Brethren.

Sadly, Christians cults such as the Brethren are ammunition for atheists to support their arguments that, "all religion is dangerous for society."

Dave Davis of Collingwood (17 January at 07:30 AM)

If the Exclusive Brethren "hold to principles of separation", why do they keep writing into newspapers, and lobbying MPs, and seek taxpayers money for their schools, and run advertisements against homosexuals and the Green Party during federal elections?

Stephen Morgan of Eden's Landing (17 January at 09:03 AM)

You could easily rewrite this letter, just replace Bible with Koran, Exclusive Bretheren with Lakemba Mosque, and The signatories with the name Hilaly, and it would be equally true and equally indefensible. I wonder, however, whether the those who oppose us latte sipping left wing loonies will acknowledge that to be the case...no, I guess not.

Merv. of Brisbane (17 January at 10:44 AM)

I can't see anything wrong with the letter tendered by the Exclusive Brethren trio as published today.

Seems fair and reasonable to me - I've long been bemused at our general society's attitude which makes great play about the sanctity of a mortgage contract with a bank or lending institution (or, for that matter, any signed, witnessed and solemnly sealed deal with anyone) but treats one of life's most important contracts, that of marriage, with a casualness verging on disdain and mild contempt.

If this rabid god-bothering mob, The Exclusive Brethren, can properly and caringly address that huge (and apparently growing) social anomaly of family breakups at a whim good for 'em, I must say.

As to fundamentalism in any of mankind's pursuits - that's a different story - all too often such collective adoption of any ism/s deserves to be feared for they're, sadly, oft indicative of a mania; of a "touch of the sun"; of a driven group's mild authoritarian insanity..

Amazingly, all such human followings never consider that their fanaticism is their "fault" especially when the ism is religious-centric - nope, they, to a man and to a woman will look you in the kisser and tell you, straight out, that it's "God's will" when none, in truth and in reality, has any genuine idea if such an unseen deity (singular or plural) actually exists, or, for that matter, takes even a passing interest in their, many times, bizarre and flowery dedication. Such is the way of the world.

Graeme of Sydney (17 January at 10:44 AM)

Nice to see that there is someone around who can make Sheik Hilali sound progressive.

The Antidote of The Same Is Different (17 January at 10:54 AM)

Richard, Warwick and Graham, nice to hear from you brothers spruiking the obvious eclectic benefits of being a member of the EBC. Oddly enough the KKK was waffling on with very similar points of view to yours, and equally as strange, they suffer from a poor public image as well. Given their are some excellent spin doctors/ PR types out in the, ah, normal community you might want trade a bible for a copy of the yellow pages. In the meanwhile, just a wee question about what you stated above. Just sort of curious about how you get new devotees pounding on your doors to let 'em come and rejoice with you given you don't impose your views on others, yet you seem to shun any questioning of your beliefs in a very robust manner? I am not sure if I am right in this, but on the surface at least, it would appear the only way to be a EBC member is via birthright, which would make not imposing/instilling EBC doctrines into a new born child highly unlikely, even impossible given the removal of freedom of association with non EBC children. Wasn't Hitler playing around with a similar notion of 'superior' by suppressing differing ideas? Strange how some people equate sameness to spiritual bliss.

Googla (17 January at 12:28 PM)

Yes, the Brethren are all lovely and caring ... as long as you never change your views and always strictly subscribe to their creed, in which case they ruthlessly cut people off.

Imagine the pressue you would feel if you started questioning the veracity of their fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible? You can either bite your tongue and tow the line, or be cut off from your family and every friend you had (since they are exclusive) which means you are totally alone. No wonder the families stick together!

Dictators are lovely and benevolent if you slavishly tow the line too.

The Doc of Box Hill (17 January at 12:38 PM)

Hang on a minute! I'm confused.

If the Exclusive Brethren are banned from reading newspapers, then how come they know what is being written about them?

For that matter, if they don't vote, because God apparently chooses our governments, why do they need to interfere? Is God getting it wrong?

aly (17 January at 12:56 PM)

i think i might be missing something here, is this the same group sprouting marriage togetherness here, who broke up this marriage and forbid the wife and children to see or speak to the father because he committed the great sin of having a couple of friends outside the brethren? is this the same group of fanatics our esteemed PM. {who preaches family unity} is courting for their backing in his scrambling for another term in office? i wonder what he has to give them in payback!
fanaticism of any sort be it religious or otherwise is the sign of a very sick group of people.

lala (17 January at 01:23 PM)

It's obvious that not all Exclusive Brethren abide by their own rules - ie no TV, no novels etc.

If they truly believe that members of parliament are God's ministers - why do they spend so much time interfering with elections they have no intention to participate in.

The isolation the Brethren places on their children is tantamount to abuse - they're lucky they Christian! Imagine the response to a Muslim group that enforced strict separation on the basis of their reading of the Koran!

Brett allen of Brisbane (17 January at 01:33 PM)

Yea it is easy to have lower divorce rates when people are brainwashed prisoners. The list of pain and sufferings this obscene cult has inflicted on their their inherents is long. This dangerous cult needs to be shut down. Who are they to cut of children's interaction with the real world. This is child abuse. It is sickening that The Australian allows a platform for these dangerous people.

Merv. of Brisbane (17 January at 01:49 PM)

Dear Googla - rouse at me if you feel inclined - God knows, I make enough spelling mistakes of my own but must you use the term "tow the line"?
No offence, but shouldn't it read "toe the line"?
kind regards. Merv.

Dani of Perth (17 January at 02:02 PM)

Brett Allen,

Who are they to cut of children's interaction with the real world?

Well said. It is a form of child abuse and reminds me of a book I read when I was 10, 'People Might Hear You' by Robin Klein. I thought that was just a frightening novel about cults and sects; apparently it is not only real but government funded.

If it were true that them EB were not ramming their views down other's throats than it would be easy to say 'to each their own'. Unfortunately this is not the case. Their children are being brainwashed, and unlike other children who rebel against their parents doctrine, the unfortunate spawn of EB face complete isolation from all they have ever known coupled with little 'real life' skills.

bg (17 January at 02:23 PM)

I don't know any facts about the "exclusive brethren" but I do detect hysteria. This "cutting children off from the world" I can sympathise with if they don't want them downloading pornos on their phones, watching endless bombings and bashings on TV, being brainwashed into eating all the junkfood etc, the idea has some merit.

This "excommunication" happens in any society including "the office", the personal experiences obviously have some degree of bias.

Never let the facts get in the way of a good story, but what are the facts anyway? Does anyone have some facts to contribute?

Winstone Robinson of Adelaide (17 January at 04:12 PM)

bg: What an arrogant fool you really are. "I don't know any facts about the Exclusive Brethren but I do detect hysteria" says so much about your insight. Cutting children off from the world are cut off from experiencing the wide range of choices the world has to offer. The children of the Brethren are sequestered, insulated and binded body, mind and spirit into a warped spiritual twisted posture. that, many psychiatrists will agree is child abuse.

And further more, this is not excommunication as you confusingly suppose it is. Rather, it is the mental and spiritual abuse perpetrated on those poor individuals who choose to leave the Brethren.

aly (17 January at 04:23 PM)

ummm i'm still tring to work out how this mob know whats been printed about them if newspapers are banned, or maybe it's one rule for the hierachy and another for the poor sods of underlings.

Dani of Perth (17 January at 04:36 PM)

BG, your comments attempt to draw a very long bow.

Many would agree that there are a lot of nasties out there from which children need protection -

dodgy people on the 'net, shite on TV, etc etc.

However, how does this (weak) link give an organisation the right to indoctrinate children, taking away the means by which they can be resilient, and threaten complete expulsion from everything they have ever known if they seek to see what's really outside the window.

As I stated earlier, other children who rebel against their parents indoctrinating beliefs but who have had experience in the real world will at least have some chance of coping if their parents cut them off. How on Earth will the EB offspring do so when their parents cut them off?

It is a similar style of argument ("It's not A so therefore it must be Z") used by those who defend the Mad Mufti's statement. A writer said a few days back that the Sheik weren't so bad because we sexualise our young girls. Arguably true, but what does that have to do with justifying feral cats pouncing on inviting meat? Nothing.

lala (17 January at 05:11 PM)

The isolation has nothing to do with pornos - tertiary education is forbidden, novels are forbidden - anything that teaches their children how to think is forbidden.

bg (17 January at 05:27 PM)

Dani of Perth,

I have really tried to avoid drawing any bow, what I am trying to do is separate the hysteria from facts. Things like one persons trauma are a sample of one. Things like vote rigging are not what makes the brethren exclusive I'm sure (ho, ho, ho.) I'm not an apologist or a critic of the brethren. Just like a silly comment from a silly mufti doesn't convict him of actual rape.

Show Oldest | [Newest](#) first Page 1 of 2 1 [2](#) [>](#)

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First byte	49
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First byte	119
Time to seek Hicks's release	114
First byte	114
Separatist indoctrination	96

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Show [Oldest](#) | Newest first Page 2 of 2 [≤](#) [1](#) [2](#)

Dani of Perth (17 January at 06:25 PM)

Good questions, The Doc (12.38pm).

Ironically, the Brethren preach total separation from 'conduits of evil' such as television, radio ... and internet.

<http://www.theexclusivebrethren.com/>

Do as I say, not as I do.

RICHARD of SYDNEY (17 January at 07:25 PM)

The dictionary defines Theocracy :a form of government by God or God directly or God through a priestly order etc..

I didn't know that Australia was a theocracy .

Show [Oldest](#) | Newest first Page 2 of 2 < [1](#) [2](#)

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First byte	49
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Article

First byte	49
Intervention is maintaining the real incomes of the poor	31
A woman who doesn't want what other women yearn for	24
Hewitt's teeth and tonsils	11
Unmade in Australia	15
Not a viable solution	12
Little time for real jobs	6