“Is Judaism a Cult?”

I go to your website often, and I always learn something new so thank you! I was reading about cults, and by the definition, it would seem that Judaism would be considered a cult. Can this be true?

Hello _____,

Thanks for your letter. I’m sorry it’s taken so long for me to respond. Scholars have not always found it easy to define precisely what is meant by terms like “religion” or “cult.” Thus, there is some dispute about exactly what a cult is and how it should be defined.

In Walter Martin’s classic, The Kingdom of the Cults, he cites with approval Dr. Braden’s definition of cult:

> *By the term cult I mean nothing derogatory to any group so classified. A cult, as I define it, is any religious group which differs significantly in one or more respects as to belief or practice from those religious groups which are regarded as the normative expressions of religion in our total culture.*

Walter Martin then writes, “I may add to this that a cult might also be defined as a group of people gathered about a specific person or person’s misinterpretation of the Bible.”

According to these definitions, then, Judaism would be more appropriately classified as a religion (alongside other religions like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism). And this, I think, is correct. I’ve never read any serious scholar who classified Judaism as a cult. And I personally think it would be a serious mistake to do so.

At any rate, that’s my view.

Shalom in Christ,
Michael Gleghorn

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