

JWRECOVERY

MAGAZINE

Fall 2009

Jehovah's Witnesses
A Cult?

Shunned by
Family

Inside *the*
Watchtower
undercover exclusive

Enabling
Abusers?

A Mother
forced to
choose

Inside!

The Research of Barbara Anderson
& One on One with Don Cameron

THE EVOLUTION OF THE
GOVERNING BODY

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If you are interested in submitting an article or column for an upcoming edition of JWRecovery Magazine we ask that you visit the 'Submit an Article' page on the website and/or send us an email to discuss.

We welcome your feedback. If you have any questions, concerns or general comments we encourage you to send us your thoughts using the Contact form on the website or to email us at info@jwrecovery.org

From the Editor

About the Magazine Project

We are delighted to bring you the first ever online magazine for ex Jehovah's Witnesses!



After many months of collaborative effort across the online ex-JW community, it is my privilege to be able to present the first ever online magazine for doubting, exiting and former Jehovah's Witnesses.

JWRecovery Magazine is a completely free, collaborative journal designed to provide easily accessible information and support assistance to ex Jehovah's Witnesses around the world. It is our hope that the information contained within, in a new alternative format, will be another convenient touch-point for those seeking information and recovery help.

The editing staff and article contributors have come together on a non-profit basis, with no agenda other than to provide recovery assistance for other former Jehovah's Witnesses. We are not an organized group nor professional counselors or therapists. Rather we aim to provide support to our fellows in an informal way by sharing stories, experiences and research.

For those of us who have come together to produce this magazine, it is our pleasure to finally release it to the public and we look forward to many others joining us to contribute to this journal in future issues.

Personally, it's been a delight working with such knowledgeable, skilled and passionate people. We all share the vision of helping others and we hope that vision will continue to be realized as the ex-JW community raises its voices together.

Moxie, Editor
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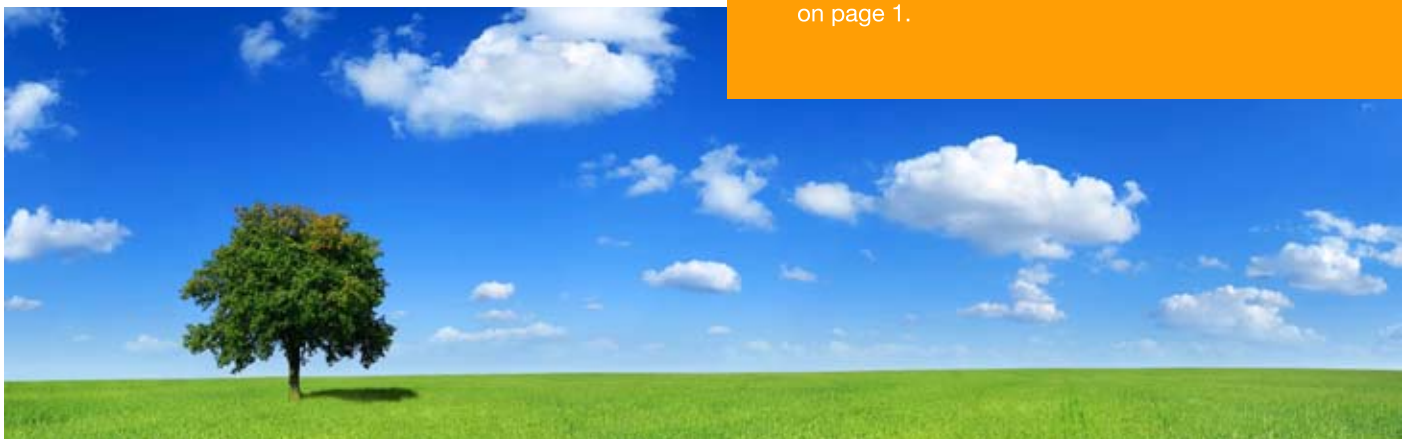


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JWRECOVERY Magazine is made possible by a group of volunteers. This is a non-profit magazine aiming to inform and support former, exiting and doubting Jehovah’s Witnesses. If you have any questions, please find our contact info on page 1.

ASK

Coming this Winter

With Amy Arnao

Ask is a special feature that will be included in future issues of JWRecovery Magazine.

Hosted by Amy Arnao, readers can ask for advice related to their own personal experiences. A selection of questions will then be answered in the next issue.

Amy is a former Jehovah's Witness who chose to accept her son rather than shun him as the Watch Tower dictates (you can read her story in this issue). She's a wonderful and incredibly caring woman who is also currently furthering her post-secondary education.

Please use the 'ASK' form at jwrecovery.org to submit your questions to Amy.



Amy Arnao, host of the upcoming 'ASK' column.

Meet the Staff

JWRECOVERY Editors

TrekkerJW - Associate Editor

TrekkerJW is the associate editor of JWRecovery Magazine. With more than 20 years spent as a Jehovah's Witness and over a decade working in the newspaper industry, TrekkerJW is proud to use his experience to help bring JWRecovery Magazine to life.

Depending on how you look at it, TrekkerJW is a third- or fourth-generation Jehovah's Witness (on his father's side, his father and great-grandparents are/were Jehovah's Witnesses, and on his mother's side, his grandparents became Jehovah's Witnesses nearly 60 years ago). Despite his family's long history with the Watch Tower Society, TrekkerJW always had doubts: Why is there no discussion of topics but only parroting of printed information at congregation meetings? Why are there so many unsourced quotes in Watch Tower publications? Why would a loving god plan to willingly destroy billions of people? Did a stuffed toy Smurf really walk out of a Kingdom Hall?

Thinking he could ignore his concerns, TrekkerJW dedicated his life to the Watch Tower Society and was baptized in 1997 – ignoring who he really was to maintain relationships with family and lifelong friends. He quietly left



the organization in 2004, attending his last meeting in May and his last district convention in June of that year. His immediate family discovered this a year later, leading TrekkerJW to make the most difficult decision of his life: coming out to them as a gay man.

The shunning that immediately ensued led TrekkerJW to seriously question the beliefs he was raised with, and he began researching Jehovah's Witnesses online, soon discovering the Watch Tower Society's 10-year involvement with the United Nations, the fact that Jerusalem was destroyed in 586/587 BC (not 607 BC as Jehovah's Witnesses teach) and the misquotes in the book *Life – How Did it Get Here?* By Evolution or by Creation?

TrekkerJW hopes that JWRecovery Magazine will help a new audience see the truth behind the Watch Tower Society, helping new recruits

Meet the Staff

JWRECOVERY Editors — continued

to steer clear of the organization and encouraging questioning or thinking current members to get the help they need to escape.

Moxie - Editor

Moxie is the founder and editor of JWRecovery Magazine. Raised as a Jehovah's Witness, she left the religion in 1999. Shunned by her former friends and family for the last 10 years, she has dedicated considerable effort toward promoting healing and recovery for former Jehovah's Witnesses around the world.

Moxie is the founder of the website JehovahsWitnessRecovery.com, which includes a popular community forum that helps doubting, exiting and former Jehovah's Witnesses interact with



their peers in a supportive, healing environment. She also runs the blog exJehovahsWitness.net, in which she discusses her own personal experiences and opinions as a former Witness and covers major current news stories concerning the Watch Tower organization.

As a humanist and atheist, Moxie supports a number of organizations that work to advance the causes of reason, science and human rights. She is a registered member of both the Canadian and American Humanist Associations and is a supporter of the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, which helps to spread rational thinking and science education throughout the world. Moxie is passionate about the struggle for women's equality and is a supporter of the Ayan Hirsi Ali (AHA) Foundation, which helps to protect and defend the rights of women in the West against militant Islam through education, outreach and the dissemination of knowledge.

As a web designer and Internet marketing specialist by trade, Moxie also works to support the efforts of other website owners within the exJW community. By applying her expertise in this way, she hopes to help improve the online visibility and reach of information concerning the Watchtower Society

of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Above all, Moxie is passionate about making a difference in the lives of former Jehovah's Witnesses. She is often called on to assist therapists and counselors who are working with patients suffering the aftereffects of the Watch Tower organization. She is determined to use her experiences for the benefit of others. Moxie's personal mission is mirrored in the statement of purpose on JWR, which is to promote positive healing and recovery for former Jehovah's Witnesses. She works as an advocate for those who have chosen to leave the organization and suffer from the extreme shunning that the Watchtower enforces on former members.

It is with great pleasure that Moxie and the editing staff present JWRecovery Magazine, the first publication of its kind. As a community contributed journal, the goal is to provide yet another means for Jehovah's Witnesses to access information and recovery support/assistance.

Moxie continues her outreach work, supporting and leading special projects that further the goal of promoting positive healing and recovery for former Jehovah's Witnesses around the world. ■

SHUNNED BY HIS FAMILY



Photo credit:
Ian Turk, CC
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Why Won't His Family Talk to Him? By Brian Stilson

One of the hardest things to understand is how a parent can shun a child, completely cutting off all meaningful contact, for simply disagreeing about religion. If you have a loved one who was excommunicated from the church, he or she has undoubtedly explained to you at least the end result of being “disfellowshipped” or “disassociated”: shunning. All Jehovah’s Witnesses, even his immediate family, are forbidden to speak with him with very few exceptions. So what’s the story here?

Excommunication was once viewed by the Witnesses as Satanic. However, after new leadership took over at the Watch Tower headquarters in the early 1940s, that opinion was eventually reversed.

I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people — not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with

anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.” — 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, NASB

This was the original list of disfellowshippable offenses used by the Witnesses. This passage is the basis for the disfellowshipping doctrine.

Why Won't His Family Talk to Him?

By Brian Stilson — continued

Since it was instituted in the early 1950s, the list has since grown to include smoking tobacco, receiving a blood transfusion, non-vaginal sex, speaking to a disfellowshipped or disassociated person and criticizing the organization. The Witnesses believe that by expelling and shunning a member who no longer conforms to the code of conduct protects the rest of the congregation from being corrupted by him or her. Not even a word of greeting may be spoken to such a person, as the Sept. 15, 1981, Watchtower explains:

“A simple “Hello” to someone can be the first step that develops into a conversation and maybe even a friendship. Would we want to take that first step with a disfellowshipped person?”

But what about family? Surely there is an exception for disfellowshipped family members, right? There is some exception, but it is unfortunately not without its caveats.

“Cutting off from the Christian congregation does not involve immediate death, so family ties continue. Thus, a man who is disfellowshipped or who disassociates himself may still live at home with his Christian wife and faithful children. ... The situation is different if the disfellowshipped or disassociated one is a relative living outside the immediate family circle and home. It might be possible to have almost no contact at all with the relative. Even if there were some family matters requiring contact, this certainly would be kept to a minimum, in line with the divine principle: “Quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy

person [or guilty of another gross sin], ... not even eating with such a man.” (1 Corinthians 5:11.) Understandably, this may be difficult because of emotions and family ties, such as grandparents' love for their grandchildren. — Watchtower, April 15, 1988, p.27

The message here is clear: have as little contact with expelled family members as possible. As a result, many families have been torn apart by this organization. For many parents and grandparents, having a normal, healthy relationship with their children and grandchildren is simply not permitted.

Naturally, this situation creates a lot of pent-up fear in the membership. Since the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses monopolizes their life, it is most often the case that all of their friends and family relationships are within the organization. For those born into the religion, it is quite literally all they've ever known, and the thought of losing every friend they've ever had, every family member they've ever loved is unbearable.

So is it the case that everyone who commits a “gross sin” is automatically kicked out? No. When a Jehovah's Witness breaks a serious rule, he or she is brought before what is called a “judicial committee”. Made up of three church elders (instead of one minister, priest or bishop, congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses are run by a group of elders appointed by the Watch Tower Society headquarters in Brooklyn, N.Y.), these private trials have no juries, no lawyers present and are not recorded in any way. It is simply the party presumed guilty explaining themselves to the elders. The elders judge the

Why Won't His Family Talk to Him?

By Brian Stilson — continued

level of repentance the accused shows. If they judge that he or she has repented of the sin, then depending on the level of knowledge of the deed in the congregation, the accused is put on “reproof”. A reproofed person has a diminished role in the congregation, but can still maintain friendships and familial bonds. After a prescribed amount of time, the restrictions put on by the reproof are lifted and the person is once again a full member of the congregation.

If the person is deemed not to be repentant — this decision being at the sole discretion of the elders — then he or she is disfellowshipped, or expelled and shunned by the congregation. Furthermore, if someone decides that they no longer wish to be part of the Jehovah’s Witness religion, they can submit a letter to the local elders outlining these wishes. The person is then considered “disassociated”, and the same rules regarding disfellowshipping apply. The end result is quite alarming: there is no honorable way to leave the church. There is no way out without losing one’s friends and family. The psychological issues such an event could bring about in a person is obvious.

Many who are disfellowshipped still believe the teachings of the society, thus being unable to worship God in the way in which they’ve been taught is devastating. They believe that those who are not associated with Jehovah’s Witnesses when Armageddon arrives is doomed to destruction. To go from believing that you will never die to realizing that you will is nothing short of traumatic.

The expelled often find themselves very, very alone after their excommunication. They have no friends, and often no family. On top of this, the Watch Tower organization tells them it is their fault they are being shunned:

“It is the disfellowshipped person who has made

problems for himself and for his relatives.” — Watchtower, Sept. 15, 1981, p.27

The Watch Tower has taken every friend and every family member who was previously in their lives, and it is their fault, they are told. Beaten down by this intense guilt, it is often difficult to integrate into a world one has been taught to hate and fear his entire life. Thus, many true believing ex-Witnesses begin to make compromises. They may become involved in the holidays to a limited extent, but will not get involved with activities that are blatantly involved with the day. For example, cooking a meal is done routinely throughout the year, but hanging Christmas ornaments is specifically for the holiday.

In most cases, the best thing that can be done for an ex-Witness cut off from his family is to find others to fill that void. If your significant other is in this situation, perhaps you could make a greater effort to include him or her in your family events if you don’t already do so. Talking about his or her experience can be quite healing. There are many communities of ex-Jehovah’s Witnesses on the Internet in which one could find support and a place to heal. Having someone to talk to that has experienced the same thing is invaluable to the healing process.

Depending on the situation, efforts can be made to bring the family out of the destructive sect. However, this is rarely if ever successful, and should be approached with extreme caution. Jehovah’s Witnesses are taught and conditioned to handle attempts to get them to leave the church, and more often than not such attempts backfire. An ex-JW must face the possibility that he or she may have lost their JW family for good, and the only recourse is to try to move on as much as possible. ■

I Lost My Heart When I Used My Mind

Special Guest Contributor

It is a road many have traveled, an uncertain path wrought with fear and adversity, yet a journey that for many must be completed or they will never feel at peace. When a person has heart, they may be described as motivated, a leader, a person who draws others to their cause.

Such was the case with I, everything, every fiber of my being was immersed in dedication to a cause I felt was the only sense that could be made of life as we know it in the world we live in. As all humans are given a gift to find or when discovered to use to feel fulfillment in life, so was I given a unique gift I discovered at a young age and that was to teach. I found great satisfaction in being able to impart in creative ways knowledge that would in turn motivate many to expend themselves in what I thought would be the best way of life. So many lives I have touched with a smug satisfaction that over time has evaporated into despair at realizing I was used as a tool to waste the lives of so many.

Somewhere along the way this creative mind I was given began to turn against my heart, my motivation, everything I placed as important in life. How could it do this to me? I fought for years



Every fiber of my being was immersed in dedication to a cause I felt was the only sense that could be made of life as we know it in the world we live in.

to forget, suppress and simply not think of troubling issues, but my mind could not be lobotomized into motivated activity without reason.

It was a battle, a war with all the pain and anguish that destroys the innocence of young boys who go in with a noble cause, then come out forever changed after enduring the results that war produces. Very similar was my battle, not with guns or bullets, but instead, with heart and mind, an internal conflict complete with charging victories and withering surrenders that exhaust the body and torment your soul. Would it ever end? Would I destroy myself before a victory could be found? The only solution I could find was to make a decision, as indecision is what wastes a person's sanity. I must set a time, a limit as to when victory would be declared one way or the other. Whatever the consequences I would accept and move on with my life. I gave it a year, as that year progressed my

mind began to bombard my heart with the heavy artillery of reason.

The harder I tried to work, the heavier the blast of trying to find the reason why. I could feel my heart beginning to concede, my joy, was no more. The very thing, from which I drew the most pleasure, teaching others creatively, became a heavy load that came to the point of feeling physically ill when I approached the platform. I did away with all notes, research and study, it was too painful, and I just spoke from my heart, a heart that was losing the battle, yet would fight courageously like a loyal knight defending the honor of a corrupt king in a cause he knew he could not win.

Finally the battle ended, like the eerie silence that drifts over a war zone at the end of the day, there was no celebration, no party, and no jubilation, and instead a sad realization it was finally over.

I Lost My Heart

When I Used My Mind — continued

My mind had won a hard fought victory with excellent strategy and complete superiority had destroyed the enemy. But this was not the enemy, it was an old friend, something I had dispatched so handily in the heat of battle, now lay before me slowly dying with nothing but pleading in his eyes for me to save him somehow. An old friend who had come through for me so many times, who always had my back when trouble threatened, who picked me up when I was down and kept me going. Even though he was misguided how could I have hurt him so?

I feel I must gently pick him up, take him to a safe place, and carefully nurse him back to health. He must be saved for he is my heart my motivation for finding a cause to fight for. You see even though my mind won the battle, without my heart I lose the war.


It is a long process, much like a wounded soldier, the rehabilitation is a slow and arduous progression. The trust is no longer there, the will to fight, while still a twinkle, quickly gives out when too much is asked. I recall the saying, "sometimes it just takes time to heal." I know I must not give up on it, but feel my heart will never be the same and hope that change will be realized someday as for the better.

Perhaps this story can be a reminder to remember to not lose your heart when you use your mind. ■

—
Anonymous, 2009

silentlambs.org

Protecting
Children
Through
Education



**it's time to protect children.
it's time to stop being a silent lamb.**

Brenda Lee
former Jehovah's Witness and
author of *Out of the Cocoon*
interviewed on the hit TV show
SECRET LIVES OF WOMEN

visit **outofthecocoon.net**





THE DAY THAT CHANGED everything

By: Moxie

After today, the Jehovah's Witnesses wouldn't be interrupting them anymore with messages of Armageddon or gloom and doom.

The year is 1983. Mr. K, a kindly Jehovah's Witness man and his wife knock on the door of a typical middle-class, suburban home. He doesn't know that his return visit is about to ask him not to return, that Mr. B has only been being polite in taking his Watchtower magazines and nothing more. But something else is about to happen. A seemingly small event will trigger a drastic shift that will change the lives of that family forever — even two yet-unborn children. It will be a change that will tear the family apart, cause

desperation and inconsolable sorrow. It was the day that changed everything...

Mr. B was closing the door, sighing inwardly with relief. He'd finally had the courage to ask the Jehovah's Witnesses not to return again. The magazines he'd been accepting for the past several months had only ended in the kindling box for starting fires. He'd not been interested in their preaching but didn't want to be rude; it wasn't his style. In a way, he respected Mr. K, who came to his door week after week. If nothing

else, he was persistent but that too had grown annoying. Mr. B had always been one to root for the underdog and, after all, Mr. K seemed so innocently happy — there on the porch with his wife — and even though he thought they were a bit crazy he'd not wanted to hurt their feelings. But now he was about to get his Saturday mornings back to himself, his wife and his young daughter. After today, the Jehovah's Witnesses wouldn't be interrupting them anymore with messages of Armageddon or gloom and doom.

The Day that Changed Everything

By Moxie — continued

But could he have imagined what was about to happen, as his little girl curiously squirmed her way into the door just before he could close it? Could he have known that this would give them literally the opening they needed? Could he have known that one day he would disown this beloved child and his yet unborn son because this man's religion should tell him so? No, that would have been unthinkable to him, but that was all about to change. It would take years but he too would change — their lives would never be the same.

He was simply perpetuating a lifetime of indoctrination. After all, who could say what he'd had to sacrifice in the name of his religion?

As she wiggled her way through the door frame, glancing up at the strange man and woman, she said, "Daddy, who are you talking to?" And peering up at the strangers she asked in her little voice, "Who are you?"

For a moment, his resolve slackened. He looked down fondly at his child, he couldn't well close the door on them with his little girl in the way. As he bent down to pick her up and finish his job of closing the door, abruptly the man said, "And what are you going to teach your daughter? What answers will you tell her when she asks about life and our purpose? Don't you want to be able to give her real answers? Don't you want to be able to tell her the truth?"

Mr. K. knew this was his last chance to reach Mr. B. He believed that God had given him this opportunity and he must do right by it. Boldly he called a challenge, a duel of theology as it were, and the challenge was this: A debate at their kitchen table in one week. On one

side, the family's Lutheran minister and on the other, Mr. K. and his Watchtower. Then they would see once and for all who had the answers, and what Mr. B. would teach his daughter as she grew.

And so, Mr. K. had his opening, his opportunity, to do what he'd be trained to do all his life. It wasn't his fault, really; there is no doubt he was sincere. No, he was simply perpetuating a lifetime of indoctrination. After all, who could say what he'd had to sacrifice in the name of his religion?

And so Mr. B. thought he had nothing to lose. He couldn't deny that the debate would be interesting and he believed it would give him the chance to finally dismiss the Jehovah's Witnesses gracefully — after his minister made short work of them.

A week later they met. Mr. and Mrs. B. and their minister were grossly unprepared for the Watch Tower warrior they met. A lifetime of training had prepared Mr. K., he was armed and ready with his magazines, books and Watch Tower doctrine. He knew how to overcome objections, and he knew which issues to raise. Of course, the Jehovah's Witnesses have an answer for everything, even though those answers tend to change over time as they are shown to be false. One could almost feel sorry for the Lutheran minister who couldn't dodge or parry the quick citation of scripture and the answer of all of life's big questions as arbitrary as they were. Caught up in the drama of it all, it was Mrs. B. who felt a spiritual awakening. Never had she believed there were answers to these questions. She was hypnotized by the Jehovah's Witnesses. When the Lutheran minister responded once by saying, "Well that's an interesting question..." she was furious. How had they let this man lead them spiritually when he knew so little? She was angry that the minister could be so ignorant, and in the end he was asked to leave. The triumphant Mr. K. then

The Day that Changed Everything

By Moxie — continued

began his work.

I do not remember these events firsthand, rather only as they were related to me, time and time again. For many years I felt a swollen sense of pride that I was the instrument God had used to bring the “truth” to my family. It wouldn’t be until years later that I would come to loathe that day and the childish act of innocent curiosity that allowed Mr. K. one more moment at my father’s door. But I don’t begrudge him; in fact, I have fond memories of him and his wife. They would become like family to me and I remember them still even though I was only very young at the time. I realize that they were victims too, but how would I rue that day, the day that was to ruin our lives. For in the end, no one would find happiness. No one.

It was my mother who at first took a keen interest in the Witnesses. The debate had been a turning point for her and she was easily convinced. She began studying with Mr. and Mrs. K. and though my father was still a little reluctant, he joined in too.

We began attending meetings regularly. I still remember sitting in the old Kingdom Hall trying to be good and remain still. I’d stare at people I found interesting, fiddle and do anything I could to pass the time. It was hard for me but I wanted to be good. I knew how important this was to my parents and somehow it seemed natural. I was too young to recognize how much our lives had changed but I also realized that our family were still outsiders in this new group. The uncanny perception of children is a funny thing. Even as a toddler I remember feeling something like jealousy at some of the other families in the congregation. They were like established royalty and my family were just fledglings. Of course, at the time I couldn’t have understood those words; it’s only in retrospect that I can articulate my feelings then, and now I’m amazed at it.

Our lives took the shape of the typical Jehovah’s Witness routine of studies, meetings and service, and I accepted everything without question. Again, I was simply too young to understand the dramatic change that had taken place. My mother was baptized first and I remember it being a big deal. I didn’t understand then; I just knew that everyone was happy and so I was happy too. At the time, she was enormously pregnant with my little brother.

I wouldn’t know until later that my father had been really struggling with the Witnesses. He wasn’t baptized until several years after my mom and I remember being so proud of him when he finally did. Looking back, I

I was too young to recognize how much our lives had changed but I also realized that our family were still outsiders in this new group. The uncanny perception of children is a funny thing.

realize that was an interesting shift — being ignorantly happy for my mother at her baptism but then feeling something close to condescending pride at my father’s. In only a few short years, it seems I had been caught up in the Watch Tower’s indoctrination too. My dad explained that smoking was his crutch and that’s why he took so long to be baptized; apparently he used to sneak out into the parking lot during the song to have a cigarette. It still makes me laugh to imagine that. But to this day I don’t know what the truth is. Was it just smoking or was it something more? I find it hard to believe that my dad was that weak. Smoking is a hard habit to quit but I’ve always known my father to be a strong, resolute man. I can’t imagine that he would let

The Day that Changed Everything

By Moxie — continued

a habit stand in the way of something he wanted to achieve. He'd overcome so much in life and had more share of tragedy than most of us can imagine, but that is another story. I doubt I'll ever know what his reasons were for sure, only that I believe my father took more convincing than my mom. She is a sweet, emotional being and my father is an intellectual all the way. I believe that in the end he succumbed to pressure of conformity and years of indoctrination. I believe that finally he let himself be moved where the currents led him, finally embracing it and convincing himself it was his own.

By the time my dad was baptized I had two little brothers. Life seemed normal and happy, although I was aware now more than ever that our family still wasn't as established in the congregation as many others. I was relieved that my dad was finally baptized but was still sort of conscious of my friends whose fathers were elders. Looking back, I think it's remarkable that a young child can perceive and be affected by an unspoken class distinction within the congregation. There was nothing that I wanted more than to be accepted among my friends and, too, for my family to be accepted within the congregation. What could be more natural?

Life continued on and school became more difficult for me, not because of the studies but because I had a very hard time fitting in. I was very vocal in defense of being a Jehovah's Witness and even tried to have Bible studies with some of my classmates. This did not win me a popularity prize. The other Witness kids seemed to keep more low key on the topic of religion, and they were more self-assured and even popular. While I was constantly picked on, teased and bullied, they distanced themselves. I was miserable. Outside school we were the best of friends but I was abandoned again on Monday morning. Their on-and-off friendship left me confused, frustrated and unsure of myself.

My younger brother, the middle child, also had a very hard time in school, even more so than me. As much as we didn't really get along, my heart still broke for him when he was bullied. It was just agonizing the way students and even teachers would treat him. They seemed to rally around an oddball and we were nothing if not that in their eyes. All the while, we were praised at home for our martyrdom at school. Life was a roller coaster — on one hand we were loved and admired, and on the other we were despised.

I still remember a little boy named Jesse. I had a crush on him all through elementary school. It was the simplest thing — puppy love — no rhyme or reason. He'd never paid me the slightest attention but he'd never been mean to me, either. Maybe that's why I liked him so much. I would pray for him before I went to sleep, begging over and over again that Jehovah would let me witness to him so that he wouldn't die at Armageddon. A few times, I sobbed myself to sleep, so afraid that he would die. I did try to witness to him at school but he'd just look bewildered and run away to play with his friends.

It seems that around this time I began asking myself questions. Would Jehovah really kill everyone who wasn't a Jehovah's Witness? I'd think of my aunt, whom I loved very much. She was not a Witness and I knew from conversations between her and my parents that she was opposed to the religion. I was desperate for her, afraid that she too would die at Armageddon, and again I turned to prayer and begged that Jehovah would help her see the truth so that she could survive the "end of the system". For her, I would cry myself to sleep more times than I could count.

These thoughts made me feel so desperate and alone. I couldn't make sense of it and it seemed so unfair. Why couldn't Jehovah see what good people there were in the world? There were a million reasons why they

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couldn't understand that the Jehovah's Witnesses had the "truth". Why could God be so cruel and kill them all? I was probably on 10 or 11, and yet for the first time the weight of my "knowledge" was beginning to feel oppressive. Many, many times I wished to myself that I had never known about the Jehovah's Witnesses. If we simply hadn't known or had the opportunity to know the "truth", then Jehovah would just judge our hearts. Then we wouldn't have to live with the terrible knowledge and fear that we did. As a young woman, I longed for ignorance. And it wasn't until many years later that I would come to appreciate the cliché "ignorance is bliss".

The desire to fit in and be accepted drove me forward into my teen years. My father had been appointed a ministerial servant and our family became more and more established in the congregation. I learned that the best way to make my parents proud of me and to make friends in the congregation was to be "more spiritual". But in my heart I always found this a struggle. As hard as I tried, I always felt that I could never do enough or that I was too selfish or that my heart wasn't in it. Despite outward appearances, I feared that I would not survive Armageddon, that Jehovah would know what a wicked person I was in my heart. Sure, I went in service often, even getting pioneer hours before I was baptized, having parts in assemblies, conventions and even the drama. But I admit that I thrived on the praise and

I was still sincere in taking the step to baptism. I hoped beyond hope that it would bring me closer to Jehovah.

admiration that came from those accomplishments. I wondered if it was the gratification I sought, as any human being would do. We want to be thought of well

by others. I wanted to know that my parents were proud of me. I wanted to be an inspiration to others and, of course, everyone wants to be popular.

It was all a double-edged sword, though. The more I did, the more I began to question my own motives. Was I really doing this for Jehovah or was I doing it for me? I had to acknowledge to myself — if no one else — that I reveled in the attention I received, and with that knowledge I became plagued with guilt.

At 17, I was one of the last of my friends to get baptized. My dad was now an elder and I admit that I was afraid of falling behind and being the only one of my peers who hadn't taken the dip. I wanted to make my family proud. At that age too, hormones were raging and there was fierce competition between the young men and women to nab a date/mate. And for a Jehovah's Witness, the desirability and eligibility of a potential boyfriend/girlfriend was all about status in the congregation.

In spite of all that, though, I was still sincere in taking the step to baptism. I hoped beyond hope that it would bring me closer to Jehovah. There was always this elusive concept of "making the truth your own" and having a "personal relationship with Jehovah", but no matter what I tried it seemed that was unattainable for me. Pray as I might, I always felt sinful and wondered if God listened. I always felt alone. I was always afraid.

A month or so after my baptism, I was out in service with one of our congregation's regular pioneers. I was auxiliary pioneering myself, and I was finding it difficult to get my time in. The days were so long and unfulfilling, and downright depressing. The pioneer sister and I were walking down the very steep driveway of the last not-at-home and she said to me, "I'm always afraid that I'm not doing enough for Jehovah. At judgment day will I be able to answer that I've given him

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every moment of every day that I could to his work?” I can’t remember anything else from our conversation but that. I remember the panic rising in my chest. This was a woman who spent nearly every waking hour in service or study and she was afraid that she wasn’t doing enough! I was suddenly very afraid. I thought that if Jehovah would judge me next to someone like her I would never survive Armageddon. For the first time, I felt hopelessness. I felt that no matter what good I might do in Jehovah’s service that at times I had selfish motives. For the first time, I felt way out of my league. I felt like this religion that I had been raised in was suddenly alien to me. I have never felt fear like that before.

Unbeknownst to me, that too was a turning point. I tried to devote myself even more to developing that elusive “personal” relationship with Jehovah. I spent more time in service, was very sincere in my personal study and tried to help out where I could, even filling in, impromptu, in the Theocratic Ministry School. For months, I desperately sought to make the truth my own. But I was never to succeed.

I believed what I had been taught, but I was constantly afraid. I always felt that I was sinful and that Jehovah was not blessing me with his spirit. I felt that my efforts were never good enough, never unselfish enough. I became depressed and then certain events would happen that would change my life forever.

I went to the elders because of my relationship with my boyfriend. What would seem perfectly natural behavior to any normal person left me emotionally torn. Of course, there had been kissing and a little touching but nothing beyond that. I was afraid, though, that this behavior — that my sin — was what was holding me back from a clear conscience and a relationship with Jehovah.

I drove to the Kingdom Hall alone on a Wednesday evening to meet with three elders in a back room. They sat at the front of the room, in three chairs facing me. I sat alone, feeling very small and suddenly very afraid. I came to confess myself to them and to seek their help and counsel, the words of the pioneer woman still ringing in my mind. Although my palms were sweating and my voice was shaky, I was desperate for these men to help me. I expected to confess what I had done, talk to them about my spirituality and ask for their help and advice. I was prepared, even though afraid of any punishment or reprimand I may receive, but to me it was worth it to be able to clear my conscience and move forward.

What happened was not what I expected. The session evolved into nothing more than an inquisition. After first trying to explain why I had come and what I was hoping for the three elders were more interested in ascertaining the specific degree of my sin than in helping me recover from it. Two of the elders I’d known for many years but the other I didn’t know well since he was new to the congregation. One was very dear to me. I’d grown up with his children and he’d been the one who baptized me. Confessing before them was the hardest thing I’d ever had to do. While he was very kind to me, the others insensitively probed deeper for information. I’ve never spoken of this before, but it felt near to rape and so what I’m about to relate is being said for the first time aloud and only for the benefit of others.

These are exact questions that were asked to me — I remember them as if I were watching a video replay: Was the kissing limited to the mouth or were any other body parts kissed? Was the touching over-top or underneath the clothes? Did you ever take off your clothes so that he saw you naked? Did you have oral sex? Does anyone else know about this other than you and your boyfriend?

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I answered all the questions truthfully, even though I was terrified at discussing the subject with these men. I wondered, Has it not been enough that I came to them to confess and seek spiritual healing? Why do they have to root through these filthy details? Why aren't they helping me? I need to talk to them about my spiritual welfare. I'm afraid!

After the elders finished questioning me, they asked if I was repentant. Of course my answer was yes — that was why I came to them. I tried to tell them that I was looking for their help but I was cut off and asked to leave the room for a moment.

After a few minutes, I was asked to return. I sat there as though a jury were about to read a verdict. The elders of my judicial committee had determined that my sin was not too great and that I was repentant. I was advised that I cease my relationship with my boyfriend and since no one else knew about our actions it was decided that I receive private reproof. They read a few scriptures and then told me that my privileges of pioneering and answering at meetings were to be removed for a time. Then I was dismissed and that was that. I walked out into the parking lot alone and sat in my car for a time before I could clear my head enough to drive.

The months went by and I was desperate to find some meaning and healing in what had occurred. I accepted my reproof without question and without grudge but I still longed for someone to talk to to help me spiritually. I remained noticeably silent at all the meetings while putting in more time than ever for personal study.

Then it all began to happen. I was just 18 and had moved out on my own for the first time with another Witness girl who was a friend of mine. I began to see behavior that shocked me beyond anything I could have imagined. My friends, sons and daughters of elders,

ministerial servants and pioneers, people who I'd held in the utmost esteem, were showing their true colors. The only thing that had changed, mind you, was my proximity to them. Now that my world wasn't sheltered by a curfew I saw much more of them. I was horrified. I saw or learned that drinking, drugs, sex and more were

I tried to ask [the Elders] for help but I was cut off and asked to leave the room...

common among my friends. What a goody two shoes I had been! How had this been going on? How could Jehovah let this go on so rampantly and unchecked in his congregation? How could I be treated the way I had been when this was happening everywhere around me? I was devastated. I was disgusted.

I went to my dad and talked to him about what was going on. My intention was not to be a tattletale but I loved these people and didn't want to watch as they threw their lives away. It was a difficult decision to come forward — I felt like I was betraying them but I also felt that maybe Jehovah was testing me.

My dad was very concerned. I told him that I didn't want my friends to know where this information came from if it could be helped but that I cared about them too much to be silent. I had in mind my own spiritual crisis and didn't want to be silently responsible for someone else's. He spoke about it with the elders at their next meeting, and it seemed to be taken seriously. Since it affected people from more than one congregation, a body was appointed to deal with the matter. But what happened next would forever shake my faith in this organization that claims to be led and kept clean directly by God's own Holy Spirit.

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The city overseer's daughter was implicated but a scandal in that family was not to be tolerated. It was all swept under the rug. And the behavior continued and actually intensified. Lies were told and I was scorned. I knew deep down that I cared for their spiritual welfare but I also wanted justice. The hypocrisy was unbelievable. Even my dad was shocked and said that we'd have to leave it in Jehovah's hands.

As months went by, I began to see that hypocrisy was not limited to my little social sphere. I distanced myself from my former friends and began to seek relationships with some of the older sisters in the congregation. But what I saw and learned there would continue to dishearten and disillusion me. Everywhere I looked there were cliques, snobbery, cheating husbands or wives, drug use — the works. It seemed there was no safe place and so I began to isolate myself. I prayed harder than I'd ever prayed before when one day the question finally came to me: What if it's not the "truth"? What if this is no different than any other religion that thinks they're right? For all their high ideals, what if they are no different than people in the world — no less selfish, corrupt or sinful? Though I allowed myself to ask these questions for the first time, I was still afraid. As if two little people whispered from my shoulders, "What if they're right?" and "What if they're wrong?" I simply didn't know anymore.

I still went to meetings, though it became more and more difficult for me. I couldn't stomach the open hypocrisy, which seemed to be all around me. I was no surely no saint but I was trying!

Since I'd moved out, I was in different congregation than my parents. I missed one meeting, then two. No one seemed to notice. I didn't feel any different at first. After a couple of weeks, I let myself ask more questions and this time I gave them serious thought. How did I

know that the Jehovah's Witnesses had the truth? I had always taken it for granted; that was how I was raised. I remembered a lecture from a teacher in high school who, in a study on society and behavior said, "We believe the reality that is presented to us."

Then it all hit me like a ton of bricks. Was this simply the reality I had grown to know? Were the Witnesses any different from, say, the Mormons? I knew at that moment that I needed to find the truth for myself. My parents had the choice to become Jehovah's Witnesses; they had lived and experienced life and something that the Witnesses said had made sense to them. They were able to make it their own because they chose it. I'd never had that opportunity. I became determined to look at my religion with new eyes, pretending I'd never heard it before. I wanted to be converted. I wanted to chose my religion. I wanted to make it my own.

At the time, I saw this as a crisis of faith and believed that this approach would help me become convinced and heal spiritually. I went back to the meetings. With the perspective of an outsider, imagining what it would be like to hear this all for the very first time, I was utterly surprised at what I felt. I began reading the Bible from the beginning, again as if I'd never set eyes on it before. That was the beginning of the end of my faith. The meetings sounded more and more like propaganda. I began to notice the broad claims and unsourced quotes made in the Watchtower.

I remember clearly the last meeting I ever went to. I slipped out after the public talk during the song. I was sick to my stomach. It was like I had had an epiphany. I realized, listening to the brother give the talk, that my high school teacher had been right, that we believe the reality presented to us. I knew in that hour, listening to the public talk, that had I never been raised to believe this religion, I never, ever would have. In that moment,

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I decided that I was through being a Jehovah's Witness. I would honor my values and seek truth but I seriously doubted this was it. Yet I was terrified, terrified of losing my family and friends — but was that a reason to live a life of hypocrisy in a religion I didn't believe?

As I walked out of that Kingdom Hall for the last time, it felt as if I were standing at one of life's great crossroads. If I left now, I knew I left for good. I would not be one of those people who flip-flopped in and out of the religion. I would lose my family. I would have to say goodbye to everyone I'd known and loved my entire life. But by now I'd had enough. I was ready to walk away from the Watch Tower and not look back. I drew inward on strength that I didn't know I had and made myself walk swiftly and surely to the exit. I still remember the sound my feet made on the tiles. It felt

I feel like I was given a new chance at life that day. There was to be much pain and sorrow along that road and yet choosing freedom and integrity has made all the difference.

like I was in a vacuum, my ears ringing, my breaths ragged. When the door closed behind me the fresh air hit me like never before. I was afraid but was committed to my course and felt the lightheartedness of freedom for the first time. I came near to weeping with relief.

Today, one of my favorite poems is by Robert Frost. In the poem he talks about two roads that lay before him and having to choose which one to take. He knew that he'd likely never have this choice to make again and so in the end, he chose the road less traveled. Frost finishes the poem with the words, "and that has made

all the difference." I still get shivers when I read it. To me the road less traveled is the more difficult road; it is uncertain, unknown, it may be dangerous and you'll likely travel it quite alone. But I look back at that day — the day I made my choice — and am relieved beyond words that I made the choice to take the road less traveled. I feel like I was given a new chance at life that day. There was to be much pain and sorrow along that road and yet choosing freedom and integrity has made all the difference.

I got on with my life, making new friends outside the congregation. I moved out from the house I shared with the other Witness girl. I tried my best to fade from the congregation. I didn't want to be disfellowshipped because I knew I would lose my family. But as the months went by, I was making a new start of my life. I began seeing a young man I'd known in high school and eventually we moved in together. As young as we were, he was very understanding of what I was going through and we often talked about religion. I'd put the Watch Tower behind me and was seeking knowledge elsewhere. Then began my comparative study of other religions.

About six months after my last meeting, I received a phone call from one of the elders that had been on my judicial committee about a year earlier. He had learned that I had moved in with a "person of the opposite sex" and wanted me to meet with him and some other elders to discuss my spiritual health. He said they wanted to help me. This time I knew better. I declined.

A few weeks later, I came home from work on a Monday night and my boyfriend told me there was a message for me on the machine. It said, "since you have refused to meet with the elders, it will be announced at the service meeting this Thursday that you are disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation. If you'd like to appeal

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this decision you may call to arrange a meeting before Thursday.” Click.

I listened to it a few times, pressed delete and began to cry. I wasn't sad, I was angry — very, very angry. They couldn't just let me go, let me fade away — they had to pursue me. They were taking my family away.

It was 1999, a Thursday. That day, I lost my parents and two brothers. I lost aunts and uncles and cousins. I chose to leave a religion because I did not believe it. As a result of my choice, my family who are Jehovah's Witnesses shun me. It's what they're taught to do. They will not visit me. They will not meet to have a coffee. They will go out of their way to avoid me. I have not even laid eyes on most of my friends and family since before that day. My brothers practically grew from boys into young men before I'd lay eyes on them again.

My family says I betrayed them, that I chose to leave them. But nothing could be further from the truth! They have cried and yelled and sent guilt-ridden letters. They tell me that I have the power to change it all, and all I have to do is return to the religion and we can be a family again. They say it doesn't matter why I come back as long as I do. What is that if not emotional blackmail? And yet it's not their fault, not really. This is how they've been trained to think. I know it's not who they are, deep down in their hearts.

I've loved them all my life and wanted nothing more than happiness for us all. But in the end, I was true to myself — I would not live a lie, I would not condone hypocrisy. I would not give up my freedom to a religion I believed to be false, and a religion that held my family hostage in such a way. It's an impossible situation. In order to have religious freedom and personal integrity, the religion demands my family as its price. In order to know my family again, I must sacrifice my freedom

to a hypocritical religion. I know they choose not to understand that — they couldn't possibly understand that— yet I ask, how can anyone impose faith and religion as the price of their love? I love them regardless of the beliefs — unconditionally, but their religion has taught them judgment and cruelty, both to themselves as well as others.

My father is now gray and my mother is often ill. I rarely hear their voices and I can't remember the last time I saw them. It's agony. I know it's been the same for them and yet they are the ones with the choice and power over our relationship. My arms have always been open to them. Theirs came with the condition of faith and, in my mind, faith is something you simply cannot

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fake. My youngest brother, while never baptized, has also left the religion. He came to me when they turned him out, and our reunion gave me the most joy I've known in these last 10 years. My other brother is very devout, and I know little more of him. He won't speak to either of us now.

Through all these years I've had my aunt, the one I used to pray for. She's been there for me unconditionally, through thick and thin and all the worry I've put her through. Of anyone I've known or loved in my life, she has taught me what unconditional love is. While I love my mother and will always mourn her, my aunt has been more of a mother to me when I needed one most.

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For that I will always be grateful and she will always have the most special place in my heart.

I don't resent my parents or love them any less. If it's possible, I love them even more. Perhaps I've had enough time and distance to idealize my relationship with them. I love my mother, who is in all other ways a kind, generous and very compassionate woman and I admire my father who I've always believed is one of the most brilliant and interesting men I've ever known.

I miss them every single day. Sometimes the pain is more than I think I can bear. I grieve for the loss of them to a religion that forced them to choose. I'm angry that they made the decision they did. Yet sometimes I wonder if it's really not the best for them now. After all these years, what kind of life would they have if they suffered what I suffered? It took all my strength and most of my 20s to recover this much. Wouldn't it be cruel to put them through that now? And yet its hard not to be selfish and want them to leave the religion. I miss them so much! I know they miss me too. My dad once told me that he keeps my picture in his wallet and cries every time he looks at it. I'm told my brother feels like he's been cheated out of having his sister. I understand he's quite angry at me and sometimes cries. My mother told me that sometimes she pretends I'm dead and gone and that helps her to cope, and when that doesn't work she takes a prescription.

I'm sure that their God is well pleased.

It's been 10 years. I have studied many, many religions. I've read the Bible cover to cover several times. I've reread many of the Watch Tower publications, checking sources and the historical record. I now believe without a shadow of a doubt that the Jehovah's Witnesses are a highly controlled cult group and are not a true or even valid religion. My heart aches for them — for my family

and long-lost friends and the Watch Tower's many other victims. But for all that heartache, there is simply nothing I can do. If any Jehovah's Witness should ever read this account or come across any scrap of critical material, they have been conditioned to regard it as something under Satan's influence. Tell me, what can fight against such a perfect impenetrable shield to logic?

What helps me get by is helping people. When you are faced with an impossible situation, when there is nothing you can do to improve your own situation, what could be more natural than to try to help someone else? This is where I find joy, happiness and fulfillment — in knowing that my experiences can be put to good use for others. To know that you have made even a fraction of a difference in someone else's life, gives you a kind of vicarious joy that you would otherwise never have known. This is where I have found healing. I have had to resign myself to the knowledge that my family will never be the same, that there is simply nothing to be done. Though I let them know that I still love them and am always here if they need me, I know nothing will ever change — things are too far gone. But for others there is still time.

The faces of my family and friends still haunt my mind — memories of childhood and better days long gone. Some days, I'm resigned to the loss of them. Other days I want to fight for them tooth and nail. And sometimes I just cry, recalling that Saturday morning in 1983 when a little girl pushed through the door and asked, "Who are you?"

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Moxie is the Editor of JWRecovery Magazine. She has been disfellowshipped for ten years and dedicates her free time to providing support for former Jehovah's Witnesses. ■

DID JERUSALEM FALL IN 607?



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DID JERUSALEM FALL IN 607 B.C.E.? By Brian Stilson

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society's calculation for 1914 being the end of the "Gentile times" is convoluted and shoddy at best. However, suppose this reasoning is correct. What if the Bible indeed prophesied that there would be 2,520 years from the time that Jerusalem was destroyed and the "last days" began? Counting backward from 1914, 2,520 years brings us to 607 B.C.E. But was Jerusalem destroyed in 607 B.C.E.?

An uncomfortable fact for the Watchtower organization

is that the entire field of archaeology points to 587 B.C.E. as the date, some 20 years later. In response, the society obstinately insists the words of the Bible trump any tangible evidence to the contrary. Never mind the fact that using a book as proof of itself is circular reasoning, but is the organization even following the book in the first place?

In order to convince a Watchtower-following Jehovah's Witness of anything, only two sources may be used: the Bible and Watchtower-

produced literature. So, using only those two sources, I will demonstrate that the date of 607 B.C.E. for Jerusalem's destruction cannot possibly be correct.

Tracing the line of kings

According to the Bible, archaeology and Watchtower literature, the last king of Babylon was Nabonidus. The biblical encyclopedia *Aid to Bible Understanding*, published by the Watchtower society says on page 1195 that Nabonidus is believed to have reigned for 17 years.

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As far as this author knows, no clarification or correction has been made to this statement in any Watchtower literature.

The king before Nabonidus was Labashi-Marduk, a “vicious boy” as the Watchtower publication *Babylon the Great Has Fallen — God’s Kingdom Rules* states on page 184. It also says that his rule only lasted nine months, until “he had his throat cut by an assassin.”

On that same page, it names Nergilassar as the king before that, reigning for four years, and also Evil-Merodach, reigning for two years before that.

Finally, *Insight on the Scriptures*, the successor (although largely identical in content) to *Aid to Bible Understanding*, says that Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon for 43 years (vol. 2 p. 480).

So the line of Babylonian kings from the start of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign can be totaled as follows:

- Nabonidus – 17 years
- Labashi-Marduk – 0.75 years
- Nergilassar – 4 years
- Evil-Merodach – 2 years
- Nebuchadnezzar – 43 years

The sum of the above figures is 66.75 years, which means there were almost 67 years from the start of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign until the fall of Babylon to the Persians. Using this number and the Bible, we can calculate the date of the fall of Jerusalem.

Calculating the fall

According to the Bible, Jerusalem’s destruction took place in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (2 Kings 25:8, 9). Since Nebuchadnezzar had ruled for a full 18 years and was in his 19th, he had a little more than 24 years until his kingship over Babylon ended when Jerusalem was sacked. Let’s see what happens when we start with the date of 607 B.C.E. for Jerusalem’s destruction.

- $607 - 24 = 583$ B.C.E., the end of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign and the start of Evil-Merodach’s
- $583 - 2 = 581$ B.C.E., the end of Evil-Merodach’s reign and the start of Nergilassar’s
- $581 - 4 = 577$ B.C.E., the end of Nergilassar’s reign and the start of Labashi-Marduk’s
- $577 - 9 \text{ months} = 577/576$ B.C.E., the end of Labashi-Marduk’s reign and the start of Nabonidus’s
- $577/576 - 17 = 560/559$ B.C.E., the end of Nabonidus’s reign and the invasion of Babylon by the Persians.

But wait! Something isn’t right here. Does not the society teach that Babylon was overthrown in 539, some 20 years later than our calculation resulted? It does! Since the Jews were sent back to the ruins of Jerusalem two years later, in 537, this is the very basis for the calculation of 70 years, arriving at the date 607 B.C.E.! But there are 20 missing years and no accounting

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for it. Even if the months were fudged (because after all, it is doubtful each king ruled for an exact number of years) it still wouldn't account for the discrepancy.

Just for experiment's sake, let's see what will happen when we start with the secularly-accepted date of 587 B.C.E. for Jerusalem's destruction.

- $587 - 24 = 563$ B.C.E., the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign and the start of Evil-Merodach's
- $563 - 2 = 561$ B.C.E., the end of Evil-Merodach's reign and the start of Nergilassar's
- $561 - 4 = 557$ B.C.E., the end of Nergilassar's reign and the start of Labashi-Marduk's
- $557 - 9 \text{ months} = 557/556$ B.C.E., the end of Labashi-Marduk's reign and the start of Nabonidus's
- $557/556 - 17 = 540/539$ B.C.E., the end of Nabonidus's reign and the invasion of Babylon by the Persians.

When starting from the date accepted nearly unanimously by scholars and archaeologists, the numbers add up perfectly. There is no longer a 20-year discrepancy in the line of Babylonian Kings. But what about the 70-year prophecy? If the Israelites were not captives for 70 years, doesn't that make the Bible wrong?

If that is indeed what the Bible says, then yes, this does make it wrong. However, does the Bible really teach that the Jews were captives for 70 years? It would be helpful to read the verse in question.

“And all this land must become a devastated place, an object of astonishment, and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it must occur that when seventy years have been fulfilled I shall

call to account against the king of Babylon and against that nation,’ is the utterance of Jehovah, ‘their error, even against the land of the Chal-de’ans, and I will make it desolate wastes to time indefinite.” – Jeremiah 25:11, 12

Notice it says nothing about Israel being captive in Babylon, but merely that “these nations” will “serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” Long before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews (among other nations) were paying tribute to Babylon, who had conquered them but allowed them to stay in the city for a while. Also, Jews were often taken captive to Babylon long before the destruction of Jerusalem. Consider the following:

“In the first year of his [Persian king Ahasureus] reigning I myself, Daniel, discerned by the books the number of the years concerning which the word of Jehovah had occurred to Jeremiah the prophet, for fulfilling the devastations of Jerusalem, [namely,] seventy years.” – Daniel 9:2

Notice Daniel refers to the devastations (desolations, ESV), not destruction, of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was attacked and besieged for years before it was destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar's seige took place in 597, and was done because King Jehoiakim ceased paying tribute to Babylon following their defeat in Egypt in 601. So at least before 601 Jerusalem was paying tribute to Babylon. The word used for “devastation” in Hebrew refers to heat, desert, a dry place. These terms can, but do not necessarily refer to the destruction of a city. It is entirely possible that the “devastation” of Jerusalem could have taken place years before its destruction, though admittedly a possibility is not fact.

Taking the number of the entire period of Babylonian kings from Nebuchadnezzar to Nabonidus, and then

DID JERUSALEM FALL IN 607 B.C.E.?

By Brian Stilson — continued

adding the two years after the Persian conquest of Babylon it took to begin rebuilding the temple, we arrive at 69 years, which is awfully close to 70. Since months are only mentioned in the case of Labashi-Marduk's reign, it very well could have been 70 years.

It is clear then, that the date of 587 B.C.E. for Jerusalem's destruction is not necessarily in conflict with the prophecy of 70 years, and it also happens to fit perfectly with the both Biblically and secularly established timeline. In fact, it is one part of the Bible that is amazingly accurate historically. This is not necessarily a surprise, since the oldest copies of Daniel that exist are hundreds of years younger than the events they supposedly foretell. However, it is nevertheless an area where archaeology and the Bible do not disagree.

The reason the Watchtower Society continues to hold on to the 607 date therefore cannot be to fall in accordance with the 70 year prophecy, but instead is being insisted upon because of 1914. This is especially evident when considering the fact that the forerunners of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Bible Students, originally assigned 1914's significance to 1874. It was only years after the events of the World War I that the meaning of 1914 was changed in order to fit with what had transpired.

It is a matter of fact that 1914 was a false prediction. Russell taught that "1914 is not the date for the beginning, but for the end of the time of trouble" (Zion's Watch Tower, July 15, 1894, p.226). Though the Witnesses later lied about the nature of Russell's prediction (Awake!, January 22, 1973, p.8), the facts remain. 1914 was not the end of anything, and certainly not the end of any "time of trouble." ■





Randy Watters, a former Jehovah's Witness and one of the pioneers of ex-JW websites, talks with JWRECOVERY about the evolution of Freeminds.org



On the Web Freeminds.org With Randall Watters

By TrekkerJW

It takes only a quick glance at the Free Minds website to see that it is everything its name implies — a venue for open thought and expression by people of all varieties of spirituality.

“We have bloggers who are Christians, we have bloggers who are atheists, we have a blogger who is gay and God knows what else we will have next,” says Freeminds.org founder Randall Watters. “All I care about is that they are truthful and that we can all get along in spite of our differences of viewpoint, in spite of different world views.”

The Free Minds website is now home to more than a dozen bloggers, links to media stories involving Jehovah's Witnesses and articles about Jehovah's Witness doctrine and history. It grew out of Bethel Ministries, which Watters began in 1982 in an attempt to expose the inaccuracies of Jehovah's Witness teachings. He says that it was a logical progression to develop a website that would host a variety of voices.

“I knew that people searching the Internet wanted the most objective facts that they could find, and often without your opinion or your biases,” he says. “So the

On the Web Freeminds.org With Randall Watters — continued

title for the website, Free Minds, was appropriate, because I did not want to be seen as some bigoted Christian who only showed one side of the picture. ... With the recent reorganization of the site, and a variety of bloggers, this has come full circle to what I intended in the beginning. It was just time.”

Watters began studying The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life with Jehovah’s Witnesses in 1971, and although he appreciated the simple answers to complex questions, he found some teachings hard to reconcile, including thousand-year creative days and the existence of two classes, one with an earthly hope and one with a heavenly hope, with one class partaking of bread and wine, and one not. Prior to becoming a Jehovah’s Witness, he had partaken privately, although he felt no urge drawing him to heaven.

“Once a year I would get a little bread and wine and pray and have my own commune in silence. That’s how important it was to me and how much I realize this was a key part of a Christian’s life.”

He adds that another teaching he found absurd was that of the 144,000 ruling from the heavens, and the

glory given to them by the organization.

“This favoritism did not exist in the New Testament, but I let it go as something that would be worked out later inside the organization...”

Although Watters appreciated the simple answers Jehovah’s Witnesses provided to complex questions, he found some teachings hard to reconcile...

“I experienced a great deal of cognitive dissonance in trying to reconcile this new world view with what I had learned up to that point all my life, and so the dissonance had to be resolved. It was resolved in much the same way as other religious experiences that are subjective — the pressure had driven me to decide on the witnesses as the one true religion. And like many decisions that are life changing, once you make them you will promote them as the way to go, the truth, and do not want to listen to alternatives, as you do not want to experience any more dissonance. So I made it a point not to doubt the organization once I had established this matter, once I had ended the dissonance in my head.”

As with a number of people who have realized that Jehovah’s Witness teachings aren’t all they’re cracked up to be, Watters spent time volunteering at the Watch Tower Society’s world headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, during which he began to experience serious doubts. When other volunteers with 10 or 20 years of service began to be dismissed for simply questioning doctrinal interpretations of scriptures, Watters did some



On the Web Freeminds.org With Randall Watters — continued

research of his own, poring over a century of Watchtower magazines to determine how a Witness knows that he or she is anointed, the validity of the Gentile Times and the issue of two classes of Christians, as well as the

“I experienced a great deal of cognitive dissonance in trying to reconcile this new world view with what I had learned up to that point all my life, and so the dissonance had to be resolved.”

dates and false prophecies the Witnesses had made.

“About this time in late 1979 I realized that this not only was not God’s organization, it did not represent or even resemble the early Christian church at all. This was primarily due to their misunderstanding of the message of the New Testament of salvation by grace, which they called ‘undeserved kindness.’”

As time went by, Watters became tired of the Governing Body’s treatment of anyone who disagreed with them, and he left Bethel, becoming an elder in a congregation in El Segundo, Calif. Six months later, he began attending a local church called Hope Chapel.

“I loved it, and decided to be through with the witnesses since I no longer believed it anyway,” he says.

After breaking away, Watters wrote a tract, What Happened at the World Headquarters of Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Spring of 1980?

“This was the year before Ray Franz wrote his book, Crisis of Conscience, so nobody really knew anything.”

When the pastor of his church found out about the tract, he volunteered to print 10,000 and send them around the world, which led to Watters’ creation of Bethel Ministries in 1982. Watters later became a pastor of the Hope Chapel, but separated Free Minds from that role in 1993, reorganizing it as a non-profit educational organization with no ties to any religious organization or church.

“Basically, after all those years I still love Christ ... but I no longer liked being in the limelight, and it does seem



After nearly 30 years of educating others about Jehovah’s Witnesses, Watters is pleased with the direction Free Minds has taken as it grew from a tract with a small circulation to a website accessible around the world.

On the Web Freeminds.org With Randall Watters — continued

that most people were interested in doctrine and theology and so forth, which I've found rather useless in trying to help a person out of the Watchtower cult. What I wanted to do was to show people the real reason others joined these organizations and how to help them."

After nearly 30 years of educating others about Jehovah's Witnesses, Watters is pleased with the direction Free Minds has taken as it grew from a tract with a small circulation to a website accessible around the world.

"I had no specific issues with any of the leadership or people in the organization — I simply knew it did not represent the Bible..."

"So far this is working very nicely, in spite of objections from the more fundamentalist side of Christianity," says Watters. "We mean no harm to anyone, but our goal is to champion freedom of thought and to expose those who try to stifle thinking

through religious, political or other types of oppression."

Watters says that Free Minds has given his life a motivation, through which he has touched the lives of thousands of people.

"I have helped many of them to have their minds set free from the control of others, and to learn to think in new ways, and to open up new opportunities in their lives for a better future," he says. "For several years I did interventions with Steven Hassan, so I learned a lot about how to specifically get people out of religious cults and that is one of the best things that has happened to me."

Despite the millions of visitors to the Free Minds site, Watters says he has had very few negative responses.

"It's probably because I am not a hateful person or bitter against the Watch Tower. They did not kick me out, I had no specific issues with any of the leadership or people in the organization — I simply knew it did not represent the Bible. I simply knew they were lying and what they wanted was power over other people. That I could not stomach and I will not stomach." ■



"Our goal is to champion freedom of thought and to expose those who try to stifle thinking through religious, political or other types of oppression."



Interview with Don Cameron

Author of *Captives of a Concept* — By Gary Busselman

Gary Busselman: Don, how did you become associated with the Jehonvah’s Witness group?

Don Cameron: Back in the early ’60s I was attracted by the society’s “end of this system of things” message and especially the part about never having to die. That thought was appealing enough to inspire me to want to try to prove to myself that what they said might actually be true. And so I accepted their offer of “a free home Bible study.”

It didn’t take long to become convinced that Jehovah’s Witnesses knew the truth about God. It was what they refer to as “the basic teachings of the Bible” that convinced me. And I sure loved the thought of never having to die. And when the society pointed out everything that was wrong about every other religion it only helped assure me all the more that “there was no place else to go.” From the experiences I have read over the years it seems that my case was not unique.

But when the Governing Body failed to acknowledge their responsibility for building false expectations about

1975, I began to lose confidence in them, so much so that I tried to resign as an elder in 1978. As it turned out, they rejected my offer and deleted me on the grounds of “disloyalty to the society” instead. Since at that time I still believed that the Society was Jehovah’s organization, I felt I was being charged with being disloyal to God himself. That was scary.

I continued to suffer with feelings of guilt and “cognitive dissonance” until 1984 when I read *Crisis of Conscience*. Pages 296 and 297 were just what I needed to snap me out of the above conditions. That was where Ray made his observations that all Witnesses, including the men of the Governing Body, were captives of their God’s organization concept that was in fact the dominant, controlling force in their lives without them realizing it.

He explained that whether the men of the Governing Body realize it or not, “they and they alone are the organization.” And from what Ray explained on page 297 apparently the men of the Governing Body didn’t realize it while he was a member of the body. And from

Interview with Don Cameron

Author of *Captives of a Concept* — continued

what I have read since 1984, they still don't realize it.

It was at that time I began to think of writing the book *Captives of a Concept*. Twenty years later I finished it.

GB: Don, I've appreciated that the book is fair and balanced. How did you keep the tone so calm and objective?

DC: I was influenced by Ray Franz's "fair and balanced" books. He was so calm and objective that my wife said, "I wish he would have punched someone in the nose!" But as you know, he never did. And that fact gives more credibility to everything he has to say. That was a good model for me or anyone else to try to follow.

GB: Isn't *Captives of a Concept* heavily supported by documentation supplied by the Watch Tower Society itself?

DC: Yes. This is because it is the society's own documentation (and interpretation of Matthew 24:45-47) that proves that it has never been "God's organization". And so it isn't necessary to use what I or anyone else has to say in order to prove that it isn't God's organization. It isn't even necessary to use the Bible to prove that it isn't. It is only necessary

to use the Watch Tower Society to prove that the Watch Tower Society is not God's organization.

"I was influenced by Ray Franz's "fair and balanced" books. He was so calm and objective that my wife said, "I wish he would have punched someone in the nose!" "

GB: How did you decide on the format for the book?

DC: I came across an instruction book one time that was formatted that way. It made sure that I was getting the points the writer was trying to make. And it was easy to locate those points when I later looked for them.

GB: How does the book deal with the assumptions Jehovah's Witnesses make in order to willingly follow the Governing Body's suggestions and guidelines?

DC: The primary assumption Jehovah's Witnesses make is that Jesus was so pleased with what the

society had been teaching that in 1919 he gave them the awesome appointment "over all his earthly interests" in fulfillment of Matthew 24:47. The society's claim to being "God's organization" now is based upon having received that appointment then.

The primary mistake Jehovah's Witnesses have made is that they have just taken the Governing Body's word for it. They all failed, even as Ray Franz failed for some 60 years, to carefully make the same examination their Governing Body says Jesus made in order to see if they could have passed an examination that was based on what they had been teaching "down till 1919."

Prior to making such an examination Franz had simply assumed that Jesus would have been very pleased. But after making his own examination in 1979 he changed his mind. Now he says, "It would be an insult to Christ Jesus to say that he selected this organization on the basis of what it was teaching as of 1919."

Peter Gregerson expressed it this way: "There is no possible way that Christ Jesus as a judge could have looked at this information [from 1876 to 1919] and have given the authority that is claimed by the Watch Tower Society." I feel the same way. I suspect you do too.

Interview with Don Cameron

Author of *Captives of a Concept* — continued

The June 15, 2009, *Watchtower* study article “The Faithful Steward and its Governing Body” is based on the assumption that the society is Jehovah’s organization because of receiving that Matthew 24:47 appointment. I try to explain how it works in the chapter “The One Mistake All Jehovah’s Witnesses Have Made.”

GB: Did you write an insider’s view of the traditions, superstitions, and conditioned mind-set of the Witness people in “*Captives of a Concept*”?

It is not possible to force anyone to change... But it may be possible to help some notice the interesting things their [literature] is willing to tell them, and then leave it up to God to enable them to get the sense of what it all means.

DC: I think “conditioned mind-set” is the key to understanding how Jehovah’s Witnesses think and therefore act. Their conditioned mindset is the illusionary concept that “the Society is God’s organization”, that all of God’s direction to mankind comes only through this one “channel of communication.”

They realize that the foundation cornerstone of the Christian religion

is that “Jesus is God’s son.” But they don’t realize that the foundation cornerstone of their religion is that “the society is God’s organization.” For example, the reason they so willingly follow the Governing Body’s suggestions and guidelines is not because they believe that Jesus is God’s son or even that Jehovah is God. But rather it is because they believe the society is God’s organization. I try hard to establish this fact in the book.

GB: How can *Captives of a Concept* be a learning tool for friends and

relatives of the Jehovah’s Witness people?

DC: Hopefully it will help the reader better understand the Witnesses’ “God’s organization” concept way of worship and why it is so difficult for them to let go of it. I have some suggestions that may help some Witnesses begin to teach themselves the truth about their religion. But I emphasize over and over again that according to what

Paul told Timothy something more than evidence is necessary for most Witnesses to be able get the sense of what has happened to them. In a paraphrased version of 2 Timothy 2:23-25, he said:

“A slave of the Lord does not need to fight Jehovah’s Witnesses, but needs to be gentle towards them, instructing them with mildness as perhaps God may give them repentance leading to an accurate knowledge of the truth about the Watch Tower Society and they may come back to their proper senses.”

The following comments come from page 121:

“Although it is good to have evidence that Jehovah’s Witnesses need to know (like that found in Chapter 3) and to be able to present it in a mild and gentle way, whether or not they will be able to get the sense of it ultimately depends on what God does. Notice that it isn’t the evidence that will lead them to an accurate knowledge of the truth about their religion. It is God giving them repentance that will do it. And according to what Paul said previously, it appears that God only gives it to those who “accept the love of the truth.” (2 Thessalonians 2:10,11)

“It is not possible to force anyone

Interview with Don Cameron

Author of Captives of a Concept — continued

to accept that kind of love or to change a Witness who isn't ready to face the truth into one who is. But it may be possible to help some kinds of Witnesses notice some of the interesting things their Proclaimers of Gods Kingdom book is willing to tell them, and then leave it up to God to enable them to get the sense of what it all means."

GB: Where can the book be purchased?

DC: It can be ordered at any bookstore. Amazon.com seems

to be one of the primary places from which the printed version is ordered. The most current printed and e-book download editions can be ordered at Lulu.com. See CaptivesOfaConcept.com. The book is also available in German and Russian.

Gary's post-interview comments:

The tone and the quality of the book Captives of a Concept by Don Cameron can't be beat. It's the best work on the topic in the world.

The book is fair and balanced, heavily supported by documentation supplied by the Watch Tower Society itself. The book is plainly written in a friendly style that takes an objective look at the assumptions Jehovah's Witnesses make in order to willingly follow the Governing Body's suggestions and guidelines.

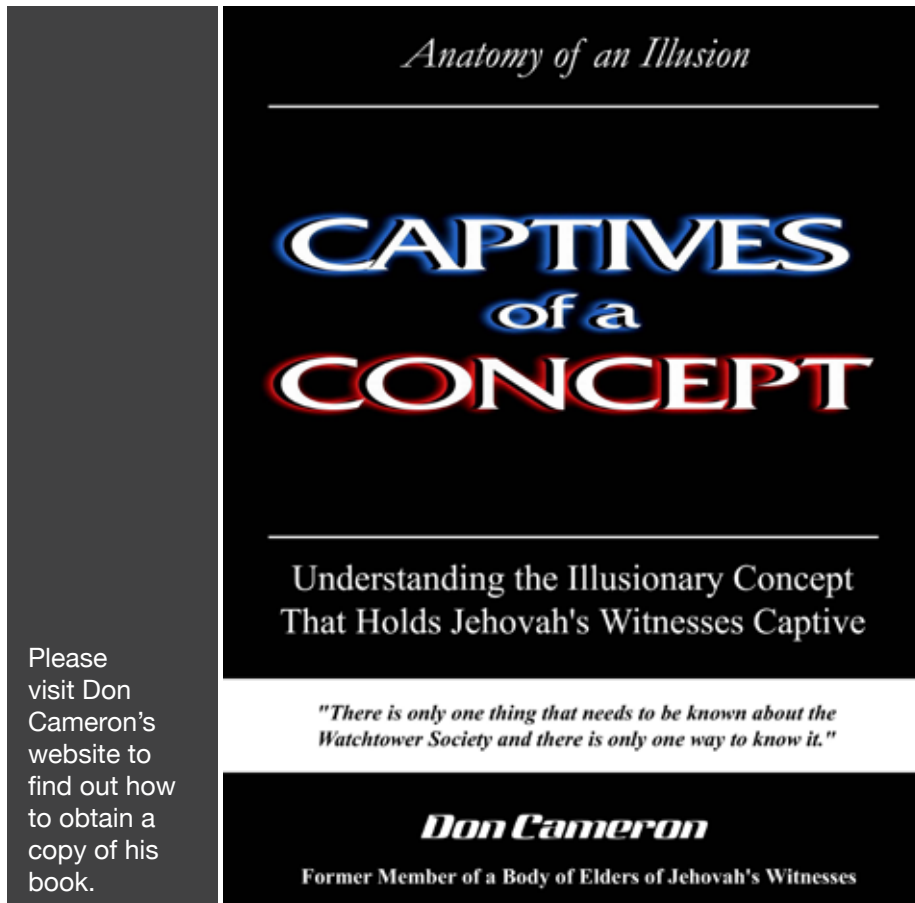
Captives of a Concept is especially valuable to friends and relatives of the Jehovah's Witness people because it offers an insider's view of the traditions, superstitions, and conditioned mind-set of the Witness people.

I endorse the book as a personal favorite of mine and I endorse Don Cameron as a personal favorite author of mine. ■

We wish to Thank Gary Busselman and Don Cameron for allowing JWRecovery Magazine to publish this interview.

Visit Gary Busselman's blog at: www.freeminds.org/blogs/gary-busselman

Visit the website for Captives of a Concept at: www.captivesofaconcept.com



Please visit Don Cameron's website to find out how to obtain a copy of his book.



FORCED TO CHOOSE

He is a 16-year old boy,
bright and articulate. He was
born with the thoughts and
feelings and longings of a
boy, but the anatomy of a girl.
And I am his mother.

A MOTHER FORCED TO CHOOSE

By Amy Arnao

His name is Adrien.

He is a 16-year old boy, stocky, sturdy, bright and articulate, who uses my own brand of humor to disarm me when he needs me to agree with his point of view. He was born with the thoughts and feelings and longings of a boy, but the anatomy of a girl. And I am his mother.

Within the confines of the sect called Jehovah's Witnesses, he is an abomination. He has no right to exist in the manner that could provide him a full and enriched life. And by supporting him and participating fully in activism that will someday secure him rights in this nation whose laws still discriminate against him and others, based on archaic understandings of this niche



Adrien and his mother Amy at the GLSEN Safe Schools Advocacy Summit in Washington DC.

population, I have become a pariah amongst people who at one time had welcomed me and accepted my support and friendship.

My sin? I have chosen to love and support this amazing person, who happens to be my child, in what has to be one of the most difficult life situations anyone could have to face, a reality that I cannot begin to imagine — becoming aware of an irreconcilable dichotomy between one's felt gender and one's physical expression of gender. How could a mother choose to do otherwise?

With many, if not most, religions, there is always an admonition to remain faithful — faithful to the doctrines and dictates delivered from on high, by means of some element of humanity. To deviate from the commands, to walk a path unprescribed is judged in the immediate as unfaithful and worthy of sanction from human agents of the unseen divine, and retribution is assured.

Within the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses, the ongoing practice of shunning, a severe form of excommunication, is practiced, often with intense zeal and a sense of righteousness. It is the expected course, when one chooses to "practice sin" or recant one's former belief in the teachings of

the sect, to be summarily rejected until such time a proper course of reconciliation is deemed fulfilled.

I suppose by the definitions the Witnesses would render, I am indeed practicing sin and I definitely have recanted belief in the teachings that would have me view my son as unnatural and sinful.

It begs the question for me: When is the choice to reject one's own child for a doctrine considered unnatural and sinful? What power is there, in heaven or on Earth, that sees as righteous the deliberate severing of the most elemental of human bonds, that of a child and mother? If there is such a power, it cannot have my allegiance. It shall not have my adoration. It certainly will never have the surrender of my relationship with my child.

In a world filled with pain and suffering, it is unconscionable, in my thinking, to voluntarily participate in creating more, with deliberate acts of misguided piety and unctuous certainty of righteousness. I cannot be that person. I will not be that person. If it is an inherent weakness I have failed to overcome for this brand of righteousness' sake, may I be in trespass with every breath I draw. ■

THE GOVERNING BODY

This is the day for all good men to come to the aid of the party.



The Evolution of the Governing Body

By Lance Goller

Is the term “governing body” unique to Jehovah’s Witnesses? Growing up as a JW, I would have thought so. The Watch Tower Society uses the term so frequently in connection with their work they give that impression. In fact, the Watch Tower Society makes it seem that the term “governing body” was in use in the first century, and that the modern day activity of Jehovah’s Witnesses follows that model (using the search terms “governing body” and “first century”). In this essay, I will demonstrate that the use of the term “governing

body” is a common legal term that in no way is exclusive to JWs. Furthermore, the term “governing body”, being a legal term, cannot be found in scripture. What are the implications for Jehovah’s Witnesses as a result?

Over the summer, I attended a course as a part of my master’s degree program called “Administration of Non-Profit Organizations”. The course included an analysis of the role of the executive director as well as the board of directors of the non-profit. I was amazed

that several terms were used, seemingly interchangeably, to refer to the board of directors, such as “governing board” or “governing body”. Governing body? Yes, I was surprised to see the term, after having been ingrained all my life that the Governing Body referred to the leadership of Jehovah’s Witnesses. It seems that it is actually a common term, a quasi-legal expression, to refer to the group of directors of any nonprofit.

A quick look at Wikipedia confirms that the term governing body has a variety

The Evolution of the Governing Body

By Lance Goller — continued

of uses outside of the JW organization. While Wikipedia does mention the Watch Tower Society as one of the potential uses of the term “governing body”, it also indicates more mainstream definitions, such as the board of directors of a company or school. Thus, just as the Watch Tower Society, as a non-profit, has a legally constituted board of directors that serves as its governing body, so do all other non-profit organizations, including religious ones. Thus, there must be a governing body of Episcopalians, Catholics and Baptists, as well as a governing body of the Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Ford Motor Corporation and so on. In fact, just below the mention of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the next Wikipedia entry is “Governing Body Commission of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness”. So Jehovah’s Witnesses certainly do not have a monopoly on the term.

The Watch Tower Society originally used the term “governing body” in this strict legal sense, and in fact, used the term quite sparingly. As stated in the Watchtower, it was not until “the year 1944 the Watchtower magazine began to speak about the governing body of the Christian congregation (*italics theirs*).” (Watchtower, Dec. 15, 1971, p. 755) Since the 1950s, the term would frequently be used to refer to the first century, making assertions such as, “The apostle Paul belonged to the governing body in the first century” (Watchtower, April 15, 1951, p. 235 par. 7) without citing any scriptural backup. On the other hand, the magazine described the modern day “Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, [as] the governing body of Jehovah’s

Witnesses.” (Watchtower, Jan. 1, 1950, p. 10 par. 2)

The Watch Tower Society admits that the original use of the term “governing body” merely referred to the directors of the Watchtower Society, a legal corporation: “This governing body has through the years been associated with the publishers of the Watchtower magazine and the board of directors of the legal religious corporation now known as Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.” (Watchtower, Dec. 15, 1971, p. 755) The term “legal” was frequently seen in connection with the phrase “governing body” as in this example: “These ‘goods’ (new world interests) have been placed under the jurisdiction of the anointed remnant with its legal governing body operating through the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (*italics mine*).” (Watchtower, April 1, 1953, p. 216 par. 3)

As time has progressed, the Watch Tower Society has made increased use of the term “governing body” in the Watchtower magazine. Note chart #1 (next page).

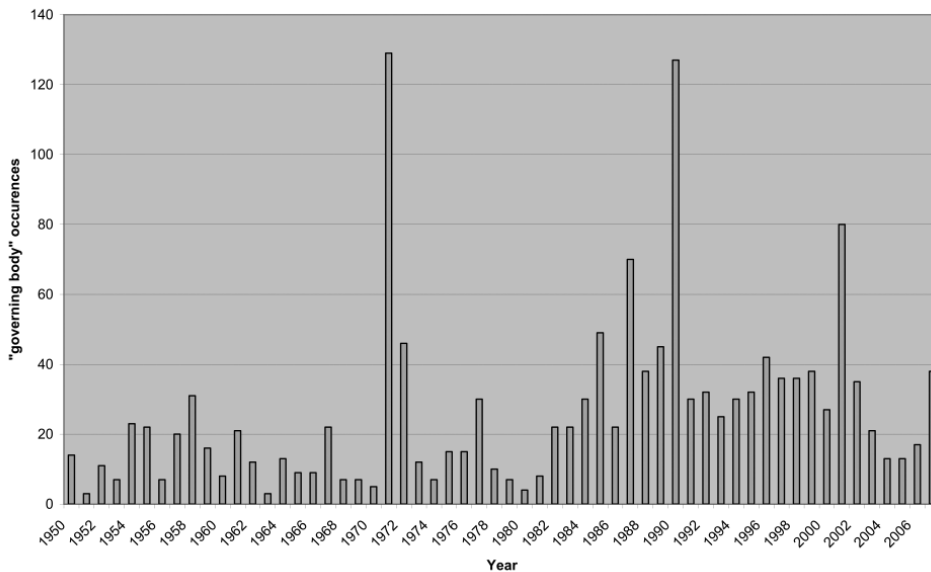
In the 1950s and 1960s, the term was used quite infrequently in the Watchtower, rarely occurring more than 20 times, and frequently meriting only single-digit mentions. However, it can be noted that the use of the term has increased significantly since 1971, when an article appeared in the Watchtower explaining that the “Governing Body” was different from a legal corporation. (Watchtower, Dec. 15, 1971, p. 755) This change caused a power struggle among members of the Governing

The use of the term ‘Governing Body’ has increased significantly since 1971.

The Evolution of the Governing Body

By Lance Goller — continued

Chart #1 Use of the term "governing body" in the Watchtower magazine



Body, as the president and vice-president of the Watch Tower Society wanted to maintain their control of the organization, and did not wish to share their power with the other members of the newly expanded Governing Body. After the fiasco of 1975, however, the Governing Body, which had been expanded since 1971 and included Ray Franz, began to assert its power, and increased mention was made in articles in the late 1970s.

Interestingly, a decline can be seen in the early 1980s. This could be due to the fact that Ray Franz was disfellowshipped in 1981, and the Watch Tower Society did not want to remind its followers that a defection had taken place on the Governing Body. Thus, in 1980 and

1981 the term was rarely used. The memory of the sheep being short-lived, the Watch Tower Society once again in 1982 began to make at least 20 references to the Governing Body each year, with another set of articles in 1990 reasserting the Governing Body's authority and attempting to provide a biblical base for the use of the term. Similar articles have once again appeared in 2008, as the Governing Body fears the growing number of people who question its authority and attempt to squelch the ever-growing amount of information unmasking the Watch Tower Society on the Internet (see chart #2 on the following page).

Overall, as can be seen by the above chart, the Watch Tower Society has increased its use of

the term "governing body" each decade since the 1960s. Given that a series of three articles praising the Governing Body has appeared in the 2008 Watchtower, insisting that Jehovah God and Jesus trust the Governing Body (how they know what Jehovah and Jesus think now is not so clear), the number of occurrences for the decade 2000-2009 will likely be more than the previous decade, and will continue the upward trend.

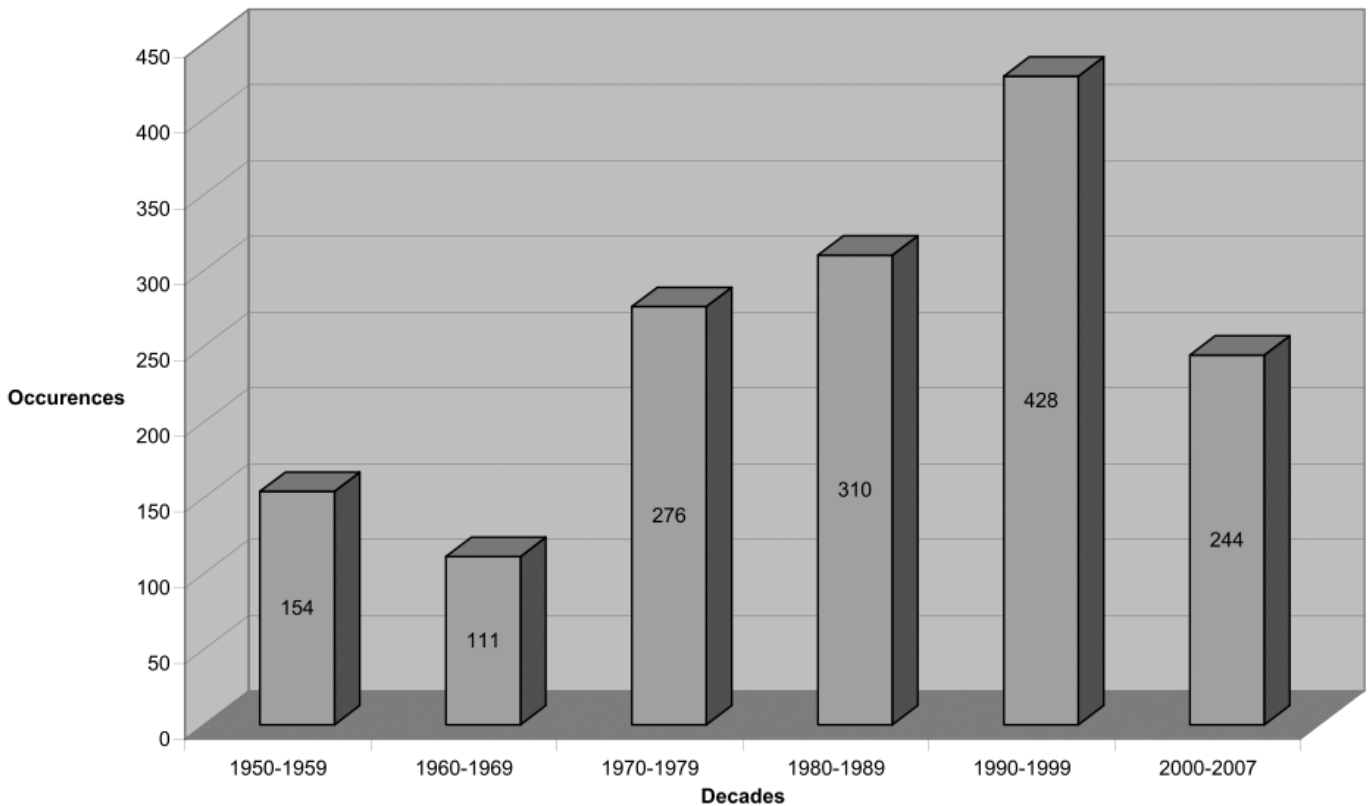
Returning to the subject of the origin of the term "governing body", it is clear that the phrase has a legal origin, even considering the introduction of the term into the Watch Tower's publications. The term "governing body" cannot be found in the Bible at all. The Watch Tower Society use of the term "first-century governing body" is an anachronism, using a modern quasi-legal term to refer to an ancient religious synod. The Bible does not make specific mention of an organized group that directed the actions of all Christians, as can be seen by the Apostle Paul's considerable independence from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. (Acts 16:6-9, 19:21, 22; Galatians 1:17-19)

Thus, the Watch Tower Society's use of the term "governing body" is an adoption of a common modern

The Evolution of the Governing Body

By Lance Goller — continued

Chart #2 Use of the term "governing body" by decade



quasi-legal term. The Watch Tower Society frequently accuses the Catholic church of having made the mistake of incorporating worldly terms into its body of teachings: "Such practices and teachings (such as the trinity or immortality of the soul), Cardinal Newman (a cleric that the Watch Tower Society frequently quotes) claimed, were 'sanctified by their adoption into the Church.'" (Awake, Dec. 22, 1994, p. 20) While the Watch Tower Society criticizes the Catholic church for adopting worldly or pagan customs, the Watch Tower Society

has committed the same error by insisting that the term "governing body" is a biblical term, when it is nothing of the sort. Perhaps the Watch Tower Society feels that the use of the term is "sanctified by its adoption" into the Watch Tower.

While the Watch Tower wanted to claim that this change was theocratic, in order to make the organization better follow the biblical pattern, the fact that they chose the name Governing Body, a legal rather than a biblical term, is typical doublespeak that convinces

the average Jehovah's Witness. However, thinking about the use of the term "governing body" helps people to see that it is just another example of abuse of power, as those in control "lord it over the flock", governing the bodies of the willing masses. ■

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Lance Goller is a former missionary and graduate of the Watch Tower's Gilead School.

BARBARA ANDERSON

Barbara Anderson is a former Bethelite and member of the writing department.



Barbara Anderson's Research Reveals the Truth

An exclusive with JWRecovery. By TrekkerJW

Barbara Anderson's research on the "true" history of Jehovah's Witnesses would fill many volumes. So it hardly comes as a surprise that she spends every spare minute — sometimes more than six hours a day — researching the organization.

It's no surprise to her, either, despite the fact that she spent many years promoting the beliefs, and even volunteering for more than 10 years at the world headquarters in Brooklyn, N.Y.

"Writers should write about

what they know, and I know a lot about the Watch Tower," says Anderson, who lives in Tennessee with her husband, Joe. "I had so much invested in it. I was so heady about it, arrogantly heady, so I'm trying to passionately undo what I did for years. It's very important to me to present the truth — I thought what I was doing was truth."

Spending hours doing research is not a difficult task because every topic leads to another.

"Sometimes when I'm working

on one particular thing, my eyes catch something on the page or across the page that is enlightening. I make a note, and then I go back to it ... and then I follow it through and see how they introduced a new slant on an old teaching. They don't bring in a new teaching, they just slant it differently.

"Every rock you turn over you find a different bug. I don't mean the Watch Tower is a rock; they're sort of a rocklike religion — they've got their heavies, and they're non-thinking like a rock," she says

Barbara Anderson’s Research Reveals the Truth

An exclusive with JWRecovery — continued

with a laugh.

But proper research is about more than simply finding damning tidbits to use against Jehovah’s Witnesses. Anderson makes sure of everything she says before bringing a new item to light, a fact that many readers appreciate.

“Generally speaking, since I try to abide by an ethical approach, the comments and responses are generally very favorable because I don’t come across as having an agenda,” she says. “I don’t have agenda. If the Watch Tower has the truth, then I want it. If I can find positive things to say about them, I do, on a specific subject.

“People are appreciative of it, not because I’m the best writer in world, but because I’m inviting them to share in what I was part of. People are curious about Mecca — and it is like the Mecca of our past religion.”

Anderson became involved with Jehovah’s Witnesses when she was baptized as a teenager in 1954. From June 1982 to December 1992, she served several departments in the Brooklyn Bethel, including the shipping and accounting departments, and later the writing department, where she put her passion for research to good use compiling historical information for the Jehovah’s Witness history tome, Jehovah’s Witnesses: Proclaimers of God’s Kingdom.

Of course, women aren’t usually involved in the writing department, and Anderson’s placement in it didn’t happen overnight. Although she stated on her application that she was allergic to toxic chemicals, Anderson was assigned to

“I had so much invested in it. I was so heady about it, arrogantly heady, so I’m trying to passionately undo what I did for years. It’s very important to me to present the truth...”

tape duplication — which used a variety of chemicals. So Anderson was shuffled over to the shipping department, where, at 42 years of age, she worked for almost a year with much younger men and women.

“I really became mom to those kids,” she recalls. “Our son was actually just a year or two older than most of the young men there at the time.”

She later moved to the engineering department, finally able to put her secular skills to good use.

“I did specialized bookkeeping for construction companies,” Anderson says. “I knew my way around the field.”

Her bookkeeping skills helped her uncover a scheme that explains why many Kingdom Halls built in the 1980s and 1990s have identical chairs.

At the time, construction was being simplified and congregations could pick from five or six hall designs, but they were told to buy their chairs from a specific Canadian company, for which the department’s assistant overseer

Women aren’t usually involved in the writing department, and Anderson’s placement in it didn’t happen overnight

Barbara Anderson's Research Reveals the Truth

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was a commissioned salesperson — a fact Anderson discovered with a quick glance at an invoice.

“He found the company that could provide the chairs and signed up with them as a rep,” said Anderson. “Because he was a rep, for every chair that was purchased, he got two per cent. That man is dead now, but how many

The younger workers felt sorry for her and tried to brighten her day. “They felt so sorry for me that it wouldn’t be unusual for me to find a rose on my little table. It was so sweet!”

chairs have been purchased with him getting two per cent? You know it had to be tens of thousands over the years — until it was discovered, and then it was stopped.”

Anderson became a personal secretary for a Bethel project manager, and became involved in several projects, including the initial development of the Watchtower’s property at Patterson, N.Y., and the remodeling of the Bossert Hotel. Her passion for research was utilized in this role, in which she prepared environmental impact statements and studied city zoning requirements for a projected new 30-story building.

“Since this (Bethel’s Brooklyn location) was a historical area, you couldn’t remodel unless you obeyed the rules,” Anderson says. “If a group was working on the windows, they had to have a new window that looked just like the original window. How do you know what the original window was like? The building could have been built in 1914.

“It got around that I liked to do this kind of thing. When a need came up, I’d get to go and do it. I went to the library or the Long Island Historical Society, which had records going right back to the Revolutionary War — the Battle of Long Island was fought right there where Bethel is.”

When a lull came in Anderson’s job when the city did not approve the construction of a 30-story building on Brooklyn’s waterfront, she was loaned to another department, and spent a month cataloguing the wiring for Bethel’s telephone system — just Anderson, a computer and a rickety chair in a cold room full of wires.

“I could have kicked myself for even asking to be there,” she said with a laugh, adding that the younger workers to whom she became “Mom”, felt sorry for her and tried to brighten her day. “They felt so sorry for me that it wouldn’t be unusual for me to find a rose on my little table. It was so sweet!”

Following another lull and a loan to another department, Anderson’s supervisor received a call from the writing department, which was hoping to utilize Anderson’s research talent for the book that came to be called *Jehovah’s Witnesses: Proclaimers of God’s Kingdom*.

“I went to the interview and there were five women, me and four others, and they were all housekeepers — so I got the job,” Anderson says. “I do think the deck was stacked — I was with housekeepers who couldn’t even type.”

When Anderson’s position became known, she was quickly given access to files that contained some of her best known “discoveries”.

“They say women gossip, but I’m telling you it was the

Barbara Anderson's Research Reveals the Truth

An exclusive with JWRecovery — continued

men who gossiped at Bethel. And that inner group passed the word.”

That led to Anderson being directed to an old cabinet from former president Charles Taze Russell's day, full of card files that linked up with actual files stored in a vault.

“I could spend as much time as I wanted to. There were all kinds of file cabinets in there, and I just started pulling them out.”

In one cabinet, she found the Watchtower Society's first account book from 1881 — but despite that discovery, she still maintained her modesty.

“When that discovery got around in the inner sanctum, my resume really got special,” she recalls. “I was scared to talk about what I was doing. I never told anybody. At the table, when people asked me, ‘What do you do?’ I barely let them know I was in writing because I just thought that this draws too much attention to the person — I was a purist. ... You want to do what Jehovah expects of you — that was our motto — and these were God's spokespeople.”

Anderson's work uncovered some interesting facts about the Watch Tower Society's history, some lost to time, others covered up. For instance, the schism that resulted between Russell and associate Nelson H. Barbour in 1878 wasn't as much over Christ's ransom, as over which man was God's mouthpiece.

“The fight between Russell and Barbour — the Watch Tower keeps talking about over the years that it was all about the ransom. It wasn't; that was secondary. It was over who was the channel. That's what was going on behind the scenes.”

Her research on behalf of the Watch Tower Society turned up another intriguing discovery — one that started her on the path out of the organization.

“Russell was not the man the Watch Tower portrayed him as,” Anderson says. “Russell supplied the information and then later his associates supplied the information for any published material. They didn't tell the history accurately. They were revisionists. The late material on Russell was taken from material that was written 40 years before, and that was written based on 20 years before and 40 years before, and so on, and so it was inaccurate and nobody bothered to check.

“So what surprised me the most was when the Proclaimers book paints him as this man who made his fortune from the haberdashery that his father started, that all of that income was behind Watch Tower and he was such a generous, wonderful man. The true picture

“I was scared to talk about what I was doing. I never told anybody. At the table, when people asked me, ‘What do you do?’ I barely let them know I was in writing because I just thought that this draws too much attention to the person...”

is not that way at all. He was a wheeler-dealer. He was into the stock markets, and he was an oil and real estate speculator.”

He was also an abusive husband, she notes — her conviction solid because her research included reading the cross-examination of Maria Russell during the

Barbara Anderson's Research Reveals the Truth

An exclusive with JWRecovery — continued

couple's divorce proceedings, which paints a far different picture.

"There was one point when she was very ill," Anderson says. "She had a bacterial infection and she was very ill. He was trying to get her to sign a paper that would say that she didn't have any complaints about him. ... He kept her up all night, as ill she was, and he badgered her and badgered her and badgered her. ... That shocked me so much because when I was studying child abuse and domestic abuse for the society, that kind of behavior is psychological abuse. ...

"When I read it, I was so moved that it was the only time in all of this, from the very beginning, that I cried. ... He fit the profile of an abuser. It just blew away everything I ever thought. That probably was the first, most shocking thing."

In 1997, Anderson severed her ties with the organization over the Watch Tower Society's child abuse policies. In the ensuing years, she has since been actively working to increase education about Jehovah's Witness teachings in an attempt to help others see the truth behind the organization.

"I have a passionate personality. ... I'm of that nature that I would like to right injustices," she says.

"People who are in cults generally are of that nature — not the ones who are born in them, the ones who convert to a cult. ... People join cults because they're passionate about justice and a better life, and they want to share it with others and I'm of that nature."

Her son, a former elder who served in Bethel for 16 years before he and his wife left to have children, doesn't share her passion for the cause.

"My son hates it, of course," she says. "He's supportive of the Watch Tower through and through. He said I do a noble work but I should never have gone public with it."

Because of the mandates of the Jehovah's Witnesses teachings, her son is forced to shun her and her husband — a policy that disgusts Anderson.

"Shunning destroys families. If you destroy families in any way, through any other organization anywhere in the world, society would do something about it, but because it's a religion, they can get away with it."

But while she researches the organization, she always remembers that it is driven by men, not God.

"If I live for another 10 years, it'll

probably be a smaller, well-operated organization," Anderson says. "Will it be more spiritual? I don't have any idea. Each bunch of Governing Body members bring in their own administration. ...

"I don't care anyway. They're corrupt, but not financially corrupt — they're ethically corrupt and they don't even know it. And they're mean as could be to do what they're doing to people in the name of God. There's no love. If you pattern yourself after Jesus, you'd never do those things." ■

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Barbara was interviewed for this article by JWR-Editor, TrekkerJW.

Visit Barbara's
website to access
her research and
hundreds of Watch
Tower scans.

Watchtower
documents
• com



IS THE WATCHTOWER **ENABLING ABUSERS**

The story of one woman's experiences; raised in a home where women were treated as second class citizens.

Is the Watch Tower Enabling Abusers?

By: Happy ToB Free

My mother became a Jehovah's Witness when I was three, left my dad for Jehovah and moved us several hundred miles away from him. Her new congregation almost immediately paired her with a young new brother and within the year, they married. He immediately attempted to get me in line with what he thought a young Jehovah's Witness daughter should be. Distancing me from my real dad and forcing me to refer to him as "dad", and my real dad as "my father". My mother was happy to give him the responsibility of financially providing for us, taking care of my discipline, and in becoming the submissive wife; she was becoming how she thought Jehovah wanted her to be.

I remember being perplexed at how my mother would just ignore the situation when he made these demands of me. I quickly learned the rules and learned to stop protesting. I learned not to have a preference and that life was easier to just eat the food I was given even if I didn't like it, I learned to just wear the clothes I was given even if I did not like them, even if they didn't fit without protest. I remember crying while I got my hair cut because I didn't want to have short hair like a boy when I was six but I knew better than to protest, so I just quietly wept while it was being cut and my

mother watched without comment. She never even asking me what was wrong.

"I could have died, most people die when this happens. I still remember the doctor reaming out Jim while he was washing up before my surgery."

According to Jim my stepfather, I was always acting like a baby; I was always standing wrong, sitting wrong, eating wrong, and talking wrong. Sometimes it was my mother's turn to be picked on and he would complain about the meal she worked on all day and made entirely from scratch. It was not what he wanted; it was ten minutes late, it was not as good as it was the last time she made it. Tears only made him stronger. Spanking was his favorite punishment. He never talked to me like a parent; he only dictated the rules and his expectations.

When I was nine years old I remember being sick and having abdominal pains. I told my mom how I felt, stayed home from school for a few days and I really tried to

not act like a baby, so I sucked up the pains and put on a good face. Eventually we discovered my appendix had burst for three days before they brought me to the emergency room. I could have died, most people die when this happens. I still remember the doctor reaming out Jim while he was washing up before my emergency surgery. I did not understand everything he was saying at the time but looking back, I remember him talking about how he was thinking about calling children's protective services and reporting neglect. By the way, my mother was a registered nurse at the time this happened but her opinion did not count and she learned not to push the point when she disagreed to keep the peace.

After my surgery, my life was in



"Her new congregation paired her with a young brother and within the year, they married."

Is the Watch Tower Enabling Abusers? — continued

danger from the infection that spread through my body. The doctor said in three days we would know, live or die. Obviously, I survived and Jim was very nice to me for a couple of months after that. I think he was afraid I would tell my dad the details of what had happened. I did not understand the severity and so I never did. My mother has tremendous guilt to this day about this incident.

As I grew up, I remember dreading when Jim would come home from work. I learned to keep my mouth shut but I never let him break my spirit. I remember telling my mother that I was never going to raise my children like this. I would never forget how it felt. Jim never changed his methods as I grew. My opinions still did not matter. He interfered with everything such as my friends in the Hall. He used his eldership to monitor my friend's families and eventually they learned not to invite me because it was inviting Jim to interfere.



“I learned to keep my mouth shut but I never let him break my spirit”

“Others suspected things were bad at our house but on the surface we looked nice and they chose not to look too closely.”

Jim was an exception and not the rule as far as headship but the headship rules allowed someone like him to become a tyrant and a bully. It enabled him and fueled the fire. It told us that we had no choice but to accept his controlling dysfunction. Jehovah's Witnesses's did not endorse this behavior but they enabled it. Jim was an elder, a leader, an example. Others suspected things were bad at our house but on the surface, we looked nice and they choose not too look closely. We had money, nice vehicles, built a new home, nice things, had parts in assemblies, went to quick builds, and visited Bethel. We really looked the part. However, Jim was the man, the head of the house and he had the power to make it as twisted as he wanted. He also had the power to influence how the elders saw us by being an elder. Jehovah's Witnesses created the situation that allows tyrants like him to flourish. I know my story is not the worst one out there. Others had it worse. Somehow, I managed to get away with my sense of self-intact.

I went to college and earned a degree in early child development because I did not want my children to feel misunderstood as I did. Going to college was one of the best decisions I could have made for myself. I learned about the world and met people who were very different from Witnesses. I was encouraged to express myself, develop interests and become proactive in the world. I learned how one person could make the lives of others better and about the joy you find upon doing so. Going to college helped to bridge the gap between being a Witness and fitting into the world. It gave me options; a voice and a purpose I did not know existed

Is the Watch Tower Enabling Abusers? — continued

and empowered me as a person.

When I first moved in with my now husband, I had this vision of how a woman should be. I thought it was my job to keep the house clean, cook and so on. One day my boyfriend straightened me out. He pointed out that it was not my job. It was silly; we even worked at the same place. Both of us equally contributed, why did I feel that it was only my job to keep up the house and cook? What if I had been with a person who just sat back and let me do everything?

Today I am a teacher, committed to helping others reach their potential in life. My mother is still a Jehovah's Witness, married to another elder after having finally divorced my stepfather after 20 years of marriage. Her new husband is much nicer to her; her former husband is now disfellowshipped. My mother explains that it was Jehovah who finally rooted him out of the congregation. I wonder why a "loving god" would take so long and allow a faithful wife and her three children be treated as second class citizens for almost 20 years. Long enough for their lives to be forever tainted by the whims of an unstable leader in the congregation, allowing him to use the Bible and Watchtower teachings to justify his abuse. Really, I know Jehovah had nothing to do with it. After Jim kicked me out of the house at 19 years old, I managed to give my mother a copy of a book written for victims of domestic abuse. It helped her to identify her toxic marriage and enabled her decision to leave him. ■



"The Jehovah's Witnesses did not endorse his behavior but they did enable it. Jim was an Elder, a leader, an example."



JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES A CULT?

Cult: Any authoritarian group that uses thought reform, coercive persuasion, deception and fear to manipulate and control its members.



BRENDA LEE:

Counter Cult Educator and Author of *Out of the Cocoon:*

A Young Woman's Courageous Flight from the Grip of a Religious Cult"

Most people would agree that the word “cult” is loaded and controversial. The joke is: A cult is any group that doesn’t agree with my particular group’s views. The reality is no cult member ever believes that they are involved in a cult. That revelation only becomes apparent after the member leaves the group and reflects upon his or her experiences with a more balanced 20/20 clarity.

There are also many definitions for the word “cult”; therefore, my opinion of what constitutes a cult

is based upon collective definitions provided by cult experts worldwide:

Any authoritarian group that uses thought reform, coercive persuasion, deception and fear to manipulate and control its members.

Today I teach counter-cult education in Denver, Colo., and I always tell people that it’s far more important to recognize the contents of something rather than relying upon a label. You can take a label off a can of beans and slap on a peach label, but

you still have beans inside. So, if a person objects to the label “cult” because he or she feels it’s derogatory, an objective look at the contents will help the person better understand what they are dealing with. The label “cult” isn’t that important. It would be like an abused girlfriend arguing with police after she has been beaten that she objects to the terminology “battered wife” — semantics.

Now, back to the original question: Are Jehovah’s Witnesses a cult? First, I’d like to acknowledge that

Are Jehovah's Witnesses a Cult?

By Brenda Lee — continued

Jehovah's Witnesses are people with lives and loved ones, just like you and I. They are not merely a label. I know — I used to be one, and I resented when someone called me a "Jehovah". Once I left the group and did a lot of research on thought reform and mind control, however, I realized that Jehovah's Witnesses are being psychologically held hostage within a cult, a cult created in the late 1800s by a single man, Charles Taze Russell. (Russell dubbed his followers the International Bible Students, who later became known as Jehovah's Witnesses, currently run by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in New York.) The invisible chains that bound me as a former Jehovah's Witness were quite real from the ages of nine until 18. I pull no punches

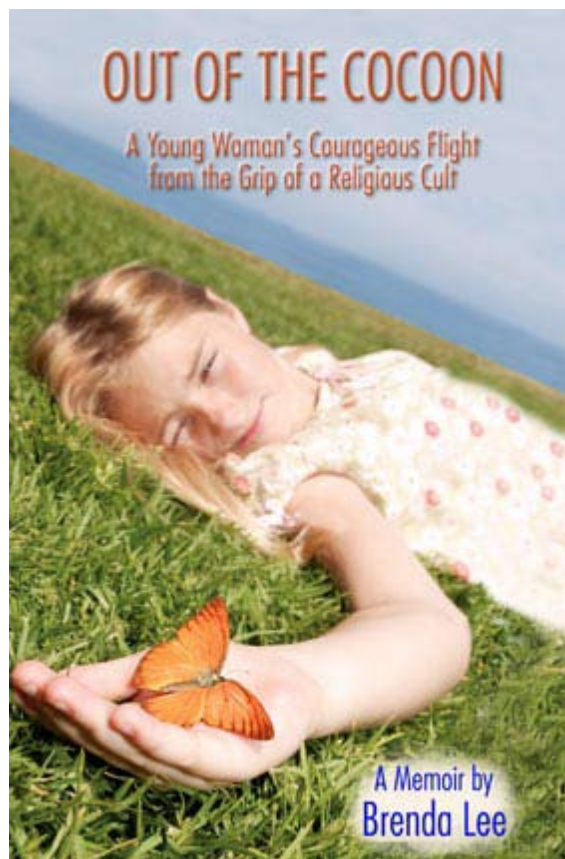
The reality is no cult member ever believes that they are involved in a cult. That revelation only becomes apparent after the member leaves the group and reflects upon his or her...

in my book, *Out of the Cocoon*, when I describe the abuse I experienced as a result of my family's association with this group. For me and millions of others who have left the organization, living as a Jehovah Witness was a highly toxic existence, one that could have easily ended my life.

What typifies a toxic organization or cult's leadership and structure? A good working understanding has been provided by cult expert Dr. Margaret Singer, a professor at the University of California at Berkeley: "In most cases, there is one person, typically the founder at the top. ... Decision making centers in him or her."

Illustrating the structure, Singer says, "Imagine an inverted T. The leader is alone at the top and the followers are all at the bottom." There is little if any accountability and "the overriding philosophy ... is that the ends justify the means, a view that allows [such groups] to establish their own brand of morality, outside normal society bounds."

Jehovah's Witnesses will dismiss Singer's definition citing that their organization is



Brenda Lee graduated with honors from Barnes Business College in Denver, Colorado, after successfully completing business and legal courses. Brenda also produces and edits an internationally distributed newsletter to help former cult members take flight.

Are Jehovah's Witnesses a Cult?

By Brenda Lee — continued

run by a group of men; therefore, the dynamic of a single cult leader does not apply to them. But hold on! The Watchtower organization is controlled by the Governing Body. Note that the term “body” is singular and there is a reason for that. The leadership acts as one voice, directing the lives of millions, just like a single cult leader. There is no accountability (no higher appeal process) and no room for dissension or differing policies within the Governing Body, as Ray Franz, a former Governing Body member who wrote *Crisis of Conscience*, can attest. Coincidentally, Franz was excommunicated in 1980, the same month and year that I left the group.

What specifically would define a group as unsafe or toxic? Unsafe or toxic groups or “cults” typically abuse and exploit their members. Their toxicity bubbles up and surfaces as depletion of members’ finances, demand for free physical labor, child abuse and neglect, medical neglect, sexual abuse and/or psychological, intellectual (i.e., limited critical thinking skills) and emotional ruin. Cults are a danger to us as a society.

To the average person, the Watchtower organization appears benign, but it uses crippling fear to control its members, operating under authoritarian control, with the threat of excommunication and shunning (Franz

Their toxicity bubbles up & surfaces as depletion of members’ finances, demand for free physical labor, child abuse and neglect, medical neglect, sexual abuse and/or psychological, intellectual (i.e., limited critical thinking skills) and emotional ruin.

and I have been shunned by our families and the Jehovah Witness community for the last 29 years). In addition, the religious leaders typically have no accredited pastoral or theological schooling and the members are taught that the directions of God are received by a select few in New York and to disagree with them is to challenge God himself. Questioning what is taught, even if it involves the sexual abuse of a child, can be grounds for excommunication and shunning.

The Watchtower runs, at a minimum, a multi-million-dollar tax-free international corporation utilizing a free sales force and governs nearly every aspect of its 7,000,000 members’ lives. The long-reaching impact of association with them is felt not only by those who subscribe to their teachings but also by extended family members who never attempt to join its ranks. An example of the latter remains vivid in my mind, even today. I remember when my mother sat me down at age nine and told me I could never speak to our relatives again because “Satan might be using them to keep us from learning the truth.” Our disassociation with them clearly impacted their lives, as well as our own, even though they never became Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Here’s what some other experts say about Jehovah’s Witnesses as a cult:

Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements by Dr. Lorne Dawson, professor of religious studies. In referencing the failed 1975 Armageddon prediction by the leadership, Dawson writes: “The responses of the leadership of the Jehovah’s Witnesses to the failure of their 1975 prophecy and the response of the leader of the Ichigen no Miya were similar. ... By a rather bizarre turn of logic, the leaders in each of these cases chose to place their followers in a kind of ‘Catch-22’ by blaming them, after the fact, for having brought on the failure of prophecy by having believed it

Are Jehovah's Witnesses a Cult?

By Brenda Lee — continued

too literally in the first place.” (p. 172)

The Kingdom of the Cults, Chapter 4: Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, by Walter Martin. Martin (deceased) held four earned degrees, having received his doctorate from California Coast University in the field of comparative religions. Author of a dozen books, he was nationally known as the “Bible Answer Man”, host of a popular syndicated radio call-in program which was heard across the country. He was founder and director of the Christian Research Institute, located in Irvine, Calif. On page 11 of his book, Martin quotes Dr. Charles Branden, emeritus professor at Northwestern University: “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 some 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. ... A cult might also be defined as a group of people gathered about a specific person or person's misinterpretation of the Bible. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses are, for the most part, followers of the interpretations of Charles T. Russell and J. F. Rutherford.” After listing other American religions that he considers cults, he comments, “From a theological viewpoint, the cults contain many major deviations from historic Christianity. Yet paradoxically, they continue to insist that they are entitled to be classified as Christians.”

When Cultists Ask by Norman L. Geisler (PhD, Loyola University of Chicago). Geisler is president of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, N.C. He has published countless articles in academic journals and is the author of more than fifty books. His book includes Jehovah's Witnesses as a cult.

About the time the members adopted their new

TIME magazine printed an article called, “California Cults” dated March 31, 1930, wherein they discuss the Watchtower's then president, “Judge” Joseph Rutherford, and his lavish living arrangements during a time when the rest of the country was experiencing a great depression.

name, Jehovah's Witnesses, Time magazine printed an article called, “California Cults”, dated March 31, 1930, wherein they discuss the Watchtower's then-president, “Judge” Joseph Rutherford, and his lavish living arrangements during a time when the rest of the country was experiencing a great depression.

In a cult, it's easy to get in and hard to get out without feeling the residual effects of a lifetime of damage. Cults, insidious and methodical, seemingly inject a poison into the member that dissolves away the person that friends and family once knew.

Fortunately, it's never too late to leave a toxic organization and get healthy. There are hundreds of recovery websites on the Internet for “survivors” of cults. Many of these are listed in the links section of my website, and I personally answer every e-mail I receive to ensure that people receive the help and resources they need. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need assistance finding your way out of the cocoon. ■

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For more information, visit Brenda Lee's website at: www.outofthecocoon.net

UNDERCOVER

INSIDE THE WATCHTOWER

SPECIAL FEATURE



AWAKE IN THE WATCHTOWER, PART 1

An insider's look at the
Organization...

Awake in the Watchtower, Part 1

by, Kay Morris

My name is Kay, I'm 33 years old and I am a Jehovah's Witness — well, technically anyway. I am part of the growing number of JW's that some like to refer to as the "conscious class".

I was raised as a Jehovah's Witness in a zealous household. My father was an elder; my brothers are now elders and all of them have served at Bethel. We were the kind of family that was always on the assembly platform and held up as an example (yeah, one of those families). Although I had the usual teenage thoughts of rebellion, I left school in the early 1990s, took a part-time job and pioneered (Armageddon was so close by now that it was foolhardy to consider buying green bananas, much less go to college).

A few short years later we received "new light" on the "generation of 1914". Although I was busy with boyfriends and life plans at the time, I secretly felt a little cheated and foolish. I had stood on many a doorstep and sincerely shown to people why this system could not last more than a few short years because the generation of 1914 would soon pass away. For the first time, I contemplated the real possibility of living out my adult life in this system.

I met a brother (that sounds so weird — who wants to marry their brother?) and we got married. My husband was from a divided household and had quite a different outlook to mine, which challenged me, in a good way. In many respects, his upbringing was more balanced than mine, having at least one parent "in the world". We put off having children — Armageddon had to be so close. A few years passed and we saw our opportunity to have a family slipping by. I didn't want to find myself aging in this system having missed the boat, so to speak, so we chose to start a family.

Having children shifts your perspective and also gives

you little time for listening at congregation meetings! In hindsight, I think this lessened the influence of "the truth" on my mental processes. Ironically, it was during an effort to do more study as the children got a little older that the bomb dropped that shook my world. As part of my meeting preparation I Googled "Jerusalem 607" — to my surprise, I could not find any references from Wikipedia or other such sites. The only links appearing were Witness related; fearing I would stumble upon apostate material, I avoided further research but was deeply troubled. I managed to establish that the general consensus was that Jerusalem was destroyed in 586/587 BC.

We put off having children— Armageddon had to be so close. A few years passed and we saw our opportunity to have a family slipping by.

Eventually my curiosity got the better of me and I ventured onto a much feared "apostate forum". My heart was racing and I was convinced (although I now realize how ridiculous this is) that I would come under some sort of demon attack! As I read, I felt angry and scared. I had always thought of apostates as bitter individuals who couldn't meet Jehovah's standards and made up lies about us. Now I realized that the truth was on their side whilst "the truth" I had grown up with was anything but.

I read avidly for a few weeks, then plucked up the courage to order a book I had seen being discussed and recommended. It was *Combating Cult Mind Control* by Steve Hassan and I was completely blown away by it. I managed to do most of my reading at work and

Awake in the Watchtower, Part 1

by, Kay Morris — continued

struggled with how to broach the subject with my husband. I decided to seek professional counseling to help me work through my anger and fear.

One evening I sat down with him, and I was physically shaking. We have a good relationship and have generally communicated well during our 13 years of marriage. This was the hardest thing I had ever done. I read some excerpts from Hassan's book and asked if any of it sounded familiar. We had a discussion that went on for hours, way into the night. When we finally went to bed, he was sobbing in his sleep and shouting my name out. I realized what I was up against — the Watch Tower reaches deep into the heart of a person and holds their soul hostage. During the following weeks, we had many emotionally charged conversations, and my husband kept repeating the same “thought stopping” phrases which I recognized from Hassan's book. Amongst them were “It has to be God's organization” and “I refuse to believe God has no purpose.” He confessed that he wanted to throw Hassan's book in the fire.

Once you have exposed the cult-like behaviors and fallacies of the Watch Tower's teachings, it's hard not to see them. After a few months, we were able to discuss things more rationally and objectively.

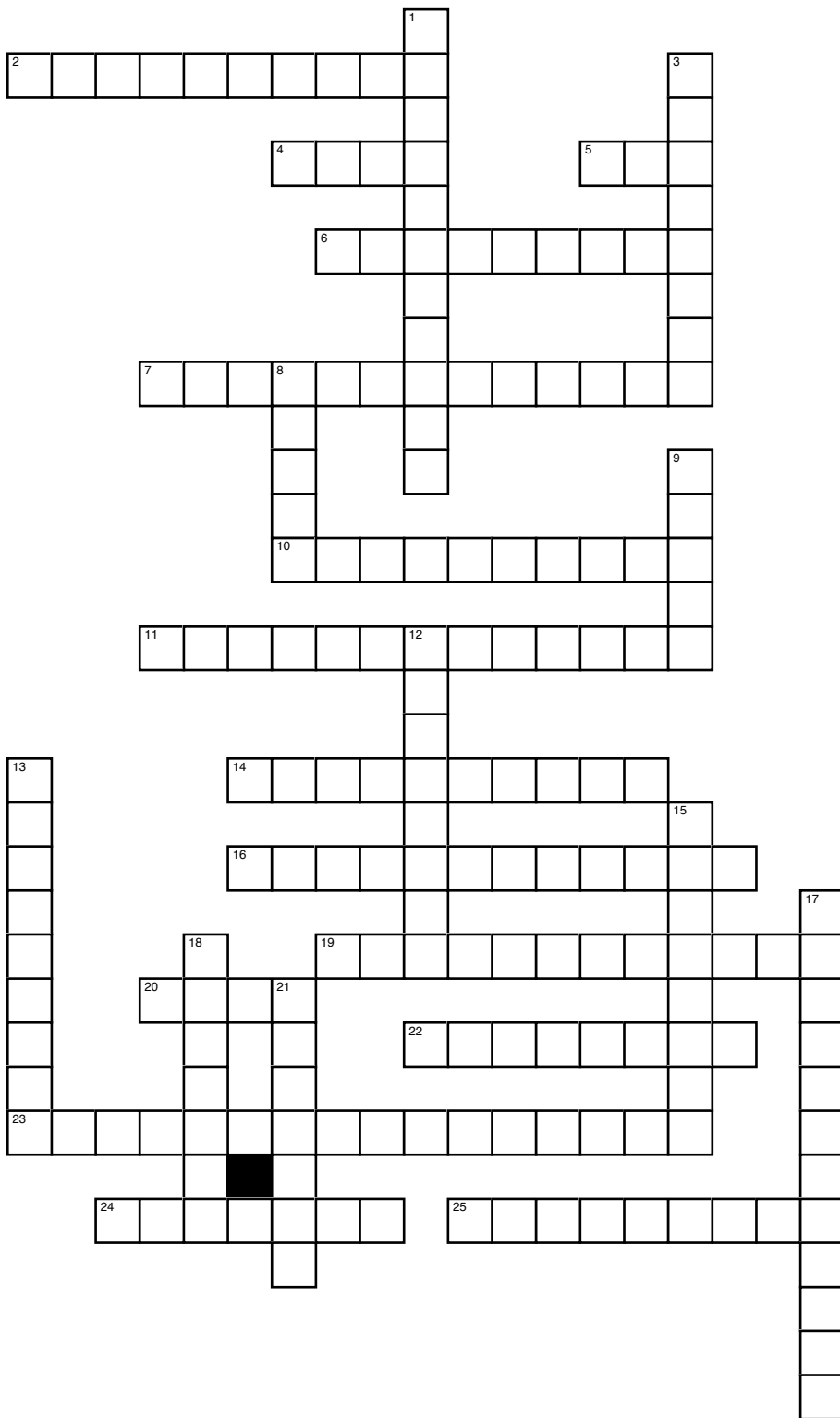
We both became tired of the fight and decided to call a mutual unspoken truce. I continued to attend the meetings with my husband (albeit irregularly) and tried to let him see it for himself. Once you have exposed the cult-like behaviors and fallacies of the Watch Tower's teachings, it's hard not to see them. After a few

months, we were able to discuss things more rationally and objectively, and I realized that the book that would really help my husband, if I could get him to read it, was *Captives of a Concept* by Don Cameron. I had bought the book myself and was impressed by the clear, concise and yet brief way it refuted the Watch Tower's claim to be “God's chosen organization”. Eventually his phobia of apostate material dissipated sufficiently to allow him to read the book. He admitted it made some valid points.

Being an avid reader, I had bought and read a number of books, both by ex-witnesses and psychologists. *Crisis of Conscience* by Ray Franz had confirmed to me that the organization was as corrupt and misguided at the top as it was on the congregation level (something that had always been painfully obvious to me as an elder's daughter). I knew that if my husband read Ray's book, he would be deeply affected by it. Over a period of a few months, he read it a bit at a time, then seemed to spend some time reflecting upon it. I let him approach me to talk, and all the time we were still attending meetings. Today, around a year after our first discussion, he is fully cognizant of the organization's cult like mode of operation and is fully able to think for himself.

We are both still Jehovah's Witnesses. There are many others in the same position. Why? I'll answer that question in my next installment. ■

—
By, Kay Morris



JWRECOVERY Crossword

Across

- 2. The real authority for the Witnesses.
- 4. What they do to a disfellowshipped person.
- 5. The _____ is just around the corner.
- 6. Convention attendees.
- 7. The group of men who run the show. (2 words)
- 10. 2nd President (last name)
- 11. Holier-than-thou
- 14. The red book.
- 16. Author of Crisis of Conscience (2 words)
- 19. To voluntarily resign.
- 20. Monthly _____ sheet.
- 22. A former member who rejects the Watchtower Organization.
- 23. Excommunicated.
- 24. Shape of Russell's grave.
- 25. The manner of Christ's return.

Down

- 1. The New World _____.
- 3. The way women are told to dress.
- 8. Not a priest, an _____.
- 9. Bad Apostle.
- 12. _____ now living will never die
- 13. A second hand book from a garage sale may be _____.
- 15. Only 144,000.
- 17. What a woman wears if giving a man's talk.
- 18. Regular _____.
- 21. The bread a wine.

ANSWERS will appear in the next issue of JWRECOVERY Magazine, coming in December of 2009.

Ex Jehovah's Witness Resources

Support Web Sites

Jehovah's Witness Recovery

Mission: To Promote a positive community environment for healing & recovery. The site includes a community forum, blog, social network and more.

www.jehovahswitnessrecovery.com

FreeMinds

Educating the public & providing an online support network where everyone is welcome.

www.freeminds.org

Silent Lambs

Providing assistance to victims who have been molested as children & silenced from speaking out or seeking proper assistance as directed by religious authority.

www.silentlambs.org

Watchtower Documents

Featuring the research & discoveries of Barbara Anderson, a former Bethel insider & member of the Watchtower's Writing Department.

www.watchtowerdocuments.com

Watchtower Comments

Providing a high quality video series called, "Comments You Will Not Hear at the Watchtower Study". All videos are available for high-quality download at no charge or restriction.

www.watchtowercomments.com

Jehovah's Witness Discussion Forum

The place to discuss anything relating to Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society... or just make new friends!

www.jehovahs-witness.net

Watchtower Letters

Featuring letters sent to and received from the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society.

www.watchtowerletters.com

JW Files

Provides access to information and research on the Watchtower Organization.

www.jwfiles.com

JW Facts

Provides documented evidence including: significant errors and changes in doctrine; misquotes of secular sources and misrepresentation of history, and; doctrine which is not based on the Bible.

www.jwfacts.com

Out of the Cocoon

Author's web site: Out of the Cocoon is a book written by a former Jehovah's witness and details a young woman's courageous flight from the grip of a religious cult.

www.outofthecocoon.net

Conversations with an ex Jehovah's Witness

The diaries and musings of a woman who was raised as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, left the faith at eighteen and lives as a disfellowshipped adult, shunned by her family.

Editor's Personal Blog

www.exjehovahswitness.net

Jehovah's Witness Support Forum

A website discussion forum for former Jehovah's Witnesses.

www.jwsupportforum.com

The Ross Institute

An Internet archive of information about cults, destructive cults, controversial groups and movements.

www.rickross.com

International Cultic Studies Association

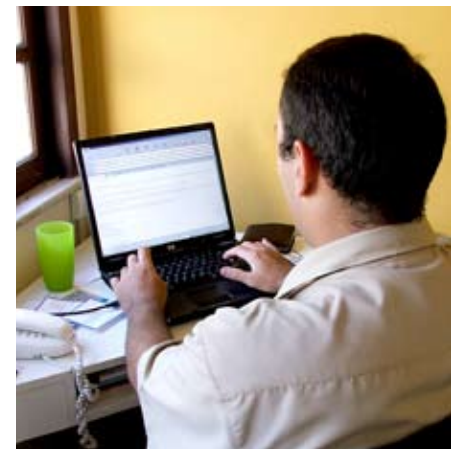
the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) is a global network of people concerned about psychological manipulation and abuse in cultic groups, alternative movements, and other environments.

www.icsahome.com

Freedom of Mind Centre

Steven Alan Hassan, cult counselor and mind control expert, is the Nationally Certified Counselor and licensed Mental Health Counselor who has developed the breakthrough approach to help loved ones rescue cult mind control victims.

www.freedomofmind.com



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