

the Free Minds Journal

promoting awareness of the Watchtower and its authoritarian tactics

Features:

From Randy's Desk

Letters to the
Editor

Witnesses
protection
programme re:
"Two Witnesses"

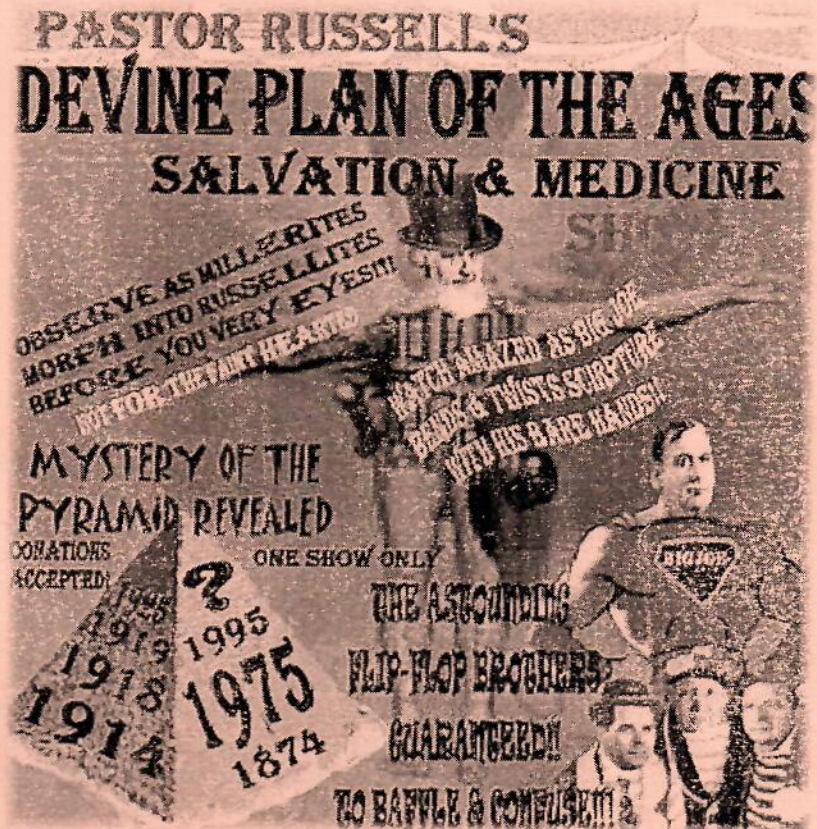
Witnesses Often
Ignorant on Blood
Ruling,
Elders to Convene

WT Growth Down

Watchtower Gets
Pyrrhic Victory
in "Quotes"
Lawsuit

vol. 25, no. 1

Feb through April 2006



The Long Road To Christianity

by Anthony Cerone

5 Minute Guide to Truth

From Randy's Desk...

Hi Randy

I read your "Rules for Christian Living" a few days ago and just wanted to let you know I was moved by what you wrote about living by grace. It re-affirmed what I have always known in my heart, even in my last 20 years as a JW, that all the pharasaic rules and judging of our brother's and sister's spirituality by their meeting attendance and service hours has nothing to do with Christianity or spirituality. For years, I have told any who cared to listen (which isn't many) that our spirituality is measured not by hours logged and placements made but by the extent to which we develop the fruitages of God's spirit in our lives. The foremost fruitage is love and that is measured by the extent that we show it to those less fortunate than ourselves. And it will be measured by God and his son, not by our fellowman who have no reliable way of measuring our hearts. It is so simple and obvious and yet so few (of any religion) really get this. To read the words of someone else of this mindset renews my faith in humanity somewhat.

I am curious though, as to how you arrived at your new belief system. I did read the testimony of your conversion but still you must admit, it is quite a leap from JW to born again Christian. Examining my JW belief system has also caused me to examine how "I know" that the Bible really is the Word of God and the miracles in it indeed happened. I don't want to exchange one erroneous belief system for another and I also don't want to throw out the baby (the Bible) with the bath water (the JW's) so to speak. So I am stuck at a doctrinal crossroads with no signs pointing anywhere. You mentioned in one of your testimonies that you experienced the miracle of being born again. While I still believe in a Creator and I believe that Jesus was a great and wise man whose teachings, when followed, can only produce good in people's lives, I have yet to experience anything approaching a feeling or "knowing" of grace in my life. Why do you suppose Jesus bestows spirit on some and not others? I "know" that I do not have a wicked heart. Skeptical yes, but wicked? Do you believe doubt or wanting some sort of evidence is synonymous with wickedness? First century Christians were provided with miracles to help them believe. However, much of what I have heard JW's and born again Christians I have talked with equate with the miraculous seems rather ordinary or co-incidental to my rational way of thinking. (I was pursuing a bachelor of science degree in nursing and while they did teach me the critical thinking skills that helped me reject the JW doctrines on blood transfusions and 1914, now I tend to want a double blind, placebo

(Continued on page 10)



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The Long Road To Christianity

by Anthony Cerone

Hello, Randy - nice to have spoken to you today. As promised, I'm writing my account of coming out of the JW organization after 34 years. But first, I'll fill you in on some of that history, before I get to the current time. Perhaps my story will have some similarities and be an encouragement to someone out there.

It starts in 1949 with my uncle, my moms' brother hearing the JW message and getting into the organization. Soon, his wife and two of his sons joined, and one became a missionary, the other served the Watchtower Society full time, from the time he was 18 years old and a Bethelite at Brooklyn, NY. Eventually, my moms' sister and her family got into the organization, and all of her children except for her eldest son, are serving that organization today. More about that eldest son later.

My uncle, his wife and two youngest sons must have had some influence on my mom, two of my brothers and myself, because eventually we all became JWs. I began to study the "Truth book" in May, 1968 with the cousin that had just returned to the USA after having spent six years in Paraguay in missionary service. In less than one year, I was baptized as a JW and became very active in the field service and giving student talks on the Ministry School. Within two years of getting baptized, I was appointed as a ministerial servant, this just after the organization switched back to the elder arrangement from the servant arrangement.

Because I was receiving quite a bit of pressure from my wife, her family, and my own parents, I was being encouraged every day by the elders especially, and the rest of the congregation generally. By the spring of 1973, my wife brought me into family court and sued for a separation. By 1975 I had been appointed as an elder, and served at different times as Watchtower Study conductor, Service overseer, Theocratic School overseer, and Book Study conductor. I had a full time job at IBM and worked part time some weekends playing music for weddings, etc. with my band. The band was one of the "bones of contention" among some of the elders.

During the 70s there was a great deal of "judicial" dealings in the congregations, and of course, in my oversight positions, I was always on the local committee.

So, to say the least I was busy. On top of this, even though my wife and I were legally separated, we did manage to have two more children during our three year separation. I pointed out how ridiculous it was for us to remain separated at this point, she agreed that I could teach the kids the Bible, but not take them to the meetings. I compromised and moved back home. In the meantime, a couple of the elders on the body pointed out to me that I wasn't living up to the head of the house (their interpretation of the scripture) and so I wrote a letter of resignation to the body of elders, and stepped down.

At that time, we had outgrown our small house, and were looking to find a larger one, which we did eventually build, but it was in the next town over, and out of the former territory that I lived in. So, in the hubub of the move

and building a new house, I started neglecting the meetings at the new Kingdom Hall. Some of my old friends from the old congregation came around from time to time to encourage me to get to the meetings, and even the elders from the new KH came over to do the same. I have to say, they were very persistent.

By the latter part of 1980 we learned that my dad had inoperable cancer. Thanks to the jobs my sibling and I had, we were able to help mom with taking dad to the hospital in NYC and eventually nurse him at home. During late summer, due to the added stress of dad's illness and taking care of him, mom suffered a fatal heart attack. Three weeks later, my wife almost died from internal hemorrhaging, and dad died two weeks later on October 15, 1981. I felt like a building had fallen on me, and while I tried to rationalize all these occurrences to "time, and unforeseen occurrences," I still felt deep down that maybe God had abandoned me, since I had (I thought) abandoned him.

Seven years passed, and I was still praying to Jehovah every day. I was feeling like I deserved to be destroyed because I had forsaken the "mother" organization and now I was feeling my own Great Tribulation, up front, and personal. I started going to the meetings... eventually the elders allowed me to go out in field service, pray from the platform, and give talks on the Theocratic School schedule.

However, I felt a divisiveness that I hadn't really seen before. I eventually found that it was due to the out-of-balance number of elders and ministerial servants from Bethel (Watchtower Farms) just 10 miles down the road.

With their presence in the congregation, there was a tacit understanding that we (the local brethren) could never measure-up to the super Christian standard that they brought to the local congregation. One could definitely see a "class" distinction there. Most of the brothers and sisters from the Farm were warm, loving individuals, and I got to know and love many of them. But there was always this "I represent the Governing Body" attitude in the air, especially when it came to counseling the congregation at the "private" meeting each week - the Service Meeting.

On top of that, I wanted my talents to be used in the congregation, which I had built up over the years in speaking and teaching. The elders had every excuse in the book, even the Circuit and District overseers as to why I couldn't progress in the congregation. I became a vacation pioneer, then an auxiliary pioneer, then a full time pioneer, took impromptu talks on the Theocratic School; sometimes two in one night. Even though I wasn't an MS or elder, sometimes I was the only brother who showed up for field service, so I took charge of the group many times.

After the CO's twice yearly visits, I'd ask the elders why I wasn't considered for service privileges, and if I got an answer, it was: "Well most of the brothers were for you, but a couple weren't, so in order to preserve the UNITY of the body, you were not chosen this time. This went on for years. But this was not the real reason I began to sour on the organization. I often thought about all the changes that were made just in the time I had been in the organization. These were all explained away as "new flashes of light" from

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 4)

Jehovah. So, I thought, well, that must mean the "old flashes of light" from Jehovah must have been a little dim.

Too, when the elders gave talks on love amongst the brothers in the organization, I found myself getting up and going home in disgust. The elders seemed to be Pharisaical in the way they were handling the brothers. I prayed constantly for Jehovah to give me insight and patience, faith in the organization, humility, every quality that I thought I lacked. I was not a happy JW. In the meantime, my cousin, Tony Florio (a sincere Christian man who loved me and wanted me to have the real truth) and I made arrangements to spend a few hours together while I was on my way to my home in Florida.

Tony and I spent many hours together when he and I were much younger, but never had we ever discussed spiritual matters. Well, after dinner at his home the evening that we arrived, we retired to his deck overlooking the Atlantic, and spent the next few hours thrusting and parrying, neither one gaining or losing much ground - or so I thought. At the end of our discussion (2:30 AM) the next morning, Tony gave me a book written by Raymond Franz, "Crisis of Conscience." At first, I flatly refused it on the basis it was nothing more than "apostate" literature, poison to the Christians' soul. Tony said, "Truth doesn't fear error, error fears the truth." I had to agree with him but I still didn't take it from him at that moment.

The next day before my wife and I left for Florida, Tony again asked me to take the book, and if I didn't want to read it, I could return it to him in the future. On the way to Florida (I had the book on my seat next to me), several times I seriously contemplated just throwing it out of the window onto the highway. Then, a thought came to me: "Why not just read a little of it, I'll probably be able to see the fallacy of it right off the bat and I'll dump it in my garage in Florida."

When I got to my house I started reading it, and by the time Tony got to my house a few days later, I had read it three times, underlining, and making comments in the margins. It really opened my eyes. Here was a comprehensive account of life at the "top of the organization" and all the slick things that had been done over the years to develop a mind-controlling regimen of meetings, contrived questions and answers, etc, etc. It was as the saying goes, *incredible*. But no, it *really was* credible - so candid, so true; as if Mr. Franz had sat next to me all those years and had been a witness to all of the hypocrisy. Needless to say, Tony was floored when I told him what had happened - I was free from them at last. He presented me with another of Franz's publications; "In Search of Christian Freedom," a continuation of the latter in some ways, but more. A doctrinal expose' of the way the Watchtower Society has used scripture in a way that suits them best. Anyway, after I read the second book, there was no doubt any longer in my mind. The very day I returned to my home in NY state, I wrote a one-liner to the body of elders saying I was resigning from their organization. Early on, a few feeble attempts were made via telephone to try to convince me I had lost my mind. But, a few short minutes of my countering the claims of the organization, and they soon left me alone.

Three years almost to-the-day have passed since the day I wrote that letter. I've passed through a long desert-like spiritual wilderness in that time. Not knowing where I belonged, afraid to commit myself and my heart to another organization, second guessing myself most of the time. But, through that whole time Tony and his wonderful wife Jan have encouraged me to stay in the Word, pray to God for his guidance, let the powerful Word of God transform my life and help me to see. A few months ago, after having wrestled with the Trinity, Justification, and many other issues, I finally put everything into the capable hands of our Lord and Saviour Jesus and asked Him to show me the way by being my own personal saviour. By continuing in his word, I have found a peace that I've never had before - my faith in Him is enough. So, now I walk with Jesus each day, and grow in Christian love. On July 25th, 2005, I asked Tony if he'd baptize me since we were only 50 feet from the Atlantic ocean. He obliged me in love and kindness.

Since then, Tony and Jan have visited us in NY and while they were here, we all took a walk at a park in our village. We happened to come upon a wallet in a gazebo located in the park. In the wallet, along with over \$700 was a "blood card," clearly identifying its owner as a JW. After spending almost an hour walking the paths in the park, Tony and I found the young man and young woman walking together. This time, it was the JW who was being witnessed to. He gave us his address, and invited me to his home. I am looking forward to making that call with the pastor of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church I have been attending. I'm going to ask him to look up "mediator" in the "Insight on the Scriptures" JW publication and read it to us while were there. A good conversation should result - hopefully, his eyes will be opened. I'll keep you informed of the outcome.

Christian love from your brother in Christ,

Tony Cerone

Email: urahusmc@hvc.rr.com

WANTED

"WATCHTOWER GANG"

FOR: CLAIMING TO SPEAK FOR GOD-TWISTED BIBLE DOCTRINE
SETTING FALSE END TIME DATES-PROTECTING PEDOPHILES
TEACHING PSEUDO-SCIENCE/MEDICINE CAUSING MISERY AND
DEATH OF MEMBERS-OTHER CRIMES TOO NUMEROUS TO LIST

 "Booster" Dart	 "Sonny" Barber	 "Big Smiley" Hend	 "Teddy Bear" Jewice	 "Big Kid" Lott
 "The Eye" Lynch	 "Mooney" Pierce	 "Gina" Sprague	 "Dutch Boy" Schneider	 "Sally Stone" Spillik
 "Little Kid" Morse III		 "Jackie Boy" Jackson		

!WARNING!
HEAVILY ARMED WITH
EFFECTIVE CHAIN OF
COMMAND-HELD IN
PLACE BY FEAR AND
INTIMIDATION
KNOWN ALSO AS
"THEOCRATIC WARFARE"
CIRCULAR REASONING
MIS-QUOTED APPEAL
TO AUTHORITY-WAVING
THE BLOODY SHIRT
RED-HERRING-STRAWMAN
AVOID THIS GANG AND
THEIR ASSOCIATES

REWARD!! FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY

5 Minute Guide to Truth

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Most Jehovah's Witnesses are honest people that want to please God and follow truth. Being a Jehovah's Witness takes a large commitment in terms of time, lifestyle, relationships and even thought processes. For this reason, while not wanting to doubt Jehovah's organisation, many Witnesses are starting to examine their beliefs, particularly now that the "last days" have been extended for so long. The Internet makes access to information far easier and assists greatly in this regard. This site is dedicated to proving if the Watchtower Society teaches The Truth. By the end of reading this page you will understand exactly how to go about determining if it is the truth or not.

All religions say they teach truth, and many claim that belonging to their particular organisation is essential for salvation. Likewise, the Watchtower Society say that they are the only truth. The Watchtower makes the assertion that there is absolute truth, that the Watchtower Society is the organisation that explains it most accurately and the only organisation by which a person can receive salvation. Regular study of the Bible and strong emphasis on doctrine is used to prove what they teach is correct. Jesus statement at John 13:35 "By this all will know that YOU are my disciples, if YOU have love among yourselves" is also pointed to, and it can be shown that Jehovah's Witnesses belong to a loving organisation.

But consider this, most other religions do the same. At least some of the members have an in-depth knowledge of the doctrine, are firmly convinced they have the truth and claim to have proof they are the most loving religion. Many grow at similar rates to the Watchtower Society and are filled with as many sincere and intelligent people. Therefore, It is not **debatable doctrine** or **subjective measurements of love** that prove the Witnesses are the true religion.

The underlying premise to being a Jehovah's Witness is that the Watchtower Society is God's visible organization. Everything hinges around this concept. Prove that the Watchtower Society is God's Organization and it does not matter if doctrines change or practices are wrong because it must be God's will to reveal things in his own time. Prove that the Watchtower Society is not God's Organization and it becomes irrelevant if the doctrines are correct or not. To know if Jehovah's Witnesses have the truth only requires being able to prove or disprove this premise. Once this is understood it becomes easy to test the validity of such a claim.

There are a several things to consider when determining if the Watchtower Society is God's Organisation. To start with it is necessary to understand where the concept comes from. The Watchtower Society uses the parable of the Faithful and Discreet Slave to justify that a new religion would appear in the "last days." This is referred to at Matthew 24:45;

"Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? 46 Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so. 47 Truly I say to YOU, He will

appoint him over all his belongings."

The parable of an appointed slave is the only scriptural support the Watchtower Society has that following an organisation is a requirement of salvation in the last days. (The Watchtower also discusses the concepts that Jehovah has always used an organisation and that the Watchtower Society is structured around the first century congregation. The validity of these claims is discussed at *Faithful & Discreet Slave*.) It needs to be recognised that Mat 24:45 is a vague parable. It does not mention the word organisation, Watchtower or Jehovah's Witness. In fact the word organisation never appears in the Bible. For this reason this parable is applied differently by various religions.

The official Watchtower teaching is that the slave is the entire group of the 144,000. In reality, up until 1976 the doctrines of the organisation were decided upon by a single person, the president of the Watchtower Society. This was limited to Russell, Rutherford and finally Knorr. Since 1976 doctrine has been approved by the members of the Governing Body, with virtually no input from any others of the "anointed" class.

Most important in understanding if the parable is referring to the Watchtower Society is to compare the history of how Jesus is said to have chosen the faithful and discreet slave with what the Watchtower now says is supposed to have occurred. This can all be done by referencing Watchtower publications, no inaccurate hearsay or anti-Witness literature needs to be referred to.

It is explained that Jesus in 1914 Jesus took rulership and first cleansed the heavens.¹ Three and a half years later in 1918 he cleansed his spiritual temple on earth.² In 1919 he re-inspected the organisation and found it cleansed. Describing this period the *Watchtower* 1998 May 15 p.17 says; "5 Anointed Christians who survived the testing period of 1914-19 were freed from the dominating influence of the world and from many Babylonish religious practices. The remnant went forward as a cleansed and refined people, willingly offering sacrifices of praise to God and having the assurance that they as a people were acceptable to him."

Watchtower 1993 May 1 p.16:

"4 In 1919 the cleansed slave class could look forward to ever-expanding activities."

The reason Jesus is said to have chosen the Watchtower Society as his only means of salvation was that it was the only organisation providing food at the proper time, and so justly appointed over all Jesus "belongings."

God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached, chap.17 pp. 350, 355:

"40 The serving of food, the right sort of food, at the proper time was the issue. It had to be according to this that a decision must be rendered by the returned master..."

⁵¹On inspecting the remnant of his anointed disciples in the year 1919 C.E., the reigning King Jesus Christ did find the appointed "slave" faithful and discreet in the feeding of his "domestics." Accordingly, he appointed this "slave" class over all his belongings."

The reason a Jehovah's Witness is supposed to believe that the Watchtower Society is God's only true organisation is because they were supplying the right sort of food, the truth, when Jesus inspected the organisation in 1919. What did Jesus find in 1919 when he inspected the Watchtower Society? He found the following teachings being promoted:

- That the last days started in 1799 and the 1800s were the worst time period of all history
- That Jesus had begun ruling in 1874
- Armageddon had occurred in 1914
- That the end was going to come in 1925
- That blood was acceptable as food for Christians
- That Jesus should be prayed to and worshipped as well as Jehovah
- That the Great Crowd were a heavenly class
- That birthdays and Christmas were acceptable celebrations
- The cross was on the cover of the Watchtower
- Many teachings were borrowed from Freemasons
- That pyramids and astrology supported 1914
- Strong Zionist support for a new nation of Israel in fulfilment of Bible prophecy
- That the "faithful and discreet slave" was not the anointed, but rather Pastor Russell

Are these teachings the "right sort of food at the proper time"? By current Watchtower truth the food the Watchtower Society was providing in 1919 was filled with inaccurate prophecy, spiritism, paganism, polytheism, idolatry and political activism. Certainly anyone belong to such a religion could not be considered one of the anointed. It brings into question if Russell, who had died in 1916, could be in heaven. Did Jesus go about immediately cleansing his organisation in 1919? No! The reality is that virtually no teachings or Babylonish practices were changed from 1914 to 1919. All of the above teachings were still being promoted in 1925. In fact, the understanding of 1914 was not changed until 1943, and the (so-called) idolatry of Jesus continued until after 1950!

One interesting twist to all of this is that in 1914 there was no faithful and discreet slave class awaiting the Lord's arrival. Luke 12:35-43 is the parallel prophecy about this slave class. It says;

³⁵ "Let YOUR loins be girded and YOUR lamps be burning, ³⁶ and YOU yourselves be like men waiting for their master when he returns from the marriage, so that at his arriving and knocking they may at once open to him. ³⁷ Happy are those slaves whom the master on arriving finds watching! Truly I say to YOU, He will gird himself and make them recline at the table and will come alongside and minister to them."

However, at that time there was no slave class, as it was believed that Russell was the Slave⁴. Neither were any members of the Watchtower Society waiting for the Lord's return as described in this scripture. Although the *Watchtower* 1984 December 1 p.14 states;

⁴²⁰ Russell and his associates quickly understood that Christ's presence would be invisible. They disassociated themselves from other groups and, in 1879, began publishing spiritual food in *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*. From its first year of publication, this magazine pointed forward, by sound Scriptural reckoning, to the date 1914 as an epoch-making date in Bible chronology. So when Christ's invisible presence began in 1914, happy were these Christians to have been found watching!"

In truth in 1914 no one was waiting for Christ's invisible return as it was still believed he already had returned invisibly over 40 years earlier in 1874.

The above information briefly shows that any claim about Jesus choosing the Watchtower Society as his organisation in 1919 is baseless. The Watchtower Society carried many false teachings as part of the religion until Rutherford made significant changes in the 1930s, and has continued changing teachings ever since.

What does this all mean? Jehovah's Witnesses are said to be part of God's only "spirit-directed organisation." Though this may sound impressive the reality is that Jehovah's Witnesses really follow what they are told to believe by a small group of men referred to as the Governing Body. Consider; if a Witness said in 1940 that worshipping Jesus is wrong they would have been disfellowshipped as an apostate and labeled as a person reserved for everlasting destruction. However, if in the 1950s they said worshipping Jesus was right they would have been labeled an apostate. It was not God's Spirit that created this important discrepancy, it was the error of men. To be classified as a Jehovah's Witness following truth was not important, following the incorrect teachings men was. God is a God of truth (Ex 34:6). If this organisation was not teaching truth, either before or after the 1950s, then it was not "spirit directed." Its followers were not following God's truth, they were following the untruths of men.

When confronted with this information the mind of a Jehovah's Witness will immediately worry, "But if it not the truth where else will we go?" and of course they know of no other place to go to. When confronted with such a dilemma the mind suffers what is referred to as *cognitive dissonance*. It is safer mentally to refuse to consider the implications of such inconsistencies of belief than to confront them. If a person confronts these inconsistencies and realises what they believe is wrong they are faced with accepting that many years of their life may have been spent in pointless pursuits and are left not knowing what to do next. This is a common dilemma for members of many high control groups. It parallels very well with the philosophical question posed in the movie, "The Matrix" when Morpheus says to Neo:

"You take the blue pill and the story ends. You wake in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill and you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit-hole goes. Remember — all I am offering is the truth, nothing more."

For many people it easier to take the figurative blue pill and think no further as to whether what they believe is truth.

The second premise that the Watchtower Society is

based on greatly helps many Jehovah's Witnesses put aside any doubts. It allows them to feel that it is unnecessary to deal with any inconsistencies that occurred in the past or may still be apparent now. This is the concept that the "light gets brighter." Rather than accept that the many wrong dates and changed teachings indicate the organisation is not directed by God, it is explained away as progressive enlightenment. This concept of provisional infallibility (that is; the Watchtower is to be considered the "voice of God" (w57 6/15 p.370) even though it has regularly been wrong) is illogical when examined but satisfies the minds need for stability.

Viewing the history of Watchtower doctrine, complete with all that was wrong and that has changed back and forth multiple times brings one to the understanding that Holy Spirit does not direct the Watchtower teachings. The same is true in regard to the appointment of brothers as well as the disfellowshipping of wrongdoers, which are also said to be done under the guidance of the "holy spirit." When a person becomes aware of the number of people that were appointed to positions of authority, who were at the time of the appointment engaging in gross sin it is readily apparent that that Holy Spirit is not guiding the Watchtower organisation in this area either.

When a person is ready to accept that the Watchtower Society has made significant mistakes, that in 1919 it was not found to be dispensing the proper food and is not an organisation directed by God and his "holy spirit" the question arises, "How could I be so sure it was the truth? Aren't the doctrines correct, or at least isn't this religion the closest to truth?" To understand why you were so sure it is interesting to review the article on fear and mind control.

Once you realise that what you believe about doctrine may not be correct, studying the Bible takes on a totally new light and you will find many doctrines you believed without question take on quite different meaning. It is incredible to find out the reasons people in other religions hold to their beliefs. *One word of caution.* People that come out of one high control group often are attracted to similar groups and can quickly become ensnared in the same situation they have just left. You have plenty of time. There is not need to make a hasty decision, either in regards to leaving the Watchtower Society or to join another religion.

It generally takes what Raymond Franz termed a "Crisis of Conscience" for a Jehovah's Witness to start seriously wondering whether the religion is really the truth. There are numerous different events that have prompted the first important moment for former Jehovah's Witnesses. This includes:

- Disfellowshipping of a loved one
- Death of a loved one for refusing blood
- Lack of love in the congregation
- Treatment by a judicial committee
- Appointment of a sinner
- Specific doctrine or changes such as:
 - 1975
 - Changing generation teaching
 - 607 BCE
- Scandal such as
 - Handling of paedophiles
 - Watchtower NGO membership to the

United Nations

I would love to hear your experiences, where you are from, if you have had a 'crisis of conscience' and what brought you to this site. Feel free to email me at info@jwfacts.com.

References

1. *Watchtower* 1991 5/15 p.9:

"Obeying his Father's order, Jesus cleansed the heavens of Satan and his demons, hurling them down to the earth. After seeing this occur in vision, John hears a heavenly voice proclaim: 'Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ!' Yes, in 1914 Christ began ruling as King!"

2. *Isaiah's Prophecy—Light for all Mankind* II chap. 23 p.348:

"In 1918, three and a half years after his enthronement, he cleansed Jehovah's spiritual temple, as represented on earth by the congregation of anointed Christians."

Watchtower 1960 7/15 p.436:

"... finally cleansed by a fiery test by 1918, the matured 'slave' as represented by a remnant now stood ready for new assignments of service."

3. *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* (1993) chap. 10 p.133:

"A clearer understanding of Biblical chronology was published in 1943, in the book *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, and it was then refined the following year in the book *The Kingdom Is at Hand*, as well as in later publications."

God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached (1973) chap.11 pp.209-210:

⁵⁵ "In the year 1943 the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society published the book *The Truth Shall Make You Free*. In its chapter 11, entitled 'The Count of Time,' it did away with the insertion of 100 years into the period of the Judges and went according to the oldest and most authentic reading of Acts 13:20, and accepted the spelled-out numbers of the Hebrew Scriptures. This moved forward the end of six thousand years of man's existence into the decade of the 1970s. Naturally this did away with the year 1874 C.E. as the date of return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the beginning of his invisible presence or parousia."

4. *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* (1993) chap.10 p.143:

"Over a decade later, however, Brother Russell's wife publicly expressed the idea that Russell himself was the faithful and wise servant. The view that she voiced concerning the identity of the 'faithful servant' came to be generally held by the Bible Students for some 30 years. Brother Russell did not reject their view, but he personally avoided making such an application of the text, emphasizing his opposition to the idea of a clergy class commissioned to teach God's Word in contrast to a lay class that was not thus commissioned. The understanding expressed by Brother Russell in 1881 that the faithful and wise servant was in reality a collective servant, made up of all the members of the spirit-anointed body of Christ on earth, was reaffirmed in *The Watch Tower* of February 15, 1927."

Letters to the Editor

Well...this is very weird....I am sure you receive many e-mails and I don't know quite where to start, but a friend of mine that has e-mailed you before told me that this might help.

I am 28 years old, married almost 9 years to my best friend and have 3 beautiful sons. Ages 7, 5 and 1!

Here is my abbreviated story. I was raised in the "truth." My mother was a raised Catholic and my dad was a disfellowshipped JW. They started dating and eventually got married. My dad's mother was a devout JW and my mother got to be very close to her. She taught my mom the "truth" and for a few years, after my dad got reinstated, they went to the meetings. Well, to make a long story short, my dad ended up leaving us when I was only three months old, my brother was 2 and older sister was 6. My mom still continued to attend meetings and met my dad, the only man I really consider to be my "dad" seeing how I never really knew my real father. They married when I was 2 and he adopted all three of us. I had a pretty good childhood. We were the kind of Witnesses that made the meetings pretty well, field service some and hardly ever a regular family study, but still had to live by the very strict rules. My mom and dad always worked multiple jobs to make ends meet. Never fit in with the "high society" Witnesses. You know, the ones who would always have a completely new wardrobe for the assemblies. Like they were going to some banquet dinner for three days!

I had bad anxiety as a child, still do. Always afraid! Afraid of my grandparents dying, afraid I was never giving 100% and Jehovah wasn't pleased with me, afraid that anything I would read and watch would allow Satan to enter. Looking back it was so sad! I also never understood why there were so many good people that I knew and Jehovah didn't accept them and was going to kill them soon. Also, why we just studied about Jesus and said his name at the end of our prayers? I always tried to pray, but never felt worthy enough. I sooo badly wanted a relationship with Jehovah, but thought until I was going to give 100% that wasn't going to happen. As teenagers my sister ended up dating a guy and got DF'd, my brother went to the wild side and got DF'd. I never got baptized. I was afraid since I wasn't doing my regular study and field service and such that I needed to wait. I was so afraid of getting DF'd like my siblings and being outcasted. At 16 I turned bad, I started dating guys and eventually dropped out of school, moved out of my parents house and moved in with my DF'd sister in a different state. Me and my siblings always would talk about Jehovah and insist that we never doubted Him, but rather just wanted to be wild for a little. I NEVER doubted the religion. I just never wanted to be the person to lead a double life, I couldn't stand Witnesses that did that. So, I was very open to the elders and told them I was leaving for a while. My parents were very upset, but I felt it was just something I had to get out of my system, so to speak, and then I would come back when I could give 100%. When I was out in the "world" I never

celebrated holidays or went to other churches. I insisted to all of my worldly friends that I always would believe that Jehovah's Witnesses were the Truth. I just couldn't live a double life and bring reproach upon Jehovah, but that I would go back when I cleaned up my life. (I did not tell a lot of people that I was a JW when I was out, I was afraid that that too would bring reproach upon Jehovah.)

I turned 18, dead broke and moved back in town with my parents. That is when I met my husband. He was an Assembly of God preacher's son his whole life. His dad was not a good preacher to say the least and he grew up believing that all churches were hypocrites. He has a very loving relationship with his mother. She always seemed to have a deep love for God. She kept the family together even though they were moved 30 something times from when my husband was born until he was in 3rd grade. They had to constantly keep moving every time his dad would get busted doing something. He would be reassigned to a different church. (No, it wasn't child molesting, either.) So they finally ended up in my town when he was in 3rd grade. His dad stopped preaching and they all together stopped going to church. They instead made a very successful family business that kept them busy.

Ok, fast forward... I'm 18 and I meet him. He is 19. We talked all the time and I really wanted to start going back to the meetings. Make a long story short, I converted him and we both got married 6 months later. His family was furious and tried to do everything possible to stop it because I was a JW and they couldn't stand the fact that their son was going to be, too. We didn't get baptized, but went to the meetings and studied. We never really had friends in the congregation. Actually only one sister came and said "hi" to my husband his 1st meeting. We didn't really fit in. Everyone in the congregation knew me my whole life and I guess everyone knew what I left for and I was still considered not-so-great association because we had not dedicated our lives and we were in our 20's with two sons. However, my brother (who did MUCH worse than I did while he was out) got reinstated and brought his former Baptist, converted JW wife with him. He was welcomed with open arms and still to this day has very good standing as a ministerial servant and his wife is a pioneer. Well, we never were considered "regular," but after much studying with brothers, we were told we must dedicate ourselves and then that would be our "new start." We both got baptized Oct. 03. That day is still vague for me. I remember crying because I sooo wanted to feel some kind of feeling of being accepted by Jehovah as I was being raised out of the water. I felt nothing... no different... just confused.

Well, we still were never regular and always battled with guilt about not living up to my dedication. I didn't want my sons to have the anxiety that I did, so I never taught them the fear that I was. They still to this day have no idea what Armageddon or Satan is. I instead focused on

(Continued on page 10)

Witnesses protection programme

Stephen Bates reports on the religious leaders who objected to a website that spread their church's teachings

Stephen Bates, religious affairs correspondent
Monday January 16, 2006

Most Christian organisations are only too pleased to spread the Good Word, but the Jehovah's Witnesses have taken an altogether different approach by forcing a Canadian member to close down a website highlighting their beliefs.

This may have something to do with the weirdness of some of the church's views, such as the belief that vaccinations are a cruel hoax by Satan, that organ transplants are the equivalent of cannibalism, that blood transfusions are unbiblical, that God himself edits its magazine, that the Great Pyramid of Giza was "an outline of the plan of God" and that the world would end in 1914. And 1915. And 1918. And 1920. And 1925. And 1940. And 1975. Having learned its lesson, it now believes officially that the end is merely imminent.

The offending website, quotes.watchtower.ca, was launched by a Toronto mechanical engineer, Peter Mosier, a long-standing, though now somewhat disillusioned, member of the 13.8 million-strong worldwide faith, which has 130,000 followers in Britain.

The site consisted entirely of lengthy quotations from official Witness publications pointing out some of the church's anomalies and quiet changes of position over the last 130 years, many of which have never been formally communicated to members of the church in good standing.

Presumably tongue-in-cheek, the site quotes instructions issued to followers in the *Watchtower*, the church's magazine, in 1942 that Jehovah has entrusted followers "with the privilege and obligation of telling His message."

The magazine added: "Those who believe that God uses the *Watchtower* as a means of communicating to His people should truly study [it] with thankfulness of heart and ... give neither honour nor credit to any man."

The website adds solemnly: "If you are looking for criticism, critique or editorial commentary, you have come to the wrong place."

Ironically, for a group best-known to the outside world for its members' enthusiastic attempts at doorstep proselytisation, the Witnesses' elders suffered a massive sense of humour failure when confronted with the site.

They threatened to sue Mr. Mosier for 100,000 Canadian dollars unless he closed his website down, with punitive damages for his impertinence in spreading their views where they might be seen by non-believers.

The Witnesses were also sore that Mr Mosier had successfully annexed a domain name that they had not already claimed for themselves, based on the title of their

magazine and the name of the office block in Brooklyn, New York where they have their worldwide headquarters.

They claimed Mr. Mosier had unlawfully misappropriated and disclosed confidential information and damaged their copyright. They stated: "The defendant's main purpose is not *fair use* but rather to try to embarrass the plaintiffs by quoting selectively from some of the religious works in a manner that misleads internet users as to the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada ... [and is] likely to cause confusion."

Members of the church keep themselves separate from the world, do not vote or take part in civic life and have traditionally been strictly controlled by their elders. Those who break their code of conduct - such as by accepting a blood transfusion to save their life or that of a child in their family - may find themselves ostracised from their relatives and communities.

A recent legal opinion in the U.S. alleges that the Watchtower has willfully misled followers over the reality of blood transfusions, which could lay it open to massive claims for damages from members who believe their relatives have died in vain because they thought they were following the word of God in rejecting transfusions.

Members of the public answering the door to Witnesses might be surprised to learn the confidential information that non-believers are regarded as doomed to Old Testament punishment on the Last Day, their eyes plucked out and their bones ground to dust.

In the past the Watchtower has told local elders that a member accused of child abuse should only be reported to the police in the unlikely event of there being two independent witnesses to the abuse, otherwise the victim can be instructed to "wait on Jehovah" to sort things out.

In an attempt to keep control of members' thoughts and prevent them falling into sin through happening on pornographic sites, the Watchtower leaders have instructed that, if members view the internet, they should only look at authorised Witness websites - hence the consternation that they might accidentally stumble on Mr. Mosier's effort.

Mr. Mosier, 37, who was brought up as a Witness, baptised into the faith at 17 and was a member in good standing for 10 years after that, said: "I decided to set up the website after learning things that I had never heard before. There were things that, had I known them when I was baptised, I would not have joined. The Watchtower calls itself God's Channel but it has a way of changing its mind and not telling anyone that things have changed."

"My website has clear quotes that enable people to study their religion and learn more about it, but the Watchtower wants people to learn about it only on their own terms. My site has been getting 10,000 visitors a month, so you could say I have been more successful in informing people about Jehovah's Witnesses than I ever was when I went round knocking on people's doors. ~

from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/religion/Story/0,2763,1687734,00.html?gusrc=rss>

Jehovah's love. I am not sure if what I am doing is right, but I am just scared.

About a year ago my sister-in law was doing a religion essay for college and asked me if I would help her because she wanted to write a paper about JW's. I said sure. She came over with Ray Franz's books and a cult book. I was so upset!! I told her that I wouldn't help her if those were going to be her resources. I flipped through the *Crisis* book and told her it was a bunch of crap and every religion has those negative people that leave and publish lies about stuff. I did read some of the stuff that he wrote and surprisingly believed it, but dismissed it as imperfect men running a perfect arrangement. Everyone makes mistakes, right? Little did I know what I do now.

The following week, we went and drove to see the Dead Sea Scrolls on tour. It was so awesome! There was a guy there signing his book, an expert in the Greek language. I just thought that the Scrolls were fascinating, but was confused about some of the translations. Why was ours so different?? I got home and started looking up on the net about different translations of the Bible. I didn't consider it looking up apostate material, so I was ok. I was shocked as to what I found out. And I am sure you can fill in the rest of my story.

At first I didn't want to accept it. How in the world is it possible?? The 1914 thing!! Oh my goodness! Pyramids! HA! This is absolutely ridiculous! How stupid can we be!

My husband is shocked, too. However he just told me that when we first met and talked about religion all he knew was that his was wrong so something else must be right and JW's just made sense, even though he never really agreed about everything. Like the organizations telling you exactly how to run your life.

Confused but yet enlightened! and saddened. My family never talking to me again and sad for them for the deception they still are being fed... where to go now and what to do? I am not one of those angry ex-JW's. I do not seek revenge. I just want to know God. I want someone to tell me what's right, but yet know that is not going to happen. I have lived my whole life given directions and now scared that I have to come up with those directions on my own. I don't know how! And scared that it will be wrong. One minute thinking I got it all together, then the next crying doubting it. In my heart, Jehovah would never want someone to be as screwed up as I am now, so is that my conscious telling me something. Or, do I even have my own conscious? So lonely....

I have left so much out, but like I said I am sure you get a lot of these e-mails. I just wanted to that you for your story and site. It has helped. And above most I thank you for listening. This is my first time doing this. I haven't "come out."

NAME WITHHELD

controlled study reviewed by my peers before I can accept any new information (chuckle). Seriously though, I now find it difficult to believe in anything, which is not a very spiritually fulfilling place to be in life. There is definitely a void of emptiness there.

I know it is hard to discern tone from an e-mail. Please do not mistake my questions for the seeking of a doctrinal argument. I have sincere doctrinal questions which I am seeking answers for and I know from your writings you used to be a pastor. Do you mind if from time to time I ask you the odd doctrinal question? I am more interested in the larger universal and Christian concepts than arguing the prophetic minutia which occurs on other sites and in JW literature. I figure, God will make all things clear when he wishes, so in the meantime what is to be gained from arguing? Isn't it sufficient that he has told us what the love of God should mean in how we live our lives? Anyway, I will try to read more of your essays so that I am not asking you things you have already answered there. I know repeating yourself can be tedious.

With respect and friendship,
NAME WITHHELD

My response:

Hi _____

I think I can say that we almost all start out as insecure children born into a world of frightening prospects all around us. That was true with me as much or more so than others. My parents moved every year in the 12 years of grade school and I had to learn to make friends fast. Yet I never liked all the bullying and social interaction of the more rowdy kids. Couple that with the fear of nuclear warfare in the sixties and other personal problems, I used to start off each day early in the morning huddled in the hallway before my father, mother and sister were up. I even cried a lot about my struggles in life growing up. I would have given anything to be as confident and happy as others seemed to be.

When I was about eight or nine my parents took me to a Billy Graham crusade. Without any prompting from them his message of Jesus took my heart and I went down to the stage and dedicated my life to him. While outwardly from then on it didn't seem to change much in my life, I did start praying every day from then on. I felt that God was there and was listening to my prayers, with the strong faith of a child. I needed him to be there, and having that invisible presence gave me some kind of strength. I did not really know what being born again meant, but I believe He heard my cries and listened to this little "orphan." Some would say I just "needed" God to be there and so invented the whole thing in my childish mind. But He was real to me.

The real test of faith came at 17 when I (and my girlfriend) were confronted with the writings of the Watchtower — a book stuck in a drawer by my parents, who had bought "The Truth That Leads To Eternal Life" just to get rid of the Witnesses going door-to-door. It had the "ring" of truth in its simplicity so I put it to the test one day. We had a black cat named Pris who liked me but never just came up to me for any reason (except maybe food). So I made this hard test of whether or not this was the truth: The thought was forming in my mind, that if the cat runs

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

over here to me on the couch right this moment... and before I was finished even thinking the thought, Pris ran across the room and in a leaping jump trounced on to my lap while I was sitting in the chair! It scared me so much I jumped up and ran out of the room!

From that point on I rejected it as any kind of "proof" that this was the truth as it was too weird. God or Satan? It was too strange to be just the cat. From that point on I decided that "testing" God was not a good idea. Too easy to be misled by subjective incidents.

My girlfriend and I looked up a Kingdom Hall and started a study with a young man. Out of "logic" and appearance the Witnesses seemed to really be the TRUE Christians. I had been raised a Baptist but quit going to church early on because of the hypocrisy I saw. The last church I ever went to before becoming a Witness was the Garden Grove Community Church which held services in the rented Orange Drive-In, with window speakers and all, led by the now famous Robert Schuller. From about 13 to 17 I was not doing anything religious. Now I was studying out of a little book about God, going to the Kingdom Hall meetings, and eventually going out in service. My girlfriend had to move back to Florida but did the same, eventually getting her mother, sister and brother-in-law into the Witnesses. I did the exact same thing. Eventually I went to Bethel to work for 6 years in 1974, after two years of "special" pioneering.

During the 8 years of being a Witness my prayers never really changed, except for using the name "Jehovah." I felt loved and protected by my God. Prayers appeared to be answered fairly often. While I won't go into the details of my leaving the organization here, suffice it to say it was because I started reading a different Bible and studying the Bible by itself and for a change it took on a whole different meaning, highlighting the love of Jesus and the grace of God, a message that the hated "Christendom" had been preaching for 2000 years, and for the first time in my life I understood this message, particularly from the books of Romans and Galatians, and the love of Christ as portrayed in the book of John.

I knew from that time onward that no man has authority over me, and God does not use an organization that deploys all the business and psychological manipulations of the world. (Not to speak of all the false prophecies I discovered they had made). I made it a point to skim through all the bound volumes of the *Watchtower* magazine in the Bethel library from 1879 to 1979 looking up certain key doctrines and noting how the leadership had changed them over the years, further impressing me that this was not God's organization.

All the time of struggling about the Watchtower's truthfulness I felt that God was with me just by the peace and sense of thankfulness I felt for what I had come to learn in the Bible that far surpassed what the Watchtower had taught me. One by one after leaving the Watchtower I began to examine all the doctrines I had been taught by reading the history of the early church fathers, the process of canonization of the Bible, and other historical works like the Talmud, archeology and a visit to the Holy Land and its excavations and treasures, all of which fit what

"Christendom" had known and taught all along. Though some would disagree I feel the Bible cannot "interpret itself" as the Witnesses boast. Like any ancient history book, one has to take into account the language and customs of the day, the factions of early believers, what their enemies said, and much more to get a real rounded out picture of what the Bible is saying to us 2000 years later. I feel I have done that sufficiently to get a grasp on Bible doctrine.

As far as subjective experiences such as joy, being "filled with the Spirit," and miracles I am no expert. I have seen a lot of fraud in the churches, having spoken in many since leaving the JW's. I think everyone is wired differently to try and seek out some particular way of feeling. All I know really is that when I worship the Lord Jesus I feel right with the universe, I feel his presence is with me, and if I worship in song in a group I am very much strengthened to live life to the fullest.

Don't be afraid to dip your toes into studying and praying and worshipping in the days ahead. Just don't look for the "one true church," it doesn't exist any more than the thousands of congregations of Christians could claim that in the first century. They were about as varied as the churches today (compare the variations in Revelation chapters 1-3).

Wishing you the best,
Randy Watters

Watchtower Growth Down

The Feb. 1, 2006 issue of *The Watchtower* shows growth/decline charts and the news is not good for them. In the U.S. and several countries including their once prized Japan (and Hawaii), the growth rate was zero. Canada had a zero growth rate as did Australia and Argentina. Growth was experienced in some countries such as Eastern block and third-world countries due to destabilization of the regions. Overall growth worldwide was 1.3% only.

In many areas, virtually all the baptisms are via children of established publishers, or from immigrants. For example, in the US, fully 1/4 (over 250,000) of the publishers are in Spanish-speaking congregations. In areas where there is a large immigration rate, it is not uncommon for some pioneers to have (literally) 8 or 10 studies, and to have 1 or 2 of those studies progress to baptism per year. In some larger metropolitan areas with a large Spanish-speaking immigration rate, new Spanish-speaking congregations are formed every 18-24 months. Based on my observations, I would not be surprised if the Spanish-speaking publisher growth rate in the US is 10% or more per year.

If the Spanish-speakers are growing so rapidly, and the overall growth rate in the US is flat, what does that mean about the 750,000 English-speaking JW's in the US? The number is dropping precipitously, perhaps more like -2% or -3%. Further decrease is expected to follow.

from: <http://www.jehovahs-witness.com/10/103528/3.ashx>



Witnesses Often Ignorant on Blood Ruling, Elders to Convene

AP January 26, 2006

NEW YORK - Jehovah's Witnesses are renowned for teaching that Jesus is not God and that the world as we know it will soon end. But another unusual belief causes even more entanglements - namely, that God forbids blood transfusions even when patients' lives are at stake.

The doctrine's importance will be underscored next week as elders who lead more than 98,000 congregations worldwide recite a new five-page blood directive from headquarters.

...
The Witnesses have opposed transfusions of whole blood since 1945. A later pronouncement also barred transfusions of blood's "primary components," meaning red cells, white cells, platelets and plasma.

An announcement in 2000 in the official *Watchtower* magazine, however, said that because of ambiguity in the Bible, individuals are free to decide about therapies using the biological compounds that make up those four blood components, such as gamma globulin and clotting factors that counteract hemophilia.

Next week's directive could create confusion about these compounds, known as blood "fractions."

Without noting the 2000 change, the new directive tells parents to consider this: "Can any doctor or hospital give complete assurance that blood or blood fractions will not be used in treatment of a minor?"

...
By coincidence, next week's directive follows some heavy criticism of the blood transfusion policy from attorney Kerry Louderback-Wood of Fort Myers, Fla., writing in the *Journal of Church and State*, published by Baylor University.

Louderback-Wood, who was raised a Witness but now has no religious affiliation, accuses her former faith of giving "inaccurate and possibly dishonest arguments" to believers facing crucial medical decisions.

Louderback-Wood complains that many Witnesses and phy-

sicians aren't given clear instruction about their faith's blood transfusion policy, particularly on the subject of fractions.

She's no disinterested bystander. The lawyer says her mother died from severe anemia in 2004 because local elders didn't realize hemoglobin is permitted.

Louderback-Wood learned that hemoglobin was allowed from the Web site of Associated Jehovah's Witnesses for Reform on Blood, which was founded in 1997 by dissenting local elders, eight of whom served on Hospital Liaison Committees that advise Witnesses and physicians.

The founder of Associated Jehovah's Witnesses, speaking on condition of anonymity to protect his standing in a faith that does not tolerate dissent, says liaison committee members know about the revised teachings, but most Witnesses automatically refuse all forms of blood without consulting the committees. Physicians are often ill-informed about Witness beliefs, he says.

Louderback-Wood thinks the faith is subject to legal liability for misinforming adherents, which to her knowledge is an untested theory in U.S. courts. Related issues arise in a pending lawsuit in Calgary, Alberta, however, over the alleged "wrongful death" of teenage leukemia patient Bethany Hughes.

...
In all, Associated Jehovah's Witnesses lists 20 shifts and refinements in blood-related rules over the years.

...
Advances in bloodless surgery have reduced medical dangers for Witnesses in the United States, but Associated Jehovah's Witnesses maintains the blood policy is a life-threatening problem elsewhere.

Louderback-Wood says she'll be contented if her protest saves one child's life.

Condensed from *Religion Today*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/26/AR2006012600943.html>

Watchtower Gets Pyrrhic Victory in Lawsuit

In the last issue of the *Free Minds Journal*, we found the Watchtower had sued a Canadian website called "Quotes.Watchtower.ca" for \$100,000 and managed to bully the site down in a settlement out of court. The suite was over alleged copyright infringement and "an attempt to embarrass the Watchtower Society," among other things. It was dedicated to just putting up quotes from past publications that show their inconsistencies.

Their short-lived victory was soon overshadowed as angry ex-Witnesses put over 7 exact copies of the banned website on the net sponsored by countries that are presently untouchable by the Watchtower, giving them a much more formidable challenge.