

April 15, 2009

Governing Body Member
Watchtower Bible & Tract Society (WTS)
25 Columbia Heights
Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483

Mr. _____,

On May 13, 1972, a wide-eyed and innocent farm girl named Brenda XXXXXX was baptized by Jehovah's Witnesses. She had just turned **ten years old**. I was that little girl, attending the XXX Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Pennsylvania with my family.

It is clear to me now, as an adult, that the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society (WTS) is responsible for the egregious loss of my family over 2-1/2 decades ago. My relationship with my family changed dramatically—and not for the better—after my family became Jehovah's Witnesses. Please don't instantly view me as a "lying apostate"; please hear me out and read this letter with a sincere heart.

After months of repetitive weekly studies and meetings, my mother began relying upon WTS, solely upon the WTS, for all of her information. You warned her through your publications and in-home weekly study that our family would be destroyed when Armageddon came "any day now"—unless we became Jehovah's Witnesses and only followed the WTS' direction. My poor mother, terrified that her precious family would perish if we didn't get take immediate action and at the urging of WTS-appointed elders in congregation, accepted the baptismal plunge along with me and my other siblings.

Now, as any 'thinking person' could see, my only option as a youngster, a minor, was to get baptized with my family. After all, it wasn't presented as an option, and did I really want to disappoint the nice elder and his wife who called me "freckles"? What would he say if I refused to follow suit with the rest of my family? Did I have any power to change the direction of my life at age 10? NO! The thing I remember most of all about the weeks leading up to my baptism is the peer pressure that was exerted upon me by the Elders to get baptized. Like proficient salesmen, they just wanted to close the deal...at any cost.

I was not old enough to vote, hold down a secular job, wear makeup, stay outside after dark, date, drive a car, purchase a house, drink alcohol or become a parent myself. But, ironically, I was old enough, according to WTS Elders, to memorize the answers to WTS questions—like a "teachable" prized student—and then be immersed into a swimming pool before tens of thousands of people, committing my entire life—FOREVER—to a cause I couldn't possibly comprehend.

The fact is, my mother, a 42-year-old undereducated housewife, wasn't able to fully understand what she getting our family into that day. In 1971 when she was first introduced to Jehovah's Witnesses, she was not informed that the beliefs of the WTS changed so frequently (Christmas, blood, the cross, organ transplants, to name just a few), and that these ongoing changes could have a life-altering impact on her relationship with me—nine years later.

My mother NEVER knew that someday she'd be instructed by the WTS to shun her own child if I "*disassociated*" (WTS terminology) and stopped attending meetings. Clearly this was new dogma and it was obviously NOT *her* idea as evidenced by her letter to me in 1981, in which she cited the WTS's new policy to support the despicable practice of shunning: "We've received **new information** in the September 1981

Watchtower that says ..." She then enclosed the article for me which instructed that those who disassociate should appropriately be viewed and treated as those who have been disfellowshipped for wrongdoing. WT 9/15/1981, page 24

Just as a police officer can advise a shoplifter to show up for a court hearing, and to not do so would result in negative consequences, my mother was instructed by the WTS to stop associating with me or face the consequences. By now, nine years into membership, the fine print had been disclosed and she realized that to complain about the changed "rules" or failure to comply with the "new light" would result in her being "marked" (avoided/branded as weak in the faith) in the congregation and possibly being disfellowshipped for "apostasy" or "causing divisions"—should she disagree with WTS policy.

When this new directive came to "light" in that September 1981 "Watchtower" magazine, my mom knew she would lose my JW sister, JW brother, and all of her grandkids if she failed to comply with your new edict. Logically and painfully, my mother accepted the lesser of two impossible choices—THE LEAST DAMAGING CONSEQUENCE—she shunned her **ONE** daughter—*me*—rather than lose two other children and all of her grandchildren. She was told by WTS that this was a loving thing to do; even though she knew it wasn't. The mother I knew in 1972 would have never joined the WTS had she known she would be forced to shun her own daughter in 1981.

What the WTS is doing to countless families is called *coercive persuasion* and most mental health and cult experts consider this type of behavior not only dysfunctional but *unethical*. Have you ever watched the movie "Sophie's Choice?" In the film, Hitler's agents used similar tactics to control and break down families.

Imagine if someone named John just started studying with you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. What would you say if John's Catholic Church told eight members of his family to shun him if he continued studying with you? Would you tell Jehovah-Witness-wannabe John that these other Catholics are "loving" and "protecting" him and trying to help him "repent," or would you tell John that the church members—*or perhaps even Satan*—are trying to "control" him and his family? Why is it OK for the WTS to expect Jehovah's Witnesses to shun family when you would never condone Christendom's doing so if the tables were reversed? And how can you possibly condone such an action *now* when in previous publications you condemned it and tied it to pagan roots? In the Jan. 8, 1947 *Awake* magazine the WTS wrote under the heading 'Are You Also Excommunicated':

"This is "canon law" which the Roman Catholic Hierarchy seeks to enforce on the pretext that it is God's law. The authority for excommunication, they claim, is based on the teachings of Christ and the apostles, as found in the following scriptures: Matthew 18: 15-19; 1 Corinthians 5:3-5; 16:22; Galatians 1: 8,9; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 3:10. But the Hierarchy's excommunication, as a punishment and "medicinal" remedy (*Catholic Encyclopedia*), finds no support in these scriptures. In fact, it is altogether foreign to Bible teachings. Hebrews 10:26-31. Where, then, did this practice originate? The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says that papal excommunication is not without **pagan influence**...the superstitious Greeks believed that when an excommunicated person died the Devil entered the body...It was therefore after Catholicism adopted its pagan practices, A.D. 325, that this new chapter in religious excommunication was written. Thereafter, as the pretensions of the Hierarchy increased, the weapon of excommunication became the instrument by which the clergy attained a combination of ecclesiastical power and secular tyranny..." (emphasis added). **Hasn't the WTS adopted the very same practices that they criticized the Roman Catholic Church for in 1947?**

The baptismal questions read by Elders to me and others about to be baptized in 1972 were changed post-1981 to the following: 1) *On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will?* 2) *Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization?* Four years after the change of policy, where is the life-altering fine print that says, "Your family will shun you forever if you ever disassociate"? Where is the complete disclosure in this WTS-initiated verbal baptismal contract, as handed down to its members in that September 1981 Watchtower? While the Watchtower has every right to terminate a person's membership within the organization; they have no right to terminate a person's membership within their own family.

The contract I was coerced into with the WTS in 1972 while still a minor—when I stood before witnesses of the organization and spoke my vows and which was later documented by other Jehovah's Witness elders/leaders as "official membership" and turned into Headquarters in New York—was suddenly, unexpectedly and unilaterally modified by WTS—almost a decade after we were baptized. Now, as you should know, in any legal transaction or contract, no one has the right to change a contract unless both parties agree with and initial the changes. WTS violated my family's rights by not consulting with us prior to this change. If your legal team would insist that there was no contract, then my family should have associated with me every single day since 1980, and the fact that they have not, combined with my mother's letter to me citing the 1981 Watchtower, confirms my allegation that there is, in fact, a verbal contract in place, holding them hostage to the WTS' *pagan-derived* shunning regulations.

The reality is, my baptism occurred over 37 years ago. Armageddon hasn't arrived "any day now." Nor did it arrive in 1975 as discussed from the Kingdom Hall platform by Elders when I was a preteen. Nor do I believe, based on everything I've learned about the WTS, that the WTS is God's organization. Shunning a loved one isn't loving that person any more than kicking a dog is loving it. Both behaviors are abusive! The fact is, the Watchtower has caused gut-wrenching pain and irreparable harm to millions of people. At age 18, I had a right to pursue my own spiritual path without losing my family, just as my Methodist mother was afforded that right when Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on her door in the early 70's and converted her.

Jesus was baptized at age 30 for a reason—and if you truly follow the Bible word for word, why are you *continuing* to baptize children?! (There are plenty of articles in the current news to support my statement so please do not deny it.) Children should not be baptized. The WTS' manta for years about Christendom's baptism of infants has been negative and yet you do basically the same thing. There are several stages to adulthood: infant, child, adolescent, adult. A child is clearly not an adult, technically much closer indeed to infant than adult!

Of course, I understand that you baptize children so that you can count these young ones as Jehovah's Witnesses and declare that your organization is growing—it's good public relations after all—but at what cost? Legally, in the US anyway, a minor isn't considered capable of making adult decisions until he/she turns 18. I have heard many Jehovah's Witnesses condone the baptism of children, citing "they are mature minors." Based on what science or psychology report? What methods do you employ to ensure they are emotionally and intellectually mature? What legally constitutes "mature" in the United States? Does not the mass exodus of teenagers from the organization and subsequent shunning by their families tell you that baptizing a CHILD is not a responsible thing to do? Where is your moral compass as a human being? (I have to ask too, while reading this letter, are you feeling humbled like Jesus or arrogant and self-righteous like Satan?)

I can assure you that at age 10 *I was a minor*, but I was **not** mature! I was still playing with dolls, fantasizing about Barbie marrying Ken and arranging furniture in their dollhouse.

My mother is 80 now and has missed out on all of my adult life and the life of my son, her grandson, who is now a young adult. I too have missed out on my family's lives for the past 28 years. Since 1981, I've never been allowed to even meet my sister's last three children (two of which are now adults). What a horrible price I've had to pay after being forced to join an organization as a child, in which the only way out involves a *Sophie's Choice*!

My mother still speaks to my father, who was never baptized (because you tell her that's OK), and **therefore she would still be able to still speak to me had I never been baptized**. Since I never committed any "sin" and was never disfellowshipped, then clearly the only thing that is keeping my family from associating with me is your *post-1980* shunning policy as it applies to baptized individuals. If those who disassociate are to be treated the same as disfellowshipped ones—murders, liars, thieves and adulterers—and since I have done none of those things, then my "sin" or mistake was obviously getting baptized.

The reason for my letter is simple. **I WANT MY BAPTISM RESCINDED**. I have suffered unimaginable damage as a result of my family's association with the WTS. I have the right to have a few months, hopefully years, with my 80-year-old mother before she dies. She is nearly blind and her mind is deteriorating due to dementia and the obsessive reading and rereading of your literature. She may not even remember me in a few months but I can assure you she is afraid to speak to me for fear of what might happen to her.

I believe you and many other Governing Body members have become desensitized to your shunning edict, which has affected millions of people, because you receive so many letters like mine. In your mind, we are all evil apostates who don't have a clue. You will probably either ignore this letter (but I hope you have enough good character to reply) or give me your standard response: "go see the Elders for counsel and return to "the truth" so that you can have a relationship with your mother again." However, the fact remains: Just as in the movie "*Sophie's Choice*" Hitler 's agents had no right to remove Sophie's child from her, **the WATCHTOWER agents never had the right to take my mother from me, nor did it have the right to deceive our family in 1972 to gain additional membership by saying the end was coming in 1975**.

I'm formally asking that you send a letter to the XXX, and XXX, PA, congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses and inform them that an announcement be made that effective immediately I shall be considered by all Jehovah's Witnesses to be a *non-baptized "worldly person"* because I was TOO YOUNG to commit to the WTS for the rest of my life. Additionally, I want the congregation Elders to announce that because the rules of the organization changed after we were all baptized in 1972, my family (mother, sister, brother, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, five nephews and one niece) are no longer held in compliance with the Watchtower's shunning edict and will not undergo any type of retaliation or mistreatment by WTS-appointed Elders for talking or visiting with me.

Time is of the essence so a prompt reversal of my baptism is appreciated. Please send a copy of your response to my attention as soon as possible. In everlasting truth, love and light, I sign off.

Brenda XXXXX
PO Box 16668
Golden, CO 80402

On April 18, 2009, Brenda Lee sent the letter above to Watchtower Bible & Tract Society Governing Body members:

- Geoffrey Jackson
- Anthony Morris
- Samuel Herd
- David Splane
- M. Stephen Lett
- Gerrit Losch
- John Barr
- Guy Pierce
- Theodore Jaracz (via registered mail)

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PS Form 3800, August 2006 See Reverse for Instructions