

Opening the Closed Mind by Randall Watters

by Randy Watters

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Understanding the Problem

It is rare to find a Witness who has not seen or heard information exposing the dishonesty of the Watchtower. Why, then, do they not see a problem? Evidently, something else has prevented them from objectively analyzing factual information. Their minds are trained to stop short of doubting the organization--a wall has been erected which says, in effect, "This far you may go, and no further."

What kind of powerful motivation prevents the Witness from entering the "dangerous" waters of critical investigation? The motivation is fear; the underlying problem is misplaced securities. The Christian concept of trusting a supernatural God is replaced with a more visible and concrete symbol, namely, the organization; God's organization. The Witness learns that serving the organization is the same as serving God. The organization is the mother, God is the father, and the Witness is to obey his "parents." Since the Witness cannot see nor experience real interaction with God, his only tie with God is through the visible organization. It is, in effect, "God"; to him (though he would not admit to or recognize it).

Convincing the Witness that the organization is deceptive is like trying to convince a 5-year-old child who loves his parents that his father is in jail for armed robbery--he simply doesn't believe his father is dishonest. In fact, he can't tolerate the thought, since he has placed all of his security and trust in his father and mother. The truth is too fearful and devastating to consider. Therefore, to protect his source of security, he rejects the factual information as being a lie.

The same is true of the Witness. He knows that if the organization is not really directed by God, he has no other tangible security to go to. He says, "Where else can I go?"; So he remains within the system as years go by, continuing to ignore the barrage of factual information undermining the entire Watchtower structure. The more and more he ignores the facts, the more narrow-minded and adamant he becomes that he will never change, and he is more convinced than ever that he has the truth. He digs himself into a trench, erecting all sorts of mental barricades against his enemy, which is doubt. While this seems incredible to the person trying to reach the Witness with the facts, it is just a simple protective mechanism, keeping the Witness from the trauma of losing his sense of security. In order to rationalize away the false prophecies and inconsistencies of the organization, the Witness must, in effect, deceive himself into thinking there is really no discrepancy in the organization. 1

While Christians have their security in a spiritual relationship with the person of Christ, Witnesses are taught to put faith in an organization. If they have faith in the organization, they have faith in God. The two are inseparable; so much so, that to lose faith in the organization means a corresponding loss of faith in God. This is precisely why the Witness must protect himself through the process of self-deception. He cannot bear the pain of losing his faith.

What Can Be Done with the Friend or Relative?

Confronting the close friend or relative who is a Witness with information disproving the Watchtower is not always the best first move. You risk him closing the door on further discussions, since you are perceived as a threat to his security. The solution, then, is to try and shift his security base. One good way to do this if possible is to just be a friend to the Witness, showing him there is love and kindness to be found outside of the organization. If he is like many who have been Witnesses for some years, he knows that there is not really much love inside the organization, and he may welcome a real friend whom he can trust. (More and more, as the organization fosters an unrealistic approach towards revealing the hidden sins of others, Witnesses do not expect to find true friends in the organization, and often look outside for more reliable friends.) If you act religious or preach to them, however, they are unlikely to consider you as a potential friend, since you will be seen as part of Babylon the Great, the "world empire of false religion," which is an object of their fear.

As the Witness begins to see the love of God through others, he may be moved to probe the real personality of God, apart from the organization's picture of God. The first admission that "maybe God won't destroy that person, even if he doesn't become a Witness"; is a major milestone. The cultic mindset is beginning to crack. As they allow for God being able to work in other people's lives, their perception of God's love is widening out; God becomes "bigger"; to them, and the JW may begin to feel secure in a relationship to God independent of an organization. As the Christian reveals more and more of God's grace and kindness, the Witness may relax his insecurities and begin to think for himself. This is often a slow and difficult process, sometimes taking years. Witnesses are not the most relaxed and down to earth people there are! Being very inhibited and insecure, they require much patience.

The Brief Encounter

Most of the time we are not able to form friendships or an ongoing dialogue with the Witness. Perhaps there is no time; they have just come to our door, and we may never see them again. Or, as is the case with many, they have adopted a holier-than-thou attitude which assesses you as unworthy of being a friend. The official Watchtower view is that you are a non-believer and misled by the devil. So he may be unable to view you as an equal, let alone a friend. In this case you have to skip the above advice and get right down to the task of making them think for themselves. (Incidentally, this is the second step for friends or relatives.)

Getting Them to Think

Before photocopies of old WT literature are brought out, or before Scriptures are quoted, it is good to establish certain things in the Witness' mind; things that they officially believe, but the individual Witness may not be in full agreement with. The very act of admitting these beliefs should not only prove embarrassing to the Witness, but will make him conscious of the narrow, cult-like mentality encouraged by the WT. To avoid being embarrassed and to save face, Witnesses will sometimes lie about what they believe or try and change the subject without answering, but you must make note of what they deny, so that you can prove that they do teach it, using their own literature. You thereby force the Witness to see the wall he has established in his mind (which says, ";you may go no further;"), and he thereby must make a decision to be honest with himself (and risk shifting his securities), or run in fear from such a confrontation. How, then, do we proceed? Below are several preliminary questions to ask the Witness. These questions do not involve interpreting passages of the Bible (that comes later), but relate to their view of how to interpret the Bible, as well as God's way of relating to man. You will find these questions very effective with all but the most hardened of Witnesses.

Common Sense Questions

These first three questions establish a foundation of common-sense perceptions about the Bible and Christianity, which are generally denied by cults. This is especially true with Jehovah's Witnesses. Often they will answer yes to these questions anyway, to save face or avoid embarrassment. If so, you will need to direct their attention back to their answers when they ";deny"; them later. GB references are to our book, Thus Saith the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Do you believe that the Bible was written to all people?

(Acts 17:30; 1 Cor. 1:2)

Do you believe that true Christians have always existed somewhere in the last 2000 years?

(Matt. 28:19,20 - The Watchtower teaches this, but cannot actually point to a single group or person as evidence of this, since no one in history believed as they do.)

Do you believe that anyone, anywhere, who just had a Bible, and no other literature, could understand the Bible and be saved?

(";No"; answer reveals that they believe the Bible is not enough, but a leader or organization is needed; ";Yes"; answer is contradictory to Watchtower teaching--GB 16,17)

Next, a statement about the dangers of various religious organizations should be made, such as, ";Today more than ever before there are many religious groups which lead people astray from true Christianity. Let's see if we can agree on certain identifying marks of such groups."; Then proceed with the following objective questions. It is better to leave the questions ";third person"; (or hypothetically apply them to yourself) rather than applying them directly to the person you are speaking with, or his organization. Instead of saying, ";Does your organization...?"; you might say, ";What if an organization...?"; or ";What if I...?"; That way you avoid getting their defenses up. They will have to apply it to themselves soon enough in the conversation, or you can draw the connection later yourself. Get them to see the point before it hurts! (compare 2 Sam. 12:1-14) Do you think a person should examine not only the teachings, but also the history of any religious organization before deciding it is the truth?

(A history of deception and unfulfilled prophecies is most incriminating!)