

Dear Brothers,

October 29, 2006

### *A Conspiracy of Silence, Soon to End*

It was a senseless and brutal crime. A young bride was viciously gang-raped and left to die – murdered. An entire nation was shocked by the outrage and quickly mobilized in response to the bizarre publicizing campaign of the grieving husband in order to see that the perpetrators were brought to justice. Incredibly, though, the leading men in the city where the crime took place stubbornly refused to hand over the guilty party, and instead of cooperating with those intent on bringing the depraved abusers to justice, they fought against them to protect the guilty from being punished. There was much needless bloodshed as a result. (The details of the matter are recorded in the concluding chapters of the Bible book of Judges.)

While this atrocity took place more than 3,000 years ago in the land of Israel, in a city called Gibeah, it has prophetic significance. That is apparent from the Hebrew book of Hosea, which was written 400 years after the incident in Gibeah, in which the prophet wrote of God's future judgment: **“The watchman of Ephraim was with my God. As regards a prophet, there is the trap of a birdcatcher on all his ways; there is an animosity in the house of his God. They have gone down deep in bringing ruin, as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their error; he will give attention to their sins.”**

Jehovah's Witnesses are, of course, not the first people to bear the name of God before the world. Long ago before the Christian era, the peoples of Israel and Judah exclusively represented Jehovah before the nations. They were the chosen people of God. Because of their covenanted relationship they bore a weighty responsibility before God. Amos 3:2 establishes the basis for their accountability, where Jehovah says to them: **“You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.”** (NIV)

But Jehovah's Witnesses have an accounting before God too – especially so, the Governing Body and secondary leadership of the organization. Christ himself stressed the principle of accountability in connection with his faithful slave, when he said: **“Indeed, everyone to whom much was given, much will be demanded of him; and the one whom people put in charge of much, they will demand more than usual of him.”** – Luke 12:48

Jehovah is a lover of righteousness, justice and mercy; therefore, he has made these precious qualities the very foundation of his throne. Everyone desirous of worshipping God acceptably must also become a lover and practicer of righteousness and justice. God especially expects those empowered as leaders of his people to be outspoken advocates and exemplars of his divine standards.

Because evil is so rampant in this world Jehovah has charged his servants to look after the disadvantaged, downtrodden and afflicted. God's law to the Israelites particularly stressed the necessity of protecting the widows and fatherless boys from being exploited or otherwise abused. Sadly, though, as the prophets testify, the leaders of God's nation fell far short of those divine

requirements. For example, denouncing the princes of the famed city of Jerusalem, God said of them: **“Your princes are stubborn and partners with thieves. Every one of them is a lover of a bribe and a chaser after gifts. For a fatherless boy they do not render judgment; and even the legal case of a widow does not get admittance to them.”** – Isaiah 1:23

With the advent of Christianity the underlying principles of the Mosaic Law became the very foundation of the new form of worship Jesus instituted some 2,000 years ago. Summing up the essential requirements of the only acceptable form of worship in God’s sight, the letter of James succinctly states: **“The form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world.”**

Jehovah’s Witnesses have had the unique privilege of participating in what might be termed a religious revival. It has involved reviving long-lost biblical truths. Up until the last 100 years, or so, there had been little trace of the vital form of Christianity practiced by the apostles and early disciples. Over centuries the truth of Scripture had been effectively obscured by the false teachings of Christendom.

Then in the late 1800’s Charles Russell and the early Bible Students were privileged to rediscover the basic doctrinal foundation of Christianity and they were fired with the same sort of evangelizing zeal to publish their discoveries as were the apostles, on a scale never before seen since the original Pentecost. There are sound reasons to believe that Jehovah is responsible for the phenomenal success of the worldwide preaching work of Jehovah’s Witnesses up until now.

But bearing the name of Jehovah before the world brings with it an enormous responsibility and it ought to be understood that a Christian’s obligation before God is not limited to merely preaching and teaching, but as already stated, Jehovah expects, yes, he demands, that we practice justice and mercy in the form of looking after the proverbial orphans and widows in their tribulation.

Just as was the case with the ancient Jews who bore God’s name and covenant, any negligence or gross failure on the part of Jehovah’s Witnesses to uphold the foundational principles of true worship will have dire consequences. God does not change. Unfortunately, human nature does not change either. Sadly, tragically, the truth is the leadership of the Watchtower Society has followed the same degenerate path of the Israelite leaders in their failing to plead the legal case of the oppressed; in this instance the oppressed are the many sexually abused children of Jehovah’s Witnesses. As a consequence of the Society’s failure in this regard many have been stumbled from the truth and the name of Jehovah has been dishonored.

These are not the baseless accusations of “opposers” of Jehovah’s Witnesses, as some may imagine. It is a matter of public record. Undeniably, there have been literally thousands of children of Jehovah’s Witnesses, both boys and girls, who have been sexually molested and raped by men who are or were Jehovah’s Witnesses.

In recent years some have courageously decided not to remain silent any longer and have told their stories on television, in the mainstream press as well as on websites, such as [Silentlams](#). As of 2004, more than 2,000 of Jehovah’s Witnesses abuse victims had contacted the law office of [Love and Norris](#) and more than 6,000 had contacted Silentlams. No doubt many more have chosen to remain silent. Shockingly, a Bethel insider has revealed that the Society maintains a secret database with the names of over 23,000 pedophiles. Bethel insists the number is far fewer. However, a recent [court ruling in California](#) may force the Watchtower to open congregation judicial files, as well as Bethel’s database of abusers, to examination.

But the mere fact that Jehovah's Witnesses have a pedophile problem, as serious as it is, is not the *real* problem. More problematic is the Society's response to it. If you are an elder reading this open letter, chances are you know firsthand of incidents of sexual abuse within your own congregation or circuit. But have these crimes against children been handled properly? Think about it. Were the police or child protection agencies notified promptly? If not, why not? More importantly, were the victims satisfied with the outcome? Were they ministered to and comforted in the knowledge that justice had been served? And were steps taken to insure the safety of other children of the congregation who might be potential victims?

Realistically, of all the reported cases of child abuse among Jehovah's Witnesses, how many accused sexual predators are ever actually disfellowshipped? Given that the [Society requires two eye witnesses](#) to substantiate any accusation of sexual misconduct, in the lack of an outright confession of guilt very few abusers are ever put out of the organization. And even if they are, they may be quickly reinstated and the congregation most likely will never know the reason for the disfellowshipping in the first place. But given the fact that pedophiles are notorious recidivists does the Watchtower's policy of silence protect or endanger your children?

(It should be noted that Christians are not under the Mosaic Law, which required two or more witnesses to certain crimes. Christians are under the law of Christ. However, Jesus' statement on the subject should not be understood to mean that Christian law requires two witnesses to an actual offense before the congregation can take action. Rather he merely established a procedure for setting matters straight after an offense had been committed. Note that Jesus said: **"But if he does not listen, take along with you one or two more."** Is it reasonable to expect children to take along one or two to serve as witnesses to the crimes committed against them? Obviously, the independent witnesses are to bear witness to the fact that the offended party had tried to make peace with the offender. Also, Paul's injunction not to accuse an older man without multiple witnesses should not be rigidly applied in instances where the accusers are children and the accused are not older men. Would not such cases be occasions for elders to plead the legal case of the afflicted by giving their accusations more than a perfunctory consideration?)

The truth is the vast majority of accused child molesters are never disfellowshipped. Without a collaborating witness to the secret crimes of pedophiles, the perpetrators typically go unpunished and unexposed, while the victims are consoled with empty platitudes of "wait on Jehovah." In all of this the congregations are usually never alerted that a suspected child predator is in their midst. For that matter, the Watchtower has never published anything specifically warning parents to be on guard against the tactics of pedophilic predators that may be lurking from *within* the congregations.

Again, given the scope of child abuse, which the Society's own spokesman admits is "*a scourge of our time*," does the Watchtower's silence on this matter contribute to the protection of your children; does it raise awareness among parents, alerting them to the very real dangers posed by pedophilic "brothers," or does it conceal the true nature and extent of the problem and provide cover for the many child predators among Jehovah's Witnesses who operate in secrecy?

The Watchtower considers it a gross act of disloyalty to God for any of Jehovah's Witnesses to speak out about their own abuse or to warn others of a pedophile in the congregation. Indeed, Bethel's code of silence is enforced with a vengeance upon those who dare to speak out. Purportedly, there have been instances when victims have spoken to others of their abuse, or concerned friends have warned unsuspecting parents of the presence of a child predator in the

congregation, only to be disfellowshipped or rebuked for slander or otherwise intimidated into silence with the threat with judicial action.

Child protection advocates are dealt with ruthlessly. Most notably, former Bethelite, [Barbra Anderson](#), and long-time elder, [Bill Bowen](#), were summarily disfellowshipped for speaking to the media and exposing the Watchtower's child-endangering conspiracy of silence.

The Society's code of silence extends to the general public as well. How so? The Watchtower's public relations spokesman admits that the organization permits even known child predators to go out in field service, knocking on doors in the community. True, Bethel dictates that the pedophile must be chaperoned by another minister; but at a time when communities are demanding notification when convicted sexual predators move into an area, should we suppose the householders in the territory will feel secure in the knowledge that perhaps only one of a pair of Jehovah's Witnesses at their door is a pedophile? Is Bethel being socially responsible in allowing known child abusers to knock on the doors of unsuspecting householders, who often send their young children to answer the door for them? After all, Bethel encourages shut-in Witnesses who may be unable go door-to-door, to witness to their neighbors via letter writing and the telephone. Why, though, are pedophiles allowed to make face-to-face ministerial visits in the community? Should not love of neighbor be the guiding principle rather than the assumed ministerial rights of child abusers?

The Watchtower's [public relations video](#) insists that their child abuse policy has adequately protected our children. But the sheer numbers of abuse victims alone should cause us to question that claim. Sadly, because of the Watchtower's refusal to acknowledge that their policies may have contributed to the problem the courts of the Land are now being called upon to decide these issues. What a reproach on Jehovah!

It is not a question of whether Jehovah's Witnesses abhor child abuse, as the Society's spokesman assures the public we do. No doubt the vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses are disgusted by the sin of pedophilia. Most people are for that matter. But that is not the issue. From Jehovah's standpoint, the crucial question is whether his shepherds have taken up the legal cause of the oppressed. So, the question is: Has the leadership of the organization fulfilled their sacred duty to protect and comfort the most vulnerable? The Watchtower insists in the affirmative. But if Bethel has really pleaded the legal case of the sufferers, why would the plaintiffs seek legal redress for their anguish in secular courts? True to Hosea 10:4, the leaders of God's people **"make many promises, take false oaths and make agreements; therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field."** (NIV)

Take the case of [Vicki Boer](#), in Toronto: The unpleasant particulars of the case aside, the Watchtower admitted that the appointed elders were negligent. The judge agreed. It turns out, though, before the actual trial Bethel's lawyers had offered Vicki Boer an out-of-court settlement of \$50,000 dollars, which she declined. But why? Because the money came with a so-called gag order – hush money, which would have legally silenced Mrs. Boer and "gagged" her from speaking about her abuse publicly. Commenting on her decision, Mrs. Boer is quoted as saying: *"It has never been about money. If it were, I would have taken the offers. It is about a victim's right to tell their story and to let people know how the Jehovah's Witnesses treat victims of sexual abuse."*

As a [Watchtower article](#) on pedophilia even acknowledges, pedophilia thrives in the silence of the abused, and victims are psychologically harmed by the silence and secrecy. Part of the healing process may involve speaking about the crimes that have been committed against them. In view

of the fact that the Watchtower made the offer to Mrs. Boer, it is an admission of guilt on their part. Basically, Bethel has said, ‘Yes, our elders were negligent, and we will compensate you, but you must not speak about this publicly.’

Although gag orders are common in the legal world, essentially they amount to a bribe paid to the plaintiff – albeit a legal one. But here are a few questions to consider: Is it an honorable thing for the Watchtower’s Legal Department to offer hush money to an abuse victim in order to keep them from speaking out? Is justice served by such a course? Why not simply compensate the victim for their pain and suffering and leave it at that? Where is the integrity in this kind of backroom lawyering? Is this not indicative of an ongoing conspiracy on the part of the leadership of Jehovah’s Witnesses to impose their code of silence upon the abused? Moreover, although Vicki Boer is not an actual orphan or widow, has the Society honestly honored the spirit and principle embodied in the scriptural mandate to “*look after orphans and widows in their tribulation*”?

Ask any elder of Jehovah’s Witnesses if they are responsible to protect the brothers and sisters in their congregation from being abused or otherwise preyed upon by animalistic individuals and they will unhesitatingly affirm that to be true. Commendably, Bethel has endeavored to instill a deep sense of personal responsibility into each congregational shepherd. For example, here is a quote from the Watchtower magazine: “*Jehovah’s sheep need to be protected from other dangers as well. The ancient shepherd David fearlessly protected his father’s flock from predators. Today, too, occasions may arise when concerned Christian shepherds have to show courage in order to protect the flock from any who might mistreat or oppress Jehovah’s sheep, particularly the more vulnerable ones. Elders will be quick to remove from the congregation willful sinners who deliberately use trickery, deceit, and scheming in order to perpetrate wickedness.*” – Watchtower, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999

Now consider what the Watchtower’s legal team says as regards an elder’s responsibility to protect the flock. In a recent civil court case in New Hampshire, [Holly Berry Verses the Watchtower Bible and tract Society of New York](#), the Society’s lawyers claimed that congregation overseers bore no “*fiduciary duty to protect the plaintiffs from abuse.*”

According to the online encyclopedia, Wikipedia, “[fiduciary duty](#) is a legal relationship between two or more parties.” A fiduciary is a trustee. It doesn’t matter that the majority of judges of the Supreme Court of New Hampshire happened to agree with the Watchtower’s defense, and the legal jargon notwithstanding, do Christian elders have a duty – a sacred trust – to do everything in their power to protect children from abuse? All of Jehovah’s Witnesses know the answer to that question.

Of course Jehovah makes allowance for mistakes, but is it really a mistake or a result of mere negligence for lawyers representing the Watchtower Society before the court to deny that elders have a duty to protect our children or assert that there is not a special relationship between the shepherds and the sheep of the flock?

Incidentally, the judge and jury found Paul Berry’s crimes so heinous that he was sentenced to [56 to 112 years behind bars](#). Nevertheless, Paul Berry was evidently not disfellowshipped. The Watchtower reportedly even paid for his defense and fellow congregation members were urged to take the stand as “character witnesses.”

Sadly, the Society’s legal maneuverings in New Hampshire are by no means an anomaly. In an ongoing case in Texas of [Amy B. Verses Watchtower Inc.](#), as reported on by the plaintiff’s attorney, Kimberlee Norris, in [Law.com](#), the Society’s hired lawyer “*wrote in a motion for*

*summary judgment that his clients owed no duty to protect Amy B. from the crime of a congregant.”*

In the case of Amy B. the elders knew that Larry Kelly was an admitted abuser. However, they placed him in a position of responsibility anyway; assigning him to take the lead in conducting daily “field service arrangements.” As a result of the trust the elders placed in Brother Kelly, he won little Amy’s trust too and eventually he sexually abused her. As an elder, what is your opinion as to the Society’s claim that elders are not duty-bound to protect little ones from exposure to those whom they *know* have committed crimes against children? More importantly, what is Jehovah’s opinion?

Again, the guilt or innocence of the local elders is not the issue here. As tragic as their negligence was, the local elders are excusable. Men make mistakes. Everyone suffers an occasional lapse of judgment from time to time. No doubt the elders deeply regret they ever trusted Larry Kelly. The Society, on the other hand, bears a much heavier guilt. Their petitions to the courts are not a one time mistake by inexperienced overseers; but rather, their course is unquestionably the product of boardroom policy. And by their behind-closed-doors declarations that elders have no duty or responsibility to protect Jehovah’s sheep, they have calculatingly repudiated Christianity itself.

It is as if Bethel has two mouths. With one mouth they publicly instruct the elders of their scriptural duty to protect the flock. With the other mouth, which few of Jehovah’s Witnesses have ever heard, they quietly whisper in the courts that elders have no such duty. There is only one word to describe Bethel’s behavior – hypocritical! Presciently, Hosea 10:2 says of Jehovah’s organization: **“Their heart has become hypocritical; now they will be found guilty.”**

Now, let us consider the import of the prophecy of Hosea, where the prophet wrote: **“They have gone down deep in bringing ruin, as in the days of Gibeah.”** The sin and ruination “*in the days of Gibeah*” was not in reference to the actual sex crime that took place, as bad as it was. The Benjaminites brought ruin to their tribe by their own foolish refusal to allow justice to be done. Jehovah actually sanctioned their ruination. Later, in the days of the prophets, the Israelites “*went down deep in bringing ruin*” upon themselves too, by their unfaithfulness.

More significantly, Jehovah’s judicial decisions contained in the prophecy of Hosea are most relevant for God’s people in this era, evidenced by the fact that Hosea 3:4 places the ultimate outworking of the judgments upon the spiritual house of God as taking place in the prophetically designated period of “*the final part of the days*” – that is when Jehovah “*will remember their error*” and “*will give attention to their sins*” – and when a chastened remnant “*come quivering to Jehovah and to his goodness.*”

It should be obvious that no such judgment took place upon the house of God in 1918, or any time since then; nor is the prophecy applicable to Christendom. They do not constitute a spiritual house of God. Jehovah is yet to give attention to our sins – individually, as well as the sins of the nation-like organization under the direction of the Watchtower Society.

The Society’s guilt and the necessity of God’s discipline are evident: Instead of cooperating with the victims and vigorously prosecuting child predators; instead of warning parents of the true extent to which pedophiles lurk within the congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Watchtower has engaged in a conspiracy of silence and has gone to great lengths to pervert justice – “*as in the days of Gibeah.*” Instead of protecting and ministering to the tender lambs in the flock, the Organization has opened its considerable war-chest and is obviously prepared to spend millions

of dollars of donated funds to crush the legal cases of the afflicted. By their stubborn refusal to acknowledge any duty to protect, or any obligation to justly compensate the children who were raped under their neglectful watch, the leadership of the Watchtower Society has indeed “*gone deep in bringing ruin.*”

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Psalm is addressed to the “*sons of the Most High,*” who are referred to by the Psalmist as “*gods*” because of the godlike authority to judge, which Jehovah has graciously conferred upon them. Did not Paul remind the holy ones in Corinth that they were destined to judge angels, as well as matters of this life? At John 10:34 Jesus Christ quoted the Psalm and applied it to the Pharisees; but the Pharisees were not “*sons of the Most High*”; no, as Jesus said, their real father was the Devil. In reality the 82<sup>nd</sup> Psalm is a rebuke of the anointed sons of God living at the time immediately before the kingdom of God takes possession of the nations. That is why the concluding verse of the Psalm says: **“Do rise up, O God, do judge the earth; for you yourself should take possession of all the nations.”**

Jehovah is the ultimate judge, even of the anointed sons of God. Hence, the Psalm says: **“God is stationing himself in the assembly of the Divine One; In the middle of the gods he judges.”**

And why does the Divine One rebuke his own sons? Jehovah answers in verses 2-5: **“How long will you keep on judging with injustice and showing partiality to the wicked themselves? Be judges for the lowly one and the fatherless boy. To the afflicted one and the one of little means do justice. Provide escape for the lowly one and the poor one; out of the hand of the wicked ones deliver them.”**

Anointed Christians constitute a spiritual house of God – “*the assembly of the Divine One.*” True to the Psalm, those who are recognized as representing the anointed on the earth today promote policies for handling cases of child abuse that are unjust and show “*partiality to the wicked*” abusers. The Society has simply refused to be judges in behalf of “*the fatherless boy.*” Inarguably, they have failed to “*provided escape for the lowly one and the poor one,*” out from the clutches of the wicked one. That is why the Psalm goes on to say: **“They have not known, and they do not understand; in darkness they keep walking about; all the foundations of the earth are made to totter.”**

“*All the foundations of the earth are made to totter*” in the sense that the very foundational principles of Christianity, namely justice, righteousness and mercy, have not been practiced by those whom Jehovah has adopted as his own sons. Jehovah himself is now obligated to set matters straight.

Up until this very moment Jehovah has kept silent. But his keeping quiet should not be construed as an endorsement of the Society’s conspiracy of silence. Isaiah 42:14, the context of which is God’s reprimand of those whom he designates as witnesses of Jehovah, says: **“I have kept quiet for a long time. I continued silent. I kept exercising self-control. Like a woman giving birth I am going to groan, pant, and gasp at the same time.”**

Ironically, when Jehovah speaks he will put the organizational oracle and institutional mother of his people to silence, as Hosea 4:5-6 foretells: **“And you will certainly stumble in the daytime, and even a prophet must stumble with you, as at night. And I will put your mother to silence. My people will certainly be silenced, because there is no knowledge.”**

The wise Congregator once wrote, **“There is a time to keep quiet and a time to speak.”** Given his deep concern for the lowly and afflicted and the zeal he has for his own name and reputation, and the great damage and reproach the Watchtower’s conspiracy of silence has wrought, if there ever was a time for Jehovah to speak, it is *now*!

Sincerely, Robert King

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This is an open letter to Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Watchtower Society. It has been published on the Internet at <http://e-watchman.com> and mailed directly to congregations in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The blue underlined words represent hyperlinks on the Internet and when clicked on take the reader to referenced information.