

Schedule of Evidence

Regarding
Harmful Practices of Jehovah's Witnesses
That Are Not In the Public Benefit

For the attention of the Charity Commission of England and Wales

2nd August 2014

1. Mishandling of child sex abuse

The Watchtower organization is receiving increasing media exposure, both in the UK and elsewhere, for its negligent policies in relation to child sexual molestation. The following evidence will demonstrate why this is.

- A. **The book *Shepherd the Flock of God* (published 2010)** – a textbook for use ONLY by Witness elders – gives the following guidance regarding elders adjudicating over accusations of child abuse:
 - i. If one who is accused of child abuse denies the accusation, and there are fewer than two witnesses, elders are to “leave matters in Jehovah’s hands.” (page 72) (This is referred to as the “two-witness rule.”)
 - ii. Elders are to “immediately call the branch office for direction” (rather than the police) if they “learn of an accusation of child abuse.” (page 131)
- B. **A letter dated October 1st 2012 to all bodies of elders** details the following policies as an update to the aforementioned “Shepherd” book:
 - i. It reaffirms the “two-witness rule” policy of only accepting the testimony of two or more witnesses as a basis for taking action (per item 11: “although they investigate every allegation, the elders are not authorized by the Scriptures to take congregational action unless there is a confession or there are two credible witnesses.”)
 - ii. It states that the only means of circumventing the two-witness rule is if there are, instead of two witnesses, two victims of the same perpetrator (the so-called “two-victim rule,” per item 11: “If two persons are witnesses to separate incidents of the same kind of wrongdoing, their testimony can be deemed sufficient to take judicial action.”)
 - iii. It insists that the branch office has the authority to determine whether a child molester should be considered a “predator” or not, with parents warned

accordingly (per item 13: "The branch office, not the local body of elders, determines whether an individual who has sexually abused children in the past will be considered a 'predator.'")

iv. It further insists that a known child molester may still be considered, under certain circumstances, for senior positions of trust in a congregation (per item 22: "It cannot be said in every case that one who has sexually abused a child could never qualify for privileges of service in the congregation.")

C. A fax from Watchtower headquarters in New York to Betsan Powys of the BBC dated May 9, 2002 admits that the organization keeps "records" of those accused of child abuse. These records "include the names of many persons who have only been accused of child abuse whereas the charges have not been substantiated." (page 3)

D. The **Child Safeguarding Policy** for congregations in the UK dated January 2012 states that, in the event of an accusation of child abuse, elders will "arrange for contact to be made with a Safeguarding Elder at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses as soon as possible for guidance and direction." (item 11) It does not say anything about the Safeguarding Elder notifying the authorities of any such accusations in all instances.

2. Coercion of members to shun former members in breach of their human rights

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (as upheld by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights) recognizes a person's freedom to "change his religion or belief."

Since 1981, the Watchtower organization has made it impossible for Jehovah's Witnesses to leave their religion ("disassociate" themselves) without being punished. This punishment comes in the form of being shunned as though they are guilty of wrongdoing. (See item A below)

The practice of shunning is particularly applicable between family members, apart from in a very limited set of circumstances, such as between a husband and wife, or between parents and a child who is not yet old enough to leave home. Aside from these minor "loopholes," Jehovah's Witnesses are to avoid all contact with family members who are former members. Repeated coercion to this effect is to be found in Watchtower publications and lectures by senior officials in the organization.

Furthermore, those who conscientiously leave Jehovah's Witnesses, or who renounce their former beliefs, are classed as "apostates." The Watchtower organization urges that such ones be thought of as "mentally diseased."

A. **Watchtower magazine dated September 15, 1981:** "Persons who make themselves 'not of our sort' by deliberately rejecting the faith and beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses should appropriately be viewed and treated as are those who have been disfellowshipped for wrongdoing."

B. **Watchtower magazine dated July 15, 2011** (italics mine): "Suppose that a doctor told you to avoid contact with someone who is infected with a contagious, deadly disease. You would know what the doctor means, and you would strictly heed his warning. Well, *apostates are 'mentally diseased,' and they seek to infect others with their disloyal*

teachings. (1 Tim. 6:3, 4) Jehovah, the Great Physician, tells us to *avoid contact with them.* We know what he means, but are we determined to heed his warning in all respects?"

- C. **Watchtower magazine dated January 15, 2013:** "Do not look for excuses to associate with a disfellowshipped family member, for example, through e-mail."
- D. **Watchtower magazine dated April 15, 2012** (italics mine): "Consider just one example of the good that can come when a family loyally upholds Jehovah's decree not to associate with disfellowshipped relatives. A young man had been disfellowshipped for over ten years, during which time his father, mother, and four brothers "quit mixing in company" with him. At times, he tried to involve himself in their activities, but to their credit, each member of the family was steadfast in not having any contact with him. After he was reinstated, *he said that he always missed the association with his family, especially at night when he was alone.* But, he admitted, had the family associated with him even a little, that small dose would have satisfied him. However, because he did not receive even the slightest communication from any of his family, the burning desire to be with them became one motivating factor in his restoring his relationship with Jehovah. *Think of that if you are ever tempted to violate God's command not to associate with your disfellowshipped relatives.*"
- E. A **recording of a talk given at a US convention**, using an outline that was also used at conventions in the UK, in which a senior Watchtower representative named Steven Bell says the following by way of coercion (italics mine): "What does Jehovah expect out of us even if the situation is so painful that we have a family member who is disfellowshipped? What does he want? Loyalty, that's what Jehovah wants. *Jehovah knows that this is a difficult time in our life, but he wants loyalty. We have to put him before a father, a mother and even our children if they're disfellowshipped.* And if the disfellowshipping of our family is not bad enough, loyalty to Jehovah may mean we even have to endure reproach. We may be hurting because, 'I can't, can't talk to my family member.' And then someone walks up to us that we work with and said, 'I thought you were a Christian. *Why won't you talk to your children?*' Or the disfellowshipped person may say, 'My family kicked me out of the family.' However, remember, the wrongdoer changed his relationship with Jehovah and his family. *It was their actions that affected the family, not ours. If they would have remained faithful, the family would still be intact.*"
- F. A **recording of a talk by Governing Body member Anthony Morris III in Rome**, January 2012, in which he said: "The Bible does not say 'don't keep company with anyone unless it's one of your close relatives'. It does not say, 'well this is my daughter, this is my son that was disfellowshipped.' It doesn't say, 'Well you don't understand, this was my mother that was disfellowshipped, my father was disfellowshipped.' The Bible says ANYONE... If you haven't been loyal to the disfellowshipping decree, let that disfellowshipped one know you're going to change from today on and be loyal to Jehovah God."

3. Negligent policies regarding domestic abuse

According to Jehovah's Witness beliefs, a person cannot get a divorce unless his or her spouse is unfaithful. It is due to this teaching that spouses who suffer domestic violence are generally dissuaded from pursuing a divorce from their abusive partner. Indeed, they are urged to remain with him or her wherever possible, with separation (with no hope of remarriage) the only recourse available to a battered spouse.

Watchtower's approach of viewing the preservation of marital ties as being more important than the preservation of human life has resulted in material being published that encourages the blaming of the victim when it comes to physical violence, and promotes the idea of battered spouses persevering by being more 'Christian'.

- A. **The book *Shepherd the Flock of God* (published 2010), page 53:** "If the Christian is considering obtaining a divorce, the elders should explain that divorce does not free him to remarry unless adultery occurs. (Matt. 19:9) In addition, the extreme step of divorce may make it more difficult to reconcile."
- B. **Watchtower magazine dated May 1, 1975,** article entitled "My husband sometimes beats me. Should I get a legal separation or divorce because of it?": "The matter is a complex one, however, for both the husband and the wife could be in the wrong and contributing to the problem. Some times when a wife says that her husband abuses her, he claims that he is merely defending himself or trying to chastise her."
- C. **Watchtower magazine dated February 15, 2012** (italics mine): "Selma recalls a lesson she learned from the Witness who studied with her. 'On one particular day,' says Selma, 'I didn't want to have a Bible study. *The night before, Steve had hit me as I had tried to prove a point, and I was feeling sad and sorry for myself.* After I told the sister what had happened and how I felt, she asked me to read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. As I did, I began to reason, 'Steve never does any of these loving things for me.' But the sister made me think differently by asking, 'How many of those acts of love do you show toward your husband?' My answer was, 'None, for he is so difficult to live with.' The sister softly said, '*Selma, who is trying to be a Christian here? You or Steve?*' Realizing that I needed to adjust my thinking, I prayed to Jehovah to help me be more loving toward Steve. Slowly, things started to change.' After 17 years, Steve accepted the truth."

4. Coercion of members to decline medical treatment, esp. blood transfusions

The stance of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding blood transfusions is well documented. Notwithstanding this, here follows a few examples of some of the material published by Watchtower with a view to coercing members to decline medical treatment.

Please note the direct counsel given to parents that they are to coerce their children to decline treatment with blood.

It should also be noted that, to heap further pressure on Witnesses, elders are instructed to arrange the disassociation of anyone who “unrepentantly” accepts a blood transfusion, thus invoking the shunning punishments referred to earlier.

- A. **The book *Shepherd the Flock of God* (published 2010), pages 111 and 112:** “Willingly and unrepentantly taking blood. If someone willingly takes blood, perhaps because of being under extreme pressure, the committee should obtain the facts and determine the individual's attitude. If he is repentant, the committee would provide spiritual assistance in the spirit of Galatians 6: 1 and Jude 22, 23. Since he is spiritually weak, he would not qualify for special privileges for a period of time, and it may be necessary to remove certain basic privileges. Depending on the circumstances, the committee may also need to arrange for an announcement to the congregation: 'The elders have handled a matter having to do with [name of person]. You will be glad to know that spiritual shepherds are endeavoring to render assistance.' On the other hand, if the elders on the committee determine that he is unrepentant, they should announce his disassociation.”
- B. **1975 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses, page 224:** "As Christian witnesses of Jehovah, her parents, Darrell and Rhoda Labrenz, correctly viewed blood transfusion as a violation of God's law and thus opposed it. They were concerned about their baby's eternal welfare, for everlasting life is the prospect only of those adhering to God's laws."
- C. **Watchtower magazine dated April 15, 1970** (italics mine): "But suppose one's wife or child were near death. Giving blood, no matter who the loved one might be, would still constitute a violation of God's law. Just because one is near death, this does not give one liberty to break God's commands. When one is near death is no time to tamper with or violate the law of God, but a time to draw as near as possible to God by remaining faithful. Everlasting life is the reward for faithfulness. How foolish it would be to *gamble away the prospect of life eternal* for the very uncertain promise of a cure by blood transfusion!"
- D. **Internal newsletter *Our Kingdom Ministry*, dated December 2005:** “Are your children able to express themselves on this issue? Do they believe with all their heart that it is a divine command to ‘abstain from blood’? (Acts 15:29; 21:25) Can they explain their belief from the Scriptures? Would they courageously defend their firm decision about blood if doctors believed that their life was in jeopardy, even if their parents were not present? Since ‘time and unforeseen occurrence befall [us] all,’ how can you prepare your children for any unexpected challenge to their integrity... You have the responsibility to teach your children God’s view of blood.”
- E. The book **What Does the Bible Really Teach** (2005), **pages 130-131** (italics mine): "What if a Christian is badly injured or is in need of major surgery? Suppose doctors say that he must have a blood transfusion or he will die. Of course, the Christian would not want to die... Would a Christian break God's law just to stay alive a little longer in this system of things? Jesus said: ‘Whoever wants to save his soul [or, life] will lose it; but whoever loses his soul for my sake will find it.’ (Matthew 16:25) *We do not want to die. But if we tried to save our present life by breaking God's law, we would be in danger of losing everlasting life.*" *What Does The Bible Really Teach* (2005) pp.130-131

5. Coercion of young people to avoid higher education

Watchtower literature, which is both read and distributed by Jehovah's Witnesses, is strewn with coercive propaganda aimed at dissuading young people from pursuing higher education. Rather than bettering themselves by acquiring skills and knowledge through college or university, young people are encouraged to pursue a career as "pioneers" – unpaid literature distributors for Watchtower.

- A. **Watchtower magazine dated March 15, 1969:** "Many schools now have student counselors who encourage one to pursue higher education after high school, to pursue a career with a future in this system of things. Do not be influenced by them. Do not let them 'brainwash' you with the Devil's propaganda to get ahead, to make something of yourself in this world. This world has very little time left! Any 'future' this world offers is no future! Wisely, then, let God's Word influence you in selecting a course that will result in your protection and blessing. Make pioneer service, the full-time ministry, with the possibility of Bethel or missionary service your goal."
- B. **Awake! magazine dated May 8, 1989:** "A university degree may or may not improve your employment prospects. But one fact is indisputable: 'The time left is reduced'! (1 Corinthians 7:29) For all its presumed benefits, would four years or more in a university be the best use of that remaining time?" *Awake!* 1989 May 8 p.13
- C. **Watchtower magazine dated April 15, 2008:** "What, though, of higher education, received in a college or a university? This is widely viewed as vital to success. Yet, many who pursue such education end up with their minds filled with harmful propaganda. Such education wastes valuable youthful years that could best be used in Jehovah's service. (Eccl. 12:1) Perhaps it is not surprising that in lands where many have received such an education, belief in God is at an all-time low."
- D. **Internal newsletter *Our Kingdom Ministry*, dated July 2011:** "Your children will no doubt experience new challenges and pressures. ... Are they prepared for the pressure they will receive to pursue higher education, date, and use alcohol or drugs?"
- E. **Watchtower magazine dated June 15, 2014:** "When a young Witness does well in school, a guidance counselor, a teacher, or a fellow student may pressure the Witness to pursue higher education as a step toward success in this system of things. Or a young brother or sister who has athletic ability may find that recruiters try to entice him or her into a sports career... What about you? Rather than pursue worldly goals, why not firmly establish "your ways" before Jehovah by sharing in the pioneer ministry?"

6. Other material worthy of consideration by the Charity Commission

In carrying out their investigations of Jehovah's Witnesses and their legal entities in the UK, the Commission should note that there is a doctrinal rule among Witnesses, sometimes referred to as "theocratic warfare," whereby it is deemed acceptable to tell lies if doing so is advantageous to the religion.

The book *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume II, says (italics mine) "Lying generally involves saying something false to a person who is entitled to know the truth and

doing so with the intent to deceive or to injure him or another person.” It later adds, “While malicious lying is definitely condemned in the Bible, this does not mean that a person is under obligation to divulge truthful information *to people who are not entitled to it.*”

This is why there is doctrinally no problem for Jehovah’s Witnesses to mislead those outside their faith when under investigation or when applying for certain benefits, such as charitable status.

I have done my best to provide information that is most pertinent to your statutory inquiry and the issues raised in my complaint. If you require any further information, including PDFs or scans of the documents referred to above (or the recordings mentioned) please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,