

Why I Am No Longer a Jehovah's Witness

Alan Feuerbacher

This essay details the outstanding events that have convinced me that it is not to my advantage to be a Jehovah's Witness.

Family Background and Early Years

"Sudden terrors have been turned upon me; my noble bearing is chased like the wind, and like a cloud my salvation has passed away. And now my soul is poured out within me; days of affliction take hold upon me."

Those words from the Bible book of Job (Ch. 30:15-16; New World Translation) have haunted me for some 56 years. My Dad made me memorize them and another fifteen verses for my first "reading assignment", at the age of seven, in the Theocratic Ministry School. My Dad was a bit of a taskmaster, and I felt like Job's burden was on my shoulders as I tried to memorize them. "Read this phrase with emphasis like this!" my Dad would say with emphasis and often, irritation. No error was too small to overlook.

I was raised as a Jehovah's Witness, and was mostly active from long before my baptism at age 15 up through the mid-1970s. In the late 1970s through early 1980s, by fits and starts I became inactive. I became permanently inactive in 1983.

My family on both sides has long been involved with the Witnesses. On my mother's side there is an apocryphal story that my great-grandfather was contacted by the Bible Students around 1909, and that he declared to his wife, "I've found the truth!", and he promptly died. About 1930, my great-aunt got involved, and convinced many others in her extended family to become JWs. On my father's side, the story goes that my grandfather, around 1918, sat up all night on his porch protecting a colporteur from an angry, patriotic mob that had tarred and feathered him in their rural Oklahoma town. He never took to the Bible Students, but his wife joined a couple of years later, and got many of her children involved. She later professed to be of the anointed.

My dad went to Bethel in 1938 when he was about 21 years old. He quickly distinguished himself as a capable man, and eventually joined the Correspondence Dept., which later became the Service Dept. He answered all manner of incoming letters, and became a proficient typist. He also proved good at doing whatever his Bethel bosses assigned him in congregation activities. In 1946 he left to marry my mom, an attractive young woman nine years his junior. My brother and I came along five and six years later.

When my dad left Bethel to marry, Nathan Knorr ostracized him by not appointing him to any positions of responsibility. About five years later, Knorr apparently decided that the punishment had run its course, and my dad was appointed Congregation Servant of the newly formed Hempstead Congregation in New York.

During the 1950s, my dad spent a good deal of time at Bethel in Brooklyn, doing pre-convention work. He also did other kinds of work. Sometimes he would bring me or my brother to Bethel, where we might quietly play among the paper cuttings that dropped down into a pile from trimming magazines on the floor above. Several years, my dad headed up the Plumbing Department for several of the big 1950s conventions at Yankee Stadium.

About late 1958, Knorr came to our house on Long Island and appointed my dad to be the Congregation Servant for the troubled Bellmore Congregation. The servants there were basically incompetent, and my dad gradually fixed things to Knorr's satisfaction. My dad remained in that position until his health forced him to step down in the early 1960s.

After my dad stepped down, due to his health problems our family had severe economic difficulties, and my mom had to go to work. Our spirituality, as measured by JW activity, also suffered. During part of this time I would have been quite happy to quit being a JW altogether. At other times I was happy to be a JW because "we have the Truth!" When I turned 15, I started taking JW teaching more seriously, and in mid-1967 was baptized a couple of months before I turned 16. Looking back, I understand that this was mostly due to peer pressure.

Problems in the Spiritual Paradise

A couple of months after I got baptized, the Society came out with its ban on organ transplants. I strongly disagreed with the reasoning set forth as justification, and even discussed it a bit with my dad.

He was fully in agreement with the Society, and so I let the matter drop.

In 1968 I remember being electrified at the end of a Service Meeting when the Circuit Servant Anthony Conte, following the Kingdom Ministry, said, "Brothers! Do you know where we are in the stream of time? Do you realize that we're only 88 months from the end of six thousand years of man's creation?

Do you understand what that means?" Well of course, I knew very well what that meant—1975 was going to bring Armageddon! The Society had not directly said that, but had said it in so many words, and I understood that Brother Conte was emphasizing the date. This abrupt realization spurred me to reach out for more JW activity.

In 1968 the Society came out with its six-month Bible study program. The idea was that if a Bible student had not progressed to the point of at least coming to meetings after six months of study, he was to be dropped. The reasoning set forth was that JWs are so busy with preaching the good news of the Kingdom just before Armageddon that they shouldn't waste time on unappreciative ones. This did not set well with me, because even at age 16 I understood that people progress at different rates.

For the next couple of years, until I graduated high school, I vacation pioneered a number of times. I found that I did not like it. After I graduated, I continued doing that, but was unable to maintain a Bible study for the continuous six months needed to qualify as a regular pioneer. Within a year I gave up on the idea of regular pioneering and concentrated on getting a decent job.

For some years my parents rented out upstairs rooms to supplement their income. Mostly it was college students who rented. In 1967 they rented a room to a man of about 40, who was recently divorced and

had moved to Long Island. He was quite friendly, and my mom and we boys enjoyed talking to him on occasion. Eventually my mom began studying the Bible with him.

By mid-1968, my parents' marital troubles culminated with my mother getting involved with that roomer. The roomer had been coming to meetings for some time, and had struck up a friendship with the Bible Study Servant. They went out in service together often. In late 1968, my dad discovered my mom's infidelity and so she was disfellowshipped, the time allotted being specified as a minimum of three years. That quickly led to a divorce, which was finalized in mid-1969. The roomer was declared the equivalent of disfellowshipped for at least three years. In mid-1969 my mom married my stepdad. After three unpleasant years passed, and they did all that was required of them, they were reinstated. My stepdad soon became a much-loved elder.

When my parents were divorced, it became evident that my father was far more morally culpable than my mother for the situation. Further, he went around gossiping to all their former friends about how "badly" my mother had treated him all during the marriage. There was a bit of truth to that, but it takes two to tango. My brother and I spoke to the Congregation Servant, but he said that, because my father's actions were not disfellowshipping offenses, there was nothing he could do. But he also refused to counsel my father to stop his un-Christian gossiping activities. So my brother and I went in to Brooklyn

Bethel and spoke to the head of the Service Department, Harley Miller, who had been one of my father's friends during his days at Bethel. We explained the situation for about two hours. He, too, said there was nothing to be done. The episode left a sour taste in my mouth about so-called justice in "the Christian congregation."

When my mom was disfellowshipped, my grandparents let her live in an upstairs room. By this time, my brother and I had also moved to my grandparents' house and slept in a spare bedroom. We drove my beater of a car two towns over to finish high school, which I did in 1969. Apparently all this commotion spurred my grandparents to retire to Florida, which they did in the autumn of 1969. A few months later, my brother moved in with my dad, who by this time had remarried and moved to Massachusetts.

During the Christmas season of 1969-1970 my parents and I drove to Florida to visit my grandparents and other relatives. Now, since the 1930s, grandma had been an active JW, but grandpa never took to it.

But he was pressured by the family to become a JW. After moving to Florida, he began seriously thinking of doing it. He was very private and never discussed anything at all, much less his religious views, with me. But one day I found on the table by his easy chair a brochure from Herbert Armstrong's Worldwide

Church of God. I later found out that this church was very close to the JWs in doctrinal outlook. I read the brochure, and a couple of things it said severely pricked my conscience. It criticized the Watchtower Society for the six-month Bible study program, correctly stating that this was an abandonment of

Christian principles. It said that the effect was to produce "assembly line Christians", meaning JWs who had only a surface understanding of the Bible but whose beliefs and faith would not stand up under pressure. It said that the Watchtower Society, rather than producing witnesses for Jehovah, was producing "Watchtower Witnesses". I realized that all this was true, and it really pricked my conscience.

During the next couple of years, I tried immersing myself in congregational activities. I was asked to conduct the third Theocratic Ministry School, and to conduct the Watchtower Study, and even gave a

couple of instruction talks on the Service Meeting. This did not work out so well, though, because I am not a fluent speaker.

In March 1971 the Society published a Watchtower article which said that the human heart—the physical organ—was literally the seat of emotion. It held "conversations" with the brain, which was equated with the mind. Upon reading the article I became agitated, thinking this was among the most stupid things I had ever read. I thereupon decided that the Watchtower Society could not be trusted. I remember being out in service one day with my best friend, "placing magazines." He tried to explain to one woman about the article, and she reacted like he had two heads. I just wanted to melt into the sidewalk. I argued with my father about the article. He thought it was great and cleared up a lot of things. To top it off, the summer district assembly program included a demonstration where a giant green brain on one side of the stage lighted up and talked to a giant red heart on the other side. The dialog reflected the emotional side of a person arguing with the intellectual side. Within a very few years, the Society dropped this nonsense.

By about mid-1971, many things came together such that I wanted OUT. I had no idea what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go; I just wanted OUT. So I wrote down some silly plans to buy a motorcycle and tour the U.S., camping out along the way. My mom, still disfellowshipped, discovered the plans and confronted me. After much upset, I told her that I no longer wanted to be a JW. She and my stepdad told me that if I did not attend JW meetings, I could not live in their house. Realizing that I had received no job training as a young JW, and knowing that the pittance I made working at my current job would not pay for the smallest Long Island apartment, I was forced to submit to their wishes. As part of the deal, I had to begin a Bible study from square one with a young man a few years older than me.

So I studied the old Truth book all over again, and another one I can't remember. During the study, I carefully thought about the JW ransom sacrifice doctrine. It simply made no sense to me. How could killing the reconstituted Jesus possibly atone for the sin of Adam? If God could decide that that killing Jesus was sufficient, then why not just forgive and forget? If Johnny does something bad, does it make sense for a father to punish Bobby if Bobby says, "Dad, beat me instead of Johnny!" The young man who studied with me had no answers, and so I decided to just shelve the problem and move on. This was a big mistake. But I was trapped by economics and my own timidity in not doing what I knew was right.

In mid-1972 I began thinking harder about the Society's teaching that Armageddon would likely hit by 1975. I wanted to find the precise basis of the Society's reasoning. After reading all relevant Society publications, I realized that there was big hole in the reasoning. I understood all the details—Adam was created in 4026 BCE, move forward 6,000 years (accounting for no "zero year") and we get to 1975. The problem was: why pick 6,000 years as the amount of time to move forward? Why not 5,999 or 6,001?

Why not 4,000 or 10,000? I again read everything in Society publications I could get my hands on, found no answers, and concluded that picking the round number 6,000 amounted to just an assumption that the round number had any more significance than any other number. So I wrote a letter to the Society explaining all this, and asking for their comment. They wrote back and said that 6,000 years was indeed an assumption, but a good one, but they did not explain why. So I dropped the matter, but it never left my mind. I wish I had kept the letters. Over the next three years, as 1975 approached, I expected that the Society would act responsibly on their admission that 1975 was only an assumption based on speculation, but of course that never happened. When 1975 passed without incident, I understood on some level that the men who are in control of the Society are not especially interested in the truth.

Since then, I've learned that the 6,000 year idea can be traced back to antiquity. It appears in the writings of the early "church fathers", 2nd century BCE rabbinical writings, and Plato. Traces can even be found in 11th century BCE Zoroastrianism. Even Charles Taze Russell admitted that the idea was a "venerable tradition," but he held to it nonetheless.

During this time, while I was in my early 20s, like all normal young men, I very much wanted to get married, because that was the only way I could "legally" have sex. I was not able to find an appropriate partner until 1974. At that time, my stepdad got another job, and had to move to another town. Since I was doing well in the truth, he invited me to live with him and my mom, since there was plenty of space in their new place. We began attending the Manhasset Congregation and quickly became friendly with many people. Almost immediately, I met a young lady. We quickly became friendly and within about six months were engaged. We got married in June, 1975. For several years I had worked as a bank teller. The job did not pay well, and had no interesting prospects for the future so far as I was concerned.

In August, 1975, I attended a District Convention at the Aqueduct Racetrack in New York City. Nathan Knorr gave the concluding talk on Sunday. He spoke about the fact that 1975 had not brought any events that the Society had convinced most JW's to expect. He said not to lose hope, that Jehovah can do an amazing number of things in a short time, and after all, there were still more than four months to go in 1975. Of course, nothing happened.

Not long after getting married, I was appointed a ministerial servant, and assigned to handle the accounts. That fit well with my bank experience. I was not consulted about the appointment beforehand; the Presiding Overseer (one of the old school, a former Congregation Servant, Company Servant and personal friend of GB member Theodore Jaracz) simply announced after a Service Meeting that I had been appointed. I was rather irritated, but kept my mouth shut.

Over the next several years I became increasingly uncomfortable with the failure of the 1975 expectation. Unbidden, visions kept popping up in my mind about what life would be like in thirty years, when Armageddon still had not come. Looking back, I really had no faith left in the Society.

During this time an incident occurred that was to have a major negative impact on my confidence in Watchtower teaching. A friend in the congregation, a young man a bit younger than me, had supported himself by mowing lawns while pioneering. After he got married, he gradually worked that into a landscaping business, and began hiring young men. He was naïve about business requirements and failed to do all the necessary tax work for the people he hired. At one point, a much older man, a JW elder, found out about the tax slip. Apparently there had been bad blood between the families for a long time, so this elder attempted to have my friend disfellowshipped for breaking Caesar's law. The body of elders, which included my stepdad, should have ended the matter then and there, because according to

Watchtower Society policy, whether someone fulfills all of Caesar's requirements is not the elders' business. But the elders deliberated time after time for six months, acting like the Keystone Kops. At one point they decided to disfellowship, then rescinded that, then went for private reproof. I found out about all this when the matter was about 2/3 finished. Finally the Society was called in, which called in yet another elder body, which decided that the matter never should have been brought up to begin with, since it is not the congregation's business whether someone handles their taxes properly.

I asked my stepdad about what was going on, and he sheepishly told me. That got me thinking seriously about whether elders really are appointed and directed by holy spirit, as the Society had always taught. If these elders really had the holy spirit's backing when making their decisions, then why the Keystone Kops behavior? So I asked my stepdad and several other elders to explain all this. They were unable to explain anything to my satisfaction, so I wrote the Society about all this, and so it was arranged that the Circuit Overseer, one Wesley Benner, would explain things to me. We spoke for an hour at my parents' home, and he certainly cleared things up for me. Benner explained that when the Society said that elders are appointed and directed by holy spirit, that was only a matter of speaking. As long as the men who actually appoint them go strictly by the Bible's standards for appointing elders, then because the Bible is inspired by holy spirit, it can be said that, in effect, holy spirit has appointed or directed the elder.

That did not set well, because that is not the impression one gets from reading Watchtower publications. Rather, the clear implication is that God himself directly appoints elders, and even directly guides them to correct decisions. So I asked Benner if I could summarize the Society's teaching, and said that he should tell me whether I understood. I asked him point blank: "In one sentence, is it or is it not true that elders are *directly* appointed by holy spirit?" He hesitated, hung his head, and answered, "No."

Naturally, this further damaged my confidence in the Watchtower Society, since they were technically telling the truth that elders are not appointed by holy spirit, but using slick, deceptive language to imply an out-and-out falsehood that they knew the rank and file would blindly accept. The goal, of course, was to reinforce the Watchtower Society's authority in the community of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The fact that the Society is deceptive in this matter was proved to me unassailably some years later.

After I became permanently inactive, I had a conversation with my stepdad about my irritation that the Society was still teaching this deceptive thing, as shown by a recent Watchtower article. I showed him the exact language that Benner had used years earlier to explain to me why elders are not actually appointed by holy spirit, but my stepdad was so immersed in Watchtower-think that he simply would not see it.

College

After my conversation with Benner, I had little enthusiasm for JW activities, and I went in service as little as I could get away with. I continued having visions of a black future, with no relief in sight. Then in the spring of 1978, I visited my in-laws. My father-in-law had never been a JW, and I laid out my concerns for my future before him. Being a research chemist at Kodak, he said that I should seriously consider college.

I told him that I didn't see how that was practical, given that I had been out of high school nine years by then, and had no money to speak of. Besides, my wife, as an apparently strong JW, probably wouldn't go for it. He said that on our trip home I should breach the subject and see what she said. He knew his daughter better than I did, and she was willing to help me go the college route for four years.

Apparently she was used to the nice creature comforts her dad had provided, and she made it clear to

me that she'd be happy to help get them again. So we immediately made plans for me to go to a local community college and see how it worked.

So in the fall of 1978 I began taking science and engineering courses at Nassau Community College on Long Island. Due to the heavy class schedule and the fact that I continued to work 30 hours a week part time, I had little time for JW activities and became inactive. My wife was unhappy about that, but we both figured that was temporary. I did well enough in school that several teachers suggested I transfer to a better school as soon as possible. So I put in applications at half a dozen good engineering schools, and to my astonishment was accepted at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge). In the summer of 1979 we moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where my wife got a secretarial job at MIT. I began attending classes that autumn, taking courses that led to an electrical engineering degree.

Almost immediately upon arriving in Cambridge, after getting my living arrangements settled and before starting classes, I began trying to contact any professors who might shed light on a question that was burning in my mind: What was the view of real scientists about the thousands of quick-frozen carcasses of mammoths and other ancient and mostly extinct large animals so often found in the Arctic? I assumed that such an archeological problem would be of great interest to them. But I quickly found that they had no idea what I was talking about.

Why was I interested in the question of "quick-frozen mammoths in the Arctic" and such? Because I had been taught by the Watchtower Society, as long as I could remember, that this was definite proof of the historicity of Noah's Flood. As far back as the 1940s the Society was teaching that "quick-frozen mammoths" and such must have been the products of freezing winds that accompanied Noah's Flood. It sounded so reasonable to a naïve young man with a scientific bent.

When I found that real scientists had no idea about what the Watchtower Society had long been claiming as irrefutable proof of Noah's Flood, I suspected that something was very wrong. It took me some time to figure out exactly what that was. On the question of why there were "thousands of quick-frozen mammoths in the Arctic," I found that the entire notion was wrong. While plenty of bones and tusks and other remains have been found, there have been only a handful of documented frozen mammoth carcasses found in the last couple of hundred years. Most were not "quick-frozen" but were either completely decayed or decayed to the point of emitting an extreme stench—including and especially the famous "Berezovka mammoth" found in 1899 and now on display in the Leningrad Museum. To this day the Society cites this mammoth as proof of Noah's Flood.

The Society has often said that a college education is unnecessary and dangerous. It speaks disparagingly of any young JW who decides to go to college rather than pioneer. During my first year at MIT in 1979/80, I got to feeling pretty bad about what was being said in The Watchtower about college goers, and on a number of occasions I complained to my parents about it. On one occasion, my wife and I visited my parents on Long Island, and it so happened that Governing Body member Albert Schroeder was visiting them for the weekend. Since I was feeling resentful about the Society's comments on going to college, my parents suggested that Schroeder and I have a talk. He was very friendly, and we had a nice conversation. To my surprise, he told me that I shouldn't pay too much attention to what the Society said in print about college, and that if it was right for me, I should be satisfied. This placated me for some time.

In my second semester at MIT I took an anthropology course for which a term paper was required. I decided to combine my interest in Noah's Flood with this requirement by writing a paper showing that Noah's Flood was a real historical event. I planned to concentrate on Flood legends but also consider physical effects. Watchtower publications dealing with the Flood contained many references to secular publications, and I figured that the MIT library would have most of that material on hand. It did, but I was hardly prepared for what I found—many of the references in Watchtower literature were from worthless popular accounts (although the impression was given that these were of real scientific value), or were quoted out of context, or were otherwise a misrepresentation. Some references were handled in such a way that the reader was led to believe they said the opposite of what they actually did.

For example, in a number of publications the Society claimed that mammoths had often been found "quick-frozen" in the Arctic in virtually perfect condition. A picture of the famous 1899 discovery of the Siberian Berezovka mammoth, the remains of which are now on display in a Leningrad museum, was sometimes set forth in support of this claim (cf. *Creation*, p. 203). The picture is taken from the Smithsonian Institution Annual Report for 1903, which contains an extensive report on the recovery of the mammoth's remains. But a perusal of this report shows that, far from being "quick-frozen", the mammoth was largely rotten by the time it froze solid, so that only the outermost parts, such as the shoulder and neck and head, were frozen in an unrotten condition. But even these were so foul that only the sled dogs would touch the meat. This report, then, completely contradicted what the Society had claimed for decades about such finds in the Arctic. Other references cited by Watchtower writers were often of the quality of today's *Weekly World News*.

Because the majority of references in the Watchtower literature I looked at were misrepresented in some way, I could not honestly use them in my paper. I gave up on the Flood theme and thought that writing a defense of creation against evolution would work well, so I looked up references on that topic in Society publications. I used the books *Did Man Get Here By Evolution or by Creation*, *Is the Bible Really the Word of God?*, and various Watchtower and *Awake!* articles. But I found the same problem with these references—ones that were supposed to knock down evolution—as I had found with those used to support the Flood. Since the end of the school term was rapidly approaching, I nearly panicked, but managed to find a book written by a lawyer (*Darwin Retried*, Norman MacBeth), which used quotations from various scientists to criticize evolution, but without distorting them. This was barely adequate to let me write the paper in a way I found to be scholastically honest and pass the course. This experience further eroded my opinion of Watchtower scholarship and scholastic integrity.

When a person who had been taught from childhood to respect an authority discovers that that authority is dishonest, he loses all respect for it, and there is no turning back. The instances of dishonesty cannot be overturned, and only a complete turnaround on the part of the offending authority can begin to restore that person's confidence in the authority. Of course, such a turnaround is an explicit admission that the authority has been dishonest. When that authority claims to speak for God, one is forced to understand that the authority cannot have been speaking for God. In plain language: by their dishonesty, Watchtower leaders have proved that they do not speak for God. Watchtower writers have been at the forefront of this dishonesty.

During all these years, I kept finding information from a wide variety of sources that suggested that my religion was not what it claimed to be, and in particular that my religious organization was not telling

people the truth about many things related to science. In the manner of so many people who don't want to face unpleasant facts, I kept telling myself that, after college was done, I could attack and solve all the things that were giving me trouble with my faith. Little did I know how severe those things would prove to be.

Once I realized that Watchtower writers had consistently deceived me for decades, I was motivated to find out whether there was such a thing as Noah's Flood. I gradually found that Noah's Flood is a myth. Due to the press of coursework at MIT, I had to put this off until I graduated.

The Early Oregon Years

Upon graduating from MIT in the spring of 1982, I landed a job at a high-tech engineering company called Tektronix, in Beaverton, Oregon, and we moved there in July. I thoroughly enjoyed my work and worked quite a bit of overtime. My wife and I immediately immersed ourselves in congregation activity, JW-related and social. I began going in service again (I still hated it), and joined the Theocratic Ministry School. I had promised my wife during college that I would give the Witnesses another try, and I did my best to put away my misgivings. But it was not to last.

In October, 1982 the Society published an Awake! article that argued that the design of plants and animals strongly argues in favor of an intelligent creator. That made sense to me, since I knew almost nothing of the theory of evolution and had been steeped in JW teaching since childhood. But a serious problem arose when the article argued that Adam and Eve's sin caused many animals to adapt themselves differently and turn into predators. How they were supposed to "adapt" themselves this way was not explained. The more I thought about it, the more ridiculous the argument sounded.

I suspect that the Society got reamed about this, because a few months later they printed a couple of readers' responses that pointed out how stupid these arguments were. The printed reply skirted the questions and lamely concluded, in effect, "We don't know what we're talking about but we believe the Bible." This angered me greatly, not only because of the Society's obvious gross incompetence that was being paraded as "Bible knowledge," but because of the implications for the supposed loving-kindness of God toward his creation. A God who deliberately creates predators along with the accompanying suffering is not a loving God.

A variety of things that I read in Watchtower literature continued to make less and less sense, and my initial enthusiasm for getting back into the JW swing of things waned. My irritation with various teachings took a big step in the summer of 1983 at the District Convention. A Brother Combs from Bethel gave a talk that praised young people who pioneered rather than going to college. He related that one young man gave up pioneering to go to college to study computers. Combs virtually spat out the word to emphasize his distaste for it. I thought that was incredibly hypocritical, because at that time the Society was bragging to the JW community how wonderful its computerized MEPS system (a multi-language typesetting system) was in furthering Jehovah's work. That was just about my last straw.

The last straw came half a year later, when I was sitting in a car group in service with three other JW men. We did a couple of hours of not-at-homes on a rainy day, accomplishing virtually nothing, but having a nice chat. Toward the end of the allotted service time, I thought to myself, "What am I doing here? Here I am, sitting in this car, getting out every 15 minutes and confirming that the not-at-home is

still not at home. I'm not doing this anymore!" And that was that. I never went in service again. In short order I told my wife that I was no longer going in service and that I would attend only some Sunday meetings. She was upset, but I was determined.

For a few years more I immersed myself in my work, attending fewer and fewer Sunday meetings, but always going to the District Conventions. In 1985 my only child was born. How that happened is somewhat of a mystery, but I'm glad it did.

During these years I did a little bit of research on Noah's Flood, and began to realize how little evidence there was for it and how much there was against it. I did no serious research, though. One thing I learned was that the Society's traditional teaching about certain aspects of the Flood—at least, the tradition I had grown up with—namely, that there were no ice ages, but that evidence that scientists interpreted in terms of ice ages was really evidence for Noah's Flood. In other words, all of the landform features that scientists said were carved by glaciers were really carved by the waters of Noah's Flood.

Now, from the early 1970s I had continuously subscribed to Scientific American magazine, and from time to time this presented articles on the amazing discoveries being made since the 1950s about physical mechanism of the ice ages. So by the mid-1980s I knew that the Society's tradition about this was completely wrong. I had no idea what to do with this information—who might I tell about it?—and so I put it all on hold again.

During this time I often traveled up the Columbia Gorge which separates Oregon and Washington. About 30 miles east of Portland is a tourist stop at a beautiful, 600-foot high waterfall called Multnomah Falls.

The water cascades over a 600-foot high cliff cut into ancient basalt lava flows. A tourist information board explained that the cliff had been cut out by ice age floods that came down the Columbia River. That almost electrified me, and I eventually bought a book that explained all the geology of these ice age floods. I realized that if relatively small ice age floods could cut a huge gorge like that I often drove through, surely a huge global flood would do far more damage. This book contained pictures of the incredible, flood-cut landscape of Washington east of the Cascade Mountains. I had not yet visited there, but eventually I would, and was astounded.

At the summer District Convention in 1985, the Society released its new book on creation versus evolution, *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution Or By Creation?* There was enough hype that I eagerly looked forward to reading it, hoping that this time the Society would deal honestly with source references, in contrast with its earlier books. Upon getting the book, I read the whole thing in a day.

Much of it seemed reasonable to my naïve mind, but a few things did not seem quite right. Another six years would pass before I found out why.

In 1986 my wife and daughter and I traveled east to visit family. While there, we visited a JW friend from college days. We had been very friendly and had kept in touch. We got on the subject of my spirituality, and that led to my explaining my problems with Noah's Flood. He suggested writing to a JW who had written a 100-page essay defending the Society's views about there being no ice ages and such. I wrote, and the man sent back a brief, apologetic reply explaining that his essay was no longer valid because the Society had changed its teaching on all that. He explained that sometime in the early 1980s, the Society

(no clue who in Bethel this was; apparently the Writing Dept. as a whole) changed its view on all this, and now admitted that ice ages and all manner of other things it had denied existed really did happen.

This became yet another nail in the coffin of Watchtower honesty. How could such a major change not be clearly explained in the publications? The obvious answer involves saving face, and not wanting to lose members who realized they had been taught falsehoods for decades.

By the late 1980s my wife was pressing me to resolve my problems with the Flood and other things, and so she asked a man who we had become friendly with to try to answer my questions. I'll call him Brother Love. This man and his wife had been in Bethel for some years, but they left due to her health issues. He came to my home and we discussed various Flood issues for a few months. It became evident to both of us that he had no answers, and that it was a waste of time to continue our discussions. He left me with a suggestion that turned out to be extremely useful: I should write a letter to the Society detailing my misgivings. I had no idea at the time how useless that would be, but I kept it in mind. It was another several years before I began seriously thinking of acting on it.

Around this time, my wife asked the Circuit Overseer, one Don Amy, to come to our home and talk to me about my spirituality and the Flood. I told him the reasons that the Society's tradition about a "vapor canopy" that supplied much of the Flood waters was physically impossible. I pointed out that such a canopy would of necessity form a spherical shell of water vapor around the entire earth. There was only one way it could be supported, short of miraculous intervention, which the Society had always ruled out: by the pressure of the air underneath it. But if the vapor canopy contained enough water to flood the earth to a depth of thousands of feet, then the weight of all that water weighing down on the clear air below it would produce an extreme pressure at the earth's surface—a pressure dozens of times higher than in today's atmosphere. That extreme pressure would require all manner of physical modifications in the atmosphere itself, and/or in plants and animals for them to survive. In particular, the percentage of oxygen would have to be much lower, or animals would suffer oxygen poisoning. That is why deep sea divers breathe a mixture of compressed helium and oxygen, with the oxygen at a much lower percentage than the 21% in air at normal atmospheric pressure.

I could see that Brother Amy didn't really follow any of this, but he finally commented, "Maybe the water was liquid and in orbit." I pointed out that that was physically impossible, because if a shell of water were in orbit, only the equator of rotation could be at the proper orbital velocity to stay up. If God miraculously installed such a shell in place and started it orbiting as a continuous mass, every bit of it except at the equator of rotation would immediately fall down, because the orbital velocity would decrease to zero at the poles of rotation. Amy was not able to grasp this, and so we ended the conversation.

The Late Oregon Years

In late 1990 I suffered a nearly burst appendix, and had to spend a couple of weeks at home recuperating. During this time, I began doing more research about the Flood, with a mind to writing a letter to the Society as Brother Love had suggested. I continued that research, with increasing intensity, for the next few years.

Initially I planned on a letter of perhaps 30 pages, but as my research progressed and I wrote down all that seemed relevant, the material quickly exceeded that. When I completed the first round of writing after about six months, I had 150 pages of material. I realized that there was no way the Society would deal with that much material, so I gave up on that idea. Eventually I did write several much shorter letters about other topics, but the Society answered just one, and that only after I called in a favor from a prominent Watchtower official who had stayed at my home in the late 1980s. This letter concerned problems with the ransom sacrifice doctrine; the answer was basically, "do not ask unprofitable questions."

By the beginning of summer in 1991, I had finished a first draft of my essay on the Flood, and so I decided to look carefully at the Society's 1985 book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution Or By Creation?* I found as many source references as I could, by going to several local libraries, by inter-library loan, and by buying the source references. I also began educating myself in the intricacies of evolution, as well as in what various believers in creation had written. After a year of writing, I had an essay that detailed the nearly one hundred instances of misrepresentations and misunderstandings in the book.

During these years, I sometimes discussed my misgivings, in a limited way, with my parents. In late 1991, my mother challenged me to investigate the fulfillment of Bible prophecy with respect to 1914 and the "last days." I began to do so, but also began for the first time to look at what JW critics had to say. I went to a Christian book store and found some interesting looking books. One was *Crisis of Conscience* by Raymond Franz. Another was *Witnesses of Jehovah* by Leonard Chretien. This book put me on to the 1985 edition of Carl Jonsson's excellent *The Gentile Times Reconsidered*, which showed how well the Bible and secular history match up with respect to the Jewish Exilic period, but also showed that the Watchtower Society's Bible chronology is completely wrong.

Somehow I also got in contact with Randall Watters, who eventually started the *Freeminds* website. Watters put me in contact with a man whose wife had recently become a JW and was influencing their two teenagers to become JWs. The man had read the *Creation* book and, as a knowledgeable technical person, was appalled at the number of misrepresentations in the book. So he put together an essay, complete with source references, detailing why the Society's references were misrepresentations. He showed the material to his teenagers, and they immediately quit their association with JWs. I used this essay extensively in my own critique.

When I began looking at the *Creation* book's references, I began with ones that just didn't look right. In most cases, my suspicions were confirmed that the reference had been misrepresented or misunderstood in some fundamental way. This was just a continuation of the Society's dishonest scholarship from years before. After a while I began looking at every reference. It became almost a game:

I would look at a statement in the *Creation* book, try to guess what might be wrong with it, and then read the source reference. Often as not, I was right.

I was appalled at the level of scholastic dishonesty in the *Creation* book. In a number of cases, the source reference said exactly the opposite of what the Society's author had claimed. In other cases, the Society's writer completely misrepresented or misused what the reference said, or left out critical information that would have thrown completely different light on the writer's claim had the reader been properly informed. Over the years, I've found about 110 such misrepresentations in the book.

Sometime in 1992, my parents suggested that I write to my uncle with my questions. He had been a missionary for most of his life, serving in several places in South America, and I believe that he was at that time the Branch Overseer for Colombia. My parents viewed him as most knowledgeable. So I wrote, asking him to answer a number of questions, including detailed ones about the Society's Bible chronology. A year later I got a reply from him that said that he had tried to answer my questions, but scrapped his attempt after realizing that the answers would not satisfy me. His final answer was no answer at all, but a statement that he was a lifelong JW because it made him happy. Nothing I didn't already know.

In 1992, I began contacting various prominent critics of Jehovah's Witnesses. At a meeting of evangelicals in Oregon in 1992, I first met James Penton, the author of *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*. He struck me as a kind, loving, grandfatherly man, quick with his wit and his emotions. We've become good friends over the years. Also in 1992, I stayed overnight with Raymond Franz, author of *Crisis of Conscience*. I was impressed by his calm intelligence and loyalty to his belief in the Bible. I began corresponding with Carl Olof Jonsson, the brilliant researcher who publicly blew the whistle on the Society's failed 1914 chronology in his books *The Gentile Times Reconsidered* and *The Sign of the Last Days: When?* I've helped him a bit in various research projects from time to time. What has struck me most about these men is their integrity and devotion to the truth—quite in contrast to "Society men."

After completing my critique of the Creation book, I very much wanted to find out who was the author. In 1996, after talking with several former Bethelites, I discovered who he was: one Harry Peloyan, a long time Bethelite who for many years was the editor-in-chief of *Awake!* magazine. While visiting relatives in New York, I went into Brooklyn Bethel and managed to get Peloyan to come down to the lobby of the main headquarters building at 25 Columbia Heights. He had apparently farmed out the writing of the book to a number of JWs, so he was really the compiler and editor of the book, which he more or less admitted to. We talked for over an hour. He became hostile when he found that I wanted to discuss some of my criticisms of his book, and after a few minutes he kept threatening to walk away. But he always wanted to have the last word, and so, after walking a few steps away, he kept coming back at me with what he thought were good rejoinders. I finally nailed him down on one point, though, after a few back-and-forths: I asked him about the misrepresentation of Richard Lewontin in his book. He said, "Was the quote correct?" Of course, the quote did repeat the quoted words exactly. I said, "But the point is that you made Lewontin appear to say exactly the opposite of what he did say." Peloyan refused to admit of a problem with this. I said, "Think of it this way. Suppose that a Watchtower article talking about evolution said, 'Evolutionists claim that evolution is true.' Suppose that I then wrote an article about the Society's abandoning creation and wrote, 'The Society now says that "evolution is true"!' Even though I quoted the Society's exact words, would I have told the truth?" Peloyan just stared at me and refused to answer. I said, "See, you DO understand why your quoting practices are dishonest." At that point he did walk away about ten feet, then returned and had more hostile words for me. I thoroughly enjoyed putting that dishonest man on the spot.

In the fall of 1992, my parents agreed to forward a short list of difficult questions to someone in Bethel, who had promised some answers. I didn't know at the time who their Bethel contact was, but have since learned that the questions were given to Governing Body member Albert Schroeder. I heard nothing for some six months, and finally asked my stepdad if he had heard anything back. He said that the Bethel contact had read the questions and decided that at least one was an "apostate question" and therefore

that he would not deal with any of them. I was angry that he hadn't the decency to inform me of this on his own, even though Schroeder had responded within a few months. It was obvious that he was embarrassed by the lack of substantive response. Because of this statement that I was asking "apostate questions," my mother complained about my doing so. I asked her how a sincerely asked question, no matter what it was, could be "apostate." She couldn't answer. Then I said, "Mom, is it possible to be an apostate if you only speak the truth?" She said, "I refuse to answer." I asked why. "Because I can see where you're going with that question." I was extremely disappointed in that answer, for obvious reasons. It gradually dawned on me that most JW's are exactly the same way—they know that some of the Society's teachings are nonsense, but refuse to take the obvious step of doing something about it. So they pretend to themselves not to have seen such questions. A completely Orwellian response—"doublethink," "crimestop," and all that.

Sometime after this, I talked on the phone with mother about some of my JW issues. I complained that every JW I tried to get to answer my questions was stonewalling. She said that no one was stonewalling. I said, "Well how come I'm not getting any answers?" I brought up the fact that their Society contact (Schroeder) had refused to answer, and that my Watchtower Official uncle gave only a lame, substanceless reply to my heartfelt letter, and that the Society failed to respond to a number of letters, and that she and my stepdad couldn't or refused to answer any number of hard questions. I said, "Mom, how would you deal with one of your Bible studies who asked the same questions that I'm asking?" She said, "Well, I'd try to convince them to put aside their questions, and complete the study and get baptized." I said, "Ok, fine. How would you then deal with the questions you asked them to put aside?" She said, somewhat emphatically, "Well! I'd think that by then they'd have enough sense not to ask them anymore!" I said, "Mom, do you realize what you just told me?" She said, "What?" I said, "You just told me not only that you'd stonewall your Bible study, but you would actually lie to them." She said, "I can't deal with this!" and handed the phone to my stepdad. So it was obvious to me that, even people as supposedly respectable as my parents would not hesitate to lie to people to put off their questions and to get naïve prospective converts to commit themselves to "Jehovah's organization" on false pretenses.

The Internet Years

By mid-summer, 1992, I had completed a first draft of my critique of the Creation book. About that time, a co-worker sat down at my desk and we chatted about my recent writing experience. He told me that a major debate about the book was happening on a couple of Usenet newsgroup forums. I had no idea what that was, so he showed me how to access these newsgroups. So in August, I began reading the debates going on in the newsgroups talk.religion.misc and talk.origins.

I soon joined the debates, and contributed posts using excerpts from my Creation book critique. The various JW apologists were very much on the defensive, and could not answer most of the challenges put to them.

Eventually my participation in these debates expanded to debating with JW apologists about all manner of Watchtower Society offenses and false teachings. This was mainly on the newsgroup talk.religion.misc. I tried to be objective, and sometimes even defended certain JW doctrines such as on the trinity.

As time passed and various people started JW-oriented email-based discussion lists apart from Usenet newsgroups, I participated in them. When the World Wide Web came into existence, JW-oriented discussion boards came along. In 1997 I joined the new H2O (Hourglass Outpost) forum, and have contributed to a number of web forums since then.

In the summer of 1993, based on input from a cousin who had close ties with certain Governing Body members, I decided to try to contact the Governing Body directly to get some of my criticisms of WTS teachings addressed. With help from my parents, who are personal friends of GB member Albert Schroeder, I forwarded a letter to Schroeder asking him for an opportunity to discuss these things. Eventually he agreed to a telephone conversation, and in late November 1993, on a Sunday afternoon, we spoke for about 2 1/2 hours. I raised enough problematic issues, that he saw were real problems, that he agreed to address them in writing.

For example, I asked Schroeder to explain how the Society reconciled Jeremiah 25:11, 12 with its 607-1914 chronology. In the New World Translation, this reads: " 'And all this land must become a devastated place, an object of astonishment, and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it must occur that when seventy years have been fulfilled I shall call to account against the king of Babylon and against that nation,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'their error, even against the land of the Chaldeans, and I will make it desolate wastes to time indefinite.' "The point I made was that verse 12 clearly states that **after** the 70 years had been fulfilled, Jehovah would call to account against Babylon.

Obviously, that calling to account occurred in 539 B.C., when Cyrus conquered Babylon and killed King Belshazzar. But the Society teaches that the 70 years ended two years later, in 537 B.C., so there is a clear discrepancy between what the Society claims and what the Bible actually says.

This dating is extremely important in Watchtower chronology, because the Society claims that the 70 years spoken of by Jeremiah began in 607 B.C., and that that year is the start of the so-called "Gentile times" period which they claim was a 2,520 year period that ended in 1914 and ushered in "the time of the end." This is also crucial for their claim that Watchtower leaders were specially appointed by God in 1919 to be "over all Christ's belongings" on earth (this claim was drastically changed in 2013), so it's the basis for their claim to be "the faithful and discreet slave" of Matthew 24:45. Schroeder had no ready answer, so we began to carefully consider verse 12 and its context. After reading the verse, I said, "According to this verse, when did the 70 years end?" He said, "In 539 B.C.E." Then he seemed to realize that there was a problem, and he had us go back to the beginning of Jeremiah 25. This tickled me, for here I was leading a GB member and former Gilead instructor through the Bible. We got to verse 12 again and he automatically said, "and that happened in 537 B.C.E." I pointed out that he had just agreed that the verse indicated that the 70 years ended in 539, not 537. This flustered him, so I suggested that I send him a written summary of what we were discussing and he could deal with it at his leisure, which he agreed to do.

Another thing that made Schroeder sit up and take notice was my pointing out that many of the arguments in the Creation book were taken from the writings of the paranormalist author Francis Hitching (he has written a number of books promoting paranormal topics). He was audibly shocked and agreed to look at my documentation. Two months later I sent Schroeder a large packet of material documenting the basis for my criticisms. These criticisms were along the lines of some of what I've

described above. By August 1994 Schroeder had not answered my letter, so I arranged to talk to him by telephone the next month when I was to be in New York on business. More on this below.

In early 1994, a young, prospective JW named Alfredo De La Fe (a resident of upper Manhattan who was studying with a mature JW) discovered the Usenet forum talk.religion.misc, and began posting defenses against various criticisms of his new-found religion. I was in the habit of posting long, boring but informative tomes on various JW-related subjects on this Newsgroup. Alfredo was particularly interested in my critical discussions with other JWs about the Gentile times chronology. After several months, he found that he couldn't give answers to certain critical questions about the Society's claims. In particular, he couldn't explain Jeremiah 25:12, any more than Albert Schroeder could. So he contacted his study conductor (a relatively young anointed brother named Rick Tunon) and eventually set up a telephone conversation among the three of us.

It quickly became evident that Tunon was also unable to answer my criticism, and so he in turn contacted another anointed JW named John Albu (deceased 2004). Albu, it turns out, was the Society's top scholar (and apparently their only scholar, after the death of Fred Franz) on Bible chronology and was conversant with Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and several other ancient languages. He's almost certainly the main contributor to the "Appendix to Chapter 14" in the 1981 book "Let Your Kingdom Come". I soon ended up in a four-way phone conversation with these guys, but even Albu couldn't answer my challenge to explain the offending scripture.

In June 1994, I had to go to the east coast on a business trip, and Tunon agreed to allow me to meet one Saturday with all three of them at his apartment in uptown Manhattan. I spent about ten hours with them, and had a most enjoyable time. In fact, Tunon told me that he had prayed to Jehovah the night before that, if I were an apostate, Jehovah would prevent me from arriving, and so the fact that I had arrived on time proved to him that I was ok. During our discussion, I told them about some of my history of misgivings about the Bible and the Society. They agreed that I had many good points.

A significant result of our discussion was that Tunon and Albu had to admit that the Society's chronological claims contradicted the direct statement of Jeremiah 25:12 (which means that the 70 years mentioned by Jeremiah ended in 539, not 537 B.C., and kills the Society's claims about 1914). I asked Albu how I, as an inactive JW, ought to view this contradiction. He answered—no surprise—that I should "wait on Jehovah." We left on good terms. Of course, "waiting on Jehovah" for another twenty years has brought no further information from the Society about this crucial issue.

By this time, I was more than half convinced that there was no God, or that if there were, he wasn't interested in mankind, and certainly not in me. I explained the reasons for this to Tunon and Albu, and they were quite understanding of why I felt that way. But Tunon, wanting to help restore my faith, explained how he had become "anointed", which bordered on a miraculous experience for him. After a good deal more discussion, he convinced me to pray once more to God and ask for help in getting through my spiritual difficulties. He said that it was his experience that God would open his hand and answer my prayer in an astounding way. So on my drive from Manhattan out to my brother's place on Long Island, I prayed my heart out. To my surprise, I actually cried as I "lay my burden on Jehovah," as the Witnesses like to say. Not long after that, things developed rapidly in ways that completely changed my life.

By early August, I found that I had to go on another business trip to New York, and so I phoned Albert Schroeder to try to set up an appointment with him to see what, if anything, he had done with that pile of documentation I had sent him some seven months earlier. He refused to meet in person, but said that I could call him at his office on a Saturday morning. Shortly after that, I had an intense dream. I was crawling on my hands and knees up a long flight of stairs out in the middle of nowhere, sort of like the stairs on which you board an airplane on the tarmac, but so high that I could barely see the top. I crawled and crawled, finally nearing the top. As I set my hand on the landing, a shadowy figure in a trench coat rushed past me on my right. I crawled onto the landing, and the man turned to face me. I couldn't see his face. He teetered backward on the brink, and fell into empty space. I crawled over to the edge and looked down, and the man was lying on his back, obviously dead. It was a long way down. Then my vision telescoped downward and focused on the man's face, like a very fast zoom lens. It was the face of Albert Schroeder. I didn't know it at the time, but I think that my brain was telling me that it was going to have me make some big changes in life real soon.

Simultaneously with these developments, my marriage was going through the final stages of failure, mainly because my wife was unable to deal with the fact that I was no longer a JW, and she had stopped treating me like a husband. I later learned that, around 1985, she realized I would never again be a JW, and so she emotionally abandoned me. After all, why would a self-respecting JW invest any emotional energy in a mate who would die "real soon now" in the battle of Armageddon? In 1993 and 1994, my wife told me point blank that she could not be my companion in life as long as I wasn't an active JW. In late August 1994, she threatened that if I taught our daughter my "apostate religious views" she would divorce me for "apostasy." So in September 1994, I decided to divorce her. The divorce was finalized in early 1996.

During the last year of my marriage, I began corresponding with Juliann Stutheit, and her sister Rella and brother-in-law Rob. I had met Julie via email at the end of 1993, when she responded to some posts I made on the Usenet newsgroup talk.religion.misc, but we left off communicating for half a year. In the meantime, I met Rella and Rob the same way, and we quickly became friends. A couple of months after Julie and I resumed correspondence in early July 1994, we admitted to each other, and most importantly, to ourselves, that our marriages were dead and that we were probably going to get out of them. Later, we made plans to meet in person to see if we were as compatible in person as by email. Soon afterwards, we met and then made plans to marry after our divorces. In December 1994, Julie moved to Oregon, and we married in early 1997.

With all these things going on, the summer of 1994 was a watershed for me in several ways. At the beginning of the summer, I began seeing a therapist to help me sort out the stresses of dealing with a failed marriage, a failed religion and a failed relationship with my father. By the end of the summer, we concluded that I was very angry about one factor common to three influential forces in my life: the inability on the part of my father, my religion and my wife to admit error. This realization spurred me on to end the pain of my current circumstances and start life anew.

During that summer, I hazily realized that things were coming to a head, and that's exactly what happened. At the beginning of September 1994, I internally resolved my problems with my father. Shortly after my wife threatened divorce, I decided to divorce her. Two weeks later, I had my telephone conversation with Governing Body member Albert Schroeder while I was in New York, since he had refused to meet me in person. He said that he had better things to do with his time than deal with the

issues I had brought up in our conversation the year before and in the material I had sent him. I asked him if he intended ever to deal with it as he had promised he would, and he said he would not. I also asked him, seeing that I now had nothing to lose, why the injunction in Luke 21:8 doesn't apply to Jehovah's Witnesses. In this passage, Jesus says, "Look out that you are not misled; for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, 'I am he,' and, 'The due time has approached.' Do not go after them." JW leaders obviously say, "I am he" in the sense of claiming to speak for God, and they certainly have said and still say, "the due time has approached" for the end of all things. Schroeder immediately realized the problem, and balked at answering, but I persisted, and he finally said, "It can't apply to us, because we're Jehovah's people!" I saw then clearly, as never before, that the entire leadership of the Watchtower Society normally acts just like Schroeder. I therefore concluded that, despite my best efforts to find contrary evidence, the Witnesses are just one of a number of religions in which good and bad can be found, and I mentally divorced myself from the Society. So in the space of two weeks, my three major psychological pressures began to be resolved and my personal life began to turn around. Since then, as I've learned more, I've concluded that the Witnesses are a destructive cult in every horrific sense of the word. Whether this worked out according to my prayer a couple of months earlier, I'll never know, but I suspect it was merely coincidence.

In Conclusion

It should be clear why I think it is extremely disadvantageous to be a Jehovah's Witness: the extreme dishonesty of the Watchtower Society and its apologists makes it impossible for an honest person to be one in good conscience. While the Society gives lip service to honesty in everything, in practice, honesty goes out the window when JWs are confronted with examples of how the Society covers over most of the ridiculous episodes in its history, such as the UN scandal, and its past ridiculous teachings, such as that God lives on the star Alcyone in the Pleiades constellation. JW defenders fail to realize that the Bible they claim as the very basis of their religion condemns anyone who would lie to defend God. I'll close with Job 13:7-12, which states, in The New Living Translation:

"Are you defending God by means of lies and dishonest arguments? You should be impartial witnesses, but will you slant your testimony in his favor? Will you argue God's case for him? Be careful that he doesn't find out what you are doing! Or do you think you can fool him as easily as you fool people? No, you will be in serious trouble with him if even in your hearts you slant your testimony in his favor. Doesn't his majesty strike terror into your heart? Does not your fear of him seize you? Your statements have about as much value as ashes. Your defense is as fragile as a clay pot."