

I THOUGHT I KNEW YOU

An open letter from Barbara Anderson to Watch Tower's Writing Department

In 1517, Martin Luther wrote in a letter to Archbishop Albert of Mainz: "You must graciously forgive that I, *that scum of the earth*, am so bold as to dare to address a letter to you."

Yes, I know, you think of me as *scum*, just like Mainz believed of Luther, wondering how I dare write you a letter, someone Jehovah's Witnesses disfellowshipped back in 2002. I was accused of being an unrepentant sinner and condemned for "causing divisions," then labeled "apostate" because I spoke out publicly on NBC's *Dateline* TV program about the child sexual abuse policies that protected pedophiles—policies that you helped formulate." Now do you remember me? I bet you do!

For acting out of conscience, it's certainly uncalled for to be shunned as an apostate and viewed as dead by family and friends. But according to the July 15, 2011 *Watchtower*, I'm also "mentally diseased" because it states that all apostates are mentally diseased.

Injuries from a physical attack can heal but experts say insults and name-calling can cause emotional pain that last a lifetime. That's why there is a saying: "The pen is mightier than the sword." You know that words can cut like knives, and it appears that's why you use words in Watch Tower literature that can damage those who differ with the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses.

It's been nearly twenty years since I walked your hallowed carpets. I loved every minute of it except for the two times I crossed swords with two of your staff members at different occasions over their unethical and dishonest practices. (One of those staff members is still in your midst.)

Back then I believed in the integrity of your staff writers. I thought they were loyal to God and never underhanded with respect to religious truth. But much investigation proved to me that some Writing Department writers are incompetent and some are just plain dishonest.

If I said the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses is as bona fide as snake oil, that it is poppycock and bunkum, many in our politically correct society would consider my words offensive and hurtful. Yet Watch Tower staff writers believe they can get away with twisting the scriptures, using them against those who question doctrines and policy, and do it with impunity, such as recently claiming, "**Well, apostates are 'mentally diseased,'** and they seek to infect others with their disloyal teachings (1 Tim. 6:3, 4)."

First of all, that's ridiculous. Paul didn't say anything about "apostates"—the *Watchtower* did. And he didn't say in verse 4, "he" [any man that teaches other doctrines] is mentally diseased! The words "mental disease" describes a bodily condition. Paul said "he" ... "but being mentally diseased over questionings and debates about words." These men literally "doted," "craved" questioning and disputes "over" Jesus words to such an extent that the craving for controversy was like a sickness. Since there was no reasoning with such "corrupt" men, Paul urged that Timothy not waste his time with them.

I don't have an argument with you about your translation of the Greek word *noseō* as "mentally diseased" or any comparable words used in other translations. My argument is not with the Apostle

Paul's negative description of the mind-set of his primary opposers who were pseudo, or "false brothers," or "false teachers" questioning and debating a particular matter. However, I do take issue with your interpretive application of his words.

The first followers of the Jew, Jesus Christ, were Jewish and they continued to follow the Law of Moses. (Romans 15:7). Early Hellenized Jewish Christian believers referred to as "Judaizers" obsessively argued over the words of Christ, insisting that Gentile Christians **get circumcised and observe the Mosaic Law.** Acts 15:5 said some former believers were Pharisees. Paul mentions his struggles with this group in at least five of his letters. *Clarke's Commentary* rightly said these Judaizers "... were not apostles, nor apostolic men; but they were undoubtedly members of the Church at Ephesus."

The issue was between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians and Paul's advice was well-timed and specific, certainly not suitable more than 2000 years later. Yes, I know about Romans 15:4 where Paul said that "... all the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction—." Contextually, he was pointing to his time, not ours. For Watch Tower writers to take an actual historical event when Jewish Christians taught Gentile Christians a completely "different doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3)—the observance of the Mosaic Law—and then dedicate a phrase found in 1 Tim. 6:4, one that referred to these men who did not consent to Christ's words, to former Jehovah's Witnesses is ludicrous and wrong.

In the July 15, 2011 Simplified Version of the *Watchtower*, published for children and others who have only very basic reading skills, the author placed a box on page 11, where *mentally diseased* "apostates" and "false teachers" are defined as "people who rebel against true worship and abandon it." In this way, you harmfully labeled those who left the religion. Thus, you planted fear in the minds of the readers, most of whom are naïve and innocent and easy prey for charlatans to influence.

Our twelve-year old grandson, Luke, aware that his grandparents left the Witness religion in 2002 and are now shunned, has in his mind the frightening thought that we are *mentally diseased*. And imagine, if you will, how a child will react to a former Jehovah's Witness parent after reading that those who leave the religion are mentally diseased. You should be ashamed of saying "**apostates are 'mentally diseased,'**" hateful words that vilify and denigrate people whom you perceive as sinners because they can't accept some of the Watch Tower's teachings and policies that they view as harmful.

May I remind you of what you wrote in the February 15, 2000 *Watchtower*:

"The ruling ecclesiastical class ... violently silenced a voice [Cyril Lucaris - in 1638] that pointed to some of the errors of their non-Biblical beliefs. They proved to be among the worst enemies of religious freedom and truth. Sadly, this is a stance that in various ways survives even to our day. It is a sobering reminder of what happens when clergy-instigated intrigues stand in the way of freedom of thought and expression."

For over forty years I thought you were different than those in the clergy who sought to suppress God-given "freedom of thought and expression." But by your words I have come to know that I was wrong!

Yours truly,

Barbara J. Anderson