GROWING UP A JEHOVAH'S WITNESS
1960 - 2010

Religious belief has power to shape a person unlike any other

A person raised as a Jehovah's Witness
Has a unique way of thinking
That is difficult for others to comprehend

The best way to understand how a Witness thinks
Is to look at the information they receive
As they develop and grow

Let's imagine a child called Matthew
Born in 1960
To Jehovah's Witness parents

We can trace what he is taught to believe
Through the Watchtower
In order to understand his view of life

Jehovah's Witnesses are directed by a Governing Body
A Witness can only be understood by comprehending
The power these leaders have over them

The Governing Body claim to be God's “Faithful & Discreet Slave”
And that God uses them to dispense “truth” through the Watchtower
Matthew must follow information in the Watchtower as if it is from God

“[Have] complete confidence in the truth as it is revealed by Jehovah God through his Son, Jesus Christ, and “the faithful and discreet slave.” - Watchtower 2001 Aug 1 p.14

“Since Jehovah God and Jesus Christ completely trust the faithful and discreet slave, should we not do the same?” - Watchtower 2009 Feb 15 p.27
As a child
One of the first things Matthew learns is **Jehovah alone is God**

Since only Jehovah’s Witnesses
Worship Jehovah
Only they will survive Armageddon

“There is no middle ground. We are either actively for Jehovah God or actively or tacitly for the gods of this world. Make your choice, and know that your decision means life or death for you.” - *Watchtower* 1965 Feb 15 p.119

“Yes, today, with Armageddon staring us in the face, we must keep in mind the sobering thought that millions, even billions, of lives may shortly come to a swift and decisive end, putting their onetime owners beyond the reach of any expression of love on our part.” - *Watchtower* 1965 Apr 1 p.212

Children will die with their parents

“... at Armageddon ... parents will be held accountable for their children, and children will suffer for the failure of their parents.” - *Watchtower* 1968 Feb 1 pp.83-84

So Matthew preaches to save them

“Are you training your children in the field service? And when you work in the field service with your children or others, do you see that they have a part?” - *Kingdom Ministry* Nov 1978 p.8

As a minor in his teens
Matthew will be encouraged
To be baptized

“... at 12 and a half years of age, Dustin was baptized at a circuit assembly.” - *Watchtower* 1985 Jun 1 p.30

“On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to
Jehovah to do his will? ... Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization?" - *Watchtower* 1985 Jun 1 p.30

Matthew is taught Armageddon is about to happen

“They expect it to come at any hour, and almost certainly within the next 10 years.” - *Watchtower* 1968 Aug 1 p.466

Matthew was told he would
... Never finish school
... Never fulfill a career
... Never grow old

“Reports are heard of brothers selling their homes and property and planning to finish out the rest of their days in this old system in the pioneer service. Certainly this is a fine way to spend the short time remaining before the wicked world's end.” - *Kingdom Ministry* May 1974 p.3

Matthew is told he will never die

*Never Die?*

“THERE are thousands of millions of persons living on earth today. Millions of these are now learning of the wonderful opportunity of keeping on living upon it without ever dying off it.” - *Watchtower* 1983 July 1 p.17

Despite destroying Billions of people,
God will save Witnesses
And allow them to live forever
“They’ll run screaming out of their houses with this striking them, and yet they’ll see that Jehovah’s Witnesses are untouched.”
1967 District Convention talk by Charles Suntuko

How can a person be convinced that God
Will soon murder billions of people
But that they are so special as to never die?

By belonging to a law driven group
With a unique set of rules
To set them apart from others

Matthew is repeatedly told Witnesses are unique

“Who are no part of the world ... ONLY Jehovah’s Witnesses.” Watchtower 1992 Apr 1 p.12

“Who in our time demonstrate ... love? ... ONLY Jehovah’s Witnesses.” Watchtower 1989 May 1 p.28

“ONLY one group of people is doing this work that Jesus foretold ... Jehovah’s Witnesses.” Watchtower 1994 Jun 1 p.18

“Jehovah’s Witnesses [are] the happiest people on earth.” Kingdom Ministry 2002 p.1

"Jehovah’s servants are the most loving, united, peaceful, law-abiding people on earth." Watchtower 2007 Aug 15 p.26

He will be warned against
Those around him
And told normal, healthy
Activities are wrong
Non-Witnesses

"It is the satanic 'air' breathed by the world today, ... the satanic thinking that permeates every aspect of life outside Jehovah's organization." Revelation - Its Grand Climax at Hand (rev. 2006) pp.233,234

"We must also be on guard against extended association with worldly people." Watchtower 1994 Feb 15 p.24

Celebrations

“Birthday celebrations ... Christmas ... Easter, ... Halloween ... All Saint’s Day ... New Year’s Day ... Valentine’s Day ... May Day ... Mother’s Day. We appreciate it very much when teachers kindly excuse our children from participation in all activities that in any way commemorate these holidays.” School and Jehovah’s Witnesses pp.18-21

Sport

“Witness parents feel that schools often overemphasize sports. ... Participation in organized sports, we believe, would expose Witness youths to unwholesome associations.” School and Jehovah's Witnesses p.23

Dancing

“The essence, the soul, of disco was shown to be free, “liberated” sexual expression.... Satan is manipulating this world for his own purposes, shouldn't we expect that he would also use the world's entertainment in his efforts to turn people from true worship?” Awake 1979 Dec 22 p.20

“Dancing in the past, and at the present, has often been done in a way so as to arouse sexual passions and to lead people into sexual immorality. ... Therefore, favor home gatherings with whole families present.” Awake 1984 Apr 22 pp.12,13

On the topic of sex

Sex is used as a source of guilt
Even Masturbation

“The real question, then, is, not how much physical harm could result from masturbation, but whether spiritual harm results. ... to help to avoid or reduce sexual tension... you may find it helpful to sleep on your side rather than on your back or face down. Another thing that may be helpful is to see to it that your clothing does not unnecessarily cause friction with the sexual organs. ... In fact, masturbation can lead into homosexuality ... Contrary to
what many persons think, homosexuals are not born that way, but their homosexual behavior is learned.” *Your Youth - Getting the Best Out of It* pp.35,42

**University Education Is Discouraged**

“Rather than being content with "sustenance and covering," those who devote themselves to getting a "higher education" usually want to be able to enjoy "the rest of the things" that money can buy.” *Watchtower* 1967 Feb 1 p.76

"The time left is reduced"! ... 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

Rather, volunteer labour
To grow the organization
Is promoted

"In the early years, put before your children theocratic goals - regular pioneering, Bethel service or missionary work.” *Kingdom Ministry* Oct 1983 p.2

It is the 1980's and Matthew has reached his twenties

He was told he was not going to leave school
Now he has a job
And considers starting a family

Even that is discussed

“... Christians to ask themselves how getting married or, if married, having children will affect their share in that vital work. ... During all this pre-Flood period, Noah’s sons and their wives had no children.” *Watchtower* 1988 Mar 1 p.19

(Fortunately most ignore that advice)

Matthew may start having doubts
But is told this comes from the Devil

“Be assured that the Devil is ready to sow seeds of doubt and revolt in such fields of impatience. Endurance and faith are needed.” *Watchtower* 1986 Mar 15 p.17

If Matthew discusses his doubts
He risks being disfellowshipped
And shunned as an apostate by family and friends

“The fact is that when a Christian gives himself over to sin and has to be disfellowshipped, he forfeits much: his approved standing with God; ... sweet fellowship with the brothers, including much of the association he had with Christian relatives.” *Watchtower* 1981 Sep 15 p.25
“The situation is different if the disfellowshipped or disassociated one is a relative living outside the immediate family circle and home. It might be possible to have almost no contact at all with the relative. Even if there were some family matters requiring contact, this certainly would be kept to a minimum...” *Watchtower* 1988 Apr 15 p.27

That can be the start of a spiral into depression
Living an unwanted life out of fear of loss

Loss of family
Loss of friends
Loss of identity and belief

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It is 2010 and Matthew is now 50
Some may say the Watchtower has changed

But the Watchtower still
Directs to SHUN loved ones

“Is strict avoidance really necessary? Yes... Loyal Christian family members do not look for excuses to have dealings with a disfellowshipped relative not living at home.” *Keep Yourself in God’s Love* (2008) p.207

Witness children are still told
They won’t grow old

“Those blessed with a lasting place in the new earth will not grow old and inevitably die.” *Watchtower* 2000 Apr 15 p.16

Still discourage university

“What though of higher education received in a college or 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... Rather than looking to the advanced educational systems of this world for security, a Christian trusts in Jehovah.” *Watchtower* 2008 Apr 15 p.4

From its inception in the 1800’s
The Watchtower has said
The world is about to end

It was supposed to end in 1914
“... we consider it an established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God, will be accomplished at the end of A. D. 1914.”

*The Time Is At Hand* (1889) p.101

And soon thereafter ever since

"... the remaining months before Armageddon." *Watchtower* 1941 Sep 15 p.288

100 years later, Witnesses are still told

It will be SOON ... In the next few years

“... the good news that soon God will rock the nations at Armageddon.” - *Watchtower* 2006 Apr 15 p.24

For how much longer will Jehovah’s Witnesses continue to be misled to believe the fantasy that they will never die?

We have seen the Watchtower has a strong emphasis on eschatology and attempts to differentiate itself through excessive use of rules.

A religion that enforces shunning of family members violates the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 12, which states:

"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation."

Although I am averse to suggesting governments encroach on freedom of choice, there should be sanctions when religions encourage breaking the law.

More importantly, the education system needs to teach critical thinking skills so humans learn to be less vulnerable to manipulation, be it by politics, corporations or religion.

That witnesses are so gullible as to believe their religion is the only truth, despite its false predictions of the world’s end, and ongoing contradictory changes, is a shameful reflection on the intellectual capabilities of humans and shows how badly our education system still fails.

I look forward to the ongoing progression of human rights through dissemination of information now widely available through medium such as the Internet.