

Radio Interview Transcript

Meria: "You'll Be Blessed"; Elton John.

Well we all have children, and certainly what we want for them is the best; we want them to be blessed and have a wonderful happy little life. Sometimes ugly things happen to children and that's something that we're going to be discussing today. I have with me today on the show William H. Bowen, who is still an elder in good standing with the Jehovah's Witnesses. He also is the host of Silentlambs.org which is a website for victims of pedophilia especially those that have experienced that within the religion – or cult – of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Before I go any further I would like to say good morning to Bill. "Good Morning, Bill"

Bill: Good Morning.

Meria: How are you this morning?

Bill: Doing fine.

Meria: Good. Bill would you like to tell my audience a little bit about yourself?

Bill: Yes. I'm a second-generation Jehovah's Witness. My father served as presiding Overseer since I can basically remember. He was used where the need was great as I was growing up; that's the terminology used among Jehovah's Witnesses to help congregations that were troubled or had various needs.

Meria: And Silentlambs; do you want to tell me a little bit about: What are Silent Lambs?

Bill: I coined the statement 'Silent Lambs' December of last year when I began deal with a problem of child molestation in my congregation and I began to think of a picture in my mind of a flock of little lambs that were too afraid to speak because of what the shepherds would do to them...

Meria: Right

Bill: ... and thus came the statement "Silent Lambs" because I feel that in the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses there will be thousands of lambs, people who have been victimized by child molestation, too afraid to speak because of what the organization will do to them if they try to speak out about their abuse.

Meria: Well hopefully today we'll provide a space for you to be the voice for all those people who can't speak for themselves. Bill, I'm just going to need to ask you to speak a little louder, I'm just watching my monitor and I want to make sure that you're coming through a little louder than you are if you don't mind.

Bill: Okay, is that a little better?

Meria: Yes, that is. Okay, so tell me; you've been a Witness obviously most of your life and an elder in the congregation. What does that mean?

Bill: An elder is a position in the congregation the person that takes the leadership and the teaching and as well as the example as far as how a person should be as a Jehovah's Witness. You also administrate and manage the church records as well as the congregation. You help people when they're in need, you visit the sick, you do the funerals; it's just much like a pastor in a typical church; all those roles and functions.

Meria: I see. And you're still currently an elder with the religion?

Bill: It's kind of a technicality. In December of last year, I resigned in protest because of the policies of the Watchtower organization and how they cover up pedophilia. The organization has a protocol though, that states that you cannot stop serving as an elder until the announcement is made in the congregation. Today as we sit here and talk nine months after the fact the organization has refused to make that announcement, to acknowledge my resignation and if they refuse to acknowledge it then technically I'm still an elder.

Meria: I suppose so. So when did the fact of the pedophilia going on around you come to be known to you Bill?

Bill: The best way I could describe it; I was as naïve as any one else perhaps that is a Jehovah's Witness, with regard to there even being a problem in the organization. But it was not until I faced a pedophile in my own congregation that I feel has molested multiple children based on the evidence that I've come to discover. When I discovered that and began to investigate then I discovered that there's an inherent problem in the organization, that the Jehovah's Witnesses has six internal letters to address child molestation in the last ten years. And I laid those six letters out on a desk and began to review what they said. And when I began to study them I began to understand a dire consequence of what they did not say...which was basically do not go to the police. They said you have to have two eyewitnesses before an act of pedophilia can be established.

Meria: Well, you're never going to have eyewitnesses to pedophilia. That's not exactly something that could happen.

Bill: That's about a one in a million chance. Child molesters generally do not do this in public where people can watch. What I began to discover, and became clear to me; it would be nearly impossible to convict these people or even prosecute them --unless they've admitted to it --by the church judicial system. And that's what I should point out, that Jehovah's Witnesses believe that if your child is molested that you should go to your elders first and ask them what to do. Now typical mainstream Christianity says if your child is molested you go to the police. So among Jehovah's Witnesses, they're required to go to their elders and then the elders have a tribunal a judicial court or an investigation that they conduct and they use the litmus test of two witnesses to establish if this matter is based or not. And according to the November 1995 Watchtower which clearly states if there're not two witnesses to the fact then the person, the pedophile will be considered an innocent man. So they turn to the child and they say, "Do you have two witnesses?" The child says "No". They then turn to the child molester and say "Did you do it?" and of course 99% of the time the child molester will say "No." Right? Then they turn back to the child and they say "Well you don't have two witnesses; he's an innocent man". So you have to go to church with him, if he's an elder, he remains an elder, he stays up upon the stage, he has all his privileges and you have to be quiet because if you say anything against him you are guilty of slander which could be a disfellowshipping offense which means you could be shunned from the congregation."

Meria: Kicked out, in other words you'd get kicked out. So these children meanwhile end up becoming a double victim.

Bill: That's right. You become a Silent Lamb. You become someone no one in the church will acknowledge or even speak to, not even your own parents and if you try to go to the police you get zero cooperation from anyone in the church to help you.

Meria: Now certainly if the child goes to their parents I should think that the parent would know enough to go to the police.

Bill: Not if you're a Jehovah's Witness, sad to say.

Meria: Well why not; are they that indoctrinated that they would just go by what their church tells them to do?

Bill: If you'd attended the District Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses this year they had their special meeting, they presented a drama and the drama was the story of Korah. Korah was a person in the time of Moses who rebelled against what Moses said. And this drama what it presented was, that anyone who speaks against the elders, which was presented as being like Moses, becomes like Korah. If you have a problem, you go to the elders; whatever they tell you to do you must obey because they are considered gifts in men from God. You disobey the elders then you speak against God and in the drama they very graphically showed how Korah was swallowed up by the earth and struck dead by God for not obeying Moses Aka the elders in the congregation. As a Christian Jehovah's Witness, if you are having a problem, the publications are copious with directions; you always go to the elders anytime you have a problem; if you have a family problem you go to the elders; a moral problem you go to the elders; any kind of problem, any infraction against any rule of the Bible you go to the elders for help.

Meria: Yeah but the bottom line is help and they're not giving anybody any help. At least not to the victims.

Bill: The bottom line—I keep saying the bottom line—the point is – the elders are not trained in matters of child molestation. I've attended the elder's schools since the mid-eighties and I remember very clearly in the early nineties in the elder's school they said basically you read them a scripture and you say a prayer and that should be sufficient. The Scriptures have a great weight in helping people to recover from emotional and mental disorders. So you read them scriptures and that helps them recover from whatever their problem is. If that doesn't solve it, then they should "wait upon Jehovah"; which is a terminology that basically says that you wait on God to solve the problem until he brings about a better time for mankind.

Meria: Right, and in the meantime what's supposed to happen to these children; they continue to get molested?

Bill: In many cases, have continued to be molested, as I can prove from my website. They many times become suicidal, they become extremely self destructive, and of course Jehovah's Witnesses have a way to deal with self-destructive suicidal people—they disfellowship them.

Meria: They just kick them out.

Bill: They commit a moral infraction, as happens with molestation victims, they often become promiscuous or they get involved in drugs. Well Jehovah's Witnesses' tribunals or judicial committees take quick action to disfellowship them and then they do not have to deal with the problem.

Meria: Wow, they're kind of like the Taliban. Well really, let's think about it; you know women have very little rights in that religion; and I've had some people on who are gay people that were kicked out of the religion for being gay; now you have child molesters who are getting away with whatever; so children have no rights in that religion. I mean, they're as oppressive as any third world country's twisted government could be.

Bill: Well I've heard the statement coined. I was in a court case last Monday and their individuals stood up and said they were much like the terrorists against children.

Meria: Well yeah; to me there's no crime greater than what I call soul robbing of a child, and that's what pedophiles do to children, they actually go in and steal their souls, that's the way it feels to me.

Bill: I've come to the conclusion based on the hundreds of victims that I've talked to that when a child is molested it destroys their life. Their lives are forever changed and they will never have the innocence that they have lost.

I want to share with you—and we haven't discussed this – I put up on my website a victim's page. And the reason I did that is because when I resigned and went public with this material the Watchtower organization assassinated my reputation and character from every

way they could. They went and had a special local talk given in my local congregation; where they assigned a substitute circuit overseer to get up, and he started his talk off with these words, paraphrased you might say: "The person who went to the media has spoken against God." And from that point he went on to call me every Christian curse word in the dictionary in my opinion about it. He said, "lying apostates would not succeed", they forbid anyone in the church to speak to me about it. They later went on to tape a four-hour video, with my parents, the Watchtower organization. And they distributed this video to all news and television media in my local area. And the only part of that video that they used in the interview with my parents is where my father said, "My son is just not telling the truth." Thus implying that I was a liar. They weren't calling me a liar; they were calling the Silent Lambs liars, the victims, saying they did not exist. They even went on the newspapers, publicly, the officials Mario Moreno and J R Brown basically said "there was no problem, their policy addresses child molestation" and one comment Mario Moreno said "We will never change our policy". He said that in the Louisville Courier.

I created Silentlambs website in March of this year to give the victims a voice, to let them speak out. If they're going to call the Society, the Watchtower Society is going to call these victims liars and say they do not exist. Let them tell their stories. Now the Victims' page has close to two hundred stories of victims who have posted what happened to them. This really happened. And yes, I can't say every story is exactly factual and truthful. I encourage them to post anonymously because many of them are so afraid. A good many of these people are Jehovah's Witnesses who are afraid of the sanctions the church will place against them if they find out that they have spoken up about this. Anyone who can read this website and look at the victim's page and not leave that page without knowing that these victims--- something is terribly wrong here.

Meria: Look, any therapist worth their salt knows that children generally are not lying when they talk about being molested. And it's a sad thing that these children have to be abused twice and then ignored for just speaking out and protecting themselves.

Now wasn't there two things; I know that Dateline is interested in doing a story on this. Is that still going ahead?

Bill: The Dateline story is going forward and I have two other major media resources that are willing to take the ball if they drop it. It will be told. They're going to know what Jehovah's Witnesses do to children, what Jehovah's Witnesses organization -- Jehovah's Witnesses are not bad people, and I hope you don't take this away from this interview. Many good people in the organization; they are just not aware of what is going on. I was not aware. I would have fought tooth and toenail to say this is a fabrication and how could anyone make these claims against this organization. But I know now, I told the truth.

Meria: And if you were an elder and you were not aware of it, I'm sure the regular people that just attend the meetings etc are totally in the dark about it.

Bill: I refer to the victim's page and if you don't mind I would like to share with you a brief excerpt, to give you one story.

Meria: No, go right ahead.

Bill: This is a female individual. She says, "I am now 36 years old. I type that in caps because I feel one hundred. My body and mind have been broken over the years by the brothers. My story starts at a very young age when my father, an elder in the congregation, raped me. Did I state I was four at the time? Did I also say that my grandmother and aunt were both pioneers, knew of the sexual abuse. Perhaps I should say I know, for sure, my grandmother knew; I know my aunt suspected or just ignored IT. IT was a very strong word in my home. IT referred to my mother's suicide. IT referred to my grandfather getting caught touching my friend in an inappropriate manner. IT referred to my grandmother's alcoholism, also my father and grandfather's. Am I now left to sift through the Why's? WHY did my elder father rape me and beat my brother and sister? WHY didn't the elders do anything about it? WHY did my father stop at the age of thirteen? Wait; I know; I started my period! WHY did another elder join my father in sexually tormenting me? WHY did this same elder beat his dog to death in a fit of rage for barking and was not disfellowshipped? WHY, when I went to the elders, was I told I needed two witnesses? Do you think my dad and his friend would testify to the wrongdoing against me? WHY do I still suffer and wonder if I did the right thing by leaving the organization? WHY did my mother kill herself? WHY was my father not disfellowshipped when twelve years later he went to jail for sexually abusing my half-sister and some of her Witness friends? WHY? WHY? WHY? Because they do and continue to ignore sexual deviants."

That person is lying? You think they just made that story up? To make the Witnesses look bad?

Meria: Of course not! Generally children and young people are not going to make up stories of being molested. That's just the way it is. And you know, a lot of times when I talk to people and counsel people who have been victims of abuse, I tell them "You know what the profile of a pedophile is?" And most people don't know. And they say, "No, I don't" And I say there really isn't one. That's why you don't. It could be anybody."

Bill: That's right. And I did research on this too in the course of dealing with this local problem I looked up a tremendous amount of information concerning child molestation. And they say a child molester is never who you would suspect. He's the upstanding man of the community; he's the coach, the scout leader, and the man of the town. He has a wonderful family life; he often has his own children. But he has this defect in his brain; that when he is given the opportunity he will molest children. And what stunned me the worst was; I took the most conservative figure I could find and they said that the most conservative figure that the average child molester would molest at least seventy children in their lifetime. The high side was up to four hundred, but the conservative figure is seventy. These people never stop. They will take every opportunity and advantage of every time that they can touch children. They can't just stop it one day and they wake up and they don't do it any more. They have either medication or they have to be monitored and if they're not medicated or monitored they will continue to molest children.

Meria: Right, and you're saying that even when they get brought before the committee of the Jehovah's Witnesses, they're still allowed to go door to door and proselytize to other people?

Bill: The 1997 Watchtower January the 1st, was an article written about child molestation issues. In that article they said –they implied basically, I should temper that – they implied that child molesters would not be given positions of responsibility in the congregation. At the end of that article, they made the statement: "A newly released child molester, to show that he has repentance, would go in the door to door field ministry." This is a man that's newly released from prison for child molestation. That is what it says in that 97 January 1st Watchtower. You can't get any clearer than that.

Meria: Wow, I should think that would open them up to quite a few lawsuits if the unsuspecting public knew they had child molesters knocking on their door.

Bill: The essence of that is, that "We'll try them out on the other people, and if he doesn't molest their children, then we'll know he's repentant." Any Jehovah's Witness knows that you're required to go in the preaching work. The preaching work is the door-to-door activity. If you do not do that, then God is going to kill you at the end of time. So if you've molested children, if you're a murderer or whatever; if you become a Jehovah's Witness or you do this while you're a Jehovah's Witness, even if you're in prison, you're required to preach. When you get out of prison, you're required to preach. And there is no, absolutely not one sanction in the church to prevent child molesters from going in the door-to-door activity.

Meria: Well I would think that's something everybody needs to know before they crack open their door to any Jehovah's Witness; they don't really know what's going to be on the other side of that.

Bill: And the most insidious part of this: members of the congregation are not allowed to be informed who the child molesters are in their congregation. I was charged by Home Office to not tell anyone-- not even this man's wife—that he was a child molester. They told me not to tell her. When he goes out in my local area, door-to-door, the Jehovah's Witness he works with does not even know that he's a child molester.

Meria: Wow, how messed up is that. When somebody moves into your neighborhood now that's served time for child molesting, you have the right to know.

Bill: That's exactly right. He was a fellow elder in the congregation. When he was removed for being a child molester in concordance with the '97 Watchtower, he told the congregation that he was tired and he wanted to take a rest, he had people hugging him and saying "oh we're so sorry that you're so stressed out from being an elder. Well, that implication burns my soul.

Meria: Well, what happens to the old Ten Commandments of thou shalt not lie? Don't they see that as lying and not being truthful?

Bill: They don't see that though, Meria, who can see that? I'm the only one that can see it and I have to keep my mouth shut, because the organization will move against me if I say anything.

Meria: Well obviously you decided not to keep your mouth shut.

Bill: That's why I resigned in protest and that's why I'm talking to you right now and I'll talk to anyone I'm on the face of the earth about this--- this has to be known. And because I speak out, yes—I have suffered terribly from the organization and what they've done to my family and me. But that's irrelevant.

Meria: No, it's relevant as you are really doing God's work by protecting the children

Bill: What is relevant is, what they have done to the victims. Can you picture if I was the molested child, and I was treated this way? It is devastating, the mental and emotional impact; shunned and treated like the bad one when you were the victim! You're re-victimized over and over and over again within the organization. I've heard stories of the child going to the elders and the next meeting, sometimes the next night, having to go and the child molester is sitting close to them and giving them smirks, like "You can't touch me."

So, no more. These parents were Jehovah's Witnesses and their children need to be empowered to know -- they don't stop at the elder's house. They don't stop at the Kingdom Hall. If your child is molested, you go straight to the police. If a church elder wants to read you a scripture, that's good; we should all listen to the Bible. But it should be in such a way that it's offered as comfort, not as a measure of judiciously child molestation. Elders have not one right to judiciously crime. If they want to deal with a child molester in a church tribunal, that should be after the fact.

Meria: Well, I'm sure that a lot of my listeners are saying "Well I'm sure child abuse doesn't only limit itself to the Jehovah's Witnesses; so why are they being singled out? And I think the point is, other religions instruct their parents to take legal action if anything like that happens. So I think the big difference in why we're having this discussion is all is that, with Jehovah's Witnesses, their private religious judicious committees seem to overrule the law of the land.

Bill: That's very clearly stated; I believe that. I believe that. You will obey an elder. There's a terminology in the organization that we use; we obey God first. And in some kind of twisted way, if an elder tells you to do something, then that comes direct from God. If you go beyond what he says, then you in effect are disobeying God. An elder gives bad advice, or he gives wrong direction then you're not allowed to question that. If you question that, then you might find yourself disfellowshipped—and that has happened.

I'll give you one example; I talked to an attorney, who was an elder, when a young girl was molested the elders tried to conduct the tribunal process. He fought them on that; he said that it's wrong; she should go to the police first. They ignored him and put her through two investigative committees in front of the child molester who happened to be her father. And they made her tell every detail in front of him about what he did to her; while he sat there and berated her and said to her that "you're lying" and laughing at what she said acting like she was crazy. You can guess where this is going. In the end, they said, "Well, do you have two witnesses?" Do you know what happened to the man who fought them on this, who was an elder? He was disfellowshipped. He was disfellowshipped! For trying to get her to go to the police. This is how they deal with people that stand up on it. His only mistake was, he didn't go public like I did. If I had

remained quiet, and spoken to members of the church about this, I would be disfellowshipped right now as I'm speaking to you. Because they would have taken care of me in short order. But because I am becoming a public figure, then they don't know what to do with me. You know, from the start of this, this is just about telling the truth. You don't have to expand this. You don't have to add to this story. This is the truth!

Meria: Well, aren't they the ones that say, "The truth shall set you free?"

Bill: These people, I have to tell you this; when victims call me, 90% of the time the first comment that comes out of their mouth was "I thought that I was the only one. I thought I was the only one!" It breaks my heart to know that these people have sat in silence, sitting alone, thinking that they were just an unusual case that happened to happen. They number thousands and thousands in this organization and they don't know the extent of how bad this problem is.

Meria: Now didn't we in an earlier conversation, Bill; didn't you tell me that it seems to be more pedophilia goes on within the Watchtower organization than other religions?

Bill: Well, now here we go we're talking about opinions here; but if you just think about our conversation up to this point –let's get this straight. If I were a child molester I would become a Jehovah's Witness as quickly as possible because I would have an entire organization to shield me from the authorities and from any justice being done. No why do I make that horribly gross statement? Well, all I'd have to do is lie. And all child molesters lie. And if I lie, then I can get the elders to back me up, I can get the congregation to back me up. Now am I just making this as an idle statement?

I'll give you an example. In a recent civil suit a sentencing hearing was held over a man that was convicted and sentenced to prison for 56 years for molesting his two daughters. At his sentencing hearing 29 Jehovah's Witnesses showed up and said "We think not only is he innocent," but a good portion said, "We would love for him to baby-sit our children." Now, you want to read that? Look at the front page of my website. I put it up; the Paul Berry sentencing hearing. And you can read what these 29 Jehovah's Witnesses had to say. Paul Berry went to prison as a Jehovah's Witness in good standing. Why? Because you know what; his two daughters were not there at the same time when he was molesting them. There were two witnesses, but they weren't both there at the same time so thus a judicial committee would not be convened. So what I'm telling you is, what would motivate 29 people to stand up at a sentencing hearing and declare a child molester innocent?

Meria: Well it's that whole cult-like mesmerism that those people fall into from even Jim Moon that I had on the show that leads that gay ex-Jehovah's Witness group. He had said it best, he said the Jehovah's Witnesses become your whole social outlet, your political outlet, your spiritual outlet and you don't want to be kicked out because you have no one else in your life because its so clannish.

Bill: I'm just here to say; in this case I read the transcripts of the trial. Not only was he convicted based on what the victims said, but also they went to the barn where he molested her; where they found the nail that he hung her from and evidence to show that he'd molested her with animals. That's what convicted him. And Jehovah's Witnesses went to this trial and then turned around and said that they thought he was innocent. He went out in field service the week before he went in.

Meria: Oh my God; and he got 59 years in prison and these people were still backing him up.

Bill: 56 years according to the records.

Meria: Don't you see? A lot of times people ask me "Meria what's your idea or opinion on religion" and I have to say and I'm going to stick with it that religion gives God a bad name. We got a world war going on right now over religion, and another crazy cult, the Taliban that treats women and children like dirt. And people forget that that's happening right here in America too, and this is a classic example of that; that parents can be so blind. Really their first job is to protect their child. And what you're telling me is that they can actually say to a child molester "Oh, I'd have him baby-sit my child." That's crazy.

Bill: well, when this first happened, four elders in the church met me with when I first went on television with this. And they were so upset and the primary thing they were so upset about was that I had challenged the bible principle –they called it – of two witnesses to establish a matter. Once of those elders told me, if his own daughter was molested, and the man said it didn't happen, that he would have to not do anything. And Looked at him in the eye and I said "Are you crazy? You would believe a child molester over your daughter?" And he looked me right back in the eye and said "Bible principles would have to apply." So at that point I thought "I can't reason on this matter, with Jehovah's Witnesses, with elders on this. They just don't see it."

Meria: No, if they're that fixed in their doctrine, which looks like an excuse to do whatever they want to do, there's nothing else you can do except what you did do, Bill and you really came out on the side of God, and thank God that you did what you did because all these people have someplace safe to go.

Bill: Well, other churches I know have problems with molestation. We read articles in the newspaper about the Catholic Church and there have been settlements recently with the Mormon Church. My purpose is not to try to pound on religion and make them all appear to be bad; even as I said, there are many good Jehovah's Witnesses that aren't even aware of this, this interview is to try and make them aware of that. What I'm trying to say is, there has to be a line drawn about how much absolute control that a person's willing to pay for.

Meria: Exactly, and someone also has to protect the children. Bill, I need to go to break, stay with me, we'll be right back, and I want to talk about that latest lawsuit that just happened, that you wrote to me. So I'm going to ask my audience to stay with me; we'll be right back, and if you have any questions you're welcome to 'instant message' me with them.

Meria: Well, welcome back. We're here in the studio and I can see that some of my listeners are stunned; actually telling me they're mouths are hanging open over what they're hearing here. And that's a good thing, and I don't mean to shock you but it's something that

you need to know. Bill Bowen, a brave man, a guy who's really doing God's work as far as I'm concerned. Who's exposed all of this on his website which I want to give out; I'll have a live link to it on the show today; it's Silentlambs.org...and I just got a message board that I'll share with you, from another listener besides the one that's in shock.

This one says "I'm one of the people that's posted my story on the Silentlambs website. I just want you to know how much I appreciate you creating a forum for this message. I was an abused Silentlamb. The really sad thing is that because of the Jehovah's Witness organization so was one of my children. This victimization of children has to stop." And I of course have to agree with that and I thank that person for sending me that message.

So Bill, obviously your work is catching on and this listener definitely wanted to thank you for that.

Bill: Well I appreciate that. I receive numerous thank-you cards. But I tell people that the heroes are those that tell their stories. No one wants to tell their story of when they were molested. That's a very private matter, a very private thing that people do not want to talk about.

Meria: No. Of course not, everyone thinks that's something to be ashamed of and somehow or other they contributed to it. Almost the same as a victim of rape or any other kind of abuse.

Bill: For every story posted on my site, there's five more people I've talked to that are just too intimidated --or whatever word that you'd like to use—that they feel they can't.

Meria: Right!

Bill: I feel that them telling their story is a part of their healing; it's learning to speak out. And I have a part of my website called "Pinpoint a Pedophile". But of course if they want to post the story anonymously they can do that. But then I find that many of these folks will fill out the survey "pinpoint a pedophile," tells every detail about the person, who he was, what his name was, and we keep a file on these people.

Meria: Oh Great! That's available publicly, if someone wanted to go there and check, is Brother So-and-So and Sister So-and-So a pedophile? Because I do want to make a point; that it's not just men that do this.

Bill: That's right.

Meria: That's it's also women who abuse children as well. I don't want anybody saying that this is a man-hating show in any way of course. But you actually have a listing there where people can go in and check the names?

Bill: For legal reasons I don't have the listing on the website; I keep that in private. But I use it for survey purposes; to show how many states pedophiles are from, what positions, how many elders were turned in as being child molesters, how many actually were turned into police and went to prison.

Meria: Now let me ask you this; if somebody suspects someone say in some congregation say in Brooklyn, if they called you and said "I think Brother or Sister So-and-So is a child molester, can you check your list, is that something you can do?"

Bill: Sure.

Meria: Okay well world you need to know that. And I know you have a phone number on your website. Is that the one you'd want people to call you on?

Bill: Yes. 877-WTABUSE. Watchtower Abuse.

Meria: Watchtower Abuse. 1-877-WTABuse. And I will post that on my site also so it'll be here linked to your page so people can get through.

Bill: I appreciate that.

Meria: Well, you know what; I'm a parent and I'm a grandparent and I think the worst thing that anybody could ever do is hurt a child. And I don't think anything hurts a child more than stealing their soul, which is what pedophilia is all about. I mean it's a violent vicious act and it breaks a child's spirit. And I should think that anybody that wants to claim any kind of religious affiliation to the Bible or God would know just how wrong that is. And protecting those kind of people is an incredible thing. I never really understood what the Watchtower Society's position was on child abuse—and this is terrible.

Bill: These men who molest children invariably move from child to child. I have cases that have been reported to me, as many as 60 Jehovah's Witness children have been molested by men who have yet to be disfellowshipped. Current cases, like one that just happened last year. Man molested 17 children went from congregation to congregation, and each time he only had one witness. So he continues to move freely, and to get away with this.

Meria: Let me ask you this; where are the parents on this? Once they know that

Somebody's done this, don't they react? Don't they get smart enough to go to the police?

Bill: They go to their elders; the elders say, "You do not have two witnesses; you must follow theocratic direction which states that you have to treat this man as an innocent man. And until you can produce two witnesses there's nothing we can do.

Meria: And they still won't consider changing their rule, to have these people go to the police, which is what they should do in the first place.

Bill: I was contacted toward the end of last year by a person that worked in the Home Office of the Watchtower Society in the Writing Department. This individual said in 1992 they wrote an article regarding child molestation, and they were inundated with mail, and people from all across the country—Witnesses—who wrote in and said "it happened to me, it happened to me." They instigated an investigation, the Watchtower Society did, and they called therapists and Witnesses, and people that are learned about this subject; and they made a report to Brother Barry, the head of the Writing Department, a member of the Governing Body; to submit to the Governing Body; there were three recommendations made on this report in 1992. It said (1) when your child is molested we should tell our brothers and sisters to go to the police first. (2) A child molester should never have a position of authority or privilege in the congregation (3) a child molester should never be allowed to go in the door-to-door work.

The Governing Body threw this in the trash. And it wasn't until 1997-- five years later—how many children were molested in the meantime? 1997 they wrote an article that said you can't have privileges in the congregation; and they ignored the other two things. And then they turned around and wrote a letter to us elders personally in March of that same year and they said, "Well...some guys can stay elders who were child molesters. We forgot to mention that to all the rest of the Jehovah's Witnesses. But us elders know, and I didn't even recognize it until I went back and reviewed the letter. But if it's been a long time ago, and nobody remembers it, or knows about it, or you've lived it down, you'll be an elder, and be a former child molester, and that's clearly stated in internal elder documents. You can see that on my website; look under 'Body of Elders letters.' These people, they tell the brothers and sisters within the organization...they all believe, I believed them, when I studied the articles, and you would never have a child molester be an elder or even carry a microphone. And then they turn around and tell them, "Oh well, yeah, you can use them." Even the guy that I dealt with here locally, they said, "in about five or ten years, you can put him back in again."

Meria: Wow, what are they that desperate for elders, I should think they'd have to be to use somebody like that.

Bill: There's an appearance of something. There's something, to me extremely insidious here. I do not understand on what basis that anyone, anyone in authority could say, "if it's been ten, fifteen years ago the guy molested children, we're going to make him an elder again.

Meria: What do they think, he got over it?

Bill: I guess they think he's repentant, he's reformed, but if you knew anyone's does a study on pedophilia—Never reformed. Maybe that's my opinion about it, but from what I have seen, from the evidence that's been laid at my feet so to speak, I feel that people that molest children will always have to be watched.

Meria: Well and people have to watch their children too, I mean surely there are signs and symptoms of a child that's being molested; that the parents need to be aware of. Can you name a few of those, Bill?

Bill: Children that have been molested invariably have anger problems. They're often rebellious, that's the terminology that we use in the organization, "that that child is very rebellious." Well, they have anger problems, they react against authority. They oftentimes have self-destructive behaviors, like they cut themselves. Or as they grow older they become prone to things like tattoos and piercing, things of that nature. They have behavioral disorders such as eating disorders, sometimes even wetting the bed, things of that nature. It's a host of different symptoms they collectively say, you know you look at a child and you say, "Something's not right here." Oftentimes their introverted, or extremely quiet, or they act out things in a sexual manner. Or they talk about things little children shouldn't normally talk about their private areas or things of that nature. It's a host of different things that collectively come together.

Meria: Well, like that letter that you read from that woman that was molested and whose mother committed suicide, who obviously other family members knew this was going on; what is it that would make people protect a pedophile in their midst. Is it fear?

Bill: I think that there's two dynamics at work here. One thing is, by and large, most of the brothers and sisters in the organization do not even know if a pedophile is in their congregation. That's the first prime reason. They're not going to be informed by the elders, that's for sure. More than likely they're not going to be reported.

Secondly, is, when a pedophile has been accused and he denies it, then the organization has very strong things about gossip and speaking negatively about friends within the organization. If someone says something about someone else, and they deny it, then we're clearly instructed: do not continue to speak it. And if you continue to talk about it, then you're the bad person because you're not following theocratic direction, the direction of the organization. So what happens is, if a child was molested and the family talks about it, the elders will go to them and says you need to not talk about this; it's a confidential matter. The man's denied it, and he's an innocent man. And then they've become the bad ones in the congregation, the ones with a bad attitude because they're not following the elder's direction. So the end result is, this child molester, hey what's he got to lose? He pretends to be innocent, he acts like he's being very seriously hurt by what's being said about him, how could they say this and the end result is he garners the love and adoration of the whole congregation in support of him; and here's the victim who's looked at as the bad person for talking about things he's not supposed to be talking about.

Meria: And then of course, if nobody believes the child, the child is like wide open for more attack by anybody.

Bill: That's exactly right. Just to give you an example; I was in Washington state this last Monday where a young lady named Erica was molested from age 4 to age 12, by a man who toward the last was an elder of the congregation according to my understanding of the matter. He was a close friend of the family and it wasn't until she was 16 that she went and told her parents about what happened. She went to the elders in her congregation and they told her if she reported the matter to the police, she would be disfellowshipped. So, it

wasn't until 19 that she said, "I don't care if I am disfellowshipped, I'm going to turn him in." And she reported the matter; the matter went to trial in 1998.

She went to the court; she had moved out of Washington State, she lived in California to get away from the situation. She came back to testify, it was her cousin and one other person came back with her. When she arrived at the courtroom, there was close to a hundred Jehovah's Witnesses there in support of the pedophile. Why? Because basically he was an elder in the congregation and they wanted to support him. No I take that back, he was not an elder at that time. But anyway, when she got to the court, she had dirty looks, dirty stares. He sat on the top steps of the courthouse and read scriptures about the trials of Jesus Christ, while about 40 or 50 Witness sat on the steps smiling up at adoration to him so to speak. He was convicted and sentenced. A pioneer sister yelled 'whore' and 'slut' at her across the room. She was completely victimized.

And then later on in March of this year his appeal finally came forth and he was released from prison. He served two years in prison. The basis of his appeal was just on a technicality, it wasn't on his guilt or innocence, it was based on a technicality with the jury selection. So he went back to trial of August of this year and this time through Silentlamb we put the word out on the Internet and other places and we had probably close to 25 people there, in support of Erica this time. And it was completely different situation. Jehovah's Witnesses didn't show up this time. But last Monday at his sentencing hearing, we had this group come back, and did you know what happened? The judge was given a notebook before the sentencing hearing. And in this notebook were 29 pages of letters from Jehovah's Witnesses in support of the pedophile. Again they did it again. And we have access to these letters, and if any of those supporters think that that's in private, I just want them to know we're going to put it up on the website so everyone can know what they said about how they loved this pedophile.

Meria: Well yeah, they're just as guilty and they should be exposed; I mean, what is wrong with them?

Bill: Well, at Erica's original sentencing hearing two years ago, nine Jehovah's Witnesses stood up at that hearing and they said they thought not only that he was innocent, that he's repentant, but a good portion of them wanted him to baby-sit their children.

Meria: Well, that's very sick.

Bill: Well what it is; I think these people are being instructed to tell for the court that they feel comfortable with him. I mean, if my best friend were convicted of child molestation, I would not stand up in court and say I want him to keep my children. I have two children myself; I wouldn't want that to happen.

Meria: Look, I don't even know that I could be as calm as to wait on the courts if something like that happened to one of my children.

Bill: This now makes the third occasion that I have written documentation—this is not idle banter, this is not chat, this is not something I could possibly fabricate—where multiple Jehovah's Witnesses have gone to court to testify for a convicted child molester and say that they believe that he should not go to jail. I do not understand that.

Meria: I don't either. It's like I said, maybe they're all used to the free meals they might be getting from him.

Bill: Jehovah's Witnesses listen to this, I think you should say and mark in your minds; I don't care what the Watchtower Society tells me; I will never go to court and testify for a child molester, especially a convicted one.

Meria: I have a note from that same listener and I want to share it with you Bill. She says "Meria; everything Bill is saying is true. My abuser finally admitted it. Two other victims came forward before he would. But the elders decided that because it had happened so many years before, no judicial action needed to be taken. I was told to keep my mouth shut and practice forgiveness. The congregation was never informed, and he's currently in good standing in his congregation. My heart aches for his potential and/or current victims. My child's abuse was reported and the abuser prosecuted. The elders for not following Biblical direction to not take my brother to court called me on the carpets. This is a serious problem within the Jehovah's Witnesses' organization.

Bill: I like to add something to that comment that she made. Every time a person comes forward with a charge of molestation, records are kept and put in congregation confidential files. Records are kept in New York City. If a way could be put forth to subpoena the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, they could push a button on a computer and tell you the names and address of thousands of child molesters across the United States and around the world that have never been reported to the police that are part of church records. These people need to 'fess up and turn these people in.

Meria: Well I should think legally they would have to.

Bill: There are criminals that are being harbored by the Watchtower organization. And I'll tell you why they're not doing it. In the United States only 16 states do not honor ecclesiastical privilege. So the Watchtower Society is hiding behind ecclesiastical privilege to protect these people that hurt children. 34 states; If I go and I'm an elder and I'm in one of those states; a man comes to me and tells me he molested children, I call Watchtower Legal and they say every detail I tell them about what he told me happened and they say you're not in a reporting state; your obligation has been fulfilled. You do nothing. If he goes to court, if the parents bring charges against him in court and the judge subpoenas me to go to court the Watchtower Legal Department tells me to not say anything. It's morally and ethically wrong. Child molesters have walked when they have confessed to elders and then they turn around and they go to court and the elders do nothing to tell what he told them and they lie in court and they walk out an innocent man. That is a problem that this organization—they got to get their morals and ethics straight.

Meria: For sure. I mean if I was them I'd certainly be worried about meeting my maker at the end of this road—and doing that in the name of God because every warning they've given out is the warnings that will befall on them that's for sure.

Bill: It's for one purpose only to protect Watchtower Corporation. To protect their money.

Meria: Their money and their image.

Bill: If an elder speaks up and opens up what he was confessed to, and he opens up the ecclesiastical privilege then it opens up their records for subpoena and they're trying to prevent those records from being opened to the public. These thousands of child molesters that they have on file are being protected and shielded by the Watchtower Society.

Meria: Well Bill, we're about out of time and I have to tell you this was quite an eye-opening interview and definitely keep me posted any updates on this you know I can get it out to my group for sure. I'm going to once again remind my audience gets over to Silentlamb.org. Read it for yourself. If you know anybody suffering from this kind of horror, the phone number is also on that site, I'll give it out again its 1-877-wtabuse. Please please, people the worst possible thing in the world are children being hurt. Please please look for the signs don't put anybody above your children. If you really believe in God know that God expects you to protect your children with your life if necessary. Bill one of my listeners asked when the show is going to be shown on TV; do you have any idea?

Bill: With the World Trade Center disaster, that story needs to be given full report; I don't know, maybe the end of the year.

Meria: Well when you know, let me know and I'll put it out on my Yahoo group so everybody can definitely connect to it.

Bill: I will make one other comment. A civil lawsuit was filed against the Watchtower Society in January I mean July of this year, and others are stepping up right behind them. If they won't answer this problem morally, then we will answer this in the courts and let's see how they stand the litmus test of the United States justice system for what they've done for children.

Meria: Well good for you and definitely keep me posted on that we'll do an update on this story for sure. Thank you so very much Bill, not just for me but also for all the children and all the families that you're really helping.

Bill: All right.

Meria: All right, I'll talk with you again soon.

Bill: Okay

Meria: Thank you.