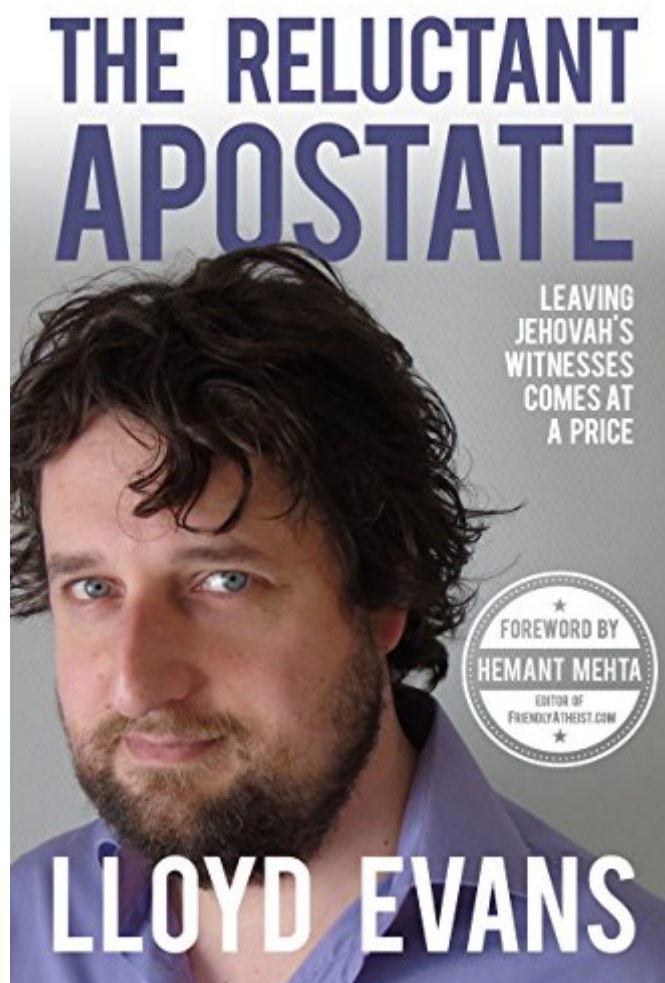




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# The Reluctant Apostate: Leaving Jehovah's Witnesses Comes At A Price



## Synopsis

Jehovah's Witnesses, well known for their enthusiastic evangelism, are a global religious movement boasting over 8 million members. Despite being a familiar sight on doorsteps and street corners, little is known about their doctrines and practices. What are their expectations regarding Armageddon, and who do they believe will survive? How do they justify their ban on blood transfusions? What happens to members who decide to leave? In this remarkably candid part-memoir, part-history guide, former Witness Lloyd Evans comprehensively explores the religion of his upbringing, charting the organization's metamorphosis from unassuming 19th Century brethren to global brand in the modern age. The Witness rules on sex are dissected, as are their far-reaching ramifications on the private lives of millions of devotees. Evans also delves into the controversies surrounding child abuse and the prohibition on blood transfusions with the aid of first hand accounts from those who have been personally impacted. Intertwined with the historical narrative and commentary is the story of the author's journey from devout Witness youth to outspoken ex-Witness activist and atheist. Evans lays bare the circumstances leading to his "awakening" with startling honesty and reveals how the heartbreaking loss of his mother played a profound role in keeping long-held doubts suppressed. In the final chapters, the author discusses the various means by which Witnesses are controlled by their leadership. Evans analyzes the role of shunning (disfellowshipping) and the stigmatization of "apostates" in enforcing loyalty among Witnesses, and reflects on the indifference of society in general to human rights violations by high-control groups. The phenomenon of fundamentalist brainwashing, or "undue influence," is also scrutinized, and those in search of a new life free from its pervasive effects are given reasons for hope. Rather than being a sensationalist rant by an embittered ex-member, *The Reluctant Apostate* offers a relaxed, good-humored tour of Witness history and teachings supported by extensive references (to be found in the "Notes" section). Though written predominantly with the non-Witness reader in mind, special boxes are also provided for Jehovah's Witness readers.

**Reviews** "Both memoir and reference book, Lloyd Evans' work is an extensive compilation of Jehovah's Witness history and theology. In his honest and exhaustively researched expose, Evans has written what is sure to be the most important book on the religion in this century. *The Reluctant Apostate* is a must-read for Jehovah's Witnesses and anyone else who has been touched by the faith." —•Scott Terry, author of *Cowboys, Armageddon and the Truth* "Insight only an 'insider' can bring to a subject difficult to understand for those who have never been part of this world, and unthinkable to contemplate for those inside its bubble. Lloyd does a magnificent job of speaking to both audiences and everyone in between. Compassion for the plight of those still held captive

bleeds through every page." – Mike Rinder, former senior executive of the Church of Scientology, as featured on the A&E series Leah Remini: Scientology and the Aftermath "A compelling and informative window on the world of the Jehovah's Witnesses that will be a vital and life changing resource for former members and many others too in forming an authentic understanding of this group, its beliefs, methods and effects on individuals and families." – Professor Rod Dubrow-Marshall, Ph.D. Co-Editor International Journal of Cultic Studies and co-founder RETIRN UK Dr. Linda Dubrow-Marshall, Ph.D. Co-founder RETIRN UK

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## Customer Reviews

The Reluctant Apostate: Leaving Jehovah's Witnesses Comes at a Price The Reluctant Apostate is a substantive, fresh and very readable addition to the genre of Watchtower/Jehovah's Witnesses critique. One frustration that I have had is the quality level of many of the books in this area. Ex-JWs, like other escapees from very controlling groups, are often still dealing with serious issues that can undermine skill and judgement, so sometimes the books are uneven or strangely biased. Some of the books focus on horrific

experiences, particularly in the areas of shunning and abuse, others do a more doctrinal or policy/practice critique. This book doesn't quite sit in either set, but instead interweaves a personal narrative with background history, policies, practices, and issues. I put it on my top shelf, with the likes of Captives of a Concept, Visions of Glory, Awakening of a Jehovah's Witness, The Truth Book, Apocalypse Delayed, Jehovah Lives in Brooklyn and Crisis of Conscience. What I love most about Reluctant Apostate is the fresh, even-handed voice of the narrator. It is an accessible book, even for current Jehovah's Witnesses who are an objectively under-educated population (according to Pew Research). Among other things, it gently highlights some forms of toxic and/or problematic thinking that are operational within the group, and models at least a few of the healthier alternatives. I give this book a high 4 rating. The Reluctant Apostate is a great resource, but it is not without some minor flaws. It is a good read and it went quickly because the content is engaging, but the book is too bulky and may present too onerous a prospect for those who might benefit most from reading it. The production quality is excellent for the most part, especially for a self-published book. The paper and binding are of high quality, for example. However, if it were to be republished in a future edition, a good publisher's editor might 1) tighten up the few sections where the history of historical personalities affecting policy did drag just a bit), 2) ensure that all sources were appropriately footnoted in the main text, 3) reduce the font size and single-space quoted paragraphs, and 3) resize and clean up a couple of the exhibits in the appendix. The refreshingly honest self-revealing bits of the book may be uncomfortable reading for those who only frame their understanding within binary oppositions such as hero/villain or hero/victim, but I think it shows that the psychological path of self-development in this kind of context is almost always fairly difficult and complicated. His journey is not without some strife or learning hurdles. However, the weight of the narrative voice is human and welcoming. Lloyd Evans is forthcoming without being fanatical about his perspective and does not try to speak too much or too authoritatively for the experiences of others. As someone who very much enjoys the author's video channel on YouTube, I have been looking forward to this book's publication (full disclosure: I did donate a little bit toward the funding, but this review was not solicited by the author or by anyone else). The book is much as I hoped that it would be, and I look forward to further projects that carry his friendly signature greeting: "Hello there!"

I can state after reading this book, I have renounced Christianity and any other forms of religion.....NO! If I believed everything I read I would still be one of the rank and file mentioned in the book. The author challenges religious beliefs on a personal level, in such a

manner that if you believe in God, you really should have an opinion on these points. This is a great book, a must read. It's very informative and easy to relate too. I can see this book helping so many people! I can use the information I learned from this book (especially like the response to use of blood and the prodigal son), and bring them up as talking points to family members. Wonderful work! Lloyd makes a point about prodigal son that I never realized before, and it surprised me because I thought there wasn't more to learn about the prodigal son, but there it was. Out of the entirety of the book there is only one point that I can recall that I didn't like, or at least couldn't relate too. I have trouble with is the analogy of digging in the back yard for a diamond, and comparing it to church. (This wasn't written by the author but one he references from some other atheist). I was like; if I was expected to dig at church every week I wouldn't want to go! That's pretty laborious. It's comparing apples to oranges. Church is fun! It's where I cultivate friendships, worship, relax, and sing cool songs, among other things. Nothing like it is an analogy to "digging", it's not work. In fact, and we believe to be a Christian, there is no work involved if you don't want to go to church, it's your choice you won't lose salvation over it. If the analogy was more like going to a weekly book club, or community center, sometimes even a carnival I think that would be more relatable. All good, no biggie. I try to keep my opinions balanced, and that was honestly the best criticism I could do! It really is a great book! FYI, I mostly listened to it on my phone (Kindle app) while at work slinging code. If you have an android phone, you can turn on Talkback, set the default language to English, UK. It almost sounds like Lloyd!

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