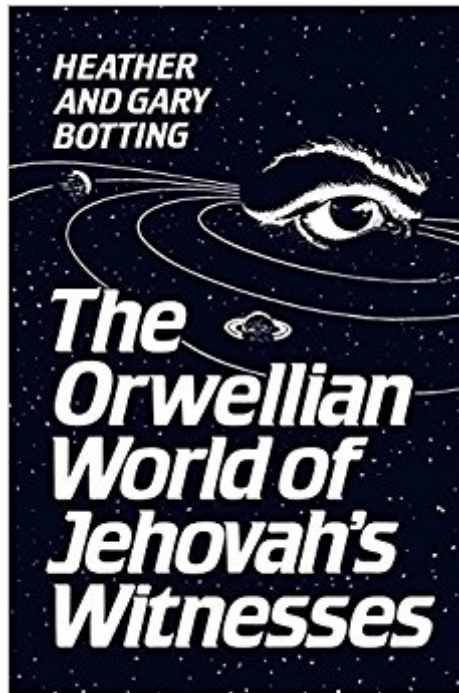




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The Orwellian World Of Jehovah's Witnesses (Heritage)



Synopsis

In 1984 George Orwell described a future theocracy that demanded unity at all costs, and in which all independent thought would be eradicated. According to the authors of this book, such a theocracy now exists. They describe how, in an increasingly restrained "New World Society", Jehovah's Witnesses busily go about the business of warning the world that their God, Jehovah, will act soon to destroy all who oppose him and his organization. For them 1984 appears to be the current unofficial deadline for Armageddon, for they believe that God promised that the generation that saw the beginning of world distress (starting with World War I in 1914) would not pass away before the end came. A biblical generation is seventy years. $1914 + 70 = 1984$. Convinced that the world is due to end, they have given up their independence to the central theocracy. The Bottings, both Witnesses, can and do answer the questions everyone asks about this sect. They examine its history, the ways in which history itself has been interpreted in the light of bible prophecy, the basic beliefs or "symbols" in which Witnesses are required to put their faith, and the dynamics of conversion and indoctrination. They also reveal why Jehovah's Witnesses turn away from their calling by the thousands and how the sect effects a "mental-regulating" of youth as choice is taken away from children at a very young age. The sect is not only subject to forces of dissidence and disaffection from its membership, it has also been subject to a major rift within its headquarters. This event and what was done about it are also described. The authors conclude this serious, concerned, probing but readable study with an exploration of parallels between the contemporary Jehovah's Witness sect and the world described by George Orwell in 1984.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Heather and Gary Botting live, with their four children in Alberta where Heather is an anthropologist and Gary is a Professor of English at Red Deer College.

In 1987, this was the first book that I ever read that was critical of Jehovah's Witnesses. It struck a nerve with me and when I tried to explain it to my JW wife, it didn't go so over so well. She turned me in to the elders at the Kingdom Hall and I suppose I could have lied and said I didn't believe JWs were wrong, but I couldn't. A year later my JW wife divorced me. She had a letter from the Watchtower headquarters telling her it was OK to break up our home in order to get rid of me and my negative Watchtower ideas. I think JWs would still divorce a spouse who openly left the Kingdom Hall and "talked" about what they had found out. That's the whole point, it's Orwellian mind control in operation and JWs actually seem to want their minds to be brainwashed.

Nothing is perfect and I'm not sure I'm in agreement with all the analogies drawn by the authors between 1984 and Jehovah's Witnesses, but that's certainly not a reason to give this book less than five stars. This could be a really important book for someone. At the very least it could be a helpful weapon against the, literally, mind numbing, insanity of Jehovah's Witnesses. Let me give just one quote from the book to illustrate what I mean."I had lived my life until the age of 25 or 26 believing that I was never going to die, or that if I did die in a car crash or something, God would resurrect me and I'd live forever in the New World. I can remember the exact moment when I realized I wan not going to live forever. The physical moment: I was working in my office at Bethel and I got up from my desk to go into the file cabinet; I was bending down to get a file, and - it came out of nowhere - I said, Hey, you're going to die one day. And in that one second the knot unraveled."I suppose I'm aiming my thoughts at the probably hundreds of thousands of those like me who were confiscated and brain washed into the religion by being born into it, or conscripted at a very young and tender age. I was 35 years old before I could really breathe a little fresh air, and even now, nearing 60, it makes me shutter every once in awhile. I'm grateful to the authors for having the will, the courage, and the fortitude to write the book and then see it through the publishing process. I'm sure they realized that such a book could probably never be a best seller, or even a big seller, because

though to injured parties like me the Watchtower Society looms large, it's a tiny blip to the billions who inhabit this planet at the beginning of the 21st century. So, even though it's not perfect, and is probably a little too intellectual for most folks, for anyone who is struggling to break free from the chains of JW's, it is a voice crying in the wilderness and a small lamp shining in a very dark place.

Gary and Heather Biotting's expose helps greatly in understanding the history and evolution of the Watchtower Society, and how it parallels with the contradictory and dystopian mindset immortalized in George Orwell's '1984'.

The authors should not have pursued the peculiar coincidentalism between JW's and Orwell's book 1984 to the belabored excess that they do. Despite this, the book is a fascinating autopsy of the mass psychology of religion (in this case, Jehovah's Witnesses) and the deceptions and nonsense that adherents will endlessly accept. Written prior to the year 1984, the book accurately foretells the more recent doctrinal changes within the "Organization" as once again Jehovah's Witnesses reinvent their theology when even they can no longer stand the weight of its absurdity. The publication is refreshingly funny and easy to read, especially if, like me, you were raised in the bizarre siege mentality culture of Jehovah's Witnesses with its oddball idiomatic peculiarities and Armageddon hysteria. The Orwellian World of Jehovah's Witnesses ends on a profoundly accurate prediction, noting that no matter which prophecies fail to materialise or which marked dates pass without event, JW's will continue to grow in number while members eagerly anticipate the day their god Jehovah starts a war on humanity destroying "this system of things" and all the evil people within it (though not his faithful flock of witnesses of course). A great book to grab off of the shelf the next time a pair of Watchtower Society pamphleteers intrude upon your property peddling their superstitions.

This is a good book and the illustrations in it are excellent. The book captures the totalitarian nature of the Watchtower movement as few books do because it is based on sound academic research and a background understanding of the movement. Both authors were raised Jehovah's Witnesses and are trained scholars. In fact, the book is based on a doctoral dissertation by Heather Botting. My only complaint about it is that it places too much emphasis on the year 1984, which was not an important "end times" date for Jehovah's Witnesses.

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