

"The Truth," My Journey Out

Prologue

Professing people know that having a "good spirit" is every thing. I have heard workers say that even if a person could get into heaven with a bad spirit, heaven would be a dreary place, as they would feel so out of place in the company of people with good spirits.

Another worker claimed that worldly people noticed his spirit and were rendered incapable of using foul language in his presence.

It is common to hear that professing people who have never seen each other can pass by on the street and recognize each other as professing by their spirits.

Down here on earth you will have a peace and joy like the world has never known...but only if you have a good spirit. You don't have peace? You don't have joy? Marriage not going well? That's a warning that there is some hardness in your heart that needs to be removed.

If you don't, not only will you not have peace here on earth, but you will not be welcome in heaven.

People that believe this are extremely vulnerable to pressure from the workers to conform. When your whole social world consists of professing people, their conformity also puts pressure on you.

I was born into the "truth."

I grew up believing because that was what I was told by all the adults around me.

In order to conform as I grew up, I ignored what I was feeling and seeing at times, I saw others do the same.

I was puzzled the first time I heard of a worker leaving the work because they were "having trouble with their nerves." Why would they be having trouble with their nerves? I asked Grandma "they were promised strength from God in return for giving their lives to the harvest weren't they?" "

That's just the way it is, "my Grandmother told me. She accepted it, so I did as well.

One of many contradictions I would encounter and ignore.

As I began writing this, I found myself organizing my recollections not only chronologically, but

under the headings: home, school and meetings. It made sense because there were a lot of contradictions between what I saw at home, school and meetings.

Meetings were a place of calm where we heard we had a peace and joy, and that we had something the "worldly" people didn't.

At home, there was no peace and joy; at school, the worldly kids had something I didn't.

Introduction

My mother's family (professing) moved from their prairie farm in Saskatchewan to the town of Terrace BC in 1955. My mother was about 14. The constraints put on a professing girl's clothing and hairstyles set her apart from her schoolmates in Terrace far more than it had back in the conservative farming community she was from.

Unable to cope with the reactions of the other girls she went from being a straight "A" student to dropping out of school when she turned 16.

She went straight to work at the local telephone office where she met my father.

She took him to gospel meetings and he professed.

They married when she was 18. I came along a year later, followed closely by two sisters and later a brother who is 10 years younger than me. In spite of the fact that Dad always tried (in his sometimes clumsy manner) to be a good husband and father, my mother remained deeply unhappy with her marriage.

My Early Memories

My parents moved a lot due to my father's work but we did spend time in Terrace where Grandma and Grandpa Nunn (my mother's parents) lived. I have fond memories of my grandparents. Grandpa Nunn was a quiet kind man, he told stories of "back on the farm." Grandma was outgoing, loved to talk, and always was interested in spending time with her grandchildren.

Grandma spent a lot of time telling Bible stories and singing hymns.

To this day, I can hear her singing "he cares for little children, he cares for you and me."

She told of Adam and Eve not obeying and getting kicked out of the Garden. As time went on people were so bad that God got angry and sent the Flood; only Noah and his family survived. She told how the Israelites were once the only Chosen Ones, but they hadn't done so well. King David was very good, but Solomon wasn't quite good enough so the Temple and the Kingdom of Israel got destroyed.

Then Jesus came to earth and let everybody, Jews and Gentiles alike, know that there is now a heavenly kingdom. There was something about dying on a cross that seemed important, but it

didn't make much sense to me.

Theological nuances like salvation by grace vs. salvation by works were lost on me at that young age, but I was certainly aware that there were the obedient ones and the not-obedient ones in these stories. I wasn't going to be like the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land. They sinned a lot, God was always mad at them and their temple got torn down. I was going to be good. Obedience was the way to get into heaven; the other place didn't sound like much fun.

The Silver Creek Years (age 7–12)

At Home

When I was seven, my parents moved to a little village called Silver Creek, about a hundred miles from Vancouver BC. The closest professing people were in Chilliwack, a town 30 miles away. We drove to Chilliwack faithfully every Sunday for meetings. The only time I saw other professing children was on Sundays.

My mother was resentful and bitter about her marriage. Of course, she could not admit it. She had to conform to the image of a dutiful professing wife, full of peace and joy. However, it was also her duty to discipline her children, and this is where her anger showed.

The wooden spoon came out often.

I gave up wondering why, I just accepted it.

Being hit with the convex side of the spoon hurts way more than the concave side.

Standing on the edge of the bath tub so that I was high enough to see my backside in the mirror, I could observe several hours later that the bright red splotches turned to a purple colour. The next day they would be blue and black, by the third day they would turn yellow and green. But the most painful was the out of control hysterical shrieking and screaming..."you stupid rotten good for nothing"... "you are the worst kid I have ever seen" etc.

It was considered a huge honor to have the workers visit our home. My parents went to great lengths to be seen to be good enough.

My sisters and I knew we had to be on our absolute best behavior or my mother would unleash a tirade on us...after the workers were gone.

When it looked like we were going to stay in Silver Creek a while, my grandparents moved down from Terrace and bought a house a half block from where we lived; I spent a lot of time there. Their home provided a respite from my mother's anger. When my father was home from work, his presence moderated her behavior.

I never wondered how someone who claimed to have a "peace and joy the likes of which the world has never known" would treat us kids the way she did, or why she concealed her behavior from dad and the workers.

I never even saw the contradiction.

Dad was an adult when he converted and at this point in time a whole-hearted member. He idolized the workers and friends.

He was quick to criticize the "false churches." He hadn't absorbed the notion that professing people don't socialize with worldly people. During this time period, he met a few people who went to "false churches."

I remember things getting really awkward when dad tried to explain to them that his was the only true way.

He was truly puzzled when they didn't accept the professing people's interpretation of the Bible. He didn't realize that they weren't under the same pressure to conform to the worker's interpretation of the Bible as he was. He could not understand why they could not see how the "truth" matched the Bible and their churches didn't.

Clearly, Satan had hardened their hearts.

He was disappointed that they didn't see God's light shining through him. "How could they be so blind?" he wondered.

As a child, I just watched, listened and absorbed my father's viewpoints without recognizing it as a subtle form of religious snobbery.

At Meetings

I had been brought to Sunday morning, Wednesday night and gospel meetings, as well as attending Convention and Special Meetings since I was born, but it was during these years that I first remember understanding what was said. Meetings were a respite from my mother's anger.

Meetings were quiet solemn affairs. I knew the routines and felt quite comfortable.

Rita Moore and her companion Shirley Collins held gospel meetings in our field; of course, we attended. Being curious and eager to please I paid close attention; I learned a lot. We needed to be emptied of self so that we could be filled with the Spirit.

Just as impurities in the clay a vessel was made from could cause it to fail as it was being fired in the kiln so too could a hardness in our heart cause a failure on Judgment day.

Jesus died for our sins to give us a chance at salvation, but those that strayed from the pathway lost out.

Make your calling and election sure.

One shall be taken and the other left. Don't be like the five foolish virgins on Judgment day; make sure your lamps are filled and burning bright or you will lose out.

And of course, the workers (God's own servants) were the only conduit to salvation.

These sentiments are an anathema to the "saved by grace" mainstream Christians. But to me this was just a continuation of the "salvation depends on obedience" stories I had heard from my grandmother.

I wasn't bothered by this. I felt too young to have to consider my own salvation; when I was old enough, I would just be obedient.

I liked the approval I got when I showed that I had understood the sermons.

Without realizing it, I was absorbing this message.

Convention was another respite from home. We were admonished to "come ye apart and rest awhile" from the battle we had to fight against the enemies of the "truth" we faced when we

were "out there in the world." I have vivid memories of speaking with Arnold Webber (a senior worker) on the Silverdale convention grounds when I was age 9 or 10.

He asked if I had made any friends here, I said I had.

Arnold then said with a great deal of passion and intensity, "Good! Because this is the only place to make friends, those worldly people, they will cheat you and lie to you, this is the only place where you find people you can trust." I was taken aback by this since I had family that were not professing and seemed like good people; this contradiction I was able to see.

Looking back I'm sure he wasn't intending to slight anybody.

But when nothing matters but salvation (as one hymn puts it) anything you say that promotes the Kingdom becomes a valid and worthwhile statement.

I didn't realize that I was hearing many other statements about how bad worldly people are that were too subtle for a child to recognize. Those I couldn't defend my self against.

At School

There were no professing children to socialize with in our town. I wasn't developing social skills the way my classmates were; I was unable to relate to worldly kids at school.

I came to school with a subconscious belief that the worldly people are inferior and to be avoided.

It was embarrassing and awkward to explain what religion I was.

I had one friend, but other than that I was a loner.

The "worldly" kids had social skills and a sense of belonging that I didn't.

I didn't know why I was different, I just knew that I was.

The Dawson Creek Years (age 12-16)

At Home

When we moved to Dawson Creek, things went from bad to worse. The spankings had stopped, but the hysterical rants were, if anything, worse. I didn't have Grandma and Grandpa to go to.

My dad's job wasn't going well for him, so he was stressed out and distant. When we were in Silver Creek he was well intentioned but gruff and clumsy at times as a parent. In Dawson Creek he was simply not there.

I learned to avoid being in the same room as my mother if dad wasn't around. By the time I was 14 my mother made it plain to me that she wanted me out of the house. When summer holidays came she told me that I should work on a farm somewhere, she managed to find people with farms that would take me.

I didn't feel that I had any choice.

The rest of the family would go on vacation.

I didn't know why she was always seething with resentment that all too often boiled over into rage directed at me, but by this time I had decided that it wasn't normal and not my fault. I had no clue how I could ever satisfy her; I coped by shutting her out as best I could.

Of course, if workers or friends were visiting she acted as though she had peace and joy.

It never occurred to me that the change in behavior when friends and workers were visiting was a form of dishonesty.

It still never occurred to me to wonder why the peace and joy she claimed to have was not at all evident when no one was watching.

I couldn't see the contradiction.

At Meetings

I professed when I was 13 during a gospel meeting held in our home. Jack Price and Eldon Kendrew were the workers at the time.

I felt I was now old enough that I had better start "being obedient" or I would go to hell if I died.

I was also thinking that maybe I could get some of that peace, joy and the strength that only professing people could get.

I was wanting strength because things were not going well at home or school.

The night I professed, I was looking forward to praying, now I that I had a direct line to God, or so I thought. I got down on my knees and started, nothing happened. I prayed for awhile longer, still no voices, visions, feelings of being moved by the spirit...nothing. Thinking maybe something would happen in the night, I crawled into bed.

When I woke up the next morning, nothing had changed.

Reading and praying before my first Sunday morning as a professing person yielded similar results. I thought what people said during testimony time was given to them by God. Oh well, I had listened to enough testimonies that I knew the kinds of things I was supposed to say so I managed.

It never occurred to me that being honest about the situation was even an option.

I felt that I had to conform.

No one noticed any lack of divine inspiration.

Dody Lennox, one of the friends, was there for my first testimony.

As it turned out, she was also in the last meeting I ever attended.

I continued on through my teen years, thinking I would slowly get good enough that God would say something to me.

Maybe I would even get some peace and joy.

At School

My parents were the youngest professing people in the town. There were no professing kids to socialize with. The nearest were about 100 miles away; convention and special meetings were the only times I would see them.

By this time my social development was so poor I had trouble relating even to professing kids.

Things went off the rails at school. The subtle religious snobbery that I had unknowingly

absorbed, coupled with my lack of social skills, made me a defenseless target for the bullies. I was spat on, physically and emotionally harassed; it was the most brutal experience I have ever been through.

It lasted until the end of grade nine.

I mentioned the bullying problem to dad who shrugged and said just stand up for yourself.

Jack Price, our worker, said much the same thing about the bullies; just fight back.

But where do you start when you walk into a classroom and half the kids are laughing at you and you don't even know why?

I was starting to realize that the way my mother treated me was not at all fair and probably had something to do with my lack of social development and self confidence. I was barely functioning.

I had no clue what to do. I decided that I wouldn't be able to start pulling myself together until I could leave home and get away from my mother.

Until then I would just have to tough it out.

I thought that once away from her I would be able to shake of my lack of self confidence, get caught up on my social skills and be normal.

Langley (age 16-17)

After grade 11, we moved to Langley, close to where Grandma and Grandpa now lived. Grandma took me aside and disclosed that she had been always been aware of the situation at home with my mother.

She said that she had been praying for me all these years.

It never occurred to me to wonder why her prayers had been as ineffective as mine.

I still thought that the "truth" was actually true.

My mother chose to have an affair with a professing man. My father noticed, as well as many of the professing people in the area.

Professing people that knew gossiped about it quietly but nobody said anything out loud.

With childish naiveté, she seemed to think no one noticed the affair she was conducting so obviously in broad daylight.

She flatly denied that there was any hint of an affair when dad challenged her on her behavior.

She chose not to see that her behavior was sitting in broad daylight for all to see.

By the end of my grade 12 year, she had convinced dad that I was the cause of the strife in our home. The contradictions in this were evident to me, but I was well practiced in accepting contradictions by this point.

Dad told me I was to leave the house as soon as I was finished school. I asked him what made him think I would want to stay?

I got a suitcase for a graduation present.

(Years later Dad told me that things only got worse after I left)

On My Own

I would say that the majority of professing people are very kind, decent people. They certainly looked out for me as I muddled along no longer under my parent's roof.

I don't know that I could have managed without them the first year. I was not functioning well emotionally or socially at all.

I must have tried their patience at times.

Going to meetings and remaining "one of the friends" was a matter of physical survival that year.

Although I didn't dare question the "truth," I was extremely angry at my mother.

It was clear to me that her behavior had been very, very wrong and I was starting out adult life with emotional issues to overcome because of her.

It was three years before I would speak to my mother, I had nothing I wished to say to her.

After the first year on my own, I was doing better job-wise and feeling a bit more secure financially. With mere survival no longer being my main concern, I began to wonder how long it would be before I became "normal." Just shaking it off and coming out of my shell was proving to be harder than I had hoped.

I continued going to meetings, but still got nothing out of them. Attending conventions as an adult was extremely painful. I was a social misfit. You are never as lonely as when you are alone with people all around you.

I never felt the peace and joy we were supposed to be receiving at convention.

I noticed this contradiction but I did not actively challenge or question the veracity of the "truth."

My heart was no longer in it, that much I could admit to myself, but I couldn't admit that there was a possibility that the "truth" might be wrong.

I thought there must be something wrong with me or my willingness, but I had no clue what or how to change.

Forgiveness

About three years after I moved out of my parent's house, there was a family gathering that I attended. I had seen my parents at convention, and spoken briefly to my father on several occasions.

When I looked across the room at my mother, I thought to myself, things are different now.

If she ever tries to hurt me, I can tell her off, get in my vehicle and go back to my own house.

The realization that the abuse was now over forever was very liberating.

I then looked at her again and for the first time saw how unhappy she looked. As I reflected on this, I realized that I was just starting my adult life and could choose whatever I wanted and possibly succeed.

My mother, on the other hand, had chosen to be a mother and failed and had no chance to undo her actions.

At that moment I chose to let go of my anger; the feeling of relief was instantaneous and powerful.

This moment has been a very important part of my life.

If this God even exists, I'm not sure I like him...

After three years, I was still very dysfunctional emotionally and socially. It was coming increasingly obvious to me that there was more to becoming normal than just snapping out of this funk that I was in.

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Recovery was going to be a long-term project.

I started actively noting in my own mind what I thought to be the roots of the problem.

Being socially isolated for the sake of the "truth" and growing up with a mother who was chronically angry in spite of the peace and joy she claimed to have were the two main causes, as far as I was concerned.

I started thinking of all the years of praying I did with not one response. Where was this God that grandma sang about "he cares for little children, he cares for you and me." I hadn't noticed this God doing much for me.

Where was my mother's peace and joy?

Where was my peace and joy?

Why would this professing God want me to be so isolated that my social development was affected? Why did I have to go through that horrific bullying at school?

Why had this God done nothing for me?

Did this professing God even exist?

If he did, why should I even like him? There was a contradiction between what I was supposed to be experiencing and what I was actually experiencing.

The belief system that I was raised in had been relentlessly reinforced with a regimen of Sunday morning, Wednesday night and Special Meetings, conventions, hymn singing, worker visits and isolation from any opposing influences. This indoctrination process had been very powerful and had conditioned me to accept contradictions.

However, the strain was becoming great.

A tiny crack appeared.

While I thought this professing God probably existed, I thought there was a tiny chance that maybe he didn't.

Believing in this tiny chance was a huge step.

If this God existed I was going to have to stand before him on judgment day, and that thought worried me. I decided in that event I would tell him that I hadn't heard much from him on earth and I was confused by what I had seen and experienced and hadn't known what to do. This professing God could then do as he chose. I would take the consequences whatever they might be.

Choosing to believe that I had the right to tell this professing God that I was confused by the contradictions between what I saw and felt vs. what I was supposed to see and feel was another huge step.

One was supposed to approach the throne in "fear and trembling." Talking back to this God was certainly not considered acceptable.

But the strain of dealing with the contradiction between what I was supposed to be seeing and feeling and what I was actually seeing and feeling had gotten too much to bear.

I chose to accept the reality of what I was actually experiencing.

To not attend meetings would be to upend my entire world as I knew it, so I continued attending. I knew people would be disappointed and what little social skills I had came from the professing environment.

I felt totally unprepared to function as a worldly person. On the other hand, I wasn't very well prepared to function as a professing person either.

Attending meeting at this point felt dishonest.

I felt homeless.

The time finally came when the dishonesty of attending meetings became unbearable.

I simply had to do something.

With considerable trepidation I decided that I would step out into the world as a "worldly" person. I had no clue what it would be like or how I would cope. All I knew was that I could no longer cope as a professing person. I chose to step into the unknown, to lose my identity as a professing person and live life as a "worldly person."

My Last Meeting

I decided Union Meeting Sunday would be the best time to not show up for the first time. The phone rang about half an hour before meeting time and I answered it.

Someone (I forget who) offered me a ride to meeting.

Before I could say anything, they announced that they would be there in ten minutes.

Damn! Shower, shave and dress, grab my Bible bag and hop in the car.

I did not have the self confidence to be able to assert myself and tell them that meetings were no longer for me, nor was I able to sit in the meeting and not participate.

The notion that one must conform was deeply imbedded in me.

As I entered the meeting room and saw the familiar scene, I knew this was not the place for me. I knew that this would be the last meeting I ever attended. When testimony time came, I made sure that I was the first up. I just wanted to get this part over with.

I spoke about fellowship and how I appreciated the spirit of the others present and sat down very relieved that this was the last time that I would have to "take part." Nothing further was required from me.

I could just sit while the others "took part," sing a hymn, give thanks for the emblems, pass the emblems around, another hymn and I was done.

Free!

A few testimonies later Dody Lennox spoke about how she knew she was part of the living vine and not some dead branch. "The proof of life is when you see growth," she said. Then she went on to recount how she had seen someone take their very first steps in the way, and how it was so wonderful to have the privilege seeing this same person today with such a strong spirit.

She was talking about me!

"For f***'s sake," I thought, "I can't believe this. Holy sh**!"

Maybe there actually is a God and this is a sign that getting out of the "truth" is the right thing to do." Sitting in that meeting with profanities going through my mind as Dody went on about the spiritual growth she could see was one of the most bizarre moments of my life.

These meetings used to be such sacred events, this one felt quite phony.

Dody was conforming. She wasn't seeing a strong spirit in me--there was none to see. I was empty.

She was seeing what she felt pressured to see. Apparently, I wasn't the only one who felt pressured to see or feel things that were not there.

I was still entertaining the possibility that the "truth" was actually there and I just wasn't seeing it because I didn't have a "good spirit."

This incident certainly eased those doubts.

I was there, you weren't...

Some years later, after I had stopped going to meetings, I was visiting my sister and her husband, both professing. I made a comment to my sister about the social isolation that we had experienced while we were growing up and how I thought it was wrong.

Her husband spoke up forcefully and declared that there was nothing wrong with it, and that my mother had done a very good job raising her children.

He also declared that I was misinterpreting what my mother had done.

He said there had been peace and joy; I just wasn't seeing that there had been.

He hadn't met our family until long after my sister and I had both left home, but he spoke as if he had actually seen the situation for himself. He was trying to tell me that events that I had witnessed and lived through, and emotions that I had experienced hadn't happened.

He was conforming; like Arnold Webber, he felt that any statement defending and promoting the "truth" had to be true.

I told him, "I was there, you weren't." I felt no pressure to conform or deal with contradictions anymore.

I was free to think for myself.
I was free to believe what I had seen and experienced.
It felt good to be able to take reality for what it was.

Is that what happened?

Fifteen years or so after I left the "truth," Heather, the younger of my two sisters, a single mother of a 4-year-old daughter, was facing a battle with cancer. My mother was devastated to learn that Heather flatly refused to accept her child going to our other sister Tammy in the event of her passing (my younger brother and I are both bachelors so we were off the list).

Tammy and her husband were both professing.

Heather was adamant that her daughter would not face the social isolation and the dress code that goes with being raised in a professing home.

Heather had never professed, and had disagreed with the "truth" since her early teens.

My mother was devastated by Heather's stand. "Was it that bad for you?" my mother asked me in a determined manner. I wasn't inclined to discuss it, but my mother demanded an answer. I said, "Yes it was." My mother firmly denied that it could have been that bad.

I told her of my isolation at school, that I hadn't had the chance to experience friendships while growing up.

I told her of the bullying. I told her of Arnold Webber's comments.

Her state of denial remained strong.

I then reminded her that she had experienced the same thing when her family moved to Terrace. She recoiled as if I had physically struck her. She looked terrified, sat in stunned silence for a few moments, and when she finally spoke, her voice sounded like a very small, timid child, "Yes, but I had a peace and a joy those other girls never knew." I didn't have the heart to ask why she dropped out of school and married too young if she had so much peace and joy.

Instead, I assured her that the social isolation that I had experienced had been very real and very devastating to me and that I hadn't the peace and joy she claimed that she had.

She regained her composure somewhat and then in a very shocked tone asked, "Oh, is that what happened?"

I'm sure some people are quite contented to be professing. I feel sorry for those who are being manipulated into seeing things that they don't actually see and doing things that they feel to be wrong.

At some level my mother must be in torment.

She knew at some level that what she was doing was wrong when she let the "truth" impose the same social isolation on us that she had suffered.

Obviously, at some level in her consciousness she did see the isolation doing damage to me as it had to her, yet she believes that she never saw it.

She believed at one level that we had peace and joy and that Heather's and my accounts were to be dismissed.

At another level, she must know that that peace and joy was lacking in her life and in mine also. I feel sorry for her.

Epilogue

It was about 10 years after I left the "truth" that I encountered Doug and Helen Parker's book *The Secret Sect*

. It was an amazing experience to have the "truth" that I based my entire life on for more than 20 years exposed as a lie.

Emotions raged through me as I read.

I was stunned, I was angry and I was relieved.

Up to this point, I had decided that the "truth" was false solely on the basis of my own perceptions.

Now I had documented evidence that it was a lie.

I was stunned to think of how many people were deceived.

I was relieved to have my own perceptions validated.

I was angered to realize that beyond all doubt, I had been lied to repeatedly by people who knew that what they were saying wasn't true.

And they had the nerve to call it the "truth"!

Another incident happened about the same time period. I was taking a university course about the history of the Christian Church. This was a fact based academic course, not a theology based course.

We were instructed to leave our theologies (if we had any) at the door and consider the historical evidence in an objective fashion.

The professor said something that contradicted 2x2 doctrine and without thinking I challenged him.

I was stunned when I realized that I was using a theology that I thought I had rejected and didn't even believe.

The sudden visceral, knee-jerk way some remnant of 2x2 teachings surfaced from my sub-conscious was quite disconcerting.

Kevin Daniel states in his book *Reinventing the Truth* that *Hymns Old and New* was first published in 1914.

I had seen this date many times on the inside of the hymn book that I carried to meetings.

He also stated that a large proportion of the hymns were written by members of other churches (the ones we called "false churches") and that none of the hymns that had been written by professing people dated before 1897.

While not spoken of often, I had heard this fact alluded to by friends and workers.

Now that I had learned a little about viewing historical facts in an objective fashion, there was a very obvious question to ask.

Why would a church that had been in existence since Jesus walked the shores of Galilee suddenly adopt a hymnbook in 1914 that contained mostly hymns written by "false churches," and no hymns written by professing people before 1897?

I was stunned to realize that I and many others had spent years with this contradiction in plain sight and yet not seen it. The power of indoctrination is amazing. I have had the opportunity to ask a few professing people this question; the logical contortions and theological gymnastics they perform while trying to answer is quite interesting.

The "hymnbook question" was another validation of my perceptions and corroboration of the claims laid out in

The Secret Sect

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It's hard to believe that it was over 30 years ago since my last meeting. There certainly were a few struggles and tough times, but life has been good for a long time now.

It's not healthy to dwell on unpleasant experiences out of self-pity.

However, it's not healthy to avoid dealing with them because of fear or denial either.

I have accepted my past for what it is, myself for who I am, and I accept other people for who they are.

Today I'm retired after a very satisfying career as a high school teacher. Adolescents are very interesting people to work with. Working with them brought many challenges; it also brought a good deal of joy. Feelings of sadness come over me from time to time when I think of my childhood and young adulthood that was damaged by the "truth." I never did marry or have children, but I have found that with acceptance of reality comes peace. I am no longer conflicted by what I feel and what the "truth" is telling me I'm feeling. Is there a God? I don't know, I certainly did a lot of praying as a professing teen and never noticed his presence. He's still welcome to get in touch with me if he likes. My mother is still professing. She remarried after dad passed, she seems much happier. We stay in touch. Unfortunately my sister Heather lost her battle with cancer and passed away in 2001. Heather arranged for her daughter to be adopted by a wonderful couple. They are Christians who choose to worship at an Evangelical Free church. My brother never did profess, we stay in fairly close contact. My remaining sister and her husband are professing and it appears happily so.

In the 30 plus years since leaving, I have had one chance to discuss (in any depth) my choice to leave. Professing people feel very threatened by such stories and non-professing people have no clue what you are talking about.

I was delighted to discover Elizabeth Coleman's book
From Cult to Christ. It was a powerful experience

reading the descriptions of her perceptions.

We traveled through the same landscape and had many of the same experiences; yet more validation and corroboration of my perceptions.

Even after all these years, it was a constructive exercise to reflect back on my journey out. I felt inspired to write my story. If there are any ex2x2s in the Terrace, BC area I would be interested in meeting you.

A group that has all of the following characteristics is probably a cult:

- isolation from mainstream society
- exclusive knowledge and teachings available only to members
- a belief that the group has to be defended from enemies
- members are dependent socially and/or materially on the group
- a leader who must be obeyed absolutely.

There are some who do not believe "the truth" is a cult. I believe it is. Decide for yourself.

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