

Johan Interview part 5 and 6

[C0003 John Interview part 5.mp4]

H; So I would really love it if you could just talk a little bit about your insights in the fear based system and how that affects, how that operates in the church, how it affects those that have left. The psychology of that and how it affects the body and the mind and the spirit. And you used 4 terms that are very powerful and are very validating for me because I've felt them all and I've not had the words for the first one. And the first one is violence pornography that is what I've been feeling all along. [0057] Very male driven. As much as I've seen the dualism in other places I also see sadism and masochism and it creeps me out. You also used the terms scare propaganda, psychological terrorism and the spiral threat. So, that's a lot. I'm happy to jump in and remind you about the terms but if you could start, what it looks like, how it applies to the church, how you experienced it both there and when you left [0131] what you see from here. Maybe the story about what Aksel J Smith used to scare people from the pulpit about? The man who left? Common theme. And former SV friend you met up with and your explanation about why you left based on what Bratlie had done [0201] 10 years later.

I have a quote: The moral of the story is that you are not obedient and settled, something terrible will happen to you. The terms psychological terrorism under warnings that will save you from the great accident. I have learned that scare propaganda is something that sits long in the body. Over time I have actually learned that periods of anxiety, fear are normal when one chooses to leave SV

J: And that scare propaganda is a major reason for people being traumatized after having left the church. And the trauma becomes clear after you have left. When you are there [0309] you don't experience it as a trauma but as a warning. So, don't hurt yourself. And it's a number of layers of the fear propaganda. One layer is the social which is about the society. Don't speak up if you are not in line with the leaders because then you will be marginalized, you will lose your position in the group. SO if you leave the church, something terrible can happen to you or your family [0408] here and now. Like Aksel Smith told once about a man who had left the church and he fell, died on the sidewalk by heart attack. And the cause and effect was very clear. He had left the church, he was not obedient to the brothers and he died [0442] and even today they are telling stories like that. I heard of a story of a man in the 80s who left the church and he died. It's not that unusual that people die. No one has survived this life. It works as a threat the ultimate threat is in the judge at the end, then you will not be saved at the last day if you don't stay here and listen to this fantastic preaching. So this scaring propaganda really comes into this spine of yours [0555]. And I met a wonderful woman a year or two ago. I remember her from my youth as an extremely friendly and nice person. I've got so many beautiful memories of her as a caring, fantastic woman. She left the church 15, 20 years ago and still she is scared and the fear is still in her body that maybe she won't be saved at the last day and still this story [0657] is still a part of her life. She was shivering when she was talking about it so this says something about how deep this is going into sensible people. And it's, research shows that 20% of people are very sensible, highly sensitive people, about 20%. I think they find something in the church that is comforting and so they are also very susceptible to this scaring propaganda. [0800] I'm not very receptive to it myself, but still, despite that fact, even 15 or 20 years after I left, from time to time I thought maybe I made the wrong

choice, maybe there is something terrible is going to happen to me 15 to 20 years later, despite that I am a very robust person. So that tells me something about how deep this is and how dangerous this community is. I had one example more which was dropped

H: there was a man who was out of the church for 10 years and you met him

J: Ya, Another example is a man I met in an airport here in Norway and I agreed to have dinner with him that evening. I'd left 20 years before him and he had left 10 years before. That evening I told him about the power abuse [0952] of Sigurd Bratlie and how he mistreated my eldest brother. And when I met him for breakfast the next morning he was shivering and that he had not slept all night. Because he had listened to my telling about Sigurd Bratlie without opposing me. He thought it was so scaring. I said that if it was so scaring it was the behavior of sigurd bratlie that was scaring, not that I told you about his behavior. And even one more example [1047] I wrote an article in newspaper half a year ago or something with some critiques of kaare smith. And a friend of mine same age as me sent me an SMS and recommended me to throw myself down on the floor and beg God for forgiveness for my criticism of kaare smith and I hope that it should not happen something to me. And this is an intelligent person, he's had a job and worked with ordinary people and still come with this recommendation and it tells something about how deep this goes in people. The problem with the health care system almost none of them understand the traumas following such a background. So the only professional environment here in Norway that has understood and is helpful is "modenbad" [Norwegian word that I have no idea on] and I know a number of people who have been there and had very good help from that. That's the only environment where they understand what this is about. I think that children growing up listening to these stories, which is so scaring and so misleading about how this society works. I think I almost must say it's a crime. It's a crime. It's abusive and should have been forbidden. I think small children should not go to meetings like this. [1344] This is harmful. So I think it should be...the authoristie should look closer into this but they don't dare to.

H: So we just spend the rest of our lives in therapy and can't have normal relationships and feel like strangers on this planet. Because that is the experience of a cult kid and, you know, therapy doesn't understand it unless they are specialized for it and that's just a handful of people around the world. It's still some much victim blaming about it. If you act weird or have these issues that are so misunderstood or undiagnosed or unstudied, even the most professional people will end up eventually dismisses you or having you stop it or just not understanding. I've just been pushed out of the room by anyone I've tried to get help from eventually. [1454] the doors are slowly shut and they don't want anything to do with me. It's an extremely, it's religious trauma and it's like, I refer to it as "soul rape", it's this extreme violation of your own identity and your own ability to trust yourself and your own ability to not have self-loathing. You're taught that you're no good. You can't rely on the basic thing which we all need which is your basic instinct and your own intuition. And then you feel like something's wrong with you, because there is but you can't get anyone to validate you or get help for it. Which puts you even deeper into it which brings me to that word "spiral threat" [1549] that you mentioned. which is this phenomenon that you are given all these reasons to have problems and you're told that if you leave your problems will begin. Which we have just discovered psychologically is the case and then when the

problems begin you're already set up to blame yourself, loathe yourself, throw yourself off a cliff so they can say "look what happened" or else you go back, crawling on the ground with your forehead down

[1621] J: and of course you don't understand that you are brainwashed until you leave. Just it's only when you have left that you understand you are brainwashed. Maybe I should say something about sexual abuse.

H: Please do.

J: My oldest sister, she was unusual beautiful and at the age of 16 I think, she came as an au pair to one of the eldest broder, the leaders, his wife should give birth to a new child and she was helping in the home. And her husband use her over a few weeks time, that was her first experience with men like that. And she came home so darkened and she was crying and was out of herself. She didn't tell what happened. She told me 15 years later. And that ruined her life completely. So having been abused there, she decided she didn't want to stay in the church. So she left. And when she was leaving, she believed in the stories she was told what it was like to live outside out there. So she practiced the scheme she had been told in the church. And for that reason she had some problems for being accepted outside the church because of her mis-behavior, stupid misbehavior. Since she was not accepted, she decided that maybe she hadn't practiced well enough [1932] so she even increased the dumb behavior. And then the rest of her life was going completely down. Her life was ruined and the start of the ruin was the telling the false stories about what is so wonderful in the church and so bad in the community. And so the abuse, sexual abuse by this elder brother who was preaching and fantastic was so completely. She was completely, she lost track of everything. At school she had the best. She was a brilliant mind, beautiful looking, had every resources it should take to have a good life and it was a disaster.

H: Was the man ever accused?

J: No,no. And so she married men who were abusing her and the last one was beating her up so badly that she was brain damaged and fell into coma and was in a coma for year and a half and passed away at age 60 years or so. So this is a very sad story, and it's picks up so much of the problems and it's an exaggerated example.

H; It sounds like my life and my family. I was almost killed by my first boyfriend I was not sexually abused but I was extremely physically abused until they. Verybally and emotionally constantly. And I still have a weird attraction men that are like leading brothers. Which means that I end up with arrogant, controlling abusive shallow cowardly dismissive, narcissists. And I've have so much therapy and I see through it but it's so deep in there. I have enough self-love that I've developed over time despite being told to hate myself that I can be OK with who I am and how it is but I can't trust what I'm attracted to. Maybe I can now, we'll see, I'm feeling better than ever. A lot of even feeling better than ever is because of this journey, this documentary. And just finding other people like me. I didn't have anyone to talk to for 15 years after my family was kicked out and I left. I was blamed also for my family falling apart. I'm the oldest. So I brought the world into the home. But I never found anybody. We were all so separated. When we were thrown out and there was no body to talk to or if I tried to talk to

anyone it wasn't the church, it was my family. It wasn't that bad, like when you met that man. I tried to talk to my friends who I grew up with and said "hey I think it's a cult that we were raised in" and they were like all wearing pants and drinking and none of us were in the church and they pretty much looked at me with the same hate glare that I would get from the brothers all through the revival. They just dismissed. "No it's not" they were still defending the church. Sorry about your sister and I can see myself in your story, and my sister had it way worse than me. I think my brothers, my 5 brothers, have suffered from it way worse than the girls [2506] I was very surprised, because growing up I thought the boys would be OK because they are told they have everything. But it turns out that if you leave the church and think you have everything, but you have nothing? Turns out you have a lot of anger issues. They are just completely unequipped to be in the real world. At least the girls have had to humble themselves and find new ways to survive because we never had the power. We're so used to having challenges but the boys are used to being kings.

[2550] J: But it's also this practice of or lack of practice of ethical reasoning. People are told to listen to the brothers, don't think for yourself, listen to the brothers. They are in God's council and know what is right. And so when one leaves there, one hasn't got any, very limited thoughts so it takes quite some time to figure out who am I and what are my ideals so that's also a cult thing

H: Or they have these ideals that are unrealistic. Just expecting everyone to work together in community and family ways that isn't how it works in the real world. Or expecting to have the life that you were raised to expect. It's not that way in the real world. It's not about group thinking, it's about individual thinking and that can be a real shock. That reminds me that I wanted to ask you. You had said that what you noticed about how this works compared to other Christianity and other churches. You said that most churches [2750] have a gift? You get totally in their part in a [didn't catch this part] in smiths friends it's like a sports. your performances count. We all run the race but one wins the prize. That bible verse they love. I've noticed this in my family even when they left the group. There's this search for the bad guy in everything that happens so we attach each other or there's a lot of criticism and there's also a competition. Where only one person can be worthy or good enough. There's a lot of nasty criticism in my family. When I read your quote about it being a competition or a sport. It's like it became a trickle down attitude that continued even outside of the church. If you want to speak more about that.

[end C0003 Johan Interview part 5]

[c0004 Johan interview part 6]

J: I didn't have any comment on that

H: When I refer to my family as having these traits. Having left the church and still acting like a mini-cult. Have you ever observed that before or is it a thesis that I've only come up with from my own experience.

[0030] J : I haven't noticed that

H: I haven't come across it so far

J: Not really

H: family strength needs to stick with people. Maybe it's just mental illness in my family. It seems like it's still like the church. Let's see if I have anymore quick questions. Would you mind describing your encounters with Aslaksen, because when my mom was interviewed, she spoke about her interactions with Aslaksen because it was him who really converted my parents. So if you could talk about him. Describe a little about Aslaksen. You wrote that he was like a shining light that no one could look away from. Fairly refined presentation where he could refute and inspire with sarcasm and directness. Very beautiful writing like most of your writing. Just a little bit on how you experienced Aslaksen and the kind of personality he was could be very helpful for me.

[0202]: J: ya, aslaksen he was very talented. And charming, very good speaker, lot of charisma. So I think he was the one that gave the church the self-opinion. so he was brilliant and the church was brilliant. So I think that this slightly oversized collective self-image stems from him. He was very talented. And I guess one could say that he was a narcissist. He loved himself and he loved listening to himself. He could speak for hours. And made the whole audience laugh and so it was a great time. He was travelling from Honefoss to Oslo which at that time which was 2 hours by bus one way. For almost 20 years. Because Olso was a big church and I think it gave him a lot to come there and let his light shine [0359] in that group. I think that was a great experience for him. And of the leaders in smiths venner there is no doubt he was the most intelligent. He was a brilliant person. And with his charm, his love of power was not so visible. He was more smart in how to get things the way he wanted. It was a less ugly performance.

[0446] H: How would you describe, where do you think this very popular Aslaksen statement comes from was it in his heart or was it a joke when he said "if you marry a witch you should thank God every day for the extra opportunities for victory". This is a very popular. My father would use it against my mother, recently some girl on Facebook who seems to be mentally ill from the church, just wrote it as a statement on FB alone. And I wrote he was a misogynist because I thought she was making a statement about this and she commented "please refrain from writing such things on my wall". I was "why are you posting this, I don't understand".

J: Ya, that statement was from him and he also linked it to [0539] Socrates who was married to some "type" who was a witch. The telling is when he left the home she was throwing a bucket of water over him when he went out the door, and he said "after such a thunder would come a rain storm". He was quoting Socrates on that. He was quite frequently quoting Socrates. He could read more than the bible so that also made his speeches more interesting.

[0632] H: So he was just being extremely clever.

J: He was extremely clever. And different from Sigurd Bratlie who was quite boring and repeating the same thing over and over again. I heard Sigurd Bratlie for the first time t 10-15 years when my father's

funeral. I had heard everything before. He didn't say one single thing I haven't heard before. So he repeated himself over and over and over again. Aslaksen was more interesting.

H: Could you say a few lines of how you would describe Sigurd Bratlie's personality? Sort of like you described Aslaksen

[0728] J: Sigurd Bratlie, he was very much a man looking for power. He was the youngest son the Bratlie family outside Oslo. He was a small man and he was looking for power. From his very youth he was after anyone he perceived as a competitor like Adolf Veltleson [?] who as studying theology and came in contact with Smith Venner in the early 40s. [0825] And he became very popular so Aslaksen gave him a lot of room, which Sigurd Bratlie didn't like so he was a very clear competitor. As a theologian he was very clever. So Sigurd Bratlie made his theology study his biggest fault. He was so clever but he was not in the right spirit so he told him he better stop his clever speaking. And maybe instead of completing his theology study, he should become a school teacher because he was very good at clever teaching but he hadn't got the spirit [0934] Obviously he managed to convince Aslaksen that there was something wrong with Adolf Veltleson [?] and he disappeared. That was the first expelling of a competitor by Sigurd Bratlie that I know from that side [0959] Bratlie was charmless, boring but very decisive. Very robust self-image.

H: And it seemed like a lot of darkness and suffering focus too. Not sure why. Seemed like a very morbid mentality too. But we should probably. Maybe one more thing. I wanted to ask about Jonathan van der Linden. We were talking about Jonathan ...you've had some interesting interactions with him. Could you describe a little about the Jonathan van der Linden story that's happening today. Maybe make it a little personal with any details you can share, if you're comfortable with that. Just want to make clear in the documentary what is occurring today and I have not been able to interview Jonathan

[1138] J: I don't think I should do that.

H: No problem. So that's it. The hand thing. The Heil Hitler thing, that's how it felt to me but.

J: looking for a term.

H: What you had said was, well they had a fist. But then I started explaining.

J: Part of the power struggle when Kaare wanted to take over, he introduced something they called a revival which I thought should be called a staged mass hysteria. And of course, to run a mass hysteria you have to have some symbols, we are together here, it is the revival, it is God coming down with his spirit and awakening people so they started to make a greeting [raises hand] which could seem to be similar to the Hitler Jugend. "Heil Hitler" was like that but this was [gestures chopping motion with hand] the hand and if you were really eager you used both hands. So this mass hysteria they managed to get so many young people to buy into and they were travelling around and scaring people all over the north of Europe. And they were going into fairs and restaurants with their hands and making fools of themselves. And a lot of people left in that period they just couldn't cope with this madness. But those who stayed were enough. I guess it was some 25% who left at that time.

H: We were told they were opposers. That's the word we were given. So we were hunting for opposers in North America also.

J: And I think opposition is important in order to develop a healthy community. IF you don't have opposition, you see what is happening. The whole madness we have seen in smiths venner in the last 20 years is because of lack of opposition. So instead of listening to the opposers they are expelled. By that they are hindering their own development. So the lack of opposition is a major problem. That's what I think.

H: OK. Thank you. That was wonderful.