

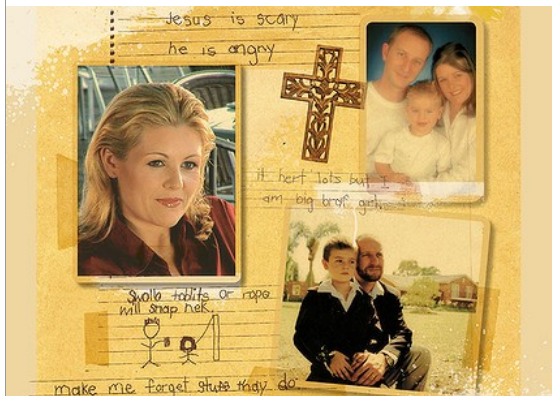
# Spirited away

March 17, 2012

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When his wife, Kylie, joined a small Christian study group in the Blue Mountains near Sydney, Nathan Zamprogno had no idea his life was about to change forever. By Tim Elliott.

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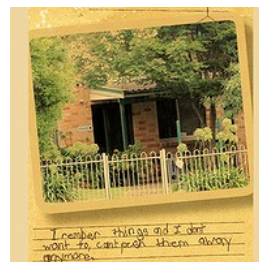
Stranger than fiction ... (clockwise from left) Nathan Zamprogno's estranged wife Kylie in 2001; Nathan, Kylie and Liam in happier times; Nathan with Liam shortly after Kylie's departure.

**This article first appeared in Good Weekend magazine on Saturday**

Most horror stories begin ordinarily enough - the comfortable home, the happy family, the loving couple. And so it was with Nathan Zamprogno, who in 2008 was living with his wife, Kylie, and their five-year-old son, Liam, in Richmond, a small town at the foot of the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney. Nathan and Kylie had met as teenagers in a local church group, and had been married almost 10 years. He was 35; she was 33. They drove a station wagon and played soccer on Saturdays. Nathan worked nearby, at Wycliffe Christian School, where he was the IT specialist; Kylie, who had studied nursing, was waiting to start at Nepean Hospital as an administrator in the emergency department.

Life, as Nathan saw it, was good. "There wasn't a day that we didn't wake up and count our blessings," he says.

Slightly built, with thin, sandy-brown hair and a large nose, Nathan is an unusual, some would say eccentric, character, with a default expression that is doleful and



Hideaway ... Kylie and Virginia's rented home in the Blue Mountains.

intense, like a real-life Leung cartoon. He is almost compulsively civic-minded, having been involved with the Red Cross, the Rural Fire Service, the local library and community theatre. Despite being a lifelong Christian, he is also a rationalist, and lists among his passions public speaking, conservative politics and "extropianism" - a progressive philosophy that stresses ethical, intellectual and physical self-improvement.

Above all, he is an optimist. He is the first to admit, for example, that his marriage wasn't perfect. Kylie suffered regular bouts of mental illness, including postnatal depression in 2002. Despite being close to her mother, who lived a short drive away in the Blue Mountains, she often felt lonely. She suffered a breakdown in 2004, then another in 2006, when she threatened self-harm, and, according to Nathan, falsely claimed to have swallowed two packets of Panadol.

"Yet, with the help of family and friends, Kylie always got better," he says. Indeed, the couple had even decided to try for more children and had extended their mortgage to renovate the house.

In April 2008, with her job at Nepean Hospital yet to start, Kylie found work on the front desk at Wycliffe Christian School, where she met an older woman called Virginia Donges. Donges, a mother of six, had worked as the school's first aid officer, and was well known in the community. One day she invited Kylie to join a Bible study group, weekly meetings of which were held at members' houses in the Blue Mountains. "Kylie wasn't a lady who made friends easily," says Nathan, "so I was pleased."

Soon the meetings began to run later and later. Kylie would often stay out past midnight, without any explanation. Sometimes she wouldn't come home at all. When Nathan tried to call her, he would receive a text message, usually from Donges, saying that Kylie would "be home in the morning".

Nathan became increasingly worried: Kylie had been anxious about her new job, and had been showing signs of another depressive episode. But he was unsure what to do. "Kylie would take our only car, and I had a five-year-old in bed," he says. "I couldn't just take off after her." Besides, he told himself that she was in good hands: he knew Donges from her work at the school, and the group's other members seemed equally reputable.

On January 4, 2009, however, Kylie left for another meeting, telling Nathan she would be back for dinner. Liam and Nathan waved her off. "She never came back," he says.

**When Kylie had been gone** for three days, Nathan, with Liam in tow, visited Donges' home in Faulconbridge, in the Blue Mountains, where she lived with her husband, Wayne. There they found Kylie sitting, according to Nathan, "mute and unresponsive", in the lounge room. "Liam ran into her arms, but she was catatonic. In the end he just played Lego at her feet for two hours."

Donges, meanwhile, assumed the air of a hospital matron. "She looked at me very seriously and said, 'Nathan, you have no idea what we've been going through.'" Apparently, Donges had been "counselling" Kylie for the most horrific child abuse, memories of which had come to light only after months of gruelling "therapy". Kylie, it seemed, had been raped and subjected to ritual Satanic abuse. She had, as a small girl, been taken from her bed by hooded figures and forced to witness murders. She had had boiling water poured in her ear, and been kept under the house and fed like a dog.

Not all of this was news to Nathan. Kylie had in the past spun wild stories about having participated in a murder, being raped and having an abortion. (She later retracted these claims.) But what Donges said next went one step further: as a way of coping with her abuse, Kylie had developed dissociative identity disorder (DID), and was now harbouring hundreds of separate identities, or "alters", the most dominant of which was a six-year-old girl named Hope, who sucked her thumb and had to be put to bed with a teddy.

From Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde to the 1976 film *Sybil*, DID, or multiple personality disorder, has become one of the most storied and controversial of all diagnoses. Springing in part from Sigmund Freud's theory of repression, DID is characterised by the presence of two or more identities that manifest recurrently to take control of the subject's behaviour. Each identity exists in isolation and without knowledge of the other, each sequestering memories of events too painful to bear. Reports of "multiple personalities" go back centuries: such behaviour was often attributed to demonic possession.

These days, many psychiatrists doubt that DID exists. Others suspect it is predominantly "iatrogenic", or brought about by its own treatment, which often comes in the form of recovered-memory therapy. "Recovered-memory therapy is when a counsellor leads the patient back to their other identity," says Don Thomson, professor of psychology at Deakin University in Melbourne. "When they arrive at that identity, they will be able to recall details of the initial trauma, which can then be properly processed."

Recovered-memory therapy is even more controversial than DID. In the 1990s it was implicated in a spate of court cases, both here and overseas, where victims recalled suffering incidents of child sex abuse, usually at the hands of their parents, that were later shown to have never occurred. "It's surprisingly easy to suggest false memories," says Thomson. "There's clear evidence that people who are emotionally distressed, when placed in an environment where they feel supported, are highly suggestible."

For this reason, experts recommend caution when dealing with recovered-memory therapy and DID. Yet when Nathan asked Donges how she had arrived at her diagnosis, he says she told him, "Spiritual discernment." (Neither Kylie nor Donges would be interviewed for this story.)

"At that stage, I said, 'Look, Kylie has to come with me, she's sick.' But they wouldn't allow it," says Nathan. "When we left, Liam waved his arms in her face and said, 'Mummy, Mummy, please talk to me. Why won't you talk to me?' But Kylie just sat there."

**Over the following year**, Nathan tried everything to get Kylie back; he called, he emailed, he wrote letters. He visited Donges's home, into which Kylie had moved. He went to the police, who told him they were powerless. He consulted Kylie's parents and siblings, whom she had also disowned. (Kylie was supposed to be a maid of honour at the wedding of her younger sister, Briony, in February 2009, but never showed up.) On Christmas Day, 2009, Nathan called Kylie and pleaded with her. "I said, 'Where are you? We miss you.' She said, 'I'm with my real family now.'"

Kylie had long since lost her job at Nepean Hospital and assumed the name Hope - that of her six-year-old "alter". She had also been seen by a Blue Mountains psychiatrist, who after just two sessions confirmed a diagnosis of DID. In 2010, Kylie signed an enduring power of guardianship, giving the "Bible study group" the right to make medical decisions on her behalf.

Her contact with Liam, meanwhile, was sporadic. Once, at a meeting mediated by Nathan's mother, Helen, Kylie turned up with another member of the group, who instructed Kylie to manifest one of her "alters", which they called "The Dark One". "It was creepy, like some bad B-grade horror movie," says Helen. "Liam was extremely upset." (Liam has been in Nathan's sole care since February 2011.)

Any spare time Nathan had was spent looking into the Bible study group, the name of which, he discovered, was the Springwood Faulconbridge Home Group. Small, amorphous and without any fixed place of worship, the group is what is known as a "house church", one that is thought to have begun 20 years ago.

"In the beginning, it was all pretty normal," says Blue Mountains-based Wendy Morton, who with her then husband and two children attended meetings in the mid-1990s. (Donges was not yet a member, but other current members were.)

"Back then [the church] didn't even have a name, it didn't need one. It was just a small group of like-minded Christians who would meet on a Sunday afternoon, study the Bible, sing a few songs, then maybe have a meal together."

In 1998, however, one of the group became ill and ended up in hospital. "We all thought he was going to die," says Morton, "and so we started praying for him."

At some stage, the nature of the prayers "turned strange", according to Morton. "One of the group [who has since left] began acting as though he was getting special messages from God, which he had to impart to the group. He would also say, 'Me' when relaying these messages, as if he were God. He also began making predictions about the return of Christ, and saying that we would each have privileged roles in His return."

One person was to be "The Arm of Comfort" (Morton had no idea what this meant); another would be "an Aaron-like figure", referring to Aaron the Priest, who in the Hebrew Bible is the brother of Moses and a prophet of God.

Morton strongly disagreed with the direction the church was taking. "I just didn't believe that a small group of Christians in the Blue Mountains had a special dispensation for the End Times." But when she raised her concerns, she says the other members became "very hostile and quite confrontational".

Morton left in 1999, but now believes there is a direct link between their beliefs then and "what is going on now, which is just really unhealthy".

Just how unhealthy became apparent in August 2011, when Nathan was contacted by Virginnia's husband, Wayne. Wayne had initially been a member of the group but began voicing concerns in late 2009, whereupon Virginnia abandoned him and their teenage daughter and moved with Kylie into a rented house nearby.

When Virginnia moved out, she left behind notes and papers that Wayne subsequently collected and passed on to Nathan. Written by a variety of people, the papers are at once bizarre, comic and sinister. Some appear to document Kylie's "treatment" - regression sessions, mainly, where she would relive childhood traumas and write in an infantile scrawl details of unimaginable abuse, including being showered in a purée of human body parts, being sexually assaulted and forced to drink blood.

The documents also indicate that the group believed themselves to be engaged in spiritual warfare with witches - both in the Blue Mountains and in Sydney - some of whom are identified by their name, age, employment and "coven status". "One of them is my aunt, who lives in Harbord," says Nathan.

The documents also confirm the group's involvement with a man named John Darnell, who is the pastor of a church in Canberra called Shepherd's Heart. Darnell is the author of *Satanic Strategies in the 21st Century*, which explains how Satanic cults have infiltrated the "highest echelons" of

government and mainstream churches. On a US Christian radio station last year, Darnell said he believed it was possible that the British royal family were actually shape-shifting reptiles.

A large part of Darnell's work involves DID, which he believes is a function of demonic possession. "Under trauma, humans have the capacity to reproduce themselves, to split into different identities, and Satan can sometimes get control of those separate parts," he tells me.

In his *Ministering to Dissociation Course Manual*, Darnell borrows heavily from medical texts - there is much mention of the prefrontal cortex and "myelination of the hippocampus" - but soon lurches into talk of demons and ritual abuse, and the role of Jesus in cleansing the "client's" spirit.

Kylie underwent such a treatment at Shepherd's Heart in Canberra in 2010, although Darnell downplays it. "I just loved and helped and prayed with her," he says.

When talk turns to Nathan, Darnell is scathing. "The headline Nathan wants is, 'Wife leaves for Bible study group and never comes back.' That's bullshit. The real headline should be, 'Desperately unhappy wife leaves husband and husband refuses to accept it.'"

**Kylie is the eldest of four children**, only one of whom, Briony, would be interviewed for this story. "Mum and Dad are devastated," she tells me. "They don't want to talk."

When Kylie first took off, her family tried to contact her. "Dad went to the house in the Blue Mountains," says Briony, "but Virginia was quite abusive towards him. She wouldn't let him in. She came to the window and was cursing him and making the sign of the cross."

Briony says her brother at one stage managed to get inside the house and see Kylie. "But he said that Virginia spoke for her the whole time. My brother said, 'I want to hear it from Kylie', and so Kylie just repeated everything that Virginia had said."

I had expected Briony to express sympathy for her sister, but instead she says, quite out of the blue, "It's not the first time she's done this, you know." Kylie had gone to other families before. "She has embedded herself in other people's lives. Once she attached herself to someone in another church and didn't want to be associated with her family. But then they told her to go home to Nathan."

Briony, who works in Sydney for a government child-protection agency, admits that what she has seen of the group worries her. "Once I went on a supervised visit, to accompany Liam. We met Kylie at a park in Richmond, but it wasn't just Kylie - there were other members of the group there, too, guarding her all the time. One woman was never further than an arm's length away, following her every move."

Indeed, the only time I am able to speak to Kylie is when a female group member calls on her behalf. "I have Kylie here," the woman says. "She wants to say something." Kylie then reads a statement saying she has left an "unhappy and dysfunctional marriage" completely of her "own accord ... The people who have supported and cared for me for the past three years are my very dear friends and are not, and never have been, a cult."

Even Briony agrees that "it's not as simple as Kylie being kidnapped ... There's more to it than that. Kylie bears more responsibility than Nathan wants to admit."

Kylie would seem to have lost a lot - her husband, her son, her job - but so has Virginia Donges. "It's incredible, what has happened," says Martin Doran, Virginia Donges's brother. Doran lives with his family in Springwood, not far from his sister. He says he was close to Virginia, but that Kylie "broke our family apart. Now when Virginia sees me, she crosses the street." He claims that Donges has begun to revere Kylie, whom she regards as "some kind of prophet. At one stage Virginia said that, 'Everything would be revealed to the world in 2010.' Everyone round here thought there would be mass suicide."

Fearing the worst, Doran and Donges's son, Brad, went to Springwood police, but they told them there was nothing they could do.

"Virginia doesn't do anything now for a job," explains Doran. "They got Kylie psychologically assessed, and now she is disabled in the eyes of the government and Virginia is her carer."

Doran says that Donges was "never the smartest tool in the shed", but that she was incredibly generous and "lived for her family". Then, in 1997, something happened that changed her forever. One day after heavy rains, her two middle sons, Grant, then aged seven, and Brad, 12, went for a walk in the bush behind their home. At one point they stopped to sit on a rock ledge, which broke under their weight. Brad was thrown clear, but Grant got trapped underneath. Brad tried to help but was unable to move the rock. Grant "looked at his brother, said, 'I'm dying', closed his eyes and went to be with the Lord", Virginia Donges told a local newspaper.

"Virginia had a breakdown after that," says Doran. "She slowly turned her back on everyone that mattered to her. We knew there was something wrong when her daughter, Karina, had a baby and Virginia never went to visit her in hospital."

Nathan paints a picture of Virginia inducting Kylie into the group at the moment she was most vulnerable. But Doran says it was the other way around. "Everyone has a weakness, and Kylie has picked it."

**Some believe Kylie is not as ill** as she appears. "I saw Kylie for a while, just after she left Nathan," a former member of the group says. "She'd go into this trance and then her voice would change and she would act like a scared little girl. At first it freaked me out, but then towards the end I kind of thought that she was having the other guys on."

It also became apparent that many of the stories Kylie recounted were borrowed from *He Came to Set the Captives Free*, a controversial 1986 book written by an American doctor who claimed to have helped people escape the occult.

Briony still regards Kylie as being "unwell" and in need of treatment. "I think that she and Virginia are in a *folie à deux*, a kind of mutual delusion where they both feed off each other in some sick way."

In an emailed statement, Donges says she has been "supporting and caring for Kylie" through a difficult time. "I am in no way, shape or form controlled, manipulated or influenced by Kylie, nor have I ever been. I have no ill intent towards Kylie. I am not and have never been in a cult."

Briony last spoke to Kylie a year ago. "It was about the fact she wasn't seeing Liam. I said, 'Liam is profoundly traumatised.' Even then I could hear Virginia in the background, whispering to her. At the end of the conversation, I was so bitter about [it] that I hung up and erased her number."

Nathan now lives with his parents on a two-hectare property at Oakville, near Windsor. The home he owned with Kylie is being rented. "We stayed there for a while but, after Kylie left, it was just so morose," he explains. I ask if he still wants to be with Kylie, and whether this may have clouded his perception of events. "Well," he says, "I do find it hard to let go ..."

Much of his time is spent lobbying government about the dangers of what he calls "psychological abuse". He has also petitioned the NSW Health Care Complaints Commission about the Blue Mountains psychiatrist who confirmed Donges's diagnosis of Kylie's DID. (The complaint was dismissed.) He has had more success with John Darnell, who was last year required by the ACT Health Services Commissioner to remove the *Ministering to Dissociation Course Manual* from the Shepherd's Heart website. Darnell has also posted a disclaimer, making it clear that his advice is "not intended to be a substitute for qualified professional opinion". All mentions of the word "dissociation" have since been replaced by the phrase "spiritual dissociation".

Meanwhile, Nathan keeps busy. Last year he appeared in a local production of *Dial M for Murder*. ("Great fun.") He also took part in a re-enactment of Governor Lachlan Macquarie's visit to the Hawkesbury in 1810.

And every year, on Kylie's birthday, he drops off a card and flowers.

[telliott@smh.com.au](mailto:telliott@smh.com.au)

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### 30 comments so far

« »

»A sad story and I am sorry for your loss Nathan. «

»Creepy Christian Cults hide behind the law again. I really would love to see some of the French style cult busting laws and governmental attitudes to religion brought in here. As for that psychiatrist... Pathetic duty of care.«

»«

Rhino | Mar 19, 2012, 11:51AM

« »

»I agree that some lawful means to investigate this kind of cultic activity is necessary. From this story it appears that this is little better than psychic abduction and all the time the victim is being held every effort is made to make her ever more ill.«

»It's true we only have one side of the story here. But these facts surely warrant the kind of weighing up of evidence properly conducted by a court. We don't tolerate a fraud whereby an individual is deprived of their money. Their sanity is no less valuable.«

»«

James K | Sydney Mar 19, 2012, 01:06PM

« »

»One very good reason why you should run the other way when zombie-like Christians invite you to a bible study or prayer meeting - no matter HOW lonely or depressed you may feel.«

»«

J | Mar 19, 2012, 01:44PM

« »

»What we need is "DOCS for Adults". In situations like this, where people are signing away their rights to a third party, there needs to at least be a panel of "experts" eg legal, psych, etc to ascertain that the person is not handing themselves over to well meaning but misguided individuals or worst, to those that attain gratification through "control" and so forth. When such a document is signed, there then needs to be a "cool off" period and a revision, to ensure that adults who may not be in a position at the time to think lucidly, can have space to make a decision without pressure or in the presence of controlling influences. It could be argued that this Kylie, who is already in a depressive state can be easily manipulated and fed constructs that are untrue and made to believe all sorts of things. When I see these situations, I am always concerned that the person will take their life - something that could otherwise be avoided though careful investigation. For myself, I would be doing such investigations of these "bible clubs" and doing what I could to regulate them as there is certainly some strange people in control of them.«

»«

virag0 | Penrith, NSW Mar 19, 2012, 12:31PM

« »

»To some extent we already have a system like this - at least in Qld. It is called the Office of the Adult Guardian and they can be appointed to look after an adult who is deemed to lack the capacity to manage their own affairs. If there are financial considerations than a financial trustee is appointed as well who work hand in hand the the appointed Adult Guardian. I specifically saw this implemented in the case of a rather dysfunctional family who could not agree on the care of their aging parent. Application was made to the tribunal on the parent's behalf and when the case was proven a Guardian was appointed and so on. I don't think we need to regulate Bible Study groups as you suggest. We already have enough government interference in the private lives of its citizens and the percentage of these groups which end up like this are very small. This is why groups like this should always be under the umbrella of a church as they are then accountable to leadership, which if you are a true believer you should always be subject to. Also churches tend to have boards or some form of governance which can be appealed to if one of their flock is "going off the rails."«

»«

aussie\_girl62 | Brisbane Mar 19, 2012, 01:34PM

« »

»My name is Nathan Zamprogno and I am the subject of this article.

If you find the circumstances described in this article distressing, because you or a loved one have been through a similar situation, know that there are several organisations that can help you.«

»CIFS (the Cult Information and Family Support network) has chapters in most Australian states.

<http://cifs.org.au>«

»AFMA (the Australian False Memory Association) is more focused on the phenomenon of "repressed memory therapy" described in the article.

<http://www.afma.asn.au/>«

»Lastly, a more detailed account of our family's story (including video of two "A Current Affair" appearances I made last year) is at this link:«

<http://baliset.blogspot.com>«

»International readers facing distress are welcome to contact us and we will endeavour to point you to resources in your own country.«

»«

Nathan Zamprogno | Mar 19, 2012, 12:31PM

»»«

»These cults prey on the weak. It's a real problem. It's twisting religion to suit your own needs ( which is control of people ). Its a very sad story.«

»«

phil | Sydney Mar 19, 2012, 12:42PM

»»«

»This is a very sad story. Nathan, I hope things get better for you and Liam in the future.«

»It seems obvious that Kylie has serious mental health issues. As soon as these 'recovered' memories enter the picture you can be pretty sure manipulation is going on. The 'crimes' are always the same and so completely horrific that there would be no way of covering them up when they supposedly were happening.«

»«

Biff | Randwick Mar 19, 2012, 12:44PM

»»«

»I grew up in a 'normal', middle class, non-religious household in suburbia. Around my sixteenth birthday I went on a Christian Retreat with a new friend I'd made at school. Two days later, I was a completely transformed individual. I think I'd literally got the "fear of God" put up me! Started to obsessively read the bible, saying my prayers for hours, and kinda becoming a 'gentle lamb of God'. This soon degenerated into more general 'obsessive-compulsive' behaviour: picking up random litter, checking I'd locked the door a million times, counting up numbers on my alarm clock (if it came to '6' - the devil's number, I'd shiver and lay in bed petrified), fearing anything red - the devil's colour, scouring my body (especially my scalp) for the 'mark of the beast'. I got dropped from my footy team, alienated myself from friends, freaked my family out, was taken to the local priest (mum was a lapsed Catholic) to no avail, couldn't sleep (seriously! - for months!) - it was a truly, ironic, hell on earth experience. It lasted for nearly a year. I could see that my mum was heading towards a nervous breakdown and this helped me to find the strength to resist my obsessive-compulsive behaviours. Was it a chemical imbalance? Hormonal? A schizophrenic episode? Well, somehow I got better (normal?) but then couldn't talk about this for many years from the fact that it scared the sh\*t outa me: I'd well up, tearful. That was thirty years ago and I can assure, unlike many, I wouldn't want to relive my childhood because of it.«

»«

just a kid | suburbia Mar 19, 2012, 12:52PM

»»«

»Very sad and scary.. however what I would like to know is the name of the doctor who signed Kylie off as "psychologically assessed as disabled". Presumably she is being paid benefits from the tax dollar. even more disturbing is that the person listed as her Carer has an 'interesting' relationship with the primary trauma that caused the disability.«

»Perhaps if the money was stopped she might get suddenly better! I wonder how many other 'disabled' people have a relationship with their carer such that they can live off the public purse.«

»«

arkbhoy | sydney Mar 19, 2012, 12:53PM

»»«

»Kind of like going through the Catholic system in the 60s?!«

»«

OldSchool | Bronte Mar 19, 2012, 01:02PM

»»«

»[Kylie had developed dissociative identity disorder (DID), and was now harbouring hundreds of separate identities]«

»My view is that people who are true believers in God already have DID - God is just one of their identities. They are merely talking to themselves, thinking it is God.«

»Our egos evolve mental systems to deal with different recurrent situations in our life. These are "software programs" and are stored in memory. «

»We all have many such programs - a work personality, a family personality, a partner personality, a friends personality and our alone personality, as well as programs relating to emotional expression - all linked together by a master program, which we call the ego. These programs are learnt by experiences and interact as a kind of Watcher or Supervisor over the feelings that arise as we live.«

»That this person calls up a girl called Hope is simply what remains of one of the ego programs she stored as a kid, with fantasy bits added in as she has seen on TV or read in books or been told by her mad Christian friends. «

»In this case the repressed memory mistreatments she has received and her experiences generally including mystical fire and brimstone fantasies, has resulted in a fractured master program - the motherboard has lost control of which sub-personality program to retrieve and utilise.«

»The Dark One is a personality sub-routine dealing with negative emotions (something we all have - we curse and express anger a lot more in our heads than we let on to others), but with this person the master ego program is disarray and thus it is not being properly controlled by another learnt higher level interrelationship program such as the "family personality" program, and thus seems particularly rabid.«

»«

Jimhaz | Occupy Cronyist Governments Mar 19, 2012, 01:05PM

»»«

»With all due respect, you are entitled to your opinions but true Christian believers know the Truth and are in no way deluded about believing a mythical God. This is just a case of a group of people who have been lead astray and need some serious help. But please don't cast all true believing Christians in the psychological basket case.«

»«

TheTruthwillsetyoufree | Mar 19, 2012, 02:01PM

»»«

»@TheTruthwillsetyoufree, With all due respect, you are entitled to your opinions, but in truth sharing the belief in a mythical god is the core value of Christianity and any of the other follies en masse we call religions. «

»I agree it would be wrong to cast all Christians in the same psychological basket as this particular group and I don't think the OP was doing so. OP was merely pointing out that the very belief in a god with whom you are in direct communication can reasonably be characterised as DID, since, incorporeal by definition, such a god can exist only in human imagination.«

»«

James | Sydney Mar 19, 2012, 02:57PM

»»«

»Just another one of the billions of stories about the problems with Religion. If it were a sickness we would have already got rid of it. The crap that comes up "in the name of God".....ban all religions & we would have a great world.«

»«

Bazza M | Central Coast Mar 19, 2012, 01:12PM

»»«

»With all due respect, I would recommend either 'innoculation' of children against theologically-derived mental illness. eg. give your kids a bit of Sunday school (or something like that) so that they can develop a natural resistance, or try teaching them complete disdain for faith-based irrationality.«

»«

just a kid | suburbia Mar 19, 2012, 01:18PM

»»«

»that is so sad.. and you can see how delusional they are: "I am not and have never been in a cult." Nope, just believe in sky fairies and Satan..«

»«

Moz | Mar 19, 2012, 01:21PM

»»«

»I don't claim to know the truth of the story but a possible suggestion... maybe Kylie feels supported and "safe" in the presence of these people... Could it have been that without this group she may have 'snapped' in some kind of other way- so essentially this predicament is the best of a bad bunch of outcomes that may have happened to her?

In a sense she is protecting herself from herself?«

»I don't believe someone can be completely brainwashed.. it takes two to tango... and if she is happier there in her own fantasy land with these people that claim to be helping her... maybe she is better off there in their care (so to speak).«

»Just a thought...«

»«

Hol | Sydney Mar 19, 2012, 01:26PM

»»«

»What a sad story. It seems many people have been hurt by these events. It sounds like both Kylie and Virginia are in need of psychological help and all I can say is that I hope their families can move on despite this trauma. My heart goes out to all, but especially that little boy Liam who may never know his mother.«

»«

Eonyk | Sydney Mar 19, 2012, 01:28PM

»»«

»very sad article. Highlights the need for higher accountability with these "house churches" or "splinter" churches that pop up with their own twisted theology. I remember in our town a "penty" guru set up shop and started "counselling" people (uncredited too) and he was telling everyone that they had a twin who died in the mothers womb or was born but died from early abuse and that the twin was trying to communicate with them. This destroyed many families. At one point there was about 7 people I know all running around saying they had a twin cos the "guru" told me.«

»«

pete | Mar 19, 2012, 01:31PM

»»«

»the trouble is that people are attracted to such churches because they are separate and without any outside accountability. because they aren't part of a formal denomination or guided by any outside superiors or rules they're seen as away from 'government control' that they claim goes on in mainstream churches. i've heard that line or a variation of it from a few people, and they won't listen to any sort of critique. these sorts of groups create, feed off, and reinforce a fear of anything outside themselves.«

»«

pb | sydney Mar 19, 2012, 02:49PM

»»«

»Elvis had one.«

»«

enno | sydney Mar 19, 2012, 02:59PM

»»«

»I am horrified that these groups/individuals can continue to do such damage. However, I can not condemn them for their actions as they simply sought to do 'what was best'. This was not about religion, nor was it about a cult. It is simply about the misguided efforts to deal with something they did not understand, the human mind.

It is this misguided attempt as helping which leads to further damage and it is not just these groups that perpetuate such damage. Look around and see groups using drugs, legal and otherwise, to escape only to find themselves with mental issues. Or look at our solution to mental health in the community, hide it away and pretend all is OK, or group people with like illnesses together in public housing until they become a social problem and then move them somewhere else, or onto the street. I do not claim to have any answers but surely they must start with acknowledging the problems, something Nathan has struggled to have anyone do in Kylie's case. How many more must suffer before as a community we say enough and begin to get people the help the so desperately need?«

»«

SID | Mar 19, 2012, 01:56PM

»»«

»I read this story on Saturday morning. I found the details so shocking and disturbing that I was rattled for several hours afterward. I understand it is a true life story but a good weekend for me it certainly wasn't.«

»«

Caitlin | Mar 19, 2012, 02:06PM

« »

»Doesn't logic say that religion / God is supposed to make us happier & love ourselves & others more? Once again I'm seeing religion - especially that based on the old testament, causing more harm & damage than good.  
And they have declared war on Witches? That's laughable. I've never met a witch (and I know a lot of them) that has ever caused this sort of trouble or harm.«

»

What The | Sydney Mar 19, 2012, 02:18PM

« »

»Some commenters are quick to lay the blame at the feet of religion in general or Christianity in particular, but it seems clear that Kylie was and remains a vulnerable individual, who could have been effectively targeted by any number of exploitative individuals or groups. Perhaps this particular, Christian cult merely got to her first.«

»I'm an atheist and certainly very distressed to hear of the abuses wrought in the name of religion, but let's not turn this into a slanging match between those with faith and those without. «

»My heart goes out to you, Nathan, and to your family. I hope that somehow there will be some resolution of this horrible situation and that Kylie gets the care and treatment that she needs.«

»

Red Pony | Mar 19, 2012, 02:45PM

« »

»It isn't religion that is the problem but the perversion of the message by evil and selfish men out to impose their will on the world. «

»The worst thing for Christianity was the Catholic Church, do you think God said a Priest can't be married. The worst thing for Islam was fundamentalists, do you think Allah wanted a distinction between Sunni and Shiite?«

»Religion is about personally coming to terms with purpose and life, why would you let anyone else dictate that for you?«

»

Peter | Mar 19, 2012, 02:46PM

« »

»That stuff about the royal family being shape shifting reptiles is gold. It certainly helps to explain a few things. I have always thought Charlie had some amazing similarities to the blue tongue that lives in my strawberry patch. As for the rest of it, bloody hell there are some ratbags out there.«

»

alex | Mar 19, 2012, 02:50PM

« »

»Sounds like AMWAY but darker. I am sure we all know someone who got involved in the AMWAY cult who now are cut off from family, friends and the real world. My heart goes out to Nathan and his family. I am not against actual denominations like Orthodox or Anglican etc where there is accountability and protocol (though bad things happen inside them too) but these break away doomsday style house churches should have more policing.«

»

pete | sa Mar 19, 2012, 03:31PM

« »

»Happy to include Scientology in there as well.«

»

Real | Sydney Mar 19, 2012, 03:44PM

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