

Divisions in the 2x2 Church

Divisions in the Two by Two Church

East-West America, 1920s

April 7, 2025

“When the West broke away from the East,”

Rift Between Jack Carroll & George Walker

Divorce & Remarriage

Overseers no Longer Allowed to Marry

Jack Carroll was Overseer of the Western States and Canada and George Walker was Overseer of the Eastern States and Eastern Canada. It is generally thought that the rift between these two men began in the early 1920s. There is a 1916 convention photo of Dalton, Idaho where Jack and George are standing side by side. There is also a 1924 convention photo of New Norway, Alberta, Canada showing both George and Jack.

The root cause of contention between the two American Overseers has not been clearly identified. It may have been one particular incident or several incidents or the differences in their management styles that brought about the division. Apparently, the two men had very different personalities. It may have boiled down to personality and control issues, which manifested themselves in various ways. Regardless of the cause, some of the effects of their rift are still being felt nearly a century later.

However, one explanation given the most often as the reason North America divided into two administrations (East and West), and this very well could have been their first serious clash and/or the breaking point. The disagreement concerned convention dates and schedules. Over the years from its beginning, the Two by Two fellowship had gradually become more and more list oriented, and many different lists came into use: workers lists, convention lists, visitors' lists, study lists, special meeting lists, etc. It was the Overseer's duty to create, maintain and distribute these lists. As late as 1921, there was still a unified schedule for East and West together.

The year was possibly 1922 when the Western workers decided to ***“make our own wee list”*** — a quotation from Willie Smiley, who was under Jack in Western Canada. Willie gave the impression that convention planning was one of the first rebel tendencies in the West. This was dubbed by some the time ***“when the West broke away from the East.”*** In hind-sight this was viewed by some as the beginning of a rift that became more visible as different issues surfaced as the Two by Two church evolved.

The Division didn't stop with separate Convention lists for the East and West, but also involved the selection of visiting workers at conventions and affected worker exchanges. Through the *“teens”* there was a still a fair amount of movement from East to West, and both brother and sister workers moved from East to West fields up until the 1920s.

Given the distinctly different personalities of the two men, it was not surprising to some that a rift occurred. Jack was ultra-organized and somewhat of a micro-manager, a trait which is still very evident in the general way things are run in the West, as compared to the East. Jack seemed to maintain nearly day-to-day control over all the workers on the West coast and Western Canada, making out all the lists, deciding every worker's moves and Jack travelled continually. He sent typed copies of letters to friends and workers, both with news of worker activities and also various instructions. He left quite a paper trail. Jack instigated the making of the large combined state lists of North American workers, which is valuable to historians. **View example of 1922-23 List.** There are numerous sermon notes by Jack Carroll in circulation. Regardless of whether Jack was behind their distribution, he surely approved of it or it would not have happened. (**Read some of Jack's sermons.**)

On the other hand, George delegated a lot to the various state Overseers under him and left very little paper trail. In many ways, George was much more laid-back in his style. The two men's managerial styles were miles apart and apparently not very compatible.

Reportedly, some of the rift was due to George Walker not approving of the lifestyle of Bill Carroll, Jack's brother who was married when he entered the work and was the Overseer of Victoria, Australia. Early on George felt that both Jack and Bill misused their positions as Overseers and spent money given to them by the friends in ways George didn't approve.

Overseers no Longer Allowed to Marry

In the early 1930's, the decision was made that an Overseer could not marry and serve as an Overseer. The Overseers who were already married were allowed to remain Overseers, but there would be no more married Overseers. This decision may have been reached at the July 19-21, 1930 World Conference held at West Hanne, England, attended by 16 Overseers. Possibly this decision was made because Bill Carroll had abused and misused his position as Overseer in Victoria, Australia. In the 1950s, a new rule was made that no worker could marry and remain in the work.

Sometime between 1932 and 1937, Jack Carroll made it known that he wanted to marry a certain sister worker. He wanted the Overseers to make an exception for them to the rule that Overseers could not marry. His request was denied. If a vote was taken, we can safely assume that George would have voted against Jack's request. George didn't approve of the Carroll brothers' desire for a female partner. George believed in doing things like they advertised; being poor, homeless, and celibate. He thought the Carroll's did not really "have it." Jack was told that IF he married, he could NOT be an Overseer any longer—but that he and his wife could continue preaching as an ordinary married worker couple. Jack remained Overseer until his **death in 1957**.

There is an unconfirmed report that Jack Carroll secretly married, but no proof has been found to date. It is rumored that Jack requested that his body would be buried beside her grave. She passed away in 1943, prior to Jack who died in 1957. However, this didn't happen. They are both buried in the same plot of six graves, but their graves are not adjacent to each other, in the Fir-Conway Lutheran Cemetery, Mount Vernon, Washington, located 1/2 mile from the Milltown Convention grounds. This cemetery possibly contains more workers' graves than any other cemetery in the world.

On July 19-21, 1930, a World Conference was held at West Hanney, England and one item of discussion was the strained relations between George Walker and Jack Carroll, the two Overseers of North America. Here is a summary statement of the meeting:

Meeting at West Hanney (England)
July 20, 1930

"For a number of years past, difficulties have existed in the U.S.A. between some of the elder workers, which in recent years became more acute, because of these difficulties it was decided that a number of the elder workers from various countries should come together in England and enquire into the reasons for the trouble and seek to find some basis for a better understanding.

"During the days we (the undersigned) were gathered together, full opportunity was given to all to express their minds and to offer any suggestions that would be helpful. After considering the matter from every viewpoint, we are happy to say that those who were most concerned in this trouble expressed their deep regret for any offence at which they had been guilty and apologised to each other, and undertook to do all in their power to dispel the existing difficulties and promote the spirit of unity and fellowship amongst the Lord's people, particularly in the fields which were most affected by the trouble.

"It was unanimously agreed by all present that the past should be buried, and that in the future, all would use their influence to discourage anything that would disturb the peace in God's family, adhering to the teaching and example of Jesus. It was further agreed that should any violation or supposed violation occur, that no decision should be arrived at or circulated until the matter had been placed before a number of brethren from various countries."

Signed by the following 16 men (the year after their names is the date they entered the work):

W. J. Gill (Willie) 1900
G. Walker (George) 1899
J. T. Carroll (Jack) 1904
J. Hardie (John) 1900
A. Dougal (Alex)
H. R. Matthews (Hugh) 1904
J. Twamley
J. Doak (John) 1903
W. Jamieson (Willie) 1905
A. Scott (S.)
J. Jardine (James) 1904
J. S. Jackson (Jack) 1901
A. Pearce/Pierce 1904
W. Weir (Willie) 1903
W. Reid (Wilson) 1904
J. Forbes (Jack)

This famous line from the West Hanney Statement is frequently quoted out of context:

"It was unanimously agreed by all present that the past should be buried..."

This line is often taken (out of context?) to mean that the workers agreed to bury William Irvine's role in founding the Two by Two movement. Please read the statement again, slowly, very carefully. Notice the purpose for which the worldwide workers meeting was called at W. Hanney. It was because *"difficulties have existed in the U.S.A. between some of the elder workers..."* The *"difficulty"* was the strained relationship between the two U.S.A. Overseer workers, Jack Carroll and George Walker. *"The past"* was not about hiding or burying the history of the Two by Two group. *"The past"* was the offenses or feud that existed between these two men. When two people *"make up,"* they often agree to *"let by-gones be by-gones,"* and to let go of past offenses. The West Hanney statement said that as far as these two men, *"the past should be buried."*

Of course, it was sincerely hoped that the two men's relationship would improve after this conference. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Difficulties arose during the next two decades in different places and many became perplexed who once believed that worldwide harmony existed within the fellowship.

Irvine Weir, along with George Walker and Wm. Irvine, were the first three workers to ever land on American soil. Irvine Weir pioneered the work in California. In 1935, he discovered the seriousness of the antagonism between George Walker and Jack Carroll. He asked George Walker to approve his plan to return to California but, to his amazement, George replied, **"I would not like you to go to California now. I am sorry but I may have to cut the West off."**

Alfred Magowan wrote: *"And then again there is the report of an eyewitness of these words: 'I may have to cut off the west' which would appear to indicate that even archbishops have their fellowship difficulties... When a man can say 'I may have to cut off the west' he may be a lamb, but he is speaking with a dragon's voice."* (A. Magowan's Letter to Jack Carroll, **December 1, 1954**)

Another further rift occurred in the 1930s. *When Irvine Weir travelled through Colorado, he found that friends and workers in Denver had declared their support either for Jack Carroll or for George Walker. The Overseers each forbade visits or contacts with preachers who were loyal to his opponent.* (*The Secret Sect* by Doug & Helen Parker, p 85)

The loyalties of the workers and friends were divided between George or Jack. *"Between the workers in Colorado of those in other fields a lack of close cooperation in other fields has existed."* There was a workers meeting in Denver to try and resolve matters. While this kept the church in Colorado from actually splitting in two, it didn't do much for the overall unity. George assumed the responsibility for *"his unwise attitude and action"* and he also took responsibility for the Friends and Workers who participated in the troublesome disturbance.

The meeting results were summarized in a **letter dated December 1, 1938**. The statement was signed by (7) worker Overseers: John Hardie, James Jardine, John S. Jackson, George Walker, E. J. Cornock, Wm. Wilkie and Hugh Matthews. (did not include Jack Carroll's signature)

In 1952, Ron Campbell wrote a letter to George Walker, *"The arrangements you were responsible for my home-coming led me into a 'trap' set by Jack and Bill Carroll's ungodly influence. I walked into this unknowingly and have been almost crushed to death in it, but God has undertaken for me. Because of Jack's unbelief in the doctrine of reconciliation and eagerness to cripple me spiritually including my ministry he has used others for this end. I believe you will understand this, being once a victim of his."* "No further details are available of George being victimized by Jack.

Occasionally, however, the two men transcended their differences and worked together for a common cause. George traveled to California by train in the late 1940s to try to effect a reconciliation of sorts, the results of which are unknown. Then in the 1950s, Jack and George traveled together to the crisis in Victoria, Australia, and provided some sort of united front there in an attempt to resolve those issues.

It appeared that Jack and George agreed to uniformly use the name in North America for their fellowship of: **"Christian Conventions Representing Assemblies of Christians Assuming This Name Only."** There were letterheads printed for both East and West containing this name and listing the respective states and their convention locations. I was told that this long (confusing?) name/title is intended to convey the idea that the group consists of conventions that represent local groups (fellowship meetings) of Christians who take no other name except Christian.

In 1942, the eastern state letterhead was used by George Walker to correspond with the U.S. Government Selective Service in response to their request for information about the church in order to consider their requests for exemptions from military service for the workers and non-combatant status for the friends. Jack also wrote some **letters on the western state letterhead** during WW2 years, promoting the Red Cross and loyalty to one's home country and flag.

In the WW2 era, the conscientious objector dispute created significant polarization. In the West, Jack Carroll left it up to the individual man to choose whether or not he would be a Conscientious Objector (**see letter in TTT Photo Gallery**); while George Walker instructed the young men in the East to register as Conscientious Objectors.

Another dispute that may have added to the rift between the East and West concerned the use of radios. During the Pacific War Theater, there were five workers who were prisoners in the Philippines: Ernest Stanley (England), Cecil Barrett (Australia); and from the Western USA (California), Leo Stancliff, Willie Jamieson and Herman Beaber (the author's uncle). This being the situation, it's not surprising that the radio was freely used among the West coast friends and workers to stay informed of current events that might affect these workers. However, George Walker forbade radios in homes and vehicles of the East coast friends. This prohibition was enforced to the point that there have been reports through the years of workers breaking off antennas from cars at conventions in some Eastern states. To this day, some friends in the Eastern USA still refrain from owning a radio, much less a television!

Ralph Derkland wrote: *"We have known for years that Jack Carroll and George Walker have been at 'bitter ends' with each other and for us to go to convention and hear Jack tell about the Catholic and the Orangeman that knew they were saved because at one time they hated each other but now they loved each other and some of us would wonder how come he preaches 'love' to us but he manifests 'hate' to George and vice-versa. Lest some of you doubt the truth of this, can you give any other answer as to why George has not been in Jack's territory for over 28 years, as he has never been here since I decided. Friends, is this consistent with what Jesus taught?"* (**1957 Letter by Ralph Derkland**)

Unfortunately, the rift between the East and West didn't die with the demise of Jack and George. Many of their perspectives live on in the territories where they had the oversight and it continues to be taught and preached by workers there. This East/West conflict also extends beyond American boundaries and is evident in the foreign countries sponsored by the respective sides.

The foreign countries under Western American jurisdiction (including Western Canada) are subjected to the Divorce and Remarriage policy of the West (e.g. Vietnam and South Korea); while the foreign countries under the Eastern jurisdiction follow the Eastern policy.

Divorce & Remarriage

Willis Propp wrote the following letter about his desire for the overseers to be united regarding the divorce/remarriage issue:

January 22, 1986 [date is unclear]

To whom it may concern:

In the prayer of Jesus that last night of His life, He placed before us not a lone a golden ideal, but a twofold responsibility—unity of the New Testament ministry, and unity of the New Testament fellowship. (John 17:11 & 20-21.)

For many years there has existed a difference and lack of this unity, particularly in the ministry, **between Eastern and Western Canada and the United States**. The coming and going of workers at Conventions and Special Meetings has been a great help in feeding and caring for God's People, yet it has not been at all effective in erasing this difference.

To the contrary, there has been a growing awareness of two very distinct lines of thought emerging with regard to some of the fundamental teachings of Christ and His early apostles. Workers, young and old, both in the East and West, are becoming more and more alarmed as to where this may lead us. Our friends in the more recent years, due to the increase in travel, etc., are beginning to question us: "Are there two Standards in this Kingdom?" Our young workers are now being confronted with this and are at a loss to know how to answer this vital question.

Absolute unity in the fundamental teachings of Christ which promotes this unity of the faith and unity of the body of Christ is so necessary. Grave danger looms that two camps polarized from one another will result. We all know that united we stand and divided we fall. The enemy of our souls would like nothing better than to see such a tragedy happen.

A gathering such as was held in Acts 15 where unity was so threatened, and where the Holy Spirit guided and promoted unifying results is urgently needed. We earnestly request such a gathering at this time where a restoration to harmony can be realized, so the preservation of a united Kingdom can be maintained. There are some of us nearing the end of our journey in life. We take this opportunity to plead for a positive and godly approach to this matter, lest we leave such a distressing issue upon the shoulders of younger men who will be taking up the torch of the testimony when we must lay it down.

Willis Propp

Some time after Jack died, the Divorce and Remarriage (aka D&R) issue polarized considerably between the East and West. In an attempt to come to a unified nationwide policy concerning Divorce and Remarriage among the friends, a momentous East-West meeting was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1975, which was attended by eight senior Overseers; four from the West and four from the East. The meeting did not accomplish its goal. The following letter provides insight into the two prevailing D&R perspectives.

In a letter dated **January 24, 1987**, Tharold Sylvester (Western Overseer) wrote:

"Your call to my companion was appreciated and I can understand your distress. Twelve years ago Eldon [Tenniswood], Earnest [Nelson], Howard [Mooney] and I [Tharold Sylvester] met Andrew [Abernethy], Garrett [Hughes], Murray [Keene], and Taylor [Wood] in Minneapolis where this question was brought up."

There Andrew read 1Cor. 7:10-11. He asked us if we believed and taught that, and we told him, "Absolutely." Then he read verses 12-15, and asked us if we believed that, and we told him, "Yes." He went further then, and said that when the unbelieving departed, the forsaken party was not in bondage in such cases. Contending that that meant such were free to get married again. However they had no other verses to prove that.

When we would not agree, Andrew closed the meeting, and promised we would have another in two years. Before that time came, Andrew had a stroke. However, he did write asking if we wanted another meeting. We answered, "Yes." Because I wanted to share the confirmation God had given me his answer. He replied that if we could not meet in full agreement with them, we would not meet.

Since then, they [the East] have been restoring divorced and remarried people to full fellowship in every place they can. On the contrary, we [the West] have had over 20 cases who have become entangled in that here in the West, and they became so distressed that they have gone to court and obtained a divorce, because of the Holy Spirit convicting them of their wrong.[remarried couples were strongly encouraged to divorce regardless of their children]

They are back in fellowship, having returned as prodigals – feeling like they sinned against heaven. This in itself proves God has a way of restoring people, and we would like to share that with them. They still refuse to have another meeting to discuss this matter, and have not invited us to come to any of their conventions.

We are determined to abide by what Jesus taught. We still teach, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever," and we'll stand with anyone who will honestly stand for that. Remember John the Baptist's uncompromising position regarding Herod.

If you have any further questions please write or call. We are interested in standing on the word of the Lord and not on the ideas of men. Don't let winds of false doctrine turn you from the Lord, as this could be the "falling away" mentioned in the Bible before Christ returns. He wants saints who have been tested in every way to be with Him forever. Excuse more and best wishes.

Yours for Christ Sake,

Tharold Sylvester"

A brother worker saddened by the division wrote in a letter: "However, there was – and still is – a persistent aching in my heart because of the rift that exists between the East and the West. If this truth we are a part of were a denomination, it would have been split in many ways long ago. But it isn't a denomination, and it is not divided that way.

The same seeds of the gospel are being sown, and the same fruit is being harvested in all areas of the world. I ask myself, 'Why should the Great Divide of the Rockies come between God's people?' And why should Satan be allowed this advantage? This 'thorn' may be more painful to some of us who have labored on both sides of those mountains, and have come to know and respect and love God's servants and His saints in all places.

I am certain that God did not cause this rift, nor want it. And I am just as sure that He wants to heal it... Jesus' fervent prayer to God in John 17 has come to mind many times – especially vs. 21, 'That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee...' also Paul's exhortation in Eph. 4:3 'Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' And numerous places that speak of one Spirit, one mind, one accord, I so long to see that among us.

*The real question doesn't seem to be a matter of what is right or wrong, but how to deal with wrong. Everyone knows that divorce is not right. Everyone knows that fornication and adultery are exceeding sinful. The difference seems to lie in how to deal with those who have been taken in these things. I confess that I do not know the answer. But there is an assurance in my heart that God Who made man knows all the answers. (**January 31, 1987** Letter by Lecil Sullivan)*

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Another evidence of the East/West division still existing is that a worker who is rejected (put out of the work) in one jurisdiction can apply to and be reinstated in another. An example was the Ron Johnson rejection from the West. After an investigation in the East, he was accepted back into the work in the Eastern jurisdiction in the State of Oklahoma, in direct conflict with opinion of the Western leadership.

More recently, there have been a number of efforts to promote unity between the east and the west; e.g. exchange of workers, convention visitor exchanges, etc. However, a consensus of the Overseers in allowing participation in meetings of divorced and remarried friends has not yet been implemented.

Compiled by Cherie Kropp-Ehrig