

In Vain They Do Worship – Chapter 1

In Vain They Do Worship

Ch 1: In the Beginning · By Willis Young

December 3, 2017

In Vain They Do Worship

By Willis G. D. Young

Chapter 1	In the Beginning
Chapter 2	The Doctrine of Jesus Christ
Chapter 3	The Outward Jew
Chapter 4	The Signs of an Apostle
Chapter 5	The Christian at Home
Chapter 6	Loopholes
Chapter 7	A Worker in Waiting
Chapter 8	My Sojourn in "the Work"
Chapter 9	Back to the "Drawing Board"
Chapter 10	In Summation
Chapter 11	Epilogue

CHAPTER 1: In the Beginning

I was brought up believing I was a Christian or, more precisely, that my parents and grandparents were Christians and that one day I would become one.

One day I did.

And for the next thirty-six years I "pressed toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

I was eleven years old that spring of 1945 when I decided that it was time for me to "profess." That's what we called it when anyone converted to the faith or when he or she "got saved" or became "born again." I didn't see that there would be any difference in the attitude of my school friends toward me since all my life I'd had to endure the teasing, the snickering, the tittering, and the jeering that came with being associated with a sect that "had no name."

"We are undenominational," I had been programmed to reply when, September after September, the teacher, during the enrollment process, would call out: "Your religion?" How simple it seemed for my classmates who had only to say, "Anglican," or "Baptist," or "United," and how I longed for that simplicity! Everyone seemed only too ready to taunt me with the labels that had been ascribed to us such as "Two-by-Two's" or "Go-Preachers" or the "Black-Stocking Gang." So how much worse could it be if I "professed"? I was tagged and was bearing the brunt of the derision anyway, so I suppose I figured I might as well be in a position of eternal reward and blessing for being reviled and having all manner of evil spoken against me falsely for Christ's sake and the gospel's.

And what would I have to give up? Nothing, as far as I could see. After all, how can you give up what you've never been allowed to have, or how can you stop going to places that you've never been allowed to go to anyway?

There is no doubt that I was an easy candidate for the faith. From a very early age I pretended to myself that I was in it already, and while other kids were playing "Cops and Robbers" or "Cowboys and Indians" I was playing "meeting." And, let me tell you, I took my play-acting very seriously. I went so far as to create in my mind a whole community of imaginary people, some of whom were in the faith, some of whom were not, and, not unlike real-life situations, I pretended that some of them left the faith and caused sadness and concern for their friends and relatives. I also concocted a "workers' list" and sent these "people" to all parts of the globe to preach the gospel. Because my imaginary years were shorter than real ones, my lists got changed regularly and often.

Privately, I staged meetings and conventions just like the ones I grew up attending. I suppose I was less than two weeks old when I was taken to my first meeting, and I know for a fact that I was only eight months old when I attended my first convention, so, you see, I really knew what I was doing when I would leave the real world behind and go into my land of make-believe.

I even organized and conducted mock baptisms. I suppose this is as good a place as any to talk about the group's beliefs in the rite of baptism. Firstly, the idea of infant sprinkling does not exist, and, secondly, because there is no church building to worship in, there is no such thing as a "font" or a tank, which is used by some denominations. Baptism must be by total immersion, and one must be fully clothed during the process. The ceremony is usually carried out during the annual conventions, and those who are eligible for baptism have likely been professing for about a year, although there never seemed to be a time limit imposed on when you had to have it done. In some countries—Greece particularly—it is held that a person should be baptized the day he professes because, after all, did it not work that way in the cases of the Ethiopian eunuch and the Apostle Paul?

I remember, too, as a child, sitting in the two-hour-long convention meetings and, instead of listening to the speaker, I would entertain myself by reading certain passages from my Bible and then writing out little mini-sermons or “testimonies” like the ones I heard week after week on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings.

Yes, I really believe I was programmed from a very early age.

So what is this undenominational, non-sectarian sect that I’m referring to? Is it really a sect, or could it be described as a cult? How did it start? Where did it come from? How old is it? And, above all, how has it survived the ravages of time to attract a fairly sizable and significant “following” from nearly all walks of life and to persuade that “following” to stay in it when it has remained virtually static in its attitude toward change and evolution in so many basic and fundamental issues? This last question will be dealt with in much greater detail and with much more passion in a later chapter, but I believe that I should say here that it is almost entirely “apostle-centric” or “worker-centric”—“worker” being the term ascribed to a minister; and that there is hardly any emphasis on the role of the elders. Moreover, I have come to believe that that control is inordinately maintained by brainwashing and intimidation.

Whatever this sect is or isn’t, what cannot be denied is that, in and of itself, it is a “faith,” a way of life, a society, and a community. To the innocent and the uninitiated it has every semblance of a “fellowship.” And it can be found all around the world.

“In the beginning God created heaven and earth.”

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

“In the beginning” there was no such a thing as a sectarian name such as Roman Catholic or Protestant or Presbyterian, or Episcopalian. Jesus, after all, neither invented nor used these terms, and so I was trained to believe they were not only wrong but also were downright sinful and that the followers of such designations were “outsiders”—heathens, the Infidel!

“In the beginning” Jesus sent his disciples out “two and two” to preach the Gospel. I was led to believe, therefore, that no minister of the Word should be able to settle down with a wife and family and live in a normal house as a normal person. All preachers—be they male or female—must almost always remain celibate, must travel about in pairs, never owning more than they could pack into a suitcase, and always depending on freewill offerings of shelter, transportation, and spending money. After all, don’t we read in the Scriptures that one should not “muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn”? They must at all times be itinerant, moving constantly from one home to another among the believers and usually spending no more than one year at a time in any given district or area. “The foxes have holes,” you see, “and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.” This means, of course, that the concept of a resident pastor does not exist, and the “Word” is spread by means of gospel missions, which the workers conduct throughout the various regions during the year.

“In the beginning” there was no church building. After all, “the veil of the temple was rent in twain” when Jesus was crucified, and so I was taught that a designated building for worship is improper and quite contrary to the will of God. Where was the Last Supper held? Was it not in an upper room of a man’s home? Where did the disciples meet on the first day of the week after the Resurrection? Was it not in an upper room? Did not the Apostle Paul refer several times to “the church in thy house”? Oh, yes, and is it not a fact that even the very first Passover feast—just to conveniently tie the two Testaments together—was appointed to the homes of the Hebrews? Isn’t that unequivocal proof, therefore, that the rite of communion must forever be performed in the privacy of a home and never in a public building? Isn’t it a fact that, even to this very day, the Jews, after attending Synagogue, go to their own homes to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt? Christians, I was always told, were no more or no less than “a New Testament brand of Jews,” the new breed of “chosen people,” and if it still behooves the Old Testament, condemned variety to adhere to such strict principles of the law, does it not behoove us even more so to do the same? Have we not been told that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees?

“In the beginning” (or so I was told) everyone went to conventions in June or July, and every November or December everyone attended a series of Special Meetings.

“In the beginning” (or so they said) everyone decided that a Wednesday evening Bible study would be held and that the first Sunday of every month would be called “Union Sunday.”

“In the beginning” (and why would you question it?) this non-denominational, no-name, generic brand of religion was called “The Truth.”

“. . .but from the beginning it was not so.”

Go to **Chapter 2**