

In Vain They Do Worship – Chapter 3

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Ch 3: The Outward Jew · By Willis Young

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CHAPTER 3: The Outward Jew

Several times in the first two chapters I made a few veiled, and some not so veiled, references to the demands and restrictions—externals of conformity, if you will—that were placed “on the outside of the cup and on the platter.” I believe the Apostle Paul said it extremely well when he wrote, “He is not a Jew which is one outwardly. . .” As I look back now to my childhood and let my mind’s eye scan the decades right up to the present time, I realize so vividly that all those years I was brought up by, surrounded by, controlled by, judged by, and condemned by “outward Jews.” I wish I could have known someone with the vision of the Apostle Paul who saw himself as an “able minister of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for,” as he put it, “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”

We didn’t have a Talmud, or, at least, not a written one, but that isn’t saying that we were without “law and order.” No, indeed! It was anything but that! It really is quite amazing that a group of people, preaching freedom and deliverance from “Egypt’s bondage,” has allowed itself to be so deliberately blinded and deluded into believing that its every move is unmonitored and uncontrolled. The members may well be free from Egypt’s bondage—whatever spiritual connotation that has—but they are so scrupulously policed and governed by “the servants of the living God” that, in most cases, they are afraid to express their own personality and individuality.

The laws that regulate and manipulate these “New Testament Jews” are legion, and, in order to make some sense out of them, I have tried to group them into general divisions or categories.

The first one of these classifications might well be termed **The Clothing Code**.

It applies to both men and women, although, I must say, over the years the former have had an unfair advantage over the latter. I should add, too, that, as time has gone on, and as it has become more common for people to travel more and more from one country to another or from one area to another within this continent, the rules have changed or been relaxed considerably, and many of the more asinine restrictions with which I grew up no longer exist.

My most vivid childhood memory is of the women having to wear black stockings. There was always a lot of controversy about them, as well as a lot of rebellion, and many a good Christian girl fell by the wayside because she refused to go out in public wearing her uniform. Black stockings, you see, were only one part of this stringent category, and long skirts, long hair, and long faces—the longer the better—were other prescribed signs of holiness and submission to the will of God.

The “black stocking rule” was not a universal one. For those living west of the Mississippi or, farther north, somewhere between Sault Ste. Marie and Winnipeg, it had either never existed at all or had been so successfully resisted that it had disappeared. This regional disparity added considerable fire to the contention and controversy of the issue, and it’s hard to know how influential it would have been in splitting the church apart if it had not finally been addressed publicly by George Walker, one of the senior workers at a convention held at Almonte, Ontario in 1945 or 1946. Even though I was young at the time, I can still recall so vividly the outpourings of relief from those who were so desperate for the change and the equal protestations from women like my grandmothers who saw it as the end of the faith as they knew it, and who kept that faith until the day they died.

Thus, black turned to shades of grey running the gamut from gunmetal to taupe, but, as you would expect, there could be no stopping the tide. Today, the legs of the ladies, old and young, are adorned with whatever color is fashionable, and if you were to ask any one of the latter about “the black stocking controversy,” they would, more than likely, stare at you blankly and tell you they have no idea what you’re talking about.

Another commandment in the Clothing Code concerns hair. While women must let theirs grow long; men’s must be kept short. And I mean short! Long and short are, of course, very subjective and very relative terms. I was always struck by the incongruity in the scenario of a man and a woman each having hair the same length: he would be told that, in order to continue in fellowship and to “break bread,” he would have to have it cut because “it was too long”; she, however, would have to wait until hers grew again before she was allowed to “take part” because “it was too short.” This rule has never been modified or altered in any way to accommodate age, time, or era even though there is not one word on record of any legislation that Jesus made concerning length of hair, hair style, or, for that matter, any other dress restrictions for either men or women.

What we do have, however, are some remarks made by the Apostle Paul who asked if nature itself did not teach that “if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him,” and added that “if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.” He seemed not to be too dogmatic about such a suggestion, however, and he advised against contention over it because, as he said, they had “no such custom, neither the churches of God.” He seemed to imply that the reported divisions in the church were more important and there were things to worry about other than the outward appearance of individual members in it. But, as I’ve already pointed out, Paul did not promote the concept of “the outward Jew.”

Men may not allow their beards to grow. That is to say, they’re not really supposed to. Mustaches are allowed, and, in former times, so were beards, but now they are, as are toupees, considered cosmetic and very worldly. Equally cosmetic and worldly are the practices of dying hair and using make-up. I do know that both these “sins of the flesh” have gone on more or less subtly for years, but they are hard to detect and harder to prove, and those who do them do so quite craftily. Again, one would be hard pressed to find any aspect of the doctrine of Jesus Christ to support such restrictions on one’s person, but I firmly believe that when all power and all authority are allowed to be usurped by such an elite group of legislators as the workers are considered to be, there is a great erosion of truth and reason as well as justice and simple common sense.

The wearing of jewelry, particularly for women but for men, too, has a high priority on the list of dress taboos. Until I was well into my teenage years, wristwatches came under the same ban. Gradually, however, conditions changed, and, strangely enough, women took the lead in abolishing that law although for years they still were not allowed to use an expansion bracelet. Men were “encouraged” to continue to use the pocket variety, and I’ll never forget how decadent and absolutely exhilarated I felt the night my father brought home a real live wrist one—shiny band and all—and asked me if I thought I’d like to have it.

In the area where I grew up, wedding rings were classified as jewelry, and, as a result, they were on the list of things that couldn’t be worn. I heard the story many times of how my grandmother, after converting to the faith and having great conviction about such matters, removed her ring, put it on a block of wood, and, using an axe, smashed it to smithereens so that she would never be tempted to wear it again. My mother, being in “that Way” from her early youth, was married without a ring, but when attitudes and opinions (or was it personalities?) changed a few years later, my father went out and bought one for her, and she wore it till her dying day. It was to be many more years before it was deemed appropriate or necessary for men to wear one, and, to this day, engagement rings are frowned on and discouraged. Like so many other rules, however, the one about rings was not at all universal, and it depended so much on the whim of the workers who happened to be posted to any given “field.”

For support for the “no jewelry” commandment I often listened to people quoting a passage from the letter by the Apostle Peter. “Whose adorning,” he wrote in reference to the wives, “let it not be that outward adorning. . . of wearing of gold. . . but let it be the hidden man of the heart, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” Peter, here, is neither condemning the use of jewelry nor legislating dress codes; rather, he is adopting the same attitude as did the Apostle Paul in saying that there should be no stress placed on “the outward Jew” because ultimately “the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

Some might contend that Paul contradicted himself when, in writing to Timothy, he specified “that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array. . .” However, immediately preceding and following that passage he appeared to place significant emphasis on the absence of wrath and doubting as well as on godliness and good works. One is led to think, therefore, in view of the rest of his philosophy, that he is simply saying that outward appearances should not be used as a substitute for righteousness or as a cover-up for the lack of love and other marks of a professing Christian.

Would I be facetious in wondering if, perhaps, awareness of that concept was the real reason that Jesus based his doctrine on compassion and mercy rather than on the color of one’s shoes and the length of one’s hair or beard?

I mention shoe color because I cannot quite recall whether it was before or after I got my wristwatch that I was allowed to have a pair of brown shoes. Black had always been the order of the day, and even though I had my parents’ approval to wear the brown ones, I was still quite nervous about how the others in the meeting would take it when I walked in on Sunday morning. I remember being concerned that they might think that I was “going back” or, at the very least, trying to “conform [myself] to this world.” To this day one would be hard pressed to find any of the workers—male or female—wearing anything on their feet that was neither very conventional nor very black. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,” Jesus warned, “ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within, ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

For want of a better term I have named the second category **The Entertainment Ethic**.

If justice is to be done to this group of laws, it must be broken down into what is not allowed *in the home* and what is banned away *from home*. As was the case with black stockings, my most significant childhood memory concerns the restriction on radios. I can't say that I remember wanting one so badly, but what I do recall is the sense of humiliation and embarrassment at having to admit to my teachers and fellow students that we didn't have one. Since this confession always brought about questions and a certain amount of derision, I would lie and say that we were too poor to afford one. Somehow I figured out that there was less shame in suffering from poverty than from being religious. Even at a very early age I had been subtly programmed not to blame "the meetings" for things I had to do or couldn't do, for places I wasn't allowed to go, and for things I was forbidden to have. In 1968, at the age of 34, I bought my first radio! By then, you see, there were bigger and better inventions that were considered much more worldly, so the watchdogs had to reassess their priorities and create brand new rules to cover their brand new aversions.

For some reason tape recorders never really made the prohibition status, but stereos did. The latter are still discouraged, but those who are heroic enough to go out and get one are allowed to keep it without losing their standing as bona fide members of the faith. Some of those brave souls are, I am sure, considered peripheral or borderline cases, and I have every reason to believe that, in the past, those same adjectives were ascribed to me, and that that is one of the reasons why I experienced such a dearth of interest and attention from the prophets of the New Age Judaism. After all, being peripheral really means being comparatively superficial or unessential, so there was no incentive to waste time with me when so many faithful folk were killing the fatted calf and preparing to eat and be merry on the other side of town.

Home movies created quite a stir for a while. Even slides were considered by some to be just on the very verge of right and wrong. Typically, I bought cameras for both and used them wherever I went, but I did hit a bit of a snag after my first trip to Jamaica. I had gone out of my way to visit John Cook, an elderly Scottish worker who had been a friend of my family for many years, and, when he appeared in the doorway of the home where he was staying, I asked him to walk out on the porch and down the palm-lined path so that I could take his picture. He complied, smiling. Two years later, however, he approached me at convention and explained that he had been completely unaware that I had photographed him with a movie camera and that he felt it was too much "like Hollywood" for him. Would I discontinue the use of my camera? No, I told him, I would not. Would I destroy the pictures? No, I didn't believe they were wrong, and I refused to make such a promise, but I did assure him that I would cut out the section in which he appeared. Years later, after his death, I spliced that footage back into the film, confident now that he was far beyond being offended by such earthly trivialities.

I included this anecdote here to illustrate the point which I feel the Apostle Paul was making when he wrote, "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." My poor old Scottish friend was grieved by my showing his picture on a screen, and I would have been less than charitable had I continued to offend him after he told me how he felt.

I already mentioned that even slides put you in danger of hell's fire according to a few of the "flock-tenders." I remember being at my parents' home one evening after having returned from a trip I had taken some place or other. One of the workers—a lady we'd all known and admired for several years—was with us, and I was going to show them all my holiday pictures. The screen was set up, the projector was plugged in, and the show was almost on the road when, to our dismay, a car drove up into the laneway. Dismay turned to horror for the "sister" worker when she realized that one of the passengers in the car was none other than the senior worker in the province. There was no doubt in anyone's mind about his attitude toward all forms of home entertainment, so while my father stood at the door and stalled his entry, the rest of us dispensed with all the evidence of our plans for a fun evening. Every one of us realized how absolutely ludicrous it was for us to have to carry out such a cover-up, but we all understood that we were not doing it to protect ourselves. We did it because "to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean," and we were not about to argue the real virtues in the doctrine of Jesus Christ or to point out the sins of omission in the outward Jew.

Apart from the home and yet very much part of the same area of restraint I should mention that it was terribly wrong to purchase or possess a vehicle of any kind with a radio in it. If you were ordering a new car, you were expected to specify that you didn't want the radio included, or if you were buying a new one off the lot, you had to ask that the radio be removed. If for any reason, rational or irrational, the radio had to remain in the vehicle, you were supposed to remove the aerial so that you could not, or would not be tempted to, listen to "the voice of the world." Several of my personal friends, including my own father, who had delayed "letting conscience be their guide," were directed by the workers to "get rid of that thing" or "have that thing taken off."

If you resisted such a suggestion, you would be told that none of the workers would ever want to borrow your car for their mission work, and, since you felt blessed to have your personal belongings used by such noble and spiritual people in such noble and spiritual pursuits, you really didn't have much of a choice but to strip your vehicle of all worldly appurtenances attached thereto. It was reported on one occasion at one of the group's annual conventions that one of the workers, caught up in the zeal of the moment, went about among the parked cars breaking off every radio aerial he could find. That same man would stand up that same day or the day before or the day after in front of those same people whose property he had willfully and maliciously destroyed and "[would begin] at the same scripture, and [preach] unto [them] Jesus."

What is so sad about all these tales of tyranny is that they are still going on in one form or another at the present time and that they are allowed to do so because people are afraid to resist or question the authority of the "rulers of the synagogue," and because they

lack the wisdom or the vision to see those rulers as nothing more than blind guides who are straining at gnats and swallowing camels.

When I mentioned the purchase of my first radio, I intimated that, at that moment in history, it was a perfectly acceptable thing to do and that the emphasis had shifted to bans on televisions and other attractions of the flesh. It's true that such a shift in emphasis was already in the works, but it would not be correct to assume that there ever has been a complete approval of radios or that the process ever ended. What really happened was that it became a *bigger* sin to own a television than a radio, but if you were a real child of God, you wouldn't hear tell of possessing either one. So now the old sermons had to be taken out of their files in the workers' Bible bags, and old vocabulary had to be replaced with new. This restriction on owning a television and, in some cases, even in watching one, is still firmly in place, but in this age of computers and software, video camcorders, Pac-man and Nintendo games, I cannot help but wonder just how much longer the lid can be held on the pot.

Card playing is something else that has never been allowed. I know there are some children's games that are played with cards, and they seem to be all right, but such things as bridge, canasta, rummy, poker, and cribbage are all considered to be part of the devil's handiwork. I learned more or less by osmosis how to play a form of solitaire, but it was many years before I felt free enough to admit to anyone that I owned a deck of cards or that I occasionally whiled away the odd idle moment with my secret "skill."

"Deck the halls with boughs of holly! Fa la la la la!"

"'Tis the season to be jolly. . ." as long as you aren't a member of a certain non-denominational sect that has concocted a set of rules that covers almost everything from when you can go to the bathroom to what type of broom you should use when you sweep your kitchen floor. But, surely, I exaggerate ever so slightly!

My first clear memory of Christmas and "decking the halls" goes back to when I was four or five years of age and our decorating a little tree that my father had chopped down and brought in from the bush on my grandfather's farm. And I grew up not knowing anything different. Every year we had a tree and, in later years, my mother even went so far as to put up colored lights and hang a wreath on the front door. There were times when money was quite scarce since we were anything but rich people, but I cannot recall a Christmas Day whenever I was home that we didn't exchange gifts, however small, and enjoy one of my mother's famous turkey dinners. On one or two of those festive occasions I remember a couple of the workers joining us, and I especially remember how much we enjoyed having them, and how much their presence added to the atmosphere of "peace and goodwill toward men."

But when I was 28 years old, I learned that we had been "emulating pagans" all those years!

I came by that intelligence by eavesdropping on a conversation between two of the senior brother workers. It had been brought to their attention that certain of the followers of the faith were "bringing Christmas trees into their homes," and, as shocked and disappointed as they were, they just couldn't make up their minds about how best to punish the guilty parties for their worldly acts and sinful deeds. The consensus of opinion was that, at the very least, they would "have to be spoken to" and in the case of those who were privileged to host the Sunday morning service, they would be severely warned that failure to clean up their act would cause them to lose "the meeting" and, along with it, a lot of face as well.

I found it very difficult to listen to such pointless drivel. The church had met in my parents' living room year after year at Christmas time with a decorated tree sitting over in the corner, and no one had ever once expressed an iota of disapproval. I played Christmas carols on the piano every year. My mother, and her mother, and almost every other "mother in Israel" sent reams of Christmas cards to people around the globe and received reams in reply. Those cards got suspended from ceilings and archways, they got placed on window sills and china cabinets, they got taped to doors and cupboards, and I never knew of any one of them ever causing anybody to have a bad spirit towards anyone else or less love and interest in "the things of God," and they surely didn't create any desire in anyone to go out and become part of the world that they were supposed to represent.

But somebody had found a hobby-horse, and he was going to ride it or rock it to death! "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!. . . ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith," and I can tell you that this omission has caused more dissension, more ill will, more division, and more disunity of spirit than one or a hundred decorated Christmas trees ever could.

The first of the three major no-no's on **entertainment outside the home** leads directly out of the Christmas theme. You see, I was never allowed to attend a Christmas Concert at school. And, believe me, I wanted to! No, that's not quite true. I craved to! Every year I practiced with the class—after all, it was during the day, and how could it be prevented?— and I knew the program backwards and forwards. I had the ability to memorize very easily, so I knew everyone's lines and could fill in for anyone who happened to be absent from a rehearsal on any given day. I even fancied myself as a bit of a clown, and I enjoyed acting out the various parts I was asked to do. Over the years one or two teachers even expressed regret and exasperation over the fact that I was not allowed to be active in the program because they thought I'd be good at it. But I always had to blame my parents for not letting me go. After all, how could a young person eight years old, or twelve, or fifteen, come right out and say he couldn't go to concerts because the "workers" in his religion believed they were a sin?

In later years I discovered that the ban on concerts was, like a few other pet aversions on the part of the "heads of state," not universal. Too, by the time I began my teaching career in 1956, the situation had changed completely, and, qualmless, I directed and led my classes in Christmas entertainment for the next fifteen years. I guess the thing that bothers me most about certain of these restrictions and passing fancies is not that I couldn't do the things I would like to have done, but that the rules against doing them were so groundless, so inane, and so temporary. One of the questions I so often asked, and, I suppose, one of the ones that got me into hot water with the church authorities, was why people couldn't see that there was an evolution, however subtle, and that time automatically had brought about changes in the things that were not "of God," in things that were based entirely on "traditions of men,"

or in things that had nothing to do with the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Why can people, even now, not see the emptiness in regulations that restrict them today but will be gone tomorrow, either because of the passing of time or the passing on of the individuals who created them? Sadly, the one aspect that has never been allowed to evolve is the cult-like power that the ministerial hierarchy imposes on itself as well as upon every other member of the group.

Going to the movies, or, as I grew up hearing it, to a “picture show,” was always disallowed, and it still is. I got away with watching “films” at school, but that was because they were for educational purposes only, and I was never supposed to derive any real pleasure from them, or admit to any, lest I be lured to the local cinema by the lasciviousness of Hollywood. A few tales floated around about certain individuals who had been seen trying to creep covertly into a theater here or there, and I even heard one amusing story about one couple being caught sneaking in by another couple sneaking in!

Not too many years ago, I accompanied some very true and faithful followers of the faith to Montreal where, 200 kilometers from home, they felt safe enough from detection by even more faithful followers to take themselves and their young sons to see “Star Wars.” These people are top-notch “outward Jews,” and they’re still strong in the faith because they never ask the wrong questions, they always give the right answers, and they make sure that “nobody knows what goes on behind closed doors.” “And [their] name is Legion, for [they] are many.” I don’t think the Apostle Paul was referring to them when he wrote, “that [Christ] would grant you. . . to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that [he] may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye [may be] rooted and grounded in love. . .”

I am not condemning my friends for going to “the movies,” but what I am saying is that it is a sad state of affairs when people are so controlled by fear and vain tradition that they must live their lives in secrecy and dishonesty both resulting in hypocrisy and mistrust. If they deserve any condemnation at all, it is because they lack the intestinal fortitude to stand up to the church’s authority figures who, true to the examples set by their New Testament counterparts almost two thousand years ago, “bind heavy burdens. . . grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders. . .”

Dancing, as you might expect, has always been banned. Even though it is one of mankind’s oldest ways of expressing emotions and one of the world’s leading art forms, there have never been any exceptions to the rule of the church against it. The Old Testament contains numerous references to dancing, and many of them are in connection with praising and giving glory to God. When Jesus, in the New Testament, told the parable of the prodigal son, he stated that when the happy father was “making merry” over the return of his recalcitrant offspring, he did so with “music and dancing.” And yet if anyone in the church ever dared to ask why dancing is such a forbidden form of entertainment, he would be told that it really isn’t the dancing that is “wrong” but “it’s the company that is kept” and “it’s what it leads to.”

Thus the workers make the rules, and the people, puppet-like, dance (if you’ll pardon the pun) to their tune.

Going to an Exhibition or a County Fair was something else I was not allowed to do, but I’m not sure how far-reaching that restriction was. Every now and then one of our “worldly” friends would take great delight in reporting that they had seen this one or that one of the chosen few at such a place, and I remember that feeling of having to cover for them and trying to find all sorts of excuses to explain why they might have gone. (Of course, in my mind I would think that they were pretty weak in the faith and didn’t have much vision of right or wrong or they would never have been found there in the first place.) Little did I realize, as I do now, that they went *because they* had vision—vision to see there was no harm in going, vision to see the nonsense behind the rule that said they shouldn’t go, and vision to understand that their faith and the doctrine of Jesus Christ went far beyond the whims and fancies of the “worker of the week.”

Like the law enforcing black stockings, and the law forbidding wristwatches, the law banning brown shoes and the law condemning wedding rings, the law against going to exhibitions and fairs has long been abandoned in favour of other more current laws, but the power of brainwashing has taken another toll. To this day—and I’m over sixty years of age—I have never been able to go to an exhibition; and even though I have not been part of the church for almost fifteen years, I still cannot, in all good conscience, bring myself to go to a movie theater. It’s very difficult to explain this uncanny hold, this psychological captivity, or to describe the invisible fence that has curtailed, and will curtail, me all my life. But whatever it is, I believe it is common to a greater or lesser degree in everyone who has ever had any serious connection to this undenominational way of worship.

I have called the third category **The Marriage Mandate**, and the first two parts of it concern **dating and marriage**. As you would expect, both of these activities are discouraged with “outsiders,” and, in fact, there is quite a penalty to pay for the souls who have the misfortune of losing their hearts to someone in that situation.

Dating, understandably, is a bit tricky because many people date many people whom they never marry or whom they never intend to marry. There is no question, however, about the fact that it is not considered “wise” for any member of the church to be going out with “a worldly person anyway because you just never can tell where it will lead,” but there isn’t too much anyone can do in the early stages except watch the person like a hawk, give copious advice, and, if possible, try to break the affair up.

And, believe me, every tactic is used!

It seems to be immediately assumed that all such love-stricken parties must be “experiencing difficulties in the Way” or they wouldn’t be looking outside for company in the first place. Or perhaps it’s because the parents just aren’t as faithful or as vision-endowed as they should be. Surely, it is supposed, if they can be brought to see the error of their ways, or if they can be “strengthened in the

faith,” they will fall out of love faster than Zacchaeus climbed down from the sycamore tree, and all will be well again. And that’s when the pressure begins!

If the workers care—and whether they do or not depends on who you are, or, more appropriately, whose son or daughter you are—the pressure starts with them. If the parents are, themselves, strong in the faith, they begin immediately to apply their own pressure or are encouraged by the workers to do so. The problem, however, is that it seldom occurs to anyone that the people involved might be genuinely in love, or that it is possible to find genuine love “outside the fold.”

Contrary to common belief, there just isn’t always someone for everyone within the exclusive confines of this undenominational way of worship, and there are many unhappy homes dotting the continent from coast to coast to prove it. But because no one seems to have taken those facts into consideration, the practice of dating “the Infidel” is still held in a great deal of contempt and is passionately discouraged whenever and wherever possible. The idea is that if the affair can be nipped in the bud, then, in all likelihood, marriage, and all the problems it entails, will be averted, and everyone can settle down with a good Christian boy or a good Christian girl and start the sacred process of producing good little Christian children who will, in turn, do their bit to adorn and propagate the faith. Regardless of all the programming, however, regardless of all the pressure, all the brainwashing, and all the negative persuasion, there is overwhelming evidence to prove that third, fourth, and even second generation members of the faith are, indeed, a rare commodity.

May I digress for a moment in order to illustrate that point?

My father’s grandfather remained bitterly opposed to “The Truth” until he was an old man in his late seventies. His wife, my great-grandmother, who had become a follower many years before, resisted his antagonism until her death, and then one day, after almost fifteen years, he changed his attitude, started to “go to meetings,” and insisted on being baptized. When he died in 1951, he left behind 107 great-grandchildren, and I was one of them, but I did not have one first cousin among the other 106 who was professing or who had ever even considered doing so.

My paternal grandparents produced ten children of whom my father was the second eldest. He learned about, and espoused, the faith at the same time they did, and so, I believe, did one or two other members of his family. None but my father remained faithful to it, however, until, after more than forty years, two of my uncles professed and are still “going on.” Should my grandparents be alive today, though, they would not find one grandchild, not one great-grandchild, or any other member of their progeny embracing their faith or living according to its rules.

The examples I have quoted are personal to my own family situation, and I could cite several more about uncles and great-uncles, first cousins and second cousins, and other cousins once removed, and they all point to the same stark reality: “the letter killeth”, and “the law worketh wrath”. Due to the sect’s hidden beginnings in Ireland around 1895, its clandestine government registration in various countries by the early workers, and the aura of mystery that surrounds it, it is difficult to total its membership or conduct a survey to further establish proof of what I stated concerning its generational instability, but after extensive travelling and meeting and making many acquaintances in various parts of the world, I firmly believe that my family’s sampling is not far from being typical of the universal picture.

Marriage to an outsider is anathema.

I suppose if someone is strong enough or brave enough to withstand or survive the rigors of the dating ordeal, they are strong enough to cope with the restrictions that they face when they plunge headlong into matrimony. At least they know what they’re in for, and they certainly can’t say that they weren’t duly and sufficiently warned.

Ultimately, there is just one form of punishment for such misbehavior, and, even at that, there is not one scrap of scripture to support such a penal measure. The disobedient members may not, for a period of one year, “take part” in either the Sunday morning meeting or the Wednesday evening Bible study. “Taking part” has two implications. The first, as you would naturally conclude, concerns the rite of communion, and the second has to do with the custom of praying audibly and giving an oral testimony in the meetings. The punishment, expressed “speak and pray.”

At the end of the year—if they survive spiritually, that is—the workers magnanimously reinstate them as full-fledged members of the cult. All bans are lifted, all restrictions are removed, and they can now go back to taking part as they always did as if nothing had ever transpired.

But, ironically, at the end of that same year they are still living with the same “worldly” mates that they were punished for marrying in the first place. The home probably will have remained “divided,” and, with luck, they may still be sleeping with their pagan partners. But now they are free because they have satisfied some obscure law concocted by some even more obscure worker, probably from Ireland, who, in all likelihood, labored among the Hillbillies in the Ozarks somewhere south of the Mason-Dixon line.

The ones who fall away or “go back” either during the dating process or during that proverbial probationary year have two choices at their disposal. They can opt to stay out and risk being bombarded by invitations to return, or they can, in fact, accept the first invitation they get and profess again right away. Incredibly, if they choose this latter route, they receive the Prodigal’s welcome, and go right on speaking and praying and breaking bread alongside their silent brother or sister who chose to stay in and stick it out for the year. Again, they are still living with the same “heathens” they married, but they were dead, and now they’re alive, and “God’s in his garden, all’s right with the world”!

I’m sure you can detect the discrepancies, see the contradictions, and understand the nonsense that pervades this whole Neo-Judaistic philosophy. I cannot help but reiterate, for purposes of emphasis, just how very much it is maintained and controlled by whim

and fancy and by antiquated traditions that have never had any New Testament support.

I suppose this is as good a place as any to discuss the third area of the Marriage Mandate: the **wedding ceremony**.

Two questions or problems arise: where should the ceremony be held, and by whom should it be performed? Both these questions are handled differently in different countries and even in different areas of this country, and so it goes without saying that the workers' opinions vary and differ according to their slot in the chain of authority and their adherence to the will of whoever is in power in any given part of the world.

Because of the group's attitude toward church buildings and ordained ministers it is generally felt in Canada that couples should be married in a Town or City Hall by a Judge or a Justice of the Peace. It would also be very rare to find any of the workers in attendance at the wedding although I know of one or two instances when they have gone. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, "big church weddings" are not discouraged. The workers go to the ceremony as well, and it is perfectly acceptable for the couple to be joined in holy wedlock by a minister of their choosing. In Germany, the general populace usually has two marriage ceremonies: the civil one, which is required by the law of the land, and the religious one in a church the following day. The members of "my group" are naturally encouraged to dispense with the latter since they are already legally and morally married and the religious ceremony is just an unnecessary redundancy.

A few years ago there was a bit of discontent over the issue in the Ottawa area, and some young couples even dared to defy the legislation, but the rebellion was short-lived. At the famous, or not so famous, "Workers' Meeting" held at the end of the group's final annual convention at Almonte, the workers were all directed by their dictatorial American "guru"—a man who will be discussed at much greater length in the next chapter—to go out and put an end to any confusion about, or any opposition to, the law that he and some of his venerated cronies had concocted and laid down.

I remember trying to discuss this "law" and to reason it out with two of the young "sister workers" who were preaching in the Ottawa area at the time. My contention was that because the wedding ceremony has no Biblical or scriptural format, any ordained minister who performs it is simply acting as a government agent for that purpose and is doing the same job as is any other person who is endowed with the same authority. I could not see how anyone could possibly be accused of any sort of affiliation, however fleeting or temporary, with a "worldly church" just because he or she "hired" one of its ministers to help them carry out the law of the land.

My opinion, of course, was considered quite fractious, and I did nothing to enhance my image as a bona fide member of a group that considers itself above reproach, beyond comparison, and barely beneath heaven itself.

The fourth part of the Marriage Mandate covers the problems and dilemmas encountered by the **divorce issue**.

To use the vernacular, it is a real can of worms. Virtually speaking divorce is not allowed, but on the literal level it has been done, and several people in different parts of the world have their own tales of woe to tell about who couldn't and who did, and who didn't and who could. I heard one horror story in Fredericton, New Brunswick, about one poor lady who, as a child, had had some connection with the group but had never personally been in fellowship. She grew up and married, but when the marriage didn't work out, she became divorced and later remarried, this time happily. When she encountered the workers again in later life and wanted to profess, she was told that she could not do so unless she were to walk away from her second marriage and leave the husband whom she loved. As incredible as it seems, that is exactly what she did!

Stories have filtered north from various parts of the United States telling of situations almost identical to that one, and yet the parties were allowed to remain married and keep on breaking bread and taking part as if nothing were amiss. Need I say more about discrepancies or contradictions?

When I was a young boy, one of my youngest aunts, who had never been in the faith at any time, divorced her husband and began to live with the man who later became her second husband. I cannot describe the furor this caused! Her parents and my parents and all other faithful "outward Jews" were strictly forbidden by the workers to have any contact with her whatsoever. Fifteen years later, however, some workers who believed, preached, and practiced that "Christ had come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" visited her, invited her to their gospel services, and welcomed her into the fold with open arms. Had she chosen to remain there, she could have done so until her death, but because other influences were stronger, or perhaps because she understood what some of the rest of us eventually saw, she left the church and remained out of it until her death.

I grew up going to meetings with a wonderfully spiritually inclined girl who fell madly in love with a tall, handsome, and dashing young man whose mother was a professing Christian. The young man, being obviously equally in love, went to the gospel meetings and professed in order that he and the spiritually-inclined young girl could get married without a hitch or hassle. She remained spiritually inclined, and, in fact, all who knew her would say that her faith grew and deepened over the years. He remained faithful in a peripheral sense, but many people felt that he never developed "the vision" that she had. One day, after about twelve years of marriage, he abandoned the faith, walked out on his wife and their three children, and replaced them with a seventeen year-old girl who had been nothing much more than their scullery maid.

For the next fourteen years she endured the hardships of being a single mother and withstood the temptation to get a divorce and re-marry. One day, however, she met a divorced man who was professing and who swept her off her feet and straight to the altar. Many of her friends and relatives tried to put a stop to the romance, but nothing anyone could do or say seemed to make any difference. She told everyone that the workers she consulted were in agreement that because neither she nor the man she was marrying was the guilty party in each separation, they were free to wed. I believe she understood that after the "magic" year was up they would both be able to take part and break bread and do all the things that are regularly done by every other church member in good standing.

What they didn't plan on, though, was that the workers would change their minds, deny what they had told them, and renege on the position they had taken. Thus the magic year came and went; and, up to the present time, fifteen or so more such years have come and gone, and they still are held in a form of partial ex-communication, unable to worship freely as they would choose and looked upon with great disregard, if not downright contempt, by many of the more zealous traditionalists who, doubtlessly, testify Sunday after Wednesday about the love of God and the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

No one would deny for a moment that there is sound basis for confusion on the divorce issue for anyone believing in, and trying to adhere to, the principles of the Bible, and I will attempt to address this confusion in a later chapter. What is so objectionable to me, however, and to many others who still adhere to the faith, is the failure of the workers to admit to this confusion and to own up to the fact that they just cannot agree even among themselves on how to interpret the recorded Word. Too, it is absolutely inexcusable that they would deny their own echo and turn around and stand in judgment against people whom they have previously misled.

I told you, didn't I? It's nothing but a real can of worms.

The fourth category is a short one, and I have entitled it **The Food Fetish**. Actually, it doesn't concern food at all, but, instead, it deals with the question of **drinking**, and, by that, I mean drinking alcohol.

This issue suffers from grave regional disparities.

From early childhood, through my teen-age years, and on into my twenties, I was led to believe that "drinking" was a sin for a "child of God" everywhere in the world. I'm not even sure what happened in my twenties that opened my eyes to reality, but I think it was mostly because, as an adult, I was drawn into conversations with workers who came back on home visits from Europe and Africa and Asia. I began to learn that cultural differences and peculiarities prevailed in those foreign lands, and that not only did the natives in those lands continue to drink their wine and beer or schnapps after they professed, but these Bible-toting preachers from Ontario or Nova Scotia or Wisconsin were also taking a little nip along with them when they were over there, far away from home and mother!

It's an interesting phenomenon that, over the years, workers from Great Britain and Ireland have fanned out all over the world like spokes from the hub of a wagon wheel. A more interesting phenomenon, however, is that those who crossed the Atlantic Ocean to North America carried with them, and passionately tried to carry out, the laws of prohibition against drinking alcoholic beverages, while the majority of those who chose simply to step across the English Channel thought the better philosophy was to do in Rome as the Romans do. Rather than trying to make British Frenchmen or Scottish Germans or Irish Italians, they chose to become "all things to all men, that [they] might by all means save some."

Mind you, when they go back home, they do not—or is it dare not?—let on to a single soul what they do while labouring in those foreign fields. On Sunday mornings they dutifully thank God and righteously take their sip of the unscriptural grape juice knowing full well that their brethren a hundred kilometers away are performing the same rite with the real stuff. I know from experience that the whole shameful sham has become more than a trifle amusing for the good Christian folk from Germany who travel to England for a holiday from time to time.

Personally I don't find the deception amusing. I find it offensive. It is one more mark of the outward Jew, one more symptom of hypocrisy, one more sign of inconsistency, one more lie, and one more piece of evidence that there is more stress placed on the creature than on the Creator.

Why did I have to wait until I was in my twenties to learn that the cultural values of the Germans and French and Austrians and practically every other race from Norway to South Africa and Chile were allowed to take precedence over those of the Anglo-Saxons of Mother England and her North American colonies? Why did I have to wait even longer than that to discover that there is not one dotted *i* or one crossed *t* anywhere in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation to support the theory of absolute abstinence from any form of alcohol—unless you were a Nazarite; or that failure to abstain from it—apart from intemperance, of course—is practically one of the seven deadly sins? Why is it that, until this very day, the faithful adherents to the sect have to take themselves across the Atlantic or the Pacific Ocean in order to be able to sit down in public—or even in private—and enjoy a glass of wine with their meal without constantly looking over their shoulders in fear of being caught in the act? Why is there not more openness and honesty on the part of the workers—these modern-day counterparts of the Old and New Testament Israelites—in dealing with these controversial issues that have no scriptural foundation and which cause so much dissension and distrust?

The answer, I believe, can be summed up in one word: **IGNORANCE**.

"For they," as the Apostle Paul put it, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own, . . . have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law. . . to everyone that believeth." I will concede, if I may once again quote the same Apostle, "that they have a zeal of God, but [it is] not according to knowledge." Not only is it unfortunate that such knowledge and vision are so obviously and sadly lacking, but it is also a great pity that so many people are kept in bondage by such a raft of man-made rules and have been stripped of their God-given right to question the authority of the authors of this deceit and oppression.

Thus, in theory—and it is in theory only—drinking alcohol is banned to all who profess to be Christians in this undenominational faith.

The **Sunday Supplement** is the name I have ascribed to the fifth classification of the church's pet rules.

In this category I'm not sure how personal or how universal the restrictions were, but I do know that they were fairly widespread in the areas of eastern Canada with which I had connections as I was growing up. I know, too, that even in those areas certain ideas changed over the years and, of course, there were always the "rebellious members"—you know the type: the "weaker souls" or those, whom I've mentioned, with "less vision"—who defied convention and religious ethics and went right ahead and did whatever they wanted to do regardless of what other people thought or said about them. Need I tell you that such a type became I in my latter years within the group? And, believe me, I did not see it as lack of vision!

I remember when I was a very young child, all the shoes had to be cleaned and polished on Saturday evening and could not be left until Sunday morning. My grandmother always maintained that that would be "breaking the Sabbath." Similarly, so would splitting the kindling to start the fire in the old wood stove when we would come home from meeting. That, as well as all the cooking and baking, had to be done by Saturday night, and then it was just a matter of getting the fire going and warming up the food on Sunday.

As the older generations passed away, and as more modern conveniences came into vogue, a lot of those Sabbath-breaking ideas faded out, but I have to admit that, away down deep in the hidden recesses of my mind, I always felt a tinge of guilt and a sense of "sin" every time I went about doing any manual activity on the first day of the week. It never seemed to matter that I knew that the Sabbath was Saturday, that the "handwriting of ordinances" was blotted out and nailed to the cross, and that we were to "let no man . . . judge [us] in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days. . . ." I still felt that tinge of guilt that remained from that early childhood programming.

No knitting and only emergency sewing were allowed.

No housekeeping of any type could be done.

No ball games or sports of any kind could be played.

No one should enter into or conduct any business deals. Some people carried this to the extreme, and they wouldn't even stop to pick up a loaf of bread or a cone of ice cream. Such was the zeal of some friends I was with in Jamaica that they were afraid to stop to buy some roasted corn from an isolated vendor on the side of a mountain road. They did it, but they felt very sullied, and they were most anxious that their "sin" would never be reported.

Going for a drive on Sunday—just for pleasure, that is—was discouraged. It was perfectly acceptable to travel great distances to attend gospel services or even to visit other professing friends or relatives, but it was not considered proper to use up time on the Lord's Day to go to see the "unsaved" ones.

Like so many of the other regulations I have discussed, these neo-Sabbath laws depended to a great extent on what workers had originally brought the gospel to the area, on the amount of zeal shown by the individual members or families, on what workers happened to be preaching presently in any community, and, most importantly, how foolishly they were viewed by people who saw through them to the real core of the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

I could open up another group of sundry laws that do not fit easily into any of the categories I have outlined, but I have chosen to cover them later when I will attempt to discuss the loopholes that exist within the group's philosophy.

Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." He did not say, ". . . if you have short hair and no beard," or ". . . if you have long hair and black shoes," or ". . . if you have no radio or television in your homes" or any of the other impositions that have been placed on the lives of people who believe they have the monopoly on salvation, redemption, and truth.

". . . if ye have love one to another."

There would be nothing wrong, really, with being an "Outward Jew" as long as it didn't stop there, but the problem comes from the fact that, more often than not, it does. There is too much failure to remember that "*all the law is fulfilled in one word*, even in this; 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'"

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the *Israel of God*."

"The 'Israel of God'?" you ask. Yes, my friends, the **Inward Jew**.

Go to **Chapter 4**