

In Vain They Do Worship – Chapter 9

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Ch 9: Back to the Drawing Board · By Willis Young

September 15, 2010

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By Willis G. D. Young

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CHAPTER 9: Back to the Drawing Board

Back to the school board. . . Back to the blackboard. . . Back to the "Drawing Board". . .

Back. . . Back. . . Back. . .

Back to being one of the "friends". . . Back to rooming and boarding. . . Back to re-owning a car. . .

Back. . . Back. . . Back. . .

Back to the life of Nine-to-Five where the evening and the morning again became one day at a time and one-day after another. . .

Back to a regular job where I could do what I wanted to do on week-ends and where I could phone in sick on days when life and stress proved to be the victors and took me down for the count. . .

Back to the world in which I used to make believe that people professed, got baptized, went into the work, and left it again because they were "just not able for it". . .

Back. . . Back. . . Back. . .

Yes, World, I was back, and in the inner regions of my consciousness, where I dared not look or dwell, I found myself settled and contented knowing full well that, even if Carson Cowan had allowed me to go onto the Resting List, I would have done it only for outward show, and that, in reality, I would never again take another leap of faith into a world with a lifestyle that neither man nor beast were ever expected to accept, promote, or advocate.

Back!

It is now well over three decades since I came back—no, I do not mean "went back"; and, just as I promised to do in my chapter on being in the work, I will try again to avoid giving you a day by day or blow by blow account of these last thirty-odd years. Some of it, of course, you've already picked up in my earlier pages, and most of it would be either too boring for you to read, or it has, thankfully, faded into the nether regions of my mind where even I have rarely ever ventured or explored.

So often you have heard me making reference to the city of Ottawa which had become home to me over the years and, as well, had formed the hub of my spiritual life within the Two-by-Two sect. Although I did work in Ottawa for a few years, most of my teaching career was spent across the Ottawa River in either Aylmer or Hull in the Province of Quebec. It was, however, to the Ottawa School Board that I returned in the fall of 1963, as that is where I had been employed during the three years just prior to my entering the work.

After that one initial year back, though, I re-engaged with the Western Quebec School Board and returned to teach in the town of Aylmer. It fell as my good fortune to be assigned to a class of Grade VI students whose IQs were not just far superior to my own—an easily achieved feat in itself—but were well into the near-genius category at the same time. Lady Luck smiled on me for the second time when I was asked by the principal to stay with the same group of students as they advanced to Grade VII.

To this day I have maintained a close social relationship with many of those young men and women and their families, but my reason for introducing that point here is that, years later, I had occasion to be very thankful for their support when my life did a complete

“About! Face!” and I was found in a very vulnerable and serious situation, indeed.

With your permission I will elaborate on this aspect of my life a little farther along.

In August 1966, I was found seated in a Canadian Air Force plane bound for Baden-Baden, [West] Germany where I would work and play for the following three years.

I worked, if one could call it work, as a civilian teacher on one of the most picturesque of Canada's air bases situated right at the foot of Germany's “Schwarzwald” or Black Forest, and I played on holidays and week-ends by travelling all over Europe, Asia, and North Africa, meeting **friends** and **workers** almost everywhere I went—all the while, deriving unbelievable satisfaction and spiritual resuscitation from attending every fellowship meeting, every gospel meeting, every Special Meeting, and every convention that I could possibly squeeze into my busy and hectic lifestyle.

Friends—civilian and military—as well as workers from Canada, United States, Germany, New Zealand and Great Britain visited me in my apartment and had me visit them on their bases, in their “batches” or at their flats. I met, fell in love with, and almost married a wonderful professing German girl. I lived life to the full, and that life, for me, was full of “all things bright and beautiful” because I was convinced that I was in fellowship with God's only true citizenry living in that present and very evil world below.

I fully believed that I was filling “the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of [spiritual] distance run,” and, if I could say it without sounding boastful or conceited, I did not *ever* feel weary in well doing, for I thought that I was really doing well.

And, then, in August 1969, I came home to Canada, but Canada, as I remembered it from a spiritual point of view, was no longer home to me. . .

I had forgotten that Canadians did not dare to drink a glass of wine with their dinners. I had forgotten that Canadians wouldn't think of replacing grape juice with “the real stuff” when they “took communion” in their Sunday morning meetings. I had forgotten that it was a sin for Canadians to have, and to listen to, a radio in their homes. I had forgotten that Canadian workers “closed down” for up to three months in some cases while they went off to prepare for conventions and then take a holiday afterwards. I had forgotten that Canadian—and American—workers, when they went abroad to preach, left their inhibitions—and prohibitions—behind them in North America and had a bottle or two of beer “for their stomachs' [sakes] and their oft infirmities” when they were running around Europe “[becoming] all things to all men [or women] if by any means they could save some”—and, I might add, “doing, when in [Europe], as the [Europeans] do.”

I had forgotten a lot of things, hadn't I?

When I tried to explain to the George Poole's of the world all the things I “had forgotten” and a few things that I had never really known or, perhaps, some things I had come to understand, I was told with no “uncertain sound” that my salvation depended on the opinions of George Walker or Andrew Abernathy or Arnold Brown or Jack Price or Eldon Tenniswood or. . . well, you get the picture.

It became increasingly difficult for me to grasp why so much of what I had always thought of as TRUTH was really a whole lot of worker-concocted jargon or “commandments of men,” as Jesus called it, that was being taught “for doctrine” in order that the cult could be protected from scrutiny which it could so ill afford from the “outside,” as well as some criticism from those of us on the inside who had expanded our horizons and had begun to see the “loopholes” about which I have already written rather extensively.

Such realizations began very subtly in my case, and they took a long time to materialize and develop. Had proper and honest answers been given to me in response to my very legitimate and caring queries, I believe I could have been quite satisfied with some—indeed, most—aspects of the “fellowship” which I had come to enjoy, appreciate and even love—especially when I could sit down with others of like inquiring minds, converse openly, and discuss the real fundamental elements of the hope we held for our eternal well-being.

Occasionally I found someone with whom I could enjoy that kind of frank exchange, but I soon discovered that most people were terrified that the workers would find out about their doubts and wonderings, and that they would be accused, as I soon was, of trying to undermine their authority and destroy the very fabric of the faith which we were always told had come to us undiluted and oh! so pure straight out of the last verse of “The Revelation of St. John the Divine.”

But such answers and such honesty were not, and could not be, forthcoming from people who were, themselves, either ignorant of the “reason of the hope that was within them” or who had been trained and admonished by their “bosses in the Way” to play dumb if they wanted to “keep their jobs” and avoid being forced to return unprepared to the “dog-eat-dog world” which they had left behind and with which they had lost all realistic contact several years before.

I have always been told by people with more wisdom than I have that it is far easier to catch flies with sugar than with vinegar. Personally, I believe honey works even better! Since neither sugar nor honey was ever used on me, I assure you that the spoonful[s] of vinegar which I was served on many occasions did nothing to convince me that those who were force-feeding me and trying to justify the principles I had always espoused with such zeal and so vigorously were anything more than “sounding brass or. . . tinkling cymbals” with not so much as a millilitre of *agape* to make the medicine go down.

It is small wonder, then, that I was so ill at ease now that I had come home again after a three-year “love-in” abroad with “the saints and servants” who were serving the same God I was brought up with but a God, nevertheless, who, obviously, had given completely different guidelines to different messengers in different lands.

After all, had I not sat around tables in France, in Italy, or in Germany and Greece while the workers uncorked the bottles of wine and, after helping themselves to a sip or two, passed them around in order that the rest of us could fill our goblets as well?

I had.

Had I not visited homes all over Western Europe where radios were as much a part of the furniture as was the kitchen stove?

I had.

Had I not “broken bread” in many a home on Sunday morning where the real fermented juice of the grape was the only suitable libation?

I had.

Had I not attended conventions that were held in school gymnasias or in resort hotels that were closed to the general public for the season and which required very little time and energy to “make ready” for the annual festival?

I had.

Had I not spent many hours, many days, and, yes, even many weekends in the company of many of the workers from Germany to Scandinavia to Greece to Italy to Spain to Switzerland and to France where I was always treated with love and respect and where I felt at one with them as they seemed to feel with me?

I had.

Had I not taken a Canadian brother worker to visit a family on the air base so that he could tell them of “the true way of God and his plan of salvation”?

I had.

Had I not found it unbelievable that, when the poor woman of the house asked him where she could go to learn more about “this Way,” he told her *he did not know because he and the other “messengers” worked only among the native German population?*

I had.

Had I not, even after that nonsensical response, still stuck my neck out even farther and tried to arrange—albeit unsuccessfully—for the use of my classroom as a site to hold some gospel meetings where other “Base People” might come to listen and to learn about God’s plan of salvation?

I had.

Had I not spent almost eighteen hours one day searching along with some other friends as well as the German *Polizei* and Canadian Military Police for that same brother worker who had disappeared one evening from my apartment, only to find him totally inebriated in a local *Gasthaus* in the company of some “worldly” Canadians whom he’d met earlier in the week in another town and with whom had arranged his clandestine rendezvous?

I had.

Had I not suffered unbelievable embarrassment and humiliation in front of my landlord and his wife as well as before my students and fellow-teachers on the base when the word got around that it was *my* “minister” who had caused me to lose a day of school and who was finally rounded up and taken as a common drunk to the local Station House where he received, in my presence, a sound tongue lashing from the Chief of Police for his disgusting dalliance with destiny that caused such an extensive search and widespread concern all over the country for either him or his missing body?

I had.

“Stop worrying about him,” telephoned Anna Maerkie, a “wise” old sister worker, when she got wind of the hunt. “He has often disappeared like this before when his headaches get the best of him, but he has always come back after a day or so.” (No doubt he would have turned up as innocent as a newborn baby this time as well if he had not chosen the “worrying-est” Canadian living abroad to disappear on—as well as absconding with his complete set of house and car keys!)

Was I not ill at ease because the workers and most of the friends “from Moncton to North Bay”—or so I was eventually told—considered me a rebel with or without a cause and did not want me to be around them lest my attitude would tarnish their “little ones” and cause them to “go astray”?

I was, indeed!

Having never considered myself more powerful than the God of Heaven or his only begotten son, and thinking that those who fostered such great fear of my influence must surely not be placing much faith in the Holy Trinity or in the infallibility of the Truth they espoused, I still attempted for almost ten years to “give it the old college try” and to make a successful go of things.

I pretended I was not the least bit offended when some of the workers, like young David Constable, showed open hostility toward me at Almonte convention by intruding upon me and treating me in a most vicious and hateful manner at the back of my station wagon literally breaking up a visit I was having with a group of people whom I had known for years.

I tried very hard wherever I went to ignore the barbs and the snide glances from some of the friends and many of the workers because I did not have a wife in tow and, therefore, according to rumour, must surely be perverted in some form or other. As well as being accused of possessing the wrong sexual orientation, it was also alleged that I was trying to break up the marriage of a brother of one of the sister workers. (If they couldn't get me one way, they would try another one!)

I found it a difficult pill to swallow when people, with whom I could sit down in private and have wonderfully explicit discussions about our belief system, would change their tune and deny their own echo as soon as they got into the presence of someone "in authority" or one whom they wished to impress with their great depth of understanding and spirituality.

I steeled myself against abject disappointment when the workers would neither visit me in my very comfortable home nor honour me with a quick telephone call to let me know they knew I existed even if they couldn't drop 'round. I was not supposed to notice or care that my car was no longer one they would borrow to go on their meanderings around their field or anywhere else that the spirit always seemed to be directing them to go.

I tried moving to a different part of Canada and, for two years, took up residence in a little out-of-the-way town on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. I was almost sixty miles from the closest Sunday morning meeting, and I made the trip over very beautiful, very mountainous, and somewhat treacherous terrain almost every week-end. At first I would linger until after the gospel meeting at three o'clock in the afternoon before heading home again.

One Sunday I was invited to stay for lunch at the "meeting home," and, while the meal was being prepared, I was sitting with the man of the house and the two brother workers who were preaching in that area when, low and behold, the elder "servant of the Lord" picked up his bible bag and, from a well-established file inside, he took out a written text of his afternoon sermon and began to rework it in front of my very eyes. Even though I had often surmised that he was reading his inspired messages, I could still hardly believe what I was seeing. Here was another childhood myth going up in smoke, for, all my life, I was told that we were all supposed to go into meeting prepared to let God's spirit flow through us to others and giving us the words to say when it was time to say them.

That was the last Sunday that I lingered in Campbell River for the afternoon service.

I was well aware of my semi-isolated location, and, although "the boys" had declined my invitations to visit me, I invited them to join me for lunch in a restaurant one Sunday after the morning fellowship meeting. I found the visit completely unsatisfactory and spiritually unprofitable, and, when I later discovered that they had been bypassing me and traveling two hundred kilometres beyond my location to visit some other friends in Port Hardy, I decided I had better ways of spending my money than wasting it on people who did not consider me worthy of even a social call for tea and crumpets.

I returned to Ottawa in 1977 after my absence and took up pretty much where I had left off two years before. But the noose was getting tighter, and I could feel my spiritual life in the cult ebbing ever away. I no longer found any thrill in going to church, and the idea of going to Special Meetings and conventions became a real burden, indeed. The only tolerable feature in any part of it was my friendship with some of the people who seemed to accept me with all my warts and blemishes and in whom I could confide my inner fears and frustrations.

But, in 1981, after four more years of struggle and personal turmoil within, I could no longer stand the feeling of my own hypocrisy, and I decided to "call it quits." I have never had one day of regret over leaving, and, all my life, I never felt as free as I did that first Sunday morning the week after I declared my intentions to cut the moorings and move on.

Now I did not care about the workers' visits and telephone calls because I was neither anticipating them nor desiring them.

I was free.

Now I did not need to "feel as if I had the 'flu" in order to be excused from going to meeting on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings.

I was free.

Now I did not need to "go crawling" with my head bowed into a crowd of self-righteous "do-gooders" wondering, all the while, which ones of them had been talking and spreading all manner of evil and ill-will about me "from Moncton, New Brunswick to North Bay, Ontario."

I was free.

Now I did not have to worry about what George Walker thought or what insults Andrew Abernathy and John Richards were substituting for sermons when they addressed the "congregations of God's people."

I was free.

Now I did not need to feel guilty when I listened to my radio either at home or in the car.

I was free.

Now I could go out, conscience-free, and buy myself a television, and I could put it anywhere I wanted it to be in my home and look at it whenever I wished to.

I was free.

I could now go on a trip wherever I wanted to without first having to clear it with the workers back here or finding out where all Sunday and Wednesday meetings were throughout my journey from beginning to end.

I was free.

There was no need now for me to attend every gospel meeting everywhere within an eighty-kilometre range or more or feel guilty because I was not trying to drag some poor “unsaved” colleague or other acquaintance along with me to sit under the “spell-binding messages” that usually had very little to do with either the gospel story or God’s plan of salvation through the shed blood of the Lamb of God.

I was free.

If I wanted to, I could now go out for a meal and join my companion(s)—as I had done as a professing person in Europe—in a glass of wine, or I could go to the store and purchase a bottle of the bubbly to take home with me feeling completely unabashed and without fear of sin and eternal punishment.

I was free.

If I had been in a way of worship that had truly upheld Jesus as its example as well as its founder, I would have learned many years earlier the meaning of the words that were cited in Matthew 11:29 and 30: “Bend your necks to my yoke, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; And your souls will find relief. For my yoke is good to bear, my load is light.”

I believe Peter delivered just about the same message that is recorded in Acts 15:10 when he said, “Then why do you now provoke God by laying on the shoulders of these converts a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear?” (NEV)

“That form of worship” would have made me free while I was yet inside and not after I left it. We read in Malachi 2:6 that “the law of truth was in [Jesus’] mouth,” so it isn’t any surprise, then, that Jesus, himself, in speaking to the Jews that had come to recognize him for who and what he was, said in John 8:32, “know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (KJV)

Instead of being in “that form of worship,” however, I was in the Two-by-Two cult that only purported to follow the teachings and doctrine of Christ while, in every instance from its inception to the present day, it was organized and arranged to promote the WORKERS’ MANIFESTO which kept changing from year to year, from area to area, and even from worker to worker.

The only part of the cult that has always remained constant and static is summed up rather adequately, I believe, in Matthew 23:3–5 when Jesus was describing some aspects of the scribes and Pharisees who, in their day and time, were sure they had a handle on what the Son of God would be like when he appeared:

“. . . for they say one thing and do another. They make up heavy packs and pile them on men’s shoulders, but will not raise a finger to lift the load themselves. Whatever they do is done for show. . . .” (NEV)

When you read that passage, do you sense much of that freedom which Jesus said we would experience when we would get to know the truth? I wonder, also, just how many of us can read a worker or two into those words of Jesus Christ!

I had lost all sense of freedom and every visage—every vestige—of truth and fellowship. I was reduced to attending meeting just because I thought I was expected to do so and, perhaps—oh, more is the pity!—because I had no conception, outside the cult, of God, of prayer, of faith, or of eternity and eternal life.

I arose one morning in February, 1981, on the first day of the week and, after eating breakfast, I went back to my bedroom to read and pray and meditate just as I had done just about every Sunday for almost thirty-five years. At nine forty-five I got into my car and headed off to the home of Hans Mestern. I arrived there at ten fifteen, parked, and went inside to my usual chair where I sat quietly reading my Bible and thinking about what my testimony would be.

The “service” began at ten thirty.

Everything proceeded normally and according to the laws set down by at least two generations of workers. I prayed my audible prayer, I took my turn in delivering a short testimony, and, before the meeting ended, I broke bread and partook of the cup. After the last hymn was sung, everyone arose to leave, and I shook hands with some and spoke briefly to others. And, as I went out the door and headed to my car, I had not one doubt in the world that, never again, would I ever set foot inside another fellowship meeting.

So far I never have.

That evening I attended the gospel meeting and discovered that George Poole had appointed another person in my stead to play the piano for the hymn singing. It was an omen. No longer was I useful even in that part of the routine. I was of no further value to anyone; my usefulness had come to an end, and I knew, just as I had known in the morning, that this would be my last attendance at any gospel meeting.

So far it has been.

Life went on for me with its usual ups and downs after I left the cult, and I have always been surprised that at no time did I ever experience any gaps in my weekly routine. I can honestly say that I never once felt time hanging on my hands on Sunday mornings or

Wednesday evenings or on any other days when I would have been attending the gospel meetings which the workers always seemed obliged to have, even if there was not one single “outsider” to preach to.

I experienced an immediate sense of ex-communication, however, once I withdrew from the group. In the first seven years I had a few visits from two or three different workers, one of them being my former companion, Willie Bryant. My Sunday morning “bishop” made it quite clear that he wanted no further contact with me or between me and his family, but the Wednesday evening “deacon” and his wife, being less harsh in their judgment, honoured me by dropping in one Sunday evening when they had no gospel meeting to attend. Murdo MacLeod, my ally and hero from that first mission in Leaskdale, now no longer in the work, himself, dropped in one July evening for a cup of tea after Almonte convention was over. Not one word was uttered about my “pagan state,” and I was never asked by him or anyone else for that matter about “who [had] bewitched [me] that [I was no longer obeying] ‘the truth.’”

As I said before, “No one asked me for no one ever seemed to care.”

On July 11, 1988, at twelve-thirty in the afternoon, my life as I had always known and lived it changed completely and forever. At a well-known and terribly busy intersection not five miles from my front door a car came barrelling through a red light, broadsided my little station wagon and threw it up into the air and over the dividing median into the side of another car waiting for the light to change. It landed on its roof, and there I stayed in agonizing pain until the Jaws of Life finally pried me loose.

My injuries were too numerous to list here, but the most serious was a tear in my aorta which required rather extensive surgery to repair, and which has left me in a wheelchair for the rest of my time here on planet earth.

I spent the following eleven months in the hospital, and, at the end of that period, I had to sell my home where steps and terraces were part of the landscape and move to an apartment which is still, even after all these years, “the place I had to come to when I couldn’t go home again.”

“ . . . When saw we thee sick. . . and came unto thee?”

From the day following my accident and for several months thereafter, former students from that wonderful class of which I spoke earlier bombarded me with visits and seemed not to be able to do enough to help me through the very rough patches. Students from classes that I had been teaching in the years just prior to my mishap came in groups, as well as singly, to visit me in the hospital. Many teachers from the school I was in came to offer assistance—some to help me do therapy, some to massage my almost lifeless legs and feet, some to see if they could tend my empty home, and many just to bring me a muffin or a bagel. Some came to sit and talk and others were more than willing to take me out in my wheel chair to feel the fresh air and sunshine.

“ . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

During my surgery, two of my colleagues sat all night long in the waiting lounge until the doctor came to tell them that I was back in the Intensive Care Unit.

“ . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

One year later, a former student who owns a car dealership in Alberta two thousand miles away came to Ottawa to help me find a suitable car so that I could drive again. In his pocket he had a company cheque for sixteen thousand dollars to give to me just in case I could not afford a vehicle at that time. After locating an automobile for me, he did not stop until he was sure that it was fitted out with all the necessary hand controls, that it was properly insured, and that the license plates were purchased and put in place.

“ . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

For the *first three years* after I left the hospital, one of my fellow-teachers came *every single week-end*, either to take me out to shop, or to find out if he could bring back anything from the store for me.

“ . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

“ . . . When saw we thee sick. and did not minister unto thee?”

In all this space of time—now closing in on ten years—I have never been offered any help of any kind or as much as a simple glass of water from any of the local members of the now infamous Two-by-Two cult.

“ . . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”

However, I must be fair.

Two older cousins—both, incidentally, members of the cult— have been very attentive to my needs from the outset until the present day; a man I once considered my best friend left his wife and family in holiday limbo and flew from British Columbia to spend a few

days with me; and four or five of the “locals” did make very perfunctory calls when I was first hospitalized. But if I had had to depend on any on-going support from any of them, I would be in quite a sad state today, I must say.

One couple dropped in one day to see me in my apartment. When they were leaving, I asked them if they would kindly post a letter for me as I found it quite impossible to reach the mailbox from my car.

“We find it hard to stop at one of those boxes, too,” they replied. *And they refused to post my letter for me.*

“. . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”

I had known Cornelius Jaenen for many years, and, for several of those years, I attended meetings in his home both on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Before he came to Ottawa to live, he occasionally would come as a guest professor to lecture at one of our local universities. Very often I would pick him up at his rooming house and transport him to and from meetings. Many evenings we sat and talked many hours about the loopholes and regional inequalities that exist in the Two-by-Two “Way.”

When I lived in Germany, he was on a sabbatical leave and was in France doing research on one of his many historical books. I drove about eight hundred kilometres to Paris so that I could spend a weekend with him and become edified by his added wisdom, knowledge, and superior spirituality.

He now lives about thirty kilometres from my apartment, but, during my year in the hospital and in all the years since I have come “home,” he has not called me on the telephone, and he has neither dropped me a note in the mail nor offered to “pop” in for a visit or to see how things are going.

“. . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”

One Sunday after one of their meetings, one of the families whom I have known for many, many years offered to drive my two elderly cousins to my apartment since they had to pass right by my door on their way home anyway, and it saved my relatives from having to take public transit. I suppose the friends in question thought it would look a little too cold if they just dropped my guests off without coming in to say “Hello” to me as well.

After the initial greeting and forced pleasantries there wasn’t much more to talk about, so they decided they were in a terrible hurry to get home. As they left, the wife, looking briefly around my living room, said, “Well, it appears as if you have everything under control here, and there’s nothing we could do for you, I’m sure.”

“No,” I replied, trying to keep the sarcasm out of my voice, “I get along pretty well, thank you.”

There was nothing they could see to do!

She did not know how hard it is to go shopping and carry the packages home on one’s knee. She could never realize the frustration of trying to cook a meal or make a pot of coffee when so much of one’s counter space and cupboards are somewhat out of one’s reach. How could she know what I had gone through and who all, of my “worldly and sin-ridden” friends, had come to my aid and made my place appear as if “everything [were] under control”? I’m sure it never crossed her mind to wonder how I had got all my moving boxes unpacked, and how my cupboards and closets had got filled with dishes, towels, and clothes. And, what is more important than even all those inconveniences, what could she feel of my fear in trying to get out of my car in winter time without slipping and falling on the ice or of my frustrations in trying to propel my wheelchair through a parking lot covered with newly-fallen snow?

There was nothing they could see to do!

“. . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”

I want to assure the entire universe that it was my “worldly” friends that “came to [me] and bound up my wounds,” as it were, while the “priest and the Levite”—or the Two-by-Two’s, if you will—“passed by on the other side.”

That teacher who came every day to the hospital and who looked in on me for three years thereafter was not “professing,” but he had—and still has—more of the spirit of true Christianity in his little toe than does the entire Two-by-Two population in the city of Ottawa and all the workers I have known in most of North America. He literally held me together, body, soul, and spirit, and, when I did not know how I would ever again be able to face that “walking world” outside my window, he quietly showed me how I could gradually expand my new horizons and learn to adapt to the limitations that fate had suddenly thrust upon me.

“. . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

That former student who came with a cashier’s cheque in his wallet, ready to buy me a car, had never heard—or heard of—a “worker,” or sat in a gospel meeting, or helped in the cook house at a convention. He didn’t know it was supposed to be a sin to go to a movie or a dance, or that a radio and a television in his home might lead him to a lost eternity.

But he did know what it meant to be a superbly kind and caring young man, and he could give lessons to almost any Two-by-Two I know on how to be not only a good neighbour, but also a true and genuine Christian, as well.

“. . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Those friends who rushed to my bedside in the emergency ward, those who sat awake all night long to learn the result of my heart surgery, and those who came evening after evening to my hospital room to massage my legs back to some semblance of their former natural condition did not do so because they thought that George Poole or Carson Cowan would like them better if they did so and would, ultimately, visit them more often.

They had not spent many Sundays travelling many miles to attend Special Meetings. They were not aware that long skirts, long hair, and long faces were a woman's ticket to the Kingdom of Heaven, but they were up to date on what qualifications were needed to make them good, empathetic human beings with compassion and understanding for another soul in need.

“. . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

There is a very “worldly” song—the kind, you'll remember, that we were neither to listen to nor sing— that contains the following words:

I've looked at clouds from both sides now,

From up and down,

And, yet, somehow,

I really don't know life at all.

Whenever I think of those words, I cannot help but think that my own situation of being in and out of “the Truth” as well as in and out of the Work could be described in somewhat the same vein.

I always thought that when I professed, I would become the perfect child. I soon discovered I was wrong, but surely, I hypothesized, I'll be “good” when I “grow up.”

Nope! It didn't happen.

Perhaps, then, when I got into the Work, I'd be closer to God, and, in that way, it would be much easier to live a sin-free life and I would be a much better Christian.

H-m-m-m! It wasn't easier for me.

I surely was no better off than I had ever been in any other context of life. Perhaps it would be easier for me to be a better Christian “in the home life,” I thought, since I had seen the work “from both sides now” and, even if not “from up and down,” at least from in and out.

For me, however, such perfection and such idealism were not to be found, and it took me almost forty years to come to that conclusion. And even *then*, the true reality of the reasons why I always felt so lacking in goodness and so inadequate in any measure of perfection did not come until many years after-I had extricated myself from the web that the workers had woven to entrap and hold hostage whole generations of innocent seekers of truth the world over.

For, you see. . .

. . . I had been brought up believing that the workers were the “alpha and omega” of God's plan of salvation.

. . . I had, as I have already written, no sense of God, of truth, of prayer, or of eternal life outside the regime of the workers and their control over me.

. . . it really didn't matter a whole lot to me that Jesus Christ died for my sins or that he had “rent in twain” the temple's veil, because the workers told me where I could go, whom I could go with, and what I should do to entertain myself.

. . . it was of very little import to me that our neighbours, friends, and some relatives went to “their church” and talked of God and Jesus and forgiveness of sins because they were wrong anyway if they didn't profess through our workers who were preaching “two-by-two,” and if they didn't wear the right clothes and worship “in a man's home” at least twice a week.

. . . it was not supposed to be such a big deal that sister workers had babies during the summer “furlough” and went back out preaching in the fall because all workers were the bosses, and we had to obey them, no matter what, if we wanted to be allowed to “continue in the faith,” break bread, and take part in meetings.

. . . when workers disagreed with each other and allowed their animosity to be seen and felt in the home, I still never questioned the foundation of my faith because those same workers were telling me that the truth they were preaching—when they weren't fighting—was “from God the Father, of God the Father, and by God the Father,” and not a single, thinking soul among us was to question one iota of that premise.

. . . we were not to take any offence when a downright rude, old worker like George Semple from New Brunswick would come into our homes and grumble—as he did in my aunt's house in Maine—about the type of food he was offered, instead of obeying the direction recorded in Luke 10:8 when Jesus told his disciples very plainly to “eat such things as [were] set before [them].”

. . . it was supposed to be quite acceptable for the workers in places like Haiti to set up their housekeeping “batches” and establish them as *church buildings* where the new converts could come to the fellowship meetings on Sunday mornings and the bible studies

on Wednesday evenings—all the while not feeling or, perhaps, not even understanding—that they were blatantly denying their own interpretation of the scriptures which they seemed so intent on using as a basis for their calling in the first place.

. . . no one was supposed to be anything but thankful for the privilege when one of the workers, Jimmy Patrick, while traveling between Almonte, Ontario and North Hatley, Quebec with two car loads of “friends” totalling thirteen persons in all, dropped in, unexpected and unannounced, on my aging and unwell grandmother who, luckily for her, at least, was visiting that day with my mother who, ultimately, had the dubious honour of rustling up a full-course meal for everyone before they went on their way rejoicing.

. . . the thought never once entered my mind about what was happening to all the “little ones”—as well as the “twos,” the “fives,” the “tens,” the “twenties”, and the “hundreds”—that were being “brought to Jesus” through the greedy grasps of those pusillanimous dawdlers that we called workers until, one day, I began hearing tales of secret hoards of cash hidden away by the elite of the cult’s clergy, as well as bank accounts deceitfully held by the more privileged members of its laity.

. . . the sad and painful truth is that in all the forty-seven years that I was connected to the “movement” I really *didn’t* “know, at all” what life—either inside it or outside it—was all about.

But life really does go on in one way or another, and I am living proof of that timeworn truism. The friends I have made in “the world” have more than made up for the shallow associates that I so long mistook for allies in “the Way,” and the very, very few of those who are yet inside that have supported, *and* kept in touch with me, are the way they are not because they are professing Two-by-Two’s but because they are the real children of God, and, as such, are citizens of the universe.

Oh, yes, World, I’m really back!

Go to [Chapter 10](#)