

The Church With No Name

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The Church With No Name: Known as the Cooneyites, Two by Twos... By Lynn Cooper

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BACK COVER

About the author: Lynn Cooper was a third-generation member of this group. She left at the age of thirty following a life-changing experience of coming to know Jesus Christ as her personal Saviour, meeting Christians outside the group, and finding out that the group was started by men and not Jesus Christ as she had been taught.

"Lynn describes from her own personal experience life under bondage of this false gospel. Not leaving the reader without hope, she very clearly points the way ahead to complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way to God and eternal life with Him." David Billings (former member, third generation, spent 32 years in this group).

"Only someone raised in this group could have written such a clear and concise summary of the main teachings and attitudes of this little-known sect." Ian Carlson (40 years in this sect)

"A well-written book which should leave the reader in no doubt that this sect started around 1900 and is not, as often claimed, a continuation of the early church." C.M. & S.O. McConnell (former members, spent 50 years in this group).

INTRODUCTION

I was brought up in a sect which had no name. When I was asked what church I went to I would reply as we had been taught that we were just a group of Christians who met in homes and whose preachers went out Two by Two like they did in the Bible. Many people

would then identify us as being the Cooneyites which we in turn would be quick to deny. When asked who our founder was, we would reply, "Jesus." When asked where our headquarters were, we would reply, "in heaven". Although most had never heard of this group, the inquirer was left with the impression that this was a worldwide movement that had begun with Jesus and had been in existence ever since His day. We claimed to have been meeting in homes like we do today ever since the time of Jesus and that every church except ours was started by 'man'.

People in this group keep quietly to themselves and Christians who have tried to communicate their Christian faith with them have been met with a lack of response. Members are encouraged not to 'cast their pearls before swine' (see Matthew 7:6) by sharing their faith with others but are told to ask the inquirer to attend their meetings to learn more. The leaders or ministers of the group whom they call 'preachers' or 'workers', also avoid answering questions. Most members and leaders alike know very little of their Bible apart from what they use in an attempt to back up their ministry. These Scriptures are often distorted and taken out of context.

The fundamental teachings or doctrines of this group are; the taking of no name, sending out their 'preachers' or 'workers' in twos, by 'faith', and the church in the home. They teach that Jesus came to earth to set up an earthly ministry as stated in Matthew 10 which they claim is continuing through them. Because of this they believe that it is the proof that they are the true church. They claim that every other church (beginning with the Catholic Church) is a break away from them – the original church. They refer to themselves as 'the Truth' and 'the Way' commonly preaching that "Jesus is the way, so we are the way." I would like to ask, did Jesus come to set up 'a way' or was He 'the Way'? Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me" (John 14:6).

This group does not print any literature on what it teaches and members are warned not to let their sermon notes or even hymn books get into the hands of non-members. The 'workers' tell their converts that they are the only ones who preach the 'truth' and that ministers from other churches would love to get their hands on their notes so that they can preach from them. As we will see, their teachings are in fact a long way from the truth and this can be seen more as an attempt to hide what they preach from those outside the group. As a result several people, usually after they have left the group have attempted to put the teachings and history of the group into print. Although no one within the group has honestly tried to dispute the facts, they have responded by claiming that what has been written about them is all lies and that people who write such things have a 'bitter spirit' and in some cases are even deranged.

Although the group claims to have never changed over the years and to be the same the world over, changes have taken place within the group and peoples' experiences of the group do vary depending on where they live and what 'workers' they have had in their area. Because of these differences it has been difficult for some to believe what has been written about them because they have no idea that such things have taken place in the group. If they find it hard to believe something then they dismiss the whole book as lies.

Frequently attacking and preaching against other churches, something which outsiders who attend their 'meetings' are quick to pick up on, like other groups that use similar tactics they feel threatened and claim that they are being persecuted by such exposure. Those in the group respond by saying that just as Jesus was despised and rejected they too choose to "suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25). They believe that such exposure or persecution only happens to 'true' Christians. Even so, having been kept in ignorance regarding their history and much of what takes place within the group, some have left after reading such books. This has caused those within the group to become closer, fearing that they too might be the next to deny 'the faith' quoting, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

Such an attempt to hide their teachings from those outside the group is not scriptural and can only be viewed with suspicion when real motives are exposed. If they believe it is the 'truth', then why are they trying to stop people telling it? The apostles recorded what they did and taught in writing for the world to read, so why do those in this group not want the world knowing about them and what they teach? Jesus said that He kept nothing hidden. He said, "I spake openly to the world... and in secret have I said nothing" (John 18:20).

REASONS FOR WRITING THIS BOOK

What I have written in this book has largely been the result of my own experience and the teachings I received growing up in the group. In other instances I have used historical records to support my statements. I was born into the group, 'professing'(1) at the age of fifteen and faithfully attending 'the meetings'(2) until I reached the age of thirty. My grandparents joined the group in the late 1920s and most of my immediate family still remain in it. Although some may experience being cut off from family after leaving the group, this has not been my experience nor has it been for many others who have left. However, many in the group avoid having contact with people who leave being told that "they had a wrong spirit", "got bitter", or "were never properly 'professing' in the first place." This is said of nearly everyone who leaves the group. Those who have gone to other churches and have tried to witness their newfound faith are said to have "gone religious", accused of wanting "an easy way to heaven", or "wanting God and the world too". They are accused of not being willing to pay the price. The price is self-denial, which is obeying without question the rules made by 'the workers'. In their eyes it is better to go out into 'the world' than to another church. It was over ten years after I left the group before I found out that there were others who had left and who had also become Christians. This was because of the fear and rumours that were told about those who had left which cut us off from having any contact with them.

My reasons for writing this book are threefold:

- The first is to inform the reader of the teachings of this group and to compare them with Scripture. Any group should be able to stand the test against Scripture. If it is 'truth' then it should be able to stand being questioned.

- The second is so that the reader may better be able to understand and minister to those in this group and help them understand what is behind the evasive answers they give.
- The third is to show those in this group 'the truth' about the group in which they have placed their faith.

I have quoted from the *King James Version* of the Bible because this is the only version that the group allowed while I was in the fellowship. I have only included what I believe, after thirty years in the group, are the basic teachings and doctrines of this group. In all the years I attended 'the meetings' (which was up to three times a week and a four-day convention once a year from a young age), I heard very little else preached. Scripture was usually taken and used to back up what has been discussed here. I refer the reader to a list of recommended readings at the end of this book for a fuller, more in-depth understanding of the teachings of this group. My desire is not to condemn these people but that they may come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to know who He is. Although, as I mentioned earlier, the Bible was written for all to read, those in this group are told that "...of making many books there is no end..." (Ecclesiastes 12:12), which they say means that people must not write Christian books, including books about them. Sadly this means that most in this group do not have the opportunity to read books such as this. Some preachers even go as far as to preach against reading anything apart from the newspaper. Televisions, stereos and radios were also forbidden.

Although members lead 'outsiders' to believe that this is a Christian church and as we shall see, unknown to its members is registered as such, it does not associate itself with Christendom nor does it call itself a Church. They claim that the Scripture which says "come out from among them and be ye separate... and touch not the unclean thing" (2 Corinthians 6:17), means that they must separate themselves from all other churches which they believe are false and of the devil, although they know almost nothing about what other churches believe. However, this verse is not talking about separating yourselves from other 'believers', (i.e. Christians), but from 'unbelievers' (see v14). They are taught that all other Christians are 'following the devil' and are to be avoided. Such tactics serve to isolate members from other Christians and helps to maintain a greater hold on their own people.

By now, you the reader may have noticed that this group does not use words like church or Christians. They do not use words like these except when talking to outsiders. Like many such groups they use a language all of their own. They talk about going to 'the meeting' rather than church, or 'professing' rather than becoming a Christian. This language which is only understood by its members serves to further separate them from other Christians. This gives them a feeling of oneness and separateness but are not words used in the Bible and an outsider listening to them would have little understanding of what they were talking about. Some in this group have gone as far as to say that this is 'speaking in tongues'. One of the first things I realised when I left the group was that they did not speak the language of the Bible. This was a revelation to me as I realised that words like 'professing' and 'meetings' were not in the Bible, whereas words such as 'Church' and 'Christian' used by traditional evangelical churches were. So, in order to help the reader identify more fully with this group I have used words familiar to the group in this book. A list of some of the more common words used by this group and their meanings are found at Appendix 1.

TAKING NO NAME

This group claims that it takes no name because "Jesus took no name" (His church I presume). They claim that they do not need a name as all other churches are a break away from them, the original church, and need a name to separate themselves from each other. However, in Scripture we see that John referred to the churches in the Book of Revelation as the "Church of Ephesus", the "Church in Sardis" and so on. As noted earlier, this group does not even refer to their gatherings as a church, but only as the 'meetings'.

Although those in this group are told that they have no name, they have in fact over the years registered under several different names. As early as 1914 the group registered with the British government for exemption from military service under the name of 'The Testimony of Jesus.'⁽³⁾ In 1942 the group registered as a church with the United States government using the name, 'Christian Conventions' and official letterheads were used bearing this name⁽⁴⁾. Yet other names were used for the group in New Zealand and Australia. Those registering for exemption from military service in these countries registered under the name 'Christian Assemblies'.⁽⁵⁾ Letterheads with both "Christian Assemblies of Australia and New Zealand"⁽⁶⁾ and "The United Christian Conventions of Australasia and New Zealand"⁽⁷⁾ have been used by the leaders of this group. In spite of using these different names which most in this group do not know about, those who do know still continue to say that the group needs and assumes no name because it is the 'true' church. Those in the group refer to it as 'the Truth', or 'the Way' when talking amongst themselves.

To outsiders this group is known as the Cooneyites after Eddie Cooney, one of their early preachers. Other names such as the "Go-preachers", the "Two by Twos" and so on, have also been attached to the group over the years. Although Cooney's name has been attached to the group he did not start it. It was started by William Irvine, a Scotsman, who joined the Faith Mission established by John Govan, in 1895. ⁽⁸⁾ In 1896, Irvine was sent to Ireland for the mission and began canvassing for converts of his own the following year. By 1900 he had gained enough supporters to break away from the mission which had been supporting him up until this time. ⁽⁹⁾ Cooney joined Irvine in 1901,⁽¹⁰⁾ who by this time had a number of followers.

Although those in this group deny excommunicating followers, preferring to say they were 'put out', Cooney (like Irvine who had been 'put out' in 1914,⁽¹¹⁾ was excommunicated with another eight 'workers' in 1928 by those who rose up after him. Those who maintained fellowship with him were also cut off from the original group.⁽¹²⁾

After expelling Cooney from the group they were then able to deny the name Cooneyite which had been attached to them and which has remained with them to this day. Most in the group know nothing about Cooney or the early pioneers of their group. To do so would

be to admit that the group was started by a man, something which 'the workers' have tried to deny by claiming direct apostolic descendant from the apostles.

After leaving the group and after years of denying the name Cooneyites, I was to find out that we were known as 'Cooneyites'. I was also to discover that outsiders knew more about aspects of the group, especially its history, than we who were in it did. In fact, we knew nothing about the group to which we belonged and grew up in. People usually do not find out about these things until they have left the group. Those who do question things usually have to keep quiet for fear of appearing to be doubting and 'submit', or end up having to leave the group.

After excommunicating the early 'workers' and threatening to do the same to those who helped them, those who remained began preaching that this group had no earthly founder, but that it had been started by Jesus. They preach that, "This way was in the heart of God from the beginning," or that it was "started on the shores of Galilee two thousand years ago," and that "Jesus walked this way." Many people joined the group believing this to be true as there was no evidence to prove otherwise.

Claims that it had been underground for 2,000 years because of persecution and has come to light in these 'last days' falls short in light of the historical evidence which proves it was started only one hundred years ago. Such evidence has rocked the foundations of this group. Some of those who have come from England and Ireland say they are well aware of the history of the group but avoid talking about it or are told not to.⁽¹³⁾ There is no doubt from historical evidence, newspaper articles, books and personal conversations that Irvine started this group.⁽¹⁴⁾ In the light of historical evidence presented to them, some of 'the workers' are now trying to deny that they had ever said that Jesus started it while sermon notes which they are even more desperate to keep hidden from outsiders give ample evidence of their claims.

However, they continue to ignore or deny any evidence presented to them about the group's beginning claiming that it is not important and that these men are to remain unknown and unrecognised like Jesus was while at the same time they elect 'head workers' who are revered, hold special meetings for others who come to their area and hold in high regard those through whom they 'professed'. If a visiting 'worker' comes from overseas, and especially if he or she is coloured, they are held in very high esteem. They claim that the 'workers' are the only 'true servants of God'.

Although a number of people have left the group after finding out that it was not started by Jesus, one must wonder how others can continue to follow those who are now denying what they have said, although they are still continuing to preach it, and who keep such important information from their followers. Many like myself were shattered to find out that the group was started by men, after being taught and believing that it was started by Jesus. I was shattered to find out that the very foundation upon which the group was based was a lie. Being unwilling to answer questions and making people feel that they are 'doubting' if they ask such questions serves to stop the leaders being answerable to the people. This is opposite to the ministry which Jesus proclaimed 'openly to the world'.

THE CHURCH IN THE HOME

The workers claim that true believers must meet in homes like they did in the New Testament, referring to the church that was in the home of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Corinthians 16:19). This group holds 'meetings' in the homes of its followers on a Sunday morning. These are called 'fellowship meetings' and only members are allowed to attend, in contrast to Gospel meetings or missions which are held in rented halls for the purpose of gaining converts. Communion, although they claim it is a Catholic word, and prefer to call it 'the emblems' (Catholics actually refer to it as Mass anyway), they believe can not be taken in any place except in the home of one of their members, although they have made exceptions to this in the past by having it at Conventions. They teach that church buildings are pagan and that "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:48; 17:24) while insisting that He must be worshiped in a home. They are in essence saying that He dwells in homes made by hands. The Bible says that Jesus and the apostles taught in the synagogues and temple. The New Testament Christians also went to worship there. What we see in the New Testament is that God does not dwell in a home or a building, but in the heart. The church is the body of Christ, not a building. The building is a place where believers meet. It is not a temple and God is not 'found' there. God can be worshiped anywhere, not just in a home.

Members are expected to attend every meeting which are usually held three times a week, a special meeting at least once a year and a four-day convention each year. If they are unable to attend a Sunday morning meeting they are required to ring up and say why. Sickness is the only reason allowed for non-attendance. If a person is away without a reasonable excuse for any length of time they are expected to 'profess' again. Traditional style hymns are sung and in the Sunday morning meeting each member is expected to give a testimony and pray. Only 'workers' are allowed to speak in Gospel meetings. However, this teaching has no scriptural basis as Acts 8 verse 4 tells us that the believers "...went every where preaching the word."

Prayers are formal and impersonal, thanking God for 'the way', His servants, and asking Him to help them remain faithful. Human needs are not mentioned, nor are prayers for the sick. Testimonies consist of a short word about something they have read from the Bible that week interpreting it to fit in with the group's doctrine. If a person has nothing to share there is usually a long silence at the end waiting for them to do so. When I started attending an evangelical church I was surprised to find that a Scripture would be read out and not need to be interpreted or reinterpreted to fit into any teaching but that it could speak for itself. "For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, ...and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12) There is power in the word of God. It does not have to be spiritualised then reinterpreted to fit in with any teaching, but it speaks for itself.

CONVENTIONS

Conventions are held every year on a member's farm and are probably the most important event of the year to those in the group. They claim that they do not believe in owning buildings, preferring instead to hire halls for public meetings, while at the same time

spend many thousands of dollars on buildings such as toilets, shower blocks, dining sheds, cool rooms and so on at their convention grounds just to be used for eight days or less a year. If a farm where a convention is held is to be sold, it is usually sold to another member because of the amount of money and work invested there. Some are also held in trust. These conventions, are not as unique to them as these people believe; instead they are patterned on the Keswick Conventions which Irvine and Cooney visited.(15)

It seems contradictory that they place so much importance on these conventions, so much so that they have chosen to register themselves under the name of Christian Conventions in places when there are no mention of them in the New Testament which they claim to be so strictly following. Claiming that we should not follow the Old Testament, they use the Old Testament to justify having conventions by claiming that there were large gatherings such as the Feast of Tabernacles that took place in the Old Testament.

THE MINISTRY

The ministry, which is the main teaching of this group is based on their founder, William Irvine's revelation of Matthew 10.(16) Here Jesus instructed the apostles to, "provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves..." (verse 9,10). Those in this group claim that this must be followed literally and preach that salvation can only be obtained through their homeless, itinerant preachers or 'workers' who have given up all to preach the gospel as they claim the apostles were instructed to in these verses. They claim that those who preach the gospel must give up all and go out two-by-two as Jesus sent the apostles (see Mark 6 and Luke 10). They teach that they are the only true servants of God because they observe these teachings and that all other churches, ministers and preachers are false because they do not. Salvation is only possible through hearing 'their' Gospel, through 'their workers'. It is dependent on 'finding' and 'following' them. Faith in Jesus alone is not enough.

Although Irvine and those who joined him preached in churches, today they completely isolate themselves from them. As children growing up in the group we were taught that 'the workers' were stopped from preaching in churches by ministers because they were preaching the 'truth' and the churches were not. They stated that because of this, people were leaving their churches to follow them. We would hear many stories like this which had been handed down over the years and been distorted and twisted to appear in their favour. Documented evidence shows on the other hand that they were condemning and preaching against the very churches and ministers that were allowing them to preach in their churches.(17) which was no doubt the reason why they were stopped preaching there.

They claim that the ministry must never change quoting "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). However, as we can see, they substitute the name of Jesus to mean their ministry. To them finding the right ministry and following what they believe is the most important thing necessary for salvation. Although they claim that their ministry has never changed since 'the beginning', we will see that it has had several major changes since it was started around 1897 and that it does not in many respects follow the New Testament ministry. We will also see that what Jesus taught in Matthew 10 was not to be continued for all time.

Although the Bible is clear that the body of Christ refers to all believers who follow Christ regardless of what their denomination is (see 1 Corinthians 3:4-11), this group claims that there is only one true church and that it is them (see Ephesians 4:5-6). Their followers testify about how they were seeking for the 'true way' and the 'true servants' and how they found them. They do not testify to having sought Jesus and of having found Him. 'The workers' require that people follow them, rather than pointing them to Jesus. People are required to believe in 'the workers' and place their faith in them. They preach that Jesus came to show us a ministry and not that He came to die for our sins (see 'What they do not preach'). They do not preach the finished work of the Cross (John 19:30) but claim that they are continuing His work. They believe that believing on Jesus as our Lord and Saviour is not enough and that God's grace gives us reason to sin (see Romans 6:1).

'The workers claim that one must follow them in order to be saved. They quote Romans 10:14, "...how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" This preacher they believe must be one who has given up all to preach the gospel and as they claim that they have done this refers only to them. They claim all other preachers of the gospel are false prophets regardless of whether they preach Jesus or not. To them, salvation is not in Jesus but in who brings the message. One must ask how could those who pioneered this group have been saved when they had been converted in 'churches' by who they preach are 'false prophets'? Irvine himself was converted by a Presbyterian evangelist.(18) Is it a case of the blind leading the blind? Apparently so, because if he and the others who started the group were not false prophets then why were they 'cut off' from the group by those who followed. Even missionaries who have given up all to preach the gospel are false prophets according to those in this group who claim that one must receive the gospel through them and be willing to become one of them. They claim that no one else has ever gone out by faith like they do even though Irvine had belonged to the 'Faith Mission'.

SELL ALL THOU HAST AND GIVE TO THE POOR

A rich man came to Jesus asking how he may have eternal life. Jesus told him "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor..." (Matthew 19:21). The man "went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (v 22). Jesus knew how much this man's possessions meant to him and that he loved them more than Him. However, those in this group use this verse to support their argument that one must sell all they have and give to the poor if they want to go preaching and all those who do not are false prophets, although Scripture does not support this. Peter owned a house (Matthew 8:14), and the Bible does not say that the apostles went and sold their fishing boats first. It says 'they straightway left their nets and followed him' (Matthew 4:20,22).

Although 'the workers' claim that those who go preaching must sell everything and give their money to the poor they do not do this. Instead, they are required to sell what they own and give their money to 'the ministry'. This practice began with Irvine who, although

he preached that one must sell all their possessions and give the money to the poor, never did. Instead, those who followed him were required to sell everything and give their money to him.(19) He died a wealthy man leaving a large sum of money in his will. (20) This practice of selling everything and giving the money to 'head workers' still continues today. They control large sums of money some of which is held in their names.(21)

'The workers' claim that the verse "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17) refers to them and not to their members. Selling everything and living by faith is only necessary if one wants to go preaching the Gospel, according to them. Giving up all is the first step in being willing to sacrifice one's life for the gospel and those who have done so are held in high esteem by their followers because of the sacrifice they have made. Some in the group believe that the preachers even have an 'angelic' look about them. Exalting themselves higher than their members, 'the workers' believe that the 'just' and the 'perfect' mentioned in these passages refers to them because of the sacrifice they have made. (22)

IT IS FINISHED

The Bible is clear that Matthew 10 was not to be continued for all time like these people claim it must. Jesus specifically referred to these verses when He was going to be crucified. In Luke 22:35-38 He said, "When I sent you without purse and scrip and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. And then he said to them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip... for the things concerning me have an end." It is clear from this that Jesus intended Matthew 10 to be followed only while He was on earth and not after He was crucified. Like most Scripture that does not fit in with their teachings some in the group have tried to explain these verses away by saying that Jesus knew the disciples had taken these things with them and that He was only trying to expose them when He said "It is enough" in verse 38. They do not believe that Jesus meant what He said in these verses totally ignoring them and claiming that Matthew 10 must still be followed today.

The seventy went out on a mission to prepare the way for Jesus to come and returned (Luke 10:1). They did not sell everything and give their money to the poor, or to the ministry like this group practices. Likewise, Jesus gave clear instructions in Matthew 10 that the apostles were only to go to the Jews and not the gentiles as well. However, most of those in this group do not notice these things because they do not fit into their teachings.

Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). In chapter seventeen, He clearly stated the purpose for which He came. It was to glorify the Father and not to set up a ministry like those in this group preach. His work on earth was finished at the Cross. It does not continue through 'the workers' like they claim. No 'man' can die on the Cross for the sins of the world, only Jesus could do that.

HEALING THE SICK

'The workers' claim that they are the true servants of God because they go out as Jesus instructed the apostles to do in Matthew 10 and the seventy in Luke 10. However, they do not heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out devils as Jesus instructed the apostles and the seventy to do in these chapters. Not only do they not do these things but ridicule anyone who attempts to. If they are following the apostles like they claim, then why are they not doing these things?

Although the Bible shows no difference between the miracles that Jesus performed and those that the apostles did, they claim that Jesus was the only one who performed miracles and that those done by the apostles were spiritual and not natural healings. They preach that when the apostles healed the blind, they healed their 'spiritual' eyes to see the truth of the gospel. When the deaf were healed, their ears were opened to hear the 'truth'; and the lame were made to walk 'spiritually'. They preach that when people believe that they are the true servants of God their eyes and ears have been opened to see the truth and their legs are healed when they begin to follow them. Here again this group has changed the Scriptures to try and fit it into what they preach. They claim that God is not interested in our natural bodies and fail to observe James 5:14-16 where the elders are told to pray for the sick. Those in Christian churches pray for one another and see the power of God at work. They believe in God for every area of their life, whereas those in this group feel that it is almost blasphemy to believe in a God who is interested in our natural circumstances. They believe that God is only interested in our spiritual well being. This is reflected in their prayers when they pray that God will keep them faithful rather than asking for guidance in other areas of their life. Verses like 'casting all your care upon him' (1 Peter 5:7), or 'take no thought for tomorrow' (Matthew 6:34), are foreign to those in this group who believe that these verses only refer to their 'workers'.

THE FAITH MINISTRY

'The workers' claim that they go out in faith, without a purse as Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 10. They identify themselves with Jesus who had 'no where to lay His head', claiming that they too, like Jesus, have no where to lay their heads (Matthew 8:20). Although Irvine and others controlled large sums of money, in the early days of this group many who joined Irvine did go out with just the clothes on their backs. Many neared starvation and some had to work to keep themselves alive.(23)

Although they give up the possibility of ever owning their own homes, today 'workers' are well provided for having food, homes and cars supplied for them by their supporters. They take money and suitcases with them and leave other clothes at home. According to Matthew 10, Jesus never carried a suitcase, took money, or drove a car like these 'workers' who move around from house to house living off their converts. Converts' homes are always available for them to stay in. They are provided with a car, petrol, food and kept free of charge. They do not go without, everything is supplied for them. They move around from house to house, something which Jesus instructed the apostles not to do (Matthew 10:11; Luke 10:7). They ring up followers and ask to have meals with them, yet condemn ministers whom they claim ask for money. Most of 'the workers' know where their next meal is coming from. All this is hardly 'going out in faith' like they claim they do.

Many 'workers' have cheque books in their own names and as stated earlier some have vast amounts of money. Those in the fellowship who know this still continue to claim that 'the workers' go out by faith and without money. When challenged about retaining his own purse while preaching that one should not, Irvine responded by saying that "there is no difference between a pocket and purse." (24) I have witnessed a 'worker' sign a cheque with his name on it in front of us for work my husband had done at convention. When later questioned about it another 'worker' claimed that it would have been his father's cheque book. This was not his father's cheque book, it had his name on it and he signed it in front of us. However, such an explanation quickly puts a stop to any further questions and satisfies those who do not want to be seen as doubting. Others talk about cheque books and money in bank accounts, (25) but it is denied with members being told that people who say such things 'have a bad spirit'. Not only do they preach one thing and do another, but they also attempt to deny and cover up what they do.

They claim that others have tried to 'go out by faith' but have not succeeded. I remember one preacher saying how he was out on the mission field while with a Christian organisation and late one night he got up to find his companion writing a letter to someone asking for money. He claimed that because of this he left the church and now as a preacher in this group he is truly living by faith. One must wonder if this was true or if it was a story that had been made up or handed down over the years and repeated like many are. They do not live by faith like they claim believing that God will provide for their needs. It is their members that provide and care for them in spite of them preaching otherwise. Going out by faith with just the clothes on their back did not work for this group even though they continue to claim that their ministry has never changed, it has with 'workers' being well cared for today. Irvine also did not go out by faith like he claimed but continued to receive financial support from the Faith Mission to which he belonged in the early days while seeking converts who could provide financially for him.

The story was told at Convention of one man who wanted to go into 'the work' but wanted to go for an overseas trip first. He was considered as putting pleasure before the gospel and I understand was not accepted into 'the work'. He was required to give the money to the work instead. Had he done so he may have had many world trips like some of them do. Within the first fourteen years of starting this group Irvine had had seven world trips. (26)

THE LOVE OF MONEY

'The workers' attack churches because they have collections and ministers are paid, saying that this is "the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). They use this to convince their members that the churches are evil while at the same time they live free of charge off their members and receive any money given to them. The wealth and material possessions that many of their members have and which is particularly noticeable by outsiders goes unmentioned by 'the workers'. They say that the 'left hand must not know what the right hand is doing' (Matthew 6:1-4) and that people can see what you are giving and make a big show of it when they place their money in the offering bag. This is not true, unlike money which is handed to 'the workers' when they come to visit or after a 'meeting', or a cheque which is sent to them through the mail which has the giver's name on it. People also know who 'the workers' are staying with and who is keeping them at any one time. Like most other things in this group there is no accountability for the money that is given to them, unlike churches who have an open book policy making themselves accountable to the congregation and government agencies. To expect such a thing from 'the workers' would be seen as doubting and lacking in faith. Would it be lacking faith in God or in 'the workers'?

They claim that "thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth the corn" (1 Corinthians 9:9) means that money and ministry are not to be mixed together and that "...the workman is worthy of his meat," (Matthew 10:10) means that it is scriptural to live off their members. They quote the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:11 where He said, "And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go hence." However, as noted earlier, 'the workers' do not stay in the same house but move around the houses of different members even though Jesus instructed the apostles not to.

Although those who go preaching are required to sell everything and give the money to 'the work', they preach that they do not want people's money, in contrast to ministers whom they claim are only after people's money quoting, "freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). They claim that this means to give the Gospel without charge, and not that they are to give money freely. All believers are to spread the Gospel freely and 'ministers' do not charge to hear the Gospel like this group claims. Condemning ministers for receiving an income from the money collected from their congregations, 'the workers' not only live off money collected from their members but also live off them free of charge. They claim that they never ask for money while at the same time they are heard preaching about how they are 'poor homeless preachers'. A subtle message which appeals to people's sympathy perhaps, as many of them are far from poor.

It appears that Paul did not live with 'the people', but took wages from them. He said, "they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14) which this group claims means living with converts. However, Paul said that he did this by taking wages from the people (2 Corinthians 11:8). He also said that "if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The preachers do not 'work'. Their lives consist of visiting their converts, not those in 'the world', and speaking in two meetings a week. They do not hold Bible studies or prayer meetings (although a Bible study does take place for a few weeks a year amongst members while the preachers are away preparing for convention), and they will not talk about the Bible or answer questions or pray with members when they visit them. There are those who feel that 'the workers' are a burden to them, being stuck with them until someone else volunteers to have them. Collections in a Christian church do not place a burden on any one person, each contributes what they can afford and what God places on their heart, and is scriptural.

The Bible says "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Collections appeared to be as much a part of the New Testament Church as it was in the Old. Concerning the collection for the saints, Paul told the people to lay aside that which "God hath

prospered..." on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2). This shows that he believed it was acceptable to have collections on a Sunday when they were gathered together. Because this is only recorded once, those in this group claim that it only happened once. Many things they follow do not appear in the Bible at all.

Their main argument against collections is when Jesus threw the money changers out of the temple. They claim that Jesus was against money being collected in the temple so threw the money changers out. Jesus did not throw them out because they were collecting money for the temple but because they were buying and selling, making money from those entering the temple (John 2 13:17). The profits made did not go to the temple but to the money changers. Jesus used the example of the poor woman who had given her last two mites as an example of giving (Luke 21:4). Throughout the New Testament nothing was ever said against collections, they were endorsed.

'The workers' preach that they do not want your money, in contrast to ministers in churches whom they claim are after your money. Such a message seems attractive and appeals to those who do not like parting with their money and who are striving to keep up with the 'Joneses'. Although there are some in this group who are content with what they have, most are striving to gain more and more material possessions never reaching a place where they are content with what they have. Those with 'money' appear to have the most influence within the group. Perhaps, as it has been said, that 'the workers' need the financial support that these people can give.

THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY

Do 'the workers' follow it?

Jesus commanded the apostles in Matthew 10:

- v 5 not go to the gentiles.
- v 6 but to the 'house of Israel'.
- v 8 heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils, freely give.
- v 9 provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purse.
- v 10 nor scrip, neither two coats, neither shoes, neither stave.
- v 11 when you go to a city, enquire who is worthy, abide there 'till ye go hence.'

Jesus commanded the seventy in Luke 10 to:

- v 1 Go Two by Two.
- v 4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes.
- v 7 and in the same house remain eating and drinking. Go not from house to house.
- v 9 heal the sick.

The 'workers' go to the gentiles, take money in their purse, take changes of clothes, take shoes. They give the Gospel freely, but not money. They do not heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers or cast out devils. Jesus did not call women into the ministry. 'The workers' do not really enquire 'who is worthy' but are given the address of a member to stay with. They move around from house to house. They only observe going out Two by Two. However, there are many references to the apostles going alone or in groups of two, three, and even up to eight. (28)

Jesus never told the apostles:

- * not to marry.
 - * to sell their fishing boats.
 - * to sell their houses.
 - * to give all their money to 'the ministry'.
- but 'the workers' make these a requirement to preach the Gospel.

Jesus told the apostles to:

Luke 22 v 36 take purse, take scrip, buy a sword.

Why?

"For the things concerning me have an end."

Although they do not follow Matthew and Luke 10, they continue to preach them as a requirement for the ministry, ignoring this passage.

Outsiders observe a double standard by those who hear humbleness preached on a Sunday but whose members spend the rest of the week striving for wealth and material possessions. They are not allowed to own a television set because 'the workers' say it is 'worldly', yet they can have practically anything else that money can buy. They are very far from being humble. They claim that other Christians want the world and God too because they own a television or women wear makeup while they do not, while they see no problem with accumulating wealth and material possessions. Passages which tell us to be content with what we have (Hebrews 13:5), or believing that God will supply all our needs (Philippians 1:19) are foreign to those who believe that these passages only refer to those who preach the gospel. They obviously place their faith in a different God than their 'workers'. I am not saying that having money is wrong, but they claim to not be of 'this world' when in fact they are very much 'of this world'.

Such striving for wealth and material possessions, which is apparent amongst many of those in this group can only be seen as an attempt to fill the void in their lives which has come about through having to be 'different' and 'separate' from others around them. Money can never satisfy the emptiness which only God can fill. Jesus said, "...for a man's life consisteth not in abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:18); and to the man who pulled down his barns to build greater, He said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then who shall these things be" (v 20).

When I left the group I was impressed with the amount of giving by those in Christian churches who would have found it far easier to keep their money to build 'flashier' houses for themselves rather than to give it for the 'extension of God's Kingdom'. Giving money away is definitely not appealing to the flesh. "The love of money..." (1 Timothy 6:10) does not refer to collections in churches, but our attitude towards money and material possessions. 'The workers' say, "you cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24) and refer to those Christian churches, rather than looking at their own congregation. Attacking churches and ministers for having collections is just another tactic used to isolate their members from Christians and the churches which they attend.

Although they claim that 'their way', meaning their group, is perfect, it is not uncommon to hear a 'worker' advising members in a sermon at Convention not to do business with each other because of bad business dealings. It has been necessary at times to divide up 'meetings' in order to separate people who have ripped each other off financially. Most people are not even aware as to why they are being separated. This has happened in at least one of the meetings I attended. This practice is different from other Christians who are encouraged to do business with each other. One would expect Christians to be honest in business, especially with one another.

UNMARRIED MINISTRY

When this group started, converts, whether married or single, were required to give up all and go preaching. A few years later this was changed and only single men and women were allowed in the 'work'. I remember married couples being in 'the work' when I was growing up. These apparently had joined the group in its early days. Some of these couples gave their children up for others to care for. This was perhaps the biggest sacrifice one could make for the 'sake of the gospel' but like many of the practices of this group, this was another unscriptural sacrifice based on what man can do rather than what Christ has done. Today, those wanting to go into 'the work' are not allowed to marry. Those who want to get married must give up preaching and 'the work' and are not allowed the opportunity to preach again, a major change in a ministry which claims to have never changed since 'the beginning' and which has apparently gone unchallenged by its members.

There are those in the group who deny that this group believes in an unmarried 'ministry', claiming that the practice of accepting married couples into 'the work' was stopped only because of the lifestyle that required 'workers' to live with other people which proved to be too difficult for married couples. How then do they account for the vows of celibacy taken by 'the workers' in 1903? (27) Missionaries take their families with them on the field. Perhaps this says more of the group's lack of faith in believing that God will provide for the needs of couples and their families than anything else.

Jesus did not go seeking single men or women for the ministry like this group does. In fact, he did not choose women at all. He chose men, whether they were married or not. He chose men who were married and who owned houses. He did not ask them to sell their houses. Making people give up the ministry if they choose to marry is unscriptural. In fact, I was surprised to discover after leaving the group that the Apostles had wives. Although I had never heard it discussed, we were led to believe the opposite. Giving up all for the Gospel to those in this group includes giving up any thought of marriage. This is unscriptural. Peter had a wife and owned a house (Matthew 8:14). Paul wrote, "Have we (meaning himself and Barnabas) not the power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren..." (1 Corinthians 9:5). This shows that some of the apostles were married and took their wives with them and that there was no difference in the marital status of the apostles and the brethren. Philip had a house and four daughters (Acts 21:8&9). Paul also rented a house which I was surprised to discover after I left the group. He "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house..." (Acts 28:30). He must have had money in order to be able to do this.

The Bible promotes marriage. God said "it is not good that the man should be alone" and made him a help mate (Genesis 2:18). Solomon said, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favour of the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22). Remaining unmarried is not considered more 'holy' than being married and one does not receive a greater reward for remaining single. Paul said that "Marriage is honourable in all and the bed undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4).

Paul obviously foresaw the temptations that some people would face if they did not marry, saying that in order "to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2). Paul warned that in the last days there will be those who will forbid to marry calling it the doctrine of devils (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Forbidding its leaders to marry has created the same problems for this group as it has for other groups which practice this. Although quick to pick up on accusations of inappropriate behaviour from other church leaders, they choose to deny or ignore such behaviour within their own group. It is no secret that certain 'workers' in this group engage in certain sexual behaviors especially with those of their own sex. While some people are aware of this, others deny or pretend it does not exist. In most cases they either refuse to do anything about it or send the 'offender' away to another town where they are not known. The problem is not dealt with and only surfaces somewhere else. Those who have left the ministry have also reported such behaviours. Of course, they are not believed and every effort is made to counter these claims by accusing these people as having a 'bad spirit'. Although an unnatural lifestyle which is contrary to Scripture where people are forced to make a decision between preaching the gospel or marriage is partly responsible for such behaviours and to which unsuspecting victims enter, perhaps such a ministry is a safe place for those who have no interest in the opposite sex to hide. After being held accountable by authorities, they are taking a more proactive stance on sexual abuse and reporting.

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

For a group that claims to be following Matthew 10, it is perhaps difficult to understand that it accepts women into the ministry. In fact, there are a lot more women 'preachers' or 'workers' in this group than there are men. Jesus never called women into the ministry, but those in this group justify it by saying that Philip's daughters prophesied (Acts 21:9).

They ignore the verses which say that a woman must not teach or "usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Timothy 2:12) while at the same time insisting that two verses earlier be observed saying that women should not wear gold or pearls (verse 9). Women 'workers' take authority over men in 'the meeting', including elders, who are male. They lead 'the meeting' whether there are men present or not. They justify it by claiming that a woman 'worker' does not lead 'the meeting' if a male 'worker' is present. However, nowhere does it say in these verses that this does not apply to woman 'workers' and that it is alright for them to take authority over men providing they are not 'workers'. Instead it says that a woman must not take authority over a man, whether she is a 'worker' or not. However, I am not wishing to comment on whether women should be in ministry or not, but I am endeavouring to show how this group uses some Scriptures while ignoring or changing others to suit them.

Philip's daughters prophesied – they were not 'preachers' or 'workers'. This confusion has come about because of the failure of this group to exercise the Gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12) or the five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4:11). This group is divided into two categories; 'the workers' or 'preachers' (these terms may be used interchangeably), and the congregation. Because Philip's daughters prophesied it did not make them preachers or 'workers'. This group makes no distinction between missionaries, evangelists, pastors or teachers, calling them all 'preachers' or 'workers'. They do not make a difference between those who give up their homes and go out on the mission field and those who remain at home pastoring the local church. In fact, words like evangelists and pastors which were part of the New Testament church are not even used by this group. Therefore, they can hardly say that they function like the New Testament church. I am sure that there are many in the group like I was who were not even aware that these different ministries existed in the New Testament church. I certainly had never heard of such things as evangelists in the thirty years I belonged to the group. Billy Graham was the only one that I heard of that fitted anywhere near this description but he was seen as a false prophet and an anti-Christ offering a watered down Gospel based on faith in Jesus and forgiveness for sins through grace. Little did I know that what he was preaching was 'truth'.

FEW THERE ARE THAT ARE SAVED

Given the exclusiveness of this group and that few people have heard of these people who prefer to hide their 'light under a bushel' how can one be saved? Although many people may have come into contact with someone from the group, be it a neighbour or someone at work, they are often unable to identify them as part of this group because of the evasive answers given.

The different names by which the group is known and registered serves as a smokescreen to stop people from identifying who they really are. Members become uneasy and embarrassed should someone identify them, denying any name attached to them. Some do so because they do not know of the names attached to them, while others do so as a deliberate attempt to confuse and mislead people into believing this group has always mysteriously been there.

Their gospel meetings are badly attended if at all by those outside who are soon put off by their style of dress and preaching. Figures relating to how many members this group has worldwide vary. The Calgary Herald in Canada, for example, reported on 30 July 1994, from what it called "knowledgeable outsiders" that there are 200,000 or more members in this group worldwide, while one of their 'workers' estimated in 1985 that there are 600,000 to 700,000 members worldwide.(28) This later figure could be seen as more of an exaggeration by one of their 'workers'. I would estimate the true figure to be somewhere between the two.

Today the group gains very few converts, except for children who grow up in the group or a potential spouse who wishes to marry a member. Most of its growth over the years has been from children who have grown up in it. These are usually the grandchildren and even great-grandchildren of those who joined in its early days. As families expand and increase so do numbers in each generation. Although there have been exceptions, it has been my observation that those who are converted to the group these days from outside often leave after a few years when they find out more about it. There also appears to be a growing trend with fewer children who are brought up in it choosing to join. A number of third-generation members, like myself, have left after having belonged to it for quite a number of years. Even fewer of the present generation join given that the group has nothing to offer the younger generation who are faced with the pressures in today's world. Given the trends, it appears that the group will see a substantial decline over the next few generations.

Family members who are brought up in the group usually join because they do not know of anything else and because of the emotional hold that such groups have over people who find it difficult to leave if they want to. Even though they claim it is a 'simple' way, 'the workers' give the appearance that they would be concerned if they were to gain too many converts because they would be making 'the way' too easy. Although they believe that churches make it too easy for people to 'be saved' they preach that one just 'simply' has to follow those who have given up all and gone out by faith. They try to show their lack of concern for not gaining converts by believing they are the chosen few quoting "...narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). However, there is a feeling of pride when they meet in large gatherings such as special meetings and conventions and give the impression to outsiders that this is a large worldwide movement. It does not take long to hear when the number at Convention has reached a thousand or more as members come from near and far to hear a visiting 'worker'. Although numbers may be impressive, the impression that 'workers' give that this is a large worldwide movement is exaggerated. For example, I found in many parts of Australia that there were no meetings outside of main centres. And contrary to what 'the workers' have said there are very few

converts in most of Africa. (29) We can see that confusing double-talk exists where on the one hand 'the workers' are trying to convince people that they are a large group while on the other they are trying to justify why they are not.

Surely if they were continuing the work of the apostles like they claim then the world would have heard of them. In spite of the crowds and fame that followed Jesus where ever He went and the verses that say the Apostles 'turned the world upside down', this group claims that they are unknown and unrecognised just as Jesus was. I wonder how many 'the few' are that Jesus was talking about when He said, "...few there are that find it." Those who have joined this group over the last one hundred years, or those who have followed Jesus over the last two thousand years?

WORLDLINESS

Women in the group are not allowed to wear makeup, earrings, jewellery, trousers or have short hair. Owning a television set, playing sports, having white weddings and such things are not allowed. The 'workers' call such things 'worldly', quoting 1 John 2:15,16 to back it up. "Love not the things of the world, neither the things that are in the world... For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life". They believe that these things are the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life, while on the other hand, expensive houses, cars, boats and other material possessions are perfectly acceptable.

Some of the women in this group wear makeup and engagement rings when they are not likely to be seen by the 'workers' and other members. Some partake in sports without others knowing, while others may have a television set hidden in the cupboard or borrowed while on holiday. Many honestly try to obey the rules made by 'the workers' while others live a double life; one before outsiders and one before 'the workers' which are obeyed more out of a fear of 'the workers' than of God. Many learn to submit to 'the workers' rules over the years after having questioned them previously or having secretly yearned for something different. It is not surprising that there are a large amount of stress-related illnesses among the group's members who are emotionally and psychologically isolated from the world around them and who believe that they are suffering for Christ's sake. Viewing everything as evil and trying to submit to 'the workers' teachings, they live a lifestyle contrary to that which God would have his people live. They have never been told that Jesus came to give us life so that we might have it more abundantly (John 10:10) or that He suffered in our place. Instead they try to earn their salvation through works of self-denial while at the same time striving to obtain material possessions which is an attempt to satisfy the flesh. As stated earlier, they claim that they are not of this world when in many respects they are very much of this world.

Those in this group have no real concept of what the Bible calls sin or indulging in things of the flesh are. They can not understand how a person can call themselves a Christian when they wear makeup, own a television set, or do what 'the workers' have said are 'worldly', yet they have no real understanding of what sin is. They have been trained to think in terms of what they have been taught 'worldliness' is and automatically dismiss those who share about the Lord if they do not 'look' like them believing their faith to be empty and shallow. What they do not understand is that the rules they follow are nothing to do with what the Bible is talking about when it talks about the flesh, the pride of life, and sin. They are following rules made by 'the workers' who have taken certain things and defined what they believe is right and wrong. They obey these things to please 'the workers' and to conform to the group rather than out of a conviction of the Holy Spirit. In essence, 'the workers' have become their conscience. The things they claim are 'worldly' are nothing to do with being 'worldly' according to the Bible which spells out very clearly what the works of the flesh are (Galatians 5:19,20). It is not having short hair, wearing makeup or owning a television; but it is clearly things pertaining to sin. Things such as adultery, fornication, hatred and so on which are listed in these verses are never mentioned by 'the workers' who instead preach about 'worldliness', which is simply obeying their rules. Surely buying all that money can buy is appealing to the flesh.

They believe that what is on the inside will show on the outside believing that one would dress and wear their hair up in a bun or similar style like they do if they claim to be Christian. The first thing a person is required to do if they want to follow 'the workers' is to change their hairstyle and dress to conform to their standards. This does not come from the heart but is a requirement to join the group. It is not a sign of inward transformation but of a willingness to conform to the preachers' rules 'for man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart'. The Bible does not say that you will know them if they conform to a certain dress code and hairstyle, but that you will know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:16-20) and by their love one for another (John 13:35). This comes from the inside; from the heart. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance..." (Galatians 5:22,23) it is not having long hair worn up in a bun. The fruit of the spirit is something which is rarely, if ever, spoken about by 'the workers' who claim that such things as being 'joyful' is of the flesh. What people see when they look at these people is not the joy of the Lord but a people who look burdened and void of joy. This is because of the effort to conform rather than being free to be who God intended them to be.

Jesus condemned the Pharisees for lengthening the hems of their garments and going around in long robes saying that their hearts were far from Him. The length of their garment was nothing to do with their hearts' attitude. He spoke about those who come in "sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). This group says that wolves in sheep's clothing are ministers, but it is obvious that Jesus is talking about anyone who tries to look 'religious'. Altering our outward appearance can often serve to cover up what really is in our hearts. The 'workers' praise young girls and women for wearing clothes and hairstyles suitable for middle-aged and elderly women. When I was about seventeen, a friend was told that because she wore her hair and clothes to what fitted 'the workers' approval that she would be 'a worker' when she grew up. She left 'the meetings' a few years later to marry someone from outside. Paul best sums it up by saying that such people have 'a form of Godliness but deny the power thereof' (2 Timothy 3:5).

WOMEN WEARING LONG HAIR

Those in the group have taken Paul's words, "...if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered" and "But if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her..." (1 Corinthians 11:6,15) to mean that women must have long hair and must never get it cut. Here Paul does not say that it is a shame for a woman to have her hair cut or even short, but it is a shame for her to have it shorn or shaven. He goes on to say in the King James version which this group follows, "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom neither the churches of God" (v16). However, 'the workers' totally ignore this verse making a law out of the previous verses saying it must be observed.

Not only do they preach that a woman should not have her hair cut, but that they are to wear their hair up. It is considered 'worldly' if it is worn out loose. Again this is a rule made by 'the workers' with no Scripture to back it up. Nowhere does Paul say that a woman must wear her hair up like 'the workers' insist. In fact, the opposite is true. A woman's long hair was given to her for a covering (v15). I have even read that it was the harlots that wore their hair up exposing their necks in those days. Putting it up does not in any way act as a covering and defeats the purpose of having long hair. If a woman is going to wear her hair up then surely she might as well have it cut.

A woman's hair was to be her glory. Wearing it pulled back in a bun, does not glorify most of those who wear it that way. They certainly do not look feminine, the trait which they are trying to portray. For many, from the front, their hair appears short and makes them look very masculine. Many look very out of date and old-fashioned in today's society. Many women spend hours in front of the mirror struggling to get their hair up because it is so thin and straggly as a result of it not ever having been cut. It proves to be a curse to her rather than her glory. They draw attention to themselves looking out of place in society, with their pale faces, no makeup and severe hairstyles. For many their appearance brings no glory to the God they are trying to serve. They believe that they should look different and give credit to those who are willing to sacrifice their flesh by looking misfits in society as they believe Jesus did. However, there is no record of Jesus looking different or altering his outward appearance, especially in light of Him having reprimanded the Pharisees for doing so. Our bodies are the temple of God, they should reflect His glory and people should be drawn to us not repelled by our appearance. The New Testament Christians found favour with the people (Acts 2:47).

Historically hair, like clothing, has evolved and changed over time. In Jesus' day, we understand that men wore long hair and gowns. It also appears that men may have shorn their hair at certain times, such as when they were mourning or fasting, something which according to Paul a woman should not do. Just as men's hair has become shorter over the centuries and their dress changed from wearing gowns to the wearing of long pants, so too has women's dress and hair styles changed. Change has been far slower for women and resisted by some groups. Paul as we saw referred to long hair as a custom. Customs change over time and from place to place. Today it is the custom for women to wear their hair long or short, by personal choice.

Those who have had their hair cut after years of having it long and having to put it up feel a freedom they have never known before. They have truly come to know what it is to be free from the bondage of the law. When one can see how easy it is to take care of short hair they can understand why people prefer to have it short. Having long hair does not make a person a better Christian. Having been freed from the law we are not to put ourselves under bondage again, but we are to live in the freedom which Christ has given us (Galatians 5:1).

We had to wear hats to 'meetings' when I was young. This was also taken from Paul's words which says that women are not to pray or prophesy with their heads uncovered (1 Corinthians 11:5). However, even women 'workers' do not wear hats today, not even when they preach. Dropping certain 'customs' while insisting that others be observed shows no consistency to the rules that this group follows.

WEARING JEWELLRY

Women are told to let their adorning be that of a meek and quiet spirit, and not the outward adorning of "plaiting of hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;" (1 Peter 3:3), and as noted earlier, to "adorn themselves in modest apparel, not with braided hair, or gold or pearls, or costly array" (1 Timothy 2:9). It is from these verses that 'the workers' claim that women must not wear jewellery or gold apart from wedding rings. Some have stated that they have even preached against that. They take the words 'not the wearing of gold or pearls' into consideration while totally ignoring everything else mentioned in these verses. They plait their hair, which is considered as a sign of humility by the 'workers' and wear elaborate decorations and ornaments in their hair, while it is considered 'worldly' to wear these same things around their necks. Much time and effort are spent in looking for new dresses to wear to 'the meeting' and ensuring that they have a new dress to wear each day at Convention. Some say that convention is more like a fashion parade than anything else.

These verses are not saying that a woman can not wear jewellery but that true beauty comes from within: "...let it be the hidden man of the heart" (1 Peter 3:4). True humility comes from the heart. Wearing a piece of jewellery is not displaying your wealth like people did in those days. Today people display their wealth through expensive houses and cars. However, this is considered acceptable by 'the workers' who believe true humility is about the type of clothes you wear and the way you wear your hair, not the way you live your life. Being dressed in 'modest apparel' is not about looking dowdy or standing out in a crowd, it is about looking pleasant.

WHAT THEY DO NOT PREACH

The Cross

Although they preach that "...the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but to us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18), they claim that it is their message which is foolishness to the world. They claim that it is hidden from 'the wise and prudent' which they say are 'religious' leaders and ministers in churches who they call 'hirelings'. They preach that Bible Colleges are the wisdom of the world quoting, "...Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (v 19,20). However, the

Apostles were not unlearned and ignorant men like 'the workers' claim. Paul and Luke were well-educated men. The Bible would never have been printed if it was not for well-educated Biblical scholars. 'The workers' have no training and this shows in their ignorance and lack of knowledge about the Bible.

In all my years with this group, I never heard the message of the Cross preached. I never heard how Christ died in my place and how that through one man, Adam, sin entered the world, and man was separated from God. I never heard how that through one man, Jesus Christ, mankind was reconciled to God through the shedding of His blood on the Cross. The 'workers' do not point people to the Cross but to them. They preach that Christ died only for them in their group, those who follow 'the workers' and not the whole world. This teaching began with Irvine who preached that, "The preaching of the blood, the death, and the cross of Christ must not be offered to the ungodly..." He claimed that the Ministry of Reconciliation is a secondary thing or the fact that 'Jesus who gave Himself a ransom for all...' is but a Pharisaical (30) delusion." He claimed that it was secondary to following the ministry mentioned in Matthew 10.

This teaching that the ministry and also 'the church in the home' are the most important things necessary for salvation continues today. For example, 'a worker' preached, "My hope and salvation is the blood of Christ (so far so good!). But, I would like to explain to you what this means." He went on to say, "The blood of Christ is the ministry and the church in the home. Without the New Testament ministry, you don't have the blood of Christ which includes the church in the home. The forgiveness of sins is a fringe benefit."(31) Numerous 'workers' preach this same message, however, I would ask, did Jesus come to set up a ministry, or to die on the Cross? If you believe that He came to set up 'a ministry' then who are you serving? 'Man' or Jesus? If it is possible to receive salvation through 'the workers' then why did Christ need to die on the Cross?

Grace

They do not preach salvation by grace, which is God's unmerited favour towards us. They believe that salvation through grace is not enough and gives us reason to sin. They believe there must be more and that we must do certain things to be saved. This consists of following the rules set down by the 'workers' and denying ourselves of certain things. We must earn our way into heaven through self-denial and self-sacrifice. To them, salvation is based on what we must do, not what Christ has done. They believe that we must deny ourselves of pleasure; although they do very little of this, to have eternal life. The Bible says that we are not 'saved' by works (lest any man should boast), but through faith in Jesus.

Repentance to 'the workers' means a woman putting her hair up or getting rid of a television set, and believing that all other churches are false. They falsely claim that believing, is believing that this is the only 'way' and that 'the workers' are the only 'true servants of God'. The Bible says that repentance is turning from sin and as we noted earlier, it is clear about what sin is. Salvation is believing in Jesus and who He is. Salvation is not dependent on what we can do but what Christ has done. Salvation can not come about through 'the workers', it can only come through Jesus. There is only one mediator between God and men and that is Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

The Deity Of Christ

Most in this group seem unsure of who Jesus really is. They bring Him down to their level by claiming that He is 'our elder brother', 'our example or pattern preacher'. They preach that "Christ had a human nature, too. He was a man, God is our father and Jesus is our elder brother."(32) They do not preach that Jesus was Emmanuel – God with us (Matthew 1:23), or God manifest in the flesh (John 1:1,14). To deny that Jesus was God they would have to deny Hebrews 1:8 where the Father calls the Son, "God"; and John 20 where Thomas said to Jesus "My Lord and my God" (v 28,29). They emphasize that He is the Son of God, but not God. As one 'worker' put it, "Jesus is not God. Anyone who thinks He is, just does not understand."(33)

Nor do they believe in the Trinity or Godhead which states that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one (e.g. 1 John 5:7; Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9). As one 'worker' so clearly put it, "We don't believe in the Trinity."(34)

The Holy Spirit

No one in this group appears to be clear about who or what the Holy Spirit is. It is definitely not the third person of the Trinity to them. Some would stress the words "Holy Ghost", making us feel that it was some mysterious, ghostlike presence; others, a mystical force from God.(35) It was also something which could come and go and we would be told not to talk after the meeting so that we would not 'lose the Spirit'. It was as if by talking we could lose it. Others said it was our conscience. One 'worker' was not clear on who Jesus was, but was very clear that the Holy Spirit was not God. He was quoted as saying, "Jesus may be God, but the Holy Spirit is NOT God."(36)

They talk not so much about the Holy Spirit, but as having the 'Christ spirit in you'. They preach that Jesus had the Christ spirit in Him and that we too must have the Christ spirit. For example, a 'worker' was recorded as saying, "Jesus means the Saviour. Jesus manifested Christ and it was the Christ in Jesus that made Jesus the saviour. Paul laboured according to the Christ that was in Him. Jesus was a mortal body for the "Forever Christ..."(37) We were often told that we needed more of the 'Christ spirit'. However, such teaching is so contrary to Scripture for Jesus was the Christ (Matthew 16:16).

The Body of Christ

They do not preach that the Body of Christ is made up of those who confess their faith in Jesus Christ, nor do they preach that the bride of Christ will be made up of born-again believers. Instead they claim the body and bride of Christ consists only of those who believe in and follow 'the workers'.

The Priesthood of All Believers

As noted, those in this group do not believe in the priesthood of all believers (see Acts 8:1,4). Only 'the workers' are allowed to preach the word. Being "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15) is being willing to ask people to attend 'the meetings', and not sharing your faith with those outside the group, according to them. Only those who have given up all are allowed to preach, although the apostles and the seventy did not sell all their possessions like this group claims. The 'seventy' were recorded as only having gone out on one mission.

The Word Of God

They do not believe a person can be saved by reading the Bible. Instead, they believe the Bible is a dead book unless interpreted by one of 'their workers', quoting, "how can they believe in him on whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher", preaching that 'a preacher' means 'their preachers'. In the days when this verse was spoken there was no New Testament for people to read, today there is.

Sin

As we have seen they do not preach 'sin' as stated in the Bible. Instead they preach 'worldliness' and make their own rules about what this is.

Summary

Although this group claims to have no name, it is in fact registered and uses several names and is known to outsiders by many names. The group surrounds itself in secrecy, keeping a low profile and discouraging members from sharing their faith, feeling threatened when someone tries to put their beliefs in print. Those who attempt to tell 'the truth' about the group are accused of having a 'bad' spirit and of persecuting them.

The Gospel message according to this group is the Church in the home, having no name, and an itinerant homeless ministry which goes out in twos. Jesus, they believe, came to earth to set up this ministry and salvation can only be obtained by following that ministry. Their central message is their ministry, not Jesus. Salvation is based on works of self-denial and not what Christ has done.

One could hardly say that they have a ministry that goes out by faith as they claim, instead it is a ministry that lives with its followers. Although they scorn Christians for what they call 'worldliness' and the love of money, many of them are in fact very much 'of this world'. This group was not started up by Jesus and is not directly descended from the Apostles as it claims. It was started by a man named William Irvine nearly one hundred years ago. They have used lies and deception to try and cover this and other important information from its members and outsiders alike. Because of the secrecy that surrounds the group, and the denial of, or connection to any names associated with it, up until now it has been able to hide information from unsuspecting people who have joined believing that it was the 'true church'. These people, unable to find out anything about the group, like other groups of this nature, find it extremely difficult to get out once they are in because of the hold such groups have on them. Isolating members emotionally from outsiders, especially Christians, makes it even more difficult for them to gain information about the group in which they have placed their faith.

This group clearly has one standard for its members and another for its leaders or 'workers'. Their 'workers' are supposed to live by faith, the members are not. The 'workers' are not supposed to have money or houses, the members can have as much money and material possessions as they want. What also seems apparent is that their leaders, 'the preachers' or 'workers', are exalted above their congregation.

The following looks at some of the tactics that this church uses which are similar to those used by some cults.

What the Bible Teaches...What the workers preach

The Bible teaches...Salvation is through Jesus alone by grace through faith

The Workers preach...Salvation is through the Workers and through our own works (self-denial)

The Bible teaches...Grace is God's unmerited favour towards us

The Workers preach...Grace is an easy way to heaven

The Bible teaches...Repentance is turning from sin as in Galatians 5:19-21

The Workers preach...Repentance is following the workers' rules; believing other churches are wrong

The Bible teaches...Sin the works of the flesh as in Gal 5:19-21

The Workers preach...Sin is worldliness as defined by the Workers

The Bible teaches...Faith is believing in Jesus

The Workers preach...Faith is following the workers

The Bible teaches...The Gospel is the message of being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ

The Workers preach...The Gospel is the Two by Two homeless ministry and the church in the home

The Bible teaches...Truth is Jesus Christ (John 14:6)

The Workers preach...Truth is the meeting in the home and the Two by Two ministry

The Bible teaches...The Way is Jesus Christ and He is the only way to God

The Workers preach...The Way is the meeting in the home and the Two by Two ministry

The Bible teaches...Jesus came to die on the cross for our sins

The Workers preach...Jesus came to show us a ministry

The Bible teaches...that Jesus is our Saviour.

The Workers preach...that Jesus is our example, pattern and our elder brother.

The Bible teaches...The Holy Spirit dwells within the believer and is part of the "Godhead"

The Workers preach...The Holy Spirit is "a force."

The Bible teaches...That the Body of Christ is all those who believe and follow Jesus

The Workers preach...That the Body of Christ is all those who follow the workers

The Bible teaches...That the Word of God is revealed through the Bible which is God's Word. It is alive and powerful (Heb. 4:12)

The Workers preach...The Word of God is a dead book unless made alive by one of their workers.

CHRISTIAN OR CULT?

The main difference between Christian groups and 'Christian' cults is their denial of basic Bible doctrine which is central to the Christian faith.

'Christian' cults claim that salvation can only be obtained through them. They claim that they are the only ones who preach the 'whole truth'. They believe they are special and that a person must remain in their group until they die in order to receive salvation. If they leave their group they are considered 'lost' or going to hell.

They look at what man can do, not what Christ has done, believing that they can be saved by their own works. Christians believe in the finished work of Christ on the Cross. They believe that He was fully God and fully human and that there is one God existing in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Cults serve a different Jesus and have a different concept of who the Holy Spirit is.

Cult leaders make their own rules which must be followed by the group. Conformity to the group is necessary in order to gain acceptance in the group. Failure to observe these rules commonly means a 'loss of salvation'. Members try to please their leaders which frequently becomes their conscience and not God. Christians believe in an inward transformation. They believe in the conviction of the Holy Spirit and that salvation is by grace.

Cults require that their members attend all their meetings. Fear and guilt are instilled into members who are accountable to their leaders rather than God. Cult leaders believe they have a divine revelation and are the only ones who can interpret Scripture, reinterpreting it and using selected verses which are often taken out of context to fit into their teachings. Cults believe their leaders bring the inspired word. As Dr. Walter Martin puts it, they are "a group of people gathered around someone's misinterpretation of the Bible." (38)

Questions are seen as doubting and are not encouraged in cults. The number of followers are often exaggerated to make the group look larger and more popular than it is, and crucial information about the group is hidden from its members. (39)

Cult members look on outsiders as a threat, frequently condemning and attacking other groups or people that are seen as a threat to them. Christian cults frequently attack the churches and clergy. They often attempt to keep information about their group hidden from outside scrutiny. Any publicity or exposure is seen as persecution. This further reinforces the need for secrecy by members to avoid information about the group getting out. They cut themselves off and are isolated from outsiders, especially other Christians. This keeps members ignorant of the truth about their group and outsiders alike. Like secret societies, these groups have their own code words and terminology which are known only to group members. Words and phrases have a different meaning to those outside the group than they do to those inside the group.

Cult members commonly suffer from fears, anxieties and insecurities. Emotional and psychological problems are common.

CONCLUSION:

As we have seen throughout this book many of the characteristics which are found in cults which call themselves Christians are also found in this group. 'The workers' claim that salvation can only be obtained through them, and if a person leaves the group they are considered 'lost' and going to hell.

Their 'workers' make the rules which must be followed by the group if one wants salvation. They have become their conscience. Members are required to attend all 'meetings' and believe their 'workers' are the only ones who bring the inspired Word of God. As with other cult groups, questions are seen as doubting and important information is kept hidden from its members. They avoid publicity and outsiders are seen as a threat. They also use a language that is unique to them.

Finally, emotional and psychological problems are common amongst members of this group, especially fear and anxiety. They are constantly trying to do better and submit more. Emotional breakdowns are not uncommon and are even more common amongst 'the workers' who are forced to live unnatural lives. Members are usually told, "they are having a rest." Questions cause individuals too much internal conflict so it is better to reach a place of acceptance in order to feel 'satisfied'. Many inwardly doubt their belief in the group and need the four days a year at Convention to reassure them that they are in the 'right' way.

Although some of the characteristics which are found in the more extreme cults are not listed here and are not found in this group, there is, however, sufficient evidence to suggest that this group has a number of traits common to cults.

A SERMON

The following is an extract of a sermon preached at one of their conventions and gives the reader an example of the style of language and preaching this group uses. Like many of their sermons, notes were taken, unusually in shorthand and then transcribed and

circulated amongst members around the world. This gives an idea of how highly valued such a sermon is. I understand that 'this worker' was sent to Korea in 1991 as a 'worker' for the group.

I have had people virtually mock us, especially religious people ministering in the religious world and others when they found out how we go out preaching. Oh, if this is supposed to be the Truth, if this is really the way of God, why don't you go out and advertise it – who even knows about this? Get out and advertise and let everybody know. How are people going to get to know about it?

There is one thing I am thankful for and that is that the way of God has been devised that diamonds can be found in the most accurate, most effective way in the whole world. There is nothing in the whole world that can touch it or come even near to it, and I'll explain why. It's amazing and absolutely perfectly effective – if there's a diamond somewhere you can be quite sure that it will be found. You may remember in the last chapter of 1 Kings, you read about Ahab going to battle and he disguised himself. In fact he let another man there put on his change of raiment so that nobody would guess that he was the King. He did not want an arrow shot at him. But you know what happened that day? We read that a man pulled a bow at a venture (it says in the margin, in his simplicity he just pulled a bow). I suppose just hoping that it might hit somebody of the enemy – and you know what happened? In his simplicity he did that but God had already decided that Ahab's last day had come. God had decided and so when that man pulled the bow in simplicity, God himself took over that arrow and directed it. Can you think of anything more deadly? There is absolutely no chance of a miss. God himself directed that arrow and that was the end of King Ahab. Now that is how the gospel works. It's so quiet nobody in the world knows about it, but some of the greatest miracles that are happening – no less are these miracles than the miracles you read about in the Bible. Right under your eyes, but God has done it so quietly and so amazingly that most people in the world and most of our friends even don't know a thing about what's going on...when God sees an honest soul, God Himself directs and brings that person in contact with His servants... (By Ernest Robinson, McCordsville, Indiana USA Convention, March 26, 1989)

This sermon is typical of the type of sermons that are preached by this group. Within the first few minutes this 'worker' has attacked other Christians, called their group *the truth and the way of God* and has emphasised the specialness and uniqueness of the group. In these few minutes, he has reinforced much of what I have written in this book showing how limited their preaching is with the same things being preached year after year. This passage of Scripture has been taken completely out of context to back up something he has unsuccessfully tried to prove.

"Religious people ministering in the religious world" are none other than Christian ministers. They liken Christians as being the Pharisees mentioned in the Bible. Christians are separated from "others" who are not seen as a threat to them. Right in the first paragraph, he has subtly referred to the group as *the Truth* (their capital T). He has likened finding the "way of God", their way, as finding diamonds. Something so unique and special that "nothing in the whole world can touch it or even come near to it..."

Three times the word *simplicity* is used. They continually use this word in preaching, saying, as noted previously, that the 'way of God' is a 'simple' way. That they 'simply' give up all and go preaching the gospel. The apostles 'simply' gave up all to follow Jesus. They dress 'simply', not wearing makeup or indulging in any of the world's activities. However, their way is far from simple, requiring people to live unnatural lifestyles and a lot of manmade effort to conform to 'the workers' rules which often creates anxiety and fear in their people. Their ministry is anything but simple.

Probably the most outstanding feature of this sermon is the quietness in which 'the gospel works'. "It's so quiet that nobody in the world knows about it... God has done it so quietly and so amazingly and most of our friends even don't know a thing about what is going on." Those close to them know very little about what they believe because as I noted earlier, they do not share their faith with others. The quiet way in which they claim the gospel works adds to the air of secrecy surrounding the group.

This 'worker', as is commonly practiced by 'the workers', has referred to those who believe in them as 'honest souls'. Those who do not are considered 'dishonest'. Often added to this is that those who do not believe in them are not willing for the 'truth'. Note that he also refers to himself and the other 'workers' as "His servants". Of course, this refers to them as being the 'only true servants of God', something which must be acknowledged if one wants to join the group.

Although these people may leave this meeting feeling 'special' and believing that this is all 'amazing', they still would not be able to give a satisfactory answer to questions that people ask because this teaching carries no weight in light of Scripture. This is probably one of the reasons they are not able to answer the questions that people ask them about the group. Never once does it tell us in the Bible to keep the Gospel a secret. In fact, the opposite is true e.g. the New Testament Christians "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) and Jesus' fame went everywhere (Matthew 4:24; 9:26,31; Mark 1:28; Luke 4:14,37; 5:15). John the Baptist's name was also 'spread abroad' (Mark 6:14). One does not light a candle and put it under a bushel (Matthew 5:15). It is no wonder they do not want people getting hold of their notes. Finding a diamond is likened to finding them. Jesus Christ, which is the central message of the Christian faith, is not even mentioned.

MY TESTIMONY

I was a third-generation member of this group. I was brought up in it, 'professed' and was baptised at the age of fifteen. My grandparents came into contact with 'the workers' and professed in 1928 and most of my family followed. Of those who have left the group only two of us have become 'Christians', the rest have turned their backs on any church. Many are too fearful to even enter a church because of the negative programming they have received about them.

Like many others I professed for several reasons. One was out of fear that I would go to hell if I didn't, the other was that by the age of fifteen I had reached 'the age of understanding' and it was expected of me. I was a teenager and expected to make my own choices as I could no longer 'ride' on the salvation of my mother. After all, others were doing it and I didn't want to be left out. I, like others of my age, professed to join 'the meetings' and to belong, to separate myself from the world as I believed it to be, and believed that I was now 'saved'. There was an unwritten belief that I would automatically believe that all churches, except 'the meetings' were of the devil, and that this was the only way to God; in fact that this was 'the Way of God'. We were taught that going to a church (bearing in mind that we did not call our group a church) was only a social event and that ministers in churches never preached about Jesus and were only after people's money. Those of us who have left and become involved in a Christian church have found that this is not true. Those in 'the meetings' are very money orientated. However, none of these things were an issue to me at the time because I knew of nothing else.

What I did not do was 'profess' because of my faith in Jesus who had died for me, and who had shed his blood on the Cross for my sins. I had never heard about it. I had never heard about 'the blood'. I had never heard how Christ had died in my place. All I heard was how unworthy I was and how I had to die daily to self and worldly pleasure, as defined by the 'workers'. Salvation rested on whether I 'professed' and not on my belief in Jesus.

Convention was a time to look forward to. Those who had struggled with believing during the year would come back from four days at Convention feeling like their faith had been renewed and were able to keep going another year. I remember hearing how we had to be misfits in the world and came away feeling quite pleased that I did not fit in at school and didn't have friends. Feeling isolated and not able to fit in was part of the price we had to pay. and like Jesus, we would be rejected by the world. I loved doing athletics. At school, I broke school records and won interschool sports in running and high jump but I was not allowed to do these outside of school. A neighbourhood friend went to a running club and won cups, but I wasn't allowed because it was considered 'worldly' and we weren't to indulge in the pleasures of this world. We were told we were in a better race (1 Corinthians 9:24-28) and that "bodily exercise profiteth little" (1 Timothy 4:8) being quoted to back it up. Like a lot of things, I found out later that others were participating in sports outside of school but this was kept a secret. I vowed that when I grew up and had children that I would take them to a running club and they would win the cups and ribbons that I was not allowed to win. They did this and it fulfilled what I had missed out in my childhood. For some reason, we were allowed to go to Brownies and Girl Guides even though they were held in a church. I loved this. We were not allowed to go to the movies. Although some parents would allow their children to go, these parents were considered to not be 'professing' properly. I remember going to the movies once and praying that Jesus would not return while I was there because I believed that I would miss out and go to hell if He came while I was there because I had been taught it was in an evil place. A visit to the hairdresser also brought about the same fear.

Those who had 'professed' during the year were baptised at convention. We had to put on some old lady's clothes and were required to wear old-fashioned woollen togs that had been kept by 'the workers' for the occasion. We were taken to a spot where the creek had been banked up to make it deep enough for us to be baptised in. It was a solemn occasion with people standing around singing hymns and not an occasion that you could imagine the angels in heaven were rejoicing over. In the meeting afterwards those who were baptised were expected to give their testimony. Most of us were fearful of standing up in front of all those people and having to speak. Every year, at convention it was expected that everyone would give their testimony at least once. Many people spoke about how they had found the 'true servants of God'. I never remember anyone saying how they were seeking for Jesus and found Him. It was always how they found 'His servants'.

When I was thirteen a lady 'worker' came up to me at convention and told me to put my hair up. My hair was shoulder length and quite curly. When it was out it looked soft and feminine and I liked wearing it that way, but at thirteen I was expected to conform. Young girls looked like mature women with their hair up in old-fashioned styles. Hair loose around our neck was not acceptable and had to be tied up off the neck. If I knew my Bible then like I do now, I would have been able to challenge her in light of what the Scriptures say. I could have said that the Bible says that a woman's hair is to be her covering which does not mean wearing it up. The length of my hair was not important to her but whether it was worn up or not. Any length hair no matter how short it was could be rolled up and many of the women would do just that for 'the meetings'.

At seventeen I became pregnant and was told that I would have to 'profess' again. As there was only one more meeting for the year I thought I would wait until the new year before I did. I began to feel frightened because it meant that as I had to 'profess' again I was no longer 'professing' and was not saved until I had 'professed' again. I thought that if I got killed over the holidays, I would go to hell, so when 'the workers' asked if anyone wanted to 'profess' the following week I quickly jumped to my feet. I was baptised for the second time at convention a few weeks later. No one knew why I 'professed' and got baptised again. I guessed that because I had not been to the meetings for several months they must have presumed that I had left for a while. Even I was not really sure why I had to 'profess' again except that 'Uncle' Walter had said it was a good idea so that other girls did not think they could 'do it' and get away with 'it'.

I met my husband through work. I took him to 'the meetings' and he 'professed'. The workers told us to get married as quietly as possible. The act of marriage was almost a shameful thing and the 'workers' did not like a big show when it came to weddings. They considered weddings to be worldly, did not approve of white weddings and would only come to the wedding breakfast if it was held in a home. Nothing like the picture the Bible gives as an example of 'the bride of Christ'.

My life was changed in 1979 when my husband asked me to visit a Christian couple with him. I refused for a while as I believed they were following the devil and did not want anything to do with them. Finally one day I agreed to go. For some reason, I told the wife my marriage was in a mess. She talked about Jesus and said, "Jesus can help." I could not understand how she talked about Jesus and I

talked about God so I asked her and she said, "even the devil believes in God and trembles". She talked about how believing in Jesus was a personal experience. I was confused. We had been told that people who went to church did not talk about Jesus and yet she knew Him in a way that I did not. I had never heard anyone talk about Jesus the way she did. After all, I thought I was in the true church so why was she talking about Jesus? As soon as I walked into her home I felt something different. A few weeks later I wrote to her telling her how I loved the Spirit that was in her home. I did not really know what I meant but that was the only way I could describe it.

A few weeks later in April 1979, I awoke in the middle of the night and saw a vision of Jesus on the Cross. He pointed down from the Cross at me and said, "I died for you". I now realised what that lady had meant when she had said knowing Jesus was a personal experience. Next day as I read my Bible everything seemed so different. I began to see what the Bible was really saying and it was not what I had been taught in 'the meetings'. I realised that the words we used in 'the meetings' were not even in the Bible. As stated at the beginning of this book, I began to see that words like church, Christians and so on, were in the Bible and that words like 'meetings' and 'professing' were not. I realised that we did not even speak the language of the Bible.

I began going to the Baptist Church as well as 'the meetings'. I would go to 'the meeting' in the morning and as 'the missions' were held in the afternoon I could go to a church at night. I noticed that people prayed for one another at church. I asked the 'workers' to pray for us but they refused replying, "We are not Pentecostals". I had not been to a Pentecostal Church but this was their excuse because they did not practice this.

As I realised that what I had been taught was 'wrong' I found it difficult to continue speaking in 'meetings' in the same manner as I had been taught. As I went to a Christian church I began to see that the things we had been told about churches were not true. I began to realise that God did not dwell in 'houses made by hands' any more than he did 'temples made by hands' but as I learned at church, He dwells within our hearts. I noticed that 'the workers' focused on changing the outward appearance and not the heart. At church, I heard what true repentance and faith in Jesus was. It was not turning from 'the world' as defined by 'the workers' and following them as they taught, but rather it was turning from sin. It was not until I went to a Church that I heard what sin really was. I found it hard for a while to understand how these beautiful Christian people in churches could wear makeup and still profess to be Christians, but then I had been trained to look on the outward appearance. I began to see that these people were beautiful on the inside and out. I saw that their outward appearance reflected the beauty and freedom that they had found in Christ.

As time went on I learned that sin was adultery and the other sins listed in the Bible and was not wearing makeup, watching television, or going to a 'church'. I realised that we only had an (outward) form of Godliness in 'the meetings' but denied the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5); and that 'the workers' had taken out only what they had wanted or found convenient to take from the Bible. I found that Christian people were truly free in Christ, although it took a few years before I could really cast off the 'traditions' that I had grown up with. For a while, I still feared leaving 'the meetings' in case I went to hell and like others who have left, feared being deceived again.

After a few months, I visited and talked with the elder of our Sunday morning meeting. Within a day or two, a 'worker' rung me up. As I had just read a book that had a short passage about 'the Cooneyites', which by now I had realised was 'the meetings' saying that the group had been started by a man named William Irvine, I asked 'the worker' about it. Her reply was that she did not deny this but that God had put it in that man's heart. This book said that Joseph Smith had also said the same thing when he started the Mormon Church. My thought was, why had this 'worker', as all 'the workers' had done, preached that we were the true church 'from the beginning' and that, unlike all other churches, we had never been started by any man? The very foundation of what I had believed was shaken. I was beginning to realise that something was wrong. Also, the Baptist pastor had shown from the Bible where Jesus and the apostles had healed the lame and the sick and how we were to pray for the sick (James 5:14,15). When I spoke to 'the worker' about this issue she said that Jesus could heal today if He wanted to but He didn't want to. I ask by what authority did she have to say that on God's behalf? She ended the conversation by saying that she could not speak to me anymore because I had been 'blinded' by going into a Baptist Church. I never went back to 'the meetings' after this and I never heard from 'the workers' again. I guess I would not have been allowed to go anymore anyway. Their loyalty ended when I asked questions, even though I was a third-generation member and our family had been in it for over fifty years.

At that time I did not know of anyone who had left 'the meetings' and become a Christian so it was a lonely time trying to wrestle with the Scriptures and undo all I had learned. It was great to be able to attend prayer meetings like they had done in the Bible and really know Jesus for myself. I could not get enough of the Bible for those first few years. I did not need four days at convention to keep me believing, I got more from one church service than I had from a whole convention. I came to know that Jesus was the same yesterday, today and forever and that He would never leave or forsake me. I change and grow, but He is always the same. I can depend on Him and I am not dependent on what I can do in order to receive salvation but on what Christ has done at the Cross. I do not want an easy way to heaven as this group claims those who attend other churches do, nor do I want the world and God too, but endeavour to live a life pleasing to Him, knowing His grace and forgiveness when I fail. I live by the Bible, not some manmade rules. I live by faith in Jesus and not by works 'lest any man should boast'. It is my prayer that if you do not know Jesus then that you might find Him and come to know Him as your personal Saviour too.

We used to sing a hymn: "I love to think the way of God, it's just the path that Jesus trod..." I used to sing this with all my heart, I believed that Jesus walked 'this way', that He started 'this way' 2,000 years ago on 'the shores of Galilee'. I now know that Jesus did not tread 'this' way, but that 'He' is the way. I take warning from the words, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1); "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"

(Matthew 11:30). I am "...ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in (me)..." (1 Peter 3:15).

WHY DO PEOPLE STAY?

The simplest answer to why people stay in groups like this is because it is hard to leave. They have been programmed to stay in the group and fear rejection and loneliness if they leave. Their friends and family are often in it. Fear has been used to keep them in and they are not aware that there is 'life' outside of the group. They have been cut off psychologically from those outside and view the outside world as 'evil'. Many fear going to hell if they leave. They find it easier to stay in than to leave. If they start to doubt or ask questions they are told they need to learn to submit more. They believe that the problem is with them and not the group. An even greater fear is that of going to another church. They have been programmed against churches believing them to be 'evil' and 'of the devil'. Sadder still is that although a member may leave the group, in most cases they never venture into a church or have a chance of really knowing Jesus. What people need to know is that there is a life outside the group.

POST SCRIPT

Since writing this book, I have heard of threats to sue another person who has written a book about the group. I have been warned that 'I also had better be careful'. Such tactics show the extent to which those in the group will go to keep their practices and doctrines hidden.

REFERENCE NOTES

1 See code words and their meaning at Appendix 1.

2 Ibid.

3 Doug & Helen Parker: *The Secret Sect*, p. 117. Also W. McClung, head worker for N.Z., used this name in a letter to the N.Z. Government dated 15/6/1920.

4 Ibid; pps 85; p. 117

5 Military records show those in this group registered under this name for exemption from military service. References to the group under this name appear in: **Out in the Cold**, by David Grant, p. 57.

6 Personal conversation with former member who typed letter for 'head worker'.

7 Parker (see note 3), p. 124. This letter signed by William Hughes, the head worker for New Zealand for a number of years, also states this 'body of Christians assuming this name only'.

8 Ibid, p. 1

9 Ibid, p. 3

10 Ibid, p. 7

11 Ibid, p. 64

12 Ibid, p. 76; p. 78

13 Ibid, p. 90. Personal conversation with an Irishman who claimed he was surprised to find denial of this group's origin in Ireland when he came to New Zealand.

14 See **Impartial Reporter and Farmer's Journal**, a collection of Newspaper Articles on the group in its early days. The Secret Sect and other books on the group.

15 Parker, (see note 3), p. 17

16 Ibid, p. 2

17 **The Impartial Reporter** is full of accounts of railings against the churches and clergy including such men as Wesley, Spurgeon, and Calvin whom Irvine and those who joined him claimed were going to hell. (see Impartial Reporter, 30 July, 1908).

18 Parker, (see note 3) p. 1

19 **The Impartial Reporter and Farmer's Journal**, August 25, 1910.

20 Parker, (see note 3) pp. 65, 66

21 Ibid, p. 42 & 81. Rumours are that George Walker died leaving \$3 million in assets. see *Forward Press*, a newsletter for ex-Two by Twos, Vol. 4, No. 4.

22 This elitism began with Irvine who was reported as being self-conceited and had an "holier than thou" attitude. In a sermon he said, "You are lepers... For you to touch me would be to defile me." **Impartial Reporter**, 29 January, 1903.

23 Parker, (see note 3), p. 40.

24 **Impartial Reporter**, 25 August, 1910.

25 Parker, (see note 3), p. 42. Parker gives an example of others who knew of bank accounts in 'worker' names.

26 **Impartial Reporter**, 10 July, 1913.

27 Parker, (see note 3), p. 20.

28 Lloyd Fortt. *A Search for "The Truth"*, p. 28: David Stone. *The Church Without a Name*, p. 4.[Both books are out of print]

29 *Forward Press*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 3.

30 ***Impartial Reporter***, 25 August, 1910.

31 Leo Stancliff, 1981, cited in *Forward Press*, Vol. 6, No. 3, p. 3. There are many instances of 'workers' saying similar things. Fortt, (note 29), also gives examples.

32 Fred Allen Post Falls Convention, August 1994, cited in *Forward Press*, Vol. 1, 2, No. 4, p. 2.

33 Clifford Fernie, Barrhead Special Meetings, Alberta, 1991, cited in *Forward Press*, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 16.

34 Sydney Holt, Boring Convention, August 1994, cited in *Forward Press*, Vol. 5, No. 3.

35 Fortt, (see note 29) p. 98.

36 Sydney Holt, Gospel Meetings, 1980, cited in *Forward Press*, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 2.

37 Dellas Linaman, Turlock Special Meetings, 1982, cited in *Forward Press*, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 1.

38 Walter Martin, ***Kingdom of the Cults***, Bethany House Publishers, 1985.

39 Margaret Singer also mentions many of these traits in her book, ***Cults in Our Midst***, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1995.

All *Forward Press* quotes cited with permission.

Appendix 1. CODE WORDS and their meanings

The following has been devised in order to help the reader understand the terminology used by this group.

The meetings – their church gatherings.

Christian comparison – church.

Fellowship meetings – Sunday morning gatherings for members only, held in a member's home. Each person is expected to pray and share something from the Bible. The bread and wine are also taken in these meetings.

Christian comparison – home group and/or communion service.

Gospel meetings or missions – larger gatherings consisting of all those from the fellowship meetings for that area. They are open meetings, held in rented halls for the public to attend in order to gain converts. They often move to several different venues within a year.

Christian comparison – evangelistic service.

Special meetings – larger gatherings consisting of all those from the fellowship meetings for that area. They are usually just for members and held one day a year.

Conventions – gatherings of sometimes up to a thousand members or more based on the Keswick Conventions in the United Kingdom. These are held on members' farms, usually over 4 days and members are expected to attend at least one a year. 'Meetings' are held in large tents, while eating facilities are usually housed in large barns or sheds. People sleep in barns, tents, or caravans. Until recently caravans were forbidden on the property but have been allowed more recently. In New Zealand conventions are held in four different locations; Pukekohe, Masterton, Winchester (near Timaru), and Ngaere (near Stratford).

Christian comparison – camps, retreats, conventions.

A Testimony – speaking about something from the Bible or often about how they found 'the workers'.

Christian comparison – how they found the Lord and surrendered to Him.

The preachers, workers or servants of God – those in this group who preach or minister the gospel. They go in twos, usually a junior and senior 'worker' together staying in members' homes. They move to a different area each year or two and are told which area they are to go for the year.

Christian comparison – ministers, pastors, evangelists, missionaries.

The work – the ministry.

Christian Comparison – the ministry

Living by faith – this is required by the 'workers' who supposedly give up all to preach the gospel.

Christian comparison – all Christians are to trust God for their needs.

The Gospel – the message of the 'workers' which is the Two by Two ministry and the 'meeting' in the home.

Christian comparison – the message of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The message of the Cross.

The Truth or the Way – their group.

Christian comparison – Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

'Uncle' or 'aunty' – the 'workers' are often called *uncle* or *aunty*.

Christian comparison – pastor.

An elder – a man who leads the Sunday morning fellowship meeting.

Christian comparison – overseers in the church.

A deacon – a man who leads the Sunday morning meeting when the elder is away.

Christian comparison – those who 'attend to tables' (Acts 6:2) i.e. jobs in the church.

Professed or professing – a person who has stood to their feet in a meeting in acknowledgment to following the workers.

Christian comparison – accepting Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

The friends or professing people – people who belong to their group.

Christian comparison – Christians.

Testing the meeting or making their choice – when a person who wants to follow 'the workers' is asked to stand to their feet in acknowledgment of this. A person is not saved unless they do this. The same as professing.

Christian comparison – accepting Christ.

A child of God – those who have professed and are following 'the workers'.

Christian comparison – a Christian.

The faithful – those who remain true to 'the workers' until they die.

Christian comparison – a Christian.

Saved – professing i.e. following and believing in 'the workers'.

Christian comparison – a born-again Christian.

Church – where people in the world go as opposed to 'the meetings'.

Christian comparison – a place where Christians meet. The body of Christ.

Christians – they may call themselves Christians when talking to outsiders but this term is not used when talking amongst themselves.

They use the word 'professing' or 'the saints'.

Christian comparison – a follower of Christ.

The religious world – Christians other than them, comparing them to the Pharisees in Jesus' day.

Christian comparison – Non-Christian religions.

Ministers – those people who are following the devil and deceiving people as opposed to 'the workers' who are God's true servants.

Christian comparison – those who preach the gospel.

The mother of harlots – the Catholic Church, i.e. Satan's church. Note the unmarried clergy of this group and the authority that 'the workers' have in interpreting the Bible are similar to that found in the Roman Catholic Church. They teach that the Catholic Church broke away from them, the true church. The daughters of the harlot are all other churches, except theirs, who they claim have broken away from the Catholic Church.

Christian Comparison – Christians believe that all Protestant churches have broken away from the Roman Catholic Church in an effort to get back to the Bible.

Blindness – those who do not believe in 'the workers'.

Christian comparison – those who do not see the truth as it is in Jesus.

Works – good works done by the churches such as feeding the poor are called 'dead' works by this group. Their works are self-denial, putting their hair up and not wearing makeup or watching television.

Christian comparison – a desire to help those in need without any reward. They are highly regarded in the Bible as a true sign of faith.

Worldliness – wearing makeup, watching television, playing sports and doing anything that 'the workers' say not to.

Christian comparison – sin.

Repentance – turning from 'the world' as 'the workers' define it and following them.

Christian comparison – turning from sin as defined in the Bible.

A wrong spirit – those who do not agree with 'the workers'.

A broken spirit – one who has repented of their ways and followed 'the workers'.

Christian comparison – one who has repented before the Lord.

Jesus – our pattern preacher, our elder brother, our example. The son of God.

Christian comparison – our Saviour and Redeemer, part of the Godhead.

The Holy Ghost or Spirit – a force, or your conscience.

Christian comparison – the third person of the Trinity that dwells with a believer.

A stranger – someone who is not a member or known to them. Usually a person who comes 'off the street' and attends a mission.

Christian comparison – unbelievers.

A divided home – when only one person, usually a parent belongs to the group.

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Much appreciation for the typist who wishes to remain anonymous!