

Cooneyites

The Two-by-Twos; The Nameless Sect, Etc.

WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT DO THEY BELIEVE?

When I was still a Jehovah's Witness, before becoming a Christian, we used to run into what we considered "funny people" at the door. They told us they were the only true Christians on the face of the earth. Usually they had just returned from an "assembly" or a "home meeting". They informed us that they were doing a far greater work than we, and we were definitely in error. However, they would never enter into a prolonged discussion about why they felt they were right and we were wrong. They never argued with us, always refused to take our literature, and most gave off an air of "humble superiority". I personally found it quite maddening at the time that they would not tell us their name, but merely smiled smugly when we asked.

The years went by and I came to a saving knowledge of the true Jesus Christ and voluntarily left the Jehovah's Witnesses. However, I never lost my curiosity about this strange, nameless, group. Time went by and we entered a full-time ministry to the cults. Now I had the opportunity to speak with these people, both inside and outside of this group, as well as to attend one of their public meetings. The women were dressed most severely with long hair in a bun, and the meeting was the most joyless I can remember. The singing was lack lustre and the sermon dull. When we attempted to linger and ask meaningful questions we were quickly escorted out. We were even told we were not "sheep", or we would have recognised the truthfulness of the group.

It took many years to assemble enough material about this closed group to write a factual tract, but at this time, we can report the following:

NO NAME - BUT MANY NAMES

These names identify the group: The Nameless House Sect, the Cooneyites, the Two-By-Twos, The Way, The Pilgrims, The Tramps, The New Testament Church, The Non-Denominational Church of America, The Go-Preachers, The Irvineites, The No Sectors, The Faith Missioners, The Dippers, The Jesus Way, The Christian Church of Australia (or America, etc.), Christian Convention Church, The Damnation Army, The Carrollites, The Secret Sect, The Truth, Die Namenlosen, Les Anonymes, and the Reidites. There are others, but any of these names identify these people. Global adherence is approx. 350,000

Two by Twos



Prominent early Two by Twos preachers. Left to right: William Gill, William Irvine, George Walker.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE GROUP

The group was founded by William Irvine, a Scottish lay evangelist in the early 1900's. He was fascinated by Matthew chapter ten,

and developed a band of followers who would go out preaching his viewpoints in abject poverty, having only one set of clothes, no money etc., believing they alone were fulfilling the true pattern of the original apostles, and forming the only true church on the face of the earth. As his followers grew in numbers, a system of powerful overseers over local groups came into being, and Irvine became a travelling leader speaking to scattered conventions. He also became more and more strange in his doctrines, partly due to the influence of the early Adventists. At one point he believed he was one of the two witnesses referred to in Revelation chapter three.

The overseers became alarmed and formed a coalition to stifle him, while hiding the facts from the followers. The movement was thrown into turmoil as Irvine wrote letters and solicited funds to support himself, and indeed, ended up living out his days in Israel in great comfort and died leaving a large estate. Cooney, Carroll, and others seized control until Cooney himself ended up disfellowshipped, along with many others. This accounted for the various names down through the years applied to the group, depending on its loyalties. Nevertheless it survived and continues down to this day.



SURVIVAL BY THE TWO-CLASS SYSTEM

Since no group can survive for long in abject poverty, someone has to supply money to continue. So, in this group, we find one segment functioning normally in society, working, earning money, and owning real estate. The other segment consists of the itinerant preachers who are supported by the first group. Over all we find the powerful local overseers who have unquestioned authority over their area.

Meetings are held in local homes and larger conventions usually on the farms of the believers. No publicity is sought for any of their activities, indeed they are most secretive to all outsiders and none are welcome to their gatherings.

DOCTRINES AND DENIALS

Due to the nature of the group, that is, isolation and control by local overseers, not all groups may believe exactly alike, except on the major points. All do believe that they are the only true church in existence, that access to Jesus Christ is only through their unpaid, itinerant preachers, and the only proper meeting place is in a home. They believe they alone have the truth, so we need to examine their doctrines.

Although it is difficult to obtain printed material from a group

that won't release any, still over the years certain doctrinal points have been consistently taught since the early days, and persons leaving the group confirm that these are the beliefs of the group worldwide. It might be best called "The Gospel of Denial".

THE "GOSPEL" OF DENIAL

First and foremost, the doctrine of the Trinity, the viewpoint of the person of Almighty God shared by all legitimate churches down through the ages, is denied by this group. The Trinity teaches that the one God of the Bible has presented Himself in three Persons, The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three are the one God. *(Space does not permit an extensive listing of Scriptures. Please download our free booklet on the Trinity from the "Free Stuff" part of our web-shop - see below)*

Also denied is the Bible teaching that Jesus is God. However, the Father calls Jesus "God" (Hebrews 1:8). The Disciples called Jesus "God" (John 20:2) and prophecy calls Jesus "God" (Matthew 1:23). This denial of Jesus' Deity began with Arius in the third century, and we find his views followed by such cult groups as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, early Adventists and other cult groups that sprang up in the same general time period. Jesus Christ is nothing less than Almighty God manifest in the flesh, and any group teaching anything less than this falls into the category of a cult.

The Holy Spirit is reduced by this group to merely an "active force", again a heresy common to groups of that time, notably the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and others. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is a Person. Salvation in this group is not by grace alone as the Bible teaches, but by an involved pattern of works, self-denial, and obedience to the overseers. How different from Ephesians 2:8,9 which says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of

yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

Of course Christians do good works, but they are the result of salvation, not a condition for it.

EXTREME LEGALISM IN MOST AREAS

Having talked at length with persons who have been in this group and have drifted away, or have been disfellowshipped for some minor offence, a pattern of extreme legalism emerges. First off, there can be no questioning of the doctrine which is in place. Honest Bible questions are not welcome (as in most cults) and are viewed as disobedience. Strict dress codes and hairstyles prevail, and failure to conform can result in disfellowshipping for disobedience.

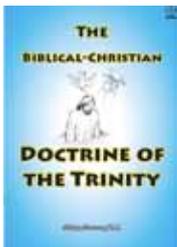
Unfortunately for present followers, dress codes were set in Victorian times and have hardly changed at all! Followers are discouraged from delving too deeply into their early history, especially since it would involve finding out about the delusions of grandeur held by their originator, and the tactics used by other powerful overseers to get their own way and control the beliefs and finances of the organisation. As in most cult groups, higher education is discouraged as a method of controlling the followers and preventing them from having access to unfavourable, historical references. The Bible and its interpretation is believed to be solely the right of this nameless group, yet no scholarship is used for reference in Bible study. Baptism by immersion is considered valid only if done by this group, and only if the preachers give permission.

IN CONCLUSION

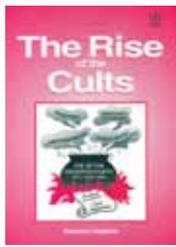
This group is definitely a cult, carrying on the heresies of the early twentieth century in company with its contemporary cults which arose in the same time period, namely the Jehovah's Witnesses, The Christadelphians, and the Mormons etc. All follow the peculiar heresies of their leaders and refuse correction from God's word the Bible. Many of their heresies are similar, the most serious error being their denial of the Deity of Jesus Christ and His salvation to us by grace alone. No one needs "The One True church" but every one of us needs the **"One True Jesus Christ"**.

"Have nothing to do with the things of darkness, but rather expose them." (Ephesians 5:11)

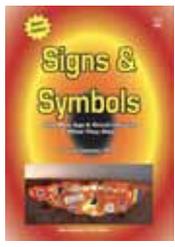
"Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"
(John 14:6)



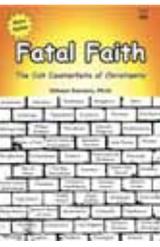
"The Biblical-Christian Doctrine of the Trinity" (FREE E-Book)



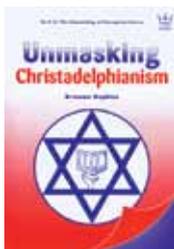
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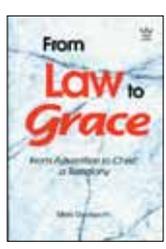
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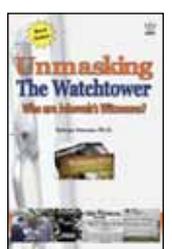
"Fatal Faith - the Cult Counterfeits of Christianity" (Book, E-Book, DVD)



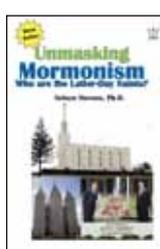
"Unmasking Christadelphianism - the hopelessness of 'The Hope?'" (Book, E-Book)



"From Law to Grace: From Adventism to Christ" (book)



"Unmasking the Watchtower - who are the Jehovah's Witnesses?" (Book, E-Book, DVD)



"Unmasking Mormonism - who are the Latter-day Saints?" (Book, E-Book, DVD)



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