

**they go  
about**

**"TWO  
by  
Two"**

**william  
e. paul**

**"They Go About  
'TWO BY TWO'"**

THE HISTORY AND DOCTRINE OF  
A LITTLE KNOWN CULT

**by william e. paul**

Formerly titled "THE TWO BY TWOS,  
Who Are They? What Do They Believe?"

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## ***Introduction*** ||

Information about this religious group is very scarce. They are known to be strongly adverse to publishing books, tracts or any other written materials describing their teachings for public distribution. Because of this they are not listed in most works that give the history and doctrines of the various cults. Perhaps the most widely circulated information about the cult is the six pages devoted to it in the book "Heresies Exposed," by William C. Irvine under the chapter titled, "Cooneyites."<sup>1</sup> Among other books that give a brief description of the group are "The Small Sects in America," by Elmer T. Clark<sup>2</sup> and "Cults and Isms," by J. Oswald Sanders.<sup>3</sup>

Religion Analysis Service, a Minnesota clearing house for cult-exposing materials, carried a four-page article on "Cooneyites" by Roy Divers in its periodical "The Discerner" some years ago.<sup>4</sup> The author is indebted to Mr. Divers for furnishing him with a copy of a rare, mimeographed sermon delivered by a preacher of this cult in San Diego, CA in 1941. Besides these sources little else has been learned about this group from research organizations and recognized authorities on cults in America.

There are two small tracts, however, which provide very helpful insights in the inner workings of this cult and its distinctive tenets. One is a small, undated tract of 24 pages, written in England, by a W. M. Rule.<sup>5</sup> The other is a recent 12-page booklet written by a couple who were former members of the cult.<sup>6</sup> But when confronted with the information contained in these tracts, members have been known to deny emphatically that it had any reference to their group.

In view of the limited research materials available, the author has made contact with members of this cult and conducted lengthy, personal discussions with them in which their doctrines have been clearly presented and critically examined. This booklet, then, is the result of these discussions, together with all available written materials which have been carefully studied and compared with those private conversations.

The author freely acknowledges the possibility of variations in emphasis which may be placed on certain doctrines by members of this cult over the years and in different parts of the nation. (Such variations may especially be evident between people of America and the British Isles). Since the group has neither an official headquarters nor any authoritative literature, it is not possible to appeal to either of these as a basis for this study. Therefore, no claim can be made for this work being exhaustive in its treatment. But it does present a carefully researched sketch of their background and the major beliefs which they currently hold.

## ***How Did It All Start? ||***



The founder of the "Cooneyite" cult was William Weir Irvine (or possibly Erwin), a Scotsman who went to Ireland in the latter part of the 19th century to preach for a "Faith Mission." (To add to the confusion surrounding this man's last name, the authors of "The Cunning Cult" refer to a "Miss Weir" of Kansas whom they thought was a relative of one of the early leaders named Irvine Weir).<sup>7</sup> William Weir Irvine eventually left this group and established an independent mission of his own at Nenagh, Tipperary County, Ireland, in August of 1897 (or possibly 1894).<sup>8</sup>

This information was confirmed in a letter from a John Long to Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., publishers of the book "Heresies Exposed," in which Long stated that he was the person who obtained "the first opening for a mission in Nenagh, August 1897" and that William Weir Irvine was the original leader of the group. Mr. Long also mentioned that another man, Irvine Weir, one of the first preachers of the group, migrated to America to carry on their mission work in this country.<sup>9</sup> The strikingly similar names of these two men has led to further confusion regarding their respective labors. (One is also struck by the coincidence that the author of "Heresies Exposed" is named "William C. Irvine").

The founder of the cult commenced his work by holding "missions" in school houses and Methodist church buildings where a number of young men and women professed conversion to his views. These young "converts" then followed Irvine from place to place assisting in the spread of the movement.

The conditions among the churches in southern Ireland at that time were at such a low ebb spiritually that some of the young people became grieved over the lack of ardour among the preachers. Irvine's vigorous and exciteable preaching attracted these young people and they mistook his zeal (in denouncing languishing Methodist churches of the day) as true spiritual power. In mounting his attack upon the deteriorating religious conditions which he saw, Irvine, in one great sweep, condemned all churches and their preachers. This resulted in his losing permission to use the facilities of the established churches for his meetings. With undaunted perseverance he ultimately gained a sizable following, especially among activist young people.<sup>10</sup>

## ***What Are They Called? ||***

It was about this time that Edward Cooney, one of Irvine's most zealous converts, appears to have initiated the practice of their

preachers giving up all secular occupations in order to devote full time to their ministry. They were to receive their livelihood solely from their work of preaching, not however, in the form of any set salary.<sup>11</sup> Because of the itinerant nature of their ministry, with no permanent base of operation or guaranteed source of income, they became known as "Tramp Preachers," or "Roving Preachers." Also, since Edward Cooney had become one of their most prominent leaders, the nick-name "Cooneyites" was used to identify them (although they repudiate this name). One of their favorite slogans, "Asyego, preach," led to their becoming known as "Go Preachers."

In some areas of the United States they acquired the nick-name "Black Stockings," or "Black Sox," apparently from a practice their women held once of wearing black stockings.

From their emphasis upon the limited commission of Jesus to the twelve and the seventy (Matthew 10, Mark 6 and Luke 9-10) they speak of the "Jesus Way" and the "Lowly Way." These terms have been used by some in referring to this sect.<sup>12</sup>

Those who are sent to teach people the Gospel personally are often called "workers," and it is held that only through the spoken word of one of these "workers" can anyone become a member. For this they quote Romans 10:13-15, applying the reference "beautiful feet" to these "workers."<sup>13</sup>

The person in charge of the "workers" in a particular state or area is known as the "Overseer" or "Head Worker."<sup>14</sup>

Since one of their greatest points of emphasis is their workers going out "by two and two," according to Jesus' instructions to the twelve (Mark 6:7) and the seventy (Luke 10:1), they have become most widely known in America as "Two by Twos."

Officially, there is no particular name or designation by which the group is known as a whole. Among themselves they seem to prefer to be called simply "saints," "friends" or followers of the "Jesus Way."

## **Method Of Operation** ||



Edward Cooney was possessed of a strong personality which, combined with a fiery zeal, were traits well suited to the militant stance of this sect. Spurred on by Cooney's fresh attacks upon all sects and denominations, each new convert to the "Jesus Way" was sternly warned to sever all connections with his former church affiliation. Preachers of all groups other than their own were considered "false prophets" and "hirelings," preaching merely for the financial gain they received.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps their most outstanding doctrine has to do with METHOD OF OPERATION. Upon engaging them in conversation, one of the first things one learns is that they alone are following Jesus' in-

structions to go about preaching without taking any money or provisions. They have been known to literally give up all their possessions, and even break the closest of family ties, in order to go about preaching their message. For this practice they cite (and misapply, as we shall see later) Matthew, chapter 10, Mark, chapter 6, and Luke chapters 9 and 10, using portions of these chapters as their principal proof texts. They dress very modestly and are usually found living with a relative, fellow member of the cult or prospective "convert" whom they consider to be "worthy."

They travel about in pairs, composed of either men or women. Shying away from large cities, they usually prefer small towns or rural areas in which to operate, because of easier access into people's homes. They may be found in large cities, however, if there is the hope of gaining a hearing for their doctrines.

Generally, their first procedure is to visit a place and seek out those who are "worthy" as they consider them. This means those who are willing to receive them, listen to their teaching, and provide them with meals and lodging, free of charge. They state that they have come to preach the Gospel in the real "Jesus Way" and that they belong to no sect. If they are refused, they have been known to insult and even frighten the timid, and end up literally "shaking off the dust of their shoes" as a sign that such persons are not worthy of the Gospel.<sup>16</sup>

If they are received they soon bewilder their hosts by their persistent, though perverted, application of Scripture until they eventually gain them as followers. Since they are so well indoctrinated in their choice proof texts, though usually taken out of context, they find little difficulty in convincing the average person of the rightness of their position. This is especially true if the person they are teaching has become disillusioned with his own church and is seeking something else in which to believe.

The "Two by Twos" consider this method the true "Jesus Way" and all those who do not follow it are considered false and Satanic. So, actually the METHOD of going about the work of proclaiming the Gospel is regarded of cardinal importance in determining who is truly doing the will of God.

Relatively speaking, this group is not large numerically<sup>17</sup> and yet it is extremely aggressive in its efforts to convert people to its peculiar doctrines. They have been known to attend the meetings of various churches and observe those in the assembly who appeared to be timid or newly added members. They then find out the address of these persons and call on them with a view to obtaining a teaching appointment in their homes. On one occasion they attempted to arrange such a study with an apparently good "prospect" right in a church building following a regular service.<sup>18</sup>

A further indication of their zeal is that they have been known to conduct preaching services, nightly, for as long as two or three

months in order to gain one convert to their ranks.

So, while few in number, they pose a serious threat to true Bible Christianity wherever they are encountered.

## ***Their Process Of "Conversion"***



The method used by the "Two by Twos" for securing a "convert" has been described as follows: At the close of the message at a regular preaching service, to which the public is invited, an appeal is made to any person in the audience who realizes he is not right. Such persons are urged to turn to the Lord in true repentance and to signify this desire by raising their hand. Those who do so are considered to be born again. This action indicates that they have turned from the "wrong way" to the "Jesus Way" or to the "Testimony of Jesus," as it is variously called.<sup>19</sup>

Only those who become followers of "The Jesus Way" are regarded by this cult as true Christians. They are bold to state that there are no true servants of Christ in any of the churches, and that only those converted in their meetings are truly the children of God. Their basis for such a dogmatic claim is that THEY ONLY comply with the Lord's command to sell all they have and to "go and preach" the Gospel "without money and without price."

## ***Degree of Dedication***



Upon being baptized by immersion, or rebaptized, even if previously immersed in another church,<sup>20</sup> a "convert" of the "Two by Twos" is soon required to renounce emphatically all former religious connections. If the parents of a youthful convert are opposed to the teaching of this group, such young people have been known to forsake parents, home and all family obligations as a result of their "conversion" to this sect.<sup>21</sup>

The following is quoted from a letter written by a woman who left the "Two by Twos" to a person who was still in the cult. "You teach that your communion must be confined to those of the 'Jesus Way' and to them alone, and thereby with Jesus Christ and his apostles and prophets. Any other communion you hold to be of the devil and not of God. Consequently, if any one of a Christian household should become attached to your sect, be he husband or wife, brother or sister, (this whole household) may not again kneel in prayer, sing hymns, or read the Scriptures together."<sup>22</sup>



From this it can be seen that membership in this group calls for the strictest sense of devotion, even to the point of totally disrupting home and family life.

## ***Their Meetings***



The aim of the "Two by Twos" is to establish congregations in every place they are received. Each of these assemblies is presided over by the "Elder" (or "Bishop" as he may be called) who is a strong advocate of their distinctive tenets. They maintain that the ONLY way to worship God acceptably is for the meeting to take place in the private dwelling of one of their "saints." Any religious meeting held in a "church building" is sternly denounced as "the false way." Their Sunday meetings include the "breaking of bread." They sing from a specially prepared song book (one of their rare publications) titled "Hymns Old and New" published in Scotland. It contains a number of commonly sung tunes but with revised lyrics designed to better conform to their teachings.<sup>23</sup>

They also hold mid-week meetings for prayer and in all these gatherings both men and women alike participate by teaching and giving testimonies. Women are equally acceptable with men as preachers so long as they conform to the required method of going about "two by two" without a regular salary. Strict attendance is urged at all of their meetings and nothing but extreme illness is a sufficient excuse for missing.

Sometimes this group is known to make use of a public hall, school house, tent, or other meeting places where outsiders are invited to attend their Bible studies. Such gatherings are not easily identified as being conducted by "Two by Twos" because of a sign, which simply reads "GOSPEL MEETING," that is displayed.

## ***Attitude Toward Possessions***



Their ordinary converts are permitted to pursue regular secular occupations but must strictly adhere to the regulations and oversight of the cults leadership. Some who have joined the sect, being rather well off materially, have been urged to "sell all and go preach." There is a well authenticated case of a preacher in England, who, after arguing extensively with some of the "Two by Twos" finally broke up his home and went off with them. He went in one direction with another man while his young wife went off in a different direction



with another woman preacher. <sup>24</sup>

Another case, reported in Australia, tells of a young man with considerable property who, becoming attracted by their preaching, expressed the desire to join them in their work. When they informed him that he would be required to sign over all his property to them before they would "anoint him and lay hands on him for the receiving of the Holy Spirit" his eyes were opened to their false teaching. <sup>25</sup>

While a "saint" (meaning an ordinary member) may retain possession of his own home, they regard it wholly unfit for a "true preacher" to have a settled home and family. They cite the fact that Jesus had "no place to lay his head" and then stress that "The Jesus Way" calls for a strict imitation of Christ in the matter of earthly possessions.

## ***Attitude Toward Marriage***



It has already been mentioned that family life is completely severed by those who go out to preach "two by two." In addition to this the "Cooneyites" subtly forbid the marriage of their preachers. During their early history, those who were married at the time of their "conversion" generally separated upon becoming members. <sup>26</sup> Children were given up as husband and wife went out separately, each with another man or woman. (Originally only couples of the same sex traveled together). Later, however, a husband and wife were permitted to go together. In justification of this practice they quote, and proceed to misapply, the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:48-50: "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? . . . for whosoever will do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister and mother."

This unscriptural attitude toward marriage (said to be "honorable in all" in Hebrews 13:4) has naturally led this cult to violate numerous other passages of scripture calling for mutual love and proper submission in the marital relationship. Any religion that either teaches openly or encourages subtly the destruction of the home and family, even though for worthy motives, strikes down one of the most sacred ordinances of God and thereby stands condemned by Christ himself.

## ***Their Misapplication of "Proof Texts"***



The usual starting point in any discussion with these people centers around their favorite doctrine, THE RIGHT WAY TO GO ABOUT PREACHING. The passages they begin with are found in Matthew

10, Mark 6, and Luke 9 (parallel passages relating to Jesus sending out his twelve apostles on the limited commission). They also bring in Luke 10 which relates to Jesus sending out the seventy disciples on a similar mission. From these two preaching missions they emphasize the following points: (1) As you go, preach. (2) Provide neither gold, silver nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, etc. That is, do not go prepared to rent your own living quarters or to make purchases of food or other necessities. (3) Go in pairs, "by two and two."

They then proceed to point out that, according to this teaching, those whom Jesus sent were to seek out, in the cities where they went, those individuals who were "worthy" and then stay with them. By "worthy" is meant those who seemed willing to receive them and listen to their message. They were to live in such homes and have their meals there without being required to pay for room and board. These provisions were considered in harmony with the principle that "the workman is worthy of his meat," (see Matthew 10:5-14).

From these accounts the "Two by Twos" draw the conclusion that this is the ONLY TRUE "Jesus Way" of preaching the Gospel and that all those who fail to follow this pattern are not to be considered true followers of Christ. In order to arrive at this conclusion they have had to regard Jesus' instructions in these passages as the necessary procedure, to be followed to the letter, for all future generations. With these convictions in view, it is easy to see why they regard the slightest deviations from this procedure to be sufficient evidence that one is a false teacher. Accordingly, this doctrine has become, with them, the standard rule by which they judge all other religious bodies. In their thinking, then, it seems very logical to begin a religious discussion on this point of the CORRECT way of going about preaching.

Let us now examine the "proof texts" of the "Two by Twos," to see whether they apply to the preaching of the Gospel for today. First of all, the twelve apostles were sent by Jesus upon a LIMITED preaching tour in Matthew 10. Verse 5 of that chapter clearly restricts the twelve in these words: "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans." Thus, the commission under which the "Two by Twos" are laboring did not allow for preaching to ANY GENTILE. At this point the "Two by Twos" violate their own proof text since they certainly preach to Gentiles. Furthermore, Jesus specifically charged the twelve to "go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6). This means they were restricted to preaching ONLY to the Jews.

In the similar commission, given to the seventy disciples in Luke 10:1, Jesus sent them, "two by two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself was about to come." The account in Matthew 10:23 adds, "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."

From these passages we learn two important facts about this

commission: (1) The twelve and the seventy were to preach to **JEWS ONLY**. (2) They were to preach only to Jews who lived in the **IMMEDIATE VICINITY** where Jesus himself intended to visit in the near future. Clearly, this was a **PREPARATORY** preaching mission. The very restrictions placed upon it by Jesus show that it was never intended to serve as the pattern for all future preaching tours.

The "Two by Twos" **DO NOT** restrict their preaching to Jews only, nor is their preaching done in the immediate environs of Judea, therefore, they are not fulfilling this commission. The very text they appeal to as proof for their method of preaching being correct, they themselves violate in the following ways: (1) They are preaching to the ones Jesus said **NOT** to preach to (**Gentiles**). (2) They are **NOT** preaching to the ones Jesus said to preach to (they make no concerted effort to reach Jews). (3) They are **NOT** restricting their preaching to the cities of Israel as Jesus specified.

Secondly, the **MESSAGE** of this commission was a limited one. Matthew 10:7 and Luke 10:9 clearly state that the message the twelve and the seventy were to preach was that the kingdom of God was "**AT HAND**" or "**IS COME NIGH** (near)." Just as John the Baptist had done before them, they preached a **PREPARATORY** message. Theirs was **NOT** a message that the kingdom had arrived. They did not preach the message of salvation through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus as they were commissioned to do later on (see Matthew 28:18-20 and the book of Acts). Since the "Two by Twos" do not preach the same message required by Jesus in Matthew 10 and Luke 10, they are violating the very text which they hold up as the basis for their preaching method.

In the third place, the limited commission under which the "Jesus Way" people claim to be laboring carried with it a **MINISTRY OF MIRACLES**. Notice Matthew 10:8: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers." In Mark 6:7 Jesus "gave them authority over the unclean spirits." The same thing is mentioned in Luke 9:1-2; 10:8 and Mark 6:13. When the seventy returned from their preaching tour they testified that "even the demons are subject to us in thy name." (Luke 10:17)

Obviously, the "Two by Twos" can do none of these things nor do they even claim to. They utterly fail in carrying out one of the most prominent features of the commission from which they claim to get their authority. When approached with this glaring discrepancy between what the Bible says and their practice they have explained that the healing, raising the dead, and casting out demons were only meant in a **SPIRITUAL** way. They say Jesus commanded the twelve and the seventy only to raise the "dead in sin," to heal those afflicted with the "disease of sin," and to cast out the "devils of sin." It isn't difficult to see why this cult is forced to such a ridiculous interpretation. They simply cannot duplicate the requirements of a **MAJOR** feature of the limited commission and yet have the boldness to claim they are the only ones who are really fulfilling it. Thus far, we have

seen that the "proof texts" used by the "Two by Twos" actually refute their practice instead of upholding it.

In the fourth place, the "Two by Twos" completely fail to understand the REASON for the twelve and seventy not taking "gold, silver, brass in your purse, no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff" (Matthew 10:9-10). The context clearly indicates why these disciples were restricted from taking provisions with them. This was to be a HURRIED trip. Jesus himself was soon "about to come" to these very cities in person. It was important for the people in them to be prepared for his coming. Therefore, the twelve and seventy were not to make elaborate preparations for an extended preaching tour since they would not be gone very long. Where people were not receptive at once, they were to move on immediately. When persecuted in a given city they were to "flee into the next" (Matthew 10:23). Because of being in such haste Jesus told them to "salute no man on the way" (Luke 10:4). Salutations in those days were lengthy and elaborate and the nature of their mission did not allow for any waste of precious time. Even with all these instructions for a "whirlwind" preaching tour, Jesus informed them that they would not get through all the cities of Israel before he himself began traveling the same route (Matthew 10:23).

Thus "Jesus Way" preachers totally miss the PURPOSE of this limited commission. This accounts for their mistaken idea that this mission was given as a "model" for all preaching missions throughout the Christian age. Nothing could be farther from a correct understanding of the passages under discussion.

Jesus' clear instructions in Luke 22:35-36 afford additional proof that the "Two by Twos" are in error concerning the matter of not taking money or provisions with them on preaching tours. Prior to his arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus reminded his apostles that they had not lacked anything when he sent them out without provisions on the limited commission. Then, perhaps with the Great Commission in mind, which would call for a worldwide ministry, Jesus said, "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet." (Luke 22:36) By this statement Jesus specifically LIFTS the previous restrictions, and plainly commands the taking of provisions on this forthcoming preaching mission to all nations. Therefore, if Jesus' teaching ever DID prohibit preachers from taking money or clothing with them as they went out to preach (and it did on the limited commission), NOW that prohibition has been lifted and Jesus actually authorized the making of material preparations.

One "Two by Two" member made a feeble attempt to twist the Luke 22:35-36 passage by suggesting that Jesus was really rebuking his apostles for still wanting to take a purse and wallet. He reached the apex of absurdity by saying that Jesus' quotation of Isaiah 53:12: "He was reckoned with transgressors" had reference to his own disciples rather than the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus.

(The apostles were "transgressors" for violating Jesus' instructions regarding taking provisions!)

In summary, note that there is no continuation of the limited preaching commission of Matthew 10, Mark 6, and Luke 9-10. This mission was SPECIFIC IN ITS SPHERE, directed, not to the Gentiles, but to the Jews of Judea only. This mission was also SPECIFIC IN ITS OBJECT, designed to prepare for the coming of Jesus and to announce the nearness of the kingdom. Finally, this mission was SPECIFIC IN ITS CHARACTER, attended by miraculous credentials which verified the preachers as divinely sent.

Therefore, this mission was FULFILLED by those to whom it was given and thus has no application to men preaching the Gospel today.

## ***The "Two by Two" Doctrine Refuted***



An important distinction which the "Two by Twos" fail to make is between the LIMITED COMMISSION (already analyzed) and the GREAT COMMISSION recorded in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16 and Luke 24:44-49. This latter preaching mission was considerably different. According to the above passages it was intended to be worldwide and to continue until "the end of the world." It differed in the MESSAGE to be preached (faith in the resurrected Christ, repentance unto the remission of sins through the blood of Jesus, and baptism into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit). It differed in the SCOPE of the preaching (into all the world, unto all nations, to every creature). It also differed in several other important features. There were no restrictions in the Great Commission as to taking money or other provisions when going out to preach. Thus, one of the chief features of the "Two by Twos" is not to be found in Jesus' final commission under which the preaching of the Gospel is to be carried out today.

We now come to another element of Jesus' limited commission to the twelve and the seventy. This point is one of the strongest emphasized by the "Two by Twos" as they cite their "proof texts." According to Jesus' specific instructions, under that limited commission, preachers were to go out IN PAIRS, "by two and two." This means that the twelve were sent out in six pairs and the seventy in thirty-five pairs.

This method, the "Two by Twos" insist, is the only true way of going out to preach today. The idea is advanced that, if preachers go about today singly or in trios, this amounts to proof positive that they are of a "false way." Again, let it be kept in mind that no such requirement was imposed upon those who were to go into all the world



preaching the Gospel to every creature under the Great Commission. Silence on this point, in itself, should be sufficient to show that one of the primary tenets of the "Two by Twos" is based upon a preaching commission which has been SUPERCEDED. The final charge of Christ to evangelize the world does not involve the necessity of going in pairs, therefore that procedure is simply not binding upon us today.

However, the "Two by Twos" are quick to point out that early preachers, in fact, DID go out in pairs following the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20. They cite Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas, Barnabas and John Mark, and Peter and John as examples. Of course, numerous such instances can be noted in the preaching missions of the apostles and their companions. Indeed, the method of going about in pairs has much to commend it. One person can be of much assistance to the other, through mutual companionship and encouragement, especially in times of physical danger and hardship. Eventoday personal evangelists find much value in traveling in couples. But this is far different from making "by two and two" the ONLY correct method of traveling on preaching tours and then considering all those who do not follow this procedure to be "false" and "hirelings." Here the "Two by Twos" make something a matter of faith which should only be considered an expedient. In other words, the New Testament makes the number of preachers traveling together at one time of NO consequence whatever. They were to bear the right message (the Gospel) and go to the right people (all creatures) but there was no such thing as a RIGHT NUMBER (pairs) traveling together in order for them to be considered true followers of Christ.

A careful reading of the book of Acts shows the fallacy of the position that preachers MUST travel "by two and two." Sometimes preachers of the Gospel went out on preaching tours ALONE. Philip went BY HIMSELF to preach to the city of Samaria (Acts 8:5). This is the Philip who is later called "the evangelist" (Acts 21:8). The "Two by Twos" attempt to explain this away by saying that Philip was not SENT OUT but only DRIVEN OUT (of Jerusalem) when he went preaching alone. But Acts 8:26 tells us that an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip and sent him to preach to the eunuch. In Acts 8:39-40 we again find Philip going ALONE into many cities preaching the Gospel and this at the direction of the Holy Spirit. According to the Holy Spirit it was not necessary to have a traveling companion when carrying out the Great Commission.

The Apostle Peter also went ALONE on an extended preaching tour which took him through Lydda and up to Joppa on the west coast of Palestine (Acts 9:32-43). Paul can be found in Damascus preaching Jesus, ALONE, following his conversion (Acts 9:19-22). Because of severe persecution Paul is sent, ALONE, to Tarsus (Acts 9:30) where he probably spent the next several years preaching and establishing churches in Cilicia.

Several years ago Richard Hollerman made a survey of the book

of Acts noting the number of persons who traveled together in each reference to an evangelistic journey in that book plus other New Testament passages. The results of that survey indicate that the number who traveled together varied quite widely. The following list enumerates the number of persons with the times this number is mentioned given in parentheses: one person (15); two persons (11); three persons (7); four persons (2); seven persons (1); eight persons (1); two persons plus an unspecified additional number (2); three persons plus an unspecified addition number (2).<sup>27</sup>

Thus we can easily see that the doctrine of the necessity of traveling IN PAIRS was neither believed nor practiced by preachers in New Testament times.

## ***The "Unpaid Preacher"***

### ***Doctrine Refuted***



From Jesus' reference in the limited commission to "no purse, gold, silver, etc.," the "Two by Twos" have strongly denounced the practice of giving a Gospel preacher any form of monetary support. Thus the "paying" of "wages" to a preacher or a fixed "salary" for his work of preaching, calling and other evangelistic efforts, is condemned as sinful. A man who would accept any such financial arrangement is obviously a "hireling" whose only concern is for money and not for serving God. So say the "Two by Twos."

By way of a Scriptural reply to this position, let us notice the following teaching. In Galatians 6:6 the principle is laid down which says, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things." Here we have inspired authorization for a person who teaches others the Scriptures to receive "good things" from those he teaches. Obviously this is meant to encourage the giving of food, clothing, shelter and other benefits to a teacher of the word of God as recompense for the time and effort he has put forth in providing such teaching. It is assumed that the teacher is spending his time in this work in lieu of working at regular employment. Whether this remuneration is in the form of a "side of beef" or its equivalent in coin or currency is not stated. This allows the "good things" to include material possessions or the money with which to purchase them.

In I Corinthians, the 9th chapter, Paul sets forth his RIGHT to receive support as an apostle and preacher. He felt compelled to do this because of those in Corinth who questioned his apostleship. In verse 6 Paul asserts, in question form, his and Barnabas' right to forego regular secular employment in favor of receiving their material needs from the people to whom they ministered the word



of God. In verse 11 Paul asks, "If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?" Here, again, the apostle sets forth the principle that preachers have the right to support (money) in return for their spiritual service (teaching God's word) to others. Then in verse 14 the principle is once more clearly stated in these words: "Even so did the Lord or - dain that they that proclaim the Gospel should live of the Gospel." The "Two by Twos" lay much emphasis on the statement of Paul in verse 18, "What then is my reward? That, when I preach the Gospel, I may make the Gospel without charge...." What they fail to understand is that, due to conditions there in Corinth, Paul found it expedient to WAIVE his right support. This he did voluntarily as verses 12 and 15 show: "Nevertheless, we did not use this right.... but I have used none of these things." Preachers were entitled to financial support in New Testament times but were not required to accept it if conditions made it unwise to do so.

Later, in II Corinthians 11:8, Paul speaks most emphatically, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, that I might minister unto you." Certainly by WAGES here he refers to monetary support. The other churches referred to were those of Macedonia (verse 9).

In Philippians 4:14-18 Paul again tells us that he received support from the church at Philippi repeatedly. All of this proves beyond dispute that Gospel preachers not only have the RIGHT to support but that they actually ACCEPTED such support in the form of "wages" for their work of preaching and teaching God's word. The position of the "Jesus Way" that preachers CANNOT Scripturally receive money for preaching is contrary both to New Testament teaching and example.

## ***The "Unmarried Preacher"***

### ***Doctrine Refuted***



In tracing the early history of the "Two by Twos" we noted that they seemed to discourage marriage among their "workers." Even today members of this cult argue that preachers should not be married. They point out that Paul was unmarried and that his writings appear to discourage marriage by those engaged in the Lord's work. We do not dispute the position that the apostle Paul was unmarried. But we hasten to point out that preachers in New Testament times were NOT prohibited from marrying. In fact, there is clear Scriptural evidence that preachers had the right to marry and that some actually were married.

In Paul's argument in I Corinthians, 9th chapter, designed to

vindicate his apostleship, he touches on the subject of a preacher's right to marry. In verse 5 he asks, "Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" The answer is obviously, "Yes." Paul and Barnabas DID have the privilege of being married and of taking their wives on their preaching tours if they chose. Notice that this passage appears to confirm that the rest of the apostles WERE married, as were the Lord's brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas (See Matthew 13:55) and Cephas (Matthew 8:14 refers to Peter's wife). The New Testament knows nothing of a ban on marriage for preachers. This is a human doctrine which had its origin many centuries ago in the apostate church.

One more citation of a married preacher is the case of Philip, who is called "the evangelist" in Acts 21:8. He was not only married but had reared children to maturity for he is said to have had "four virgin daughters" in Acts 21:9. Needless to say, Philip's case proves an embarrassment to this cult and one of its members resorted to a stock evasion by arguing that Philip was not a "sent" preacher and therefore was apparently exempt from the marriage ban.

## ***The "No Church Building" Doctrine Refuted***



One of the "Two by Twos" most vehement objections is aimed at the use (and especially ownership) of a special building for their regular church meetings. Being extremely conservative, they strongly oppose anything that might suggest extravagance or vanity. They claim that regular meetings of the "saints" should be held only in private homes. To support this position they call attention to the several references in the New Testament where the church is spoken of as meeting in a person's home. Granted, there are such references, and no doubt the early church did make considerable use of private residences for church meetings where the apostle's teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers were engaged in. However, there is NO specific command or principle, expressed or implied, which may be interpreted as FORBIDDING any other meeting place for the church. The question centers around whether or not the mere mention of a house for church meetings in the Scriptures MUST be taken as a pattern which cannot be departed from without violating the will of God. The "Two by Twos" insist that it DOES furnish such a pattern. Let us examine the Scriptures to see if this is truly the case.

In the early days of the church we find examples of Christians

making use of the Temple in Jerusalem for prayer (Acts 3:1). In Acts 16:13-18 a careful study of the circumstances indicates that the "place of prayer" near the river had become a regular meeting place for the newly converted group of Christians which included Lydia and her household. Paul had been going to this place for "many days," no doubt to teach these new Christians and to pray with them.

After meeting with opposition in the synagogue of Ephesus (Acts 19:9-10) Paul separated the disciples and began meeting with them "in the school of Tyrannus." The use of this building evidently continued for two years as the meeting place for Christians. It was probably some type of school room or hall where classes were conducted by a man named Tyrannus.

These are a few instances where Christians met, as a church, in a location OTHER than a private house. From this we learn that there was no requirement of "home meetings" in New Testament days. While the advent of what we call "church houses" or "meeting houses" developed somewhat later, the New Testament contains neither command nor principle which would give Scriptural grounds for us opposing their construction and use.

Let us look at the church meeting in Acts 20:7-12. Was it a private house? The context does not indicate that it was. It does mention that it contained three floors, but we have no way of knowing, with certainty, whether it was a private residence or not. One could argue either way with equal force. We cannot draw conclusions from the SILENCE of the Scriptures. The "Two by Twos" have taken the position that this WAS a private house, not because of what the Bible says, but because of a preconceived idea they have settled upon.

Scholars are generally agreed that there is a possible allusion to the use of a special meeting place for the church in I Corinthians 11:17-34. This passage discusses the church's assembly for the Lord's Supper. The church in Corinth was abusing the practice of the Lord's Supper by making it a time for partaking of a regular meal at the same time. This was causing division because those who were better off had plenty to eat while the poorer ones had little. Paul asks the question, "What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not?" (verse 22). The implication is that THIS meeting place was NOT a private house but some other type building large enough for accommodating a sizable congregation. This is further suggested by verse 34 which says, "If any man is hungry, let him eat at home..." While we cannot dogmatically assert the exact type of building this was, there are notable indications that it was not a private home.

Anyone even slightly acquainted with church history is fully aware of the fact that the early church met for worship in catacombs beneath the streets of Rome. This was necessitated by the severe

persecution being waged against Christianity in those days. If the church had been required to meet in private homes during those trying times, obviously it would not have survived. The early church knew nothing of mandatory "private house meetings" as "Two by Twos" insist on today.

They have such strong feelings about this subject that some members have been known to misapply, grossly, various passages of Scripture in an effort to "prove" their point. The case of the Jewish leaders whom Jesus rebuked for loving "the chief seats in the synagogues" (Matthew 23:6) is used to "prove" that people who make use of church buildings today are Pharisees. They also assert that the "synagogue of Satan" mentioned in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 is a reference to the sin of meeting in a church building. The absurdity of such misuse of Scripture seems to know no bounds.

## ***Their Teaching About Christ***



As important as the person and work of Christ are, a discussion with "Two by Twos" of these matters often never even arises due to the emphasis they place on the other subjects dealt with previously in this study. Therefore, the author has not been able to obtain much information in personal conversations with "Two by Twos" concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. The following has been reported by those who have had more success in discovering their viewpoint on the work of Christ.

Concerning the necessity of the blood of Christ for the atonement of man's sins, the "Two by Twos" seem to have a hazy concept. One of them is reported to have once commented, when pressed about the necessity of Christ's blood as the ground of salvation, "How can the blood of a dead man save anyone?"<sup>28</sup> A couple who once were members of this cult state flatly, concerning "Two by Two" doctrine on the blood of Christ, "They claim that we are saved by Jesus' life but not by his shed blood."<sup>29</sup> If this attitude is representative of the group as a whole, as it appears to be, they do not hold the conviction expressed in I Peter 1:18-19 that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Another person, once a member of the cult, revealed the following in a letter published in a tract. "Of all the time I was with them, I only once recollect one of their preachers mentioning the blood (of Christ)."<sup>30</sup>

According to W. M. Rule of England, they have even gone so far as blasphemously pronouncing one of their preachers to be "Jesus Christ come in flesh."<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps the testimony of one who has left this cult and written

an "Open Letter" to them best summarizes their understanding of Christ's atoning work on the cross. The "Open Letter," printed by W. M. Rule, in his tract, states, "You deny the atonement made by our Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross... your denial of this classes you with every anti-Christian sect.... Everywhere in the Scriptures we are shown that the blessing flows to us through the death and blood-shedding of Christ, WHICH YOU DENY.... The devil does not mind what else you preach so long as you deny the efficacy of his atoning work at Calvary." <sup>32</sup>

According to such testimonies as cited above, it becomes quite clear that the "Savior" of the "Two by Twos" falls far short of being the Savior revealed in the Scriptures. And, regardless of what other matters on which they might be in error, to have the wrong view of salvation through the blood of Christ, constitutes a sufficient reason to issue the sternest of warnings against them.

## ***Conclusion*** ||

From studying the few writings available on "Two by Two" doctrine, together with information learned from numerous interviews with members, it becomes apparent that there are rather significant differences between members of the cult. The lack of a recognized headquarters, any formal organization, or published literature accounts for the extreme difficulty in compiling a systematic presentation of all their doctrines. The foregoing material covers several of the most prominent subjects on which members, with many years of affiliation with the cult, have openly committed themselves. Every attempt has been made to honestly and fairly represent their position on the topics dealt with.

The purpose of the author in presenting this material has been to provide those who may be confronted with the teachings of this sect with a brief history of its background and Scriptural grounds for refuting its unbiblical doctrines.

The author's firm conviction is that salvation may be obtained through no other name than that of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). The Gospel consists of the death of Jesus for our sins, his burial and resurrection from the dead (I Corinthians 15:1-4). This salvation may be realized by every person who places genuine faith in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16), who repents of his sins (Acts 17:30-31), and who is baptized into the death of Christ to rise to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-4). May God so bless every reader of this booklet, who has not already done so, that he may become an obedient follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Footnotes

1. "Heresies Exposed," by William C. Irvine; Loizeaux Brothers, Inc.; New York; 35th Printing, 1973; pages 73-78.
2. "The Small Sects in America," by Elmer T. Clark; Abingdon Press; New York; Revised edition, 1949; page 184.
3. "Cults and Isms," by J. Oswald Sanders; Zondervan Pub. Co.; Grand Rapids, MI; 1962; page 166.
4. "THE DISCERNER" Vol. II, No. 9, January-March, 1958; Religion Analysis Service, Inc.; Minneapolis, MN; Article, "Who Are the Cooneyites?" page 12.
5. "The Cooneyites or Go-Preachers and their Doctrines," by W. M. Rule; Central Bible Depot; London, England; no date; 24 pages. (Most recent mailing address: Central Bible Hammond Trust, 50 Grays Inn Rd London W.C.1, England).
6. "A Cunning Cult," Authors anonymous; Gospel Tract Ministry, P. O. Box 77, Coffeyville, KS; no date; 12 pages. (Available from Religion Analysis Service, Inc., 2708 E. Lake St., Suite 231, Minneapolis, MN 55406).
7. Ibid., page 8.
8. Rule, pages 3, 4.
9. "Heresies Exposed," page 73, footnote.
10. Rule, page 4.
11. Ibid., pages 4, 5.
12. Ibid., page 5.
13. "A Cunning Cult," page 2.
14. Ibid., page 4.
15. Rule, pages 5, 6.
16. Ibid., pages 6, 7.
17. However, several years ago, a member of this cult, then working on a thesis about the group at the University of Oregon, told a personal friend of the author that they numbered as many as 400,000.
18. This took place at a church in Douglas, WY where the author once ministered.
19. Rule, page 7.

20. "A Cunning Cult," page 7.
21. Rule, page 8. The author once counseled with the distraught parents of a young lady who turned against them upon affiliating with this group in North Platte, NE.
22. Rule, page 8.
23. "A Cunning Cult," page 5.
24. Rule, page 10.
25. Ibid., page 10.
26. Ibid., page 10.
27. A printed survey sheet containing this information was provided by Richard Hollerman in private correspondence with the author.
28. Rule, page 19.
29. "A Cunning Cult," page 8.
30. Rule, page 19.
31. Ibid., page 20.
32. Ibid., pages 20, 21.