

# GOODBYE, BELOVED BRETHREN

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Today the Exclusive Brethren struggle to present a bold, new face to the outside world after the stormiest period in their history. But they still live up to their name.

Try and talk to them about what happened in Aberdeen, Scotland, that week-end in July 1970, during Big Jim Taylor's visit, and you will be met by blank looks. For they refuse to mention his name. They want to forget the past.

That is why I have widely made use of private letters and circulars published by the sect in an effort to tell their inside story for the first time. I also received invaluable service from two former members of the Brethren who suffered under the wicked regime. This book is dedicated to them and all other men, women and children who experienced great hardship and misery by so-called Christians acting 'in the name of God'.

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## INTRODUCTION

There were few tears shed for Big Jim Taylor, the Archangel of the Exclusive Brethren religious sect, when he died of a heart attack in his New York home in the autumn of 1970. During his eleven years as leader to thousands throughout the world, even behind the Iron Curtain, his 'earthly paradise' brought hell to many families.

When he came to power it was estimated that he had more than 100,000 followers, but this figure has dwindled, particularly in Scotland, because of his harsh edicts', based on his interpretations of the Bible, and the Aberdeen Scandal.

His advent as a latter-day prophet brought the rule of Separate Tables, which forbade families from eating and living with any 'unclean', or non-believer, whether or not they be one of the same family; the rule of no, wedding receptions, no honeymoons, no association with trade unions or trade associations, no social contact with non-Brethren, and the rule that the body of a dead brother belonged to the Assembly and that no relatives, not even members of the immediate family, would be allowed to attend funerals if they did not belong to the sect.

In the twilight of Big Jim's life, the once proud, strong movement had been divided and sub-divided beyond recognition. Today it faces extinction. If this should mean a return to the less rigid teachings of earlier leaders then perhaps it will be a good thing. But whatever happens now inside the Exclusive Brethren it will never wipe out the legacy of bitter memories and untold suffering caused by Big Jim.

The 71-year-old Archangel was accused of 'Nazi-type' tactics by preaching complete separatism from the outside world and by using young, fanatical priests to enforce his edicts. There were scores of cases where dissident Brethren were virtually 'brainwashed' in a bid to force them to stay within the Exclusive fold.

Taylor has been compared to Adolf Hitler. In Scotland, a young Brethren woman who underwent treatment in a clinic for a nervous phobia brought on by the Exclusive teachings, was given several books to help in her cure and eventual return to a normal life. All of these books were medical texts, except one. This was William Shirer's best-seller *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*.

In the last year of his life Brethren were aware of a disturbing turn in Taylor's teachings and of hilarity and showmanship at meetings. Because of this change, the friendly relations between Big Jim and his second-in-command, Stanley McCallum, were strained to breaking point.

The Archangel survived the biggest scandal of all by barely three months - the 'naked lady' incident in a house in Aberdeen. But when he died his vast following was melting away. As one Exclusive member told me near the end, "We as Christians do not condone iniquity, irrespective of who is responsible. The vital thing in life is your character, your moral standard. A man's character is more important than money. To go through the world with a clean sheet is most important. My mother and father taught me so! We will not stand immorality within the movement. Righteousness is our leader, not Big Jim Taylor."

Many devoted followers who turned their backs on Taylor after the scandal believed his death could be the movement's salvation from the sins of the past. But hundreds had stayed on, many even under threat of banishment unless they declared '100 per cent support for J.T. Jr.' Such was his power.

Six days before he died Big Jim spoke confidently at a huge rally in New York of the 'great clearance' that had taken place within his movement. But his great age, weakening condition and the sensational events of the past few weeks proved too much for him. Before the last hymn he wearily excused himself from the meeting, saying, "Goodbye to you, Beloved Brethren."

## I. WHO ARE THEY?

Where the wild Scottish Grampian mountains reach the grey North Sea there stands the house where Angels fell out. A modest, detached bungalow, high on a hill overlooking the city of Aberdeen, was the scene of the confrontation between the two American based leaders of the Exclusive Brethren religious sect, Big Jim Taylor, self-confessed leader of the world-wide movement, and his deputy, Stanley McCallum. In a bedroom at the rear of the house at Nigg, Big Jim, the ageing 'Archangel', was accused of corruption by the 'Angel' after he found a nude sister in Taylor's bed.

A wave of gossip and rumour swept the movement until the scandal exploded in black newspaper headlines in Scotland when Taylor gave his version of the incident. He claimed he had been held prisoner at one stage in the bungalow, and complained to the Scottish police. The ensuing conflict caused the biggest split in the Exclusive Brethren since the sect's trouble-torn birth in the first half of the last century'. Support for the Angels was divided from Brisbane to Buckie, from New Zealand to New York. In the blow-up it was revealed that tapes of Taylor's meeting in Aberdeen contained vile language, vulgarity, and references to sexual organs. Taylor, silver-haired and to many, silver-tongued, found himself fighting for his very existence as universal leader, a position he had held since 1959 when he succeeded his late father.

Banffshire-born McCallum did not escape the wrath of some Brethren. There were reported threats against his life and an incredible campaign was mounted to blacken his character after he was excommunicated. A photostat copy of a letter signed by McCallum came into my possession during the upheaval. In it the Angel claimed attempts by Taylorite supporters were made to destroy his testimony in relation to what happened in Big Jim's bedroom that night of Saturday,

July 25th, 1970. He described their efforts as a “frame-up of Satan”.

Taylor never forgave the Scots to his dying day. He told one British Sunday newspaperman that he would never set foot on British soil again. *And he didn't*. Twelve weeks after the Nigg incident he was dead. But there was a time when the British Isles had a special place in his heart. He enjoyed his trips to the North-east of Scotland in particular. Like that day in the summer of 1964 when men, women and children spilled from the exits of Aberdeen's Music Hall into Golden Square eight hours after they had first queued to hear his word.

Afternoon sunshine sparkled on the statue of the Duke of Gordon, staring loftily down his granite nose at the scene below. Office girls leaned from the upstairs windows around the square as the beaming Archangel pushed gently past his followers, who reverently touched and plucked at his suit as if he were a saint.

To the man in the street Big Jim was a man of mystery who periodically issued iron-hard edicts from his sprawling, three-storeyed house in Brooklyn, New York. To the former Brethren members who had suffered terribly under the dictatorial rules the one-time American draper was a figure to be hated. His Scriptural edicts, narrow and legalistic interpretations of the Bible, had resulted in broken homes, broken hearts, suicide, and, maybe, even murder.

But that day in Aberdeen no one booed or hurled accusations. Big Jim was unquestionably at the height of his power. Only a miracle, it seemed to his enemies, would clip his wings and bring the Archangel crashing to earth.

Who are the Exclusive Brethren? Why do they have a fetish for secrecy? Why have they turned their backs on their fellow men? Incredible as it seems they have not always been the narrow, joyless, severe and inward-looking disciples of the Bible they are today. It is only in the last decade that they lived their ‘ostrich-like’ existence, shunning social contact with non-believers, branding ex-sect members as leprous. A Church of Scotland minister, who preached for thirty years in the same Banffshire parish, summed them up: “I have spent

half of my life here and I still do not know them. What I do know is that anyone not of their persuasion may just as well be heathen.”

Many ex-Brethren members blame Taylor for all their troubles. Said one Aberdeenshire man: “I am certain all the trouble over his future is God's judgement for Brethren choosing the wrong man as universal leader.”

The Brethren which had its roots in Dublin, spread to Plymouth and Bristol . . . and emerged as the so-called ‘Plymouth’ Brethren. There followed a split and the Open and Exclusive or Close Brethren went their separate ways in 1848.

Their womenfolk are easily picked out. They wear no make-up and wear expensive but severe-coloured clothes, with a weakness for fur trimmings. Early in 1970 their priests urged them to throw away their foundation garments and wear their hair long under headscarves and flowing down their backs, as ‘proof of their affection for Christ’.

Big Jim based this edict on the New Testament (1 *Corinthians* 11: 4-6, 13-15): ‘Every man praying or prophesying, having, his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven . . . Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man hath long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.’

This passage reflects the social code of Graeco-Roman times when respectable women covered the head when going out of doors, while prostitutes or disgraced women walked in public with bare heads or their hair shorn. According to Paul, any woman who walked in public with her head uncovered was immodest and would not be admitted to a church. But as the events in Aberdeen spread like a shock wave round the world the women tidily tucked their hair back into their expensive-looking hats.

Brethren women, or ‘sisters’ as they are called within the sect, have an air of Victoriana, even in this modern age. Over

the years the sisterhood has been the butt of many slurring references of Taylor's so-called ministry. A sister has few rights both at home or in the church. And before his death the Archangel had reduced the role of Brethren women to that of slaves within their own homes.

During the Aberdeen scandal he claimed the woman in his bedroom was 'serving him' by washing his feet and drying them with her hair. It was Scriptural, he argued, but his opponents maintained otherwise. In New York a few days before his death he endorsed that feet-washing should be carried out in all Brethren households. Among children and between parents, but only the wife should wash her husband's feet.

Sisters in recent years have played an increasing role in meetings by giving out hymns and participating in readings, but brothers feel this is wrong and that this is calculated to remove them from their designated place in church.

Although no sex orgies took place at Brethren meetings, as has been alleged, there were disturbing sexual undertones introduced at meetings, by word if not by action.

Sisters have little or no say in the Exclusive hierarchy. Big Jim himself said Brethren wives were for 'ornamentation'. Women hold no key positions in the sect; this is strictly forbidden. The silent sisters have to put up with indignities that would make a suffragette weep. Their place in the church is to remain silent. To be obedient and to get on with the job of being a faithful Brethren sister, without fuss. Even if this means young mothers having to take their babies to meetings at all hours; or frightened, lonely spinsters crossing a darkened city for the early morning service.

At home the place of the Brethren housewife is to provide comfort and companionship for her husband and to bring up their children to the teachings of the sect. Unless the wife is branded as an outcast and must live under the same roof as her husband, and yet be treated as a leper, cut off from her elder children and husband, who is forbidden to have sex with her.

Brethren men and women can be polite. They will not deliberately cold-shoulder neighbours, although they are not en-

couraged to talk freely. Brethren who have been 'withdrawn from', that is banished from the meetings, are shunned. They live in traditional bungalows, preferably detached and without television aerials, for TV is taboo. But they appreciate the luxury of wall-to-wall carpeting and even gold-plated taps in their bathrooms.

Menfolk dress in sombre, expensive suits and hats when they attend services. Otherwise they wear their normal working clothes, which in most cases in Scotland is the dark blue woollen jersey of the fishing community. Brethren do not reap their rewards only from the sea. They own businesses, and before the recent troubles preferably small ones with as little contact as possible with the general public. Some members have turned down the chance of fortunes rather than offend the movement by working with or for 'non-believers'.

Brethren children are rigged out in style for meetings but only the girls stand out from other girls because of their long, plaited hair. The children are taught from an early age to follow in their parents' footsteps and have no choice. Until a few years ago they were not allowed to 'break bread' until they were 12 years old. According to Taylorism, if they had not joined the fellowship after that age they were to be given the 'Separate Tables' treatment. This meant they had to eat alone from the rest of the family. In New Jersey there was a case where a couple and their five youngsters left the sect because the priests wanted them to have their 3-year-old child break bread and attend meetings.

Brethren bairns are healthy, well-behaved and have almost complete rule of the house, despite their seemingly strict upbringing.

Big Jim has stressed time and again that his adult flock must grin and bear their children's tantrums. Looking back on his younger days and life with his father, James Taylor told Brethren in America: "I was a little sassy at times, but he was very kind he did not mind my sassiness. And do not mind your kid being sassy because when they are they teach you something." It is hard to believe this was the same man talking whose iron edicts had caused so much misery.

Because of their beliefs the sect will not allow non-believers to cross their threshold. No matter how friendly I have been with some members they have not invited me across their threshold.

Brethren life revolves round their church which is the assembly. It is almost the sole topic of their lives.

The members mind their own business, but they operate an uncanny grapevine to pick up the latest gossip and talk that may be going on around them, although they are not encouraged to, talk to non-believer neighbours. They are not too well informed, however, about world events; they do not buy Sunday newspapers (openly, that is) and do not watch television or listen to the radio, apart from the weather forecast or fish prices if they are fishermen.

Every household is rich in literature. There is the Holy Bible and other books. But the theme is always the same; the teachings of Jim Taylor. Yards of his tracts and books line the shelves. White paper booklets containing verbatim proceedings at his rallies and meetings throughout the world, made and printed in England and distributed to members by the Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot in Kingston-on-Thames or by sect leaders; books such as his *Foundation of Gospel*, which lays bare his separate table teachings.

But rules are made to be broken and Brethren do buy Sunday papers and their children read comics at the risk of being reported by their local hierarchy. All books of fiction are banned by the sect but there was a case in an Aberdeenshire town where a teenage girl was found in possession of the risqué classic, *Fanny Hill - Memoirs of a Lady of Pleasure*. Youngsters were warned: "Do not read such filth; it will contaminate your mind and seep into your moral vein". Sound advice. But the Brethren ban on books also covers adventure stories such as *Treasure Island*.

When the American Angels decreed that only spiritual works were to be read Brethren all over the world began making gigantic bonfires of all other kinds of literature. As the flames lit up their back gardens no doubt they could hear Big Jim's voice booming in his heavy American accent: "The best books, of course, are what comes from the Stow Hill are

they not? The best book to have of course is the Bible, that is the book. We want those books. We do not destroy them."

But even now Taylor's Biblical Kirjath-Sepher, the city of the books, is tumbling down as disillusioned Brethren burn its books.

## II. A FAMILY CALLED DAVIDSON

On a numb November evening in the fishing town of Peterhead, in the Buchan region of Aberdeenshire, a man staggered drunkenly homewards through the empty streets. When John Davidson reached his council home in Atlantic Avenue he found he had a visitor. The man who had called on his wife and family earlier that night was an old friend of John's. As he put it, "I knew him long before he joined the Close Brethren".

Although well under the influence of drink, Davidson took in what the man was offering him; the rare chance to enter the Exclusive Brethren. "He asked me if I wanted to give up drinking and, of course, I agreed", recalls John, "God, how I agreed. I was really drinking heavily and welcomed a way to give it up. He told me the only way to abstain was to follow the Lord. He said I could not keep off drink any other way and that the Brethren would help me conquer my thirst for liquor."

John was told to attend a Gospel meeting the following week. The sect's meeting hall in Constitution Street was packed to hear a guest preacher from England. "I was simply overwhelmed by him. He preached something about 'silver and gold have I none but such as I have I give unto thee in the name of the Lord Jesus'."

The Exclusive Brethren had won a convert, and the following week his wife Lilian went to the meeting. For the first time in months they were going out together. "I was like a new man", admits John. And true to their word, John began to drink less and less. But eighteen months after he first joined the Brethren ranks, the blow fell. The Exclusive Brethren did a complete about turn in their approach to drink. It was ruled that members would be allowed to touch liquor for the first

time in their history. Whisky became known as the 'Creature of God'.

In fishing towns along the Moray 'Bible Belt' children were sent to the back doors of inns to buy liquor for their fishermen fathers. Sect priests did not allow their stocks to run dry and kept a well-stocked private bar at home to entertain fellow members. At rallies Big Jim Taylor was never without a charged glass of the hard stuff as he sat in his chair on the platform.

For John Davidson, who had by now stopped drinking altogether, the shock edict had disastrous effects.. "I could hardly believe my ears when the priests told us all: 'You will take drink as such as it is the gift of God.' They called it the creature of God."

John painfully remembered his drinking bouts of the past, and rebelled. "The priests came to my house and said I could take drink and could control it because of the spirit of God within me. One night I went to a priest's house in Peterhead and he gave me a glass of whisky, and that was the start."

That night, John, with £10 in his pocket, stumbled into the darkened streets and made his way to a local club and drank the night away. But hours later he was seen staggering from the club by two members of the Exclusive Brethren and they reported him to the priests. "I spent that night with a relative and when I got home the next morning Lilian told me the priests had been at our house at seven in the morning and they said I had to appear at a special court the following week. Lilian persuaded me to go but the priests called several times to make sure I would turn up. I went to that meeting, it was like a trial."

John had expected only a few of the leading Brethren to point out to him the follies of drinking in places inhabited by non-Brethren, the Unclean Ones. But when he arrived at the brightly lit hall he found it packed with men, women and children. He was accused of sin and of being drunk in a public place. "It seems if I had been blind roaring drunk in my own house I would have been within the scriptures", recalled John with a touch of bitterness.

They handed him a microphone to answer the charges but the priests, who sat directly in front of him, shouted him down. John could feel 400 pairs of eyes boring into his back as they gave their verdict that he should be 'shut up' from the Assembly. "I did not know what they meant at the time, I was told to 'get up and go' from the hall. Later that night two priests came to my house to explain what it meant."

Wearily rubbing his forehead, Davidson continued: "I was told I would not be allowed to sleep with my wife. I was told I would not be allowed to eat with either her or my children."

Davidson was, in fact, a victim of the sect's notorious edict of 'Separate Tables.' which forbids members to live or eat with non-believers. This was the edict at the root of the trouble which had threatened to tear the sect apart. It turned father against son, husband against wife and best friends against each other. It caused such a furore in North-east Scotland that it was estimated that 2,000 pulled out of a membership of more than 5,000.

At least John Davidson was lucky. The Brethren priests allowed his wife to stay with him. Lilian and their children, Phyllis, Wilma and baby Alexander, still attended sect meetings, while father stayed gloomily at home pondering over their future. For six weeks John lived apart from his family in his own home. Before the 'punishment' began a priest noted that the couple shared a double bed, while the children slept in one bed. He came to their home with a single bed which was put in a spare room. This was to be John's room. "Every seven days the priests took turns in calling to see if we were carrying out the separate tables edict to the rule, and to see if I was ready to be brought back into the fellowship", said John. "They always called around meal times to make sure I was not eating at the same table as my wife and youngsters. They need not have worried."

At first his wife Lilian was in full accord with what was happening. "I believe if you go into a thing, you must go into it all the way", she told me during our interview. "John told me he would return to the meetings after the six weeks ended, and I believed him and thought it better we

stick to what the priests said." John, in fact, did return to the fold. He was drinking as heavily as ever. "A doctor told me later I must have been drinking as much as a bottle a day, but I really wouldn't like to say. I was making a lot of money at work and there was always money to buy drinks. Unfortunately, other things were being neglected."

But in the months that followed relations with the movement became strained to breaking point. Spies were quick to report the misdemeanours of sect members. The Davidsons had experience of this Gestapo mentality before they were even admitted to the movement.

Before people are admitted to the movement the Assembly is asked to approve the choice. When the Davidson 'application' came before the Peterhead Care Meeting the priests turned it down. John and Lilian were later told that a sister had seen him leave a shop one Sunday morning carrying newspapers under his arm. Sunday newspapers, unlike daily newspapers, are taboo and his 'crime' was serious in the eyes of the Brethren. John vigorously denied the charge and proved that in fact he could not have bought newspapers, or anything else in the shop, because it never opened on Sundays. What in fact he carried under his arm was a newly-ironed shirt wrapped up in a daily newspaper. The priests were satisfied his story was true.

But the Davidsons fell foul of the priests, soon after joining the Brethren when it was noted Mrs Davidson and her children regularly visited her elderly mother's house on the outskirts of Peterhead. "They said I would have to stop going", said Lilian. "We were only supposed to visit relatives if we intended to preach the gospel to them. My mother lived three miles outside the town and a visit to her lasted nearly all day. They claimed I must have had a meal with her and this was strictly forbidden. For the next two years I never set foot inside my mother's home."

But in the summer of 1965 when John Davidson was readmitted to the meetings he was again at loggerheads with priests over his employment as a house painter. Because of the Brethren's disassociation from trade unions, John did not belong to a union. He was working at a job in Peterhead when

the union discovered he was not a member. He was asked to join or find another job.

John explained his dilemma to the priests, but his pleas were ignored. John discussed the position with his wife and they agreed it would be better if he quit work. He was on the dole for two weeks when a sect member offered him a job as a storeman in his grocer's shop in Peterhead. He had been making about £18 a week as a painter. As a storeman he worked from 7.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. at about 3s 2½d an hour.

They found keeping up with the Joneses was impossible. Explained Mrs Davidson: "You have to keep to a certain standard of living if you join the Brethren. You have to wear the best of clothes to meetings — you and your children. You also have to invite Brethren for meals and you go to their homes. They certainly enjoy a high standard of social life among themselves. We found it difficult to keep up this way of life on less than £10 a week."

The 'spies', who had failed to stop John from sharing his flask of tea and sandwiches with fellow painters at the docks, later reported seeing other members of his family calling at their home in Atlantic Avenue. "My mother was ill at the time", said John. "I knew if she had died I would be unable to attend the funeral. I couldn't take any more and decided I wasn't going to continue with the meetings because of what was happening to me and my family."

Peterhead has fifteen different religious denominations to serve the spiritual needs of its population of 12,502. Sundays and weekdays men, women and children flock to the churches and meeting halls. Presbyterians, Catholics, Methodists, Salvationists — even the Love Family, a quaint sect who preach happiness through the Bible to accordion music and the beat of tambourines.

But when John decided to make the final break, he would not be found in any of these places of worship. Instead, he persuaded his wife to skip Brethren meetings and take the children to the beach. Every Sunday they slipped out of their tenement flat and made for the Lido, a stretch of golden sand under the shadow of Peterhead Prison, or to the beaches at the mouth of the River Ugie. Or they spent the day hunting

for shellfish in the rock pools at Boddam, where the lighthouse rises from the sea like a stick of peppermint rock. "We went all over the place", said John. "As long as it was as far away from the Close Brethren as possible. We knew they would not be looking for us on Sundays, but we could not take that chance. Every Sunday morning we virtually went into hiding."

John had meantime left his storeman's job and had picked up a non-union job as a painter in Peterhead. When he left his employment initially because of union trouble he had told the priests of the possibility of getting work with a non-union shop. But they frowned on the idea of taking such employment, as they ruled it would only be a matter of time before it also became a closed shop.

For three months the Brethren hierarchy in Peterhead applied pressure on the Davidsons to return to the fold. This involved the inevitable call at the door and repeated interrogation. Said Mrs Davidson: "They would come up during the day while John was at work and ask when we were going back. They explained to me if I did go back I would have to completely separate myself from my husband." On one occasion a priest and his wife called on Mrs Davidson. The woman told her: "If you love the Lord more than you love your husband you would leave him."

John, too, fought off attempts to force him back to the Assembly. "For three months they tried their best. I was not withdrawn from at this stage or shut up, as I had not committed any sin in their eyes. I said I was finished with them. But they told me 'You cannot withdraw from the Assembly of God. God's Assembly has to withdraw from you.'" In desperation John went to a service at the Apostolic Church in Peterhead one Sunday morning. It was a deliberate action, meant to disgust the Brethren and end their relationship. It did not work. He was not spotted.

The priests asked him to attend a Care Meeting to discuss his case, but he did not attend. That night they came to the Davidsons and told John he had been "withdrawn from for despising the Assembly for not attending the meeting". John was out, but his ordeal was not over. Priests again approached

Mrs Davidson and pressed her to return to their ranks and to leave her husband. She said she loved her husband more than anything else and she too was withdrawn from.

The Davidsons had been members of Taylor's movement for three years. The last eighteen months had weighed heavily on the couple. Mrs Davidson was confined to bed with bronchitis and swollen joints, brought on by the worry of the previous months. In her husband the after-effects were even more alarming. He developed a deep hatred of the Exclusive Brethren. It was a nightmare that grew and resulted in a strange phobia which landed him in a clinic in Aberdeen — agoraphobia, fear of open spaces. He was afraid to leave his house and walk down the street. At first doctors thought Davidson was suffering from a form of epilepsy, but tests proved negative.

Said John: "It did not happen all the time, only on certain days. When I came home from work I would tightly close the curtains of our home, shutting the world out. When I went into the street when I had these attacks, the houses, the sky — everything seemed unnatural, as if a cloud had swept over the landscape." He went on: "My wife used to try everything to make me leave the house when I took these attacks, but I just could not force myself to go down the street."

In Aberdeen Davidson underwent treatment; a course of tablets and group therapy. He was discharged eleven weeks later as cured. "The doctors questioned me for hours about the Close Brethren, and one theory is that my months of anxiety before breaking off membership, had caused the phobia."

The Davidsons also claimed their children were affected because of their link with the Brethren. The youngsters had their first terrifying experience before they were accepted into the movement when they were baptised at a special ceremony in the bathroom of their parents' home. Thirty Brethren men, women and children sang hymns in the small living room as two priests immersed the pyjama clad youngsters in the bath water. The Davidsons recall how Alex, then aged 3, almost strangled the priest as he held grimly on to his

necktie. Baptism of Brethren children can prove hazardous for the youngsters. One weeks-old baby baptised in Peterhead lost its breath and almost died as it was dipped into the bath.

Soon after they had broken away, John Davidson was walking in Peterhead with Alex when they saw a Baptist church. "Alex became hysterical and started screaming, 'The Brethren! The Brethren! I'm nae going in there, Dad!'" Says Mrs Davidson, "The children are no longer interested in the church. Whenever a religious service comes on television they insist on it being switched off."

Today the Davidsons are settling down to a new way of life. They have moved house to another part of Peterhead — to a council house which would certainly have pleased their former Brethren masters. They have their own door. Because the Taylorites believe in total separatism from non-believers, this extends to dwelling houses. Members were urged to leave tenement flats, because members shared the same front door, lobby and drying green as the Unclean Ones.

The Davidsons were told to move into a house that would satisfy the priests. John remembers the occasion a priest came to his ground floor flat in Atlantic Avenue, scanned the skyline with a frown and said to him: "Where is the Angel going to sprinkle the blood? On the television aerials?" When John and Lilian enlisted in the Brethren they had to stop mixing with neighbours, stop their youngsters having sport at school, give up their TV, stop reading Sunday papers, and stop all insurances, except essential ones such as those for cars and protection against fire. They know one brother who gave up his comfortable bungalow because he had a mortgage through a building society.

Today things are back to what they used to be with the Davidsons. Sadly so. For John admits to drinking, heavily again. "I blame Taylorism for what happened to me", he says bitterly. "Sure they helped me to kill my drinking habits at first. It was like some sort of cruel joke when I was told it was all right to drink again. That is surely the irony of it all. That evening I came home pretty drunk and was told I could be saved. It seemed like a miracle at the time when my drinking bouts lessened. Then my world caved in on me. Perhaps

if Taylor had not introduced drinking as a part of the movement I would still be a member. I just don't know."

His wife has this to say: "I went along with the Brethren as far as I could. Then I drew a line. I don't think they are aware of what they are doing. They don't seem to realise the damage they have done to families. It is well we are out of it."

Drink has caused a lot of unhappiness among Brethren families. Alcoholism is not unusual in their ranks in America. Big Jim's own love of the 'cratur' landed him in a clinic in 1965 but it did not cure him of his addiction. At one meeting he is said to have praised an English couple who never forgot to bring several bottles of whisky when they visited him in New York. Many meetings in the South of England have been cancelled in recent years because of vulgarity engendered — with liquor the main cause. A worrying feature as far as ex-Brethren members are concerned is that many of those drinking are young men and sisters.

At one sect gathering Big Jim said the way to keep Brethren right is to keep them 'happy', because "every once in a while, you know, they kind of go overboard." He went on: "On the platform they do it too, I have to look around and see some of them just about over. They Think I do not see them, but I smell them."

### III. IN THE BEGINNING

Powerscourt House sparkles like a jewel at the foot of the rolling Wicklow Mountains outside Dublin. The house is one of the most impressive in the area of the Irish capital, but it is the eighteenth-century gardens, with a 400 foot waterfall, Japanese gardens, deer park and tranquil pools, which are the main attractions for tourists. The gardens, laid out in 1745 for the first Viscount Powerscourt, are among the finest in the world.

For a week in September 1833 a number of young Christian men and Bible students came from different parts of Great Britain to Powerscourt, but not to admire the breath-taking scenery. Their vision extended far beyond the conical dome of the nearby Sugar Loaf Mountain.

Napoleon had been dead for twelve years but the effects of the French Revolution spread like ripples in a pool through Europe. By the early 1830s, the drive of nationalism, democracy and anti-clericalism, let loose in the streets of Paris, found a less bloody outlet in the other capitals of the world.

England was in a state of agitation as the Powerscourt meetings on prophecy took place. Parliament had introduced the Reform Act the year before and in economic and social spheres times were changing. It was in this atmosphere that the young men of Powerscourt met to forge a united Brethren movement to challenge the established church. In the next fifteen years brilliant young preachers and scholars, fired by a completely new Christian outlook, joined the Brethren.

Soon missionaries from this new kind of church were to be found spreading their gospel all over the world; from the frozen wastes of Russia to the green hell of a South American jungle. Theodosia, Lady Powerscourt, had thrown open the doors of her home to a group of men, aged in their twenties and thirties, from wealthy and deeply religious families.

John Nelson Darby, the son of an Irish merchant and landowner and the godson of Lord Nelson, was among them. He had trained for the law but later joined the clergy. But he turned his back on the established Anglican Church and resigned on conscientious grounds. Darby, not yet 33 when the Powerscourt meeting was convened, was, in fact, the father of the Exclusive Brethren.

Also at Powerscourt was Henry Craik, aged 28 and a son of the manse. Despite his training at St Andrews he became a Baptist minister in Devonshire rather than enter the Church of Scotland ministry. In Devonshire he became a firm friend of a German, George Muller, who had been sent to Halle University to study Lutheran ministry, but became a Baptist minister at Teignmouth. Later in Bristol he founded a number of orphanages, his work influencing eminent people such as Dr Thomas Barnardo, who also had a Brethren background.

Benjamin Wills Newton, a 26-year-old Oxford graduate of Quaker stock, who had given up plans to enter the ministry of the Church of England, was also present at Powerscourt. Each in his own way was to play a vital role in the movement. Sadly, because of conflicting dogma and Biblical interpretations, stresses and strains racked the movement. Leaders fell out and Brethren went their separate ways. By 1850 the split was complete, resulting in the formation of the Open or Christian Brethren and the Exclusive Brethren. But this all seemed so far away in the autumn of 1833, when the first steps were taken to establishing a movement that sought solutions to the problems of the Bible.

The Brethren movement originated in Dublin despite the name that was given to it; the Plymouth Brethren, which is a misnomer. Plymouth became associated through the Brethren who used the famous Devon seaport as their English headquarters. From Plymouth the evangelists rode out on horseback to spread their teachings and distribute their tracts.

Darby was the foremost figure of the Brethren in Ireland in those early days, while Newton had a similar role in England and worked on developing the movement in Oxford University.

Colourful characters emerged on the scene. Men such as Captain Percy Hall, who was in command of the Plymouth coastguards and thought nothing of a sixty-mile round trip by horse to preach. Captain William Rhind, the son of a sea captain, who distributed pamphlets from a boat to sailors in Plymouth Harbour.

And Robert Gribble, a humble tradesman, reckoned to have achieved results in the country districts of Devon equal to his leaders. Broke, and with a wife and eight children to support, he later became a leading evangelist. He preached every Sunday morning at the gate of one village churchyard. He even converted the local publican and persuaded him to build a small chapel in his beer garden.

Ireland and the West of England saw the rapid expansion of the Brethren, but the movement was beginning to flourish in other parts of the country. It quickly spread to London, Liverpool, Birmingham, the North of England, and to Scotland.

In Bristol, the movement flourished thanks to the driving force of Craik and Muller. While working there the year previous to Powerscourt they had opened their own floating chapel, a ship called, *The Clifton Ark*.

Overseas, too, the Brethren movement gained momentum. In 1840 they sent Swiss evangelist John Meyer and his wife to preach in British Guiana. Meyer penetrated the fever-ridden jungles to preach to the Indians. He composed hymns and translated the scriptures, which he printed on a small hand-press.

A former naval midshipman, Leonard Strong, who had arrived in British Guiana some years before Meyer, was attracted to the Brethren cause. Both men were given financial aid by the movement in Britain. Meyer risked death as he hacked through the jungles and in 1847 he died of fever. Strong carried on his good work and in subsequent years was joined by other missionaries.

Pioneer of missionary work abroad was Norris Groves, who had been trained as a dentist in Plymouth. Groves, who was also the brother-in-law of George Muller, undertook an incredible journey with his wife and family from London,

through Russia into Persia and on to Bagdad in 1829. They crossed the Caucasus mountains with a band of British evangelists and reached Bagdad six months after setting out from London.

During their long stay in Bagdad, Mrs Groves died of the plague, leaving a baby daughter and two boys. A relief party was sent out from Dublin in 1830. Groves later travelled through India and Ceylon and did much to recruit missionaries for overseas.

Darby also played an important part in the early development overseas and visited Switzerland and France where he did excellent work. Hundreds flocked to hear him preach but, in February 1845, the Brethren became the targets of a bitter, Jesuit-backed persecution when Switzerland was shaken by a political revolution.

Meetings were now held behind locked doors but the persecutions served to strengthen the Brethren's hold. Even so, Darbyism, as the movement was known in Switzerland, was threatened and the leader decided he should return to Plymouth for his own good. On his arrival in England Darby was faced with a crisis. A bitter conflict between him and Newton over divided counsels, the future of church life, and the finer details of scriptural interpretations, had been brewing for some years.

On a visit to Plymouth in March 1845 Darby openly showed hostility towards Newton's sentiments. Newton rallied his supporters around him as he sensed that the leader was spoiling for a fight. In a letter to his supporters at Plymouth Newton said: "I believe an Apostle would scarcely seek to be a kind of universal censor in the way Mr Darby does: and certainly nothing can exceed (and here I know I can appeal to your own experience) the overbearing manner, both in speech and action in which he seeks to occupy this censorial position." Newton warned his colleagues that Darby was intent on bringing about the "supremacy of one mind ... that has wandered from the orthodox truth of God and has ceased to be in the subjection to His Word". Newton strongly objected to Darby's system of prophetic interpretation.

For two years the bickering went on among the leaders leading in time to a split between Muller and Darby.

The final denouement came in the summer of 1847, when Newton published a fifty-page tract entitled *Remarks on the Sufferings of the Lord Jesus*. Newton did not regard the nature and purpose of the life-sufferings of Jesus Christ as vicarious. He believed that Christ had inherited through His mother all the sinless penalties and experiences proper to the man in general and an Israelite in particular. His perfections were enhanced because of His sufferings on the cross, argued Newton. This was the consequence not of Christ's 'personal' standing, but of His dispensational or relative position consequent upon His Incarnation.

Immediately Darby launched a bitter attack on Newton's integrity in a tract entitled *Remarks on the Sufferings of the Lord Jesus*. Darby infuriated Newton, who hated to have his views questioned, by claiming his prophetic system was so unscriptural that "either Mr N. is deliberately seeking to degrade and dishonour Christ, or he is a blind instrument of Satan in doing it".

The split came about when a Captain Woodfall and his brother, pro-Newtonites from Plymouth, visited Bristol and applied for fellowship to the Bethesda Chapel in 1848. The Woodfalls were received, despite Darby supporters who protested on the grounds of their doctrinal unsoundness. A few months later Darby called in at Bristol and scolded the Brethren for the reception of the Woodfalls and said he would not go to Bethesda again until there had been an investigation and a condemnation of Newton's errors. Darby claimed that Newton agents were circulating their leader's writings in the church at Bethesda. But the Bethesda elders refused, at first, to condemn Newton and Darby warned Muller and Craik of the consequences.

From Leeds on August 26th, 1848 Darby issued the notorious *Bethesda Circular*, excommunicating the Brethren at Bethesda. In his circular he took the view they had become contaminated with the false teaching of Newton, through accepting into their fold people who held it, and refusing to

receive anyone from Bethesda is opening the door now to the infection of the abominable evil from which at so much painful cost we have been delivered.”

In October 1848 Bethesda took surprise action by condemning the views of Newton, who was fast vanishing from the Brethren scene. After several mass meetings they announced that no one defending, maintaining or upholding his views should be received into communion. Newtonites left Bethesda, but Muller’s action had come too late. Those who acted in accordance with the Bethesda Circular cut themselves off from the Brethren who supported Newton’s teachings. To this day the people who supported Darby are known as the Exclusive Brethren. Their numbers have steadily diminished over the years as their policy has been carried to ridiculous lengths. The Exclusive Brethren adopted a stricter system of ecclesiastical organisation under a central control in London, which eventually took orders direct from New York.

But in 1848 when Darby withdrew from Bethesda he took thousands of supporters with him. This was probably due to his magnetic personality. While the ‘Irish Curate’ lived, Darbyism flourished. The sect had branches throughout America, Canada, Europe, the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand and the Far East. In 1880 the Exclusives, thanks to the power of their propaganda, had nearly 800 meeting places in the British Isles alone. Eleven monthly magazines published in London carried a vast readership — several between 40,000 and 50,000.

But the Exclusives began to quarrel among themselves and when Darby died at Bournemouth on April 29th, 1882, aged 81, he was a bitterly disappointed man. Shortly before his death he was involved in a head-on clash with his life-long friend, Dr Edward Cronin. Darbyites wanted the movement to be even more ‘Exclusive’, but Cronin decided their only hope for survival in the future was to retain a link with the outside world.

The Exclusives’ solution to the problem was to ‘withdraw’ from Cronin, who died a shattered man five months before Darby. Disaster steadily overtook the movement. After Darby’s death leadership passed to J. B. Stoney and then to F. E.

Raven, a civil servant. But the quarrels continued and further division took place in the years leading up to the turn of the century.

Most of the American churches shook off the Exclusive bondage in 1884, and in the following years some of the Continental churches followed their example. But extreme exclusivism survives, though only just. The decay of Darbyism is almost certainly, in the twentieth century, due to the leadership of the two James Taylors, father and son, because of their narrow outlook.

After the parting of the ways in 1848 the Open Brethren grew stronger. They rejected the idea of a federation and preferred a wide difference in belief and practice. Several years after the Great Split an unsuccessful bid was made to heal the breach, but it failed. While the Exclusive Brethren diminished into complicated sub-divisions throughout the world, the Open Brethren flourished, free from the petty squabbles, and with a pure Christian outlook, shunning the personality cult later adopted by the Exclusive church.

In 1859 the Open Brethren benefited tremendously as a religious revival swept like wildfire from North America to the British Isles, touching all denominations. The Exclusives shared in this revival, but with less spectacular recruiting figures than the independent Brethren. Free from the oppressive influence of Darbyites’ teachings, the Open Brethren rapidly gained strength with their natural, healthy outlook, which continues today. With the Exclusive Brethren facing disintegration today, many Brethren who turned away from Taylor after the Aberdeen incident, feel they should return to the teachings prior to 1859. There is another opinion, not shared by everyone, that they should return to Powerscourt and begin all over again.

The Brethren movement reached Scotland in the 1840s, but in the North-east of the country, where it still has a large support, it was linked up with a number of local and independent movements of a similar character.

In 1860 a strong revival swept along the Moray Coast under the guidance of James Turner, a Peterhead cooper, who held prayer meetings by oil lamplight in fish-houses. He had been

excommunicated by the Kirk after praying for the conversion of unenlightened ministers.

Turner was born of poor parents and at the age of 10, after only three years at school, began to learn the trade of a cooper. In the beginning religion had little influence on the young man's life and it was not until he was 21 that he became conscious of the stirrings of religious principles within him. For many years he attended the Presbyterian Church and it was not until 1846 that he was introduced to Methodism. In 1854 he preached his first sermon in the tiny coastal village of Collieston. Then followed sermons in Aberdeen and as far away as Dundee and Perth.

In 1859, the year of the great religious revival, the Turner family suffered a financial set-back when the herring industry failed. Turner, who was in partnership with his brothers, lost a considerable sum of money. With little work to occupy his time he decided to hold religious meetings in all the fishing towns of Aberdeenshire.

Spurred on by the Great Revival, which was sweeping the country like a tornado, 'Jeems' Turner soon became a well-known figure along the North-east coast. During his life in Peterhead he preached in the family's fish-curing shed. It was a low, wooden building, with gutting troughs on one side of the wall and cooper's benches on the other. The shed had an earthen floor, it was dimly lit with three or four oil lamps and it smelt strongly of salt fish and smoke. While the coopers made barrels during the day, 'Jeems' Turner made converts at night. For the early religious meetings were all held in the evening, and lasted well into the 'wee sma' oors', and sometimes the coopers would have to wait outside the curing house when they reported for work in the morning until 'Jeems' and his converts joined in a final prayer and left. His crusade in Peterhead proved disastrous for the town's publicans. A number of pubs put up the shutters when their favourite customers, the fishermen, took to religion, while converted publicans turned their businesses into shops.

St Combs, a fishing village a few miles south-east of the town of Fraserburgh, was the spot where Turner began his first mission in December 1859. Encouraged by the response

from the fishing community he set out on a tour of the Moray Firth. In January 1860 he opened his Banffshire mission at Cullen, an ancient and beautiful holiday resort overlooking the firth. His mission lasted three months. While preaching at Cornhill, he collapsed and for the last two years of his life was dogged with ill health. He is buried in his native Peterhead.

The Brethren in Scotland can also trace their ties back to the body called the North-east Coast Mission, which operated along 500 miles of coastline, from Ferryden and Montrose in Angus to Thurso in Caithness. It was an inter-denominational mission which had close ties with the Free Church of Scotland. The superintendent of this mission was a Donald Ross, a native of Alness. Ross, who was also the mission's first secretary, fell out of favour and formed the Northern Evangelical Society. In 1870 his followers amalgamated with Brethren in the city and together they formed the first Open Brethren in Aberdeen. In 1879 Ross emigrated to the United States where he died twenty years later after a long and distinguished evangelistic career.

The early history of the church in North-east Scotland is clouded by legend and tradition, but the area was inhabited at a very early age, the Druid circles and earth houses being a lasting memorial to that fact. Christianity spread through the area, brought north by St. Columbian missionaries and Celts. They set up their small churches along the Moray Firth, but were driven out at the end of the eighth century by marauding Vikings. The monastic settlements provided a tempting target for the Norsemen and they plundered throughout the land, until they were routed by early Scottish kings.

The reign of King Malcolm III and Queen Margaret brought religious practice in Scotland into keeping with the Church of England and other Christian strongholds. They laid the foundations of the religion which was to be observed in Scotland for 500 years.

Monastic orders flocked, to Scotland in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and they helped set up cathedrals, universities and hospitals. But by the fifteenth century the abbeys no longer catered for the spiritual needs of the people,

and the abbots became mere landlords. The way was ripe for the Reformation. By 1567 the Reformed Church was well established in Scotland, not without a struggle in the North-east, particularly in the Moray Firth area, where feudalism was strong and lairds had a strong influence over their subjects.

In the late sixteenth century there followed a struggle between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism, followed in the first half of the following century by the Covenanting Wars. In Banffshire the people's sympathies were with the Royalists and then with the Covenanters, and many a town and village were plundered or burned to the ground.

But Episcopacy continued to be welcomed in parts of Banffshire, although with the rise to power of William and Mary Presbyterianism had been revived. It is not surprising that the county was predominantly Jacobite during the two rebellions in 1715 and 1745.

Banffshire was also the centre of the greatest division in the Church of Scotland when the congregation at Marnoch, a small rural township named after a Celtic saint, turned its back on the established kirk.

It happened this way. In 1834 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland had passed the Acts on Calls, or the Veto Act, which gave the congregation a say in the choice of a minister. There followed a test case in Auchterarder in Perthshire where the patron, Lord Kinnoul, presented his choice to the congregation. But the people refused to sign the call and Lord Kinnoul was asked to offer another candidate. He refused, and took the case to the Court of Session in Edinburgh, where he astonishingly received support. The case was carried to the House of Lords in March 1839 and was upheld.

But the fight was far from over, for in 1837 a vacancy occurred at Marnoch and the assistant minister was presented to the congregation and only one member of the kirk signed the call.

As at Auchterarder, the case went before the Court of Session and the same decision was given — that the congregation must accept the minister. But a split occurred among the Strathbogie Presbytery and the Church of Scotland auth-

orities. The kirk was so determined to uphold the rights of the Marnoch congregation they even suspended some of the clergy 'rebels'.

But the ministers decided to defy the Kirk and on January 21st, 1841 they met at Marnoch Church to carry out the induction of the assistant in accordance with the Court of Session ruling. Snow blanketed Deveronside when more than two thousand parishioners gathered around and inside the small kirk to confront seven ministers of the Presbytery. Before the ceremony of induction began the people handed over a protest note to the ministers intimating they would withdraw if they went ahead with the ceremony forcing a minister on them.

In an emotionally charged atmosphere the congregation of old and young people rose together, lifted their bibles and silently filed out of the pews into the deep snow. Some were in tears as they trooped from the kirk. It was a poignant scene which was to take place many times in different parts of the country. The result was that ministers left the Established Church in their hundreds and within two years more than 500 churches were built to accommodate the new order of the Free Church. Within fifteen years of the disruption the number of Free Churches in Aberdeen outwith the established church was on a ratio of 15 to 90. It was not to be the last time a religious group in North-east Scotland was to face a testing division. Today the predominant church in North-east Scotland is the Kirk. But there are still a number of Episcopalians who survived the purges of the eighteenth century, and Roman Catholics, found mainly in towns and cities and in remote country areas on Deeside and Upper Donside, where they found sanctuary from Protestant Scots and the Redcoats. Elsewhere there are followers of Methodist, Baptist Churches and the Salvation Army. The flame of Methodism burned brightly in 1746 when John Wesley toured the North-east, and his form of worship and stirring hymns appealed to the fishing communities. He visited the area several times, and saw the formation of a large number of Methodist societies formed, although by the first half of the nineteenth century they had all but vanished. By this period the fishermen were

looking for a simpler, more direct form of worship from the established churches, and it was the zeal of men like James Turner and others who reached out and captured their imagination.

The roll of honour in North-east Scotland contains the names of soldiers, scholars, craftsmen, and, of course, men and women of the cloth, who have gone out from the area to make their names abroad. Rev. Dr Alexander Forsyth (1768-1843), a son of the manse who eventually succeeded his father at Belhelvie, Aberdeenshire, invented the percussion system of ignition for fire-arms. The British refused to adopt his invention for nearly thirty years, and he was offered £20,000 by Napoleon for his secret. The canny minister declined and continued to work on his invention inside the Tower of London, where examples of his work and a memorial tablet to him can be seen. Rev. Forsyth also established the first Savings Bank in North-east Scotland and took an interest in medicine. He studied Jenner's methods of vaccination against smallpox and even carried out similar experiments on his parishioners.

The North-east's most famous missionary was a woman, Mary Slessor or 'Mary of the Calabar', who was born in Mutton Brae, Aberdeen in 1848, and who attended Brethren meetings in an assembly hall near her Aberdeen home. Her father was a Buchan shoemaker and her mother came from the Aberdeenshire market town of Oldmeldrum. At the age of 11 the family moved to Dundee where Mary worked in a textile factory. In 1876 she volunteered to go to Africa as a missionary, and during her thirty-nine years in Nigeria she fought disease and witchcraft to win African natives to God.

Another inventive North-east son of the manse was James Gregory of Drumoak, Aberdeenshire. He was the most brilliant of a family which supplied fourteen professors to British Universities and was himself the inventor of the reflecting telescope and a mathematical scholar second only to his friend, Sir Isaac Newton, with whom he corresponded. Incidentally another weapons expert came from Aberdeenshire. Patrick Ferguson was born at Pitfour and invented the breech-

loading rifle during the American War of Independence. After successfully demonstrating the rifle he was sent to America to form a corps of riflemen and was killed in action.

Alexander Murdoch Mackay (1849-1890) was born at the manse at Rhynie in Aberdeenshire. He trained as a teacher in the Free Church Training College in Edinburgh and then studied engineering at Edinburgh University. While working in Berlin he read Stanley's *How I Found Livingstone* and, fired by the book, volunteered as a missionary and mechanic in Uganda, where he did sterling work.

Other distinguished ministers who had their roots in this small corner of Scotland include Robertson Smith (1846-1894), a professor of Hebrew at Cambridge and editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and John Skinner, poet minister of Longside, Aberdeenshire, whose work brought praise from Robert Burns.

The North-east has had its share of controversial ministers over the years. None more so than Rev. A. M. Bannatyne, minister of Aberdeen's United Free Church from 1885 to 1890. Because of his uncompromising attitude on certain matters of religion, he was nicknamed the 'Presbytery Police-man' and 'The John Knox of Aberdeen'. The snow-haired parson attained country-wide publicity in the last century when he described dancing as being 'flings and springs and close bosomed whirlings'.

## IV. THE FISHERFOLK

North-east Scotland is a gnarled elbow of land thrusting out into the North Sea. From the rocky shores of the Moray Firth to the rich, red earth of the Kincardineshire Mearns it is an area which relies heavily on agriculture and fishing. And it is the fishing community of the North-east which has been attracted to the teachings of the Exclusive and Open Brethren. Why? The answer, I believe, roars and crashes on their doorstep; the cruel sea.

Fishermen have reaped their harvest from the North-east since the beginning of time. They favoured the sheltered inlets and open beaches for harbouring their boats. Fishermen today in these coastal towns live comfortably. They own modern houses and drive fast Continental cars. But the dangers at sea are as great as ever, even although fishing methods and safety precautions are much more sophisticated than in their forefathers' day.

In the eighteenth century the boats belonged to the local lairds, who also claimed the greater share of the catch. Dark days indeed, when a fisherman who did not go to sea often enough to please the bosses was placed in manacles. As late as the beginning of the nineteenth century a set of irons, or 'jougs', could be seen attached to a house on the east side of the Burn of Buckie in Banffshire.

These hardy men risked their lives in undecked boats without any shelter against the gales and freezing seas. They did not wear oilskins, and some even went to sea bare-footed. Their diet was poor, consisting of only barley-meal bannocks, fish or a pint of kail. Their women folk were equally hardy and had to assist in baiting the catches and dragging the heavy boats on to the beaches. In winter they even had to carry their husbands on board to make sure they had dry feet

and clothing which would not freeze immediately when they sailed.

With no modern aids to help forecast weather conditions, the fishermen in those early days had to rely on their own judgement and observations of the sky and the sea. When disaster overtook them, and this happened all too often in the dark, stormy weather, they sought a reason for their cruel luck, omens, and religion became part of their everyday life.

Superstition was prevalent among the fishing communities. For instance, the clergy was never mentioned on the sea, since to speak of a man of the cloth was to invite disaster. Certain men and women were regarded as unlucky by the fishermen and none of these individuals was allowed to cast off the moorings of a boat setting out for the fishing grounds. This strange superstition was so prevalent in the hamlet of Footdee, at the mouth of the River Dee, and now part of the city of Aberdeen, that fishermen about to sail would get their wives to go out in advance to ensure none of these 'unlucky' or 'ill-fitted' characters were in the vicinity.

If the coast was clear the fisherman's wife returned to the house, and as he crossed the threshold she sprinkled him with salt for good luck. In Footdee, as most other fishing areas, it was considered unlucky to turn a ship against the sun. Fishermen had an aversion to certain things being mentioned at sea, such as rabbits, rats, salmon and pigs. They believed in witches, evil spirits, ghosts and mermaids. As recent as 1870, a Peterhead crew claimed they had conversation with a mermaid off the awesome Bullers o' Buchan North of Cruden Bay, Aberdeenshire.

Hundreds of years ago the fishing folk lived in thatched cottages near to the shore and built in clusters to shelter each other against the howling gales. Today older fishermen prefer the solid, gaily-painted houses to the red-roofed modern bungalows favoured by the younger breed. In the older villages they tend with great care and pride the neat rows of houses, which have an exclusive look, standing apart from other houses in the neighbourhood. In some ways it reflects the general mood of the fishing folk towards their neighbours who do not follow their calling. In the old days their homes

were sparsely furnished, but however poor they may have been, the Brethren families always afforded to decorate the walls with religious pictures such as 'Gospel Compass', 'The Gospel Ship' or 'The Good Shepherd'.

In the past the fishers had little contact with the country people, except when the fisherwives heaved the bulky creels on to their back and set off on foot to sell the catch. The tight-knit communities retained their exclusiveness for many years, and it was rare for marriages to take place between neighbouring villagers. When the herring boats headed north to the Shetland Islands or south to Yarmouth they took their families with them.

Life was hard and dangerous. Early parish records reveal a regular disaster at sea, collections being taken for the widows and families left behind. Then, and even today, when a fishing boat vanished the majority of the crew were related, and a disaster touched the whole community. Thus the sea has always had a great influence on the religious life of men. It has been so since Biblical times.

Even David writes of it in Psalm 107:

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters. These see the works of Jehovah, his wonders in the deep, for he speaketh, and raises the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof; They mount up to the heaven, they go down to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and they are at their wits' end; Then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distress. He maketh the storm a calm and the waves thereof are still. And they rejoice because they are quiet and he bringeth them unto their desired haven.'

The toll was heavier in days gone by as the open sailing boats, called the Skaffie, the Fifie, and later the sleek Zulu (first built during the Zulu War in 1879), and their crews faced the sea.

Fishermen are nearly always deeply religious people, living in the perpetual atmosphere of worry and anxiety, with the

ever-lingering fear of losing a loved one to the sea. They find solace and comfort in religion. At sea, while the younger crew members perhaps favour the blast of a pop tune from the ship's radio, the older hand may be heard crooning a hymn. Only a few years ago people in the North-east would actually 'tune in' to the trawler wavelength on their radios - just to hear Brethren skippers lustily sing their favourite hymns or psalms to their families ashore.

In bygone days in Peterhead people on land actually heard the singing voices of the crews manning the inshore fishing fleet. The hymns, *Jesu, Lover of my Soul, Rock of Ages* and the *23rd Psalm*, would boom out across the still waters on a fine summer night as the men toiled on deck. Before shooting their nets it was the custom on most boats for the crew to gather in the skipper's cabin and offer up a prayer.

The fisherfolk of Aberdeen looked towards religion for help in making their lot easier. The districts of Torry and Footdee, on either side of the River Dee, were many years ago made up entirely of fisherfolk. They tell the story of how church-going families crossed the Chain Bridge from Tony to worship on the other bank of the Dee. The toll was one halfpenny ( $\frac{1}{2}$  d), but the public were not charged on a Sunday if they were going to attend church. On a Sunday morning it was common to see the head of the house cross with his family all holding their Bibles high to show the tollkeeper.

The suburb of Tony was part of Kincardineshire until 1891. Old Torry, granted a charter by King James IV in 1495, in 1882, a year after a bridge spanned the River Dee because of a ferry boat disaster, the area took on a new lease of life. The growth of the industry saw the rise of warehouses, curing yards, fish houses and fish curing and processing plants. Trawler crews and their families came from all parts of the country to settle in Torry, and with the influx of fishermen they brought their religion. But with the advent of new industries on the nearby Tullos Estate, Torry today has all but lost its strong ties with the seafaring life, although it still has a small trawler dock, a shipyard, and fish-houses on its doorstep. Nowadays the numbers of Torry folk connected

with the industry and its ancillary trade is much smaller than the district's non-fishing community.

But the religion the old fishers embraced in the last century and more in Aberdeen still linger, and Brethren meetings are still held in Torry and at the Exclusive Brethren 'temple' in Rosemount Viaduct, which has a Church of Scotland kirk on its front door and a Baptist Church at the back. The Evangelists, whom I remember as a boy touring the streets of Torry to hold impromptu kerbside services, have gone. The Open Brethren flourishes in Torry, their tastefully decorated Victoria Hall stands witness to this fact, and in other parts of the city.

Across the narrow strip of water called the Aberdeen Channel, there stands the community of Footdee. At the beginning of the century 'Fittie' had a community of 150 fishermen, but now very few are left, and in time the picturesque, clean squares with old fisher cottages and houses, could become a haven for the holidaymaker, the painter or the nouveau riche. The religious life of the Footdee folk is divided between the Church of Scotland and the Open Brethren. At one time the evangelist Ross and his North-east Coast Mission ran the mission hall in the centre of the village.

Ross began preaching in Footdee in 1860, but won few followers at first. About eighty families lived in the village at the time, all were of fishing stock, all were inter-married and shared the same name in most instances. They were a hardy lot and when Ross appeared on the scene the fishermen sought spiritual solace from the bottle. The average attendance at those early meetings was between three and four, and it is said that Ross actually prayed for a storm so that the fishermen would be kept in port and converted to his faith. In 1861 his prayers were answered when the East Coast of Scotland was struck by a violent storm and the fleet was forced to tie-up. It was the moment Ross had been waiting for, and to help matters the captain of a Fraserburgh schooner came to hear him preach, and remained to help him in his crusade.

Footdee was suddenly caught up in the evangelical revival and by the end of 1869, more than 600 people flocked to hear

Ross. The villagers quickly lost their taste for liquor and their three local pubs closed.

Smoking was also forbidden, but laws are made to be broken. A true story told to me a few years ago by an Aberdeen trawlerman concerned an Open Brethren skipper caught smoking in his cabin. He was puffing quietly into a huge biscuit tin so that his crew would be unable to smell or see the smoke.

When trawling was introduced the fishermen of Fittie strongly opposed it, fearing it would ruin the industry. And for some time it was not unusual to see them and their brothers from Torry stoning the trawlers as they steamed out of Aberdeen. But the old ones were fighting a losing battle and despite deputations to petition the Government they had to surrender to the new methods. With them went the quaint Footdee customs of burning old boats, and the 'Fishermen's Soiree' in the Mission Hall every February.

And so with a decline in the life of the fishermen of Aberdeen, so too, did their families neglect the strong religious beliefs of their forefathers. Like the sailing drifters and steam trawlers of yesteryear, the religious groups have all but vanished in Aberdeen. The Brethren who have followed, to some extent in their footsteps, do not necessarily have a close connection with the sea.

## V. BRETHREN COUNTRY

Aberdeen is still Scotland's major fishing port. Its history stretches back into the mists of time, and long before the Romans came to Britain. Perhaps some of the seafaring spirit of the city can be traced back to the Vikings, who used the mouth of the River Dee as a base after razing 'Aparidion' in the twelfth century. The Church of Scotland is the predominant religion and for many years religion had a considerable influence in the city, but with the so-called permissive society, Aberdonians prefer to spend their sabbath evenings drinking rather than in the Kirk.

The Exclusives had been preaching in Aberdeen six years before the evangelist Ross and his 'Plymouthites' came on the scene. In 1864, or thereabout, a member of the George Street Baptist Church congregation formed a small community of Exclusives. They went about their Biblical business in a quiet way, attracting little attention as they held their meetings in private houses. But the movement snowballed and soon they were holding much larger gatherings in a room in the city's Music Hall.

From 1865 until 1868 the Aberdeen Exclusives preached the Gospel in the Music Hall, before moving to the Crown Court Hall. The main feature in those days was the formation of a Sunday School for children living in the east end of the city. But the Aberdeen Assembly lacked a leader to provide the driving force to make it more influential in the city. Then along came a negro student, called Davis, who was studying medicine at Aberdeen University. His magnetic personality, fluency of speech and knowledge of the Scriptures caught the imagination of the Aberdonians. Davis spread the Exclusive Gospel whenever and wherever he could. His professors turned up to hear him preach at mass rallies in the Music Hall, and in the summer, using a table for a pulpit, he attrac-

ted thousands to the corner of Union Street and Holburn Street — as many as who crowded the city's Golden Square to watch the famous Blondin walk a swaying tight-rope above their heads. They even took their lives into their hands and descended to the floor of a granite chasm called the Rubislaw Quarry to preach to the workers.

After he had graduated, Dr Davis went to St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, but when the Franco-Prussian War broke out he packed his Bible and went off to the front to help soldiers and hospitals. He never returned to Britain, for he died of smallpox in France.

But the Exclusive community he left behind in Aberdeen, continued to grow, and thirty years after they first moved into the Crown Court Hall they occupied an old Free Church building in the city. But the bickering, and feuding, which has bedevilled the movement until the present day, also took its toll. In 1885 a breakaway group of the Exclusive movement was formed in the city, after yet another dispute over doctrine rocked the Exclusive Brethren in Reading. But at first only nineteen left the Assembly, and, although growing in number, it never rivalled the popularity of the Darbyites in the city, who, by the turn of the century, numbered 300.

It can be seen that the rise of religious groups, such as the Exclusive Brethren, has taken place in the coastal areas of North-east Scotland. Inland, in the agricultural regions, the sect made no headway with the farming community. Ellon, a market town in Aberdeenshire, is half way between Aberdeen and Peterhead, yet it was only after the recent split that any kind of Exclusive Brethren meeting was held there. And even now it involves only a few people. No doubt Evangelists attempted to spread their gospel in the hinterland, but their messages appealed to the fisherfolk because of their dangerous calling; the rural inhabitants turned a deaf ear.

There were a number of angry scenes in some rural areas when the Brethren gossellers held meetings for farmers and farming folk. At Huntly in 1872 a mob attacked the preachers in a local hall, and threatened to dump one evangelist into the River Bogie. Other meetings were disrupted by young

hooligans, and there were cases of preachers and their converts being stoned and pelted with rotten fruit and vegetables.

At Inverurie in Aberdeenshire youths tried to cause chaos by thrusting live crows through the shattered windows of the meeting hall.

Scotland's 'Bible Belt', in fact, is the string of coastal towns, villages and hamlets which are strung out on the elbow of land, from Aberdeen to Peterhead and Fraserburgh in Aberdeenshire, and along the Moray Firth, with Gardenstown, Macduff, Banff, Portsoy, Cullen, Portknockie, Findochty and Buckie predominant.

Today the 'capital' of the Exclusive Brethren in Scotland is Peterhead in Aberdeenshire, although the City of Aberdeen has a slightly larger number of members. Peterhead, a rose-pink granited town at the mouth of the River Ugie, 35 miles north of Aberdeen, owes its origin to the Picts. They called it 'the homestead by the water', *Pett-aye-uisge*, which became through the years corrupted to Peterugie. Then came the spread of Christianity and in the thirteenth century a church dedicated to St Peter, was built on the banks of the Kirkburn. King James VI made the lands of Peterhead a burgh of barony in 1587, but it was not until the district came under the power of George Keith, fifth Earl of Marischal, three years later, that the burgh flourished.

The town has a few historical buildings, including Peterhead Prison, at one time known as the toughest jail in Scotland, if not all of Britain. The prison owes its inception to a group of men who in 1881 met to consider the best method of employing convicts. It was decided to construct a Harbour of Refuge in the sweeping South Bay and, as a result, the grim prison building was completed by 1891. The prisoners toiled in a quarry near the prison and the stones for building the breakwater were transported by railway to the harbour front, about three miles away.

Peterhead has relied on the fishing industry for its prosperity since 1820 and today the port boasts a modern fleet and huge canning and processing plants. It also has a small boat-building industry. The burgh has a great number of

shades of religious opinion with the Brethren playing no minor role. The Exclusives came to Peterhead in 1871, but up until the start of World War One their fortunes slumped and their number was less than twenty. But they became stronger in later years and their first hall was established in Albion Street. The Open Brethren acquired the use of the Prince Street Hall in 1932. They lost ground to the Exclusives and it was a common saying at that time when an Open Brethren member changed allegiance, "Oh, he's come frae Prince Street, you ken". The Exclusives moved to their present main meeting place in Constitution Street in 1949. This hall seats 500 and is much bigger than two other halls belonging to them in the town.

Despite both minor and major squabbles, the Exclusives have managed to retain much the same membership roll of 300, largely due to family connections. To the everlasting credit of the fishermen they have turned their backs on the doings of Big Jim and have steadfastly refused to give his followers support.

Fraserburgh, which stands where the North Sea and the Moray Firth meet, has been a fishing port since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Non-conformist bodies have flourished among the fishing communities but in recent years the Exclusive Brethren have lost control in the town and neighbouring parishes.

Within 10 miles of Fraserburgh there is the parish of Crimond, where the widely-popular psalm tune Crimond, sung to the 23rd Psalm, was first played. The melody is said to have been composed by the daughter of the manse, Miss Jessie Seymour Irvine, according to the Church of Scotland, though authenticated accounts differ.\*

The picture-postcard village of Gardenstown clings to the steep slopes of beautiful Gamrie Bay, just across the borders of Banffshire from Aberdeenshire. The village is approached by a winding road, which drops and twists alarmingly by about 500 feet in less than a mile. Along one section of this

\* The origin of the tune Crimond is fully discussed in *Spots from the Leopard: Short Stories of Aberdeen and the Northeast* by Fenton Wyness; Impulse Books 1971.

steep brae motorists literally peer down the chimney pots of the cottages at the roadside. Gardenstown is honeycombed with narrow lanes and flights of steps, and the quaint main street is only about 200 yards long; so narrow that vehicles have difficulty in passing two abreast.

The chief industry is fishing although the majority of the small fleet, which hunts the shoals around the British coasts, remain at Banff. The parish is steeped in religion and one of its antiquities is the old kirk at Gamrie, St John's, which stands crumbling near wind-blasted Mohr Head. The kirk was built in 1004, and marauding Vikings were said to have used it as a stable, until the Thane of Buchan and his army taught them better manners.

The majority of villagers are with the Church of Scotland but there was a time when the village was strongly linked with the different branches of the Brethren. But today Gardenstown reflects the present turmoil and uncertainty within the Exclusive Brethren, in that those belonging to the sect are few, compared with the scores of families only a few years ago. Close knit families in this village were among the first in the North-east to revolt against Big Jim's edicts.

Gardenstown had the reputation of being Scotland's only non-swearing village. This followed an amusing court case which came before Banff J.P. Court in February 1954, when two men were accused of committing a breach of the peace and conducting themselves in a disorderly manner by cursing and swearing and using indecent language. The incident was said to have happened in the Garden Arms Hotel, the village's only inn, one Sunday night the previous December. And the words the men were said to have used were 'damn' and 'bloody'. A 15-year-old boy who heard the men argue in the hotel from an upstairs room said in evidence: "It seemed unnatural in Gardenstown. I have heard the words before in Banff, but not in Gardenstown."

The hotel proprietor, Mr Norman Tennant, told the court that when he asked the men to leave after refusing them drink, they both became abusive and obscene. "It was blasphemous language, uncommon in a village like Gardenstown, a very respectable village on a Sunday night." Mr A. W. Lyall,

solicitor, defending, asked him: "But the words damn and bloody are used quite often on the stage?"

Mr Tennant replied: "In such a respectable village as Gardenstown, such words repeated at the pitch of the human voice do not have a very creditable effect on my establishment." Mr Lyall: "Are you telling me that words which you think are blasphemous in Gardenstown are not so if used in Banff?" Mr Tennant answered: "In Gardenstown your neighbours are so close at hand you hardly need to raise your voice." He then described the language as "the type that a ploughman uses when speaking to his horses".

Another witness, a grocer from the nearby coastal town of New Aberdour, said both accused were sober and told the bench: "The only strong word I heard being used was bloody. I thought the language was blasphemous but not obscene." So did the court, for the charges against the men were found 'Not Proven' after trial.

Gardenstown's reputation as Scotland's non-swearing village was upheld in several interviews which appeared in the national Press. Said the district councillor: "I have lived here for some years and I've yet to hear anybody use a swear word." The local minister had this to say: "Bad language is seldom, if ever, heard. Not that I would be in a position to hear it." Even the village's only policeman admitted it was the first complaint he had ever had.

An article in the *Scottish Daily Express* attributed Gardenstown's reputation to "a man who died nearly 100 years ago". He was the Peterhead cooper James Turner. "And we have never forgotten this", a kirk elder told the Expressman.

Eight miles or so along the cave-pitted Banffshire coast from Gardenstown is Macduff, with the county town of Banff just across the Deveron. Macduff, like Gardenstown, stands in the Parish of Gamrie, and is built on a hill rising from the shore, with its trim harbour and fish market. The Exclusive Brethren have a fairly modern meeting place in this town, which is the birthplace of Stanley McCallum. He himself has spoken in the hall several times.

The Exclusive Brethren are also to be found in Portsoy, an ancient harbour, which was once famous throughout

Scotland for its marble, a green stone which was used successfully for some years as a commercial product, but which is now only used by a few local craftsmen. Next Exclusive Brethren stop along the coast is Cullen, which in modern times has relied on tourists to bring prosperity rather than the fishing. The town, which has its roots probably before Roman times, had a large herring fleet with the usual ancillary trades at the start of the century. But the Cullen fishermen sailed for the far-flung waters of East Anglia. By the end of World War One the town's fishing industry was dying, and the men gave up their boats and joined fleets at Macduff and Buckie.

Even today there is fear among fishermen in the Banff area that they will lose crewmen to the Nuclear Age. Within the next few years a multi-million pound power station is to be built at Stake Ness point at Whitehills, near Banff, and it is expected the high wages paid to construction workers will tempt locals away from the sea.

Cullen, like most other towns in the area, is expected to benefit from the new project. The days when its fishing industry brought in the cash are gone. By the late 1950s the harbour, which was once choked with a variety of fishing boats, held only a few lobster and mackerel boats. The history of the burgh is strongly linked with Cullen House, the family seat of the Seafield family. The late Countess of Seafield was reputed to be one of the richest women in Britain.

Rathven is a seaboard parish in the north-west of Banffshire, embracing the coastal burghs of Buckie, Findochty and Portknockie. Although John Wesley visited the North-east five times he never went to Buckie. Even so Methodism had a great influence on the fishermen of the parish. The Peterhead cooper James Turner revived any flagging spirits in the area with his crusade of 1860, beginning his mission at Cullen and then proceeding to Portknockie, Findochty, Portessie and Buckie.

The fishing townships of Portknockie and Findochty are both Brethren strongholds. Portknockie, which is less than two miles from Cullen, was built in 1677 by fishermen from Old Cullen, who were attracted by the natural sheltered harbours.

The town also has one of the most modern Exclusive Brethren halls in the North-east, and is the rallying point for sect members from a wide area. Big Jim Taylor and other overseas leaders have preached in the hall, which cost many thousands of pounds to build.

Two miles further north is Findochty, or 'Finechty', as it is known locally, a settlement which was founded by fishermen from Fraserburgh in 1716. At one period in recent years the small burgh boasted at least twelve different religious denominations, including, of course, the Exclusive Brethren. But the teachings of Big Jim, like the invading Danes who fought a battle against the Scots more than a thousand years ago on the Moor of Findochty, are dead and buried.

Buckie, standing at the western end of the Banffshire coastline, commands a breathtaking view of the Moray Firth, of the sweeping countryside for miles around, and of the Highlands on the far side. The town is recognisable from a distance because of the twin spires of its Roman Catholic church. Buckie is the largest town in the county and supports a variety of religious denominations. Yet again it owes its prosperity and early growth to the fishing industry, although in recent years the town has attracted some light industry and a large number of summer visitors. Exclusive Brethren from the town attend meetings in Portknockie.

This then is the country where the Exclusive Brethren live. It differs from any other place in the world where their fellow sect members worship. North-east Scotland has an exclusiveness all of its own, and its people retain an individuality from fellow Scots. But with the march of progress steadily creeping through the area, change is inevitable within its fishing communities. Their particular brand of exclusiveness was broken into during the two world wars as service-men flooded into the area, and younger family members returned home with new ideas.

The Exclusive Brethren, because of their strict faith and beliefs, have been practically unscathed so far by the advance of progress. While the young generation got their lead from the Beatles, television and films, their counterparts in the Exclusive camps were kept very much in check. The Brethren

children continued to share a family life experienced by their forefathers, although there have been a few 'black sheep' and today sect parents are worried about the drinking habits of their teenage sons and daughters.

But with new industries and new techniques coming into the area in the near future how long can they remain exclusive? The future strength of the Exclusive Brethren lies in the youth of today. The youngsters are now better educated and this opens up new horizons in a choice of career. No longer do they automatically join the 'family boat', following the footsteps of their father. Instead, they can seek a new life elsewhere. And with a totally new slant on the 'world outside', they will begin to relax their strict religious code.

Fish, the ancient symbol of Christianity, was ironically at the centre of the first clash between the Exclusive Brethren and the world about them. The dark blue jerseyed fishermen who were members of the sect in Scottish fishing towns and villages, decided to withdraw from the Scottish Herring Producers' Association in 1960. They refused to remain in the association's pooling system, which operated among the catchers, giving them all an equal share of the selling prices, whatever the quality.

At Ullapool, Wester Ross, more than 100 fishing boats tied up in protest as independent buyers declared they would buy catches from whosoever they liked, and that included the twenty Brethren boats whose skippers had withdrawn from the pool. But the fish price war was overshadowed by more sinister happenings in Brethren camps. Ports buzzed with talk of a divine leader called the 'Angel' having visited Britain to enforce the law of separation. Stanley McCallum was blamed for starting the fish war, but in actual fact the call for dis-association with trade unions and non-believers had gone out a year before. And although it was not known then, Big Jim Taylor was at the root of the trouble.

McCallum was merely his 'travelling salesman' — the message boy who had been ordered to deliver the goods. It was Taylor, whose father had been a tolerant leader in the eyes of older Brethren, who was in control. And he had made it perfectly plain from the outset that no one would challenge

his authority. He told followers: "Anyone who does not recognise authority is not fit for fellowship." Slowly, at first, the incredible stories of Brethren separation from the rest of the community and the rift it had caused, emerged.

Brethren children were forbidden to mix with non-believers at play. Some Brethren parents were prevented by the separation law from allowing their youngsters to see a Punch and Judy show — "It is the work of Satan" they told a surprised schoolteacher. School blazers were stripped of their badges and youngsters refused to take religious instruction.

The fish war was only the tip of the Brethren iceberg.

## VI. SEPARATE TABLES

The law of Separate Tables is the harshest and cruellest edict laid down by a religious movement in modern times — at least in the Western world. Big Jim based it on scriptural quotations from *Second Corinthians* (“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers”) and *Second Timothy 2*, which he called the sect’s ‘Magna Carta’. In his aim for complete separatism from unbelievers the edict caused great damage to homes and lives. It drove many to divorce and suicide.

Before the edict of evil, husband and wife, whether or not they were both members of the Exclusive Brethren, lived in harmony. It was a common enough sight on Sunday mornings in North-east Scotland towns to see husband or wife escort each other to the kirk down the road before leaving for the Brethren meeting. Children in a ‘divided’ family were not pressed to join the Exclusives, they had to make up their own minds.

But early in 1960 Taylor spread the gospel of Separate Tables. “Partial separation in a divided house is not allowable”, he told his worldly flock. “The abandonment of Christ was absolute.” What an epigram for the sons of God, “is not allowable!” Thus husband or wife were faced with a terrible alternative — join the Brethren or live apart. The strain on many couples, where the partner accepted the dogma, can well be imagined.

In an action raised in Banff, Scotland, a husband claimed that his wife deserted him because she had accepted the Brethren ruling — that she would be ‘unclean’ if she ate and slept with him. The couple had been married over ten years and their plight was brought to the court’s notice when the husband sought access to and custody of their 7-year-old daughter. The husband told the court how prior to Big Jim’s outpourings the Brethren had lived in complete harmony with

other members of their community. He did not change his religious beliefs by accepting the new teachings but his wife did, influenced by her sister and brother-in-law.

As a result his wife ceased to take her meals with him and also to occupy the same bed, insisting on sleeping with the child. Their once-happy life was in ruins. The Sheriff granted the father permission to see his child for eight hours every Saturday.

Confidential reports taken at Brethren meetings in England in the summer of 1960 give some of the reasons why Taylor enforced the law. These take the form of verbatim, question and answer reports of a startling nature. Sect members fired questions at rallies attended by Big Jim and Stanley McCallum. A segment from the report at Chesterfield reads:

Question: “You said we could not eat with unbelievers at all?” Big Jim: “No, I do not think so.”

Question: “If there are any amongst us who are not breaking bread, should we ask them to go out?” Big Jim: “Well it depends who they are, if they are children of those who are moving along with us they would not.”

Question: “I mean any adult person interested in the truth not breaking bread?” Big Jim: “Yes, they should not be with us eating.”

Question: “You are saying that we are not to eat with men of the world?” Big Jim: “Certainly not.”

Question: “Where are you getting that from?” Big Jim: “I am getting it from the Scriptures.”

Big Jim then went on to say he was quoting *Second Timothy*, second verse: “If man purge himself from these by separating himself from them, he shall be a vessel to honour.” Asked if Brethren were “free to mix with them?” he replied: “We are free to walk down the street, of course we are, we are free to sell them some goods and buy some goods from them — but not to eat with them.” But the questioner pressed on and asked: “I think it is a severe point not to eat with men of the world whom you have nothing against. They are sinners as we were until grace met us, and you are suggesting that *Second Timothy 2* is in regard of the

world generally, and not exclusively in regard of iniquity which is a different matter from sinners?"

Big Jim: "Iniquity covers the whole question."

Question: "We are called upon to withdraw from the world *in toto*?"

Big Jim: "Of course we are. We are to be a Separate People. The world is 'separated'. Is that what you are saying?"

Question: "I do not understand that?"

Big Jim: "Well *we should* understand it. Because if you want to understand what the Assembly is, we will know that it is separate from everything."

At this point the brother brings a personal note into the proceedings when he asks his next question: "I and many Brethren have relatives. I speak very simply — my wife had an aged mother and I know another sister who has an aged mother who lives with her and she is a believer, but the Brethren are often entertained in that house. Can't they go there now?" Big Jim: "I am not saying they cannot go there. The question is the principles that govern the matter."

Question: "If it is a principle it is workable?"

Big Jim: "Yes, but I do not know the facts of the matter altogether and I would not pronounce on it until I did."

Question: "This is the fact."

Big Jim: "Well what are the facts please. State them clearly so I can understand."

Now Big Jim takes over the questioning — "Whose house is it?" he asks the questioner. "A brother's house?" "And he is in fellowship?"

"Yes."

"And his children are in fellowship?" "Yes — two of their children, but then they have an aged mother."

Big Jim: "Yes, and how old is she?" "Not in fellowship, somewhere in the seventies."

Big Jim: "Well, why is she not in fellowship?" "I really could not say exactly, but I can say one thing — a very practical thing with her is that physically I think she is afraid to face the matter of baptism."

Big Jim: "Well, then you have got an issue with her straight away, have you not?"

"Well it is a very difficult matter because of her physical condition."

Big Jim: "Well, do you not think the Lord would help the Brethren to help that person get into fellowship?"

"Well, we are not able to do it."

Big Jim: "Well, the Lord can do anything."

The Archangel was interrupted at this stage by McCallum, who had been sitting quietly in a chair on the platform. Thirty years before, the former fisherman had left Banffshire for America.

"This matter has been referred to as a new departure", he began. "One might just bring in a personal reference. I have come to this country since 1946 every other year. I have a mother, sisters and brothers and I do not go to stay with them because of this very thing. I have stayed with Brethren in the same town, so it cannot be said to be something new, or a new departure."

Later in the meeting the Archangel commented about Brethren who "link with the world". He said firmly: "I am sure this is wrong. Especially when the Assembly comes into it, and a wedding is arranged and invitations sent to persons who are not with us. I think the Lord is grieved about this thing."

*We are to be a separate people.* Seven words which changed the course of Brethren history. Seven words which brought misery to hundreds of families throughout the world and resulted in the ever-dwindling sect becoming truly the Exclusive Brethren.

Thousands pulled out of fellowship rather than adhere to the doctrine. Those who stayed were either too frightened to leave, because of their strong family bonds within the sect, or had an undying faith in their leader, the Archangel. Those who feared the consequences of Separate Tables within the family structure must have been shaken by Stanley McCallum's remarks at Chesterfield. At that time it was felt by the movement that McCallum would adopt a 'soft line'. Those who stayed within the sect tried to 'beat' the edict

with farcical results. Some Brethren households ate at a family table where believers and non-believers were kept apart by the one-sixteenth of folding gap at the centre. All this was done with the risk of a priest surprising the families at meal times to ensure the edict was being obeyed.

Family life became embittered and ruined as non-believers within the unit were withdrawn from as unfit for Christian fellowship and subsequently 'committed to Satan'. And it was the innocent and helpless who suffered. Take the case of Jean, a young single Brethren girl living in a small English village. Jean was an orphan and was brought up by her grandparents, who were not in the Brethren. The girl, in later years, decided to look after the elderly couple — but she was withdrawn from for having tea with them. Tragic and sad. For Jean's grandfather was totally blind and her grandmother was an invalid.

There was a similar case in Chorley where a blind spinster was cast out because she lived with her natural sister.

Separate Tables was obeyed by Brethren outside their homes. They did not eat in restaurants or hotels and were instructed by Big Jim to carry a packed lunch when travelling long distances. The Archangel must have found this particular 'clause' a bit of a nuisance at times — particularly when he went by sea on some trips abroad.

At Horsham, in the year of the Separate Tables, Big Jim was asked about eating with 'unclean' business associates. A brother asked: "In my business I frequently have to go to works out in the country and there is business to discuss, and I have to eat while I am there and they say, 'Come in with us into our canteen'. I should be sitting with my clients and talking to them, and I thought of the scripture in *1 Corinthians 10*, 'If any one of the believers invite you' would cover that; I have always felt free about it, but I would not do anything habitual."

Big Jim replied: "The thing is if you are minded to go but then what happens? You are involving yourself with the persons you are eating with. I know, too, because I have done it; but I would not do it again, because I am not minded. I could not be minded to go and eat with such persons, because what

is involved to be practical, is that people smoke, people use bad language, and people are apt to introduce defiling things into the conversation. I could not be minded to go."

It would seem the brother's lunch-dates, and perhaps even his business, were in jeopardy after that.

Leaders of the sect believed that family members who did not break bread after the age of 12 would affect the whole house and make it 'leprous'. Taylor had also decreed that partial separation in a divided house was *not allowable*. One London High Court judge told a divorce court in July 1964 that the Separate Tables doctrine was "odious to the majority of people". Ordering a Brethren mother to give her 10-year-old daughter to her husband who had left the sect, Mr Justice Pennycuik said: "I have reached the clear conclusion that this child's welfare imperatively demands that she should live with her father. She will be in a strictly religious atmosphere as she has always been. But it will be free from this, to my mind, quite intolerable doctrine of separation."

He described the mother as "fanatically committed to the principles of the Exclusive Brethren". And he added: "In this distressing case a mother has ruined the lives of the father, herself and their child out of a sincerely-held conviction that God requires her to follow a course of life dictated by the Brethren leaders."

The indictment against the Brethren leaders is lengthy and makes heart-rending reading. Open it at any page and you will find evidence of great cruelty.

In the south of England in 1962 a father of eight children, aged from 4 months to 17 years, separated from his wife and members of his family who were not in agreement with the doctrine.

In a Lancashire town there live an elderly couple who have never seen their baby grandson because their son, a fanatical Taylorite, separated from them several years ago.

In South Africa in 1967 a leading brother in that country, who had first broken bread as a teenager, withdrew from the Exclusivists at the age of 90 — because they wanted him to throw his spinster sister who was a member of the Lutheran Church into the street. She was 86-years-old.

In North-east Scotland a young man brought up by his grandparents was ruthlessly thrust out of his home by the priests. With no one to turn to he joined the Army.

In Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, a 70-year-old man was withdrawn from because he made contact with members of his family who were not in fellowship. Spies had spotted him slipping up an alley where the people lived and had timed his visit.

And in a North-east fishing town a 12-year-old boy was made to eat his meals in his own room while his parents, a younger brother and sisters fed downstairs. All because he had disobeyed the Brethren rule not to mix with unbelievers and had played soccer with his chums after school hours.

It was the same, heart-breaking story throughout the world. Two cases in Australia in the spring of 1966 are worth recording. The first case concerns the Mauger family of Southport, who had been married for twenty-one years and had five children, aged from 8 to 20. Their marriage was happy until the husband became a member of the Exclusive Brethren in 1959, the year Big Jim came to power. Ten years later the couple parted. At the divorce hearing Mr Justice Hart granted Mrs Mauger decree nisi for divorce from her husband. The judge found that after 1959 the husband became fanatical, and still was; that he constantly badgered his wife to become a member of the sect; that when she refused he told her she was 'unclean' and 'iniquitous', and attempted to break her down physically and mentally; that Mr Mauger forbade his wife to have any social contact with anyone not a member of the sect, while at the same time no one in the sect would have anything to do with her because she was not a member. Her position, therefore, was 'intolerably cruel', and her husband tried to turn the children against their mother, and that she was left lonely, deserted and unhappy.

Mr Justice Hart further ruled that the husband's cruelty and brutality to the elder sons was proved; that the rule of the sect as to withdrawal from married women was harmful to the wives and children, and to the community, and contrary to public policy. He added that it was 'very much' against

the children's interest to allow them to be brought up in the doctrine of the sect.

The second case concerns Mrs M. E. Kiorgaard, of Brisbane, whose husband, a member of the Exclusives, started the action. On May 16th, 1966, the action was heard by Mr Justice Stable, a judge of the Supreme Court. His opinion was that Mrs Kiorgaard had received 'heinous treatment' at the hands of her husband. She had done everything possible to save the marriage from going on the rocks, but her husband had literally thrust her out of his life. Justice Stable granted the wife a divorce and full custody of the couple's 4-year-old daughter. But the Exclusive Brethren were to become involved in a far more sensational method to achieve the separation, for instance of wives and husbands.

Terrible plots that condemn them in the eyes of all mankind. So cruel and heartless; carried out without pity or concern for the injured party. It seems the work of a tyrannical political party rather than that of a religious movement.

## VII. STOLEN WIVES

His footsteps echoed in the hallway of his home and he could almost hear the silence. He shouted his wife's name several times, louder each time, but there was no reply. A worried frown crinkled his brow when he got no reply. He walked a few steps and opened the door of the living room. But the house was empty, with no sign of his wife and their two children.

They had always been home at that hour. Where could they have gone to? They had few friends in the north of England town, and his wife would not leave for an Exclusive Brethren meeting without telling him earlier in the day. But he feared the worst when a search of their bedrooms revealed that clothing belonging to his wife and children had disappeared. And his heart raced when he spotted the tell-tale envelope addressed to him on the dressing table top. It was a letter from his wife. She had left him.

During the next few days it became clear that the Exclusive Brethren were behind the 'abduction'. He had been a member of the sect, but was 'withdrawn from' when he refused to sever business connections. But they had hoped they could somehow woo him back to their fold, and when this failed they applied pressure on his wife to leave him.

The husband, too concerned to carry on his work, turned detective in a bid to contact his wife and family. In desperation he squeezed an admission from a sect member that his wife had gone into voluntary hiding in a house in the town.

With the help of some friends at the office the distraught husband managed to trace his family to a hideout and after forcing entry found his wife had left with the children only a few hours before. Every attempt was made by the Exclusives to keep the family apart, and they succeeded. Although the poor husband managed to follow the trail of his estranged

wife to another house 20 miles away from the first hideout they were never re-united. The next occasion they came face to face was in a divorce court.

Such well-planned plots for the 'abduction' of wives and children happened many times among the sect during the sixties. Husbands were kept completely in the dark and knew nothing of the plots until after they took place. Wives were transported to secret destinations, everything being planned meticulously beforehand.

In one case in South Africa the abduction was to a place more than 500 miles away from the home. The Assembly were to blame for encouraging the separation between couples, by financing wives while they remained away from their husbands.

In Liverpool, the Brethren from Wallasey began preparations weeks beforehand by assembling spare under-clothing for the D-Day. The cumulative distress and heart-break caused to husbands — and children — can well be imagined.

In London, a wife and daughter were harboured for a fortnight in Haverstock Hill and the husband had no knowledge of their whereabouts. Board and lodgings were also offered free to wives as an extra inducement to be secretly abducted.

In one case in Liverpool the Assembly gave £30 a month to finance the enforced severance between a husband and his wife and their daughter. The only happy feature of this distressing chapter in Exclusive Brethren history is that the divorce courts had little sympathy for the wives. A case which came before a High Court judge in England highlighted the secret abduction tactics of the sect. The father claimed the custody of his daughter. The judge accepted the evidence against the actions and teachings of the Exclusives and awarded the custody of the child to her father. The court ruled it desirable that the child should be safeguarded from Big Jim's teachings. The judge accepted the submission that it was contrary to the child's interests to be sent out into the world as an 'Exclusivist'.

During a visit to Sydney, Australia, in April 1966, Big Jim Taylor claimed he did not know that husbands and wives were being separated. It is incredible that Taylor would dare

plead ignorance. It was he who showed the way in the 'Separate Tables' edict. Although he denied wrecking families he took no steps to stop the actions of his priests in his name. The breaking up of homes was enforced right up until his death.

Brethren priests were encouraged to entice wives away from husbands who refused to toe the sect line. In July 1966 there was a case in Johannesburg when a special reading was held to discuss the case of eight sisters whose husbands had been 'withdrawn from'. The wives were asked to leave their partners — and one agreed to this solution.

But because a wife stayed with her husband and children it did not necessarily ease their own domestic problem. There are cases today where wives live under the same roof as their husbands but not as partners, because of the heresies committed in the name of Big Jim Taylor. The eternal hope of a Surrey man who experienced this situation is contained in a letter: "I am trusting the Lord will open her eyes to see the wickedness of all this teaching, and free her from the Satanic bondage."

Not all of these heartbreaking cases ended in divorce courts. Because of the children, husbands or wives are still fighting for a reconciliation rather than go their separate ways. But because they are, under the complete influence of the local priests the hope that many will live a normal life again is slim.

The agony suffered can be felt in this extract from a letter by a doctor in South Africa whose wife had left him because of the Exclusives' teachings. Writing to the Johannesburg high priest he pleads: "I appeal to you humbly to rectify this matter so that my wife can return to me. If you do not wish to do so for my sake, I plead with you to do it for the sake of the Lord's testimony which has been brought into sad disrepute as a result of this disgraceful action. For the sake of my poor wife who, as a result of the unscriptural teachings and practices of your Sect, has suffered such privation, sorrow, hardship and loneliness which will increase as she grows older."

The unfortunate doctor also pleads for his young daughter,

"who was always marked by sweet gentleness, kindness, friendliness and love but who, as you must realise, must now have a completely frustrated, warped and slanted outlook on life, due to her having been forced to treat her own father with such extreme contempt, contrary to all natural affection and Christian principles; if not to mention ordinary decency and politeness."

He goes on: "Is such an attitude a fruit of the Spirit? Surely such unchristian conduct which she is forced to adopt, and which goes all against all natural feeling, must sooner or later tell on her health.

"Have your leaders no compassion? Will they not be held responsible if one day they have another nervous wreck on their hands? Would they want to have such harsh evil treatment inflicted on their own children and family?"

## VIII. PALLBEARERS AND PETS

Exclusive Brethren carry the word of Big Jim Taylor to the grave. But even in death they cannot escape his dogma. Soon after he laid down the laws of 'Separate Tables' he was asked about un-believers attending the funeral of a deceased member. Big Jim ruled: "The body belongs to the Assembly."

This meant complete separation between Exclusive Brethren and 'Unclean' mourners. Where the sect members are outnumbered at funerals of dead Brethren they stand well away while the burial service takes place. Sect members were strictly forbidden to attend funerals of the departed who are 'unbelievers'. This meant that a son or daughter could not attend the funeral of a parent, if the deceased had not been a member of the Brethren.

In the early 1840s the Plymouth Brethren in Hereford was one of the first assemblies to possess a graveyard, but burial grounds for individual religious movements are not uncommon. Today the Exclusives share the same graveyards as non-believers, although there have been moves through the years to buy land in Brethren strongholds.

But it was in life that innocent non-believers felt the backlash of the tyrannical laws of this form of religious apartheid. Separatism spread to the world of commerce and business. And to the domestic front.

In May 1963, for instance, a Peterhead landlady gave marching orders to three tenant families who were unbelievers. One was an invalid woman, who suffered from bronchitis, and who lived in a three-roomed flat above the landlady's shop, in St Peter's Street. All had their rent fully paid up but were given notice to leave by lawyers without explanation. Another tenant later told how she and her husband had been given the key to their flat after they told their land-

lady they did not smoke. It was one reason why they got the keys. For weeks after the couple scurried about their house getting rid of ashtrays and cigarette packets as soon as they heard a knock on the door.

There was a similar case in Peterhead where a young couple and their infant son were shown the door of their flat because they were unbelievers. The woman responsible was the husband's own mother. They packed their luggage, stored their furniture, and went to live with his in-laws.

Fishermen, who had been involved in a row with the sect over the herring pooling system, were the centre of a bigger storm in the early 1960s. Separate Tables was the source. Exclusive Brethren skippers and crewmen insisted on eating separately from other members of the crew. It is not difficult to imagine the tension-laden atmosphere created in the tiny, wooden-hulled fishing boats sailing from Fraserburgh, Peterhead and Macduff. The crunch came with whole crews marching ashore, leaving only the Brethren skipper or mate behind. For weeks Brethren-owned boats rode at anchor, as skippers recruited new crews. Many were forced to sell their vessels and join all-Brethren crews.

After the fishermen, the Exclusives turned their attention to the trade unions and the universities. They forbade contact with 'unholy associations'. This hit members who were members of unions, and lawyers and doctors of the future who would be expected to join legal and medical bodies.

Two students at Aberdeen University failed to turn up at their graduation ceremonies because of their beliefs. John Benjamin Bodman of Bristol had completed six arduous years of study and had passed his final M.B., Ch.B. examinations. But days before he was due to be capped in the Mitchell Hall at Marischal College he left his digs in Aberdeen, never to return. Two days before, Elizabeth Buchan, who was 21 and came from Peterhead, should have received her M.A. degree. Shortly before the ceremony she wrote to the university authorities calling off her appearance at the ceremony. She gave no explanation.

The British are a nation of animal lovers. That goes for the Exclusive Brethren, although you will not find a single

domestic pet in any of their households. It was believed that Taylor had forbade his followers to keep pets, but this is not strictly true.

At the root of the so-called 'edict' are the three-day rallies held by Brethren on important occasions. Because all the members of a family would be away at these meetings there would be no one at home to look after the family pet. And the Brethren could not ask a neighbour to look after their pet dog or cat because as we know they are not encouraged to have contact with the 'Unclean'. To hand a pet over to anyone would be an unforgivable crime. Brethren who insisted on keeping their pets could not attend the marathon meetings and, therefore, pressure was put on them to get rid of the animals.

So there was the sad sight up and down the country of tearful Brethren children parting with pet rabbits, budgies, guinea pigs, cats and dogs without knowing really what it was about. If the Brethren could not pass on their pet to an unbeliever there was only one solution to the problem, for very few turned the animals free to roam the street. Veterinary surgeons were kept busy destroying cats and dogs as households took the heartbreaking decision. But not all vets were willing to do the job. In one North-east Scotland town a vet refused point-blank to destroy healthy Brethren pets.

Brethren priests, perturbed perhaps by the non-appearance of certain members at meetings, would call at these households to find out that they had refused to leave their pet alone and without proper care, attention and food for long periods.

In Shirehampton, a leader called on two elderly sisters — both spinsters — who had a cat. He asked them to give up their beloved pet, but they refused. He then offered them £5 to take the animal away, but they dug in their heels. They were finally excommunicated. There was another case in England where two sisters left home with their golden spaniel because of pressure by their own parents and priests.

In Peterhead they still talk about one fisherman whose black and white collie dog never left his side. They were a familiar sight round the streets of the town and at the fish

market. Then one day the collie was no longer at his side. Locals knew the bitter truth only too well.

And from England the case of Mr Colin Court, an elderly and completely blind brother. His pair of eyes was his guide dog. Because he was not allowed to bring the dog into meetings the Brethren priests told him he must get rid of the animal.

Mr Court refused and was cast out by the heartless priests.

## IX. 'I LIKE YOU GUYS'

On the day of his triumphant rally in Aberdeen in 1964, Big Jim Taylor surprised his supporters by casually strolling towards waiting pressmen in Golden Square and greeting them with a cheery: "I like you guys." Until that stunning moment neither he nor his deputy, Stanley McCallum, had shown any signs of friendliness to newspapermen. They never gave interviews. They had remained silent.

Two months before Taylor's visit to Scotland, the Angel paved the way with a morale boosting tour. He flew into Glasgow without advance publicity and addressed nearly a thousand followers in the temple at Pollokshields.

I was present when he was smuggled into the hall. He had little difficulty in giving pressmen the slip as men, women and children milled deliberately outside the temple. After the three-hour meeting there was a nasty incident as photographers closed round the car that was slowly making its way through the crowded ranks towards the exits. Flushed with excitement, a number of Brethren began stoning the press car, and McCallum made his escape.

But two nights later at the Constitution Hall in Peterhead the Angel was 'snatched' by the cameramen. Minutes before he was due to address 500 of his followers, McCallum was whisked into the car park. He sat hunched in the back seat with his hat pulled down over his eyes. He was then bundled by his two bodyguards into a side door, and by his expression seemed to be enjoying every minute of it.

But tempers flared after the meeting as the tide of worshippers swept aside reporters and photographers. Elbows were dug into the cameramen in a bid to prevent them from photographing the Angel. As before, the Angel buried his face in his hat, but a plucky colleague darted alongside the speeding Brethren car and managed to get his picture. It

seemed McCallum had given up the struggle and did not play hide and seek with the Press again. The following week-end in Macduff, Banffshire, he posed for photos, but refused to answer questions.

Perhaps McCallum, and later Big Jim, were mindful of *Ecclesiastes 3*: "A time to keep silence and a time to speak." Taylor chose his time well. His sect had been bruised and buffeted by adverse publicity, although he himself was unscathed within the movement.

In Aberdeen Big Jim delighted newsmen when he decided to give his kerbside interview. But he continually dodged vital issues, and refused to answer questions on his edicts and their tragic aftermath. Asked if he thought the British Government would ever prevent him from entering the country, Big Jim replied: "I do not think they would do that. I have been coming here for 40 years, but if they do, these people will carry on in the teachings of Christ. There are plenty of sensible people here. They are not dopes."

He denied he was a member of a sect. "We are members of the church. What church? There is only one church, The Church of God. Did you know that? Don't you know your Bible?" After cracking a few jokes ("I am not an elder, but I am older") Big Jim wrapped up his first-ever public appearance with, "I like you fellas; I'd like to convert you ..."

After the Golden Square interview Taylor went into his shell, and never gave another interview until the Nigg affair broke, when he spoke to a number of Pressmen, including myself, and allowed his voice to be taped for a BBC television news programme. The Exclusive Brethren have opened their doors to unbelievers in times of danger to their existence, such as the threat of the Family Preservation Bill which failed to get a second reading in the British Parliament in 1965.

Chief supporter of the bill was the late Mr Roger Gresham Cooke, Tory MP for Twickenham, who took a serious view of the intolerance of the sect leaders and the unhappiness they caused. Big Jim attacked the Bill in a circular addressed to British MPs, "This Bill strikes at the foundations of Christianity", he argued. He defended the movement and made several other points, "Each one is governed by his own

individual conscience"; there is no coercion to take the same path," and, incredibly, "The Brethren have no rules or edicts."

In Britain sect members came into the open for the first time to fight the Bill. They sought, and got, personal interviews with their MPs to state their case and to prevent the end of the much criticised separation edict, and the banishment of Big Jim from Britain for all time. Exclusive temples were thrown open to local MPs to see the Brethren at prayer.

One former sect member who was present at one such meeting attended by a Scots MP told me: "It would have turned your stomach to have seen the way the Brethren fell over themselves to greet that man. Everyone wanted to shake his hand at the end of the meeting. The whole thing was a put-up job by the Brethren. They sang the right sort of hymns and the sermon was tame. They wanted to make a good impression — and they certainly did."

Big Jim and his followers rode the storm and the Family Preservation Bill never got off the ground. An official move to have the Home Secretary ban Big Jim from Britain also failed. Other countries had also tried to close the door on Big Jim. South Africa was considering such a move. In July 1966 the Queensland State Authorities in Australia investigated the activities of the Exclusivists at the instance of the Minister of Justice, following information of "incredible acts of blackmail, torture and perversion".

The Church also attacked the Archangel. At a Methodist conference in Sheffield in July 1964 the delegates roared approval that he should be banned from Britain. The Rev. Kenneth Greet, Christian Citizenship department secretary, told the conference: "I have on my desk pathetic letters from Methodists whose family life has been disrupted by the pernicious beliefs and practices of the Close Brethren." Suggesting that Big Jim be made an undesirable alien he added: "If we could ban him without making a martyr of him, then I would." But somehow Taylor survived the wrath of the people.

I myself attended a gospel meeting of the Exclusive Brethren in Peterhead during that stormy period. The veil of

secrecy surrounding the Exclusives was lifted as Councillors Robert Forman and Ian Davidson took their seats with pressmen in the then simply decorated temple in Constitution Street — the first unbelievers to hear the sect preach indoors for three years.

Councillor Forman, a member of the Church of Scotland, and Councillor Davidson, an Episcopalian lay preacher, went along to the hall to find out if the public were barred from taking part.

Their visit was the result of a challenge thrown out by Davidson, a factory supervisor, to his council colleagues at a council meeting: that the meetings were open to the public and that the halls were entitled to a remission of rates.

Earlier that Sunday morning Councillor Forman had not been admitted to the hall because he was told the meeting was being held in private. Davidson walked out of the public meeting after 15 minutes. He told me: "I had no intention of staying for the whole meeting. I utterly disagree with their principles. But I just went along to prove my point that these meetings are open to the public."

But during the 70-minute meeting I noticed that one Exclusive rule was strictly adhered to; that of complete segregation from non-believers. While sixty men, women and children sat in their Sunday best at the front of the hall, we sat on the other side of the aisle, at the back of the hall.

There was little doubt the sermon was directed at the guests. "God is going to put responsibility on you this day. You are more responsible here now than you were outside ... God is giving you a responsibility to be right with Him. God has brought you here to be converted ... now is the day of salvation. God is giving you an opportunity." No music was played and no offering taken, although a black collection box hung on the wall. There were loudspeakers round the hall but the microphone was not used by the preacher. We sang two hymns, *Hast Thou heard God's wondrous message?* ... and ... *O, Lord with our ears and hearts open*. As we filed out of the hall at the end of the service a priest shook hands with us all.

Commented Councillor Forman: "The purpose of my visit

was to create harmony rather than hate among the community." Asked if he thought the meetings were a place of 'public worship' he answered, "I think it speaks for itself. I felt at ease." At the next meeting of the council, Councillor Davidson voted for a remission in the rates for the three Exclusive Brethren halls; Constitution Street (£89), Balmoor Terrace (£34) and Skelton Street (£49).

It will be seen that the Exclusives pick the occasion and the appropriate meeting to roll out the red carpet. At other times they go to extremes to keep out unbelievers from meetings. Sect meetings are held on every day of the week. On weekdays, including Saturday, they take place in evenings. On the Lord's Day there are three services for the faithful — at 6 a.m., 9 a.m. and at noon. The most important gathering of local Brethren is held once a week. This is the Care Meeting, when Brethren business and discipline of members is thrashed out before the Assembly.

When Taylor tightened his grip the first thing to disappear was the 'All Welcome' sign outside meeting halls. Walk into a meeting place today and you would be told, "Sorry, I am afraid this is a private meeting."

Showpiece rallies, which attracted thousands to hear the guest preacher, took place at weekends. To try and pierce the security ring was like breaking into Fort Knox. But it had been done. In the early sixties myself and two colleagues slipped past the guards at the Cowdray Hall in Aberdeen. We had been tipped off previously that Big Jim was in the country and was going to address the meeting.

We arrived at the hall before the crowds rolled up by car, chartered bus and on foot, and entered the building by a back door. We got into the room at the back of the stage, then crept on hands and knees into the dust-clouded atmosphere beneath the platform while the disciples scraped and bumped their chairs above our heads.

Heart in mouth, we listened as the guards checked the doors of the main hall. One entered the room behind the stage. Light flooded our hiding place, but we were concealed by a barrier of

old chairs. We sat cramped and hunched in the black void, scribbling blindly in our notebooks as the muffled tones of the 'Archangel' drifted down to us in our hidey-hole.

Ninety minutes later we emerged into the bright sunshine looking like coal miners. But we had heard the voice of 'Big Jim' for the first time and we were all secretly pleased at fooling the Brethren bodyguards. The headline over my piece was 'The Voice of the Angel'.

Then about a week later the embarrassing truth hit us when we received an anonymous letter from an ex-member of the Brethren. The man we had heard preach in the Cowdray Hall was not Big Jim Taylor. He was in fact his son-in-law, Australian Bruce Hales.

The early morning services created numerous problems for worshippers, when it was introduced in Sydney in December 1967. The breaking of bread at 6 a.m. was introduced by the Australians as a matter of personal convenience, not principle. Without a thought to the consequences, the idea of dawn meetings spread to other countries. Aged Brethren have had to start getting ready as early as 3 a.m. because of infirmity. In big cities lonely sisters were frightened to travel in the early mornings; they were faced with standing on empty subway platforms at 4 a.m. in New York. Couples with babies were forced to take the youngsters to meetings. Awkwardly timed meetings certainly disrupt the normal development of Christian family life.

## X. SUICIDE, BRAINWASHING ...

The young spinster, tears brimming in her eyes, stood with head bowed at the front of the silent assembly. In hushed, broken tones she told the elders and the packed congregation of her 'terrible sin'; she was pregnant. As her pitiful story was sobbed out, the expressions on the faces of those in the hall varied from shock and sympathy to plain embarrassment. It is not too difficult to imagine the feelings of the poor, distressed girl as she stood alone at her heartless confession, which took place in a North-east Scottish town a few years ago.

It is little wonder that Brethren, young and old who were punished, banned or chastised for their 'sins' in front of the Assemblies, sometimes committed suicide as a way of escape. There have been a number of cases of suicide among the Brethren in recent years and at least six of these took place in 1964 alone. In Pembrokeshire, a spinster took her own life after the Brethren broke up her romance with a young man who was an unbeliever. A young girl in Ireland drowned herself. A husband took an overdose of sleeping pills because his wife joined the Exclusives and their home life became intolerable. In Bristol a man hanged himself because of his mother's fanaticism with the Exclusives. There have been many more suicide attempts. In Peterhead I spoke with a Brethren member who told of one family who cut down the father of the house before he could hang himself.

Two other tragic cases were spotlighted in the national Sunday newspaper, *The People*, in March 1968. The writer, David Burgess, himself a former sect member, told how the harsh Taylorite doctrine drove the unmarried and middle-aged sisters Elsie and Winifred Rhodes to take their lives.

The sisters ran an egg farm at Gailey in Staffordshire. They were kindly, well-liked by their neighbours and they had

been members of the Brethren since childhood. Against their upbringing they were obliged to carry out the creed of separatism. This meant they stopped visiting their cousin and her husband in Eccles, Lancashire, after many years of friendship. Brethren priests then put new pressure on the sisters, telling them their dealings with the Egg Marketing Board constituted an 'impure link'. The Rhodes were even told the little lion symbol stamped on the Marketing Board's eggs was a 'sign of the devil', and that they should sever their link with the Board.

The Brethren priests ordered the dismayed sisters to sell their smallholding. They advised it was worth £7,000. In blind obedience, they sold their property for less than £5,000.

Burgess wrote: "The desperation of this situation drove the two sisters to despair. They could see no way out. Finally, at the end of their tether, they walked hand in hand into a pool near their home on the night of June 29th, 1962, and drowned themselves.

"At the inquest a verdict of suicide whilst the balance of their minds was disturbed was recorded. No real explanation for the tragedy was offered. But I have the name and address of one person who was an actual witness to the persecution of the Rhodes sisters and the real reason for their suicide. I will not divulge her identity, but I am prepared to do so to the proper authorities if required."

In a brief interview the woman witness describes how one night as she came out of the Brethren meeting with the sisters they walked to the other side of the road, followed by two priests. She went on: "The two men were shouting at the sisters and pointing at them. After a few minutes the men walked away and the sisters stood there, crying and shaking with fear.

"I did not hear what was said to them, but I was aware of the pressure that was being brought to bear on them to give up their business. A few weeks later I heard they had committed suicide."

*The People* also cites the case of 21-year-old Martin Lawson, a handsome, sensitive young man who had been brought up with the Brethren at Hayling Island, Hants. His father and

mother were members, but he was not. In 1960 when Big Jim issued his 'Separate Tables' edict this meant Martin's parents were forbidden to eat and drink with their own son until he joined the movement himself.

He refused. Then the priests moved in to bring pressure on his poor parents, forcing them to refuse to share the same table at meal times as their son. But they loved their son and could not continue with separatism. "With rare courage they decided to leave the Brethren, whatever the consequences to themselves", wrote David Burgess. "What they did not reckon with, however, was the dangerous turmoil within the mind of their own son. One day in a garage in North London he was found gassed."

Discipline had been a feature of the Brethren movement since its early days. In the early 1840s the minute books of English Brethren communities tell of members being barred from communion until they repented for their sins, which included going to a concert, baking on a Sunday, swearing, drinking and gambling. Even running a pawnbroker's business brought the wrath of his brothers on top of one member; and wife-beating cases have also been dealt with.

We have already heard of the more extreme measures of the Exclusives. Unfortunately such un-Christian actions have been successful and particularly among Brethren who have spent all their years in the movement. To find themselves cut adrift from the only way of life they have ever known; to be 'sent to Coventry' by life-long friends or relatives, has caused them to return to the fold. Suicide, it would seem, is one way out. Stronger willed persons have defied the priests and other pressures and have turned their backs on the sect to live a normal life for the first time. Alec Slater was such a person. When he left the Exclusives for a less strict breakaway group in Peterhead in March 1964 he was subjected to several brain-washing sessions by local leaders in his bedroom of his home. One of those who was determined he should rejoin was his own mother.

Slater, then 18, was a warehouseman in a Peterhead woollen mill, but had been a member of the Brethren since he was 12. Three weeks after he left the Taylorites against his

mother's wishes he returned home to his upstairs house in Clerkhill Road, Peterhead, to find a number of Brethren members in the living room. Slater was immediately subjected to a barrage of questions as to why he had left the sect. He went to bed, but the priests followed him and for some hours they took turns in trying to make him return to the meetings.

He was accused of being under the bad influence of non-believers and they claimed he was trying to break up his home. Alec could not lock his door because there was no lock. His mother stayed in the living-room as the brain-washing went on until two the following morning. The youth was exhausted, worried and was unable to sleep.

But his ordeal was far from over — the Peterhead Brethren were determined to woo the once shining star back into the fold. One morning he was three hours late for work when two Brothers called at his home and again tried to persuade him to stay with the Exclusives. They were big well-built men and they barred his way when he tried to leave for the mill. He only escaped when two workmates called to see why he had not reported for duty. The same evening Alec anxiously returned home. At his side walked several of his friends who were also members of the 'breakaway' sect. Alec told them if he did not reappear from the house soon to come and get him. A number of Exclusive Brethren were inside the house and they again tried to stop Alec from leaving. His friends hammered on the front door but were warned off by those inside. They were told they were 'wicked and iniquitous' and they should stop exerting their evil influence on Alec.

Fearing for his safety, his friends later called at Peterhead Police Station to lodge a complaint. When police constables arrived at the Slater household Alec told them he was not forcibly being detained. A police spokesman admitted later: "It appears some elders and his mother were trying to persuade him to rejoin his sect." No action was taken against Alec's inquisitors.

Today Alec lives a completely normal life, having carved out for himself a new career away from the North-east coast of Scotland. 'Shutting up' or 'putting in ward' is the terrible

process that seems more akin to police state methods than those of a religious movement in modern times. Brethren leaders in the past condemned the faintest suggestion of this device — including James Taylor senior.

In his absorbing work, *The Confrontation of James Taylor, Junior*, Mr H. Calvey writes:

Broadly what happens is that

- (a) some zealous fanatic (maybe with a vivid imagination) develops a suspicion (or manufactures one) against someone he dislikes or on whom he feels it would be wholesome to exercise some authority.
- (b) Then he shrinks from that person.
- (c) Then he evidences his antipathy and the person would soon and certainly know it.
- (d) Then the matter is deliberately spread — the priest's feelings must of course be shared and supported.
- (e) So all must come unreservedly into the matter as supporting the priest — otherwise, as you say, it would all collapse — yet you (Jim Taylor) say this is not administrative; but all are against one, the objective being that the victim should collapse, however innocent he is, and on the mere grounds of what may be the baseless suspicion of one person whose motives may be open to question.
- (f) The point is thus attained that all within the 'fellowship' are estranged from the person concerned; they dare not be otherwise if he attends the Lord's Supper the elements would be passed away from him; if he gave out a hymn it would not be sung, and the giving of it out would be treated as insubjection; thus the person is completely ostracized — without, no contacts of any kind tolerated; within, no recognition, even, of any kind whatever. And Mr Taylor, this is your 'new' version of your Christianity. But there is more.
- (g) The case is next brought in full before the Care Meeting; the pressures are intensified shockingly (how well we know the terrible procedures at these 'Meetings

of Care'. Normally they are unbelievably disgusting and disgraceful!).

- (h) Then the victim stays away from all meetings.
- (i) His wife and children now treat him as non-existent; the prospect of family disruption looms into view.
- (j) The basis is now prepared 'to find out something' (Taylor's own words);
- (k) Then there is the addition to this barbaric process of the 'suggestion that the person had better be confined in view of finding out something, so that the person might be saved.' — (Mr Calvey again quotes Taylor).

Calvey, whose volume comprises a selection of challenging letters he wrote to Big Jim, continues:

"I refrain here from enlarging on this awful, calculated, cruel procedure of progressive coercion with all the horrible accompaniments which we know so well — the repetitive visits of young fanatics who are your 'priests', whose every evil act and word are regarded as justifiable; who stop at nothing to apply force and to instil dread ('You will not go up at the Rapture' is one of the minor weapons); and whose objective (ostensibly, and ludicrously, to 'save') is, by this final accumulation of pressures without restraint (for the least word by the person concerned, the victim, is construed as intensifying the badness of his state, though it be the last word of truth in fair explanation or defence) to enable them to go back in triumph to the meeting with the victim's scalp. *You know all this.*"

'Shutting up' had become a deliberate pressure tactic in the hands of the Exclusive priests to force acceptance of their views and edicts by severing family ties and holding the implied threat of a divided house over a brother or sister. Emotions and inward feelings of the victims are exploited to bring about capitulation, if not conviction. The scripture to justify this act is *The Second Epistle Thessalonians, Chapter 3, Verse 6*, "Now we command you brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from

every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” And verses 14 and 15: “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

*Leviticus 13* has been forced into the section of *Second Thessalonians 3* and is largely the one acted on in practice. The ‘shutting up’ treatment has been meted out for various reasons — some plainly farcical. There was a case in England where a brother was ‘shut up’ for using the same public toilet as a man who had been banished by the local meeting.

## **XI. AND, PERHAPS, MURDER?**

The red-haired, good-looking stranger whom Mrs Helen Puttock met at the dance in Glasgow’s Barrowland Ballroom that night in October 1969 spoke intelligently enough. He showed an interest in religion and on the taxi run from the dance hall to the street where she lived, in the Scotstoun area of the city, he twice quoted from the Bible.

He told her his name was John. In darkened Earl Street the taxi stopped; Helen and John got out. The night of gay laughter, music and Biblical texts was over. For Mrs Puttock never reached home where her soldier husband looked after the family.

The following morning, she was found only yards away face downwards in the back courtyard of 93 Earl Street. She had been strangled, her clothing ripped and a purse was missing. The grim find, made by a man and his dog, started the biggest murder manhunt in Scotland, for a Bible quoting young man, nicknamed by Press, police and public as ‘Bible John’. In the next two nights alone, more than 900 people were interviewed at the ballroom as the search for clues intensified.

The Bible John murder hunt focused attention on two previous murders in Glasgow in which the victims were women. In all three cases the victims had been to the same ballroom on the nights they were murdered, all had died from strangulation, the clothing of all three had been torn, and a handbag or purse stolen. The question police considered: Was Bible John behind the three murders?

The first woman to die was 25-year-old Pat Docker, married with a young son, of Langside place in Langside, Glasgow. She was a part-time nurse at Mearnskirk Hospital in Renfrewshire, and was the wife of an R.A.F. serviceman stationed in Lincolnshire. Her body was found on February 23rd, 1968,

in Carmichael Lane, Langside. Some of her clothing was recovered by frogmen in the River Cart, but her handbag and purse have never been found. The murder trail for her killer ended in disappointment with no new witnesses coming forward.

The second woman to die was mother of three, Jemima McDonald, 32, whose body was found in a derelict tenement only twenty yards from her home in McKeith Street, Bridgeton on August 18th, 1969. Murder squad detectives sealed off the tenement where her body was found and her two sons watched, unaware their mother lay dead inside. Piecing together the last moments of Jemima McDonald, the police believed that she had met the killer in the ballroom and had allowed him to walk her home. Police interviewed dancers at the ballroom and were able to get an artist to paint an impression of the killer. But despite wide publicity Jemima McDonald's killer is still at large.

But they were able to get a first-hand description of Mrs Puttock's killer. For Helen had not been alone when she had gone to the ballroom. She had been accompanied by her sister, Jean, and on the fatal taxi run Jean accompanied her for part of the journey. It was Jean who was able to give detectives a detailed description of 'Bible John'; a tall, reddish-haired man, aged about 26 to 30, somewhat articulate and who quoted from the Bible. He spoke with a polished Glasgow accent. Police were even told of his teeth formation — one front tooth overlapping. He had smooth hands, suggesting he was not a manual worker.

Bible John was stylishly dressed in brownish, flecked single-breasted suit, with high lapels, blue shirt, dark tie and brownish, short overcoat. It seems at the dance hall the stranger had created an impression. There had been some dispute involving a cigarette machine and Bible John had brought the matter to the attention of the ballroom management.

More than 40,000 people have been interviewed by police in the hunt, which has led to inquiries being made in West Germany, the Far East, Australia and the United States. In Glasgow, door-to-door calls were made and a 'photo-fit' pic-

ture of Bible John was distributed throughout the country. The manhunt caught the imagination of the public, and police received encouragement and help, but so far the mystery remains. Nearly 4,000 calls and letters were answered by the crime squad in Glasgow.

Hairdressers were interviewed in the hope that the red-haired stranger was one of their customers. So was every tailor in the city to find out who had supplied Bible John's stylish clothing. Detectives worked round the clock, spreading the net to doctors, dentists, the docks, the armed forces, and even undertakers in case Bible John had since died. Plain-clothed policemen and policewomen still mingle with dancers in the Barrowland Ballroom in the hope they will turn up the all important clue.

Who is Bible John? Police believe he is a loner; a young man shielded by his family who know the awful truth or can guess at it. Because of the vital clue regarding his Biblical quotations, they have checked churches and mission halls in case Bible John is a member of a congregation. One possible theory explaining the Bible John mystery lies with the Exclusive Brethren. Families belonging to the sect in Central Scotland have been seen by detectives, and I know that the murder caused comment and speculation among the Exclusives.

In searching for a killer such as Bible John, one must theoretically narrow the field down to the type of man likely to quote freely from the Bible. Police do not think he is over religious, but a man with a normal, intelligent working knowledge of the Bible. Even so he made some impression, on the Puttock sisters on the taxi journey, with his Biblical quotations. Bible John could well have been brought up by a family with a strict religious background and this makes one immediately think of a minority religious group rather than the established church.

Can it be that his years of segregation from the world outside his close-knit family, the harsh measures inflicted during his upbringing, has had some effect on this young man? Certainly there have been some incredible changes in the outlook of Brethren youngsters once they have broken away from

their exclusive life. I have witnessed many such changes in Brethren youth.

One young man, cast out by his family after eighteen years in the movement, found it extremely difficult to adjust to a world which seemed as alien to him as a man from the past. Luckily, he had at his side the sort of friends needed to guide him through the first months of his new found freedom. But even so, he was introduced to a life he had never before tasted. He was taken to public houses, to the cinema, to dance halls, football matches, and he watched television for the first time. Such a dramatic transition could have had disastrous results. But his watchers kept him firmly on the straight and narrow, and he was able to adjust. There were times when he wished he could return to his family, but the thought of the Exclusive church was the spur he needed to go it alone.

Bible John may be a religious maniac. One of the world's greatest unsolved murder mysteries has been laid at the door of such a criminal. Victorian police investigating the Jack the Ripper crimes in 1888, the 'autumn of terror', when five or six London prostitutes were horribly mutilated, and murdered, believed that a chief suspect was a member of a Russian religious order bent on destruction. Certainly at that time in Czarist Russia a sect, the Chlysty, believed that only by killing people could the souls of the victims enter Paradise.

A mother who was a religious crank may be responsible for her son becoming one of the strangest murderers ever in America. A Wisconsin farmer, Ed Gein, was committed to an asylum for the insane in 1957 for murder and robbing graves. As a child his mother preached that the world was full of sin and that God would destroy all women. Every time it rained, she read him the story of Noah from the Bible and preached doom.

The Bible has been blamed for more than one horrible murder. In May 1971, *The Times* reported the tragic case of a New York woman who severed the head of her five-year-old daughter. When her husband came home he found her 'babbling incoherently'. She told him: "God made me do it."

In the Book of Judith, part of the Apocrypha, Judith, a Jewish widow, cut off the head of Holofernes, an invading general.

In June the same year *The Times* reported the harrowing case of a teenage West Indian boy who was sacrificed by his immigrant parents in a ritual killing at their home in Reading, Berkshire. Before 16-year-old Keith Goring was finally strangled his foot was cut and his blood daubed in crosses on the foreheads of his three brothers as they lay stretched on the floor. During the ritual the boy was made to cough for long periods to free his sister from the devil.

At Berkshire Assizes, the boy's father, Olton Goring, was committed to Broadmoor after the prosecution accepted his plea of Not Guilty to murdering the boy, but Guilty of manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility. Mrs Goring pleaded guilty to manslaughter and was ordered to be confined in a mental hospital. The court was told that the couple were members of the Pentecostal faith, a revival sect widely supported in the West Indies, and that the boy was killed "during some sort of sacrifice during a session of fasting and meditation".

The mental torture suffered by some unfortunate members of the Exclusive Brethren has, we have seen earlier, resulted in them taking some extreme escape routes, whilst others have found sanctuary in a sanatorium. Bible John may well be a more extreme manifestation.

Extreme pressures on an individual by Brethren priests and by members of his or her own family, through the 'Angry Silence' of Separate Tables or the brainwashing sessions, can undoubtedly leave a scar. Big Jim and his henchmen must share the blame of a bloody indictment of attempted suicide. And, perhaps, even murder.

## XII. THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

Critics of the Exclusive Brethren accuse them of wrecking homes, marriages and lives. There is another charge they level against the sect; that of commercialism. This starts with the love of money, the root of all evil, which offers members status in the movement, influence and power beyond their dreams. The Exclusives have a Trust Fund, centred in New York, which is believed to be in the region of £2 million. This staggering figure grows steadily through wise investment in stocks and shares and enormous contributions which flow into New York from all over the globe.

Cash is sent from all parts of America, Canada, Australia, the British Isles, the West Indies, New Zealand, South Africa, South America and Europe. The leaders admit to the growing difficulty of getting funds out of some South American countries and Iron Curtain satellites, where much of the sect's activities have gone underground.

At Croydon in August 1963 Big Jim appealed to members: "We have to think of our Brethren, especially in Eastern Germany, where the whole power of Communism is against the Brethren." At this same meeting he warned of the growing threat of communism in the West Indies and South America. At Bristol in May 1970 he said of the East Germans, "we weep over them".

Contributions are made at every Brethren meeting, resulting in large sums being sent to New York every week. In 1961 it was directed that only paper money should be put in the box at Lord's Day collections and the box was to be uncovered, so that all the Brethren could see how much each one was contributing.

Persons in fortunate circumstances or employment were expected to put in substantially more than ten shillings; £5 was the accepted rule. With the coming of decimalisation in

Britain the seven-sided ten-shilling piece was acceptable to the priests.

We can see why the Trust Fund reached such huge proportions when it was estimated that from Peterhead alone £50 was collected at each meeting. And that in one instance New Zealand sent a sum of £500 to the New York bankers. But the individual Brethren camps still have enough left over to satisfy their own needs. In Peterhead the Brethren hall was tastefully redecorated with wallpaper costing £7 a roll. A new meeting hall in a Banffshire town cost the sect many thousands of pounds.

Big Jim Taylor received a large share of the money, and it was estimated that his personal income rose from about £80,000 a year in the mid-1960s to £150,000 before his death. Less distinguished members also received 'gifts'. A brother in the English Midlands, asked why he quit his job as a milkman to follow the Exclusives, is said to have replied, "When I was a milk roundsman I earned £9 a week; now, as one of the Lord's servants, I receive £9 a day."

Big Jim's son-in-law, Bruce Hales, is alleged to have told a meeting in Nelson, New Zealand, in May 1965, his example of a spiritual man. Pointing to a fellow Australian on the front platform row he said: "*There* is a spiritual man; he makes £10,000 a year and anyone who gets that from a Dutch-man (nationality of the brother's boss) is a spiritual man."

But if the Exclusives insist on being 'open-handed' about personal contributions at meetings, they are criticised for not coming into the open regarding the origin, exact amount, purposes, current use, ownership and control of the Trust Fund.

Religious denominations, other than the Exclusives, have been attacked for seeking financial details of members so as to judge how much each family or individual can afford to contribute to their church. But forms sent to Brethren in Chicago in October 1966 probe far deeper than any taxman. Each head of the house was called upon to fill in the forms and send into the meeting the extensive details in the analyses provided. They had to first complete a balance sheet, detailing on the Assets side: cash in hand, savings accounts, bonds,

stocks, notes and loans, mortgages, real estate, furniture, cars, insurance, pension funds and other assets.

On the liabilities side they had to fill in: notes and loans, instalments, loans, charge accounts, bills, mortgages, unpaid taxes, contingent liabilities and other debts. Then there is a column headed, 'Net Worth' — that is assets as shown, less liabilities as shown. But the brother or sister completing, this head-scratching document, was far from finished. The forms — they consisted of four large sheets — also included a section for sources of income, salaries or wages, and all other income to be itemised in detail and figures filled in.

If the scheme had worked, it was to be extended to other centres. But as it was not put into operation in Britain it can be deduced the Chicago Brethren did not take too kindly to the idea.

The Chicago Brethren were told that when the detailed analysis was received back completed, teams of brothers — not necessarily priests — would go to each house and evaluate the net worth of the households and individuals. At the Memorial Day Chicago meetings in May 1965 it was firmly stated that if the analysis was not forthcoming the responsible person in each defaulting household would be excommunicated. In one American city a leading sect member asked several brothers present to stand up if their liabilities exceeded their assets. It is no accident that those left in the Exclusive Brethren are, in the majority of cases, fairly wealthy people. The sect preach total separation from non-believers, but this is impossible as far as the world of commerce and business is concerned. Brethren businessmen still do business with the 'Unclean'; the Exclusive shopkeeper still does business over the counter with the customer of another faith.

Members of the sect own factories, laundries, shops and other commercial ventures, and naturally rely on the 'Unclean' for their livelihood. They also employ non-believers in most cases for they have no choice. Money, as far as the sect is concerned, is not unclean.

The fishermen of North-east Scotland reap a rich reward and deservedly so. Exclusive Brethren fishers face the same

cruel hazards in the hunt for fish and, although they no longer pool their resources, their catches fetch competitive prices on the market floor. When Big Jim ruled on separatism many Brethren businessmen followed his line to the letter and sold out. Other reneged and left the sect rather than lose money. Compulsory Saturday closing (Brethren were asked to prepare themselves spiritually for Sunday meetings) also caused trouble, particularly among shopkeepers who relied on weekend trade.

To the Exclusives their home is the Assembly. They have a high standard of living, with modern, comfortable bungalows, all modern comforts, and expensive cars ... of all colours, except red. One car salesman has said he found it impossible to sell a red automobile to a sect member because it was the colour of the Devil.

Some Brethren have found a way of making a living in partnership with un-believers without fear of the priests. They remain a sleeping partner in a business and enjoy the best of both worlds; spiritual and financial.

Big Jim, like his father before him, was a draper to trade. But when he rose to the dizzy heights within the sect he left his trade far behind him. The substantial gifts of cash he received every year put him without doubt in the millionaire class. He enjoyed the best of living. He lived with his wife and family in a luxury three-storey house in Brooklyn, and when he travelled abroad it was always first class.

A sinister method employed by some Brethren to boost local funds takes the form of priests applying pressure on elderly members to leave everything to the sect when they die. In Lancashire an aged widow, who lived alone in her own house, was pressed to rewrite her will. It led to a breakdown in her health and she was later moved to a mental institution.

Big Jim continually denied charges of commercialism in his sect and is said to have disciplined certain national leaders for exploiting this field. But his denials are meaningless when you study the text of an international meeting in New York less than a week before he died. At this rally he openly touted for contributions and told one American brother exactly how much money he should contribute. He also gave

the key to the reason why Brethren in positions of power are wealthy. They buy their high offices, with the backing of the leader. At New York Big Jim told the assembly: "I put people in office, that is my business. P.M., I did not put him in, but he did a good job and he is going to stay. We will keep you in office, as long as you put that money in the box!"

Minutes after the meeting began Big Jim pointed at an American brother, Mr L. Holt of Des Moines, and asked, "Did you bring your money with you?" Holt replied, "Just a sample." But Big Jim pressed on. "We are going to have a collection here tomorrow. I notify you, Mr Holt, we are having a collection tomorrow." When the brother asked if he took cheques, Big Jim answered, "Well, we will take cheques if they don't bounce. Now, how much are you going to put in? A thousand? Yes, you are going to put in a thousand bucks."

Startled, Holt replied, "What are you ... well, how much do you need?" Big Jim: "A thousand bucks we want from you tomorrow." Holt: "From me?" Big Jim: "Yes."

"I don't know," Holt said slowly. But Taylor was adamant. "Yes, we will take your cheque. Yes, we will do that. Now you understand, Mr Holt, you are not spiritual. You told me that your brother was spiritual and you financial." Taylor insisted Holt contribute one thousand dollars to the Brethren fund. "Yes, we want about three thousand dollars here tomorrow. Tomorrow three thousand bucks, and one thousand is coming from you." Holt: "You want one third from me?" Taylor: "One third from you, yes. You have got it. Do you deny that?" Holt: "No."

In the next hour or so the Archangel ordered Brethren to contribute sums ranging from five thousand dollars to two dollars per person. Finally, the amount promised climbed to twenty thousand dollars, of which about twelve thousand came from America. Somehow what had started out as a religious meeting became a discussion on the individual wealth of certain Brethren, including income tax and stocks and shares.

Big Jim again picked on brother Holt and told him, "You know money, and you know how to keep it too. He is only

worth about one hundred and fifty or two hundred thousand, that is all he is worth, maybe five hundred thousand. Is it five hundred thousand you are worth? Tell the truth, now, how much are you worth?" Holt: "You are embarrassing me." But the Archangel insisted, "I tell you, I know you are worth more than I am, and I think you are worth about half a million."

Holt came back with, "Well, I am glad you are worth more than I am, because I don't have that much." Big Jim: "No I am not. I am only just worth what I get in, that is all." Holt: "Well, we have something in common, we are both below five hundred thousand." Big Jim: "Are you worth below five hundred thousand? You are telling the truth, are you?" Holt: "Yes, I am telling the truth."

Taylor, unperturbed, then asked: "How many tyres have you got left?" Holt: "Tyres are not dollars." Big Jim: "Tyres that is the inventory, and I know what you do." Holt: "What we have got is all correct now." Big Jim: "All right, you pay the income tax, and you owe the government about two hundred thousand. All right, I won't tell on you, I promise I won't tell on you." Answered Holt: "Well, my net worth goes up fast here in New York."

"Sure does," Big Jim told him. "Stock goes up fast here, and you take note of these figures, and C. he don't know, but his wife knows. He don't know anything C. but his wife knows and my wife knows too. Once I say to her, you know this, she knows that, and she tells me this and she makes out my income tax and I am sure it is right when she does it — only about ten cents for the government. You get a wife like mine and you won't have to pay any tax, I think that is right, and I think V. you had better see your wife about your income tax. Mr Frost, you don't pay any income tax do you?" At this point Mr E. H. Frost, from Vancouver, stood up and replied: "Oh, yes, I have to pay what they ask for." Big Jim: "I know, but do you pay it right?" Frost: "Yes."

Taylor, winding up the meeting, told Frost: "You do, you are sure? You don't cheat them? Well, if you don't cheat them you are not an Englishman. The English cheat, that is what they do, cheat. Every millionaire is a cheat, yes. I found

that out long ago. Now, this meeting is over, and the next meeting we are going to have that clergyman up there, and after him Mr R. Hibbert and after him is me. Is that all right? Right, now we go on with the next meeting here, and some sister will wake up and give out a hymn.”

In North-east Scotland the Exclusive Brethren fishermen owe much of their wealth to the war years. Because Brethren — both Open and Exclusive — have been conscientious objectors since the Crimean War, few true sect members have ever marched into battle. There is a bitter feeling even today in North-east ports that while non-Brethren fishermen took part in the war at sea, the Brethren, because of their religious beliefs, stayed at home.

Fish was scarce during the war years because of patrolling Nazi submarines and aircraft. Many fishing boats were attacked in the North Sea and the price of fish was high in more ways than one. It was during the war that the Brethren amassed their wealth which, through careful investment, is reflected today in their comfortable way of life. One Peterhead housewife recalls with bitter humour how drunken Exclusive fishermen were wheeled through the back streets of the town after celebrating a big catch. She said: “They were not supposed to drink in those days, but they got the stuff okay. I have witnessed relatives putting drunken fishermen on to a handcart and wheeling them to their homes, away from the prying eyes of the townspeople.”

In August 1970 Big Jim, who claimed he had never made a cent out of the Exclusive Brethren, demanded £1 million in royalties from the Stow Hill Depot in England, the company responsible for publishing his manuscripts and tracts. It was the first time that Stow Hill, a charitable institution, had ever received such a request for royalties on ministry.

The Archangel demanded the money be handed over by September 5th. The Stow Hill trustees sent him a rebuff in rhyme:

“A million pounds? How blind thou art, deceived ...  
 What hast thou, thou thyself hast not received?  
 How wilt thou stand, when in the final count  
 The judge demands from thee the full amount?”

### XIII. SEX AND THE SCRIPTURES

Sex education is on the curriculum of most schools in Scotland. Social and moral welfare workers have joined forces with teachers in helping to pass on the facts of life to youngsters in the classroom, through lectures or television. Education authorities have found opposition to their plans from parents, particularly from members of the Exclusive Brethren. At Banff Academy, while 260 schoolboys watched the local television company’s acclaimed sex programme, *Living and Growing*, a group of Brethren boys stayed away. The boys, average age 12, sat in the school library or in an empty classroom as their classmates watched the programme and took part in the subsequent discussion. When the education authority announced its sex talk plan there was an immediate outcry from the sect.

Brethren parents do all they can to protect their offspring from sex, through the influence of education, films, television or books. But perhaps they would be surprised that some teenagers were titillated through writings of a far different kind; not some work of underground pornography, but a book that had sat on their bookshelf since they were able to read: The Holy Bible. A Brethren youth once described how he and fellow brothers would seek out ‘dirty bits’ in the Bible and show the text to blushing and giggling sisters. Both Old and New Testaments, as Biblical readers will tell you, contain a host of views regarding sex. These cover a variety of subjects, including prostitution, adultery, homosexuality and bestiality. In the opening paragraphs of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans he paints a grim picture of a debauched, corrupt pagan world of the Ancient Romans and Greeks:

“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world

are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse; Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.

“Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. For this cause God gave them up into vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.” (*Romans 1: 19-27*).

A Brethren teenager, seeking knowledge of premarital relations, need only consult the Old and New Testaments for their outspoken views. The Ancient Hebrews took their sex seriously and kept a strict eye on their daughters:

“If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour’s wife: so thou shalt put away evil from amongst you.

“But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die. But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of

death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so in this matter. For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her.” (*Deuteronomy 23: 23-27*).

Hebrew women who were engaged in premarital relations faced certain detection from a future husband.

“If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her. And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid.

“Then shall the father of the damsel and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel’s virginity unto the elders of the city and the gate: And the damsel’s father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter’s virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

“And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days.

“But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel; then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die; because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father’s house: so shalt thou put away evil from among you. (*Deuteronomy 22: 13; 21.*)

To a student of social behaviour the Bible is a mine of information of sex in the Ancient World, but to a Brethren child, whose only source of knowledge outwith the school library is the Bible, it can provide unexpected titillation for young minds. The Prophet Ezekiel, discussing prostitution in the Old Testament, provides such an example, in his story

of two sisters in Egypt, Aholah and Aholibah, who both played the harlot. Aholah doted on her lovers, neighbouring Assyrian warriors, governors and high-ranking officers, and “committed her whoredom with them, with all them that were the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself. Neither left she her whoredoms brought from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity and poured their whoredom upon her.” Ahola was executed by the Assyrians for her hidden past, but her sister, Aholibah carried on the family trade.

She, too, in her youth in Egypt had played the harlot and doted upon paramours “whose flesh (sexual organs) is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses. Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.” (*Ezekiel 23: 5-8; 19-21*).

Incest is man’s most widespread sexual taboo. In Biblical times it was frowned on and the guilty were either banished or put to death. The first case of incest can be found in the Old Testament and concerns Lot and his two daughters after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. *Genesis 19* describes how he and his daughters sought refuge in the mountains above Zoar:

“And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

“So in a cave in the mountain they made their father drink wine, and the first-born lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. On the following night the second daughter followed suit and, Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father’.”

We now turn to the case of King David, his eldest son, Adonijah and the beautiful girl, Abishag the Shunammite, whose story is told in the First Book of Kings. In *1 Kings 2*

Adonijah, the prince regent, asked that Abishag be given to him as his wife. A simple enough request, but it cost him his life. In *1 Kings 1* we read:

“Now King David was old and stricken in years: and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat. Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not.”

Why then did David’s eldest son die? Adonijah, who was cheated out of rightful place as king by his younger brother Solomon, was in fact asking in *1 Kings 2* for the woman who had shared the late King’s bed. His request, in the eyes of Solomon, was a virtual claim to the throne. He made the request first to Solomon’s mother, Bathsheba, to ask the new King. Her request was met with this angry reply from Solomon: “And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also; for he is mine elder brother; ... Adonijah shall be put to death this day.”

It is not the last we shall hear of Abishag and King David, or the Moabites, for during the Brethren Scandal they are mentioned by Brethren.

#### XIV. A LETTER FOR SISTER HINDLE

In Scotland in the summer of 1970 the deep-rooted faith of the Exclusive Brethren was shaken to its foundations by events which had world-shattering repercussions for the sect; events from which they have never recovered. The Big Jim affair caused thousands to 'withdraw from him' and it drew others nearer to him. Some disillusioned Brethren sought religious solace elsewhere. The strictest sect in the western world was torn from top to bottom.

Disturbing rumours which filtered through to the outside world became fact and seemed even more incredible in the cold light of day. The 'bedroom incident' as it became known by the Brethren, took place after a startling meeting in Aberdeen, where Big Jim held court before 500 men, women and children. According to Brethren circulars issued after the scandal broke, tape recordings of this meeting disclosed 'vile' language, references to sexual organs, whistling, 'cat calls', stomping of feet and showmanship. It was when Taylor returned to Nigg, where he was the guest of Mr and Mrs James Alexander Gardiner, that the real storm broke. Two days before, on Thursday, July 23rd, there was little hint of what lay ahead. That morning Taylor arrived by charter aircraft in Aberdeen after preaching at meetings in the south. He went immediately by car to the Gardiner home at Airylea, a trim, blue-and-white painted bungalow at Nigg on the southern outskirts of the city.

There were other guests at Nigg that night; a Dr and Mrs Bob Gardner, of Perth, Mr and Mrs Jim Gray, of Edinburgh, Mr and Mrs Ed Steedman, of Falkirk and a Miss Ann Gibb, also from Falkirk. At 9.30 p.m. the same day a London chemist Mr Alan Ker and his attractive 35-year-old wife, Madeline, called at Airylea after flying to Aberdeen on a BEA flight. They were on their way to Laurencekirk, a market

town in the Kincardineshire Mearns, but broke their journey. When Taylor saw the couple he told his hosts that the Kers should stay the night.

In the first few days of August the rumours began to leak out and the first hint of the approaching storm came in a report in the *Scottish Sunday Express* of August 3rd, which spoke of "the man who has headed the Close Brethren sect for 20 years may now be on his way out, following an incident in Aberdeen ten days ago".

Pressmen knew well that a woman and Big Jim had been involved in a bedroom scene at Airylea, but the Exclusive Brethren remained tight-lipped. The only hope of the truth being revealed was for someone, somewhere issuing a statement. Preferably Jim Taylor. But past history of the secretive movement gave little hope of this happening. Then, incredibly, it happened. On Wednesday, August 12th, the Aberdeen newspaper, the *Evening Express* carried a front page exclusive, headlined, 'I Am Not An Adulterer' — Big Jim Taylor"

In a startling, frank interview the Archangel claimed that he had been falsely accused of adultery during his Aberdeen visit; that he had been held against his will for 90 minutes in the room of a house in the city, and that the movement was split into two opposing factions, one headed by himself and the other by Stanley McCallum, who accused him of 'corruption' with a sister.

The report carried snatches from a copy of a printed letter he had made available to the newspaper and which he was sending to each of his 8,000 followers. I also received a copy of the letter after contacting Taylor in New York. It was handed over to me by one of his supporters in Grangemouth. The letter, written by Taylor from his home at 470 East 26th Street, Brooklyn, New York, was addressed to a Brethren sister in England, a certain Miss Elizabeth M. Hindle.

Here it is; published in full for the first time.

"Beloved sister,

Thank you for yours of July 23rd; I do not remember you, but am thankful you enjoyed the meetings at

Aberdeen. The last time I was there I met the Press which was very interesting. This time I met criminals. I arrived on Thursday by charter flight with Mr and Mrs Alan Ker. I was brought to A.G.'s house and was made very comfortable. That night there was some singing and I went to bed.

"Friday the meeting started at 8 a.m. At the foot of my chair in the meeting was a glass of mixed whisky. The meetings proceeded on Abram the Hebrew and there were some very fine addresses and the day was very fine in spiritual ministry. During the meetings I took a sip of whisky. Mr A.K. had said to me that his wife wanted to wash my feet, to which I agreed. He also suggested she might assist me after the meetings each day in rubbing my head and massage. He brought her in that night, they had to go through most of the rooms of the house to get to my room — there were many helpers beside the host and hostess who saw them come to my room.

"The second night was the same only there came a knock on the door and in came the host with S.McC. and J. Gray. S.McC. says, 'What's that?' points to the sister (nurse) lying on the bed. He says 'Corruption'. He points to some clothes on the floor and again says, 'Corruption'; the host agrees. I said to S.McC., 'You are a bastard, a liar'. Alan Ker had also come in and he told S.McC. that he was charging his wife with corruption. He said she was a pure woman. They all left and Alan Ker and his wife went out expecting me to follow to get the charter flight. On the way out Mrs Ker was called a demon and they were told they could sit on the street all night. Alan Ker waited one-and-a-half hours for me to come out then they left to go to an hotel.

"The reason I could not come out was that two brothers did not let me out of the room. This lasted for 1½ - 2 hours when there came a knock at the door and the doctor came in. The doctor gave me some injections as he had been doing and then said, 'You are going home because you are sick?' I said 'No, I am not sick' and

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asked him if he knew what was going on in this house.

"He said no, so I said I would not spread evil by telling him. The host came in with some pills and I asked where Alan Ker was, and he said he did not know. He said James 3 was coming. Soon James 3 came and I asked why he came because I was to meet him at London Airport. S.McC. had phoned James 3 and told him something. James 3 actually left the meetings at Farnham because he was told I was sick, senile and did not know what I was doing.

"S.McC. filled up James 3 with this 'corruption' as he had charged. I left the house (A.G.) after asking was he right, his wife, S.McC. He said yes, but I found out later he meant that S.McC. was right. As I came out to go with James 3, there was S.McC., J.L., J.G. and a brother called Stephano or such name about 4 a.m.

"These were the criminals; they were supposed to have a breaking of bread, but none was held in that house. The charge made by that bastard Waterfall that I was in bed with another man's wife is a dastardly lie. If I wanted to sleep with another man's wife would I go to Aberdeen — costing about \$1,000? Brooklyn would be cheaper. Some Brethren have shown themselves to be boobs. The dear Brethren in Detroit have come to a right decision and withdrawn from S.McC. only to be poisoned by A.B.P. with the lies he got from Aberdeen.

"I told him I withdrew from him, 2 *Timothy 2*, because he was associating with persons under discipline. (Aberdeen). Affectionately your brother, J. Taylor Jr."

On the day the story broke I phoned Big Jim in New York. As his number rang out across the Transatlantic cable my attitude to his speaking about the affair was pessimistic. But for the first time ever Big Jim was showing amazing frankness. "Go ahead, ask me anything you want," he told me.

During the interview that followed he confirmed the text of his letter to Miss Hindle. It was high noon in sweltering New York

when he took the call. And the temperature soared higher as Big Jim angrily denied the accusations against him. "Lies, lies, lies. It is a dastardly lie," he stormed when asked about the rumours of adultery and that Mrs Ker had been naked in bed. Taylor, white-haired and 71-years-old, told in a trembling voice of the events of July 25th. "They kept me in that room for nearly two hours. The door was unlocked but I could not get by them as I am not very strong."

I had a fleeting memory of a similar despairing scene happening in a house in Peterhead six years before. On that occasion the 'victim' was Alec Slater, the factory boy. Big Jim defiantly said he was still leader of the Exclusive Brethren but admitted: "It looks bad for me in Scotland. But I will return to Scotland when I feel like it -- they will follow me when the time comes." He said he had complained about his 'imprisonment' to the police in Scotland. Before the interview closed I asked how his wife felt about the accusations made against him. "Would you like to speak to her? She's right here," he told me.

Then in a hushed voice, Irene Taylor, who is much younger than her husband, took the call to defend him. "This is an attack of Satan on my husband. I know my husband is a pure man. I have no reason to suspect him whatever of anything that has taken place. I stand by everything that he has done." On the other side of Aberdeen all callers were being turned away at the front door of Airylea. It looked as if Big Jim had won the first round.

But first, one or two points about Taylor's letter. At the very beginning he thanks Miss Hindle for her letter, dated July 23rd, and is thankful she enjoyed the meetings at Aberdeen. Obviously she could have made no reference to the Aberdeen meetings because they did not start until the 24th and he travelled alone by air to Aberdeen not with the Kers. James 3 is in fact Big Jim's son. The doctor who treated Big Jim in the bungalow was not Dr Gardner; he was a Dr Thomson of London. The brother called 'Stephano' was Ed. Steedman.

The Archangel, on his homecoming, complained to the Scottish police of being kept a prisoner in the bungalow. He addressed his letter to the 'Inspector of Police, Edinburgh,

Scotland' and his complaint was forwarded to The Scottish North Eastern Counties Police. But it shows how seriously the police took his allegations when at the time of his death none of the principle witnesses in the bungalow had been interviewed. In fact some of them went to the police to find out what was happening.

## XV. A DAMNABLE LIE

Events moved quickly in the Press and the Brethren world in the next forty-eight hours. Mr Alan Ker gave an amazing interview to newspapermen from his home. Then he and his wife and family flew out to Big Jim in New York.

The day the Scottish national newspapers splashed the story of the 'bedroom incident' reporters were homing in on the Ker's red brick villa in residential Woodberry Avenue in North Harrow, outside London. And Ker, a 39-year-old father of four, told them that his wife *was naked* in the bedroom with Big Jim. But he insisted nothing improper had taken place. "Do you think I would allow my wife to mess around in a promiscuous way?" he asked the *Daily Record* man. He went on, "What these people have suggested was very wicked. We just go by the Bible but Christianity is very good fun. Mr Taylor needed some comfort. We just did all that we speak about in the Bible. There was nothing improper. My wife had no clothes on but she was covered by a sheet. She is in love with me and we are very attached to Mr Taylor. He was clothed." Mr Ker, a towering man, over 6 foot tall, talked to the *Scottish Daily Express* of the 'wicked charges' made against his wife. In his version of the bedroom scene Big Jim was wearing pyjamas while Madeline was covered with a bed sheet. "They did not commit adultery", he said.

Sipping whisky as he relaxed, sandal-clad, in a huge arm-chair he said calmly: "It is all a wicked lie. My wife is a pure woman." Of the accusations, Mr Ker said, "All things are pure to the pure. I do not think the incident was planned. I think the opportunity presented itself and Mr McCallum took advantage of it. Christ also suffered like this. There were those who even doubted his birth through the Holy Spirit." Then he described the events at Nigg which led to the allegations.

He told the *Scottish Daily Express*: "My wife and Mr Taylor were alone together for quite some time. Shortly before 11 p.m. Mr McCallum came up to me and said, 'Get your wife out of Mr Taylor's room.'" He went on, "I went in to see Mr Taylor. Mr Taylor told me to bring the men in. Then they kicked my wife and me out of the house. They called my wife some terrible things. They said she was a devil and that we could sleep on the street. I had to ask Mr Gardiner, whose house we were staying in, what the name of the house was, so that I could get a taxi."

"Mr Taylor said that if we were to go then he was coming with us. He called them bastards and liars. But when Mr Taylor tried to leave the room, they restrained him. It was a wicked thing to do." While her husband gave this startling interview Mrs Ker was upstairs having a bath. "She does not wish to see anyone tonight. She is very tired." The following morning Mrs Ker broke her silence before the Kers flew to America. But she would not explain why she was covered only by the sheet as she massaged Big Jim's feet. "All I can say is that I love Mr Taylor because he is a pure man. I was serving him."

Mrs Ker told the *Scottish Daily Express* (August 15th): "The woman in the Bible washed the Lord Jesus's feet, and I want to do that for Mr Taylor. He is a great man. He was tired after the meetings in Aberdeen, and I wanted to comfort him so I massaged him. There is no wrong in that surely? He is an old man, and I was accused of wicked things but they are all lies. I love my husband, I would not corrupt a pure man — and Mr Taylor is a pure man. My husband knows that. Mr Taylor is the only man he would allow me to serve. I too, would serve no other man." Mrs Ker added: "These people knew that my husband had allowed me to serve Mr Taylor. The door to Mr Taylor's room was open. They could have come in at any time. But, instead, they called my husband and told him to remove me from Mr Taylor's room. They said. I had corrupted him. They found an opportunity, and they took it to discredit Mr Taylor. It was an evil thing to do.

“The horrible accusations that have been cast against me have hurt us deeply. We were very disappointed in the people who tried to discredit Mr Taylor through me. Two of the people at the house that night held him back when he tried to follow us on to the street. He could not believe they would say such monstrous things.”

Then the Kers with their two youngest children, Allison and Charlie, motored to London Airport for a ‘working holiday’ in the States. In New York, Big Jim was still in a talkative mood. On the BBC news magazine, ‘Nationwide’, on Thursday, August 13th, the Archangel’s voice was heard for the first time by millions. He told the interviewer over the Transatlantic phone that Mrs Ker had been lying in the bed and he had been sitting on the edge of the bed. Asked what happened next, Big Jim retorted, “Nothing happened”.

Taylor was being kept in touch with the explosive situation in Britain by his supporters. When the story first hit the headlines he received a number of calls from sympathetic businessmen in Scotland. Big Jim had certainly done all the talking. The ‘other side’ retained an almost stony silence, apart from a curt reply from Stanley McCallum, when I phoned him at his home in Detroit. “It is all a pack of lies”, he said. Seven words. He was giving nothing away in public.

The ‘bedroom incident’ at Nigg had all the ingredients of a Sunday newspaper story. And at the end of the first week of the scandal Taylor again denied the accusation of adultery this time to the London *Sunday Mirror* (August 16th): “I am no fornicator,” he told the Mirror reporter. He hit out at the ‘naked lady’ story. “No sir. She was not naked. That is a damnable lie that is going around and people are going to be sued who put it out.”

The ‘naked lady’ story in one Scottish newspaper certainly upset him. Days after the story appeared in print a Bristol firm of solicitors announced it had been instructed to raise an action for libel on behalf of its client. They did not name the person they were representing, but as nothing has been heard since, it can be presumed their client was Big Jim.

But although Mr Ker had already admitted his wife had been naked there was no ill-feeling between Mr Ker and his

leader. The two men stood together during the Mirror interview as Taylor said: “We are the greatest of friends and always will be.”

In the interview the Archangel said he was in bed while Mrs Ker washed his feet. Afterwards Ker suggested to him that his wife should rub Taylor’s head and massage his neck. “I find that soothing,” explained Big Jim. Questioned about why Mrs Ker lay under a sheet, Taylor replied impatiently, “I don’t know why. Maybe she was tired. I was in pyjamas. I don’t know what she was wearing.”

Asked about the clothes found in his room by McCallum, Big Jim answered: “I don’t know whose they were, maybe they belonged to some angel.”

It was left to another British Sunday newspaper, *The People* to add an incredulous touch to the whole affair. In their version (August 23rd) they claimed that Big Jim had had half-naked women dancing before him. It was not made clear if this had taken place in the bungalow or at meetings. Had it really happened it would certainly have caused a lot of raised eyebrows among Exclusive Brethren.

Asked *The People*: What about those stories of half-naked prancing women? “That,” Archangel Jim said, “Is a lot of rubbish. The story originates from those rats in Scotland.”

*The People*, in a spicier vein, reported that Taylor’s critics claimed that the sect’s ban on foundation garments was intended to make sexual fondling easier. It quoted one married British member of the sect as saying: “We have split from Big Jim because meetings have been taking the form of orgies of sex — not religious gatherings.” Another member — a married woman in Dulwich — told the paper “I have heard of these meetings where men touch the women’s bodies, but my husband and I won’t associate with that sort of thing.”

Back in Brooklyn the Archangel explained to *The People*, “The members are not encouraged to touch everyone’s sexual parts. But breasts are for Christ. It’s as old as Solomon. The man touches the woman’s breast. Of course, they do it in private. You only do it with your wife. It’s the best part of the meeting.”

These were somewhat sweeping claims by the paper, which, in the same story, said Big Jim had broken the sect's no-drinking rule by sipping whisky at the Aberdeen meeting. But, of course, the Exclusives had many years before lifted prohibition.

While Brethren meetings had taken a peculiar turn with regard to the behaviour of some of those present the suggestion of sexual orgies was entirely wrong. But Taylor Jnr can perhaps be faulted in that he introduced a sexual undercurrent into meetings, but with words only. At one meeting he said sisters were to be "stripped instruments" and not "stringed instruments" (*Psalms 150: 4*). And it is claimed that elsewhere he took up *Canticles, Chapter 8: 10*, "and my breasts are like towers" and asked startled Brethren: "How can we know the sisters' breasts are like towers?"

Four days after the Nigg incident Big Jim was back in New York preaching to followers in their Nostrand Avenue Temple, and his subject was 'Purity'. He told them: "Purity is a great matter in scripture, a very extensive matter. What was the pure nard of great price? What was that woman? She was a pure woman — 'Pure nard of great price' (*John 12: 3*). "So we want purity of mind and heart, the whole being. So that you approach any matter with purity not by suspicion." At this meeting he again asserted himself as leader. "Everything supports my line — everything. My line is right and you better get aboard, and it is not *Genesis 3*. That is not my line."

On that same day, July 29th, Mr James Gardiner phoned Mr A. Bufton Parker, a Brethren leader in New York. Then he and Stanley McCallum signed a typewritten statement giving their version of the bungalow row, and sent it to Parker. This was that letter:

'Beloved Brother, Re phone call. Our brother Mr Taylor arrived on Thursday morning, July 23rd. The Brethren we had arranged to stay in the house were Dr and Mrs R. Gardener of Perth, Mr and Mrs J. Gray of Edinburgh, Mr and Mrs E. Steedman of Falkirk and Miss Ann Gibb of Falkirk, all those Brethren were here by 8.30 p.m.

"Mr and Mrs R. A. C. Ker, who were to stay at Laurencekirk called about 9.30 p.m. on their way from the airport to Laurencekirk. Immediately J.T. Jnr. saw them he said these are my friends and insisted they stay in my house. That night we witnessed Mr Ker lead his wife through to Mr Taylor's bedroom with a dressing gown on and barefooted. Then Mr Ker returned to his own bedroom alone, my wife witnessed Mrs Ker coming out of Mr Taylor's bedroom about 6 a.m. on Friday morning. Mrs Ker spent some time during the intervals in Mr Taylor's bedroom. On Friday we were about an hour late for the afternoon meeting. I knocked on Mr T.'s bedroom door but got no response. After about 20 minutes Mrs Ker came out saying she had to wait until she was released. After about another half-hour Mr Taylor came out. Mrs Ker said she had to be with Mr Taylor to attend to his feet and head.

"On Friday night Mr Ker again led his wife through to J.T.'s bedroom about 11 p.m. and again returned alone to his own bedroom and left his wife in Mr Taylor's room. To get to his own bedroom he had to come through the kitchen, dining room, and living room. We had no evidence as to when Mrs Ker came out of Mr Taylor's bedroom on Saturday morning.

"At the break on Saturday I went through to Mr Taylor's room with a preparation for his lips which he had asked for after which we barricaded the door between the Ker's quarters and the living-room to prevent Mrs Ker from having access to J.T.'s room because we were disturbed and unhappy as to the length of time they were spending together.

"We had provided every comfort and care for J.T. so that he was being well looked after by us in the house. Mr and Mrs Ker tried to break down the door so that she could reach J.T.'s bedroom. In the process a large glass panel at the door entrance was cracked.

"When our other visitors left for the meetings Mrs Ker managed to slip through to Mr T.'s bedroom staying there alone with him for some time, so that we were

again late for the afternoon meetings. When she came out of the room she said she had been told to tell me I was a S.O.B. and a bastard.

“On the way to the meeting I asked if it would be alright for S.McC. and Jim Lovie and his wife to come up for a meal with us after the meeting. He agreed to this. The afternoon session was short and we were home early. Mr Taylor went straight to his room and Mrs Ker followed him through a short time afterwards.

“S. McCallum and the Lovies arrived. We sat around talking and had a meal. J.T. and Mrs Ker did not put in an appearance and I felt I had to find out what was happening in my house. I went through to J.T.’s bedroom and found Mrs Ker, undressed and in bed with J.T. He had on his pyjama top which was open down the front. I remonstrated with Mr Ker and asked him to get his wife out of there, and then asked S.McC. to come back to the bedroom with me and witness the situation. Mr S.McC. and I both witness to the fact that J.T. and Mrs Ker were in bed undressed together.

“S.McC. asked J.T. if this was right and he said, ‘yes’. S.McC. pointed out that it was unsuitable, uncommonly and not morally right. J.T. said to S.McC., ‘The devil is in you and I have to get him out. You have been wrong all your life.’ S.McC. said, ‘What would Renee say?’ His reply was, ‘I suppose you will tell her.’ S.McC. and the Lovies then went away. Ker was fully consenting to what his wife had done, and I decided that to protect my home I had to put the Kers out. J.T. insisted he was going out with them and said, ‘She is my woman.’ We prevented him from leaving with the Kers. This was because we wanted to protect him. S.McC., Jim Lovie and Dr Bob Gardner had gone to Glasgow to get James 3 off the 1.20 a.m. flight.

“J.T. became very difficult calling us bastards, and son of a bitch and to all go to hell. We had to send for Dr Bill Thomson who had been attending to him for the last 3/4 weeks. J.T. became very quiet when Dr Thomson arrived and was given an injection and tablets. Dr

Thomson said that *medically* he was a sick man but the moral side is a matter for the priests.”

Mr Gardiner then makes two points:

1. “I feel all could have been covered if J.T. had admitted the wrongness of having another man’s wife in bed with him — both being undressed.”
2. “If it had been admitted that he was a sick man. The attempt to justify the bedroom situation has made it imperative to disclose the full facts.”

Mr Gardiner then alleged that moves to have his home declared “leprous” and both he and McCallum “withdrawn from” were an attempt to get “witnesses out of the way”.

His letter continued: “Some Brethren take the view that this is Abishag and David forgetting *Ephesians 5, v. 25* and other scriptures.”

Here Mr Gardiner was making reference to the fact that it was known in Brethren circles that Taylorites were brandishing the Bible in defence of their leader. One Exclusive I spoke to at Peterhead during the crisis told me curtly: “Look at the first book of *Kings* in the Holy Bible,” referring to the story of the ageing King David and the virgin maiden, Abishag the Shunammite.

The anti-Taylorite’s reply is also found in the Bible, in the *Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians, Chapter 5, Verse 25*: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.”

The day after the Kers were ordered from Airylea they were back in London. Big Jim Taylor was driven by his son to Glasgow where they boarded a London-bound flight. The Kers, after spending the night in a hotel in Aberdeen, flew south to be reunited with Taylor and his son.

The ‘Angel’ Stanley McCallum left Scotland and returned home to Detroit on Tuesday, July 28th, to discover he had been ‘withdrawn from’ by Exclusive Brethren there. He was told the news when he arrived at Detroit airport. The row was boiling over on both sides of the Atlantic as Taylorites refused to believe the Nigg episode, whilst the majority of Scottish Brethren feared their leader had been guilty of immoral conduct. In the next two days the Brethren in

Aberdeen met to discuss the crisis. They gave James Gardiner full backing for his actions, and 'withdrew' from a Mr John Scott, a leading James Taylor Jnr supporter in the city.

Big Jim referred to the charge made "by that bastard Waterfall" in his letter to Miss Hindle. The man he accused of spreading the 'bedroom incident' is Mr F. D. Waterfall, a leading member of the Exclusive Brethren in Birmingham, England.

Days after the 'Hindle Letter' went out to Brethren, Mr Waterfall replied to Big Jim's charges. In a letter sent to Taylor, Mr Waterfall makes two points: Firstly, Miss Hindle's letter of July 23rd was written the day before the Aberdeen meetings started. "I note you say she enjoyed them," comments the observant Mr Waterfall. Secondly, "What was Alan Ker's wife doing lying on your bed in the absence of her husband?" he asks. "Is it normal for nurses to lie on the beds of their patients?" Mr Waterfall then denies charging Big Jim with being in bed with another man's wife. "I did not do this," he wrote to the Archangel.

He discloses that considerable pressure was put on Birmingham Brethren, as elsewhere, that Big Jim "must be supported 100 per cent whatever charges had been made." Birmingham refused to support Taylor, but added that any charge against Taylor was New York's matter and not for Birmingham to decide.

The Birmingham Brethren decided to withdraw from iniquity to pursue righteousness and judged "it was not right for a man to have another man's wife in bed." Taylor's supporters, who numbered about 100 out of a membership of 500, broke away after claiming it was right for the universal leader to have another man's wife in his bed. Mr Waterfall, who severely criticised Taylor for his method in 'withdrawing' from Bufton Parker of New York ("slaying a righteous man"), described Big Jim's letter to Miss Hindle as "abusive."

## XVI. THE ABERDEEN TAPES

During the last Saturday of July 1970, more than 28,000 delighted Scots roared as the Commonwealth Games ended in the Meadowbank Stadium in Edinburgh. Millions also thrilled to the finale on television and radio. But a hundred miles or so to the north, in Aberdeen, a small gathering was treated to a far different sort of spectacle.

If Exclusive Brethren families are not allowed to watch television, go to the cinema or listen to the radio their priests have no objections to them listening to the tape recorder. For tape recordings are taken of all important Brethren meetings, to be used later for reference purposes in all parts of the world.

When Big Jim preached in Aberdeen, on those two successive days of July 24th/25th 1970, tapes were made. His followers were shocked by what happened at the meetings, particularly the one on Saturday, July 25th. And when the Nigg incident reached their ears Aberdeen repudiated the meetings.

After James Alec Gardiner phoned A. B. Parker in New York on July 29th he sent the Aberdeen tapes to him in America. Before the tapes arrived Mr Parker and two New York brothers called on Taylor at his Brooklyn home to find out what had happened at Aberdeen. This was on the Wednesday forenoon only hours after Gardiner had called New York. But they did not find their leader very co-operative and he refused to answer certain of their questions.

By then, American Brethren had realised that something was amiss and they were summoned to attend a fellowship meeting in New York the following evening, Thursday. Some of the sect members travelled 3,000 miles and evidently the point of the meeting was for Taylorites to reassure them that all was well. By Thursday, word had spread round the

sect that the Aberdeen tapes were being sent to Parker and that he would judge from the recordings. On the same night at the fellowship meeting a number of young brothers from Brooklyn came to Staten Island sub-division reading and, according to Parker later, “it was evident that trouble was brewing.” That evening Big Jim called Parker on the phone and ‘withdrew from him’.

He was accused of associating with persons under discipline; and, as word of the nature of the Aberdeen tapes went round the New York Brethren, there were claims the tapes were forgeries. In a circular from three New York Brethren — A. B. Parker, Elliot Hoyte and Donald Pflugst — to universal members (August 14th, 1970) they stated: “The crisis facing Brethren currently relates to the exposure of shocking evil at Aberdeen meetings on July 24th/25th.” But Big Jim raged at a New York Care meeting: “There is a tape of filthy conversation which is not my voice. It’s a fake.” But people who have heard the tapes say there is no doubt it is Taylor’s voice.

They claim the original tapes disclosed unbiasedly the exact words expressed, along with the intonations of the speakers, and a background of hilarity caused by showmanship, laughter at unseemly insulting remarks, whistling, cat-calls and stomping of feet. “They are proof of the use of words no believer should use, but worst of all the blasphemous use of God’s name ‘El’. No lover of Christ, hearing these tapes, could do other than endorse the action of the Brethren in the place where the things were perpetrated.”

One of their witnesses at Aberdeen puts it a little more strongly. “We returned home before we had arranged for, and I took the first opportunity of confessing to my Brethren that I had failed badly in not protesting in the Name of the Lord Jesus against the torrent of evil to which we listened for two days. All the brothers who were there, including two juniors, followed suit, endorsing the adjectives I had used; namely, lewd, vulgar, obscene, indecent, abusive and irreverent. At a later meeting I added the word blasphemous. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the issue that

Brethren universally have to face is that of blasphemy. The Brethren of Aberdeen have judged this. The charge of blasphemy is based on the flippant, profane and frequent use of the Name of God, ‘El’, in the meetings.”

Now to the question of the tapes. I have in my possession a typewritten extract said to have been taken from a recording from the Saturday afternoon reading in Aberdeen. It was the second day of Big Jim’s rally in the sect temple in Rosemount Viaduct, and five hundred followers again gathered to hear him.

At the top of the extract is this note: “This is a continuous extract from the original tapes. Because of the extraordinary character of the occasion, it has been necessary to make some attempt to describe the intervals of noise and uproar between the speaking. This has been done without exaggeration and all can, of course, be verified from the tapes.” “J.T.Jr” is, of course, Big Jim; S.McC., Stanley McCallum and J.A.G. is James Gardiner. Copies of this particular extract were circulated among Exclusives and ex-members in Britain and elsewhere in the world. My copy was given to me by a one-time member of the movement living in Aberdeenshire and I later received a similar copy from Belfast.

It is an incredible document. Parker was quoted by Brethren in England as stating that, in his judgement, anything worse than the Aberdeen reading would have come “direct from hell.”

JT Jnr: What the ‘ell are we doing here? You so and so, what are you saying?

TMB: This will get us somewhere, this will get us somewhere. I don’t know where.

JT Jnr: George, what do you think of this here? George Brown, what do you think of this here?

GMS: I’m sorry I didn’t hear your question.

JT Jnr: I wasn’t talking to you, boob. George!

GWB: Yes, Mr Taylor.

JT Jnr: What was the answer?

GWB: I don’t quite know, Mr Taylor, what to make of it.

JT Jnr: Anybody know that. Is your wife here?

GWB: Yes, she is.

JT Jnr: And she's mad.

GWB: No she isn't Mr Taylor.

JT Jr: She is so. All going to have a good time here. Oh, yes. We're going to ... you nut! ... we're going to have a good time here. And you, you dear, dear, dear, dear, dear boob, what do you want to say?

JAG: See the stars and stripes you know?

JT Jnr: Rubbish! What are you looking at, you boob? See that fellow there? He's too serious.

JAS: I was thinking of the value of ...

JT Jnr: You were thinking of what?

JAS: The value of Paul and his intelligence in the mystery  
(*Loud laughter and stamping.*)

JT Jnr: Now we must get on with this meeting here and the next address: Now we have Mr George Terries. The next address. You never had it so good. You big boob, you. And then the next is what? Because we're still producing (*Not clear*). We had the hell of a time in our house just a few minutes ago — 'ell of a life. That so-and-so. But its No. 2 now. We got No. 1. That's No. 1, that's George Terries. Anybody know him? Anybody know George Terries? We're going to have the 'ell of a time here. I want to tell you my purpose that he's a very good factory. I'm still looking for that. George is No. 1 ... No. 2 is coming but it comes slow. She's in terrific pain. You bastard! You bastard! We need a doctor here. Go to sleep Stanley, go to sleep. We have plenty of hymns, to hell with you. We're having a very good time. You bum, you. You big bum. Scott! Bum! Scott! Bum! Scott! Bum! Scott! Bum! Scott! Bum! Now you have it. You never have it. You never had it so good. You never had it like this, you nut, you. (40 seconds pause with bursts of laughter) (*Shouting*). You stinking bum! You stink! Why didn't you bring some toilet paper with you. Very fine meetings.

MBT: Yes, first class. (*Pause 85 seconds with indistinct remarks and laughter then shouts of laughter with cheering, whistling and stamping.*)

What I would like to know Mr Taylor — is this to be the pattern for all meetings?

JT Jnr: Look at that son of a bitch there. (*Pause 70 seconds culminating in laughter, stamping and whistling.*) You never had it like this before. You bastard you. (*Loud laughter, stamping and whistling.*) David, where the hell have you been? Thank God for you. I thank God for you everytime. You been stinking somewhere. What you been doing at?

DID: In Hell.

JT Jnr: You haven't had any privilege to do that. You feeling better? Thank God for that. You feeling better, David? Thank God for that. You feeling better, David? Thank God for that. Are you feeling better, David? Thank God for that. The whole thing, too. What about your intestines? Was that the trouble? To hell with them! 'ell with them. You hear that George? George! You st ... George! Did you hear? Yes. You st ... 'ell with the other one! 'ell with the other one! Stay awake, you boob! What do you think, we're going to get on with all these songs from Detroit? To hell with them, 'ell with them, I said. 'ell with them! You big bum you. You never had it so good. And don't you think, don't you think you're going to go away with this stuff. You here, what's your name? Son of a bitch.

JG: John Gaskin.

JT Jnr: Get up. You look like nothing. Sit down! You never had it like this before. Eric! Awake? You awake there? Well get up and perform Eric, get up. Get up Eric. Get up! Eric get up. Sit down. You never had it like this before. You stupid people here, what do you think I am? I'm a professor. Here you. I'm not finished with you yet. You nut! Get up. I'm not finished with you yet. Well I'll tell you this. Don't you mention any cars any more, remember? So what the hell are you? Skunk. You never had it like this before. That son of a bitch. I very careful using the word son of a bitch because I wouldn't know. I wouldn't know you have to be careful about it. Is everything alright with your bowels? You never had it

so good. Stand up Mr Gardiner. I would like to introduce you to Nicodemus. And will you answer the question that I ask you Nicodemus? You couldn't. Who are you? Who are you?

JAF: James Flett.

JT Jnr: Get to hell out of here! 'ell, I said 'ell out of here. You big bum there, you Bennett, what are you doing there sitting round . . . You never had it like this before. Now we have some other things before, before us. You know, what I want to bring before you. What I want to bring. There are things that I would like to bring before you. Repeat. There are certain things I'd like to bring before you. You son of a ... *(Pause 60 seconds with shouts of laughter.)*

JT Jnr: You never had it so good. Will you have something to say to the church.

JG: I think we've entered in the time of the sign language.

JT Jnr: Repeat.

JG: I think we've entered in the time of the sign language.

JT Jnr: Repeat. .

JG: I think we've entered in the time of the sign language.

JT Jnr: Repeat.

JG: I think we've entered in the time of the sign language.

JT Jnr: Repeat.

JG: Amen.

JT Jnr: Repeat.

JG: I think we've entered in the time of the sign language.

JT Jnr: You're going to sleep. Yes you were. All right George.

Upidee George. Upidee George. What are you saying for the church here?

AT: Who's the big stiff now, eh? *(Loud laughter and whistling.)*

GT: I think somebody needs a good clean out.

AT: I've been today and I've used the paper as well.

GT: Can I make another observation? You stink!

AT: Say something original.

GT: I'd like to. But it depends on somebody else. *(Pause 60 seconds with laughter.)*

JT Jnr: Watch me. You do the same. *(Loud laughter with*

*whistling and stamping.)* You never had it so good. And I don't think will ever have it do good either. You big bum here, give me your hand so I can have some.

SMcC: Can I ask a question? Are these the signs of the zodiac?

JT Jnr: Yes! *(Loud laughter with whistling.)* Now what was the point that was before us here? What we talking about here? What was the point we were ... What was the point we were talking about?

JAG: Sid escaped from Eddie and came and told James the Hebrew.

JT Jnr: We're getting on with that. We're getting on with this truth here. And the truth is this. This is the truth. And this is the truth. That's what it is. It's the truth. We're having having a very fine time. And it's the truth. Why did you sit down? I told you to stand up. Don't you do that again. We're going to get down to the truth here. And the truth is the truth and the truth. And don't you sit ... Don't you sit down you st ...

SH: Truth and the truth and the truth — that's the triple crown isn't it?

JT Jnr: Yes. And you, don't you sit down.

SMcC: Could you initiate us into the mystery? *(Loud laughter.)*

JT Jnr: You never had it like this before. You never did. *(Laughter.)*

SH: It's like Piccadilly this. Like Piccadilly. I feel like Eros sucking plums, you know. *(Laughter.)*

JT Jnr *(very slurred)*: We're getting on very well in the truth here. *(Pause with indistinct remarks followed by loud laughter.)*

SH: That's Alec Terries, higher and higher yet.

JT Jnr: Get up you bastard. *(Loud laughter.)* We'll now proceed with this meeting here which is very spiritual and the point is to get people spiritual. We have in mind to get people spiritual here. We forgot to deal with these ... *(pause).*

SH: Spiritual line to get people to stand on their feet isn't it? Two feet?

JT Jnr: You never had it like this before. (*Loud laughter then 75 seconds pause then very loud laughter.*) You never had it — it so good. You never had it so ... (*Laughter.*)

SMcC: We might translate that by saying “You never had it so good”. (*Very loud laughter with whistling and clapping.*)

JT Jnr: Now don't do that again. You were told to stand up.

SH: He can't do two things at once.

JT Jnr: If you have an explanation for what in the world you're doing anybody knows no but you (*sic*). You have an opportunity to justify ... (*laughter.*) The chapter begins this way. I repeat, the chapter begins this way ...

SH: She was turned into a pillar of salt.

JT Jnr: The chapter begins this way. That's how the chapter begins: “To hell with you.” El — Genesis 1. (*Laughter.*)

SMcC: I may have to be excused ... (*Loud laughter and whistling for forty seconds.*)

JT Jnr: We're going on with the scripture here. (*Pause 45 seconds with bursts of laughter.*)

Remark: At least we've got company, Sidney.

SH: Tweedledum and Tweedledee. (*Uproar for twenty seconds.*)

JT Jnr: Now we're going on with the scripture here. It's very spiritual this scripture here. We have to get some scriptures in between some damned fools.

Question: Beg pardon?

JT Jnr: Do you hear that — you big bum plumber from Dusseldorf? We have to get some scriptures in between some damned fools here. (*Laughter 20 seconds and then uproar, whistling, etc.*)

Remark: A threefold cord is not easily broken. (*Laughter for 30 seconds.*)

JT Jnr: You never had it like this before. (*Loud laughter continuing with stamping and renewed shouts for 60 seconds.*) We'll proceed with this meeting which is very spiritual. (*Pause.*) We're proceeding with this meeting which is very spiritual. You never had it so good. (*Pause.*) You never had it so good.

Question: May we ask a question in the temple? (*Laughter.*)

Would you tell us what that means please? (*Loud laughter.*) When I was a boy we had a name for that. We used to say, “Same to you with knobs on.” (*Loud laughter and whistling.*)

JT Jnr: Is there another question from the parliament? You son of a bitches.

Question: I wondered if No. 2 was still born or what?

JT Jnr: Interpret? (*Pause.*) Interpret? (*Laughter.*) What's the interpret of this thing? What is it here? What's the question on the board?

Question: I was wondering if No. 2 was still born. (*Confusion, two people talking at once.*)

JT Jnr: Hey, wake up there old coffin, you got two coffins on the side of your face there. Look up there, he has two coffins one on each side of his nose. You don't do that again! Now what is the question before ... (*Laughter.*) What is the question before the board here? You son of a bitch what you got to say? I couldn't prove that you're the son of a bitch I couldn't do that. You can't say a son of a bitch if you don't know. But you're a bastard. Now what you want to say?

Remark: I'd rather listen to you.

JT Jnr: To hell with you. We want to listen to people give me a fight. That's what I want somebody to give me a fight. You don't want to fight me? (*Pause.*) The only fighter left is this skunk over here.

SH: You can fight and run away. “He that fights and runs away lives to fight another day.” (*Laughter, cheering and clapping.*)

JT Jnr (*very slurred*): You never had it like this before. You never had it like this before. Me, I'm looking around for these sons of a bitches, where are they? (*Loud laughter.*) You never had it like this before. Now for instance if you want to take ... for instance, for instance, for instance, for instance, for instance, for instance ... for instance ... (*Pause.*)

SMcC: I'm beginning to wonder where I am.

JT Jnr: I wonder where the 'ell you, are you (*sic*).

SMcC: Whether I'm down there ...

JT Jnr: Down here, that's where you are. *(Laughter.)* Now it's a very fine subject this here. It's wonderful you know, it's really wonderful what I'm bringing before you. What I'm bringing before you is really wonderful. Wonderful. There's one of these bastards here trying to interrupt me. What I'm bringing before you is wonderful. But these bastards they interrupt me. But you're going to get something out of this meeting.

SMcC: It's a long time coming. *(Loud laughter.)*

JT Jnr: It's a long time in coming because of a son of a bastard like you. *(Laughter. Pause, then several wolf whistles; then uproar; cheering, clapping, and loud rhythmical clapping for 90 seconds.)*

JT Jnr: The introduction of these meetings was very spiritual you know. And we must get on ... spiritual. *(Laughter, 30 seconds.)* You never had it so good. You son of a bitch. I wondered what that word meant you know and then I found out what it was. *(Loud laughter) (slurred).* We ... we ... we need a doctor here. Amen. Huh! We need a doctor here. You never had it so good George. And, George, you son of a bitches. But you can't really say that one if you don't know it. So I wouldn't say it. *(Laughter and pause.)* You never had it like this before and I don't think you'll have it again. I'll tell you a few of my friends here. A few of my friends, I'll tell you who they are. There's that Mr ... I'll tell you who my friends are ... Ben Armitt, he's my friend. I don't know any other son of a bitch is my friend or no, I wouldn't think he is though. I think you are you big boob over here. I think he's my friend. Your name is Scott, yeah, you're my friend, you discovered me, in ... *(Laughter.)* ... you discovered me in Inverness. What you want to say, you boob, get up and say it.

Remark: My name is Scott *(Laughter.)*

JT Jnr: You never had it so good. *(Pause, then uproar and whistling with loud hysterical laughter from the platform.)* Well the object of these meetings as usual, is to get some people spiritual, that's the object of these meetings. That's the real object of these meetings, to get

something spiritual into the Brethren. Now how are we going to do that with all these bastards here? I'm looking for you, you're going to get it. But George, George, you're going to give the next address. That may not be too happy for you. You may not like that but he's going to give the next address. And then we're going to get the next so and so and that's going to be the bastard sitting here. I think his name is Craig. That's the next bastard going to speak. Goodness, if you would keep looking down there, I'd help you. *(Laughter.)* Now we got No. 2 man and the next man is not going to be you, you bastard you. *(Laughter.)* Nicodemus, son of a bitch. I don't think there's anything truer than that, that Nicodemus was a son of a bitch.

Alec Terries: He's from the same source.

JT Jnr: I know my men. Why don't you keep quiet, you bastard? *(Loud laughter and then bursts of cheering, stamping and whistling 30 seconds.)* Now we got two. Two selectees, we got two. And George don't forget your production. George, don't forget your production. George, don't you forget your production. I think you forgot that, and you are No. 1 man. No. 2 man is this Craig here, fast asleep in every meeting. Fast asleep in every ... *(Laughter.)*

GT: Can I ask you who is going to clear up the mess?

JT Jnr: We'll take care of that. *(Pause.)* You never had it ... so good. Now we have No. 2 man and he's called Craig. He's the son of a bitch from somewhere. I must excuse myself because I don't know whether he is a son of a bitch. I think he's more like a bastard. Because I can't prove my ... I can't prove some of the things I'm saying here. You can't prove who a son of a bitch is. But you could prove who a son of a bastard is. That's what you could prove.

JAG: You can't go by the uncton, you must have facts. *(Laughter.)*

JT Jnr: We'll have time for you, David, I don't think we'll need much for you. I wondered where you were and I found out where you were and you were sick and I think

I felt for you. And I think the Brethren did too, felt that you were sick and we are going to keep on doing that. You're a sick man (*next part indistinct*). And you Alec, you think you did a good job didn't you? Yes, I'm telling you this? I'm going to take a lot of your territory away from you. (*Laughter.*) Well we're getting on with these meetings and we must have something spiritual here you know. There's all the old bums going to sleep he couldn't, you know he couldn't do it right (*indistinct*) (*singing, very slurred*). Everybody's doing it, doing it, doing it ... (*Laughter.*)

SMcC: You've given me so much today that I'm troubled with flatulence. (*Laughter.*)

JT Jnr: To hell *with you*. (*Laughter.*) These distinctions are rather difficult to understand but its Hebrew. Ell with Stanley McCallum, ell with him. Ell with Craig, ell with ... Jim (*Pause.*) Renton, he's rentin' everything. And you, maybe we'll see about you. But what we want, what we want is George Terries, that's what we want ... and why we want him is, his fine production. That's why we want you George. Production. And if you don't know it I'll tell you this that he's got a very fine production. You people don't know these things but I know them.

JT Jnr: And then there's that Jim Fleming. He's got a pretty good production, but I think I made one of them mad you know, that's what I think I did. But they all came to me with confessions so I think JF, son of a bitch, is all right. But I wouldn't be able to call him that you know, because I don't know, all I can call him is a bastard. Now if you people have got anything to add to this would you please say it.

Question: Would you give a word?

JT Jnr: No. I would give my word about ... Mittwoch ... Mitt ... Mitt ... Mittwoch, Mittwoch. You understand that? I'll give my word Mittwoch.

Question: Would you interpret please?

Heinz Nitsche: It's Wednesday. Mittwoch is Wednesday. (*Laughter.*)

JT Jnr: Now we're doing all right here. Now JF, you satisfied? Your daughters are wonderful, I tell you and your wife is superlative. Oh, when she came to me I thought that was it. And you were scared. He was scared when she came to me. But she had to do it. It's too bad you know, there's only one job like this. All these people wanting my job, but there's only one job. And I got Mrs JF and she came, and she was something. And she still is something. These old ... you know these Georges, they don't get a clue with ... but we'll get on with the operation, and it's very fine. I tell you that GT's production is fine. And then JF's is fine, when I got it (*Laughter.*) What do you think this is? Your bed? This fellow's sleeping on me all the time. George, you understand? George, you understand? No. Oh yes (*very quietly*) that GT he knows how to produce them.

AT: They're all like their uncle. (*Laughter.*)

JT Jnr: You're a liar! You're a liar! (*Laughter.*)

Remark: We all agree. (*Loud laughter.*)

JT Jnr: George, we're waiting for them. I tell you that George is something.

GT: The half has not been told you.

AT: Say something original.

GT: I go by scripture.

JT Jnr: You son of a ... You devil. I'm telling you, that George is something. George, George ... Boag. (*Laughter.*) You want some help? (*Laughter.*) I never had it so good. I really never had it so good. I can control Glasgow ... Edinburgh ... Preston ... and, what the hell is the name of this place here?

JAG: Perth (*Laughter.*)

JT Jr: You never had it so good. But that JF, he ... I'm not too sure about him. Cause I got ... her. I got her all right. So it's not too safe for him. Where are you, where are you, where are you, you honey, where are you? Mrs JF where are you?

Remark: Right up the back.

JT Jnr: Go to hell. (*Laughter.*) Where is she? Where are you? (*very quiet.*) Oh honey, it's too far. (*Loud laughter.*)

We're getting on with this meeting here and its going to be spiritual before we get through. That poor old fellow from Detroit, I know he's pretty sick, you know. Sick. He's Detroit sick, he's sick as a dog. Down by the sea wall, saying, "Oh, help me O God". Down by the sea wall. Yes, that's something you didn't know. Where are you Jonah? By the sea wall.

SMcC: What he's crying is "Hosanna, Son of David".

JT Jnr: No, no, he's not. He's down by the sea wall. I learned this song from one of the most priestly men I have ever heard of, and he didn't know nothing any case. His name was Johnson, I heard from him, "Jonah? I'm sick as a dog ... Down by the sea wall." Jonah means ... I think it means, you know, I think it means Hebrew. Here I am Jonah, shouts the captain, where art thou, Jonah? Here I am, down by the sea wall, sick as a dog. Give me a seed cake or else I die. Repeat. Captain says, Where are you Jonah? Wake up Jonah. Where are you? Here I am, sick as a dog. Give I kee-cake, give I kee-cake, give I kee-cake or else I die. Repeat. Give I seed cake or else I die. Jonah means Hebrew. Jonah knows Hebrew, he says, Cast me in. You never heard such ministry as this before. Jonah says, Jonah says, Cast me in, that's what Jonah says. Jonah was, I think between females. That's the latest ministry and I think it's true, same as Peter.

SMcC: I was just going to ask if I could be excused. (*Loud laughter.*)

JT Jnr: It's no good, it's too good for you to be excused. Too good. Because Jonah's, what he had to eat was terrific. But what you got to eat is good. You stay here — don't you go out of here.

SMcC: Are you prepared for the results? (*Loud laughter and stamping.*)

JT Jnr: You never expected this here. You did not.

R.A.C.K.: Didn't Jonah have a 20-gallon tank?

JT Jnr: Where the ell are you? Who are you talking up there? That's the coffin man, yes it is.

W.M.C.C.: But it wasn't me it was him.

JT Jnr: Yes it was, it was you. It was you. Oke. We want

Oke, that's all we want. Oke! Fine meeting this, you never had it like this. You, I'll get through with you — you won't be what I'm thinking about you. Derek. We need a hoist. Who told you you could sit down? We want a hoist. That's no good. We want a hoist. We want to get up to heaven. We want to get up to heaven.

SH: Get them to sing, 'Swing low sweet chariot, Swing low sweet chariot.' Go on Derek.

SMcC: When can Jonah come up? Get up? In a moment I'm going to say, 'To 'ell with you'. (*Loud laughter and stamping. Pause. Then cheering and whistling for 90 seconds.*)

JT Jnr: You never had it so good here. Now we'll try and get spiritual in this meeting. What chapter did we read? Any case the whole thing adds up to this, the whole thing adds up to this; do you have any power to attract people to Christ? Do you? That's what it adds up to. Do you have any power to add up ... Look at me. Don't look at that boob. Where did you go?

SMcC: Ask no questions and you will be told no lies. It's a very delicate matter.

JT Jnr: It seems very smelly around here; it seems very smelly here. Where have you been? It seems very smelly here. Did you take care of that bastard? Did you? Did you care for that son of a bitch? You can't call him that you know really, because you don't know. Doctor did you take care of him?

WT: And myself as well. (*Loud laughter.*)

JT Jnr: Now we got to get on with this meeting here.

SH: Every verse ends with (*singing*). Doing what comes naturally.

JT Jnr: Maybe you. Not yet, maybe. George. You ready for production? Stand up. Are you ready for production?

GT: Yes.

JT Jnr: How many are in view?

GT: At the last count there were three, but one's gone.

JT Jnr: Who's next to him? Who's coming up next here? We want to have you in view. No. 3. Where's that so and so? Where's he? Where's No. 3 here? Who's No. 3

here? Where's that son of a bitch? Surely it's not me. Is that true? You're a real son of a bitch. I don't know who's propo ... I don't know who is the third man? Who was he? Who is?

Several voices then replied in chorus: YOU!

JT Jnr: Is that true? All right we'll proceed with this meeting. I found out that you're a crook. Yes, I found out that he's a crook. In between these meetings I found out that this son of a bitch is a crook. He's the first son of a bitch I've met since I came to Aberdeen. Well, we'd better proceed with these meetings. We'd better proceed with these meetings. No. 1 George, you ready for production? All the stools ready George? You need stools if you're going to produce.

GT: Are we permitted an anaesthetic?

JT Jnr: Speak up.

GT: Are we permitted an anaesthetic?

JT Jnr: Proceed. You proceed then. Proceed with your production.

The *Aberdeen Extract* is an amazing document. If it is factual then it is little wonder the Brethren in Aberdeen were stunned and shocked by the nature of the meeting and the language expressed by their leader, who seemed to be under the influence of drink. But if it is a fake, and this I doubt, then it reveals the incredible lengths to which Taylor's opponents would go in an effort to discredit him.

There is no doubt Exclusive meetings in England and elsewhere were degenerating. Big Jim himself subscribed to the goings-on and encouraged followers by taking part. At one gospel meeting he appeared on the platform barefoot and crossed himself during prayer in the manner of a Roman Catholic.

At some Brethren meetings older members were startled by drum-playing youngsters, throwing darts fashioned from toilet paper and squirting water pistols. As one London member wrote to a Cape Town brother: "His supporters at their meetings have descended to the level of wordliness that no 'pop' church would think of."

After the Aberdeen tapes were played in the United States

the Exclusives, as we have already seen, were split. Big Jim's opponents alleged his supporters were sheltering him and refused to face the truth. They claimed efforts to bring the truth before Brethren in New York had been blocked and that Taylor was 'dictating' to the Assembly, not allowing the facts to be known and that persons in possession of the facts had been 'withdrawn from unrighteously'. There is no doubt that, at this point in the crisis, New York and its neighbouring centres, such as Plainfield and Passaic, were solidly behind Taylor. But at the same time his opponents were withdrawing from him and breaking bread elsewhere.

## XVII. SATAN'S FRAME-UP

Stanley (The 'Angel') McCallum was born in the Banffshire fishing town of Macduff more than sixty years ago. He came from fishing stock and in his younger days manned the small wooden boats that fish round the British coast. But before World War Two he emigrated to the United States and later settled in the car-producing city of Detroit.

McCallum still has relatives in the Macduff and Banff area. On his own admission, at a Brethren meeting, he has visited Britain regularly since 1946 but never visited his mother, sisters and brothers. Some years ago I spoke with his nephew then living in Banff. This man was not a member of the sect and he did not expect his uncle to visit him. But he did not bear McCallum any grudges.

The Angel came into the public's eye in 1960 when he visited Scotland and was blamed for starting the fish war. After he returned home to his wife and family in Detroit the McCallum family was shocked by a tragedy. In October 1960, Stanley's 61-year-old brother, John, was found gassed in his home in Macduff. John, who lived alone, had at one time been a leading member of the Brethren. He joined the sect in the early 1930s and showed such great promise as a preacher that he was sent to America to attend a course. But a year after returning home to Scotland he unexplainedly left the movement. John was buried in a cemetery at Macduff at a service conducted by a Church of Scotland minister.

McCallum had a rough ride as the Brethren's Number Two man. A few months before he toured Britain in the summer of 1964 it was claimed by ex-Brethren members that he had fallen from his perch on the Exclusive Brethren tree.

It was claimed he had been involved in a head-on clash with Taylor over the question of the validity of a Universal leader. Some felt he had only retained a position on the

Brethren hierarchy because of the hold he had over members in North-east Scotland. Many believed, then, that if he had left the sect the drift towards less strict breakaway movements would continue.

But McCallum rode out the storm and retained his place as the 'Angel', despite possible rivals; Taylor's son-in-law, William Bruce Hales, of Sydney, Australia, and his brother, John both of whom have attended rallies in Britain.

At a sect rally in his birthplace a few years ago McCallum said of the 'Archangel': "He is the greatest on earth. Jesus Christ is the greatest in Heaven." Before the parting of the ways it seemed to many Exclusives that any past differences between the two had long been settled.

But if McCallum was worried and concerned by the mass exodus of Brethren through the years and the untold unhappiness, he did not seem to show it. He stuck by Taylor right up until that night in Nigg, despite rocky relationships earlier in the year.

McCallum, bespectacled and of wide, toothy smile, has a sense of humour. He laughed heartily the evening he was smuggled on the floor of a car into a rally at Macduff. The same day he refused to answer questions but told a press photographer, "What do you want me to do? Would you like me to take off my hat?" But he had few jokes to crack on that fateful week-end in July 1970. The events at the Rosemount meeting and the bungalow left him white-faced, stunned and trembling. An Exclusive member who was at Airylea, told me later: "You would have felt sorry for Stanley, that night. He was a shattered man."

Disillusioned, he flew back to Detroit and the gathering storm. Taylor who had arrived back in the States before the Angel, immediately got in touch with Detroit and told local Brethren that McCallum had plotted his overthrow.

The Angel was met at the airport, informed of the decision and he went home alone. Later, when Detroit heard the facts from Aberdeen they called another meeting and restored McCallum. But pressure was applied to their New York Brethren, who refused to believe the report from Aberdeen, and once again Detroit forsook McCallum. The next sinister

move was a charge of terrible corruption about McCallum. In Scotland and England some Brethren received copies of a letter, listing certain phone numbers in Canada and America. The numbers were in fact of police stations, and the inference was that if Brethren telephoned the numbers they would be able to confirm certain information regarding McCallum.

As the campaign against McCallum mounted he wrote an open letter to Brethren members. Copies of this letter were circulated throughout the world and one came into my possession. The Angel begins frankly: "It is being currently spread abroad into every country of the world where Brethren are (including U.S.A. and Canada) that I am a homosexual and a Sodomite."

McCallum then states that "before any opportunity has been given to me to refute these charges" two Brethren members and others had "set it on like a flame of fire" throughout Great Britain and other countries. He then accuses two of the Brethren hierarchy in Detroit of "ferreting out anything and everything in the above mentioned relation that would support the accusations". McCallum adds: "They have been seeking to destroy the testimony J.A.G. (Gardiner) and I have rendered in relation to finding J.T.Jr. in Aberdeen in J.A.G.'s house, on Saturday, July 25th, in bed, *under the blankets*, with another man's wife." He then describes how he stood at the foot of the bed and appealed to his leader as to the "uncomeliness" and "unseemliness" of the situation.

Taylor sat up in bed and told him, "Stanley, you have been wrong in so many things, the devil is in you." And he addressed James Alec Gardiner: "Your job is to get the devil out of McCallum."

In his letter McCallum describes his attempts to get to the root of the gossip. "The above mentioned brothers in Detroit will not answer any questions regarding the matter of the accusations, so I do not know who the witnesses are they are setting against me. Their stock answer is, 'I am not prepared to discuss these things with you'."

And he warns: "The whole matter is a 'frame-up' of Satan to destroy my witness. *I am not a homosexual and never have been. I am not a Sodomite, and I am not marked by obscene*

*behaviour*. These charges will be proved to be false in court *if and when* the time arrives." "My prayer for my accusers is in the language of Stephen, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge'." He signs off, "Your brother in Christ." But there is a postscript: "I have never been approached by the authorities or taken into court as some in Britain have inferred."

In the left-hand margin of the letter, he lists appropriate text references from the Bible. The reference opposite the 'homosexual and Sodomite' charge is 1 *Kings 22: 19-23*:

"And he said. Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ra-moth-gil-e-ad? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

"And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also; go forth and do so. Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee."

McCallum picked a quotation from *Acts 20:26* for his allegation of a 'frame-up'; and his denial. "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." His prayer for his accusers is from *Acts 7: 60*. "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

The above letter was given to me a month after it was sent out by McCallum. A member of the Exclusive Brethren in Aberdeen admitted it was a genuine letter. But the vicious rumours did not die with the letter. Shortly after receiving it I contacted McCallum to try and verify the facts, following the report that he had been charged by Detroit police. But a call to the police in that city quickly 'killed' the rumour. McCallum's wife took the call but refused to be drawn into

any discussion, and refused to answer any questions. She did not see any purpose in my phoning again when her husband was at home. "You can try b u t you will be wasting your money," she said. Later in the day I put through a second call to Detroit, but the line was 'out of order'.

It would have been enlightening to hear McCallum's side of the smear campaign against him, although his letter gives the facts pretty clearly. But, according to Brethren sources what happened was that after the rumours went out, McCallum approached police in Detroit and Canada to determine if the make-believe story had reached their ears. Their reply was that some young priests had tried to build up a case against McCallum, but the police told the Angel it was evident to them it was a vindictive plot.

My information is that the corruption charge against him was based on his effort in 1965 to save some young men in Detroit from being involved in corrupt practices. He got a book from a young Brethren doctor and spoke with a number of the youngsters to enlighten them as to what they must avoid. Five years later Brethren were called on the phone and told the awful, make-believe story of McCallum being a corrupt man.

The wrath of the Exclusive Brethren fell with a vengeance on the Angel, and, at the height of the scandal, there were rumours in this country that militant supporters of Big Jim would make an attempt on McCallum's life. Whether this was true or not, there was a genuine fear among Exclusives in North-east Scotland that such an attack was possible. If it happened, it was felt the perpetrators would be the fanatical negro supporters of Big Jim who are known to be fanatically devoted to him.

## **XVIII. GOODBYE, BELOVED BRETHERN**

Sometime during the autumn of scandal a young man, who had been ejected from the movement several years before, wrote to his parents who were still in fellowship. His father was a fanatical follower of Big Jim, but the son decided to go ahead and present the facts of the Aberdeen incident to him in the hope he would withdraw his support.

He wrote a long and touching letter to his father in England, enclosing cuttings from several newspapers. But his plan failed. For his father's reply was short and to the point; the gist being that no doubt wicked and false stories had been spread about Mary before the birth of Jesus Christ.

There are, no doubt, hundreds of Brethren who had made up their own minds as to what happened in Aberdeen and, subsequently, 'withdrew' from Taylor. But, as others wrestled with their consciences, the Taylorites moved quickly. They claimed the Aberdeen tapes were forgeries and that their patriarch had never been involved in any scandal; attempts to topple him were acts of the devil. They still preached that they depended on the Archangel — and not on Jesus — to get them into heaven.

Scotland turned its back on Big Jim, but even today he still has support elsewhere in Britain, particularly in the London area. Members are still proud to display his portrait on the walls and his writings in their bookshelves. But in Scotland the number of his supporters has been whittled away to a mere handful. In Peterhead they now find themselves on the outside of the plush meeting hall they helped finance. Within a few weeks of the split they were holding weekly meetings at home or travelling by car to the market town of Ellon, to join in prayer with his few sympathisers there and from nearby Aberdeen.

World-wide meetings have taken place to discuss the

'Taylor Position' and that of his successor. But the men who accused Big Jim were themselves subjected to severe criticism from inside the sect — and not from the men behind the Archangel. Some Brethren felt the Aberdeen meeting should not have been allowed to take place, in the light of evidence alleged to have taken place in the bungalow — Mrs Ker having been seen leaving Taylor's room at 6 a.m. on the Friday.

Mr James Gardiner of Aberdeen was himself criticised for showing weakness in not facing and challenging the evil speaking and disorderly behaviour at Aberdeen. The so-called righteousness of the 'Aberdeen Position' was tagged as 'very dubious' by opponents within the sect.

The controversy raged on. Then on October 5th a New York brother, Mr William Petersen, sent a frank and startling letter to a sympathiser in Brighton, England. "It should be made clear to Brethren that Mr James Taylor Jr's conduct in Aberdeen was no 'one time matter', he stated. He disclosed that in New York 'filthy and blasphemous' speaking had proceeded in the assembly almost daily for a whole week. And he revealed that on Sunday, August 16th, Big Jim's preachings went from one excess to another: And he quotes Taylor as saying: "If Mr P. doesn't like what I've said, The El with him!" (As to the woman of John 4) "Press the button (belly button) she would say, Come in, any man would do!" "... the place lower down, we can't mention it, where the babies come out. You older sisters have one too!" Reference was made by Taylor to the toilet facilities.

It was during one of the meetings that Big Jim appeared barefoot, and sat alternately clowning and dozing during the service. Then Mr Peterson makes a startling allegation:

"A brother from Cape Town was asked to serve at the City Reading. Mr Ker and Mrs Taylor were present; Mr Taylor and Mrs Madeline Ker were at home alone. The Cape Town brother proceeded by saying. 'We have been drinking for three days' (at the Taylors' house). 'My belly is bigger than yours' (to Mr Alan Ker). 'I could make an Abishag warm!' He then spoke of his relations with his wife after a period of abstinence. It was remarked that 'The Lord kissed the woman of John 4.' The

Cape Town brother replied, 'He did more than that!' It was said that Mary was told, 'Touch me not', because she was accustomed to handling the Lord's body freely. The next two days, Mrs Taylor gave much information as to Mr Taylor's conduct to several Brethren. Because her public remarks since have been used to offset facts, what she revealed is given in part as follows:

"During Mrs Ker's visit to New York the conduct between Mr Taylor and Mrs Ker was fully and extensively resumed, as in Aberdeen. Mrs Taylor felt 'torn' as to this; when the interviews, taping and photographing by the Press took place she remained secluded. Mr Taylor said he was Paul, and had rights to 'my women' as Paul, rights which others did not have. Mrs Taylor 'obeyed' Mr Taylor by approaching certain of these by telephone. Her attitude in all this was to be transparent with her husband, and to try to 'see' things in the light of the scripture."

As to Big Jim's drinking habits, the letter writer claims Mrs Taylor had promised never to reveal again his rate of alcoholic consumption since his hospitalisation in July 1965.

"From all the foregoing the so-called 'spiritual mystery' and 'special humanity' was but the cloak of the enemy," wrote Mr Petersen.

"A mind sickened by excess was his device to introduce corruption into the assembly. Vile practice, being defended, was to become doctrine. The insanity was now collective, and spreading. With a disunited family, indecisiveness with Mrs Taylor, it was impossible to restrain the person. The Press, sought out by Mr Taylor, was making his conduct a public scandal, involving the Lord's name.

"An attempt to see Mr Taylor was refused; he named certain others he would not see also. The assembly was appealed to on Saturday morning, the 22nd August. Rather than submit to priestly care, Mr Taylor withdrew from a brother without witness and led his party from the room. The continuance of armour bearing meant a prolongation of the sorrow affecting so many around

the world. An assembly action, taken in the light in faith, and as governed by right principles will find the Lord's support. Faithfully in our Lord Jesus (Signed) William T. Peterson."

A footnote, signed by a Mr Edgar T. Maynard, states: "The foregoing is fully established. Brethren in this city are prepared to witness to those concerned according to God."

And, at the same time, there were strong claims that meetings held at Preston in October 1969 had been conducted and condemned for their lewdness (witnesses were to testify to far worse language being used at Aberdeen). The Preston meetings were, of course, held before Aberdeen, but there is no apparent record of Taylor's preachings. At Preston, Taylor is quoted as throwing out a number of "sons of bitches", "bastards" and even "damned fools".

It can be seen that the crisis which faced Brethren after Aberdeen was the result of a long course of the allowance and support of evil undertones. Evil which culminated in the meetings in the Granite City. In the United States the holier-than-thou attitude of certain leading Brethren was attacked. They were accused of supporting Big Jim for years and concealing his wicked and sinful system. They were also accused of being guilty of ecclesiastical pride and turning on Taylor without showing any repentance, self-judgement or confession as to what had gone before.

As September drew to a close, stories were circulated of a big crisis meeting to be held in New York to discuss Taylor's future as Brethren leader. By plane, train, bus and car they flocked to the temple in Nostrand Avenue, New York, for the three-day meetings of October 6th to 8th. They came from Britain, West Germany, Barbados, Canada, Scandinavia, Jamaica and all parts of America. Six hundred in all. But they had come to praise Taylor; although a few did stay to bury him.

The meetings were a show of strength. They contained scriptural references to the troubles and were again marked by undertones of hilarity and showmanship. From notes taken at the meetings it would seem that Taylor was his old self again. unshaken by the events of the past weeks. He

acted the clown and continually made jibing comments at Brethren from the platform. It was at these meetings that he bluntly told members how much money they should donate to the movement. For the first reading J.T.Jnr. took the text from *Romans 11: 33-36*: "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgements, and untraceable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counsellor? Or who has first given to him, and it shall be rendered to him? For of him and through him, and for him are all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen."

Then the meeting took a financial rather than a spiritual turn, as we have seen in a previous chapter.

The Archangel was free with insults during the meeting. He accused one brother of being a 'crook', and turning to the gathering he said of another, "You know he has got some money, has V. Used to work for those oil people and he robbed them every year. But he has got plenty of money and we are going to get the money out of you." He asked for 200 dollars.

Earlier he beamed at a Dusseldorf brother and commented, "He is one of these Nazi boys, you know, he lets you know he is around." But added quickly, "He is all right."

Despite his demand for cash, his rudeness, his showmanship, Taylor sailed confidently through the meetings, whatever his innermost fears may have been. He had picked his men well, and he got support from every corner of the temple, beginning with the theme of the address of Brother R. Hibbert from Calgary, Canada, *Ezekiel 43: 5, 6*: "And the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of Jehovah filled the house. And I heard one speaking unto me out of the house; and a man was standing by me."

Hibbert caught the mood of the pro-Taylor meeting when he went on: "It is a fine thing to have a man standing by you ..."

Some of the 600 perhaps had mixed feelings, but they did not get their chance to voice them. When Big Jim began his address, ["Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?"

*John 12: 27*] he said, “I am looking at you Brethren, and I find out by looking at you, then I get a word. How many Brethren are here? Six hundred, well you get six hundred words, just by looking at the Brethren.”

Big Jim then shouted across the temple to a number of Brethren whom it would appear had at one time not been in full support of him. He wielded the heavy stick as he warned, “You listen to me, regardless of whoever he is, he has got to listen to me ... you had better listen to me ... whoever is in office, God puts them in office. If you don’t like him there, off to 1 Genesis with you.” In more earthly terms, “If you don’t want me to be the boss, to hell with you!”

Big Jim then referred to local Brethren and the support they had given during the crisis. “They know me, and they know I am not a crook. I never stole a dime from anybody. My local Brethren know me ...” Then a crucial phrase: “I know the crooks and they are out of here, they are out, and we are going to get along with each other.”

And later, when agreeing that the Devil must be kept out of the Assembly, he commented: “That is, I think, what the Lord has pointed out. Keep feeding the Brethren and then keep the devil out — those dogs. That was a good thing when we got rid of the dogs, you know. Were there tears over that! Not far from me either. And what a mistake I made when I let the old dog in.”

A slanderous dig at his deposed deputy is contained in this remark. In the Old Testament a ‘dog’ is a male homosexual or Sodomite.

Deuteronomy contains this reference to cult prostitution: “There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a Sodomite of the sons of Israel. Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God.” (*Deuteronomy 23: 17-18*).

Cruden’s Dictionary of Bible Terms (1958) says:

Dog: A domestic animal well known. By the law it was declared unclean and was very much despised among the Jews: the most offensive expression they could use was to compare a man to a dead dog. David

in order to make Saul sensible that the unjust persecution which he carried on against him did himself no honour said to him: ‘After whom is the King of Israel come out? After whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog.’ The name of dog is sometimes put for one who has lost all modesty; for one who prostitutes himself by committing any abominable action, such as sodomy. In this manner several understand the injunction delivered by Moses, of not offering in the tabernacle of the Lord ‘The hire of a Whore, or the price of a dog.’ (*Deuteronomy 23: 18*). And Christ excludes dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers and idolators from the Kingdom of Heaven. The Apostle Paul calls the false apostles dogs, by reason of their impudence and greedy love of their sordid gain.

Taylor, referring to the last twenty years of the movement, said his father had had “a great influence”. “He held things together and they knew it was useless to fight him.” Big Jim said his father never made an “administrative mistake”. “I made a few, that is all, just a few,” he admitted modestly.

A New York brother told him: “If we look back over the last twenty years, as you indicated, we can see what you have just said, there was a lot of young Moabites that were tied up in this recent crisis.” Big Jim replied, “Yes, some snakes too. Feminine snakes.”

The Archangel let the Brethren into a secret that his health was failing; it is possible he knew he was dying. “Why does your heart go too fast?” he queried during the second day. “Why? I suppose the doctors might tell us. I cannot figure out why my heart should go too fast sometimes. Maybe it is because you folks cannot keep up with me, I don’t know.” And, “I felt kind of weak this morning and found my pulse was going a 120 ...”

Brief reference was also made to ‘washing of feet’. Taylor ‘told the meeting, “The way to keep right, I suppose, is to wash.” His ears pricked up when Brother B. Francis, from New York, asked, “Is that washing of feet only for old men to do?” “I do not know the purpose of the question, Mr

Francis.” Francis — “I think it is for elucidation because there is a feeling that it is only for older men to do, and if so, what age?” Big Jim answered, “Well, I would think you do it whenever you had wisdom to do it. You need wisdom to do that, and then you get the water, that ain’t much to get some water, and a wash cloth; so there is really not much in it. Anybody can start any time.” Taylor then said it would be a good thing if children did it to each other. “You tell your children, ‘You wash his feet’, see whether he will do it or not.”

Francis asked: “Husbands and wives, now should they be kind of stimulated to get started on that?” Big Jim replied, “Yes, I think so. I do not wash her feet, she washes mine.”

The Archangel wound up the first day of the meeting by chiding Brethren for being slow in praying, “that is an awful weakness amongst us, slow to get up and pray.”

During the New York meetings Big Jim heard how the split had taken its heavy toll in Scotland. The Aberdeen delegate, Mr J. A. Scott, asked him, “Would it be in order for us in Aberdeen to have the breaking of bread outside the city in another place where the Brethren are, for the convenience of all the Brethren?” Big Jim: “That is what I would think, it is where the Brethren are. Where you should have the meeting is where the Brethren are.”

Mr Scott told Taylor, “We are in Aberdeen and there are our Brethren in Peterhead, and there is a suggestion to have it in Ellon, where other Brethren live, half-way between the two places.” Big Jim: “I see, well, it is really that the Lord came to where the disciples were, so I think that is where we should go.”

The Archangel told his flock it was alright to hold the breaking of bread in a detached house in close proximity to dwellings of people under discipline. “You do not need to worry about those things. The thing is that we find our houses suitable, and the will of God is seen in each person and, to some extent, in the children, if you have any — to some extent.”

He heard from other delegates of ‘lost meeting rooms’ and how numbers attending in fellowship had melted away. One

Assembly was reduced to seven Brethren, including youngest members, and in Kingston, Ontario, only four sisters and one brother remained together.

But the leader seemed unperturbed. He told Brethren, “These are things the Lord will work out for us, because he knows what has happened.” Asked if he thought the “recent clearance might give the Lord a freer hand” he answered, “I think so.” It was evident he still believed he could return to his former position in Scotland. He told a brother, “I think we should go out and preach the gospel — pull them in. Scotch people like to hear the gospel, they like to have some other stuff with it, but it has certainly turned into a very peculiar place.”

The New York meetings appear to have ended happily enough, with the Exclusives believing they had won a victory over the anti-Taylorites. Big Jim, who had begun the meetings in energetic fashion, looked pale and drawn at the end of the last day. Before the assembly rose to sing the last hymn he got to his feet and told them, “Well, if you will excuse me I think I must go. I will say Goodbye to you, Beloved Brethren.”

That was his farewell message to his followers.

## XIX. DEATH OF AN ARCHANGEL

Big Jim's evil and tyrannical reign came to an end on the afternoon of Wednesday, October 14th, 1970. At about 3.15 p.m. he died of a heart attack on his reclining chair in his Brooklyn home, with his family at his side. His last words were: "I am coming."

Two days later, 400 Brethren gathered at Nostrand Avenue for the funeral service, and more than half of them filed into the cemetery at Brooklyn to watch Big Jim laid to rest. He was buried near his father's grave.

Less than three months before, Big Jim's regime had seemed as solid as ever. Within the sect there had been slight murmurings at the growing idiosyncracies of their leader at meetings. When he flew into Aberdeen, for what was to have been a three-day rally, his power seemed absolute, despite some minor criticism behind his back.

But although he seemed as powerful as ever, he was failing physically and mentally. Age and his excessive love of whisky had taken their toll. A growing heart condition had not been helped by his drinking habits. He was a frail, old man; a pale, shrunken shadow of the colossus who had strode confidently from Aberdeen's Music Hall only six years before.

The last outsider to speak to Big Jim was a *Daily Express* reporter, Mr Philip Finn, who is based in New York. The interview took place on Monday, August 18th at Big Jim's white-painted detached house in tree-lined East 26th Street. By a previous arrangement, Mr Finn went to the Archangel's home with a freelance photographer to talk to Big Jim and Mrs Ker, who had arrived from Harrow with her husband and family. Throughout the interview in mid-afternoon Big Jim drank whisky from a glass tumbler which he balanced precariously on his knee. In his lap he had a large leather-bound Bible

When Mrs Ker joined the interview Big Jim put his arm round her, kissed her and fondled her left breast, although this fact was 'subbed out' of the final story. He told Finn: "I don't care what people might say, Mrs Ker is a very, very pure person. We have never at any time done anything improper."

Of the Nigg incident he told the *Expressman*: "Absolutely nothing happened in that bedroom that Mrs Ker and I are ashamed about. It is true that she was lying under the sheet on the same bed as myself. But I was on one side of the bed and she was on the other."

It was not the first time that the English journalist and Big Jim had crossed paths. Finn had known the Archangel from a distance ever since 1962, when the sect leader visited a strong Exclusive cell south of Manchester.

The reporter saw Big Jim again in Northern Ireland when he attended a huge rally in Belfast, probably during his 1964 pilgrimage to Britain. Finn recalls: "Then he was a powerful, almost menacing figure. He was heavily built and looked every inch of his 6 feet 1 inch. Because his creed was so unbending, and because he had caused so much grief in families, he had with him what appeared to be a bodyguard."

His observations are correct. In those days it was not unusual to see Taylor ringed by young, hefty priests, all wearing the same conspicuous wide-brimmed hats and dark grey overcoats favoured by their leader. "It was impossible to get near him," Finn told me. "If you did manage to get within ear-shot, he would look at you stonily and turn away. His aides, who were always protective, made it clear they did not want the big man troubled."

I myself had difficulty in piercing the same protective barrier when the two Angels visited Scotland separately. At Macduff and Peterhead reporters and photographers were swept or elbowed aside. And at Macduff they were only allowed forward when the Angel signalled to his protectors.

Finn finally caught up with Big Jim, two months before the Archangel died. He phoned Taylor on Sunday, August 16th, to arrange an interview. "He amazed me by his co-operation, and answered everything I wanted to know. He

also put me in touch with Mr Ker,” said Finn. He was not the only journalist to be taken aback by the Archangel’s sudden willingness to talk. Finn was shocked by Big Jim’s appearance when they came face to face. “Big Jim was clearly feeling the effects of the Scotch, and the once strong, impressive figure looked a sad, gaunt bag of bones,” recalled Finn. “I think that latterly, his health had deteriorated fast with heart trouble. This and heavy drinking accounted for one of the most dramatic changes I have seen in a man.” During the interview Finn told Big Jim of their first ‘meeting’ and how he had regarded him as a ‘fearsome figure’ and expressed his surprise at his change in appearance. Taylor’s reply was, “Times change.” But he quickly insisted that his old doctrines had not changed.

During the candid interview the question of the Archangel’s earnings was raised by Finn. But Big Jim denied he had ever made any money out of the sect. An embarrassing feature of the strange meeting was Big Jim’s behaviour. Whether it was because of the whisky or his senility he tended to ramble and kept giggling.

Several letters, containing sheer gibberish, were sent by Taylor to both his supporters and enemies after the Aberdeen scandal. One letter which fell into my hands was to an English brother, Mr David Davis. It bears out Finn’s observations of Taylor’s behaviour in New York. This is reflected in the short letter dated August 12th 1970 which reads:

“Beloved Brother:

It was very good to hear from you. What the spirit has done is to get the O.B.’s out. I was rather surprised at boob Eric. He thought to go back to 1965 and cancel everything. What he probably meant was to go back to 1865 when Abe Harrow Lincoln beat the southern bastards. Prim Cyril thought it was better to take this one than Charlie’s. We should have sympathy for Charlie because his wife is an iceberg to him but to no other man. There is a saying as to the Hudson River, N.Y. that the further up you go, there is more scenery. This is Charlie’s business. His wife, associated with Mrs B. S. (Brighton) and Mrs Throw (Trowbridge), have the honor

of being the most insubject persons in Christendom. But George is sloppy, muddy and generally in keeping with the stinking waters of Slough. John the Welcher, professor of some sort, was a very kind host to me. He did not have the courage to call me up and ask me, ‘Is it true you are a fornicator (corruption)?’ His unrighteousness is in the act of locking out the Trustees who were right and two sisters who were right and firing them. The darkness deepens, but Max and John will see that righteous contracts are fulfilled. Dr (London) was very kind to me. He wanted me to say I was going home from Aberdeen because I was sick. He now knows I went home because Alex Gardiner’s house was leprous. A.B.P. corrupted those two sisters at Dunstable, and I have a suspicion the Dr did also. The plague will not stop until God stops it. Numbers 16. With love in Christ. Affectionately yours in Him. (Signed J. Taylor)”

On his last visit to Number 470, East 26th Street, Philip Finn found Taylor co-operative. But a few days after this interview the sect leader refused to speak to the English journalist. “I am not going to speak to you,” he boomed over the phone.

Taylor had been told by his British followers of Finn’s interview. But it was a factual story, tackled by a very experienced newspaperman. Taylor must have been well aware of what was going to appear in print; he and Mrs Ker willingly posed for photographs.

I too experienced the angelic cold-shoulder. It happened when I tried to contact Taylor shortly before he died. I had wanted to confirm arrangements being made for an international rally to be held in New York. But the woman who took the call refused to allow me to speak to him.

Could it have been that Taylor realised his mistake in allowing Press and television into his life? He had dismayed Brethren when he broke his ‘no comment’ rule by speaking to reporters in Aberdeen. And after the Aberdeen scandal he seemed willing to talk to anyone willing to listen. He obviously hoped the Press would help him in his fight to save face. But his plan boomeranged.

But even so his death came as a great shock to his followers. It took reporters in New York a lot of work before it could be confirmed. Even the lofty *New York Times* contacted a foreign correspondent virtually on their own doorstep to confirm his death and get further details.

What did happen behind the drawn curtains of that house in Brooklyn? The facts of Big Jim's last moments are recorded for posterity in a letter sent by his son, James, to Londoner, Mr A. J. Gardiner, a very old follower and one-time close friend of James Taylor the First. This letter penned a week after Taylor died, was published in a tract issued to Exclusive Brethren all over the world. It reads:

"Beloved Brother. I thought you would be pleased to know something as to the last days of my beloved father's life. The three day occasion, October 6th to 8th, the previous week was a most full and happy time, as you will see by the notes. Over 600 were present and there was a spirit of joy and liberty as the ministry flowed, and an evident sense of the Lord having brought forth judgement into victory. Our beloved's own comment was that, 'The glory appeared', and he was full of the joy of those days.

"What an honour that the Lord should give his beloved servant this crowning time amongst his own Brethren in New York and the many who were with us. By the end of the last meeting his energies had been visibly spent, and before the last hymn he said he would have to leave, saying: 'Goodbye to you, Beloved Brethren,' as he got to his feet.

"He was very tired on the following days, Friday and Saturday, having fully spent himself over the three days, but he was with us at the Lord's Supper and served in freshness and power though physically weak, and he started two of the hymn tunes.

"In referring to the loaf, he spoke of the great clearance there had been as being an answer to the betrayal. In his next part he spoke of the strengthening that comes in the eating, and the glory in the face of the Lord.

"He did not go out again on Lord's Day. On Monday he was all ready to go to the prayer meeting but found he was not strong enough. I visited him briefly on the Lord's Day and Monday and Tuesday evenings, and each time he conveyed his customary clear view of things. Later Tuesday evening Dr Phil Truan attended him and found no particular deficiency, except that his heart was weak and a general weakness, which, however, responded to treatment. Very early Wednesday morning he was up and walked, at his insistence, with help, to his reclining chair in the living-room where he stayed until the Lord took him in the afternoon.

"My Mother and Estelle were on either side of him and he held their hands almost constantly throughout these hours. Several other sisters were nearby also ministering to his comfort. As the morning went on he became too weak to speak except for an occasional whisper. His face brightened when he was told Florence and Consie were coming. Florence arrived in the early afternoon. He grew weaker gradually, but was aware of those around him until near the end."

Then Big Jim's son told how his father forgave two wayward Brethren on his death-bed. He explains in the letter: "In the morning he had given directions to the doctor, refusing additional medical aid; and also reaffirming the condition under which persons under discipline, including relations, might see him. One came in and he said to her, 'You shouldn't be here.' She said she was sorry and asked for forgiveness, and he replied, 'If you say you have sinned I will forgive you' (*Luke 17: 4, Matthew 12: 37*). She then said she had sinned and he forgave her. Another came in later saying he was sorry and asking for forgiveness, and my father's indications were that his attitude was one of forgiveness. His final moments will remain most vividly in the hearts of those privileged to see. He appeared strong and expectant as he suddenly looked upward, his face and eyes shining and his lips forming the words — though inaudibly 'I am coming'.

“He lingered for a few minutes his breathing at first becoming very strong and rapid and then becoming quiet, the Lord gently taking him to Himself at about 3.15 p.m.

James 3 then described the funeral ceremonies:

“We came together for the meeting at Nostrand Avenue at noon on Friday. About 400 were present, mostly those local here and in the immediate area. We began with two hymns given out by sisters, and then beloved Mr A. N. Walker prayed voicing the deep feelings of the beloved Brethren then there were words by Mr T. D. Norgrove, Mr F. N. Walker, and Mr A. Macdonald.

“Several hymns followed given out by sisters, and Mr L. Edwards closed the meeting in prayer. Those who served in ministry as in prayers were very much helped, and the spontaneity in the giving out of the hymns reflected an answer to our beloved’s final ministry as to our sister’s part in the assembly.

“About two hundred and fifty Brethren assembled at the grave at the same plot wherein ‘the beloved’ his father was buried. We surrounded the grave as the body of our beloved was carried amongst us by loving hands and lowered into its resting place.

“The love of the Lord Jesus came to our minds as the body was committed to Him, how He valued the life and valued the service from start to finish, and how He loved such an one who loved Him and who did what He said, despite the cost.

“Many of the beloved saints entered into the completing of the burial, even Mr A. N. Walker in his weakness taking up a shovel, until the grave was completely filled in. Many, too, of the brothers — old and young — had a brief part in carrying our beloved one from the house to the meeting room and to the grave.”

The letter ends on this stirring note:

“How we all loved him! How we will miss him! But we continue in the sense of the Lord’s victory and the Holy Spirit’s victory acknowledging the Lord’s perfect

timing and His right to take His beloved servant after a work well done.

“My mother and sisters and my wife and myself and the Brethren in New York join in love to you and your wife and all the beloved Brethren. It is a great comfort how the saints are feeling it together as to this great loss to the assembly. Affectionately in the Lord. James.”

The death and funeral of Big Jim Taylor is a moving account but is it entirely true? Some Exclusive Brethren refuse to believe it. James Taylor described how his sick father spent his last day on earth on his reclining chair. But one American source claims that Big Jim was due to appear at a court hearing in New York on October 14th, and that, in fact, he made an attempt to be present.

But as he was taken downstairs in the lift in his home all he could say was, “Aberdeen ... Aberdeen ... Aberdeen ...” He was then taken back to the living room where he died. It seems they are not prepared to let him rest in peace.

Before he faded into Brethren history, Stanley McCallum, on being told of Big Jim’s death, admitted: “We had been friends for many years until earlier this year.”

And he added: “His death was God’s decision.”

## XX. THE FUTURE

How did Big Jim come to be the one chosen to lead his people into bondage?

In the United States there was little opposition to him succeeding his father, James Taylor I, who died in the fifties after a mental illness. But in Britain there was some opposition, as some Brethren felt Mr Gerald Cowell, of Hornchurch, would be the obvious choice to lead the British. Taylorites moved swiftly to crush Cowell. In July 1958 American Brethren threatened their British counterparts that if they did not accept the leadership of Big Jim there would be a 'split' between the two countries.

Cowell's supporters pleaded with him not to attend the 1959 London meetings, to be attended by Big Jim and his British supporters, but he insisted on going. Cowell was cold-shouldered by Taylor and in the coming months a campaign was mounted to get rid of the Englishman. The end came in July 1960 when the Hornchurch Brethren 'withdrew' from their once beloved leader.

On Tuesday, February 21st, 1961, at Westminster Central Hall during a meeting attended by Big Jim, a brother asked why they had withdrawn from Cowell. After a long and difficult silence Stanley McCallum made a reply. In the corridor after the meeting, amid loud laughter, a Brethren member asked, "Well, Charles, what did you think of Stanley's reply?" Amid further raucous laughter a man replied, "I did not believe one half of what he told us, but anyhow we got rid of Cowell."

A former Brethren man in Lancashire described Cowell thus: "He was truly a man of God, of unique spirit, exemplary in devotedness and sobriety, sound in teaching ... a pious and humbleminded and spiritual gifted man. He was not, even in one whit, capable of the merest fraction of the

havoc and sorrow and scattering which Taylor was directly responsible for all over the world."

There is no doubt the conspiracy against Cowell broke him — and was responsible for his death. Big Jim's early history is clouded in mystery, although I have inside information which reveals his attitude towards some members of his own family was not that of a man of God. Of Irish-American descent, he lived most of his life in New York. I have been told he was not too successful as a businessman and was declared a bankrupt in the thirties. His father took him into the family business, the Taylor Linen Company, and made his fortune.

He was married twice. His first wife died after a tragic illness. They had three of a family; James 3 and two daughters — Consuella, who wed Australian Bruce Hales, and Florence. His second wife, Irene, who was ten years' younger than him, gave him another daughter, Estelle.

Until the Aberdeen Scandal the Archangel was believed to be 'irreproachable'. Certainly he practised the evil he preached. During his reign he wrecked thousands of families. And he caused great heartache, even among his own family. I have in my possession a copy of a letter, dated February 1st 1952, from his mother to his brother, Arthur. A remarkable scene took place in the Taylor household when Big Jim told his mother, "You are just a rebellious and insubordinate woman and my father must leave you."

The reason behind Big Jim's action was because he thought his mother was trying to put his sick father into an asylum. His attack came after his mother had spent three long months tenderly caring for her husband. During the row Taylor told his sick father, "We have the Assembly to fall back on." And he later brought sixteen of the Brethren round to his parents' home to witness further accusations by him against his mother. And following one meeting at Nostrand Avenue, he said before Brethren, "She is not my mother."

The first time Big Jim came to Britain was in 1959 when he addressed the Westminster meetings. It was at these meetings that he hinted of the harsh edicts to come. I have tried to discover the secret of his qualities as a leader. How did he

manage to hold so many people together after his edicts were issued and even following the catastrophic Aberdeen meetings of 1970? Did he have some hypnotic hold over them? Some Brethren agree with this view, but the majority who pulled out over the years say his influence lay only partly in personality; he had an undoubted ability to trade on the deep and instilled fear among Brethren of being excommunicated. This, I feel, was the Archangel's secret weapon of terror.

Fanatical young priests eagerly obeyed the Archangel's word and by hook or by crook they forced hundreds to remain in the fold. And Brethren, with family links extending back to the roots of the movement, suffered untold heartbreak and misery in order to cling to the Assembly.

Big Jim is dead ... long live ... who? Two names stand out in the struggle for leadership of the sadly depleted ranks of the sect. His son James seems the one most likely to take over. He has the huge backing of American Brethren. Their numbers have not been so greatly reduced as in other parts of the world. American Brethren in New York still worship their dead leader, and the choice of his son would be obvious and popular. He travelled abroad with his father in recent years and took part in all services. He accompanied Big Jim on his last disastrous tour and had been preaching at Farnham when news reached him of the Aberdeen scandal.

But one other who is making a bid to attain leadership is Bruce Hales, who is the voice of Australian Brethren. Within a short time of the Archangel's death, I understand, Hales, his son-in-law, published a booklet outlining his years in the sect. This publication has been scornfully nicknamed, 'Mein Kampf' by former Brethren.

So far there has been no direct clash of personalities. But if it did come to a showdown, would they risk dividing the Brethren yet again? Or will they realise the salvation of the Exclusives hinges on their unity? Certainly, these two are the contenders for the title. Europe offers no challengers. Scotland has been almost denuded of Taylorites. Some Scots have even moved house across the border rather than stay in the same area as the anti-Taylorites. For in England, apart

from one or two regions, the followers of Taylorism are virtually as powerful as ever.

The Angel, Stanley McCallum, is out of favour; never to return. Perhaps, there was a time when he seemed likely to succeed his master. But since he was excommunicated in the car park at Detroit Airport he has been breaking bread only with his wife and a few close friends at Detroit. In fact McCallum's stock, which understandably was never high with ex-Brethren, is still not fully supported by their opponents. Many believe the Angel could have led them from their bondage years ago, but condoned, rather than condemned, the oppressive system.

Peterhead, which was the first town in Scotland to support Aberdeen's judgement of the Archangel, threw open its doors to non-believers early in November 1970. For the first time since the Brethren closed their doors to the public, and dismantled the 'All Welcome' signs from their meeting halls, they decided to allow non-members into their temples to hear 'the word'.

That is still the position. The public, if genuinely interested, can attend Gospel meetings; but that is all. After-Gospel meetings and the holy of holies, the Care Meeting, are exclusively for Brethren.

Few outsiders are taking up the invitation to attend gospel meetings. Those who do are given a cordial enough welcome, asked to sit at the back of the hall, and then take part in the same, simple service enjoyed by the sect since its stormy birth. The only changes from Darby's day is that sisters play a bigger part in services. And at Peterhead, as at most modern meeting halls, the Brethren each have a hand microphone.

At the same time as their 'open sesame' on halls, the Brethren in Peterhead decided to open shops and businesses on Saturdays, and end the dawn gospel meetings. Crews made up of Brethren and non-Brethren are sailing again; pets are again popular. The North-east town, which for many years has been at the heart of the movement in Scotland, is adopting a soft line; a line extending back to 1959, when Big Jim first loomed large on the scene. And efforts are being made by Exclusives to patch up past quarrels with members who left

or were banished. In one North-east town some years ago a number of Brethren mill workers 'withdrew' from the firm, owned by a family with roots in the movement. But since a reappraisal of the sect, a few have asked for their jobs back.

I do not doubt the sincerity of the Scottish Brethren to rid themselves forever of their corrupt image. But they give the impression that the light of testimony which shone so brightly among them was suddenly snuffed out only in Aberdeen. And that, sadly, if Taylor had not been involved in the scandal of the bungalow and the tapes, they would still follow him.

Today the Taylorites are as loyal as ever before. The fanatics have turned their backs on anyone who does not believe or still follows his edicts. But there are obviously hundreds of his sympathisers still remaining in the 'breakaway' sect, which continues to thrive and recruit new members from selected ranks. The terrible sins carried out in the name of Big Jim and God cannot be swept under the carpet. But this is what the anti-Taylorites are trying to do. At the same time his supporters who have chosen to stay behind with the 'breakaways' remain silent ... and wait.

Since the great split at least one Brethren leader has visited Scotland. Bufton Parker, who was involved in a head-on clash with Big Jim over the Aberdeen tapes, addressed rallies in Central Scotland, Peterhead and in Banffshire during the spring of 1971.

It is now up to the Brethren who 'walk in the light' to make sure that the evil of the Archangel and his henchmen never again be allowed to taint these shores. That the unbelievable suffering and terror should not be repeated. One hundred years ago, J. N. Darby made a somewhat prophetic statement, which could be a comment on the recent turmoil.

Speaking of the earlier Brethren system he broke away from, Darby said: "I would not have stayed in it, if I were to walk alone and have no church at all to the end of my days. But God has ordered it otherwise, and given exceeding peace and quietness to those who through grace delivered their souls from it. I have no doubt a direct power and delusion of the enemy was there, from which we have been

rescued by the Lord's goodness, and are in the blessing and liberty of the Spirit of God, though poor and feeble. This has been one of the happy features, the subdued, happy gracious spirit of those who have left; we are in another world as to our minds."

And so it would seem that Brethren history has repeated itself; 1970 was the year when those who left Big Jim were saved from a system in which a man had replaced Christ, where people took precedence over principles, and human decency meant nothing.

The death of Big Jim Taylor, and his movement in Scotland, is a reminder that 'God is not mocked'.

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THE AUTHOR, NORMAN ADAMS, has spent twenty years in journalism. Married, with three of a family, he lives in Aberdeen where he works for the Scottish Daily Express.

For over ten years he has investigated and written about the activities of the Brethren in North-East Scotland, where many thousands of the Movement's members are concentrated, and where the final act in the drama was played out in the summer of 1970. He has gained access to many privately circulated letters and papers, some of them published here for the first time, including transcripts of the amazing conduct at meetings presided over by Big Jim Taylor.

The author dedicates this book to all those men, women and children, some of whom he has personally known, who have experienced so much hardship and misery at the hands of so-called Christians acting 'in the name of God'.