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## The Uncontaminated

Friday, June 16, 1964

"Do not unite yourselves with unbelievers," St. Paul told the first Christians of Corinth. To the surprise and dismay of their fellow Britons, more than 10,000 members of the Exclusive Brethren sect are currently trying to take the injunction literally and separate themselves from the rest of society.

An offshoot of the fundamentalist Plymouth Brethren, the Exclusives have traditionally been a clannish sort, clustering in self-imposed ghettos in small English towns and Scottish fishing villages. They seldom marry outside the sect, and refer to each other as "saints"—the only true disciples of Christ. The Brethren do not smoke, dance, watch TV or wear makeup, but official doctrine says that "strong drink is to be regarded as a creation of God and saints should freely drink it."

They had always remained distantly courteous to their neighbors until 1960, when new orders came from James Taylor Jr., a retired New York businessman who is the leader of the sect. Taylor, who styles himself "the authoritative voice of God," decreed that his followers must avoid "contamination" from the unclean by abandoning all association with non-Brethren. The Exclusives were thereby forbidden to mix professionally or socially with outsiders, and Taylor warned: "Those who do not agree will be excommunicated."

In obedience to Taylor's new dogma, Exclusive landlords in the Scottish town of Peterhead evicted non-Brethren tenants; Exclusive fishermen fired crewmen who did not belong to the sect. Members of the sect were forced to leave their jobs in Midlands factories because Taylor's rules forbade them to join unions. Marriages have foundered on the doctrine of separation; in Walsall,

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for example, Businessman Leslie Pearson and his father-in-law Fred erick Jessop publicly complained that their wives would not even speak to them when the two men left the sect. In Staffordshire, two spinster sisters who belonged to the Exclusives committed suicide after they were forbidden to speak to old friends.

So far, about half the Brethren have left the sect rather than obey Taylor; one Tory M.P. has heard so many tales of hardship from his constituents that last month he asked for a Home Office investigation of the sect. But difficult as their new way of life may be, the rest of the Brethren have followed Taylor, convinced that to live with the Lord means not to live with other men.

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