

**‘The Children of God’ > ‘The Family of Love’
> ‘The Family’ > ‘The Family International’**

A religious grouping that started off its life being known as ‘**The Children of God**’ has over the period of its existence ‘morphed’ into becoming firstly ‘**The Family of Love**’, then ‘**The Family**’ and finally ‘**The Family International**’. There is a helpful history located on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_International

The present grouping, ‘**The Family International**’ have a web site located on <http://www.thefamilyinternational.org/> and they have a section on their web site headed ‘**What We Believe**’ and that can be accessed on <http://www.thefamilyinternational.org/en/about/our-beliefs/>

In the section of their beliefs headed ‘**The Word of God**’ they state –

We believe that God is a living God who continues to speak to His people today and to impart His message through ongoing revelation, prophecy, and words of spiritual direction and counsel.

The Bible of course rejects this claim of ‘**ongoing revelation**’ by what it teaches in **Hebrews 1:1-2** and **Jude 3**. However, this claim by them allows them to function fully as a ‘**cult**’ and to show forth several of ‘**the marks of a cult**’ that I have often mentioned when speaking on ‘**cults**’ - namely **(1)** an earthly head or founder – **David ‘Moses’ Berg** **(2)** an authority in addition to or in place of the Bible – **the writings of Mr Berg**.

In the section of their beliefs headed ‘**Sexuality**’ they state –

We believe that God created and ordained human sexuality, and we consider it a natural part of life. The Bible says that God told the first man and woman to “be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). God “saw everything that He had made”—which included the first man and woman as well as their bodies and sexuality—“and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). It is our belief that heterosexual relations, when practiced as God ordained and intended between consenting adults, are a pure and natural wonder of God’s creation, and permissible according to Scripture.

Whilst they also cite, among other scripture references, **Genesis 2:18-25** which refer to “**a man**” and “**his wife**”, the group does not, as you can see, speak explicitly and exclusively of ‘**heterosexual relations**’ being only permissible within the confines of a ‘**marriage covenant**’ but rather as being ‘**between consenting adults**’. Could this be their way of attempting to justify the group’s history and practice of ‘**sharing**’ that was tantamount to husband and wife swapping.

Over the course of my own Christian life I did encounter some of their ‘missionaries’ on the streets of Belfast and Lisburn and from recollection the couple that I met in Lisburn were actually based with a community grouping in the Republic of Ireland (possibly in the Julianstown/Duleek area but I would not swear to that).

I recall, when speaking with the couple that spoke to me in Lisburn, how uncomfortable they became when I started mentioning the immoral views and teaching of the founder of the movement, **David 'Moses' Berg**, and how they also tried to defend the practice of 'sharing' which as I have already stated amounted more or less to wife or husband swapping.

At this point I would invite you to watch the video of a programme that was broadcast in July 1994. It features the story of the **Padilla** family who were for many years members of this movement.

WARNING: I need to advise you that this video includes some brief scenes of partial nudity and also contains a few comments that could be described as being of an 'adult nature' – I hasten to add that they are not foul-mouthed swearing. In the context of what is being told about this group and its practices they are very relevant to exposing the whole unsavoury and unchristian nature of this movement despite its claims to the contrary.

The link to watch this video is

Since first posting this article I have received a heartfelt request from someone who featured in the video asking that it be removed from our YouTube site. They have moved on since the days of their involvement and felt that it was reviving painful memories that they want to put behind them. In the circumstances I have readily agreed to their request. Should anyone want a (PAL) DVD copy of the video for personal use they can obtain one by emailing me on takeheed@aol.com

As you will have seen, the claims of the **Padilla** family are disputed, by a spokesperson for the group called **Solomon**, who was directly involved at times with the **Padilla** family in their 'missionary endeavours'. This 'difference of opinion' is also referred to in a fair analysis of the programme that can be viewed on

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/lost-in-the-brainwash-a-documentary-about-victims-of-the-cult-known-as-the-family-does-not-tell-the-full-story-says-isabel-hilton-1416291.html>

Was the experience of the **Padilla** family a 'one-off' and not typical of what was happening to other families – that is what **Solomon** would like people to believe. However, details of another area in Ireland in which the group operated are detailed in a book called '**Not Without My Sister**' as you can read on this link - <http://www.religionnewsblog.com/18968/children-of-god-4> and this particular article is valuable because it brings to light claims similar in nature to those made by the **Padilla** family in the video.

Another informative link that would undermine **Solomon's** claims that the experiences of the **Padilla** family are questionable, even untrue, and not typical of '**The Family International**' is found on

<http://religiouschildabuse.blogspot.co.uk/2010/11/family-international-aka-children-of.html>.

Another and much wiser **Solomon** from a bygone age wrote “**Lying lips are abomination to the Lord**” (**Proverbs 12:22**) and my impression of ‘The Family’s’ **Solomon** was that what he said was a mixture of truth and hideous error, especially his concepts of ‘sharing’ and ‘flirty fishing’ which go totally against God’s standards of morality as found in the Bible. His defence of ‘sharing’ centred on ‘consenting adults’ with no reference to that being within the confines of a marriage covenant.

Another short and helpful ‘biographical’ piece on **Sylvia Padilla** can be read on

[http://www.xfamily.org/index.php/The Mirror: How we escaped the clutches of a cult](http://www.xfamily.org/index.php/The_Mirror:_How_we_escaped_the_clutches_of_a_cult)

My own past writings on ‘**The Children of God**’ were limited to two brief pieces in my **June 1994** and **June 1995** ‘**News From The Front**’ ministry newsletters. This is what I wrote in the **June 1994** newsletter –

‘THE FAMILY’ – formerly ‘CHILDREN of GOD’

Over the past few months there has been clear evidence of followers of this group canvassing on the streets of Northern Ireland. Sharon, who works at Breda Centre, met some of this group in Lisburn (they were up from Dublin doing ‘outreach’) and she obtained a copy of their basis of faith known as ‘OUR STATEMENTS’. On page 7 under the heading ‘**25: COOPERATIVE COMMUNAL LIVING**’ we read ‘... we today have found both the practical and spiritual benefits of cooperative communal living to be extremely advantageous...’ Later in the document on page 29 under the heading ‘**SEXUAL MORALITY IN OUR HOMES IS SUPERIOR TO THAT OF MUCH OF SOCIETY**’ we read ‘Thought we have a liberal attitude concerning sex between consenting adults...’ The nature of this ‘liberal attitude’ was made clear by a spokesperson for ‘THE FAMILY’ when she was interviewed in the Philippines. The Independent Methodist magazine ‘THE ALERT’ (Jan-Feb 1994) made reference to an article in the Irish times of 5/10/93 which stated ‘The cult formerly known as The Children of God and now called The Family has admitted that it permits extra-marital relationships among its members provided these are discreet and with the spouses’ consent. The admission came when Ms Faith Cortejos appeared before a committee hearing in the Philippines Senate to answer charges that the group advocated immoral practices. “It is the individual’s prerogative as long as they are discreet and no one is hurt and they are consenting adults” said Ms Cortejos when asked by the committee if the group advocated extra-marital sex.’ In article 1 of their Statement of faith headed ‘**1: THE SCRIPTURES**’ we read ‘The Scriptures are a sacred revelation... these writings are the divinely appointed standard and guide to our faith and PRACTICE’. God’s Word declares “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14) and “Thou shalt not covet... thy neighbour’s wife” (Exodus 20:17).

In my **June 1995** newsletter I included this short item –

FAMILY (‘CHILDREN of GOD’) ACTIVITY

Several people from the Co Armagh area contacted me about the ‘outreach’ activity of a family based in Armagh City – Daniel and Clare Lynch. They are attached to ‘THE FAMILY’ formerly known as ‘THE CHILDREN of GOD’ and helpful material is available from ‘Take Heed’

One of the most valued books in my 'collection' is the book **'Truth Under Attack'** that was written by **Dr. Eryl Davies**, retired principal of the **Evangelical Theological College of Wales**. As it says on its front cover it is **'A comprehensive and practical handbook on Cults and Contemporary Religions'**. Back in 1997 Dr. Davies was my invited guest here to give a series of talks around the Province on the subject of **'The Cooneyites'**. If that topic would happen to be of interest to you then you can see what Dr. Davies had to say by going to this link –

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlcdMMDyl44&list=UUY6K5SN-Z7IIOKmXcIB51jQ>

One of the groups that Dr. Davies addresses in his book **'Truth under Attack'** (1995 edition) is **'The Family of Love' – previously called 'The Children of God'**. With the very kind permission of Dr. Davies, for which I am truly most grateful, I am now going to set out in full what he wrote in that section. Dr. Davies wrote –

The formation in 1968 of the group now known as the Family of Love coincided, so its founder claims, with “the end of the Gentiles”, so that God is now gathering his Israel together rather exclusively through the ministry of this movement. David Berg was born in 1919 and was the son of an evangelist serving with the Christian and Missionary alliance in the U.S.A. Claiming a call from God to preach the gospel, David Berg was ordained as pastor of an Alliance Church in Arizona but eventually resigned, because, he claimed, of the impossibility of supporting his large family on a low salary.

For a short time afterwards he assisted a Pentecostal pastor in radio work and then in 1968 he moved to Huntington Beach where he was responsible for a coffee-bar work amongst young people. At this time he was under the influence of the Jesus Movement, with its characteristic features of coffee-bar evangelism, community living, authoritarian leadership, exclusivism and the rejection both of conventional churches and the family unit. During this period Berg launched an organization called 'Teens for Christ'; converts were immediately encouraged to leave their homes, jobs and churches in order to settle into his communal group. An unfulfilled prophecy a year later that California would be the centre of an enormous earthquake brought Berg and his organization into disrepute.

The movement is established.

It was in 1969 that Berg's followers began to use the title 'Children of God' and by 1977 they had established well over 850 communities in about seventy-five countries. They now claim (please remember this is a 1995 publication) to have two million members and 8,000 missionaries. This was the first group from within the more diverse Jesus Movement to reach Britain and to have an impact in London, the Midlands and South Wales and other areas.

Thinking these people were sound and keen Christians, a Christian businessman in London, Kenneth Frampton, helped the group by allowing them to use one of his properties as their headquarters, but he later withdrew his support. **‘Having backed this movement more than any since they arrived in Britain’** he writes, **‘I repent for having encouraged the active propagation of what now proves to be false teaching, dishonouring to Christ’**. (Kenneth Frampton: ‘Beware – the Children of God’: p3)

Frampton was horrified by their methods of isolating converts from their families and the exercise of rigid control over the actions and thinking of impressionable teenagers. When entering the group, for example, a member agreed to give all his money and possessions to the hierarchy and allow them to open all his correspondence. From what is normally called ‘the babe’s colony’ the new member progresses to another colony of only twelve people and his time is spent chiefly in selling the group’s literature as well as routine domestic work and fellowship.

The movement was renamed as the Family of Love and David Berg had previously changed his name to Moses David. Berg died in November 1994 at the age of seventy-five. Tragically, he does not seem to have expressed any repentance for his erroneous teachings, writings and immorality. In October 1994 the British Criminal Injuries Compensation Board awarded a teenage girl £5,000 after having been abused by members of the cult from the age of three.

What the family of Love teaches on	What the Bible teaches
<p style="text-align: center;">THE BIBLE:</p> <p>The Bible is God’s ‘inspired word for yesterday’, while the ‘Moses letters’ (MO letters are those written by David Berg, who later adopted the name Moses David) are the inspired word of God for today.</p> <p>The MO letters are more authoritative than the Bible and are the only valid interpretation of the Bible. Berg is regarded as God’s ‘mouthpiece’, through whom alone the correct understanding of the Scripture has been given.</p>	<p>“For ever thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89).</p> <p>“Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever” (Psalm 119:160).</p> <p>“... teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mark 7:7).</p> <p>“... making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered” (Mark 7:13).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SALVATION:</p> <p>Conventional churches belong to the devil. Berg writes, ‘We teach the kids to hate... the <i>false</i> church system... We hate the hypocrisy, self-righteousness, lies and deceitfulness of those who claim to be the Church, but are not and we hate the spiritual system of the Devil behind them.’</p>	<p>While many conventional churches have abandoned Bible doctrine and ethics yet the true church of God is visible in the world; it consists of all those who trust in Christ and have been born of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Peter 1:1-2).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">DISCIPLESHIP:</p> <p>Misusing our Lord’s words in Matthew 10:34-37, Berg taught that following Christ necessitates the forsaking of families, friends and employment, etc and this wrong teaching has had tragic results for many families.</p>	<p>In Matthew 10:34-37 the Lord is stressing the believer’s supreme loyalty to Christ. The gospel of Christ divides as well as unites families, for man’s sinful nature frequently causes him to ridicule the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:14) and</p>

<p>The Family of Love also exploit members by taking all their money and worldly goods.</p>	<p>oppose even relatives who become Christians. There are occasions, the, when Christ must come before parents and others but. Wherever possible, the law of God insists that children should honour their parents (see Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-3).</p> <p>Berg's interpretation of Ephesians 6:1-2, namely, that obeying parents means obeying your spiritual, not human, parents is a perverse twisting of these verses. The word can only refer to human parents and children must honour them as far as is possible, for this is what the Lord demands.</p> <p>“For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness” (1 Thessalonians 2:5)</p> <p>“... who subvert ^(upset/destroy) whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake” (Titus 1:11; cf. 1 Timothy 6:3-16).</p>
<p>MARRIAGE and SEX:</p> <p>Abraham, Solomon and David had concubines so Berg insists it is legitimate to have sex with others in the group.</p> <p>Husband and wife-swapping is justified by a wrong interpretation of Acts 2:44.</p> <p>Berg's writings are often pornographic and obsessed with sex. Women members are told to 'crucify the flesh' by giving themselves physically to other men in order to attract them to the group and to Christ. This is an expression of God's love which, Berg claims, is only properly experienced in sexual intercourse.</p>	<p>The marriage of a man and a woman is an ordinance of God (Genesis 2:18-24); sex is God's gift to be used exclusively within the marriage relationship. The lapses of even godly men must <i>not</i> be taken as God's norm for mankind. These were departures from the original creation ordinance of marriage, and were associated with backsliding (e.g. Solomon), unbelief, sin and trouble as in the cases of Abraham (Genesis 21), David (2 Samuel 11, 13) and Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1-6).</p> <p>The sharing of “everything in common” (Acts 2:44) is explained in verse 45 as being applicable only to possessions and material goods. This extensive sharing of goods was not a regular practice for the imperfect tenses are used by Luke, e.g. “they used to sell” and “they gave”.</p> <p>See 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 7:1-40; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:3-17; Colossians 3:5-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">OCCULT:</p> <p>Occult practices such as astrology and witchcraft are encouraged in the MO letters. Berg himself claimed to be led by a spirit identified as a gypsy king who died over a thousand years ago; Berg also claims regular demonic intercourse.</p>	<p>Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Isaiah 8:19-22.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SECOND COMING OF CHRIST:</p> <p>Their earlier prediction that Jesus would return to earth in 1993 was proved wrong.</p>	<p>“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matthew 24:36, 42, 44).</p>



Again I want to record my thanks to Dr. Davies for allowing me to reproduce in its entirety what he wrote on ‘**The Family of Love/The Children of God**’. If you would like to obtain a copy of ‘**Truth under Attack**’ by **Dr Davies** - cheap used copies are available on

http://www.amazon.com/Truth-Under-Attack-Eryl-Davies/dp/0852343418/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1414077561&sr=1-2-fkmr0&keywords=truth+under+attack+eryly+davies

If you wish to read more detailed accounts of some of the matters mentioned briefly by Dr. Davies in his book you can do so in two other books –

in ‘**The New Cults**’ by **Walter Martin** – in America cheap used copies are available on

<http://www.amazon.com/The-New-Cults-Walter-Martin/dp/0884490165>

or in the UK on

http://www.amazon.co.uk/New-Cults-Walter-Martin/dp/0884490165/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1414077038&sr=1-1&keywords=The+New+Cults+walter+martin

or in ‘**Larson’s New book of Cults**’ by **Bob Larson** – in America cheap used copies are available on

<http://www.amazon.com/Larsons-New-Book-Cults-Larson/dp/0842328602>

or in the UK on

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Larsons-New-Book-Cults-Larson/dp/0842328602/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1414077418&sr=1-1&keywords=larsons+new+book+of+cults+bob+laron

My own closing thoughts on this group are really summed up by two portions of scripture – one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament – they are

“Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight. Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine and men of strength to mingle strong drink. Which justify the wicked for reward and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him. Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, **so their root shall be as rottenness and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have cast away the law of the Lord and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 5:20-24).**

“This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves... **unholy... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. **For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts**; Ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3: 1-7).**

Cecil Andrews – ‘Take Heed’ Ministries – 24 October 2014