

## Was Wm Irvine the Founder?

### Was William Irvine the Founder?

Judge for Yourself

Revised October 2, 2018

#### Who said Wm. Irvine was the Founder?

*"Whom do men say that I am?"*

Mark 8:27

**Merriam Webster Definition of a Founder:** a person who creates or establishes something that is meant to last for a long time (such as a business or school): a person who founds something as in the founder of a newspaper empire or he's the son of the company's founder.

**Synonyms:** initiator, father, establisher, author, maker, framer, designer, architect, builder, creator, beginner, generator, inventor, organizer, patriarch, benefactor, originator, constructor, institutor

**Early workers** said that he was...

**Early friends** said that he was...

**Relatives** stated he was...

**Faith Mission** said that he was...

**Later Workers** said that he was...

**Newspapers** stated that he was...

**Court Sworn Testimony...**

**Wm. Irvine** said that he was...

What do YOU think?

**See Also: Articles containing the Words: "Founder""Leader," "The Standard," "Pioneer," etc.**

Early workers said he was...

**WILSON McCLUNG:** "Our mission was started by William Irwin, a Scotchman, seven or eight years ago. Others followed him. I myself was a Civil Servant in Dublin. I resigned my post, sold all that I had and gave to the poor, and went out to preach." (Wilson McClung, Overseer of New Zealand, Feb. 16, 1905 Impartial Reporter). However McClung contradicted this statement twenty years later by writing the Editor: "A number of originators, dissatisfied with present-day method sought to get back to the Scriptural way of serving God, both of preachers and people, hence the present existence of 'Christians' (Evening Post, NZ, **Jan. 26, 1926**).

Wilson McClung gave a sworn testimony (Lloyd's Weekly News, **December 23, 1906**) "The sect, continued McClung, had been in existence eight or nine years, a man named Irvine being 'the first to step out.'" This goes back to the years **1897-1898**

**EDWARD COONEY:** There was in the days gone by, a certain man called William Irvine, upon whose heart Gods spirit worked to raise him up like the judges of old, to lead back those in Christendom to the truth as it is in Jesus. (Reprinted from Edward Cooney's Testimony reprinted in Selected Letters Hymns and Poems of Edward Cooney 1867-1960, by **Patricia Roberts**, Pages 43-45)

**EDWARD COONEY:** Undoubtedly God called us and separated us to be His people in the beginning; and most prominent and most used in this calling out a people for God's name was William Irvine who, at the time of his being sent forth to be a prophet, saw more clearly than any of us that the revelation of the Father to each individual child of His is the Rock alone on which Jesus Christ would build his church, and that the gates of Hades should not prevail against it. (Letter by Edward Cooney to My dear Sister dated May, 1930 Reprinted from: Selected Letters, Hymns, and Poems of Edward Cooney 1867- 1960 by **Patricia Roberts**)

**JOHN LONG:** In John Long's own words, he and Wm. Irvine were "**the two instruments** used of God at the origin of that movement." "That movement" was the Go-Preacher Movement. The text "As ye go, preach," from Matthew 10:7, paved the way to the name often attached to them of "Go-Preachers." (John Longs Journal, 1907)

**John Long's Journal December, 1900:** About that time William Irvine left the Faith Mission. All who knew the man was acquainted

with the fact that he did not covet or desire to start a new sect or Mission; and his leaving the Faith Mission was not without feeling the risk and responsibility of doing so; but circumstances and events rendered it necessary. Some workers who gave up their situations to go fully in the Lord's work were not accepted by the Faith Mission; others did not feel led to join it; and others believed in being more like the pattern as seen in Jesus, and reforming according to the ideal church in the Acts of the Apostles; among the latter was Edward Cooney, who had newly started out, became a strenuous advocate. Most of these workers were either young converts or disciples of William Irvine; and it became impossible for him to be true to the rules of the Faith Mission and to them; so he resigned the one and entered enthusiastically into the other.

Footnote in **Heresies Exposed**: Mr. **John Long** has written us that he was the man who obtained for William Irvine 'the first opening for a mission in Nenagh, August, 1897.' That '**William Irvine is the name of the original leader of the Go-Preachers**. Irvine Weir was one of the first staff of preachers who emigrated to America; these two names seem to have got mixed up.' He declares that the movement dates from 1897. [William C. Irvine used this tract (abridged) in the book *Timely Warnings*, published 1917; which was renamed: *Modern Heresies Exposed*, published in 1919; and which was renamed: **Heresies Exposed**, published in 1921 (29 printings) By W.M.R., Loizeaux Brothers, Neptune, NJ. **See Chapter**: "The Cooneyites or Go-Preachers and Their Doctrines," Pp 73-78]

**John Long's Journal April, 1903**: At that time, Thomas Craig joined us, and we had a visit from **William Irvine**; he wanted to ask my advice about the work for he was in a strait between two as to whether he should go from the work as leader; and labour for God independently in a new district; **as he shrank back from forming a new mission or sect**; and the work and workers at that time were very scattered and disorganized. He was very downcast, and disheartened and humbled before God: he said to me whatever they would do, he would serve the Lord. **I encouraged him not to forsake the work which resulted very largely as the outcome of his own testimony**: but to call a conference; and get the workers united together; and form the young converts into assemblies where they could get spiritual food, but to be open and unsectarian in attitude towards all other sects, missions and persons; at the same time setting before them an example of Godly living, obedience and conformity to the Word of God. "That ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," Jude 3

**ALFRED MAGOWAN**: During a visit to Wm. Irvine in 1938 by Alfred Magowan, Ed Cooney and R. Irwin, Wm. Irvine made his famous statement to Alfred Magowan: "It was **A GREAT EXPERIMENT**" to which Alfred replied, "It was A GREAT EXPERIENCE." From Magowan's play titled **Outline of the History of a Peculiar People From 1900-1931**, pages 11, 25:

**First Visitor**: "They speak of him as a man raised up."

**Second Visitor**: "They trace their spiritual genealogy to him."

**First Visitor**: "I hear they are doing it now, and many have already given up what they call their old profession, and refer to him as the **beginning of a new order**, as Adam was the beginning of human descent."

**Second Visitor**: "What fools these mortals be!"

**First Visitor**: "He **founded** The Testimony by himself." (NOTE: Testimony is the name early workers used for the Two by Two sect)

**WILLIE CLELLAND** (also a cousin of Wm. Irvine): When Willie was told "that the workers had given their worldwide membership the idea that they went back to Jesus," he was shocked and said, "For them to have given you the idea that it went right back to Christ—that's an absolute lie. It went back to Bill Irvine...It might be a good question to ask those who say they are 'from the beginning,' '**Who was ahead of William Irvine?**' **William Irvine was entirely responsible for the creation of this movement**. He gathered a few converts around him in Ireland, and he had the idea that he could facilitate the spreading of the gospel by having a few men and women join themselves to him. His ideas of preaching were entirely on his ideas of Matthew 10. And yet, they have the hide to tell one that it went back to time immemorial. **It went back to exactly 1899 when the first workers gathered around Bill Irvine.**" (**The Secret Sect** by Doug & Helen Parker, page 96, Footnote 32)

**IRVINE WEIR**: "William Irvine's ideas of preaching and tramp preaching were founded entirely on his idea of the tenth Matthew (sic) where Jesus told them to go, providing themselves neither gold nor silver nor script or staff for their journey, neither two coats, neither shoes nor staves for the workman is worthy of his hire. William believed that what was good for the apostles was also good for the preachers of that day. He forgot that this message was given to the apostles to give to the Jewish nation only." (Feb 21, 1956 Irvine Weir to Doug Parker; **The Secret Sect** Footnote 5)

**JACK CARROLL**: Our old friend W. I. [William Irvine] is on a different tack now and shows less evidence than ever of having the anointing of God. His extravagances along prophetic lines are very foolish and have no scriptural foundation. I hope none will be disturbed in spirit or mind thro' this last development. 2 Timothy 2:15-19 have a deeper meaning for me than ever as it is very evident **poor William** is now following in the footsteps of Hymenaeus and Philetus. **How sad it is to see a man once honoured by God AS NO OTHER** now carried away by his own stubborn and unbroken spirit and under the influence of the "other spirit," not the Spirit of God. It is a continual heart break to me to see him where he is, but I do not know a man on earth that he would be willing to take help or counsel from. (**Letter by Jack Carroll to Clyde** dated April 12, 1919)

**ROBERT DARLING**: See below

**Early friends said he was...**

**GOODHAND PATTISON:** "Just at that time a Mr. and Mrs. Todd, who had been Faith Mission pilgrims, had started a similar line of things to Mr. Govan's with their headquarters in Enniscorthy, having (I presume) Ireland before them as their first and chiefest field of activity...to start off with, they did not seem to have any of their own converts to go forth as workers, and so getting in touch with Mr. Irvine, who was having quite a number willing and anxious to go, they took on the direction and oversight of such, and in a short time had a pretty nice number in the field, including Tom Turner, John Hardie, Emma Gill, Annie Holland and Sarah Sullivan, and I dare say several others, probably Alex Given...Anyhow, the connection didn't last very long as I believe the workers jointly and individually felt Mr. Todd was not the man to superintend and direct such an important movement, and probably pressed Mr. Irvine himself into acceptance of responsibility...and "Todd's Mission," as it was then called, shortly became a thing of the past...And the workers now in fellowship with William Irvine went on and increased in numbers, and perhaps I may add increased in their attachment to and respect for their chief's leadership, possibly more so than was good for him or them..."

**ROSE EDWARDS:** In the Bible, Wm. Irvine saw only this manner of life for a preacher, but he saw no one living it in the world. So he made up his mind he would put God to the test, even if it cost him his life, and he resigned his position, sold what he had, made himself as poor as Jesus was when He said, "Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath no where to lay his head," and in this manner he, Wm. Irvine, went forth to preach, which was the beginning of what we have called the Testimony. If there had been no Wm. Irvine, there would have been no Testimony, no matter how much you may be told to the contrary. As he went on, he met the different ones who became associated with him in the Alpha Message and work. (Rose Edward's Letter to MacMillers, Denver, Colo. November 23, 1935)

**PROFESSOR OLIVER W. ROLFE:** I met **Robert Darling** in 1958 at the Albuquerque convention; I then traveled with him to the three Mexican conventions. That is, he asked me to drive him in my car. I saw him every day for a period of weeks; he rode with me back to the Midwest where I was living at the time. We became good friends and corresponded regularly until his death in 1970. In 1967, he came to California, where I was then living, and I met him at the Gilroy conventions. He stayed with me between the two conventions, and we had great fun sight-seeing in the Bay Area. On this latter occasion I asked him about the beginnings of the church; he told me that it was started in Ireland by **one man (whom he did not name, but I assumed to be William Irvine)** after his sister had frozen to death because their parents had shut her out of the house. There was no mention at all of Switzerland. In fact, in all my discussions with him there was never the slightest implication that the church dated historically from an earlier time. He seemed to be somewhat distressed that so many people seemed to believe this. [by Oliver William Rolfe, Ph.D., Stanford University, 1967, Professor Emeritus (Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures) University of Montana, Missoula, Montana] NOTE: Robert Darling was on the **1905 Workers List**.

**Relatives said he was...**

**PETER COMRIE, brother-in-law to William Irvine:** **It was definitely William Irvine who started this movement.** Between he and Edward Cooney, they did everything. If John Hardie has misled you that this belief is from the beginning, that is definitely a lie. (Secret Sect p 95; Footnote 31j)

**Faith Mission said he was...**

**Faith Mission Official List of Workers** shows Wm. Irvine left Faith Mission in 1901. The reason given was: **"founded Cooneyites in S. Ireland."** He was last shown on their Bright Words Workers List in Dec. 1900.

**John G. GOVAN, Founder and Director of FAITH MISSION wrote in the August 1901 issue of their monthly publication Bright Words:** "When in Ireland I came into closer contact with a movement **that has been going on for the past year or two.** A number of young people are going out on quite independent lines, holding missions in various parts both of Ireland and Scotland. While there may be much that is good in the devotion and earnestness of those who thus leave all, believing that the Lord has called them thus to follow Him, a number of features of this movement do not commend themselves to us. There is no one to judge of the fitness of these workers except themselves; being independent, they are not able to profit from the experience of others older in the work, as they would if there was some organisation; and then some of them have not been long enough converted themselves before going out, and, wanting in Christian experience, are very apt to be unbalanced and one-sided. While we can quite believe that a few of those who have gone out have been truly called of God, we fear that a number of others have been more called of man, or moved by their own impulses, and are really not fitted for the work. As some have been mistaken for pilgrims, we think it necessary to say that the Faith Mission is not responsible for this movement." (**August 1901, pp. 175-6**)

**JOHN G. GOVAN, Founder and Director of FAITH MISSION, wrote in the December, 1903 issue of Bright Words:** "We regret that it seems necessary to again point out that missions are being held in various parts by persons who represent themselves to be "Faith Mission" workers, but who are not in any way under our control or direction. **This movement which has almost no organisation and little method, was started by Mr. Wm. Irvine,** at one time much used as a pilgrim in our Mission, and some of whose converts we are glad to have as efficient workers among us today. Though somewhat on our lines there are various points, both in method and teaching, that we do not approve of, and in which they widely differ from us. Then we hear of instances in which some of these irresponsible workers have misrepresented and spoken against the Faith Mission, while taking personal advantage of it

by holding missions in places we have already worked, and seeking the support of our Prayer Unions." (**December 1903, p. 275**)

**REV. C. N. PECKHAM, Principal, FAITH MISSION:** "From these references, you can see that **William Irvine definitely did not leave the Faith Mission to take over or become a part of an existing ministry. There certainly was no movement of that kind existing over here before Irvine's break-away movement.** As William Irvine spent some time in the Faith Mission before leaving it, there is no possibility that he founded the Cooneyite sect before 1886 as it was in October 1886, that John George Govan began the Faith Mission." [See copy in TTT Photo Gallery – May 29, 1991 Letter to Cherie Kropp]

#### Later Workers said he was...

**DONALD FISHER:** "...my remembrance of how for several years at Special meeting time, I remember a favorite subject of Wm. Jamieson (when the Workers would be gathered in the home) was to tell us that as far back as we could trace this fellowship was unto Wm. Irvine. He spoke openly and freely of all which he knew of Wm. Irvine, etc. What he told us was unto enough people that it would be common knowledge statewide." (Donald Fisher Letter to Fred Miller, circa 1982 -D.F. was a worker)

**WILLIAM LEWIS:** "Since early workers followed a Scottish preacher in Ireland before the turn of the 20th century, they have spent their lives traveling from home to home with little more than their clothes." (William Lewis, Minneapolis Star Tribune, Minnesota 11/2/86 – The Deceased Overseer of Texas)

**DENNIS JACOBSEN:** "While I was in the work, I visited with a number of workers who have not only agreed and/or admitted that William Irvine started the 2&2 fellowship, but also some who have volunteered this information. Who? George Walker, Andrew Abernethy, Robert Darling, Tom Lyness and his sister Annie, Willie Jamieson and his sister Elisabeth, Jack Carroll, Dave and Emily Christie, Sam Charlton, and the Jardine brothers, just to name some of them. Many of these talked about "The Early Days." One of my companions, Charlie Krubb, was not there in the beginning of the Early Days in the "Old Country," (as they sometimes refer to Ireland and abbreviate it as O.C.) but he related in great detail to me what he had learned over the years. These things were not something that I believed anyone would repudiate, much less workers or ex-workers. Everett Swanson was another worker, who was not there in the O.C. as a first-hand witness, yet he also confirmed that he had been told what those first hand old-timers had told me. He was the first person I ever heard who used the expression in meeting **'we do not have, nor can we prove apostolic succession.'** Charles Wells was the first to relate to me that Wm. Irvine believed he was one of the two prophets of Revelation."

**PAUL ABENROTH:** "I suspect that George Gittins had his encounter and visit with **Robert Darling** during the same year (1967) as Dennis Jacobsen and I did. I do not know what Robert Darling told George, but I do know that Dennis Jacobsen, Will Rolfe (a Montana University professor) and I, all three of us, visited with Robert enough to get it clear from him that he did not believe or claim that the friends and workers existed before William Irvine. I questioned him about his 1967 Silverdale, B.C. Canada Convention message where he alluded to the origins and mentioned William Irvine by name. I asked him the following approximate question, 'Did you intend to leave the impression that before William Irvine there were no workers or professing friends?' He replied, 'What other impression could I leave?' He then continued by claiming that Abel was **'the firstfruits of faith'** in his day; Abraham was the **'firstfruits of faith'** in his day; and Simeon and Anna were the **'firstfruits of faith'** in their day."

**PAUL ABENROTH:** "A number of years later, in about 1985, **Tharold Sylvester** amazed me with a frank and unexpected candid moment at the Special Meeting in Pasco, Washington. Only a minute or two into his message, in his customary abrupt manner, he set the stage by declaring, 'Some of you folks are wondering: When did this thing start?' Much to my surprise, he even mentioned a book called **"The Secret Sect."** Obviously his intent was to respond to this book. He immediately offered an explanation substantially identical to that given me by Robert Darling about a decade earlier. The arguments he used actually corroborated the basic evidence supplied in that book. He did not call William Irvine by name, but he did specifically refer to him in an unmistakable context by which I knew who he was talking about. He did not try to refute the evidence in the book which shows that the friends/workers fellowship had its beginning with Wm. Irvine. Instead, Tharold's discourse was directed toward claiming a **scriptural precedent** for William Irvine being what Tharold called **'the first fruits of faith' in our day.** He cited the Bible characters, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Zacharias and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, claiming they were 'the firstfruits of faith' in their day." Therefore, it was reasonable to expect God could raise up someone to be the 'firstfruits of faith' in our day.

**PAUL ABENROTH:** "As recently as June, 2002, **Paul Sharp** spoke of the origins at Walla Walla Convention, calling it a **'regeneration.'**"

**PAUL ABENROTH:** "Before Jack Carroll died, Charles Wells and Everett Swanson had a visit with Jack about the origins of the fellowship. Jack shocked them with the statement, 'Boys, there is no such thing as apostolic succession.' In all fairness, let me say that I do not expect anyone to consider my recounting herein of Jack Carroll's statement to be firsthand evidence of Jack's statement. I only offer it as corroboration because it is consistent with all the other primary evidence I have seen."

**FRED WOOD:** "The Living Witness Doctrine (states) no one could be saved apart from hearing William Irvine or a preacher sent out by William Irvine...there was sister workers sent out two-by-two which, of course, was started by William Irvine, seeing he belonged to these whatchamacall people (Faith Mission), and he brought in the sister workers. (Early Memories Recalled By Fred Wood, from a transcribed tape of a 1985 conversation with FRED WOOD, age circa 93, which a Cooneyite elder made in the home of a professing

American Two by Two).

**FRED HANOWELL:** This I did &, together with what I got to know from “workers” (old or young) I was told, that William Irvine, one of the first (or perhaps THE first) who went out into the Gospel Work in the manner of the first disciples, (Two by Two, after having sold all their possessions) had been a member of or at least attended the “Conventions” of “The Scotch Faith Mission” from whence he “copied” it & introduced it, respectively that Convention-System”, to those believing in the end of the past century & the beginning of the present century. (Letter by Fred Hanowell to Fred & Ruth Miller, written around 1964) **Fred Hanowell Account** \*\*\*NOTE: Wm. Irvine wrote Fred Hanowell on Aug. 17, 1921: God made me the first head of the family. He did the calling by me, and now these past seven years he is doing the choosing, for many are called, few chosen. It was so wonderful, both in numbers who heard, the numbers who professed, the numbers of workers, the ground covered with the clearness of the truth as it is in Jesus.”

**GORDON McNABB:** Irvine’s founding role is of little consequence, for we alone follow the true pattern of the original apostles, and the early church.” (from: **The Secret Sect** by Doug & Helen Parker)

**LES VANDENBERG:** This all was taking place in the last three years of a 14 year stint in the work. I had known for several years that William Irvine was the undisputed founder of the Two by Two church. Harry Brownlee had told me first off and then I had confronted both George Walker and Andrew Abernethy about it. Their description (to my way of thinking) was convoluted, leaving me wondering why they could not give me a clear description of the church history.

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### Newspapers stated that he was...

Reporter’s interview with a worker:

Q: “With whom did this movement originate?”

A: (worker) “The first man to take up this work was Mr. Irvine, who was at one time mine manager for Messrs Baird & Company at Glasgow.” (from: **The Courier**, Dundee, Scotland, February 13, 1907, p 5)

**Wm. Irvine, the founder and supreme authority of what is known as Cooneyism**, is a Scotchman. His native place is Kilsyth, a small town near Glasgow. Before he became a Tramp he had attached himself to the sect known as the Faith Mission or Pilgrims, and was the manager of a coal mine under Baird & Co., Glasgow, and enjoyed a salary of £300 a year. William Irvine left this employment and joined the Faith Mission, under the control then of J. G. Govan, of Rosyth, who still holds conventions after the manner followed at Crochnacrieve, but on a much smaller scale. It is often addressed by evangelical Clergy. Wm. Irvine gave up his connection with that sect for two reasons, according to my information—1st, because the leader was alleged to have been a ‘hypocrite,’ in that while teaching Pilgrims to live by faith he himself had over hundreds of pounds. 2nd, because Mr. Irvine’s converts always lapsed and were lost among the clergy by going back to their own congregation or what is known as the churches. Consequently a small number of preachers and some from the Faith Mission, along with one named John Long (who was rejected three years ago, because he would not maintain that John Wesley had gone to hell) and about a dozen stood by Wm. Irvine....However, the chief motive power was latent until Edward Cooney heard Wm. Irvine, and offered him money and even a salary yearly, which was refused by Irvine. At all events, £1,300 from Mr. Cooney alone was applied to the cause, and has been preached as having been ‘given to the poor, on the authority of, Sell all that ye have, &c.’ Yet as a matter of fact, this sum was mostly paid to transport preachers to places abroad, and not to the poor, as is sometimes understood, the fruit of which even yet in some measure returns annually to Crochnacrieve Convention. Edward Cooney soon made converts, and spoke of his relatives in a manner not after the style of the Gospel. But because of his sincerity and earnestness, many were influenced...(Impartial Reporter **August 25, 1910, p8**).

The annual Convention for the ‘Pilgrim’ community was opened on Sunday at Crochnacrieve, the residence of Mr. John West, near Ballinamallard. In the absence of Mr. Wm. Irvine, founder of the Pilgrims, the Convention was opened by Mr. Edward Cooney, formerly of Enniskillen. (Impartial Reporter, **July 3, 1913**)

The closing scene at the meeting in the gloaming was impressive. All the arrangements had been made for the departure of the ‘preachers’ to different parts of the world, and it only remained for the **Go-Preachers’ founder** to give to all the last words of counsel and farewell. Mr. Irvine dealt mainly with the duty of those in fellowship towards one another and towards the outside world. (Impartial Reporter, **July 31, 1913, p. 8**)

The performance of the “Cooneyites” **most recently formed of sects**, which mysteriously which mysteriously sprung into existence under the leadership of an Enniskillen man named Cooney, have caused a good deal of commotion in various part of the North of Ireland...A hardfaced Scotsman followed in about nine months. He was **William Irwin, the founder of the Tramps** and Chief Baptizer...One night Irwin announced, “I am St. Paul the Second!” (illegible)...(Sunday Independent **June 10, 1906**)

That remarkable sect, known as the “Cooneyites,” have been holding their annual convention at Crochnacrieve, Fermanagh. Upwards of a thousand members, who describe themselves as pilgrims, assembled from all parts of Ireland, as well as from England and Scotland, and even from some of the colonies. Crochnacrieve House and its extensive grounds were placed at the disposal of the assemblage by the owner who is said to be an enthusiastic member of the sect...At these gatherings, which extend over several days, services are held daily, the principal preacher on this occasion being **Mr. William Irvine, one of the founders of the sect**, who

was formerly an engineer in Scotland. At each service two or three members of the sect relate the story of their "conversion," and renounce their former religious associations. The Cooneyites declare that no one can be saved who drinks or smokes. Before a person is admitted into the sect, he or she is publicly immersed in a running stream. (The Poverty Bay Herald, Gisbourne, NZ; now the Gisbourne Herald, **September 28, 1910** – Page 8)

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### Court Interrogations...

**WILLIAM IRVINE UNDER OATH:** At libel suit at the Bristol Assizes brought by members of the Burfitt family (plaintiffs) against Rev. D. L. Hayward (defendant) who had issued a leaflet against the Go-Preachers, implying they were engaging in white slave traffic, and procuring women for prostitution under the cloak of religion. The workers were successful in obtaining damage awards. (Bristol is due West of London; "assize" is a court session) Wm. Irvine was a witness. The article states: **"William Irvine, one of the founders of the Go-Preachers Society, said it was Protestant evangelical"** and states that Wm. Irvine also said, **"I have never known of a new sect being founded without opposition"**. **Impartial Reporter July 17, 1913:**

**EDWARD COONEY UNDER OATH in Cooney v. The People Ltd:** Mr. Justice Darling—**Were you the founder of this sect?—No, William Irvine was the first, about sixteen years ago.** I cast in my lot with him as a fellow-preacher, and preached a good deal in the north of Ireland. I recognise the name, but others have nicknamed us 'The Cooneyites.' I do not like it myself. (Impartial Reporter, **December 18, 1913, p. 3**)

### Wm. Irvine said that he was...

Eldon Tenniswood told a younger worker in 1997 that William Irvine had visited his family a number of times in Michigan during Eldon's childhood. The older Tenniswoods thought very highly of him, to the point that they named one of their sons Irvine. But he was never mentioned in any special capacity as founder or supreme leader. **On his last visit to a Michigan convention (either 1913 or 1914) he said something that caused the Tenniswoods to come home quite disappointed in him. Irvine had preached himself as 'founder' there, saying (Eldon's exact words) "I am the father of you all." Tenniswoods' reaction was, "William's changed, and we don't believe we can trust him anymore."**

"In Nov. 1896, I was sent to the West of Ireland to the hottest Roman Catholic spot in the world, and where this Irish trouble began—at the beginning of this year. After 6 or 7 months there, I got to where the Carroll's were **in Nenagh; and there BEGAN the work that has spread so far.**" (Oct. 13, 1920 **Letter to Dunbars**)

"In October, 1896, I was working a mission quite near where the Sinn Fenn's are now getting more than they bargained for, in the burning of their town on October 3, 1920...**on the day I STARTED the mission there that stirred the whole of that country for years to come, as I did in Southwest Ireland and finally all over Ireland.**" (Oct. 13, 1920 **Letter to Dunbars**)

"You speak of self-effacement being the mark of God's Anointed. The false prophets have always been good at effacing the true prophets of God, **as the evil workers have been effective in effacing the Man who made it possible for them to preach.**" (July 28, 1920 **Letter to May Carroll**)

"Looking back over 20 years, it was a big job to gather, mother, teach, guide, lead and scatter over the world, a seed in Alpha Days. But I managed it. **It was hard to get people to see, feel and do what I had done IN STARTING ALONE,** and finding room and people in the world for my Message; and once people tested it out, they found it possible, just as if the world was virgin soil. But it was the way to reveal the strong from the weak. And my job was to lead the way so that others could follow and find, that what was possible to me was, for them, comparatively easy, if they faced it. And once a year I visited them to cheer, strengthen, and supply what was lacking in their witness." (June 2, 1933 **Letter to Hulls**) (Followers of Wm. Irvine's Omega Message)

**"I am the one God used altogether—not "most." NO WILLIAM—NO TESTIMONY.** The mountains echo and re-echo the human voice, and so The Testimony was the echo and re-echo of the Voice of God through my lips, though I knew it not then, as I do today. For the Prophets and Apostles only got to know who they were, when they found themselves the victims of the iniquity and Scandal of those who were called the Church, or seal of their Anointing...**I planted the Vineyard** and it has fallen into the hands of wicked husbandmen. And I am the Servant sent to find the fruit; and those who mistreat the Servant are the same as the killers of the Son and Heir...whose end is destruction." (March 2, 1923 **Letter to Eddie Cooney**)(Worker- entered work in 1901).

"Your last letter contending for the many heads and which you try to justify from Matt 10....I had heard before of your attempt to prove that my position in the Testimony, **but no Wm. Irvine, there would have been no need for people to claim headship....Many mice became men, and nobodies became somebodies when the real head disappeared from their midst"** (July 20, 1921 **Letter to Alfred Magowan**).

"He [John] is very happy and content in sharing the Message of God today, as he once did in **Alpha Testimony Days; which was my work then to begin it.** And now, The Man and Message of Revelation is my job, and reward for my service for 21 years up to 1914. Testimony finished in 1914, when Revelation became The Message and Test for all men" (**Nov. 11, 1934** letter to Moores).

"And if nobody else knows it, I do...And rightly so, for The Testimony was the Seal of God and proof of MY Anointing. **And if I was not the Father, certainly I was not the Brother of any. God never gathered brethren but by a father**, and all your attempts to change these facts only reveals the secrets of your hearts and leaves you where you began and as you began..." (March 2, 1923 **Letter to Eddie Cooney**, entered work in 1901).

"These 26-1/2 years is but half of my nearly 54 years of being the Son of Man, and hid from men's eyes and now about to be revealed. 26 years giving Alpha Message and seeing it finished up as in Matt. 24; leaving the Tares which the devil sowed to the Testimony cut asunder and appointed their portion with the hypocrites **LIVING BY WHAT I HAD MADE FOR THEM.**" (May 6, 1946 **Letter to Dunbars**) (Some loyal followers of Wm. Irvine—letters in TTT files to them from 1919 to 1946.)

"Think of all I did for you, and others, in spite of my sins!...Fancy the labor in building a house for God, and the pain of seeing it become a den of thieves!! (August 28, 1920 **Letter to John Hardie**).(Worker and childhood friend of Wm. Irvine from Kilsyth Scotland; entered work in 1900)

"**God made ME the FIRST head of the family.** He did the calling by ME, and now these past seven years, he is doing the choosing, for many are called, few chosen. It was so wonderful, both in numbers who heard, the numbers who professed, the numbers of workers, the ground covered with the clearness of the truth as it is in Jesus. But the end of the Jesus Way is to choose his Bride from among those who have had all these privileges...The dragon with seven heads is those who sat themselves up as Leaders of The Testimony and use their Horns of Authority to hurt others and are claimed by men as Leaders...deliver you from the power of the greatest set of robbers in the world history, who thought they could rob ME and those of what God had given them." (August 17, 1921 **Letter to Fred Hanowell**. (Worker)

"**It was all God and I from the first to last...God and I were the only shapers of the whole Way**, Truth and Life which so many are so fond to claim as their own... **I was as the main spring and the binder together**, which was the real strength of the Testimony. And when **I had finished the House**, it was to find myself out and with God; and the House in possession of Thieves and Robbers—as it was in Jesus day. " ( **December 4, 1922 Letter to Dunbars**)

"Six years ago, in April, I was rejected and despised and cast out to die, according to prophecy, my birthright divided amongst my children and enemies (and I was willing), but the anointing that God gave me remained with me, and nobody seems to get my mantle, though many have tried my shoes, sat in my seat, slept in my bed, ate my meals and have enjoyed the rise to power and pre-eminence...When the world and Testimony set out to bury me, and forget my name, person, presence and etc. they failed. **The Jesus Way was stolen, confiscated, misappropriated.** I remember seeing and hearing you take it over in my presence." (June 29, 1920 **Letter to Wm. Carroll**) (Worker – entered work in 1903 along with his wife; Overseer of Victoria, Aust.)

"You and Co. [the other workers] **stole all God and His Anointed produced**, but you did not steal the root nor the power which made my mustard seed." (**March 2, 1921** Letter to Willie Abercrombie)(Worker – entered work in 1901)

"I was pleased to see your letter and to hear of some evidence of returning humanity in three of you, for that will precede any hope of deliverance from the snare of the Devil, into which you have all fallen, and which accounts for the deadness and corruption, which characterized the whole Testimony these 9 years. And if nobody else knows it, I do; and always knew more of these conditions than anyone else. And rightly so, for The Testimony was the Seal of God and proof of MY Anointing. **And if I was not the Father, certainly I was not the Brother of any. God never gathered brethren but by a father**, and all your attempts to change these facts only reveals the secrets of your hearts and leaves you where you began, and as you began—without God, and knowing it not, though full of zeal, knowledge, profession and fruit, which you long ago recognized was only adding to the wickedness of the world..." (March 2, 1923 **Letter to Eddie Cooney**) (Worker who entered work in 1901).

Then you will be sure that the twelve apostles who tried to usurp my place in the Testy were frauds, all of them with only moonlight or the reflection of what I gave them, you will then know who was the **foundation and head of the Testy** (August 19, 1923 **Letter to Edward Cooney**).

"For 14 years I worked outside all religious connection and gathered many out and around Him, and my attempt to do as the Acts and Apostles taught, **only to find, as did Paul, that false Apostles and prophets would try to get power to lead the so-called churches I had formed spiritually under their power....**I had many converts in G. Britain, Ireland, USA, Canada, NZ, Australia and S. Africa.....I listened to all sorts of people and went to all sorts of places from 1914 to 1918 and found nothing but the old hypocrisy of saying and doing not, every man full of his own thoughts and ways, seeking a crowd and a crust. (October 16, 1934 **Letter to Mr. Thorp**) (Thorp was an outsider who met some people following the Omega Message and wanted more info from Wm.I. It is not uncommon to introduce yourself as to what your position is (Founder of the Alpha) to a newbie wanting information.)

I can look back with Joy on it all and say that **God and I were the only shapers of the whole Way**, Truth and Life which so many are so fond to claim as their own. The work in U.S.A. and Canada was all built on the very little friendships which I had made. Same in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand. And the few know all it meant in putting it into the hearts of workers and turning them up to the

music making. **It was all God and I from first to last**—and all we have seen since has only been like most others going because they were provided for, and a soft imitation of the Early Days. **I was as the main spring and the binder together**, which was the real strength of the Testimony. And when **I had finished the House**, it was to find myself out and with God; and the House in possession of Thieves and Robbers—as it was in Jesus day. (**Dec 4, 1922** Letter to Dunbars)

No honest man who knows the facts can ever doubt that **the Testimony was my work. No William, no Testimony**, or 7 churches. Foolish people and false apostles of Ephesus thought it was presumption, my going around as I did. Who else could have done it? And who else could have dealt with all the various good and bad who were being gathered into the net? Don't think I am unconscious of the conditions of most of my brethren, and many a time my heart was weary as I listen to their speaking and new conditions among them in self-seeking and place-speaking, which no doubt is worse today than ever. (**February 7, 1927** Letter to John Hardie, boyhood friend and early worker who entered the work in 1900).

I began alone, and faced the whole?/worlds? religions and founded the apostolic church of today, and like Paul, I am very much alone, facing the religious world and the churches 7-fold Devil possessed. (**July 18, 1924** Letter to Loitz)

The Testimony was the fruit of my work for 21 years. (Letter to H. L. Reader, Aptos, CA, Sept 9, 1932\*)

**Notice Irvine wrote these letters to his close friends, both workers and friends.** He wrote some letters to some of the earliest workers (John Hardy, Wilson McClung, Wm. Carroll, W. Abercrombie, Ed Cooney, Alfred Magowan) Would Irvine try to tell the very men who were with him in the beginning that he was the founder—if it wasn't true? He was REMINDING them that he had started the movement he referred to as an experiment. They knew it without him saying so —there was no question in their minds. Irvine was writing them that he founded the Alpha Gospel in which they were workers, and now he was explaining to them his new revelation—the Omega Gospel, hoping they would join with him again.

Depending on the audience or reader, certain things are presumed to be known. Matthew was a Jew writing to Jew and he didn't elaborate about things they were familiar with or that were common knowledge. Do workers commonly go about claiming to be "somebody" special? Does the head worker of a state get up at convention and say, I am John Doe, Overseer of the State of Texas? Is visiting worker Bill Jones introduced in convention as the Overseer and pioneered the work in Timbuktu? No, the workers don't advertise who they are or what they have done, and Wm. Irvine didn't generally advertise that he was the founder either.

Normally, the friends who were NOT from the **"Old Country"** were not told the rank or importance of the visiting workers who came from afar to preach at their conventions. "Old Country" is often abbreviated as **"O.C."** in writings of the early workers, by which is meant the UK and Ireland.

Compiled by Cherie Kropp-Ehrig

THE ABOVE IS SOME OF THE EVIDENCE. . .

WHY SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE WILLIAM IRVINE IS THE FOUNDER

What Do YOU Say?

**Judge for Yourself: Was William Irvine the Founder?**