

Australia Newspaper Articles

Early Newspaper Articles

Australia

Revised September 27, 2025

NOTE: The Two by Two History Website has an extensive archive of newspapers for Australia for the period 1906 thru 1954. Original images of the actual newspapers may be downloaded in pdf format.

The Go-Preachers or Cooneyites

By Archdeacon T. C. Hammond aka the Hammond Report
For the New South Wales Council of Churches

Queensland Newspaper Extract from the Irish Magazine

RE: John Sullivan

by J. Woolcott, Reporter

1907, May 18, p. 8 – *The New Zealand Truth* (Auckland, NZ)

A New Religion, Operating in Australia, Missionaries in **Melbourne**, The “Go-Preachers” or “Dippers”
The “No-Sect Sect”—A Campaign of Cadging—Homes Broken Up—Australians Beware

1908, January 4, p. 4 – *The Express and Telegraph* (Adelaide, SA)

Go Preachers – A Strange Sect

1916 November 24, p.4 – *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill, NSW)

Defence of Australia – Conscientious Objectors – Scripture Lessons in Court

1925, August 6, p. 3 – *Mudgee Guardian and North-western Representative*

Charge of Vagrancy Fails – “Preachers of the Gospel” in Court -They were “Cooneyites” and Thought Clergy Started the Trouble

1927, March 9, 12, 16 – *Armdale Chronicle*, NSW

Queer Creeds – The Cooneyites known as Tramp Preachers

1931, Pinaroo and Border Times (South Australia)

The Cooneyites or Go-Preachers and Their Doctrines by Pastor T. C. Backen

1931, July 03, 10, 17

The Work of the Gospel – Workers reply to above series (A. E. Schilling. R. C. Crettenden)

1931, July 24 and 31

1932, April 2 – The Southern Argus (country newspaper in South Australia)

Camp Convention at Blackwood Park

1933, July 6 – *Wellington Times* (NSW Australia)

Mr. Dennison and the Cooneyites

1936, August 29 – The Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Queensland)

Sect which says: “Sell all thou has and give to the poor.”

RE: Rochedale Convention

1943, February 10, p. 6 – *Advertiser* (Adelaide, South Australia)

Conscientious Objector Courtmartialled (Ernest Christian of religious body: “Christian Assemblies”)

1951, April 30, p. 16 – *The Sun* (Melbourne, Victoria)

2 women evangelists lead strong “early Christian” group (opposite Glenhuntly station)

1983, May 17, p. 5 – *The Chronicle* (Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia)

RE: Doug & Helen Parker’s book: *The Secret Sect*

Secret Sect Threat to Person’s Rights

1983, December 28, p. 26 – The Canberra Times

RE: Doug & Helen Parker’s book: *The Secret Sect* Book seeks to lift veil of secrecy

1984, June 30, Pg 37 – The Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney, Australia)
The Most Secret Society in the World; By Alan Gill

1984, Dec 15, Pg 25 – The Courier Mail (Australia)
The Sect With No Name; By Alan Gill

1986, June 2 – The Australian Church Record
The Cooneyites, "the invisible church"

1994, Dec. 12, Pg 14-15 – News Weekly; Outline
Report by Megan Norris and Marianne Docherty
A deathly obsession with rock band Nirvana sparked a tragic family suicide pact.

1994, Nov 29 – The Daily Telegraph Mirror (Sydney, Australia)

RE: 1994 Suicide of two Henderson children

1994, Nov 29 – I should have talked to my suicide children.

1994, Nov 29 – Mystery Religious Group Shuns the Limelight, By Aaron Patrick

1995, Nov 1, Pg 20 – Fear of church led children to suicide

1995, Oct 1 – Pg 1 – The Age (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia)

Two Children, Kurt and a fear of God by Tim Pegler

1995, Nov 5, Pg 1 – Herald Sun (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia)

Satan and My Kids – Father Tells of Death Diary by Wayne Jones

2001, July 25, Pg 14 – Herald Sun (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia)

Secretive Sect Leader Dies; Controversial Cooneyites to bury Victorian head By Tanya Giles

RE: Death of John Evan Jones, Overseer of Victoria

2005, August – Wendish News

By Wendish Heritage Society Australia

The Moravian Brethren at Bethel in South Australia

Number 35 August 2005 – Part 1 – Page 4

<http://www.wendishheritage.org.au/publications/Newsletter%20No.35.pdf>

http://www.wendishheritage.org.au/publications/newsletters/2005_august_no_35.php

2006, March – Wendish News

By Wendish Heritage Society Australia

The Moravian Brethren at Bethel in South Australia

Number 36 March 2006 – Part 1 – Page 4

<http://www.wendishheritage.org.au/publications/img/news36.pdf>

http://www.wendishheritage.org.au/publications/newsletters/2006_march_no_36.php

2013, Sept. 23 – The Age

By Chris Johnston

Friends and enemies, truth and lies

Interview with Elizabeth Coleman

Article Sept 23 – The Age

2014, March 20 – The Age

By Chris Johnston

Former sect leader pleads guilty to child sex charges

Re: Former worker Chris Chandler

2014, July 28 – The Age

By Chris Johnston

Secrets, lies and sex abuse as ex-sect leader chooses life on the inside.

RE: Former worker Chris Chandler

2020, February 9 – News.Com.Au

Woman recounts life raised in secret Australian religious sect

RE: Elizabeth Coleman, Author of *Cult to Christ*

2024, May 30 – ABC.NET.AU News

By Tobi Loftus

F.B.I. investigating Two by Twos for historical child sexual abuse claims, including Australia

2024, April 27 – **South Burnett Today** (Queensland, Australia)

By Lulian Lehnert

Travelling Christian sect under F.B.I. investigation holds Burnett meeting

May 18, 1907 p8

The New Zealand Truth, Auckland, NZ(now a weekly tabloid)

**A New Religion, Operating in Australia
Missionaries in Melbourne**

The "Go-Preachers" or "Dippers "

The "No-Sect Sect"—A Campaign of Cadging—Homes Broken Up—Australians Beware

Of the making of new religious sects there is no end. And as if Australia had not already an ample variety of religiosity, a new one has come here. **Officially, they bear no name, but, for reasons hereafter explained, they are variously known as "The Go-Preachers," "The Cooneyites," "The Irvineites," "The No-Sect Sect," and sometimes as "The Dippers."** Ostensibly, they have no responsible organisation, no headquarters, no offices; but, behind it all, there are, as usual, clever hands and cunning brains. Four representatives of the sect are already operating in Melbourne, while two are said to be at work in Sydney.

It would appear that the **sect was started in Great Britain in 1898**. Six years previously one **William Irvine**, a colliery manager at Kilsyth, Scotland, attended a mission service held by the "Rev." John McNeil, an Evangelist. Eight months later he resigned his position and went to the Bible Training Institute at Glasgow, and until 1898 he was attached to the "Faith Mission," which sent out preachers all over the United Kingdom. But while working in the South of Ireland Irvine came to the conclusion that his position was "inconsistent with the example of Christ," and he left the mission to preach alone. "Had I chosen the ordinary path that leads to the ministry, with its churches, chapels, congregations, and stipends, all would have been well," says Irvine. So he inaugurated the "Go-Preachers," who sometimes vary the name by calling themselves the "Tramp Preachers."

Their "Charter," as they call it, is the 10th chapter of Matthew's Gospel, and they are told to follow the Apostolic injunction: "And as ye go, preach, saying the Kingdom of heaven is at hand," and "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats ... for the workman is worthy of his hire." Upon this foundation the Irvineites have built up an extensive system of fraud, imposition, cadging and credulity. In 1891 Irvine was joined by, amongst others, **Edward Cooney**, the son of an Enniskillen draper, who became a member of the sect with **Annie Smith, one of his father's assistants**. Later on Irvine and Cooney were joined by one **Wilson McClung**, and hence in certain parts of England the "preachers" are known as "McClungites."

Now what are the tenets of this sect? In the first place they cadge and loaf upon other people. Irvine himself says: "In exchange for bread and butter we give those who are in fellowship with us bread from Heaven—a real hearty, exchange. ... Whenever I have visited the home of a brother I have always found hospitality in exchange for that, which, as a preacher of the truth, I bring into it. ... As for those phases of the work which cannot be carried on without money, all I know is that the money has always been available." But at the back of all this bunkum there is the undeniable fact that Irvine's converts and "disciples" have supplied him with any amount of money. It has been ascertained that the income of Irvine and Cooney totals at least £2,000 a year, apart from the cost of sending "preachers" to the colonies and other expenses, such as bicycles, clothes, railway and boat fares, to say nothing of the cost where it must be incurred, of accommodation. But, primarily, the "Go-Preachers" or "The Dippers" are loafers.

Secondly, the **"Go-Preachers"** (according to the English papers which have investigated their proceedings) are breakers of homes, breeders of **strife and domestic dissension**.

Up to the commencement of the present year Irvine, had despatched 114 "preachers" to Canada and the United States, some score to South Africa, and half a dozen or so to Australia and New Zealand. These "preachers" are mostly girls, and it is evident, from published correspondence, that their movements are directed by Irvine and Cooney.

Irvine says: "The preachers always go about in pairs—two men and two women. A sister always has her companion to whom she can appeal. If she thinks it advisable she may go to one of the brothers, who are always at hand, prepared to exercise nothing more than a brotherly control, which is the only kind of control we have. We don't recognise that sisters do more than help. They couldn't baptise." Scores of young men and women have turned their backs upon home and relatives and gone into the world as converts of the new religion. In many cases (inquired into by English journalists) four sisters named Wilson, the daughters of a farmer near Ipswich, were each entitled to £500 under their grandfather's will, and all this money went to Irvine. Numerous instances have been published of girls leaving home, and, under the influence of the new religion, going to America, Africa or Australia; and an authenticated case (in Lancashire) is given to prove that a young woman lost her reason through **this religious mania** and had to be placed in confinement. "God provides," said the "preachers," but the £2,000 of the Wilson children should be borne in mind. A typical

illustration of the practices of the "Go-Preachers" is that one of them who "lived" on a poor woman in Falkirk, Scotland, until she was compelled to put him out." Their "preachers" in Australia are carrying on the same game.

As to their assertion that they have neither organisation nor method; it is conclusively shown that, as a body, they are controlled by individuals; that there exists a perfectly understood system encouraging likely "preachers"; that, so far from their movements depending upon Divine guidance, they are mainly prearranged; that they are maintained and housed by an elaborate system liable to abuse; and that the strength of the preaching is modified to suit the occasion. If they can, they loaf; but sometimes "payment is necessary where there is no saints or no accommodation." All requests to Irvine or Cooney. From fathers or mothers for information, as to the **whereabouts of their children** and the conditions under which they are living are refused. At the annual convention held in Belfast brothers and sisters (according to Irvine) "volunteer for the work in the colonies," but there is ample evidence that they are "sent," and have no choice but to go. Regarding **"Go-Preachers"** who are already operating in Australia, "Truth" has been able to ascertain that four are in Melbourne. Two of this quartette are Willie and Aggie Hughes (apparently brother and sister), who came here on the Oswestry Grange. Subsequently Aggie wrote: "We got into a Baptist hall, but only got staying a week. Were put out at the end of it, although we did try to go softly" (i.e., in preaching). The names of the others are at present unascertainable; and it is significant that the Melbourne Baptists, with which denomination the "Dippers" are stated to be allied, deny all knowledge of the sect. "Truth's" representative, who inquired into the matter, however, has reason to believe that the "Baptist hall" mentioned in the letter was **one in Fitzroy**.

But the fact that there are representatives of the **"Go-Preachers"** in Melbourne and Sydney is fully established, and also that they are at work endeavoring to proselytise and "convert," and also to loaf, and cadge, according to their creed, upon those, who have provided themselves with a modicum of the good things of this world. It is worthy of note that the "Irvineites" are divided into two sections—the "preachers" and the "saints." The "preachers" are those who abandon the things of the world in order to devote their lives to preaching. The "saints" are those who remain at home "in fellowship" under the supervision of the "bishops," among the latter being Irvine and Cooney. And it is an understood thing that the "preachers" in the colonies are expected to remit to the "saints" at home any monetary collections they may, make.

— Melbourne Truth

The Express and Telegraph Adelaide, South Australia

January 4, 1908, p. 4
"Go Preachers" – A Strange Sect

That remarkable sect, the "Go-Preachers," or "Jesus Way People," or "Nazarenes," have now appeared at Swinden (writes our London correspondent dated November 22). Although the preachers have only now ventured into the large towns they have been at work in the neighboring villages for a year last, though with what success even the villagers themselves are not quite sure.

Where the preachers come from, who they are, and how they are sustained nobody seems to know. The "Nazarenes" pose as money-less folk, though provided with bicycles and other aids to moderating the hardships of this life while waiting for their exclusive monopoly of the good things of the next. They live by "faith" alone—that is to, say, they almost live by it, for, actually, support by faith is rendered not so precarious, as it would seem because of another tenet of the faith known to the vulgar as "sponging." When you become a Nazarine you "surrender all." Strange as it may seem, the "Go-Preachers" do find credulous folk who will go to this limit enthusiastically; and so the cause is fed.

The first missionaries in the Swindon district were two men, who opened a portable mission room at Wanborough, about four miles from Swindon. They served to introduce the strange creed, and then two young women came and took charge, and the men left. It should be said that it is remarkable how many young people of both sexes are apostles of this new religion. Some of the women who have visited the villages as missionaries, stayed for a while and then gone on, nobody knows where, were little more than girls.

It is, of course the dark secrecy covering the organisation of this sect of Go-Preachers which brings them trouble from the responsible members of the village communities they visit. No body would mind their theatrical baptisms and so on if anybody outside the sect really knew how the sect's affairs were managed and why. Consequently, when they do appear in public to conduct any meeting or ceremony, they have a bad time.

Earlier this year, for instance, they appeared at the village of Liddington, and after a short stay arranged quietly for a public baptism of converts. But some of the village boys went higher up stream and stirred up the mud. In addition, the villagers showed themselves so hostile that the ceremony was abandoned. Since then they have been to Ogbourne and Badbury.

On a recent Sunday at Wanborough the news got abroad that the "Goers" were to have a baptismal ceremony in the mill stream. The fact had been kept secret till the last moment, and then some children casually mentioned things they had overheard. Dinner was abandoned as a matter of no consequence when some hitherto steady members of the community were going for a dip, really because they wanted to, in the mill stream on a dark, cold, and rainy winter's afternoon. Two men and two women converts were "dipped," and one of the men pleasantly announced to the astonished and shivering audience on the bank that the only Christians in Wanborough were those of the sect to which he belonged.

TROVE LINK: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/208909984>

Barrier Miner (Broken Hill, NSW)

November 24, 1916, p. 4

Defence of Australia – Conscientious Objectors – Scripture Lessons in Court

Excerpt: Mr. Justice Gordon sat as a District Appeal Court in Adelaide on Monday (says the "Advertiser"), when the appeals of the conscientious objectors were dealt with.

A young farmer from Normanville explained that he felt within himself that he would be going against the will of God if he undertook military duties.

His Honor: Why?

The appellant: Because Jesus said, "Thou shalt not kill."

His Honor: Well, now, Will you show me in what part of the New Testament Jesus said that? I don't remember it. Perhaps I am a little bit rusty in the New Testament.

The appellant: (looking at the Bible) I can't find it just now.

Do you say you read it yourself as one of the commandments of Jesus?

—It is one of the Ten Commandments.

But the Ten Commandments were not uttered by Jesus. They were given to Moses. Don't you know that?

—Yes.

You are apparently at sea in regard to the foundation of your belief. Do you know that the Old Testament allowed a man to have more than one wife?

—Yes. Well, you see, we don't follow the Old Testament in everything—Was it not the mission of Jesus to save life?

His Honor: I am here to ask you questions, not to answer them. (Laughter).

The appeal was dismissed.

The next case dealt with was also from Normanville. The objector stated as his ground for seeking exemption that he was told in the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not kill." In the Gospel by St. Luke (18-20) Jesus said, "Thou knowest the commandments." And included, "Do not kill" in his remarks.

His Honor (looking at a copy of the new Testament: Yes, but Jesus was only repeating the Commandments.

The witness intimated that he considered the Old Testament teaching was still binding on followers of Jesus.

His Honor: Very well. Let me read you a passage from the Old Testament. Turn to Numbers, the first chapter—"And the Lord spake unto Moses...Take ye the sum of the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families by the house of their fathers with the number of their names, every male by their polls, from twenty years old and upwards, all that are able to go forth to the war in Israel." Now what have you to say to that?

The witness: That does not apply to this case. This is a spiritual book and that applies to spiritual warfare.

His Honor: You are a little beyond me in your reasoning. (Laughter). Do you belong to any religious body?

—I belong to the Testimony of Jesus. That is what Paul belonged to.

Do you sign any declaration when joining this body?

—I have not signed anything, except in my heart.

Have you anything more to say?

—Is that necessary?

Well, you have not satisfied me yet.

—I have decided in my heart to follow Jesus.

You believe in following literally the teaching of Jesus?

—Yes, certainly. He said, "Love your enemies."

Have you any money in the Savings Bank?

—Yes.

Do you know that Jesus said, "Wherefore take no thought saying What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

—Yes, He said that.

But you are saving money. Why are you saving it?

—To make money and get the interest

His Honor: But are you not taking thought for the things of tomorrow? You know you are told not to do so.

The witness (after some hesitation): I suppose to some extent. But money is no good to God.

His Honor: Don't you know that Jesus told His disciples to take nothing for their journey, neither money nor scrip, and not to have two cloaks? I suppose you have two coats?

—Yes, but that was only for ministers. (Laughter).

You are told to provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purse. Do you believe in that?

—We have to provide for the natural requirements and God provides for the spiritual.

His Honor said he believed the witness was a conscientious gentleman within his lights. He came before the court to claim exemption on the ground of conscientious objections. He had already stated the principles of the law on the subject as he understood it. He would exempt the applicant from service in a combatant capacity and order him into camp to serve in a non-combatant capacity.

Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative
August 6, 1925, p. 3

**CHARGE OF VAGRANCY FAILS
"Preachers of the Gospel" in Court**

**THEY WERE "COONEYITES" AND THOUGHT CLERGY
STARTED THE TROUBLE.**

At the Gulgong Police Court before Mr. E. A. Prior, P.M., on Monday last, two young men, Henry Peters and Leslie McDonald, were charged with having no means of support. The case aroused considerable interest, and the court was packed. A charge against the defendant McDonald of forging a cheque was withdrawn, as no police evidence was available.

Sergeant McDonald deposed: On July 27 I saw defendants at Ulan at the residence of Mr. Tory, the school master.

I said to McDonald, "I am a sergeant of police from Gulgong, and understand you and your mate are preaching here.

He said, "Yes."

I said, "I have had numerous complaints regarding it." He said, "Yes, that is quite likely."

I said, "How long have you been at Ulan?" and he replied, "Thirteen weeks yesterday."

I said, "What are you doing for a living, and he replied, "We are preaching the gospel."

I said, "How are you supported, and he said, "We go out as Jesus disciples and get food and shelter wherever we can."

I said, "Where did you meet Peters?" He replied, "In Mudgee."

I said, "How did you come to meet him there? Had you arranged to meet him?? and he said "No."

I said, "Did you have any money when you started out? and he replied "No."

I said, "How have you been living ever since?" and he said, "by what people give us. Jesus sends his disciples out without money and without food and we are following that doctrine."

I said, "You are causing a good deal of trouble if that is your doctrine." He said, "Yes, I know that. Jesus had a rough passage."

I said, "How is it you are causing trouble here?" He replied, "I suppose it is the same here as at other places. The clergy start the trouble."

I said, "Why should the clergy start the trouble?" He said, "Because we denounce them."

I said, "That is peculiar if you are both preaching the Word of God!" He replied, "We denounce their methods. We do not take up collections like they do."

I said, "Don't you think it would be better if you left the village now you have caused this trouble?" He replied, "No; we will stop and carry on God's work."

I then had a conversation with the defendant Peters, and then took both defendants to Gulgong lock up. On being searched McDonald had £4/10/, and Peters £9/13/.

I asked McDonald where he got the money. He hesitated for a time and then said, "Perhaps I had better tell you. I got it from Mrs. Tory. She put it in the washing."

I said, "Why should she put it in the washing?" He said, "We refuse to take money."

I said, "Where did get the rest?" He said, "A man named Wilkinson sent me –?" In searching defendants' correspondence I found a letter (produced).

I said to McDonald, "You informed me that you had no organisation. I have found a letter which states that you belong to a world wide organisation and suggests getting into people's homes in the same way as you have been doing at Ulan."

On the morning of July 20, I had a conversation with Peters.

I said to him, "I have information that your organisation is known as Cooneyites." He replied, "Nothing of the sort."

I said, "Did not you and your friend attend a convention at Guildford?" He replied, "Yes."

I said, "Is the organisation called Cooneyites?" He replied, "The world might call us Cooneyites, but we do not acknowledge that."

After the sergeant and Constable Boon had been cross-examined by Mr. Bootle, the police magistrate dismissed the charge against defendants. He added that there was no element of vagrancy, and the methods of the accused were similar to those of many other religious bodies.

Several followers of the faith of the two defendants journeyed from Sydney to give evidence, but were not called.

TROVE LINK: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/156047416>

Armdale Chronicle, NSW, Australia
March 9, 12, 16, 1927

Queer Creeds

The Cooneyites known as Tramp Preachers

The "Cooneyites," a religious sect, have again pitched camp at Dumaresq, and it is estimated that about one hundred members will be present. The Cooneyites are, perhaps, the least-known among those whose creed may be classed as queer.

TROVE LINK: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article188069803>

Armidale Chronicle; NSW, Australia

March 12, 1927, p. 10

Queer Creeds.

THE COONEYITES.

KNOWN AS TRAMP PREACHERS

CAMP AT DUMARESQ

The "Cooneyites," a religious sect, have again pitched camp at Dumaresq, and it is estimated that about one hundred members will be present. The Cooneyites are, perhaps, the least known among those whose creed may be classified as queer.

The custom of worshipping in private houses is the most remarkable features of the Cooneyite organisation, and is [w.....] practised. Only the Cooneyites can tell you where their meetings are held, but an inquirer, [wh.....r] any of the members of the [.....ty] will [then] be supplied with the information, for the Cooneyites are behind nobody in their zeal to make new converts.

The organisation, it is said, was founded toward the end of the last century in Ireland by a Scotsman named Irvine or Erwin as the result of a [series] of "faith missions" which he established. Later, one of the converts, by name Edward Cooney, gave up his regular employment, threw in his lot with the new sect, and became a travelling or "tramp" preacher. Being a man of strong personality and [.....] Cooney soon dominated the organisation to become the recognised leader [and theerents ...her] chose [.. w....] the name of Cooneyites, by which they are still known.

As with Irvine or Erwin, so with Cooney, the distinguishing note in his preaching was one of strong antipathy to the orthodox churches of every denomination, and converts were strictly forbidden to hold any fellowship with other sects than their own.

The lay order of preachers is the [only] recognised, and it is said to be still a characteristics of the Cooneyites that they have never a good word to say of the ministers of other religions.

Cooney made a point of warning adherents against fashionable tendencies in dress and all outward exhibitions of worldliness. Those having money or property were expected to follow the New Testament example and "lay it at the apostles' feet" to be used for propagating the faith. In these things the Cooneyites are still obedient to their founder's teaching.

The methods for propagating their faith adopted by the Cooneyites are, they claim, the apostolic methods. They themselves do not call their evangelists "Tramp Preachers," but "Go Preachers," and [in] apostolic fashion, they are sent out Two by Two, two men or two women, but never a man and woman together. If a married couple accept their conditions and offer to follow in the "Jesus Way," by surrendering themselves and all they possess, they have to agree to separate.

This practice has subjected the Cooneyites to severe criticism at times. Cases are quoted which involve allegations of wrecked family life. The price of the husband's espousal of the Cooneyite teaching and of his acceptance as a preacher, has been that he must abandon his wife and children, if he has any, and go forth alone.

This rule is said not to apply in the case of ordinary members. If asked for scriptural justification for this practise, they quote the apostle Paul's exhortation to "present your bodies a living sacrifice ... and be not conformed to the world."

These two-by-two preachers find their avocation in travelling all over the State, from district to district, not holding public services, but seeking quietly and unostentatiously, by house to house visitation, to make a convert who shall become the nucleus of a local church, as they call any local assemblage of their adherents.

Their house services are severely simple in character. The members sit in a circle round a table, and the one in whose house the meeting is held informally presides and is known as the "bishop." The hymns are chosen impromptu by the members and announced by the leader. Each member present is expected to pray audibly in turn, and also to expound some passage of scripture or relate some religious experience. There is no set address or sermon. At the close, a plate containing a slice of bread is handed round from

which each member breaks off a portion and eats. Similarly a glass containing wine is circulated, and the contents sipped. This is termed the "breaking of bread," and is observed without introduction or comment. Women pray and speak equally with men.

Another peculiarity of these people is that they neither publish nor circulate any printed information about themselves or their teaching, and generally condemn the reading of religious devotional or expository literature. Neither do they place much emphasis on the cardinal doctrines of Christianity affirmed by the orthodox churches, insisting that the great thing is to live the "Jesus Way," and literally follow His example.

(Transcribed from very bad copy 8/20/16)

TROVE LINK: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/188069962>

Armidale Chronicle, NSW

March 16, 1927

Not "Cooneyites."

MR. A. J. DAWSON'S DISCLAIMER.

Following upon an article headed "Cooneyites" which appeared in a recent issue of the "Chronicle," Mr. A. J. Dawson of Dumaresq, on whose property the religious sect is camped, stated, in the course of an interview, that the religious body at present in conference had absolutely no connection with the "Cooneyites" (if there is such a "sect,") nor did they have "tramp" and "go" preachers. He stated, too, that it was an absolute untruth to say that when a married couple joined the faith and took up the work of preachers that they were separated and had to leave their children.

TROVE link: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/188070043>

Pinaroo and Border Times, South Australia

THE COONEYITES OR GO-PREACHERS AND THEIR DOCTRINES

By PASTOR T. C. BACKEN

July 3, 1931, p. 1

Sir,—Permit me through the columns of your paper to publish a series of articles dealing with the above named subject. In writing these articles I would also like to state at the very outset that there is no attempt on my part at notoriety or self aggrandisement, but simply to present the truth, on the basis of Scripture and to utter a solemn cry of warning and admonition.

The originator of the above cult was a Mr. William Weir Irvine, a Scotchman, who went to Ireland about "50" years ago as a preacher in connection with the Faith Mission. He subsequently left them, and began an independent Mission on his own lines at a town called Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, where he found a few hearty people who had been but recently converted. These he succeeded in gathering round himself and they became the nucleus of this new sect.

He commenced by holding missions in school houses and Methodist Churches, which had in good faith been placed at his disposal; and in course of time, a number of young men and women professed conversion to his views and followed him from place to place. The condition of church life in the south of Ireland at that time was such that there were young Christians who were languishing for lack of spiritual food, and were grieving over the want of ardour in the Gospel among them.

Such were attracted to these preachings, and mistook the vigorous denunciations and excitable preaching of the missionary for spiritual power and holy zeal. Ultimately, many of them were induced to unite with him. Irvine then commenced a virulent attack on Methodists and Methodism, and publicly anathematized all churches and their ministers. This led to the withdrawal of all permission to use any of their property for his meetings.

Cooneyism.

It was about this time that Edward Cooney gave up his secular employment and threw in his lot with Irvine, and became what he termed a "Tramp-Preacher"; hence came the new name "Cooneyites", or "Tramp-Preachers as they are sometimes called. They are called "Go-Preachers" in that they go out Two by Two, without money, purse, or scrip, and literally tramp from place to place, claiming to obey the word of Christ to his disciples in Matthews 10,7: "As ye go, preach", hence the name "Go-Preachers."

Cooney was possessed of a strong personality, combined with a fiery zeal, which suited well this militant sect. Fresh attacks of greater vehemence were now launched against all sects and denominations, and their converts warned against them and, forbidden to have any connection with them. Further developments shortly took place. If any of them had money they were exhorted to give it up, and literally carry out the teachings of the Lord Jesus in Luke 9, 1-5, and Matthew 10, 5-42, and this way they called "Jesus Way."

Any form of outward respectability in dress was pronounced worldly, and contrary to "The Jesus Way", for He lived and worked as a poor Man. Only those who follow "The Jesus Way" are regarded by them as Christians, and every profession of conversion through other instrumentality than their own is regarded as Satanic and their work that of "False Prophets", and "Hirelings"

Conversion to “The Jesus Way” or “The Lowly Way”, as it is variously called, is according to them, indispensable for salvation, and this can only be evidenced by their following it; and any divergence of thought from this teaching is denounced as “Earthly, sensual, and devilish.”

Methods and Practices.

They usually move about in couples composed of young men or young women. They seem to be very shy of large cities and towns, preferring the country districts, where they seem to gain easier access to souls, and find less opposition to the propagation of their pretentious dogmas and doctrines, which damage spiritually all who lend an ear to them. Their first practice is to visit some place and seek out those that are “worthy”, as they deem it; which in reality means, those who are prepared to listen to them and to receive them. They state they have come to preach the Gospel in the real “Jesus Way”, and that they belong to no sect.

If they are refused, they will browbeat, insult, and endeavour, to frighten the timid (especially the women, knowing that their husbands are absent) and end by literally “shaking off the dust of their shoes against them.” If they are received, they very soon bewilder their host with their perverted and plausible application of Scripture, and alas! sometimes eventually gain their adherence, unless they are well grounded in the Gospel, and possessed of a well-balanced mind. For the sake of securing one proselyte they have been known to preach every night for two or three months. Their method of making converts is as follows:

At the close of their preaching, an appeal is made to any who realize that they are not right, that they should turn to the Lord in true repentance, and signify the same by raising their hand. Those who do so are accounted as born again, or as having turned from “the wrong way” to “The Jesus Way” or “The Testimony of Jesus”, as it is variously styled. They boldly state that there are no true servants, of Christ in any of the churches, and that there are no true Christians except those who are converted in their meetings. They claim that they only are the true servants of Christ, inasmuch as they only have complied with the Lord’s command to sell all they have and preach the gospel without money and without price. What diabolical arrogance and assumption on their part!

Their converts must be baptized by immersion (where is biblical proof?) and renounce their former religious connections, and when as is sometimes the case, parents are opposed to their teaching and methods, their children have been known to forsake parents and home and all filial obligations, under the baneful influence of these preachers.

“One of the first results of their lowly-way doctrines”(?) —writes a correspondent—“is the loss of natural affection. I saw it in others, and I have found it in my own experience.” We quote from a letter written by one who has recently escaped; from the snare, but whose husband is still a strong adherent of the sect. “You teach that your communion must be confined to those of ‘The Jesus Way’ and with them alone, and thereby, with Christ, and His Apostles and prophets. Any other communion you hold to be of the devil and not of God. Consequently, if any one of a Christian household should become attached to your sect, be they husband or wife, brother or sister, they may not again kneel in prayer, sing hymns or read the Scriptures together.” This little bit of evidence goes far to corroborate all that we have ever heard of this sect on these points.

Their ordinary converts are allowed to pursue their secular calling, but must strictly adhere to their regulations; If they find any one with means who is likely to be of use to their cause, they exhort them to sell all that they have and to “Go-Preach.” There is a well authenticated case of a local preacher in England, who, after arguing, with some of these preachers (?!), became melancholy (a not unusual result) and he sold his farm and stock, handed the proceeds over to these preachers, broke up his home and went off with them, he in one direction, and his young wife with one of their women preachers in another.

Another case is that of a young man here in Australia, who was in possession of property. He was attracted by their preaching and wished to join them in their work; but they refused to anoint him and lay hands on him for the gift of the Holy Spirit because he was not prepared to sign all his property over to them. This opened his eyes.

A very wise man indeed! A “saint” (?) may have his own settled home, but they deem it to be wholly wrong for a “true preacher” to have a settled home and family. They discourage marriage, and in a subtle way forbid the marriage of their preachers. Originally, those who were married before they were received among them generally separated. The children were given up and the husband and wife were sent out apart, with other preachers.

We now learn that this procedure has been recently somewhat modified. The husband and wife are now allowed to go together. In justification of this they quote, wrest, and grossly misapply the words of the Lord, Jesus Christ, “Who is my mother?, and who are my brethren...For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother (Math. 12, 48-50)” This treatment of the marriage bond is not only unscriptural, but it has often led to the grossest form of evil. In this connection it is well to remember that the Apostle Peter was a married man! (Matthew 8,14).

They further more make the loud boast that when once a person really received “the truth” from their preacher’s lips they never give it up, nor have they had any occasion to excommunicate any real “saint.” However, many who used to preach with them are to day

preaching with other bodies of Christians. But these are denounced and accounted as “apostates” for whom there is absolutely no hope! They cannot be renewed to repentance, and can only wait “a certain fearful looking, for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” (Heb. 10,27) So say the Cooneyites!! We shall see.
(To be continued in next. week’s issue)

TROVE LINK: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/190819703>

July 10, 1931, p. 1

THE COONEYITES OR GO PREACHERS AND THEIR DOCTRINES

(PASTOR T. C. BACKEN)

(continued)

Sir, —Permit me in this week’s issue to deal with the professed mission of the above sect, their attitude towards Christ and His atoning work for all sinful mankind . Arrogant assumption, coupled with a loose way of handling the Scriptures, seems to be the prevailing feature of this pretentious sect. Naturally the wonder grows that anyone can be found to give heed to their lofty claims to a superior spiritual elevation, and to a special and divine appointment to their mission.

They are not missionaries in the strict sense of the word, for their zeal has never yet carried them to the unevangelized heathen. They prefer to do their “missionary”(?) work among such who are already adherents of a Christian denomination! Judging from the statements made from time to time by these “preachers”, we might conclude that God has had no true witnesses on earth since the time of the Apostles until the advent of the Cooneyites!

All that ever came, before them they unhesitatingly stigmatize as false prophets and hirelings, and all their work as “earthly, sensual, and devilish”. Just imagine that for a period of twenty-five years or so all ministers of the various denominations here in Pinnaroo have been doing the work of the devil!! What can we say to the colossal conceit and effrontery of men who will publicly and unblushingly assert that such God-honoured servants of the Church as Spurgeon, Whitfield, Wesley, Moody and Luther, and the like, whose memory we all revere, were simply and only Hirelings and Impostors and are all now in hell!! This they are constantly affirming and that because they did not preach the Gospel in the “True Jesus Way!”

We may in this connection now enquire what is this preaching of “The True Jesus Way”, of which the Cooneyites claim to hold the monopoly, and without which (and a Cooneyite to preach it) no one can be saved. When they are asked, all they seem able to tell us is that the “True Jesus Way” is laid down in Matthews 10 and Luke 9 and 10. From these Scriptures they constantly quote, laying particular emphasis on “Go-preach”, and “Provide neither gold, nor scrip for your journey”, etc. Read for yourself the commission which they allege they carry out and which we will here quote at length, and see if you think they have ever fulfilled it or were ever even sent to do so. It reads as follows:

“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy: and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into a house, salute it, and if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet”
(Matthew 10,5- 14.) Read also Luke 9 and 30.

NOTE the special messengers to fulfil this “mission, the particular object of that commission, and how completely it was carried out at that time. FIRST: That commission was given to the twelve apostles by name. These were afterwards followed by seventy others, all DIRECTLY sent by the Lord. Where are the Cooneyites in this?

SECOND: Their sphere of service was distinctly limited to the cities. “Whether He Himself would come” (Luke 10,1) j and they were not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor into any cities of the Samaritans, BUT ONLY TO THE LOST SHEEP of the house of. Israel. Is this the sphere to which the Go-Preachers limit themselves!

THIRD: The special time and object of that mission was after the death of John the Baptist and in view of Christ presenting Him self, to that nation as their King in fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah, “Behold, My King cometh”, etc. (chap. 9, v. 9.) The object of their mission, (that of the disciples) was to announce that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, and their credentials that they had been sent by the King Himself were witnessed in the fact that they had power given to them by which they could cast out devils, heal the sick, and cleanse the lepers.

DO THE COONEYITES ANSWER IN ONE SINGLE PARTICULAR TO THE SPECIAL FEATURES OF THIS SPECIAL MISSION? We unhesitatingly deny that they do. Then whether it is right for them to claim this to be their special mission, and to distinctly disobey the Lord’s specific injunctions as to their sphere of service, and to exhibit none of the credentials of those sent on that mission, we will

leave it to the reader to judge.

We affirm that there is NO continuation of THAT mission to-day, being as it was specific in its sphere, time, and object, and for the simple reason that it was fulfilled by those to whom it was given. Nothing could be in greater contrast than, the commission we have been considering and the one given in Matthew 28.19, and Mark 16,15, "Go ye into all the world" etc.. Nothing is said in this commission about no money, scrip, or purse, which the Cooneyites accentuate as being one of the Chief features of "The Jesus Way". On the night of Our Lord's betrayal. He reminded His disciples of the mission upon which He had previously sent them. "When I sent you without purse," etc. Now HE SAYS, "He that hath a purse let him take it, and likewise his script" (See Luke 22, v. 35 and 36). In the face of that, would these Go-Preachers say that this was NOT "The Jesus Way?" To confound these two missions or to say that one is the continuation of the other, is to proclaim a lamentable, indeed, culpable ignorance of Scripture and its teachings.

What think ye of Christ?

Here we have the very surest test, even if it be the very oldest. To be wrong here is to be wrong everywhere. The Go-Preachers profess to believe in the deity of Christ, but utterances such as this, "Jesus over came His own flesh", clearly shows that they believe that the Lord Jesus Christ had sinful flesh in Him that needed to be overcome! How incompatible this is with Luke 1,35: "That holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God", and "In Him is no sin" (I John 1 3,5). No one that believed Him to be God the Son could speak of His "having to overcome the flesh in Him." Having therefore, false: thoughts of Christ we shall be prepared to find that they have false thoughts of His work, for these two things always go together.

The atoning Work of Christ.

"The Jesus Way" of the Cooneyites accordingly, has no room for the precious blood of Christ as the ground of salvation. One of them, when the all-importance of the precious blood of Christ as the ground of salvation had been stressed and emphasized, remarked, "How can the blood of a dead man save anyone!" Underlying that statement is an assault upon both the deity and the atoning work of Christ. They assert that the work of Christ it NOT finished, and that in the face of John 17,4 when, He said, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do"; and also of that memorable peace-giving and victorious cry of the dying Saviour on the Cross—"It is finished" (John 19,30). In support of this strange contention they quote, and again wholly misapply Acts, 1,1: "Of all that, Jesus began both to do and teach." The Cooneyites thus claim to be carrying on the work of Christ which He only began but did NOT finish.

They ignore also the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in the souls of men. While they admit the term, "New birth", and prefer the term regeneration" to "conversion", yet with them it is simply turning from the "wrong way" to "the Jesus Way." They claim there cannot be new birth without human agency, and that, in their opinion, means a Cooneyite preacher.

(to be concluded in next week's issue)

TROVE LINK: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/+190819739>

July 17, 1931, p. 1

THE COONEYITES OR GO PREACHERS AND THEIR DOCTRINES

(PASTOR T. C. BACKEN) (conclusion)

On the basis of my previous articles we have obtained well-attested evidence that Cooneyism neither offers a Saviour nor Salvation but rather goes far to show that neither are needed. If it were necessary for Christ "to overcome His own flesh", as they affirm it was, then His was a sinful condition, and as such, He would need salvation Himself. If again, there is no atoning value in His precious Blood, as they preach, then there is for the sinner no possible means of cleansing, justification or redemption—all of which, the Scriptures tell us, are dependent upon, and are received through faith in His Blood (See Romans 3, 24 and, 25; Acts 10, 43; I John 1,7).

One Scripture passage alone proves the fallacy of these Cooneyite statements: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious Blood of 'Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (I Peter 1, 18 and 19). There was no blemish of sin in Him, and no spot of sin on Him. To rob the air of its oxygen, and expect men to live is as foolish and hopeless as to rob the Gospel of these vital facts and expect men to be saved.

In the Cooneyite mission they evidently preach a different Gospel, but which is not another, but one which is devoid of the very essentials of the Gospel, and against which, the Apostle utters the most; solemn warning (ste Gal. 1,6-9) . Their harsh judgement and arrogant attitude towards others: than themselves does not agree with their profession and boast of being in "the lowly way"; but rather proclaims their behaviour to be as unchristian as their teachings are anti-christian.

We feel that it would be unfaithful as well as unkind if we did not warn all readers, and beseech them to beware of being beguiled by this plausible but seriously false teachings. The Apostle Paul warns us of subtle and Satanic forces that Satan would use for others, seem to feature those he designs, and these Cooneyites, besides others, seem to feature those he describes. "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness."

(II Cor; 11,14. I have no other object in writing the foregoing than to warn the unwary, and seek to help some to "recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." (II Tim. 2,26).

If these articles should fall into the hands of any who know and feel that they are not right with God, but are; anxious to be so, let me urge you to lose no time in taking your only, true place before God as a confessed and repentant sinner, and put your full confiding trust in Christ, the sinner's only Saviour "Neither is there salvation in any other "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby, we must be saved." (Acts 4, 12). No alteration of your life for the future will either meet your need or God's requirement in regard to your sins, nothing but the sin-cleansing precious Blood of Christ, will meet your case, and with all the earnestness and tender solicitude of which I am capable, I would urge you at once to flee from every bit of teaching even if it is called gospel, that robs Christ of His deity and His precious Blood of its atoning value.

Put your simple trust in Christ, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16, 31). "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever, believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3,16). In concluding these articles permit me to quote the following comment relative to the above sect. The "Witness", London, 1/7/29 states—"This peculiar confraternity whose hand is against every other sect and party, seems to have largely moved its quarters from Britain to South Africa and the Colonies. Founded by one, Cooney, at one time an earnest preacher in the South of Ireland, they publicly consign, all bishops, priests and religious persons to perdition, condemn those who preach redemption through the Blood of Christ, live mostly on the charity of free hospitality of others (once in a home they are difficult to get out—II Thess. 3,8), and generate altogether an unhealthy Christian atmosphere in homes, meetings, and districts where they obtain a footing."

I thank you, Sir, for your great kindness in publishing these letters, and for your liberality of space in your valuable paper.

TROVE LINK: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/%20190819786>

July 24, 1931, p. 3

THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL

(Messrs A. E. Schilling and R. C. Crettenden).

To the Editor

Sir,— Kindly allow us sufficient space in which to touch very briefly on the above-named subject. The first thing in connection with our salvation is the provision that God has made for us, in Christ, before we were born, when man was bankrupt and had sold himself to Satan and sin. There was only one source from which the ransom could come, and that was from God. He gave His only Son to be the great "sin offering" for the sins of the whole world, as in I John, 2-2.

It is evident that Christ died for all, yet all are not saved. His blood avails only for those who are willing to come to the light and walk in it. I John, 1-7. "If we walk in the light as He (Jesus) is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all Sin. "

"The scripture hath concluded all under sin, etc." (Gal: 3-22). "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," (Rom., 3-23). Seeing then that all are sinners, born in sin, we need the atoning blood of Christ in order to be redeemed from our sins. If we were to ignore the provision that God has made for us in Him, then we would have no Gospel at all.

While it was most essential for Christ to die on the cross for our sins, we must not overlook the fact that His life lived, was also of great importance. I Peter, 2-21, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in His steps." Alluding to His manner of life, His walk. Also I John 2-6, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself, so to walk, even as He walked."

The second thing is the work of the Holy Spirit before we hear the Gospel. God strives with the hearts of men from the earliest possible time, preparing them for the Gospel, as in the case of the Phillippian jailor, (Acts 16-9). Later Paul and Silas moved and directed by the Holy Ghost, took the Gospel to where the need was. We have briefly touched on the provision made for our salvation before we were born, also the work of the Holy Spirit preparing us for the Gospel.

The next thing is the Gospel, and wherever you get the Gospel, you get someone preaching it. Some of us have read the Bible much before we got salvation, but it did not save us, it did not give us life. It was dry and unintelligible. But when I heard it preached I could understand it.

Let us see how the work of the Gospel is done. Rom.10-13, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." If we take this verse without regard to the context, all that a person would need to do is to cry to the Lord, and they would be saved. That is not right or fair to leave out the following verses, "How shall they call, etc...how shall they believe, etc., how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?" as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet, etc."

We see what God admires; what do we admire? Is it eloquence? God admires the feet. He says: "if I get the man with his feet in the footsteps of Christ, I can make use of that man!" Jesus words to Andrew and Peter were, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. " (Math. 4-19). Peter, (by his words in Mark 10-28) shows that he was following in Christ's footsteps (as a preacher). "So we

have left all and followed Thee.

Jesus was not a pattern for preachers only, but, also for those who had their home duties to attend to, for He lived the life in the home until 30 years of age. When a man is planting an orchard or a vineyard he makes up his mind what he wants to grow, and plants accordingly, and God does the same. He says, "I want Christians therefore I send forth Christlike preachers." "If I want the fruit, I must have the tree." "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." (Matt. 7-17 to 20).

The next thing is, as the result of listening to the Gospel, that our eyes are opened and we get a vision of "Jesus and His Way." In John 6-40, we read, "And this is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone that, 'seeth the Son', and 'believeth on Him', may have everlasting life." A manifestation of the Son is what we need to-day. When Christ was on the earth 1,900 years ago, there was no difficulty in seeing the Son, He was there before the peoples' eyes. The difficulty of being saved when Christ was on the earth, was not the difficulty of seeing Christ, but of being willing to follow what one saw. Our difficulty to-day is not so much to become what we see, but, to see what we should become.

(to be concluded next week).

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July 31, 1931, p. 3

THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL

(Messrs A. E. Schilling and R. C. Crettenden).

(Conclusion)

Sir,—Before we go further let us repeat the chief points in our last week's article. (1) The provision made for our salvation before we were born. (2) The work of the Holy Spirit preparing us for the gospel. (3) We hear the gospel. (4) We get a vision of Jesus and His way.

The next thing is that those who receive the gospel, receive Christ and get an inward life. In John 1-12 "As many as received Him to them, gave He power to become the Sons of God, etc." In I John 4-4, "Ye are of God little children, etc., for greater is He that is 'in you' than he that is in the world." Also I John 5-12, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." There are many more such passages showing very clearly that Christianity is a matter of being possessors of the life and nature of Christ. The condition of the temple in Jesus' day is just typical of our hearts condition when Christ comes in.

The question is, have we let Him in? Have we had that definite experience of Christ coming in to live His life over again in us? When Christ Comes in the cleansing begins. John 3-3:5. Jesus' words to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again he cannot 'see' the Kingdom of Heaven," again "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot 'enter' the Kingdom of Heaven." Notice no hope of 'seeing' the Kingdom, much less 'entering' it, unless we have this real and definite experience of Christ coming in to live in us, which is the result of accepting the gospel, delivered to us according to the scriptures, and making Him Lord of all. No other way to enter the human family but by birth. We cannot join it, we must be born into it, and so it is with regard to God's family, we must be born into it. We all need that second birthday, which after all is most essential.

Christ was the only one who was born with two natures. He was the 'Son of man' as well as the 'Son of God.' We are born with human nature only and so we cannot cease from sin, until we become possessors of the Divine nature. I Cor. 15-22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." We need the Christ nature (which is God's gift), that we might live eternally. It is evident that Christ partook of the Adam nature and was subject to temptation as we are, it says in Heb. 2-18. "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able also to succour them that are tempted." Heb. 4-15. "But was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." We notice it says, 'without sin', the reason was, not because Christ had a nature that wasn't capable of sinning but because of the abundant supply of God's power and grace. Heb. 2-16. "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." Also V. 17. "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him 'to be made like unto His brethren, etc.'" and Phillippians, 2-8, "And being formed in fashion as a man He humbled Himself, etc."

The conditions for discipleship include a taking, up of our 'cross' daily, which certainly begins when we have that second birthday, and make Christ Lord and Master of our lives. The question may arise, "What is meant by the Cross?" It is simply the result of possessing two natures that are opposed to each other; namely, human nature and Christ's nature. Gal. 5-17, "For the spirit against the flesh, and the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and are contrary the one to the other, etc." If no real inward battle, (no Cross) there is no evidence of life begotten within us. Christianity", Christ in us.

The next thing is we get into fellowship. I John 1-3, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." It is evident that wherever the 'Gospel of Christ' is preached, it will produce the same results, whether in Burma, India, America, Africa, Europe, or any other place or country, and those who receive the gospel will fall into line with God's people in the rest of the world, for it is the same God, the same Jesus, the same vision, the same walk, in the same way, led by the same Spirit.

The next thing is, "Worship." John 4-23, "The. true worshippers shall worship the Father in 'Spirit' and in 'Truth', for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." In 'Spirit', spiritually and in 'truth', scriptural ly. God requires both, of us. The true worshippers must do it both spiritually and scripturally. Those who get saved are, "obedient." "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments," (I John 2-3). "If any man love me, he will keep my words, etc." (John 14-23).

"Baptism", is an outward symbol of what has taken place in the heart, being willing to renounce self and sin, and walk in newness of life in Christ. Rom. 6-4, "Therefore we are buried with Him in Baptism that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we should walk in newness of life." Those who receive the gospel and get an inward life, are willing also to follow Christ through the waters of baptism.

"The sacrament", or the "breaking of bread," which was instituted by Christ, in a certain home, at the passover feast, and afterwards practised in the various Christian churches, represented the body and blood of Christ, and by partaking of the emblems we are not only reminded of His sacrifice for us, but show our willingness to share in His sufferings and sacrifices, I Cor. 11-26, "For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come." Paul was referring to Christs' daily death, he also said of himself at one time, "I die daily," again II Cor. 4-10, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that, the life also of Christ might be made manifest in our body,"

We trust. Sir, that this very brief comment on "The Work of the Gospel" will serve as an explanation to those of your readers who may be in doubt, or have a wrong conception, as to what we believe and teach. We thank you heartily for allowing us sufficient space in your paper, and we appreciate your kindness.

Yours etc.,

A. E. Schilling

R. C. Crettenden

TROVE LINK: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/190819878>

**Newspaper Article about the Strathalbyn Convention in South Australia
Published in The Southern Argus country newspaper for South Australia
April 2, 1932**

Convention at Blackwood Park At Blackwood Park, the residence of Mr. F.W. Thring, about four miles from Strathalbyn, delightfully situated on the Angas at the Junction of the water course which drains the hills at the east of Macclesfield and Bugle Ranges, there annually assembles a very large party, usually numbering between 500 – 600, gathered from all parts of the state, and with delegates from other divisions of the Commonwealth and New Zealand, the raison d'etre being the customary convention conducted by a body of worshippers who own no special title, but who band themselves together "to worship God and follow the teachings and practices of Jesus Christ, untrammelled by sect or creed and seek to as far as humanly possible, walk in His footsteps".

The convention has been held at Blackwood Park for very many years, the members of the Thring family sparing neither time, work nor expense to make the gathering a material as well as spiritual success, there beautiful homestead being one of the first homes in the district, built for the late Dr. Rankine who came from Scotland, soon after his pioneer brother established the settlement of Strathalbyn, the site of the convention thus having historic as well as natural interest.

Round the house a canvas town grows up each year with a large meeting marquee, capable of seating close on 600 people comfortably, a dining tent with servery tent attached at which 250 at a sitting can be attended to, store tents, water supply provisions, ample sanitary arrangements, and other essentials for the comfort, convenience and safety being made for the large crowd, which usually includes a small proportion only of children, the gathering being primarily one for worship, not for pleasure, though the reunion each year has undeniable social enjoyment for those who attend it, the beautiful scenery, the delightful surroundings and the happy spirit of the devotees all conspiring to add to the happiness of the big body of worshippers, coming as they do from far and near.

At the courteous invitation of Mr and Miss Thring, the Mayor of Strathalbyn attended one of the big meetings on Friday afternoon last, and was given the particulars stated above, and was shown over the grounds, dotted by scores if not hundreds of individual tents from the little single camp size to the family and party capacity, and was much impressed with the perfect order and care everywhere evidenced. Squads are selected from time to time to carry out the routine business of the day, cook waiters, scullery attendants and supervisor, and Mr Thring was able to speak in praise of the admirable way in which all the heavy duties for so big a party were carried out. With modest self-effacement, he said little of the big part his family played in the scheme, but it was very evident and there was ample evidence too the catering arrangements lacked nothing.

It was at the meeting place – the afternoon one of the three held daily – that the sincerity and earnestness of the people present were plainly to be appreciated, and there were over 500 present. The addresses given were earnest and fell on eagerly listening ears, the spontaneous prayers, the voluntary testimonies and the wonderfully hearty way the hymns were sung all impressed "the stranger within the gates" and convinced him that here was no mere formal demonstration, but sincerity of purpose, constuteness, and an earnest desire to live up to the purpose of the organisation, to "follow meekly in the steps of the *master*."

The convention will close at this weekend, and meanwhile visitors will be welcomed at the meetings.

Wellington Times, NSW. Australia
July 6, 1933

MR. DENNISON AND THE COONEYITES.

(To the Editor).

Sir: — Will you kindly allow me space in your valuable paper for the following letter:

To the Rev. Mr. Taylor.

On the 25th June you visited Dripstone, and held a service in the hall; you also distributed a **pamphlet, 'The Go-Preachers or Cooneyites.'** There are two men at Dripstone who have been preaching the Gospel here for some time. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, you left the impression behind you that the above mentioned pamphlet fitted in with the teaching of these men.

As one who has listened to every service, but one, I emphatically deny that the term 'Cooneyite' can be reconciled to the teaching of these preachers. The inference was drawn that the men I have been listening to are home-wreckers. Now, it is surely British justice not to condemn the accused before he has been heard. Even the most hardened criminal is heard before he is judged. If anything was said by you for people to draw the above inference, surely it was very unjust, since I am sure you have not heard them at Dripstone, and I feel sure that you have not heard them anywhere else, if you would even suggest that they are preaching on the lines of the 'Cooneyites.'

I consider it the duty of a minister of the Gospel to make himself clearly understood. I think it would, be a shame were your sincerity of purpose to be misunderstood. If you are of the opinion that the practices and the doctrines of these men will not stand the test of the scriptures, will you publicly discuss the scriptures with them? If so, and they being willing, you can name the place of meeting. Were it granted you that these men are 'Cooneyites' (which is not) the pamphlet by John McDonald is inconsistent.

I presume that either you or the Methodist Church is behind the author, by the evidence of your distributing the pamphlet. If this be so, how do you reconcile your teaching to the comment on page 5, paragraph 3 of the 'Cooneyites,' The Cooneyites having only existed for 30 years, what shall be come of the countless millions who have lived and died, etc." before the Cooneyites existed." Seeing that the Methodist Church was formed in 1739, I wish to ask you the same question, substituting Methodist for Cooneyites. I wonder if those people who condemn them because they have only been in existence for 30 years would admit the R. C. Church must be right because of its age.

Again, on page 5, paragraph 4, it states "Superfluous money, from their collections goes into a central funds, etc.' ? Then on page 7, paragraph 3, this statement appears, "They claim they only are the true servants of the Lord, in that they have complied with the Master's command: 'Sell that thou hast and give to the poor and preach without money and with out price.'" How can these two statements from the same work be made consistent?

Under the heading of "Their Origin," the following appears, "We cull the following from the Go-Preachers by 'W.M.R.' Who is W.M.R.? Is he an inhabitant of this planet, or of Mars?"

In closing, I would ask this question, Do you consider these preachers, who are at Dripstone of being Cooneyites?

— Yours etc.,

W. H. DENNISON,
 Dripstone, June 28, 1933.

TROVE LINK: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/143126724>

REV. R. E. S. TAYLOR IN REPLY.

The Parsonage, Wellington, July

Dear Mr. Editor. — Having been visited by a propagandist of a certain strange sect, who said he came from Dripstone, I understood that he was one of the young men who were holding meetings there. When visiting Dripstone, a while after, and a couple of days before my service of June 25th, late in the afternoon I discovered that the two young men, who lived a mile or so out of the town, represented quite a different sect. A number of Methodist people had attended their meetings, and some aspects of their teaching and of their methods suggested a distinct likeness to those of the people usually known as "Cooneyites."

I was told that the two young men (intended being present at my service, and I expected meeting them and interviewing them there. However, there, were present only the usual members of my congregations. I had brought the leaflets referred to, which describe the teachings and methods of the Cooneyites, and distributed these among my people to help them to identify, one way or another, the young teachers who had come into their midst, without any announcement as to what school of religious thought and practice they represented. But why labour along these lines?

Is it not a fact that, even now, some of the adherents of these young men are declaring that they are "following Cooney," and are "Cooneyites"? I have not at any time said or suggested that these two young men are "home-wreckers." Your correspondent, of course, only mentioned that an inference was drawn to that effect. I can support, however, and other Christian leaders in Wellington can support, what the author, of the leaflet declares, viz., that the peculiar literalism with which the Cooneyites have interpreted some passages of Scripture, has resulted in upset and division in erstwhile happy home-circles.

I have no time to discuss this new-fangled freak teaching. It is a well established fact that public controversy upon matters of religious belief has wasted time, perspiration, nervous force, breath, temper, and the midnight oil, to no good purpose. If your correspondent re-reads the two paragraphs he quotes, re finance, he may see that they are reconciled.

On the other point raised, re the multitudes of people who had no opportunity of benefiting (?) from Cooneyite teaching, let it be said that Methodists, unlike Cooneyites, do not claim the monopoly of the Divine favour. The leaflet is definitely sponsored by Mr. John McDonald of Dee Why.

Yours sincerely,

R. E. S. TAYLOR

One Word from the Editor

[The Editor of this paper before Saturday had never heard of "the Cooneyites," until he was interviewed by Mr. Dennison of Dripstone, the writer of the above letter. Being naturally curious, the question was asked Mr. Dennison and his companion, Who are you following and what are your teachings. The answer was given that they were followers of Cooney (who by the way, is dead and gone to his reward or punishment). The writer of this said definitely that no religious controversy would be allowed in this paper. The general public had had enough of this a couple of years ago, when another sect had started the ball rolling from Walmer. This letter and Mr. Taylor's reply closes the matter as far as this paper is concerned.]

TROVE LINK: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/143126725>

**The Courier-Mail, Brisbane, Queensland
Saturday August 29, 1936**

**Sect Which Says: "Sell all thou hast and give to the poor."
Rochedale, the centre of a body which taught renunciation and seeks converts in tent or the open
By R. K. Gerrand**

At Rochedale, 12 miles or so out of Brisbane, and just out of sight of the Pacific Highway, is the chief gathering place of a little band of preachers and 'saints,' who strongly repudiate every, name but that of Christian, though their teachings have won for them the soubriquet of 'Go-preachers.'

They go out Two by Two to preach, leaving home and relatives, and giving all their property to needy preachers and' the poor. They discourage the reading of all other books, than the Bible, and will not put their doctrines into print. Theirs, they declare, is the only highroad to God.

They claim that the word of God comes to man only through their preachers and in support of their dogma quote the text: "How shall they hear without a preacher"?

Others call them the Cooneyites, but they indignantly deny the name, and declare that an Irishman named Cooney, who was one of their foremost preachers 30 odd years ago, now has nothing whatever to do with them. The true "preachers" hold no communication with him.

These people have no church buildings, but meet for worship in the homes of the 'saints', their lay members. Their wandering preachers, about 12 of whom are at work in each of the Australian States and New Zealand, hold missions in tents and hired halls. Usually two men or two women go out together, one an experienced missionary and other a young trainee. Sometimes a man and his wife go together. Because of the difficulties of a life of itinerant preaching, however, the preachers rarely marry. The head of each house in which the 'saints' meet for family worship, in which several surrounding households join, is called a bishop, overseer, or elder.

Rochedale is the main centre of their work in Queensland. There they have buildings which form the nucleus of a big annual camp convention. I went as a stranger to the family worship in the home of a Rochedale bishop.

The old farm house, built on high stumps, hid its bare poles with crimson skirts of bougainvillea. As I walked up the track from the gate I heard in the distance singing, and over the paddocks a magpie fluted gloriously. Bird song and hymn and still sunny morning called to worship. The hymn stopped before I came near the house. I went in through a gate that made a gap in the bank of crimson and heard a voice in the deep tones of prayer.

Creepers hid the battening around the house stumps. A battened door stood open. A congregation of about 20 knelt on matting strips beside the long low stools to be found in most old farm homes. I stood near the door, waiting for the prayer to end. When the young man who was praying had finished a young woman near him followed, and then a boy and an old woman.

The prayers were glad thanks to God for His great goodness to men, for His gifts of sunny mornings and hearts happy in His service,

and before all other gifts for Jesus Christ, who showed men God and the love of God. They asked of Him grace, strength, and guidance, that they might follow Him worthily. They sought His blessing on themselves and on their preachers, that all men might learn of His simple way, and be won to walk in it. There were prayers or consecration, prayers of devotion and adoration, and humble petitions for mercy and forgiveness. Almost everyone in the little meeting offered a prayer, some only a sentence or two.

While I stood outside undecided whether to wait or to go away the head of the house, who was bishop or elder of the church meeting there, came out to me. When I told him I was a stranger wishing to attend worship of his church, he said I was welcome.

A Setting of Nature

He was an hospitable, genial old farmer, with a friendly, smile and hand shake. He took me in among the kneeling people, left me at a gap in the family circle, and went back to his place beside a little table on which were bread and unfermented wine.

When the prayers were ended, and we got up from our knees I was able to look around me. The stumps of the house were the pillars of this holy place; the altar was the simple table with its plate of bread and glass of wine. The door was open to the sunny farm outside red soil, plots of pineapples, and rows of symmetrical orange trees, a cultivation paddock with the heat haze trembling over it, and the bush, behind, like mirage.

"Will someone suggest a hymn?" the bishop asked. A young woman gave a number, and the congregation, sitting, sang:

*—I listen to the Master's word,
And all my waking heart is stirred.
'Midst sin and strife I hear Him say:
'I will return; keep watch and pray.'*

*Though most, despise God's lowly way,
Reject His love, and go astray,
Within my heart one purpose burns:
To stand approved when He returns.*

*His love can full satisfy,
And needed grace He will supply
To keep me in the heavenly race
Until I see Him face to face;*

*His Way' is best; I follow on,
Just where His bleeding feet have gone,
My one desire to worthy be
And fill the place prepared for me.*

Members of the circle one by one, now an old man, now a girl, now a youth, gave short devotional talks, most of them only two or three minutes long, some even less. In their own figure of speech each placed on the family table a loaf, a thought from the week's meditation and experience of the Christian way, that all might share the spiritual food God had provided.

Most of the messages were of quiet devotion. There were gaps of silence, in one of which a magpie came up to the door and peered in, his inquisitive head on one side. House swallows came in and out, circling over the heads of the worshippers as if they had not been there. Neither speaking nor singing disturbed them.

Simple Communion

When a longer silence showed that no one else wished to speak the bishop took a piece of bread, and reminded the family of One who in a house in Jerusalem 2000 years ago took bread and brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "This is My body which is given to you; this do in remembrance of Me".

The bread was passed from hand to hand around the circle; and each ate a fragment and bowed in prayer. So, too, the wine was passed around, and all drank of it. I have not seen anywhere more simple or more reverent Communion than I saw in the family gathering beneath the farm house that sunny Sunday morning. A hymn of consecration was sung at the end, and the bishop's benediction sent the people out into the glorious day.

When later I took a photographer to get pictures of the 'family' church I had to content myself with pictures of the farm house in which the church had met. The bishop and his flock were doubtful whether even these might be used without the authority of the preachers,

an authority the preachers readily gave, though they refused to be photographed themselves.

Preacher at Work

The kindly bishop of Rochedale made me curious to hear the preachers of his faith, whom he and the flock esteemed so highly. Only through hearing them expound the Word of God, he told me, could mankind attain salvation. When I asked him what were the distinctive teachings of his Church, he referred me to the preachers for fuller explanation.

So that night I went to a 'gospel meeting' in the preachers tent at Woolloowin. Several cars were standing in the street outside. In the tent, which was about 25ft in diameter, was the beginning of the congregation, a score or so of people, old and young, who increased to about 50, comfortably filling nearly all the seats, before the service started. A smoking kerosene heater near the centre pole took the chill out of the air. A fizzing petrol lantern hanging on a rope across the tent lit the place with white glare.

A venerable preacher with a close clipped pointed white beard, a Bible under one arm, and a hymn book in one hand, came through the tent entrance and went to a front seat facing the congregation. Despite 30 years of itinerant preaching he still looked, and when he spoke, sounded, the school master he used to be.

"Well, I feel sure you will enjoy the meeting a lot better by helping it," he said, "The way you can help is by joining in the hymns heartily." He announced the first hymn in a voice that had a strong Irish flavour, despite almost pedantically careful English enunciation.

Stones on the Roof

A second hymn was sung, a young man, having announced, "We will just wait upon God in a little time of prayer," prayed for Divine blessing on "Thy preachers, who have given up all".

Another hymn was sung to the tune of 'Juanita.' The old preacher then said: "young brother will speak to us, and after that a brother in the meeting who wants to sing will sing." The young brother preached on a passage from the Book of Isaiah.

For punctuation, stones fell on the tent roof, and the preacher went out to investigate. As he put his head out the door there was a scatter, and the sound of boys' running feet. It was soon over, and the volunteer singer sang in a pleasant tenor:

*Your life is one short season here:
Be careful what you sow.
Sow wheat, and you will reap the same;
Sow tares, and they will grow.*

*God's harvest time will surely .come,
With sheaves for you and me.
O, ask yourself the question friend,
What shall the reaping be?*

*Your days, though blooming like the rose,
Will reach the yellow leaf,
And seeds you sow you'll one day reap
In sheaves of joy or grief.*

In his sermon, on spiritual influence, the preacher said those called to be preachers of the way must not let any earthly ties hinder them, to the destruction of their souls; nor should any one shrink from entering God's way because of fear that someone near and dear might be called to leave home on service as a preacher.

Scorn of Buildings

In this way he preached the renunciation, which is the central feature of the 'Go-preachers' way of life. 'Give God what He asks of you and he will see that you have all that is necessary for you.' From among those who are converted in their missions and from the families of the saints, the preachers select promising young volunteers, men and women, to send out preaching. They must leave their homes and families, and give up everything they possess. They must apply literally Christ's words to the rich young ruler: 'Sell all thou hast, and give to the poor,' and go out penniless and homeless.

Although in principle the new preacher is free to distribute his goods to the poor as he pleases, in practice he usually gives it to the poor preacher who has been the means of his conversion. The preacher passes on to other needy preachers what he himself does

not need, and with the balance helps needy lay members.

Voluntary contributions from the lay members are also left, in the hands of the preachers to carry on the work.

The preachers had to account to no one but God for the administration of these funds, I was informed. They held the money in trust, and passed it on to others in need, often sending money across the world to poor preachers in other countries.

The rest of the world, including the other churches, was in such deadly peril of damnation, the preacher declared in his sermon, that the preachers sometimes were rough in their methods, like the two preachers who dragged Lot and his family from doomed Sodom.

The early Quakers' contempt for 'steeple houses' was nothing to this people's scorn of church buildings for the worship of God. They will preach the Gospel anywhere, in tent or hall, or under gum trees; but, for their private meetings for Communion, 'the breaking of bread,' nothing but the home of a 'saint' of their way will serve. They interpret, literally 'The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, 'from Stephen's defence before the, Sanhedrin'.

The, gospel meeting ended, almost two hours from its commencement, with a hymn and a prayer by the old preacher. He prayed simply and fervently for blessing on God's glorious family, and for grace and strength for the preachers, that they might be a meditative, thoughtful, and consecrated people, to lead the family in His way.

Despite their exclusive dogma I liked the zeal of these nameless people, their simple family worship, and their unbounded confidence.

Advertiser (Adelaide, South Australia)

February 10, 1943, p. 6

Conscientious Objector Courtmartialled

A young conscientious objector appeared before an Adelaide courtmartial yesterday on a charge of having refused to obey the lawful command of a superior officer. He pleaded guilty, and the court, after hearing the evidence, adjourned to consider sentence. Accused was Pte. **Ernest Christian** of Wayville Camp. On his behalf civilian counsel explained that he was a member of the religious group known as the **Christian Assemblies**. He had been drafted into the militia in February 1942. The authorities knew of his conscientious objections and he was enlisted in the Army Medical Corps. In April he appeared before a conscientious objectors court at Glenelg seeking registration. Asked by the magistrate whether he would be willing to continue in the AMC he had replied "Yes, but it will be against my conscience to do so."

He came to the conclusion that it was wrong for him to do so and decided that he then he had twice been sentenced to detention for refusing to obey lawful commands. Even though he were imprisoned time after time he felt that in God's sight it would be wrong for him to serve in the AMC. It was stated that the accused had a splendid character and disposition.

The Chronicle

Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia

May 17, 1983

Secret Sect Threat to Person's Rights

Doug and Helen Parker of Pendle Hill, Sydney, arrived in Toowoomba with some new facts about a nameless religious movement originally called the Cooneyites.

They have spent several years compiling a 125-page book called The Secret Sect.

Mr Parker is an Anglican minister.

"We felt we had to write the book because the history of the movement was so obscure," Mr Parker said. "Even its own members don't know all the background."

Mr Parker said the sect, which originated in Northern Ireland in 1899, is now active right across the world. "My own family in Sydney were involved some 30 years ago," he said. "They were led to believe that the sect wait back to the time of Christ. Our research has proved this to be wrong.

"The Cooneyites name was never acknowledged by the sect which is now known as nondenominational Christian Conventions.

"Meetings are held, in private homes, mid-week and on Sundays. Large annual conventions are held regionally on private properties."

Mr Parker said the conventioners were Christians belonging to a church that had no name, no permanent church buildings, no offering plate and ministers with no formal title or theological training.

He said the Christian convention attracted Christians from all denominations. "The object appeared to be to win them into a movement whose leaders preached that they were the only true stream of the primitive Christian church.

In Queensland, the sect was pioneered by a school teacher from Tipperary, Tom Turner; in about 1905.

The new book carries a warning to people contemplating joining the sect to consider whether or not they, are losing all their rights and entering a full-time commitment. Those who take on the ministry could also lose their finances. Mr Parker said research had indicated

a loss of Christian freedom throughout membership of the 'closed' sect.

He and Mrs Parker said they have received numerous letters from people who had read the book.

A typical comment was "My parents are more settled within themselves since reading the book I send them. I only wish their parents were alive so they could read it too."

The Secret Sect sells for \$5.95 and is available through Christian book shops.

[Photo of Doug & Helen holding a copy of The Secret Sect.]

Source: [http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/116403392?searchTerm="Doug Parker"&searchLimits=dateFrom=1983-01-01||dateTo=1983-12-31](http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/116403392?searchTerm=)

Canberra Times
December 28, 1983

Book seeks to lift veil of secrecy

THOUSANDS of people all over Australia are being misled by the preachers of a strange, anonymous religious sect, who create the false impression that their religion goes back to the time of Christ and is the only way to salvation, according to a book by Sydney couple Helen and Doug Parker.

Called 'The Secret Sect', their book aims to unravel the veil of mystery which surrounds the movement – a movement which is so secret that it docs not even have a name.

Mr and Mrs Parker, who were in Canberra on holiday this week, spoke of the years of careful research which led to the book being published and which even took them to Britain to carry out their investigation.

Their interest in the movement – sometimes known as The Invisible Church – stems from the fact that Mr Parker himself was raised in the sect's faith and, about 30 years ago, almost became one of its preachers.

Instead, however, he chose to become an Anglican minister and after his marriage began to look into what he had been led to believe was the only "true" faith.

When Mr and Mrs Parker's inquiries eventually took them to Britain, they were amazed to find that instead of originating during the lifetime of Christ, the sect was actually founded by a Scottish lay evangelist called William Irvine, at the beginning of the 20th century.

"I found it a tremendous relief when I discovered the truth of its history," said Mr Parker, who now feels that all of the sect's members should be allowed to know what he believes to be the true facts.

Mr and Mrs Parker's beliefs about the origin of the sect are spelled out clearly in 'The Secret Sect', which lists the sources of their information, gained by interviewing former sect members in Britain, Canada and the United States, and researching old newspaper files and documents.

Members, popularly known as "Cooneyites", hold conventions in separate areas in countries through out the world. According to Mr and Mrs Parker "overseers" in charge of each area send out preachers, who always operate in male or female twosomes, giving the impression that their nameless sect is the only "true church" and is a continuation from the first disciples of the New Testament.

The sect preaches a restricted lifestyle with little personal freedom and a member wishing to become a preacher must give his worldly possessions to the overseer.

Followers are encouraged not to have material possessions such as televisions, and female converts have severe hairstyles and do not wear jewellery.

Apart from holding regional conventions, followers also have 'house church' meetings, four of which take place regularly in Canberra, according to the Parkers.

The main strength of the sect comes from the children of converts but the movement also wins converts from other religions by attractive gospel preaching, who are then taught to "loathe outside churches".

Anyone within the sect who questions its practices are either "dramatically excommunicated" or "frozen out", say the Parkers.

"What we feel about this movement is that they just haven't been open about its true identity."

Mr and Mrs Parker are also concerned that the movement is growing and that preachers are being recruited from Australia to go to other countries including Japan, Taiwan and New Guinea.

'The Secret Sect' is available from Christian bookshops and can also be found at the National Library.

The Go-Preachers or Cooneyites

By Archdeacon T. C. Hammond aka the Hammond Report
For the New South Wales Council of Churches

The following statement was prepared by Archdeacon T. C. Hammond, and is printed for the New South Wales Council of Churches.

In various parts of Australia, as in other parts of the world, a group of preachers is operating and causing deep concern to the clergy and people in many churches, particularly in the areas where they hold their meetings.

At first sight there seems to be little that is unusual about them. They have no name and are at great pains to emphasise the fact that they have NO NAME. To outward appearance they seem to have no "peculiar" doctrines or practices, for they claim to be sincere followers of Jesus Christ, and set themselves up as Gospel preachers.

Closer examination and investigation, however, reveals that for certain official purposes they are registered under the name of "The United Christian Conventions of Australia and New Zealand," and that they also go by the name of "The Testimony of Jesus" or followers of the Jesus Way." Two other titles which may be attached to them are, "Go Preachers" and "Cooneyites."

They claim to be the only company of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ who observe the conditions laid down in the New Testament for the guidance of disciples.

They are very hostile to all who do not subscribe to their peculiar tenets, and are particularly virulent in their denunciations of all ministers of religion,

The origin of this particular body can be traced to the activities of William Irvine and Edward Cooney.

William Irvine was a native of Kilsyth, in Scotland. He was converted through the influence of the Rev. John McNeil, a Presbyterian minister who, after occupying the pulpit of Regents Park Church, in London, devoted himself with remarkable success to the work of evangelism.

Shortly after his conversion, William Irvine joined the Faith Mission, an evangelistic organisation connected with the name of John Govan. The Faith Mission was an interdenominational society which worked in cordial co-operation with the existing churches, and directed converts who were impressed at the meetings held by them, to associate themselves with the congregation to which they belonged. It is scarcely necessary to add that the Rev. John McNeil adopted the same principle.

The danger which accompanies all such movements, and which is not confined to them, but is often manifested in deep religious movements within the strict limits of denominational activities, is that earnest, but not well-balanced, souls may be caught up in the enthusiasm engendered by earnest appeals, and may lay undue emphasis on personal experience to the loss of sound scriptural knowledge.

Evidently William Irvine had a mystical and rather excitable temperament. He was apt to regard his personal actions as determinant of truth regardless of the Gospel, inasmuch as towards the close of his life he took up his abode in Jerusalem, believing that he was the witness mentioned in the book of Revelation whose body will lie three and a half days in the streets of Jerusalem.

The movement inaugurated by him and greatly furthered by the enthusiasm of Mr. Edward Cooney, a native of Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, Ireland, unfortunately withdrew from all association with other religious bodies. They divided their adherents into two classes—the "Go Preachers," who are required to abandon all means of livelihood and live on the free will offerings of the disciples, and the ordinary members, who are invited to give generously for the support of the "Go Preachers."

The advocates of this body contend that the injunctions in Matthew 10 are directed for the whole of Christ's followers, and for all time. They ignore the command, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not," which plainly indicates the temporary nature of this particular commission to the twelve.

Unfortunately the requirement made that "Go Preachers" should deposit all their worldly possessions in a central fund, and go out without even shoes or two coats, has led to the unhappy divisions in families and amongst the adherents of "The United Christian Conventions."

It is only natural that those who have hastily committed themselves to a rash enterprise and afterwards regretted their action, should be disposed to question the absolute sincerity of those who invited them to make a rash venture. The inner divisions, consequent upon incidents such as these, has led to even Mr. Edward Cooney himself being visited with a measure of displeasure, amounting almost, if not altogether, to excommunication.

Christian homes have been divided, and much internal distention created in various Christian congregations through the activity of these persons, and particularly through their antagonistic attitude towards all other professing Christians. Not only are the members of the ministry denounced, but the practice of attending Sunday School and the habit of church attendance have come under the severest censure.

Most of the "Go Preachers" are men of limited knowledge of the doctrines of the Christian faith, and as a result most extravagant utterances are traceable to them. Some of their preachers have contended that we are not saved by faith, but by imitating the life of Jesus as a man upon earth. Emphasis is laid on the fidelity to the company rather than on personal lines, faith in the Redeemer of men.

They seem to have adopted, in an exaggerated form, the old opinion of an inner illumination and regard the Bible apart from the interpretation of their experiences as simply a dead book. The discouragement of marriage amongst the preachers, and the separation of husband and wife in their preaching ministry, where marriage has taken place before the call to become a "Go Preacher," are potent of many possible evils, as the history of enforced celibacy abundantly proves.

In view of the grave consequences that have followed the entry of these missionaries into the various districts, the Council of Churches feels that it ought to address this warning to the ministers of denominations afflicted with it.

About the Author: T. C. Hammond, an Irishman, was always highly admired in evangelical circles for his apologetics for the Christian Faith. He has a number of books published that are still in circulation, the best known one, 'In Understanding be Men'. Hammond, an ordained Church of Ireland clergyman, left Dublin for Australia in 1936 after serving as a minister in a Dublin parish followed by service in the Dublin mission. An outstanding Greek and Hebrew scholar, he was seen as the bane of Roman Catholicism in Dublin because of his strenuous condemnation of their doctrines and practices.

**Queensland Newspaper Excerpt from *The Irish Magazine*
by J. Woolcott, Reporter
About John Sullivan**

In Australia and New Zealand they number several thousands. Every year they hold three big open air Conferences: one in Sydney, one in Brisbane, and one in Townsville. Official statistics do not mention them, because they escape classifications.

They build no churches or meeting places of any sort, for they say church buildings are an invention to keep religion out of the homes. They refuse to adopt any name or to have any written rules, because they say to organize religion is to make a live thing dead. They simply meet together in each other's homes every Sunday Morning, and exchange the fruit of their week-long meditations.

This serviceless, ruleless, nameless, moneyless sect is exceptionally strong around Kingaroy, Queensland. My business took me into scores of farmers' houses in that district, and I was struck with the atmosphere of calm happiness which belonged to this queer, unorganized organization. There is no cant in their unmeasured hospitality. Their farms are just as well managed, in many cases, better managed than their neighbours.

Last year I had the good fortune to spend a night and a day with John Sullivan, the Irishman who is a driving force behind this nameless sect in that part. Heavy rain held me up at Holy Creek, a village seventeen miles from Kingaroy. Sunset was near, my horse was done out, and I sought shelter at a couple of tents, one large, and a small, which had been pitched on a field at the side of a pretty schoolhouse.

Sullivan, however (I cannot put Mr. before his name) greeted me at the flap of the small tent and promptly offered me shelter for the night. In a few moments my horse had been turned loose, and I was seated before an oil stove on which ham and eggs were frying noisily. The spell of my host's appearance made two lines of Whitmore spring into my mind:

*"We do not convince by argument, smiles, rhymes,
We convince by our presence."*

Tall, massively built, large merry eyes, and beard artistically trimmed to a provocative point; and amazingly high white forehead; such are the details one notices at first glance. For years this man has gone quietly up and down Australia's most out-of-the-way farming districts. Sometimes tramping, sometimes driving. He has preached the gospel, and now his following in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand, would serve as a human gold mine, if he were a money-hunter. But Sullivan will take no wages either from the public or from his followers. At his meetings, no collections are made. He is supplied with clothes and food, and bare travelling expenses, nothing more, and he is the happiest, most devil-my-care Irishman I have ever met.

But he has his enemies, viz, the Lutheran priests, and so hated is he by these German Sky pilots, that they do all they can to down him in their official publications. As a consequence, his tents have more than once been wrecked, and he himself driven out of a settlement. Why do the priests show such enmity? Because Sullivan is creating great bare spaces in their large buildings.

You should have heard his voice tingle as we sat that night on two boxes in his tent, as he read out for my amusement a typewritten denunciation of himself. I lent him a couple of papers and books. "The rain is too heavy for any meeting he said," I'll stay up and read. So while I slept soundly on his comfortable stretcher, and the rain made music on the tent rood, Sullivan sat beneath the hanging scetylene lamp, and read the papers and the books.

J. Woolcott,
Reporter for *The Irish Magazine*