

Newspaper Articles: 1917-1930

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1917 – 1930

Revised September 1, 2024

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About

The Church Without a Name, The Truth, Two By Twos, *Two by Twos*

1916, March 29 – Western Times – Pugsley denied CO status

1916 April 13 – Western Times – Ward denied CO status

1916 October 27 – Western Times – Richards denied CO status

1917 March 23 – Daily Mail – "Testimony of Jesus" recognized as a religious denomination. Worker exempted. (John Baillie)

1917 March 29 p4 – Fermanagh Times – Pilgrims recognized as a religious body. Worker exempted. (John Baillie)

1917 March 30 – A Peculiar Sect – Sabine Road Man's Minisry & the Military Service Act (John Baillie)

1917, July 13 – Ideas (lawsuit filed over this article)

1917, July 19, p. 6 – Impartial Reporter

1917 August 29 – The Courier – Baker denied CO status

1921, July 7 – Kings County Chronicle, Parsontown, Ireland (Murder of Pearson Brothers on Coolacrease)

1921, Sept 26, p11 – Indianapolis News (Indiana) McCordsville Convention

*Mr. Walker said that he thinks some Christians have believed as his people do since the days of Christ. **About twenty-two years ago, he said, church members in England and north Ireland became interested in the doctrines, and out of this has come the spread of the faith into this country, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In recent years, preachers have gone into South America. William Irvine, a Scotchman, one of the original leaders, is not now affiliated with this group because of a difference over the prophecies of the Revelations, Mr. Walker said.*** [1921 minus 22 years = 1898 start date per George Walker]

1921 Sept 27, 1921 p1 – Greenfield Daily Reporter – Tramp preachers' Convention (McCordsville, Indiana Convention) NEW

1923 June 3 – The Courier, p8

Baptismal Scenes in Belfast Lough – Holiday Makers see Dipping of "Cooneyites"

1925 December 12 – Dublin Newspaper – \$500 a Year to Stop Preaching

1928 March 9 – 1926 Census of Belfast's 60 sects.

1928 December 28 – Fallen from Grace – Division in Ranks of the "Cooneyites"

1930, May 1, p 304 – Methodist Leader (Weekly Journal of the Primitive Methodist Church)

Warning against Cooneyites or Go-Preachers

1916 March 29 The Western Times

Appeal of Wm. Pugsley of Yarcombe (Devon, Eng)

Desiring Conscious Objector status for being member of Testimony of Jesus Church

1916 April 13
The Western Times

Frances Thomas Ward, a young farmhand from Shebbear, had been exempted from combatant service on conscientious grounds, appealed for absolute exemption, but now said he was ready to "look after horses or tend the wounded." If he thought it right to kill, he "would go and kill any man that was there." Appellant was very hazy as to the religious body to which he belonged. They were not Brethren or Christadelphians, but were: The followers of Christ."

Captain Vesper suggested "The Brotherhood of the Testimony of Jesus," of which he had heard something at Exeter. Appellant seemed to agree, but the great thing he was emphatic about was that he was willing to be put to look after horses. He had belonged to his religious body about four and a half years. About a dozen of them met at Bewe's Cottage, and they all objected to military service. There was no chairman or leader, and they all spoke in turn as they felt inclined. Local Tribunal's appeal upheld. Applicant: Shall I be put looking after horses? Capt Vesper: Oh, you'll do as you're told.

1916 October 27
The Western Times

Frank Richards of Hemyock (Devon, England)
 Stating his Conscientious objection, asserting he was misled.
 Joined Testimony of Jesus 1 yr ago. Leave to appeal refused.

March 23, 1917
Daily Mail

"Testimony of Jesus" recognized as a religious denomination. Worker exempted.

John Baillie. M.A., [A WORKER] a member of a religious denomination known as the "**Testimony of Jesus**," answered at the London South Western Police Court on Thursday to a summons before Mr. Hay Halkett for having failed to surrender for military service.

Considerable interest was manifested in the proceedings, there being present a large number of followers of the defendant.

Lieut. C. P. Blackwell, representing the military authorities, explained that the question in dispute was whether the defendant was a regular minister of an established religious denomination.

Mr Clavell Salter K.C. (defending) submitted that the defendant was one of the 70 ministers of a denomination which claimed to have a following in the United Kingdom of 5,000 members. They took the Bible as their sole guide, and modeled themselves on the lines of the Primitive Church.

Evidence was given by Mr. Edward Archdale, M.P. and Mr. Patrick Crumley, M.P. to prove that the followers of the defendant, known in their Irish constituencies as "the Dippers," were a recognized religious body.

Mr. Halkett, after a long inquiry, came to the conclusion that the defendant was, by reason of being a minister of a religious denomination, exempt from military service. He therefore dismissed the case.

March 29, 1917 p4
Fermanagh Times
Pilgrims and War Service
Evidence by Mr. Archdale and Mr. Crumley
Interesting Case in London

A short time ago the military authorities in England called upon a number of members of the Pilgrim sect who were travelling through the country preaching, to join the army. The Pilgrims in question contended that they were ministers of a separate religion distinct from other Churches and as ministers they were entitled to exemption from military service.

The case came before the authorities on Thursday last in London for decision and among other witnesses examined to prove that the Pilgrims have a separate existence as a religious body in this country and that they have recognised leaders or preachers, were Mr. E. M. Archdale, M.P. and Mr. P. Crumley, M.P. At the conclusion of the evidence the court expressed itself satisfied of the bonafides of the applicants and exempted them from military service.

Leading members of the Bar in London were engaged on behalf of the Pilgrims.

March 30, 1917
South Western Star

A PECULIAR SECT
SABINE ROAD MAN'S MINISTRY AND THE MILITARY SERVICE ACT.

On Thursday before Mr. Halkett at the South Western Police Court, **John Bailie**, 54 Sabine Road Battersea was summoned as an absentee under the Military Service Act.

Lieut. C. P. Blackwell conducted the prosecution on behalf of the War Office, and Mr. Clavell Slater K.C., M.P., with whom was Mr. John Harris, defended. Lieutenant Blackwell said he understood defendant's contention was that he was a minister of a denomination known as "The Testimony of Jesus."

Lieut. Windows, recruiting officer for Battersea, said a call-up notice was sent defendant on March 3, but he did not respond, and was therefore an absentee.

Mr. Clavell Slater said defendant was a minister of religion – a denomination known as The Testimony of Jesus, which came into existence between 1900 and 1906. There were now about 70 ministers in the United Kingdom and about 5,000 members. Defendant was educated and took his M.A. degree at Glasgow University, training for three years for the Presbyterian ministry, but instead he became interested in and entered the ministry of this other organization, which followed the tenets of the early churches.

They were sometimes known as "Go preachers," "Cooneyites," and "Pilgrims." Their congregations were under the charge of elders. The ministers were put forward and recommended by their congregations to the overseers, who tested them, and if suitable they were presented to the annual convention. The areas of each of the ministers were settled from year to year, their subsistence depending on the free will offerings of members of their congregations. The ministers were constantly travelling about, religious meetings being held each evening and two or three times of a Sunday. There were celebrations of the sacrament – the breaking of bread – at the Sunday meetings. Very strict discipline was enforced in this church.

Mr Patrick Crumley, Nationalist member of Parliament for South Fermanagh, and a Roman Catholic, said he had known defendant's church as "The Testimony of Jesus" in his constituency, and members were known as "Dippers" or "Pilgrims." He had seen large numbers going to their meetings. He had known Mr Cooney, one of the founders, for 30 years.

Cross examined, witness said he knew they were assembled in a large building.

Mr E. Archdall, Unionist member for North Fermanagh, said a considerable number of people belonged to the denomination. The assemblies at the annual central meetings numbered several thousands. Large marquees were put off for the annual convention.

Staff Captain T. Bonner Morley, a brother-in-law of defendant, said defendant joined the "Cooneyites" about 10 years ago.

Defendant, giving evidence, said a religious meeting was held nightly. Preparation and visiting occupied the earlier part of each day. His congregation supported him by offertories. The ministers were not allowed to have property. He was not a conscientious objector.

In cross-examination, defendant said their church had no buildings, the primitive church had none. Adherents met in the homes of the members. He and his co-minister in four counties had about a hundred members in each – 400 in all. There was a very real form of ordination carried out by the overseers. Marriage was considered as a civil function. Baptism was recognized. In the absence of a minister and elder would conduct an ordinary religious service.

Mr Edward Cooney said he and three others founded this church about 1900. In the United Kingdom were about 5,000 adherents and 70 ministers. He and Mr Gill were the overseers in this country. They took the New Testament as their guide. Local congregations were in charge of elders, men in secular employment. For the ministry, candidates were recommended by fellow members or their own senior ministers. The final decision was at the annual convention. Most of the ministers were unmarried.

Cross-examined, witness said that in Lancashire defendant and his co-minister lived in a wooden tent, where meetings were held. The magistrate said he was satisfied that defendant was a minister of religion. He therefore dismissed the summons, but without costs.

July 13, 1917

IDEAS

ROMANCE OF THE "TRAMP PREACHERS"

This Article Clears Up the Mystery that Surrounds the Band of Ragged Evangelists who Dupe their Converts.

One of the most remarkable religious sects of our day is that of the "Tramp Preachers," otherwise known as the "Cooneyites," who have suddenly sprung into prominence during the last 15 years.

In many of the histories of religious delusion which have been narrated in *Ideas*, it has been quite obvious that the promoters were animated by mercenary motives, and that their main object was to extract from their dupes large wealth for themselves.

In the case of the "Cooneyites," there can be no suspicion of this, for their principal tenet is a profession of poverty, and there is not the slightest suspicion that their leaders have acquired any wealth from a movement which most sane people would regard as mischievous.

The "Cooneyites" call themselves the "Go Preachers," and they have taken that name from the injunction in the Gospels to "Go ye

into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” They literally obey the injunction to “take neither purse nor scrip,” but leave their homes, and trust to working or begging to maintain themselves during their evangelistic journeys.

HYSTERICAL

The old phenomena of hysteria is not absent, and many of the women preachers fall into a sort of trance in which they are supposed to be speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

They denounce all other Christian churches as “false teachers,” and decry the institutions of marriage as inconsistent with the approaching end of the world.

Their founder was really a Mr. William Irvine, who lived near Enniskillen, and his doctrines, of course, do not differ essentially from those of the various heretical millenarian sects which have arisen in the history of Christianity.

Irvine’s teaching did not make much progress until he converted some 15 years ago a very strange personality—a farmer, of Irvinestown, County Fermanagh. Tall, spare, ascetic-looking with the beard of a prophet and the eyes of a fanatic, this farmer became the missionary of this new sect, and preached all over the North of Ireland.

There was a flaming enthusiasm about him that might have made a new Peter the Hermit, and very soon the converts began to flock in, and the sect increased in numbers.

A THOUSAND EVANGELISTS

Now it has “tramp” missionaries all over the world. Men and women disappear from their homes and are lost in the cities of the United States, of Argentina, of Australia, where they are living the life of religious mendicants.

In the summer of 1906 the sect had made such progress that the villagers of Crocknacrieve, in Co. Fermanagh, were astonished by the arrival in their midst of an international convention. There were 1,000 men and women evangelists who gathered there from all parts of the United Kingdom, besides travelling from France, Germany, Spain, Australia, the United States, South Africa, and New Zealand. They stayed there for a couple of weeks, living in tents in a great camp, which was conducted on communistic lines. The men did the cooking, tailoring, repairing, etc., while the women looked after other domestic duties.

There were daily services, and in their spare time the pilgrims were to be seen walking about the meadows reading their Bibles. The services were attended by thousands of women from all parts of the North of Ireland, and it was a sight to witness proselytes being baptised by complete immersion in the river of the neighbourhood.

MISSING CONVERTS

It is only natural that a movement of this uncompromising character has aroused hostility as bitter as it has evoked enthusiasm. One of its most fruitful recruiting grounds has been East Suffolk where the people resemble in their hard Puritan outlook and their dogged literalness the Ulster folk among whom the new sect arose.

Some years ago there came into Cretingham, a small village near Framlingham in East Suffolk, two young women who were Cooneyite evangelists. They disclaimed all sectarian associations, and when asked for their credentials one replied in the formula “I am of Martha” and the other “I am of Mary.” They began preaching in the villages and very soon their enthusiasm and the novelty of their mission began to gather in converts. A large farmer’s two daughters, and one of his sons were converted by the “Cooneyites” and gave up their homes to join the sect. They simply disappeared, and the Cooneyite evangelists refused to give any information as to their whereabouts. At the same time other young people began to disappear from Suffolk homes, and their parents were frantic with grief.

WILD ACCUSATIONS

The missing farmer was of that stern breed which filled the ranks of Cromwell’s Ironsides with East Anglian troopers. Wild with grief and anger, he commenced a bitter campaign against the Cooneyites. He began by attending the meetings they held in farmhouse kitchens and labourers’ cottages in the nearest villages, and testifying to their hearers of the wrong they had done him. He covered the dead walls round Debenham, a small town, which became their stronghold, with posters setting forth his view of their conduct and morals. He followed them across the county to Sudbury in West Suffolk and roused a crowd of 3,000 people, who drove the “Go Preachers” out of the town.

He gradually extended his campaign to other parts of England. Invoking the assistance of the clergy and Nonconformist ministers in the towns which he visited, the grief-stricken father would appear at Cooneyite meetings and denounce them with burning language. He wrote letters to newspapers and printed handbills and posters which he exhibited wherever he could find a sympathiser. Passion drove him on, and his mind, inflamed with his wrongs, led him to make charges as to the lives led by the disciples which he could not justify. Briefly, they were the charges which the outside world has made against the heretical millenarian sects since the days of the third century—that while decrying marriage and preaching the approaching end of the world, certain of the “Tramp Preachers” had

duped and deserted the young girls who trusted them.

It is, in fact, quite clear that the leading men of the “Tramp Preachers” are entirely free from any suspicion of any conduct of this kind; but it is easy to understand how the feelings of a father and the passion of an apostle betrayed the farmer into a false position.

That the “Cooneyites” deliberately separated him from his daughters is quite clear from a prosecution which took place at Framlingham Petty Sessions in October, 1907, when the grieved father was charged with breaking the windows at a farmhouse used by the “Go Preachers.”

The prosecutor, who claimed to be a “bishop” in the sect, admitted that he knew where one of the farmer’s daughters was preaching, but declined to reveal it on the ground that the father would go there and upset the meeting.

It is a strange drama that of the “Tramp Preachers” to be acted in the twentieth century right under our eyes.

The following newspaper repeats the above article, adding in the first sentence: *“It is not correct in some particulars:— ”*

July 19, 1917, p. 6
THE IMPARTIAL REPORTER
 Established 1808.
 Newspaper for Enniskillen, Northern Ireland

**THE TRAMP PREACHERS OR ‘GO PREACHERS’
 THE HOSTILITY THEY AROUSED
 MR. WILSON’S CRUSADE AGAINST THEM**

Ideas of July 13th, contains the following article under the heading of ‘Romance of the “Tramp Preachers.”’ It is not correct in some particulars:—

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1917 August 29
The Courier

An appeal by Arthur James Baker (18), porter, of 40 Victoria Avenue, Chard, had been adjourned because he had failed to answer the questions put to conscientious objectors. The questions as answered by appellant were now read, and he stated that his parents belonged to the Church of England, but he joined the "Testimony of Jesus" in September, 1915—Dismissed.

Thursday July 7, 1921
The King's County Chronicle

Parsonstown, Ireland**TWO YOUNG FARMERS SHOT AND HOUSE BURNED
THE SHOOTING WITNESSED BY MOTHER AND SISTERS**

On Thursday evening last two young farmers named Richard Henry and Abraham Pratt Pearson were taken from their home at Coolacrease, Cadamstown and shot.

At least six rifle or revolver bullets penetrated the bodies of each of the brothers, who shortly afterwards succumbed to their wounds. The shooting was witnessed by their sisters and two other ladies.

Their residence, furniture, and out offices, as well as ricks of hay and straw were burned.

The deceased's father and a younger brother were absent from the home and did not learn of what had happened until the following morning.

Coolacrease House is situated about four miles from Kinnity and one and a third from Cadamstown.

FORTY ARMED MEN

On Thursday evening of last week, at about four o'clock, while the two men were making hay in a field about thirty yards from their residence at Coolacrease, Cadamstown, they were surrounded by about forty armed and masked men, who ordered them to go up to the house, which they did, closely followed by a number of the men. On arrival there the men directed the occupants to put up their hands, a command which was complied with.

It was intimated to the family that the house was to be burned, and a number of the party thereupon proceeded to search the rooms, breaking, it is alleged most of the furniture and other articles, including a piano. While the search was in progress (a *Chronicle* Representative was informed) one of the girls was held up and asked if there was any money in the house, to which she replied that there was not, so far as she knew. This evidently satisfied the interrogator, who then joined the main party. The members of which, the search having been completed – were making preparations for burning the house. Hay, sprinkled with petrol, was placed in various places. Meanwhile, Mrs. Pearson, who had fainted when the raiders arrived, was being attended to by her two sons, Richard and Abraham, who were endeavouring to restore her to consciousness.

SHOT IN YARD

What exactly happened after this is not quite clear, but we learn that the two young men were brought out to the yard at the back of the house, and at least six bullets fired at each of them, the occupants of the house, including the boy's mother, three sisters, and two other ladies, cousins, who were visiting the Pearson family at the time, having experienced the dreadful ordeal of witnessing the shooting.

In an interview with our reporter, one of the Miss Pearsons stated that she had not had the remotest idea that her two brothers were going to be shot. "I knew they were going to burn the house," she said, "but I did not think there was going to be any shooting. Though I saw my two brothers being confronted by a number of armed men, who were speaking to them in the yard, I did not think for a moment that Dick and Abe would be shot, being under the impression that they were only being questioned or cautioned not to report or say anything about the burning."

PREPARING FOR FIRE

While the tragedy was being enacted in the yard, which is in full view of the house, arrangements for setting fire to the residence and everything it contained, were proceeding apace. The girls asked leave to remove their clothing and bicycles, and also to be allowed to go out of the house, but the latter request was refused until the last moment, when they were allowed to get some clothing, one of the girls being given a bicycle, which was, however, not her own, and almost useless. All the occupants of the house, Mrs. Susan Pearson, her three daughters, Misses Tilda, Ethyl, and Emma, and the two cousins, Misses Evelyn Pearson and Kitty Pratt, then came out on the road, and in a few minutes, witnessed the destruction of their home, from which bicycles and other articles had been removed by the raiders, who then decamped.

The family were now homeless and scantily clad, in a sparsely populated district, — more than a mile from any human habitation, — and in the small hours of the morning.

The demeanour of the men when they first arrived at the house showed excitement; they burst in the door with, it is presumed, the butt end of rifles.

NO REASON GIVEN

Asked if she could assign a reason for the tragic occurrence, this lady said "I asked them what was the reason for their action in burning the house, and one of them said he did not know. I pointed out that it was an extraordinary thing to burn a house without having any reason for so doing. The reply to this was: "Don't think we are doing this because you are Protestants. It is not being done on that account."

Continuing, she said: "There was some trouble about a pathway last year, but this was settled long ago, the path having been given to those who claimed a passage through it. I don't think that has anything to do with this occurrence."

The two men, with others of their family, had been attending the wedding festival, in Tipperary, of a relative on the day before their tragic deaths. Their father Mr. W m. Pearson and a younger brother Sydney, had gone to the house of some friends on Thursday

morning and did not know of the terrible happening until Friday morning, when they became aware of what had occurred.

At 7.30 p.m. on Thursday evening Dr. F. W. Woods, Kinnitty, was summoned to attend the injured men, one of whom (Richard) was dying. He dressed the wounds of both men and remained in attendance for over an hour, when a party of police arrived and had the wounded men removed to Birr Military Barracks, where Richard succumbed two hours later, and Abraham at 6 o' clock on the following morning. The family were brought to the house of a relative, Mrs. Odium, at Newbridge Street, Birr, where they stayed for some days.

The residence which has been destroyed was a slated two-storey dwelling. A row of out-offices and ricks of hay and straw were also given to the flames, and totally destroyed. Richard Pearson was 24, and his brother, Abraham, 19, both being unmarried. The farm on which they were working is an extensive one.

THE WOUNDS DESCRIBED

A military enquiry, in lieu of an inquest, was held at the Military Barracks, Birr, on Sunday morning of last week, at 11 o' clock, to investigate the cause of death. A "Chronicle" reporter was permitted to be present during the taking of medical evidence.

Dr. Frederick W. Woods, M.O., Kinnitty, stated that on Thursday night a civilian called to his house and said that his presence was required at Coolacrease House, where two men had been shot. The messenger asked him to go at once, as one of the men was dying. He left immediately on his bicycle, and on arriving, found the two men on a mattress in a field. He first attended Richard Henry, who was in a dying condition, and then attended to the other man, Abraham. He treated the wounds of both men antiseptically. Richard seemed to have bled considerably, having superficial wounds in the left shoulder, right groin and right buttock, in addition to which there were several wounds in the back, one of which had probably penetrated the lung. He also found a wound in the left lower leg, also of a superficial nature. They might have been caused by rifle or revolver bullets, which, in his opinion, were fired at close range, the wounds being saturated with blood. He spent an hour and a half at the house, which he left at about 9.15 p.m.

On his way home he met Dr. Morton, who also examined the wounds. Both of the men were then removed to the Military Barracks, where Richard Pearson died of his wounds about two hours after admission, and Abraham on the following morning. In his opinion the cause of death was shock and sudden haemorrhage, caused by gunshot wounds, the fatal shot having been that which entered the right groin.

The medical evidence in connection with the death of Abraham was identical. The remains were removed for interment to the family burial place at Ballacolla (Queen's County), on Sunday.

NOTE: "Parsonstown" was the name of the town now known as Birr in County Offaly. The former name of Offaly was "The King's County". They were interred in the adjoining burial grounds of Killermogh Anglican Church, close to the village of Ballacolla in the Queen's County. The Queen's County is now called County Laois.

September 26, 1921, p. 11
Indianapolis News

Religious Group, Led By "Tramp Preachers," in State Convention

Annual Meeting Being Held on the Helms Farm Northeast of McCordsville – Tenth Chapter of Matthew Emphasized by Members of Faith.

With tents and haymows as lodging places for most of the men and farmhouses nearby for the women and children, nearly 400 members of a religious group, led by what are commonly known as "tramp preachers," is holding its annual state convention on the farm of George Helms, three miles northeast of McCordsville. George Walker, the recognized leader of the group in this country, is attending. Few persons outside of the vicinity of McCordsville know that the members of this faith have held their annual meetings on this farm for the last six years. The leaders and members are disposed to shun publicity.

Walker, the leader, is about fifty and is typical of the preachers of this group. He has no home, he said, but spends his time traveling from one community to another. He even goes into foreign countries to preach Christianity as he understands it wherever he can find listeners. He depends on " Providence, through his brethren" for a livelihood. His mail address is Philadelphia, and could claim legal residence there if he desired. Indiana has only a few of these "tramp" preachers. Several hundred members of the group, however, live in the state and many are attending the convention.

A small tent, pitched near an orchard on the Helms farm, is the meeting place. The convention will close this evening. The preachers expound the doctrines, hymns are sung and members pray and testify. A tent in the orchard serves as a dining hall, and food in abundance is provided by the farmers in the vicinity.

Many families have come from various parts of the state for the convention, some of them traveling by automobile.

Source of the Faith.

Mr. Walker said that he thinks some Christians have believed as his people do since the days of Christ. **About twenty-two years**

ago, he said, church members in England and north Ireland became interested in the doctrines, and out of this has come the spread of the faith into this country, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In recent years, preachers have gone into South America. **William Irvine, a Scotchman, one of the original leaders, is not now affiliated with this group because of a difference over the prophecies of the Revelations, Mr. Walker said. [1921 minus 22 years = 1898 start date per George Walker]**

Mr. Walker, a native of Ireland, came to the United States about eighteen years ago, and was one of the prime movers in starting these "tramp" preachers in the field in this country. About fifty conventions similar to the one on the Helms farm are held in this country annually, he said.

One of the peculiar points of the doctrine taught by these preachers is the emphasis placed on the tenth chapter of Matthew. There, Christ, sending out the twelve disciples to teach, directed them to "provide neither gold nor silver nor brass for your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nether two coats, neither shoes nor yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat. From their stand on this chapter comes the name given to their preachers.

"It's the spirit of this chapter that we follow." Mr. Walker said. "Of course, it would be impossible to follow it to the letter. Our preachers go out, Two by Two. If they have property before they start, they usually sell it, distribute it among their relatives or the poor, depending on the Lord to provide in their journeys."

These preachers take gifts from the people whom they visit. They get no salaries. There is no central church organization, nor do the members in a community organize. They have no church buildings, no church schools or church societies. When members in a community meet on Sunday to worship, they gather in the home of a member, or if a meeting house or school is available, they meet there. The only organization recognized by the members is that in the home. They do not believe in church organizations, secret organizations, or any kind of an organization outside of the home is scriptural.

"We don't say these organizations are of the devil," Mr. Walker said, "but we do not think they are Scriptural, and Christ said Christians would follow His commandments."

Will Not Bear Arms.

Members of this group recognize no other name than Christian, Mr. Walker said. They do not believe in war, but they teach, Mr. Walker said, that a citizen must perform his duty to his country. Consequently, when the United States entered the world war, members who were drafted wore the uniform, but obtained transfers to non-combatant units. They would not bear arms because they did not believe they should kill any man, Mr. Walker said, but they aided all they could in other ways. Preachers of this belief are officially designated as such, but they bear no ordination papers, and hence in the war period, some local draft boards did not recognize them as preachers and some were drafted, Mr. Walker said.

The group has women preachers. The leaders believe the preachers should not be married, but some husbands and wives are in the field, Mr. Walker said.

Members of the group take little interest in politics or temporal affairs. Preachers do not perform marriage ceremonies.

The Daily Reporter, Greenfield, Indiana NEW September 27, 1921, Page 1

Tramp Preachers' Convention Annual Meeting Being on Helms Farm near McCordsville Tenth Chapter of Matthew is Emphasized by Members of the Faith.

The following story of a religious convention being held near McCordsville is taken from the *Indianapolis News** :

With tents and haymows as lodging places for most of the men, and farmhouses nearby for the women and children, nearly 400 members of a religious group, led by what are commonly known as "tramp preachers," is holding its annual state convention on the farm of George Helms three miles northeast of McCordsville.

George Walker, the recognized leader of the group in this country, is attending. Few persons outside of the vicinity of McCordsville know of the members of this faith holding their annual meetings on this farm for the last six years. The leaders and members are disposed to shun publicity.

Walker, the leader, is about fifty and is typical of the preachers of this group. He has no home, he said, but spends his time traveling from one community to another. He goes into foreign countries to preach Christianity as he understands it wherever he can find listeners. He depends on "Providence through his brethren" for livelihood. His mail address is Philadelphia, and could claim legal residence there if he desired. Indiana has only a few of these "tramp" preachers. Several hundred members of the group, however,

live in the state, and many are attending the convention.

A small tent pitched near an orchard on Helms farm is the meeting place. The convention will close this evening. The preachers expound the doctrines, hymns are sung and members pray and testify. A tent in the orchard serves as a dining hall, and food in abundance is provided by the farmers in the vicinity. Many families have come from various parts of the state for the convention, some of them traveling by automobile.

Mr. Walker said that he thinks some Christians have believed as his people do since the days of Christ. About twenty-two years ago, he said, church members in England and in North Ireland became interested in the doctrines, and out of this has come the spread of the faith into this country, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In recent years, the preachers have gone into South America. **[1921 minus 22 years = 1898 start date per George Walker]**

William Irvine, a Scotchman, one of the original leaders, is not now affiliated with this group, because of a difference over the prophecies of the Revelations, Mr. Walker said.

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One of the peculiar points of the doctrine taught by these preachers is the emphasis placed on the tenth chapter of Matthew. There, Christ sending out the twelve disciples to teach, directed them to "provide neither gold nor silver nor brass for your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, not yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat." From their stand on this chapter comes the name given to their preachers.

"It's the spirit of this chapter that we follow," Mr. Walker said. "Of course, it would be impossible to follow to the letter. Our preachers go out, Two by Two. If they have property before they start, they usually sell it, distribute it among their relatives or the poor, depending on the Lord to provide in their journeys." These preachers take gifts from the people whom they visit. They get no salaries.

There is no central church organization, nor do the members in a community organize. They have no church buildings, no church schools or church societies. When members in a community meet on Sunday to worship, they gather in the home of a member, or if a meeting house or school is available, they meet there. The only organization recognized by the members is that in the home. They do not believe in church organization, secret organizations, or any kind of an organization outside of the home is scriptural. "We don't say these organizations are of the devil," Mr. Walker said, "but we do [not] think they are Scriptural, and Christ said Christians would follow His commandments."

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June 3, 1923
The Courier, p8
Baptismal Scenes in Belfast Lough
Holiday Makers See Dipping of "Cooneyites"

Estraordinary scenes were witnessed yesterday at Whitehead, a holiday resort on Belfast Lough, where new disciples of the sect known as "Cooneyites" were publicly baptised in the sea by complete immersion.

The leader stood in the water, and after the baptisms danced and sang. The converts included women and girls and men, one of which was 85 years old and another 70. A large crowd of holiday makes witnessed the scenes.

December 12, 1925
Dublin Newspaper
\$500 a Year to Stop Preaching

A novel bequest and ban on preaching appears in the will of Mr. William Rutherford Cooney of 15 Willoughbyplace, Enniskillen, who left £8,915.

He directs that in the event his son Edward stating in writing that he has ceased to preach and has returned to allegiance to the Church of Ireland, thereby abandoning his means of living, £100 per annum shall be paid to him so long as he adheres faithfully to his decision.

March 9, 1928
Evening Telegraph & Post
Belfast's Sixty Sects – City's Diversity of Faiths
1926 Census Analysis

Belfast population: 415,151

137,384 Presbyterian

125,166 Church of Ireland

95,682 Roman Catholics

25,701 Methodist

5,095 Congregationalist

4,315 Brethren

3,900 Baptist

1,341 Salvation Army

364 Protestants

33 Testimony of Jesus (13 males; 20 females)

(Assorted others)

Northern Whig
December 28, 1928

Fallen from Grace
Division in Ranks of the "Cooneyites"

There has been for some time a cleavage in the ranks of the sect known as the Pilgrims or "Cooneyites," an organization founded 21 years ago, and particularly strong in the North of Ireland.

Mr. Edward Cooney, who has come back to Ireland from America and found that things are not as they should be has set about trying to bring union again into the ranks.

Many of the "Pilgrims" have fallen away from grace, their views are not as strictly orthodox as they should be, and many do not carry out their religious duties in the same rigid manner.

Mr. Cooney addressed a large meeting in Irvinestown at Christmas, and though representatives of both sections were resent at the meeting, there we no signs of dissent.

Methodist Leader
(Weekly Journal of the Primitive Methodist Church)
1930, May 1, p 30
Warning against "Cooneyites" or "Go Preachers"

Rev. J. T. Ridley desires to warn our people against a new sect, calling themselves "Cooneyites" or Go-Preachers. They travel about the country and seek the loan of our chapels, especially in the villages, and the co-operation of those who have been associated with them. They have an air of simplicity and piety, but do not hesitate to sow discord wherever they go. If the chapel is refused or having been lent for a service or two, is denied them, they seek to hold cottage meetings, by which they deceive even the elect.

Mr. Ridley has suffered from their invasion, and desires to warn others of their insidious ways. It is not the first time our friends, especially in small places have had to guard their heritage against unwelcome intruders. We hope our people will be on their guard again.