

Life and Ministry of Edward Cooney 1867-1960

THE LIFE and MINISTRY of EDWARD COONEY 1867-1960

By PATRICIA ROBERTS ©

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Abbreviations:

EC Edward Cooney
IBID (IBIDEM) In the same place, age, passage, etc., cited just before.
IR Impartial Reporter.
KJV King James Version.
NC Newtownards Chronicle.
ND No date.
NEB New English Bible.
RSV Revised Standard Version.

"Yet show I unto you a more excellent way." 1 Cor. 12:31

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CHAPTER 1

Early Life and Conversion

Edward Cooney was born in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, on 11 February, 1867. Shortly afterwards he was taken to the parish church and sprinkled by a clergyman who then entered his name on the church rolls "That was how I became a member of the Church of Ireland," he said "I suppose I yelled – most babies do – but I remember nothing about it." His father, William Rutherford Cooney, was a wealthy merchant and prominent citizen in the financial and social Life of the town. He was a proud, ambitious man who achieved success early in Life. As a young man he had come from Cootehill to Enniskillen and entered the employ of William Carson, a rich clothing merchant who had a thriving business at No. 4 High Street.

In 1864 William Rutherford Cooney married Emily Maria Carson, his employer's only daughter, and eventually became owner of her father's business himself. The Carsons were an old and highly respected Methodist family with a reputation for religious and philanthropic work, and whose forebears, it is believed, were directly influenced by John Wesley when he preached in Fermanagh in the mid-eighteenth century. This was then the background of Emily Maria who had a gentle, spiritual disposition. Her husband, on the other hand, was a shrewd businessman for whom material wealth and social position were of prime importance.

They had eight children, six boys and two girls. Edward was their second son and third child. As a boy he attended Sunday school with his brothers and sisters at the Enniskillen parish church, now St. Macartin's cathedral where they had all been christened. The

children there, he recalled, were divided into three classes: the aristocracy, the middle class, and the working class. These were taught respectively by members of their own social rank. Lord Enniskillen's agent taught the aristocrats, Edward was taught by a man from the middle class, and the poor were taught by one from the 'corduroy' or working class. It was not surprising, therefore, that his most vivid and lasting impression of his Sunday school days was the pride that everywhere manifested itself. "Even the best men there were affected by it," he was later to recall. And he, himself, was not free from it either. "I had a lot of that pride crammed into me too," he said.

His own family, who were of the wealthy merchant class, drove to church in a carriage and pair in a style quite equal to that of the gentry. They dressed in a manner which reflected their high station in life, and occupied one of the front pews in the church. His father was a member of the select vestry, an office held only by the rich in those days. Every Sunday when he was a boy, Edward used to hear the words from the pulpit "Blessed be ye poor," but as he watched the people enter the church, he saw that the poor were given the back seats whereas the rich sat in the front pews. And if a poorly clad individual chanced to stray into the pew of the rich, he noticed with what contempt the indigent was driven out of it. It seemed to him that the clergy had very little respect for the poor. They did not associate with them. They always dined with the rich with whom they identified. Then there was the bishop who drove about with pet dogs in his carriage and provided them with a nice room and bed. This was in an age when the poor were extremely poor with scarcely a roof over their heads, a coat on their backs, or a bite to put in their mouths. Everyone was poisoned with pride; and the religious leaders, it seemed to Edward, were the proudest of the lot.

In education as well as in religion, pride also prevailed. Edward with his five brothers, was educated first at the Model School and afterwards at Portora Royal School, Enniskillen. The Model was a primary school open to all classes and creeds. Portora was a secondary school accessible only to the privileged middle and upper classes, who were generally Protestant. Edward's father was on the board of governors there, an office also reserved for men of wealth and influence at that time. It gradually became apparent to the youth that pride and the love of money pervaded every aspect of life, for even in his home as well as in church and school, these twin sins were highly esteemed. This influence came primarily from his father. But there was another influence in his life during his formative years, which stressed spiritual and humanitarian values. This came from his mother mainly. At all events the Cooney household seems to have been a happy one, the members bound together by the ties of love as Edward was later to recall:

"My brothers and sisters and I were happy together. We delighted in each other's company, delighted to play together, to associate with one another. We loved each other because we were of one family with one father and one mother." (IR 12/8/1909). This ideal of the happy human family was to become for him the symbol of the family of God.

When Edward was 14, his father asked him into his study to discuss his plans for the future as was his custom with all his children. "What do you want to be my son," he inquired. At that early age, the youth had been attracted to the colourful uniforms of the military – the Inniskilling Dragoon Guards – for Enniskillen was then a garrison town. So he answered: "I want to be an officer." But his father replied: "I have been watching you, Edward, and I think you are more fitted for business." It was the father's intention that the son should follow in his footsteps by pursuing a business career and so add to the family fortune. This was not to be, however; for, some years later, Edward began to see that God had some other purpose in life for him. And so it was to his heavenly Father's business that he would devote his life. For in the fullness of time when the Saviour called with the same message as he had for the rich young ruler, unlike that sad young man, Edward obeyed the call, gave what he had to the poor, took up his cross, and followed Jesus. It was a pilgrimage that was to last to the end of his days. His long life was thus spent, not in labouring for the meat that perisheth, as his earthly father had hoped he would do, but for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life, in obedience to his heavenly Father's will.

In the meantime, however, Edward was sent to Armagh to learn the family business from the bottom up. Here he found in the person of the hard, proud, Presbyterian gentleman, to whom he was apprenticed, that same spirit which respects the rich and despises the poor, which he had observed in the people of his own church, the Church of Ireland. Thus it gradually began to dawn on him that pride and the love of money, prevalent among the churchgoers of his day, were wholly opposed to the example and teaching of the lowly Jesus.

About this time his elder brother, Willie, contracted T.B. This young man, then about 19 years old, was a devout Christian. He had given himself to Jesus as a result of hearing a coloured woman, probably an Indian, preach. Her message was: "Give yourself to the dear Lord, and when you fall he'll pick you up again." These words were to make a lasting impression on Edward also. He was profoundly influenced by his brother's righteous life, and when the latter became stricken with T.B., Edward knew that the threat of death was upon him. He was therefore moved to examine his own life; and although he was a youth who kept all the commandments, yet he knew that if he were to die then he would not know God as his Father. In his extremity, God spoke to him while he prayed and said: "Give yourself to Me." So at the age of 17, above his master's shop in the city of Armagh, he yielded to God.

The housekeeper there was a godly woman, so he told her what he had done. She advised him to confess Jesus and pray aloud before all the other employees. This he did, and from then on he always taught that the beginning of salvation was "to believe in thine heart that Jesus is Lord and confess Him with thy mouth." Thus began Edward's conscious walk with God. He had made Jesus Lord. He was born again. And, as he was to point out years later this was a revelation direct from God to his own heart – the church he belonged to had nothing to do with it. This experience was so real and so powerful that it in time established in him the unshakable belief that the revelation of Christ from the Father by the Spirit to the individual human heart is the Rock alone on which Christ builds his church.

His brother, Willie, had been sent to Australia when he contracted T.B [Tuberculosis] for it was thought that the climate and the outdoor life on his uncle's ranch there would help cure him. A few years later, when Edward was about 20 years old, he was sent to

join him for he too had caught the dreaded disease, tuberculosis. On arrival in Australia, he found that his brother had grown worse, so with an aching heart he accompanied him part of the way home. At Ceylon they were met by their mother and sister, who escorted Willie the rest of the way, and Edward returned to Australia. Willie lived just a week after he reached home. But during the short time that was left to him, he spoke about the Lord to all his family and to his father's employees as well. Dean Ovenden came into his bedroom and asked him if he was ready to go, to which Willie replied: "That has been settled long ago – too late to leave it until now." On 29 May, 1887, at the age of 22, Willie died.

This left a deep and lasting impression on Edward, causing him to draw closer to Jesus and rely on his strength and not on his own. It took Edward three months on a very rough sea to reach Australia again, during which time he witnessed to the passengers on board. He remained in Australia a few years sheep farming. The outdoor life seemed to have helped him for he recovered from the tuberculosis. He then returned to Enniskillen and entered his father's business as a commercial traveller. His work took him through the south of Ireland where, as he travelled, he preached the Word as God revealed it to him. This often resulted in his getting mobbed, for southern Ireland was a strongly Catholic country where diversity of belief was not looked upon with tolerance. So great, in fact, was the reaction to his preaching that this young businessman frequently had to flee from one town to another.

In his home town of Enniskillen which is in the Protestant north, he met with strong opposition too. On one occasion, his father left him in charge of the business for a week, and when he returned he found the town in an uproar. For Edward had taken advantage of his absence to hire a hall in the slums of Enniskillen where he and his sister spoke to all about Jesus: both Catholics and Protestants. This at once influenced and offended many. One result was that the Catholic priest denounced him from the pulpit the following Sunday, warning his flock against him. But this only made Edward the more zealous to preach Jesus.

This was the last decade of the 19th century. Edward was then a young man in his early twenties. He was handsome, wealthy, witty, intelligent, educated, kindly, lovable, alert, possessed of a fine sense of humour, a winsome personality, and a keen business acumen. He had, in fact, every attribute to make him a tremendous success in this world, both economically and socially, had he been willing to bow down and worship the prince of this world who said to our Lord: "All this power I will give thee and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me and to whomsoever I will give it; If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." But if Edward was not overcome by the temptation of worldly ambition through a business career (where he proved himself extremely successful), he might still have been through an ecclesiastical career had he stopped moving in the direction God was leading him. For, like Saul of Tarsus, if anyone had a right to put confidence in the flesh he had. Regarding all points of the law he too was blameless. He was an active member of the Church of Ireland, sang in the choir and taught Sunday school. At one point in his early life he had considered a musical career for which he had some talent. He dismissed this idea, however, for he felt that such a desire was prompted by vanity.

At the age of 23, when he was 6 years old in Christ, the spark of the divine had already begun to manifest itself in him. This, at all events was the impression of one of his former Sunday school pupils, Dr. James Jackson Moore who, some 60 years later, was to recall "the man who taught small and often mischievous boys at the Episcopal Church, Enniskillen," decades before. Dr. Moore continues:

"Although a careless, restless and not very attentive youngster, I often gazed on our teacher – a man of striking appearance of the handsome and healthy type who radiates warmth and vigour. He was neatly dressed right down to the finger tips, as cleanliness is often said to be next to Godliness. The purity of the man, however, was not in his well-groomed appearance, but in the divine spirit (grace) that dwelt within – It almost hypnotized me." (IR 1/5/1951).

Edward would indeed have been an asset to any church, for he had the gift to influence people for good and to make converts. If he had chosen an ecclesiastical career within the Church of Ireland, he could undoubtedly have considerably increased its membership and have had an honourable place in the hierarchy of the clergy. But his vocation was not to convert people to any system of organized religion but to win souls for Christ and so further His kingdom. He also became increasingly aware that this was not to be accomplished unless he himself was willing to follow in the footsteps of the lowly Jesus, for how else could he point the way to others? And more and more he came to know that this path led down, not up.

Thus, as he pressed toward the Light, he gradually severed his ties with the Church of Ireland, and he joined none other. He continued, however, to preach in the open air and in churches when permitted. Two young men who evangelized with him at this time were John West and Tom Betty, both of whom had also experienced the new birth. And so, while travelling for his father, all his spare time was devoted to the service of God whose dealings with him, during this period of his life starting from his rebirth, are briefly outlined in a letter to Alice Flett (circa 1930):

"I was born anew in the city of Armagh, Ireland, sometime during 1884. After that a number of us, who had been through the same experience, met in a room from time to time to encourage one another to follow Jesus, still attending the denominations to which we belonged. After a few years, I got to see I should become a continuing disciple of Jesus. I ceased to belong to any denomination and with progressive light pressed on in the path of discipleship, preaching in the open air and in synagogues when permitted. Some got won to Christ through this my ministry. In Enniskillen, my native town, we met in a Presbyterian man's home Sunday afternoons, preached in the slums and in a school house granted to us by the Methodists." (E.C. 1930).

Still groping for further light as he travelled and preached throughout Ireland, he came in touch with William Irvine, a Scottish Presbyterian evangelist in the Faith Mission. This was in 1897 when Irvine was holding a mission at Borrisokane, County Tipperary. They accepted each other as brothers in Christ; and Edward was to recall years afterwards that he never remembered the gospel sounding so sweet as when he first heard it from William Irvine. Of that encounter he writes:

"I travelled for my father's business and preached inside and outside as occasion offered, with some persecution. And while doing so. I met William Irvine (through whom Willie Gill, George Walker, Jack Carroll, William Carroll, James Jardine and a number of the present leaders professed). He and I were drawn together as brothers in Christ, each claiming the liberty to follow Jesus as we received progressive light from God by the Spirit. William was at that time, Pilgrim Irvine, a preacher in the Faith Mission." (Ibid.)

This meeting was the beginning of their friendship and fellowship, and marked another turning point in Edward's journey along the path of discipleship. For through Irvine he got a clearer vision of what the Lord required of him.

CHAPTER 2

William Irvine

William Irvine was born in Kilsyth, near Glasgow, Scotland, 7 January, 1863. He was at the age of 25 general manager of William Baird and company's Boswell Collieries in Lanarkshire; and while still in his twenties was on the way to the top of his profession – a directorship. But he felt a higher call, and so gave up a promising career to devote his life to the service of God.

He was born again circa 1893 when he was about 30 years old through the ministry of the Reverend John McNeil, a Presbyterian clergyman whom he heard preach in Motherwell Town Hall, Scotland. After two years' training at John Anderson's Bible College in Glasgow, Irvine became in 1895 a 'pilgrim' or evangelist in the Faith Mission. This organization was founded in 1886 by John Govan for the evangelization of rural areas and small towns in Scotland. In 1892 the Mission extended its work to Ireland and later to England and other parts of the world. Faith Mission evangelists, both men and women, went forth with the gospel in pairs trusting in God to provide for all their needs. They did not receive guaranteed salaries but were maintained out Of Mission funds as the Lord supplied the means.

During his first year with the Mission, Irvine preached in Scotland. In 1896 he was sent to Ireland, first to County Antrim in the north and then to County Clare in the south. It was here he met John Long, a Methodist colporteur for the Limerick District, who described Irvine as a "born and born again leader of men," and who later was to become his companion as a preacher:

"I first met William Irvine," writes Long, "in the Methodist Church, Kilrush, County Clare, where he was having a mission. I was greatly blessed under his ministry and fellowship, and I used influence to get him openings which resulted in his holding a mission in the Methodist Church. Nenagh, County Tipperary, where a revival began in August, 1897. That revival was the origin of the Go Preacher fellowship. Whole households got converted, including Roman Catholics. It was opposed by the majority of the clergy and churches, yet defended by others...William Irvine was rather severe on Christians but very merciful to sinners, and most successful in personal dealings with them leading them into the experience of salvation through Christ. He was known to preach for five hours at a time and interest his audience." (Journal, n.d.)

About this time, during a study of Matthew 10 with his companion, John Long, it was revealed to Irvine that the commission Christ gave his first disciples was a permanent one, serving as a model for his sent ones in all ages, and not just a limited and temporary one to the house of Israel as many have taken it to be. Thus as Irvine pondered on the Lord's command to those first missionaries, "As ye go, preach...freely ye have received, freely give; provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, not scrip for your journey...for the workman is worthy of his meat," he became keenly aware of the contrast between them and the clergy of his day. The apostles were an unpaid, itinerant ministry with no provision but the promise that God would supply all their needs, whereas the clergy were a settled ministry with salaries, houses, and church buildings.

Irvine therefore became dissatisfied with his role as evangelist in the Faith Mission. He was concerned about his many converts who were, according to Faith Mission policy, being urged to become active members in their own churches which, Irvine had now come to believe, were organizations with no foundation in the New Testament. He felt also that the Faith Mission evangelists were dependent on Mission funds while claiming to trust in God to supply all their needs. (The Faith Mission did not solicit funds and this was the basis of their claim that they were on faith lines).

Although Irvine remained in the Faith Mission as superintendent of the work in the south of Ireland for the next three years, from 1897 on he was groping his way out of it and moving toward independence and a stricter interpretation of what it means to preach the gospel by faith. We can trace the progress of the direction in which he was moving during the next four years from reports in the Faith Mission magazine, "Bright Words." The Mission, however, does not seem to have been aware of this move toward independence until circa 1900, because in 1898 Govan visited Nenagh and was evidently well pleased with Irvine's work there, for he states:

"It was a joy to meet so many bright and sympathetic children of God in that part of the country and to see so much satisfactory fruit remaining from the missions held by Pilgrim Irvine and the sisters during the last twelve months." ('Bright Words' Oct. 1898)

From February 1899 until May, Irvine was working in Scotland after which he returned to Ireland and again is referred to in the Faith Mission magazine, 'Bright Words' as superintendent of the 'work' in the south of Ireland. Until now he seems to have been working happily in the Mission, or so it thought. But in October, 1899, he went with some of his converts on a bicycle tour of Scotland to visit friends in the Mission and attended meetings there. Among those who accompanied him were Willie Gill, William Carroll, George Walker and Irvine Weir. These young men had heard him preach while he was holding a mission at Rathmolyon, near Dublin, and had thus been won to Christ through his ministry. Though he was still nominally a member of the Faith Mission, this Scottish trip marks another step in Irvine's move toward independence.

There can be no doubt that he was a dynamic preacher and a charismatic personality, for many of those who had become converted through, him in the Faith Mission were associating themselves with him as he moved gradually away from all organized religion to

follow more closely the pattern of primitive Christianity as practiced in the New Testament. But he had not as yet severed all ties with the Mission although he seems to have been getting lax with regard to his obligations to it. For in the Mission's annual report of 1899, Govan wrote: "In Ireland there has not been much work in the south", and in March 1900, he observed:

"Several brothers who have received blessing in connection with Faith Mission work have been holding missions in various places where we understand they are on Faith lines and in sympathy with our work...It should be understood that they are not directly connected with the Mission or under its control."

Again, in the annual report of 1900 he noted: "We should mention that the work in the south of Ireland has not been reported." He continues:

"Much of the time of the Pilgrim in charge (Pilgrim Irvine) has been taken up with building movable wooden halls (for missions) nearly all of which are worked on independent lines by workers unconnected with and not under the direction of the Faith Mission." William Irvine's name appears in the Faith Mission list of workers for 1900 but no more after that; and in the donation list for that year he is mentioned for the last time as superintendent for the work in the south of Ireland.

By 1899 he had gathered around him the first crop of workers who were to form the nucleus of the independent or Go Preacher movement of which he was the leader. Among these were Willie Gill, John Long, George Walker, Irvine Weir, Albert Quinn, and John Kelly. By 1900, others were added among whom were Matt Wilson, Sam Boyd, and James Patrick. Within 12 months John Hardie, Jack Jackson, and Tom Turner, all members of the Irish Workers Christian Union, had joined Irvine. Thus in the Faith Mission magazine for August 1901. Govan wrote:

"When in Ireland, I came into contact with a movement that has been going on there for the past year or two. A number of those people are going out on quite independent lines, holding missions in various parts of both Scotland and Ireland. While there may be much that is good in the devotion and earnestness of those who leave all, believing the Lord has called them thus to follow him, a number of the features of this movement do not commend themselves to us."

According to Govan, some of these features were: there was no one to judge of the fitness of these workers except themselves. Being independent they were not able to profit from the experience of those older in the work as they would have been if there had been some organization. Furthermore, some of them had not been long enough converted themselves before going out and, wanting in Christian experience, were very apt to be unbalanced and one-sided. He continues:

"While we quite believe that a few of those who have gone out have been truly called of God, we fear that a number of others have been more likely called of man or moved by their own impulses and are not really fitted for the work."

Govan is concerned that they may be mistaken for Pilgrims. i.e., Faith Mission workers or evangelists, so he points out: "As some have been mistaken for Pilgrims, we think it is necessary to say that the Faith Mission is not responsible for this movement." He further states:

"During the year, several have dropped out from our list of workers. Pilgrim Irvine has been working on independent lines, chiefly in Ireland. Then quite recently Pilgrim Kelly has resigned and allied himself with these independent workers."

It would seem from the foregoing that between 1897 and 1900/1 a number of workers, including Irvine, were simultaneously connected with both the Faith Mission and the independent movement which under the "leadership" of Irvine sprang from it. These workers were groping for further light as they stepped through the night of sectarian confusion toward the dawn. Thus, believing themselves to be led by the Spirit, they gradually left their respective denominations, severed their ties with the Faith Mission, and went forth to preach the gospel after the manner of Christ's disciples, each claiming to have a commission from the Lord himself to take the gospel to Christendom and the world.

Although there was undoubtedly a great deal of truth in Govan's statement, (in fact, it could even be said to have been prophetic) that while "few of these preachers were truly called of God, a number of others had been called of man or moved by their own impulses," the fact remains that God did work mightily through those few whom he did call.

CHAPTER 3

The Call to Preach

"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Mat 28:19-20) RSV.

When Cooney saw that Irvine and others had given up all, he felt the urge to go too. But he hesitated realizing it was a big step to take. He feared he might be seen as a loafer, a name for which he had a terrible distaste. But, as he was to write some 30 years later, "the man who finally moved me to go to preach was William Irvine." For when Edward suggested giving his money to Irvine to send out preachers like himself and those associated with him all over the world, Irvine bluntly refused saying, "this is not like Jesus," and showed Edward that God didn't want his money, he wanted himself.

And so, one day as Edward was reading the Acts of the Apostles in the train, he began to think of the influence those sent ones of the Lord had on the world; and he wondered what impact such men would have if they were living in his day. So he began to pray: "Lord, send out labourers into thy harvest field." Then the voice of the Lord was heard in his heart saying: "Hypocrite! Why don't you go and be like them?" Shortly afterwards, one night at a meeting in the Town Hall, Enniskillen he was preaching on the 4th chapter of 1st Corinthians:

"Now ye are full, now ye are rich. Ye have reigned as kings without us; and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak but ye are strong; ye are honourable but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things unto this day." (1 Cor. 4:8-13).

Edward preached this as a true description of a true preacher. As he went back to his seat, God said to him: "Now Edward, you have said the truth, will you practice it yourself"? Thus God made it clear to him from this early point in his ministry the type of preacher he was calling him to be. For, reasoned Edward, the servant is not greater than his master; and if Jesus was despised and rejected of men, if he had nowhere to lay his head, his sent ones who receive his nature must expect to experience something of the same treatment as he had. Paul evidently had. He, like his Master, had no certain dwelling place; he knew what it was to be hungry, thirsty, persecuted, despised, flogged, imprisoned, mobbed; to be treated as the scum of the earth, the dregs of humanity.

Edward knew now that the Lord was calling him as he had called the rich young ruler, and that the time had come for him to forsake all, take up his cross, and follow Jesus. As soon as he decided to do this, he wrote to his father saying he was going out to preach the way Jesus went. After posting the letter, he became so worried about it that he at once wired his father's book-keeper asking him to return it. When he got it back, he kept it for several days, then finally plucked up courage to post it again. Needless to say, his father thought his mind was deranged and implored him to give up this 'mad' notion. He suggested that if he insisted on being a preacher he should at least do it in a respectable way. So he promised to send Edward to college and have him educated to become a clergyman. But Edward pointed out that this was not the way Jesus went. "You must be mad," retorted his father. "Then Jesus must have been mad too," Edward replied.

His father disinherited him until such time as he returned to the fold of the Church of Ireland, and lived as a respectable businessman or clergyman. Edward, however, having found the pearl of great price, gladly gave up both his inheritance and fine business prospects. His own personal wealth, which was considerable, he gave to the poor. And so, in 1901, at the age of 34, in fellowship with Irvine and his associates, Edward too forsook all and went forth to preach depending on God to move the hearts of others to minister to his needs, conscious that he had been sent by the One who said: "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

Edward had, however, one last engagement to fulfil before he finally went. He was to attend the wedding of a friend. Bill Carroll, in Borrosokane. County Tipperary. He had a train ticket as far as Dublin for this purpose. His mother accompanied him to the train station in Enniskillen and gave him her blessing. She had said she wouldn't cry, but was unable to keep her promise.

Before boarding the train, he realized that, if from now on he was going to live by faith, he would have to depend on God's leadings, watch every move, even to what railway carriage he chose. It was then that a fellow commercial traveller recognized him and beckoned him to his carriage, not knowing what Edward's plans were. His first test of faith came when the train reached Dublin and his fellow traveller asked him where he was going. He replied. "I intend to stay with a widow, the mother of a friend of mine." Edward didn't know how he was going to get there; but this man happened to be going in the same direction and offered him a lift on his jaunting car, without knowing what Edward's circumstances were.

He wasn't sure whether the widow would ask him to stay the night, so this would be the next test. When he arrived at her home, however, she gave him a hearty welcome and asked him to stay, an offer he gladly accepted. He told her what time he wanted to be called in the morning but still didn't know how he was going to get to Borrosokane for the wedding. The devil then began to torment him by putting the question in his mind: "What are you going to do now?" But when he came down to breakfast in the morning there was an envelope addressed to him on the table. He immediately opened it and inside was a gold sovereign and a note from the sender stating that having heard of the life he was going to live, God moved him in the night to get up and send the money. Edward then prayed: "Lord, I know now how it is done and why you sent your Son as you did."

This money was sufficient to pay his fare to the wedding; but when he got to the train station and was about to pay for his ticket, the station-master punched it and handed it to him with the words: "In the name of the Lord." This man had also heard that Edward was going out by faith to preach the gospel and refused to take money for the ticket. What was more, he pointed to a nearby house and said: "That house is yours whenever you need it." Edward never took advantage of this offer, but was encouraged to depend on his heavenly Father as, during the next 60 years, experience after experience reminded him of the Lord's promise to his sent ones who go forth with the gospel in His name and way: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

CHAPTER 4

The Go Preacher Movement in the Beginning — "As Ye Go Preach"

"Repeatedly in Christian experience over the centuries, sensitive individuals who observed the contrast between the church of their own day and that described in the New Testament have sought to restore religious institutions to the earlier model." (Walter L. Wakefield)

There were many such sensitive individuals living in Ireland and Great Britain during the closing years of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th, who through a study of the Scriptures began to see the discrepancy between their respective religious denominations and the early church of the New Testament. Those like Edward Cooney, John West, and Tom Betty, who had experienced the new birth while still attending the churches to which they belonged, used to meet from time to time in homes to encourage one another to follow Jesus. Such groups were fairly wide spread and independent of each other.

These were days almost like those of which Malachi writes, when for four hundred years no prophet was sent. "but they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord harkened and heard, it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and thought on his name." George Walker, who professed through William Irvine and who was himself one of the first of the Go Preachers whom Irvine gathered around him, in giving an account of God's dealings with these early workers to the Selective Service. Washington D.C. during World War II states:

"They were deeply concerned about spiritual things and became fully convinced that there should be a return to the methods and purposes taught and carried out by Christ and his first disciples. This conviction led to frequent earnest conversations and studies on the subject, which in turn led to religious meetings and in due time a number of these people went forth to devote their lives to the preaching of the Gospel according to the teaching and example of Christ as given in the New Testament, i.e., 'Two by Two' and without salary or making appeals for financial assistance, putting implicit trust in God and his promise that as they sought first the Kingdom of God, their natural needs of food and raiment would be added to them."

Walker here omits to mention that it was through William Irvine's ministry that they came to understand that Matthew 10 was the pattern for all preachers in every age since that first mission to Israel. Be that as it may, many of these people were gradually being led out of Babylon by the Holy Spirit, albeit gropingly, haltingly, imperfectly, and were ready to receive the message of further light brought to them by Irvine. He was therefore not a voice crying in the wilderness, but one who, having received a measure of the anointing power of the Holy Spirit, was led to preach to those with whom the Spirit had already been dealing in convicting power and of whom many were born again before meeting him.

Concerning this calling out of Babylon, Edward Cooney in a letter to "sister in the way" writes:

"Undoubtedly, God called us and separated us to be his people in the beginning; and most prominent and most used in this calling out of a people for God's name was William Irvine who, at the time of his being sent forth to be a prophet, saw more clearly than any of us that the revelation of Christ from the Father to each individual child of His is the Rock alone on which Christ builds his Church, and that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (May 1930)

This was the kind of truth that was crucial for Edward Cooney; for, although he followed more strictly than any of his fellow preachers the pattern of Christ and his first apostles, he realized that unless they built on the Rock of revelation, a return to the methods and practices of the New Testament church could result in mere form, a following of the letter without the control of the Spirit. For, "the letter killeth, but the Spirit liveth life." It was therefore not a question of being imitators of Christ and his sent ones, but rather earthen vessels to whom, in whom, and through whom Christ was revealed, thus gradually and progressively becoming conformed to his image.

There was never any doubt in Cooney's mind as to the source of this movement. Its source was God. It was as though once again in the spiritual history of humanity, the Holy Spirit, was moving upon the face of the waters, so to speak, and leading people out of chaos and confusion toward the Light – that Light that shone before the light of the sun. Thus in reflecting on those early days, Edward Cooney writes again:

"All that God begins is right. And over and over again in considering the Truth of God, it is a great help to know that things began with God. So how did God begin to manifest his church in these latter days? I think of how God gave Adam a wife (Adam is a type of Christ). God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam. Out of Adam's side he took a rib, and out of that rib he builded a woman. What was the deep sleep? It was typical of surrender. How did God always get his church? Surrender of the Christ to God. God got a rib out of Christ. William Irvine was part of that rib, and others were part of that rib too. I believe I was part of it and Tom Betty and others also. And out of that rib God builded his church, and so we became (part of) the Bride of Christ in the early days. Why I like that is it gives no glory to man. The bride and the Bridegroom become one and become a reality." (Notes 1929/30)

Alfred Magowan, who professed through Edward Cooney at a mission he and Joe Kerr were holding in Armagh in 1902, and who himself went to preach shortly afterwards, also recalls those early days of the Go Preacher movement. In a letter to Wilson McClung, who was then head worker in New Zealand, he writes:

"There were no regulations and no asserting of authority. The Lord had mercifully set us free to worship him and serve him under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through a good conscience. And there was neither machinery nor any of those other things that religious people think necessary and which are necessary under human control.

"There was nothing of the vision we had of the 'way in Jesus' that would have led us towards another kind of sectarianism nor did we ever anticipate a time when we would become a strong people in an evil world. We had only one commission and that was to make people disciples as we had been made; and we had only one authority – if the Lord was with us we would so speak and live that he would use us in getting people saved. And as they listened to us they would recognize the voice of Him because of the anointing. That was the simple outline in the days of our beginning." (21/1/1931)

Two points are especially worthy of note here: in the early days of this movement's history, there was no organization because the Holy Spirit led them; and like the apostles they groped their way, and they got on without leaders too, for although Irvine was most used in this calling out, they were all, including Irvine, humble servants who believed that One was their Master, even Christ, and they were all brethren, as Alfred Magowan states again:

"We set out to form a brotherhood where all would be equal. We wanted to break from all tradition and become a people neither Catholic nor Protestant, with no regulations, no authority, no machinery or human control, to be free to serve God, and make people

free like ourselves. We put all worldly ambition behind us, none of this world's satisfactions or regards held any attractions; we had no theology to propound, no congregations to please; we saw ourselves as workers and not bosses."

It was also apparent to those outside the fellowship as well as inside that these preachers in general and Cooney and Irvine in particular were not among those who 'say and do not.' For states a local newspaper concerning them:

"They are greatly in earnest; they are full of zeal. They do not play the hypocrite. No one can say that Mr. Cooney says one thing and practices another. Nay, the very thing which gives most force to his preaching is the fact that he has himself practiced the self-denial and abandonment of the world, which he preaches; that he gave up good commercial prospects to follow the Lord, and that in daily life he shares with his brethren in common, and gives of what he does possess to those more in need than himself. Present Mr. Cooney with a top coat, the probability is that he would transfer it to one of his workers more in need of it than himself. He practices self-denial as a virtue. Mr. Irvine, the co-leader, it is said, has done the same. So that we have here two leaders who have sacrificed worldly advantages to serve God, as they believe, by a life of following the Saviour's example." (IR 13/10/1904)

Cooney and Irvine are described here as the co-leaders; and this is how the world perceived them as they were the movement's most outstanding preachers. The fellowship, however, at this time claimed to recognize no leader save Jesus only. God however, used them according to their light and ability in the same way as he used Peter and Paul.

Thus while Cooney and Irvine were leaders in the sense that they were a step ahead of their fellows in the path of discipleship, they were not rulers. Nor did this fellowship have any kind of denominational name at this time, believing such to be unscriptural. It was the world that called them Go Preachers, although John Long claims that this was their proper name from the beginning taken from Matthew 10:7, "As ye go, preach." But by 1904, three years after Cooney went to preach, they were already being called Cooneyites. It must be remembered, however, that although they were called many nicknames, they themselves assumed no name at this time. Thus they recognized no earthly 'leader' and took no denominational name, as Wilson McClung, one of the early preachers, told a reporter in England:

"We are simply mission folk, and we go out into the world at the instruction of Jesus to preach the Gospel... We have no name but the ribald multitude give us many. Some call us Cooneyites, some call us Tramps, Faith Missionaries, No Sectors, and so on. Well, we are Cooneyites; we are McClungites, for Cooney is no greater than I. We have no established leader in this world." (IR 21/6/1906)

One might detect a twinge of envy here toward Cooney who never sought recognition, but he got it anyway. On the other hand. McClung may simply have been trying to point out that they were an equal brotherhood. Cooney sought only to do the will of God as it was revealed to him, and to this end he placed himself unreservedly at the Lord's disposal as did many of the others also.

Irvine, however, from the first saw Cooney's worth, and this seems to have provoked envy in some of his fellow preachers who were associated with Irvine longer than he was. It was, in fact, thought by many at the time that the movement didn't get its impetus until he came into fellowship, for the Impartial Reporter stated, "the motive power was latent until William Irvine met Edward Cooney." Irvine was quick to see that Cooney was a tremendous asset to the movement, for by his powerful preaching he soon made many converts. As John Long writes in his 'Journal'; "The early days of his ministry were attended with extraordinary success." As a preacher, outsiders also considered him to be above his fellows, as the following account of an open-air meeting indicates:

"Some of the men who spoke on the Enniskillen Diamond were utterly unfitted to preach. On the other hand Mr. Cooney can talk. By dint of practice he can pitch his voice without shouting; he can reason; he can enforce his argument with chapter and verse; and therefore he is listened to and his reasoning has power and force. But his copyists, while they may be very good people, are not preachers. They simply speak jargon. Indeed the old Saxon word, 'blather' would almost be justified." (IR 13/10/1904)

"Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33).

John Long recalls that Irvine and Cooney preached that the life of forsaking all to follow Jesus was the scriptural way for the workers; but the saints should consecrate their homes and possessions to God and minister unto those who had gone forth to preach. Thus while the workers forsook all, divesting themselves entirely of all earthly possessions, the saints renounced all and became stewards of their possessions which they now regarded as belonging to God. The saints' homes were therefore 'open homes' for the homeless preachers to stay in as they moved about preaching from place to place.

There were, however, many places in which there were no 'open homes', especially in those early days, and the pioneer workers often had to sleep in barns or under the stars, frequently on empty stomachs. But hard as this way was, many people from a variety of backgrounds were led to forsake all and go forth to preach the gospel by faith. There were among them: farmers, businessmen, school teachers, engineers, civil servants, policemen, blacksmiths, soldiers, carpenters, fishermen, for example. Their going forth thus to preach, after the manner of Christ and his sent ones, was an act of faith and a labour of love. And their efforts bore fruit, for people impressed to see faith in action came into fellowship with them, as George Walker points out:

"As a result of this step, many people expressed their desire to be in fellowship with such preachers and this led to regular gatherings together of small assemblies in homes for worship and study of God's word. The reason for meeting in homes was primarily because it was scriptural; the Christians during the first centuries of the Christian era met regularly for worship in homes, which fact is borne out and supported by church history. Thus after serious consideration, the leaders were confident that, in their efforts to follow the early Christians, they should form church gatherings in homes ... The meetings continue to the present in homes and are under the guidance of local elders. Baptism by immersion and the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper are taught and practiced." (Statement to Selective Service 1942)

Although Walker does not mention them by name, Irvine and Cooney were the two 'leaders' who introduced the practice of forming assemblies in the homes for the breaking of bread on the Lord's Day under the guidance of local elders, in accordance with New Testament teaching and practice.

As well as restoring the scriptural methods of preaching and worshipping, the Go Preachers also sought to restore the scriptural method of baptism. Since the New Testament was clear on this, the only problem facing the preachers was to find someone worthy enough to perform this service. From the beginning, Irvine realized that it was of prime importance to choose from among them who was the least likely to backslide. So Tom Elliott was unanimously chosen, and all agreed that the choice was a good one. He it was then who baptized all the early preachers and converts. (Subsequently, other preachers also baptized new converts).

Elliott was therefore affectionately known among them as 'Tom the Baptist'. He was a man in about his mid-thirties, who had been a very prosperous farmer and who, with his wife, Ellen, enjoyed a comfortable home and a happy settled way of life. They had no children. Before coming into fellowship, through the ministry of Edward Cooney, they were Methodists, upright and blameless in all their ways. They too heard the call to forsake all and follow Jesus. So in 1902, they obeyed the call. Tom sold his farm and all his earthly possessions, gave the proceeds to the poor, and with his wife Ellen, took up his cross, and went also to preach the gospel by faith, in fellowship with other Go Preachers. This was no small sacrifice, but Tom said to Ellen that it would be worth it all if it meant winning even one soul for Christ.

Thus during the first few years of the fellowship's history, the Go Preachers had restored some of the basic elements of the early church, cutting out of their lives all that they knew to be unscriptural. To summarize, these elements were:

- 1) A fellowship of continuing disciples in which saints and workers formed an equal brotherhood – a priesthood of believers – controlled by Christ through the Spirit, individually and collectively, assuming no name and recognizing no earthly leader or leaders. (And if they didn't always live up to this ideal, it was at least the standard to which they aspired. The early church did not always live up to the ideal that Paul set before them either, but he never compromised or lowered the standard to suit the carnally or worldly minded).
- 2) A homeless, itinerant, unpaid ministry called upon to forsake all and depend on God to move the hearts of others to minister to their needs. These preachers included women as well as men, who like the men went to preach in pairs, and also some married couples some of whom had children who were cared for in the homes of the saints.
- 3) The breaking of bread on the Lord's Day in the homes of believers under the guidance of local elders.
- 4) Baptism of believers by total immersion.

The movement spread rapidly throughout the British Isles, and by 1903, the preachers had taken the gospel to the New world, as George Walker writes:

"In 1903, ministers of this Christian body began their labours in the United States and in the year 1904 in Canada. In these and subsequent years, through the preaching of the Gospel, assemblies were formed in the homes as already described." (Ibid.)

All this was achieved without either organization or hierarchical structure. But men and women strong in faith, "claiming the liberty that can be enjoyed by every born again person to move and speak as directed by the Holy Spirit," went where the Spirit led them and made disciples. And,

"As each individual kept in touch with the Head" (Jesus), that kept all union ... This is what was seen on the day of Pentecost when 120 were united with no organization but were controlled by the unseen Head, Jesus, and moved by the unseen Holy Spirit." (Fred Wood)

Although the Go Preachers did not profess to know the whole truth, but were groping their way toward further light, there were undoubtedly some among them who, according to the measure of faith, showed evidence of the anointing power of the Holy Spirit. In writing about the early church, G. B. Caird states:

"The Spirit made his presence known unmistakably by the gift of revitalizing power, and the sense of newly acquired power was one of the marks of apostolic Christianity."

It can also be said with confidence that the revitalizing power of the Spirit was one of the marks of the Go Preacher fellowship in the beginning. Thus Edward Cooney saw that it was of prime importance that they keep moving in the direction the Spirit was leading, because only to the extent that they walked in the light given them would further light be revealed. For this is a progressive revelation, a continuing discipleship, the goal of which is Jesus. With the exception of Tom Elliott, however, it is doubtful if many of the other early workers, Irvine included, saw as clearly as did Cooney at this time although some of them at least were also truly called of God. For subsequent events will show that as time went on, the fellowship, as a whole was gradually and progressively to lose much of the power, the freshness, and the spontaneity of the childlike faith it once had.

CHAPTER 5 (Part 1)

The Newtownards Mission – 1904

Edward Cooney was in June 1904 led by the Spirit to preach the gospel in Newtownards. "I have a commission from Christ," he told the hostile multitude. "Three years ago (1901) the Lord said to me: 'Go, Edward Cooney, without scrip and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' Then he gave me this promise, 'Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' And

he has kept his promise." But when this 20th Century apostle appeared on the scene in 1904 preaching the same gospel as did his spiritual forebears in the early church in the first century, he was regarded by the inhabitants of this 'Christian' town as a fanatic, a perverter of the Word of God, and a disturber of the peace. For states a contemporary report:

"Not since King Edward VII, the mightiest ruler in this world, visited Newtownards, was there seen such a vast concourse of people as that which was on the Shore Road on Sunday last, all going to hear and see Mr. Edward Cooney, a 'tramp' preacher hailing from Enniskillen, who has visited this town, and has created not a little strife by his religio-manical doctrines." (N.C. 28/5/04).

These so called 'religio-manical' doctrines were:

1. His claim to apostleship: This, the report said, "was outlandish in the extreme." It went on:

"Claiming to be a divinely appointed apostle, he expects the community at large to honour that claim on no other grounds than his own naked assertion." (Ibid.)

When, however, Edward Cooney declared: "I am commissioned by Christ to preach the gospel," he was claiming no more than was Paul when he said:

"Paul, an apostle, not by human appointment or human commission, but by commission from Jesus Christ and from God the Father who raised him from the dead." (Gal. 1:1) NEB.

Edward's claim in the 20th century that he was commissioned by the Lord was no idle boast, no 'naked assertion. It was as valid as was Paul's in the first century. For, with both Paul and Edward, it was not just a matter of preaching the Word; it was also a matter of making the Word flesh. It was not just a matter of talking about God, but rather of being an instrument through whom God spoke. And the closest scrutiny of the some 60 subsequent years of Edward Cooney's ministry will reveal that he had the right to say as Paul had: "I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me."

2. The commission given by the Lord to his apostles was a permanent one for his sent ones in all ages: Edward Cooney believed that there was only one way for apostles or sent ones to go to preach; that was the way Jesus went and the way he sent the 12 and the 70, with no provision except from God. Edward, therefore, attacked all organized religion, Catholic and Protestant alike; for, he claimed, they used the name of Jesus but did not walk his way. Their systems, he said, had no foundation in the New Testament. Such anti-clerical pronouncements provoked sharp reactions. He was accused of making "unwarrantable attacks upon church organizations in general, and upon ministers of the gospel in particular," and, his insistence that the Lord's commission to his sent ones in Matthew 10 was a permanent one was said to have been "an inexcusable misrepresentation of the Saviour's words." For runs this argument, the fact that this mission was to the Jews only and that Jesus subsequently issued totally different instructions (Luke 22:35-36) shows that he never intended the commission he gave in Matthew 10 to be other than a temporary one.

This argument was constantly being brought up against Edward and his fellow preachers; but they were able to refute it from Scripture. An anonymous writer, who signs himself 'Within,' sums up the Go Preacher teaching on this matter thus:

"True the Gospel was preached first to the Jews only. But after our Lord had risen, he appeared to the Eleven and told them to go and disciple all nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost – 'teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' And he promised to be with them: unto the end of the age which certainly means during the present dispensation of grace." (IR 7/10/1909)

As for the contention that totally different instructions from those in Matthew 10 were subsequently issued, Luke 22:35-36, the statement goes on:

"When the whole passage (Luke 22) is carefully read, the backslidden state of the Apostles is clear; because we are told: 'There was a strife among them to see who would be the greatest' – an evidence of the devil's working in all ages. Jesus told Peter that Satan desired to have him to sift him as wheat, and we find (verse 38) they had already taken swords but had them concealed from the Master's view. There is not a word about sending them out again in this passage because they were in no condition to be sent. For, we find that very soon afterwards, Peter denied him and the remainder forsook him and fled. Later on, after Peter had repented and was restored, we find him at the Beautiful Gate of the temple saying, 'silver and gold I have none'. (Acts 3:6), but he had the power of God instead. And Paul, the 'educated tramp preacher' fared no better. For in 1 Cor. 4:11 he says; 'Even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are half clad, and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling place.'" (Ibid.)

3. Baptism: Method and Authority: Referring to Edward Cooney and the baptism he conducted at Strangford Lough one Sunday in June, 1904, the report stated:

"We have heard much of this fanatic and have treated him with the silent contempt such a person deserves; but one cannot fail to take notice of the performance that took place on last Sabbath day. Mr. Cooney believes in total Immersion, and it was rumoured that many throughout the week, both males and females, were baptised in the waters of Strangford Lough." (N.C. 4/6/1904).

To show how far Christendom had drifted from New Testament teaching and practice, a baptism carried out according to Scripture was for the 'Christians' of Newtownards in the early 20th century a strange and novel idea. So unusual was this event, in fact, that it caused a vast multitude to follow Cooney and his converts to the White Pillar at Strangford Lough where the baptism was to take place. This moving mass of scornful though curious spectators is described thus:

"One would have thought, on looking at the Shore Road, that the Newtownards Flower show was being held and that the Ballyhait races were in full swing, all proceeding thereto on foot. But no, all were going to see and hear Mr. Edward Cooney. And as the day

was fine and very hot, it enticed the vast number that were full of curiosity to visit the shore." (Ibid.)

This mob created a disorderly scene at the baptism, first by mocking and scoffing and then by attacking the converts preparing to be baptized. The report did not, however, condemn these hooligans for their unseemly behaviour. It chose rather to hold Cooney and his converts responsible for the scene, and threatened that if such scenes should recur, the Cooneyites would be hunted out of Newtownards. For, continues the report:

"If the Cooneyites continue in the way they are doing, we anticipate they will be hunted out of Newtownards in a similar way as they were hunted out of Ballynahinch." (Ibid)

Jesus however, leaves us in no doubt as to the necessity for baptism and the method by which it should be carried out. Because, he who had no need to be baptized, nevertheless submitted himself to the baptism of John – the baptism of repentance. And the baptism enjoined by Jesus in Matthew 28:19 was one to be undergone by believers who identified with him in his death, burial, and resurrection. The call throughout the New Testament thereafter is to repent and be baptized with baptism having this significance. This will give some indication of its sacredness and seriousness. But in 20th-century Christendom, where infant baptism by sprinkling is the order of the day, a baptism in accordance with Scripture was regarded in at least one 'Christian' community as an extraordinary scene, provoking an attack on the participants by an unruly mob.

It was not only Cooney's method of baptism but his authority to baptize that was called in question since, it was said, he had no ecclesiastical standing. "We did not think," the report went on, "that there were so many innocents in Newtownards as to be baptized by Mr. Cooney or anyone else who has no ecclesiastical standing." One might ask what ecclesiastical standing did John the Baptist have, and why the Lord chose to be baptized by him and not by those who had ecclesiastical standing – those high priests and scribes who later had him crucified. Jesus chose John for the simple and very good reason that he was a man sent from God. And because he was sent from God, he bore many of the marks of Christ.

These were the Forerunner's credentials. They were the credentials of the prophets whom God sent to Israel and Judah warning the people to repent. They were the credentials of the apostles whom Jesus sent first to the Jews (the people of God) and then, after his resurrection, to the nations in the first century. They were Paul's credentials – he whom the risen Lord sent to bring his name before the nations and the people of Israel. They have been the credentials of all God's sent ones ever since. And they still remain the credentials of his ambassadors to Christendom and the world. Edward Cooney was one such ambassador for Christ in 1904, and he remained one until his death in 1960.

It is significant that throughout Biblical history, the sent ones of the Lord were never members of the established ecclesiastical order, that is to say the priesthood. They were in all cases prophets and apostles whom the Lord called out from among the people. Archdeacon Pratt of the Church of Ireland, Enniskillen, was to say of Edward Cooney years later, that he was a prophet raised up by the Lord from among the people when the churches had gone dead. Edward Cooney had the best possible authority to baptize; he was a sent one of the Lord bearing, like the apostles and prophets before him, many of the attributes of Christ.

4. The Conditions of Discipleship: Edward's teaching on the conditions of discipleship was given by the above-mentioned report as "another instance of his perversion of the Word of God. . . with the views he inculcates respecting the rich young ruler." He was accused of preaching that one must sell all that he has of this world's goods and give the proceeds to the poor in order to obtain eternal life. This is a perversion of Edward's teaching, for this is not what he taught. What he did teach is well expressed by Fred Wood, a fellow labourer with him in the gospel. Fred puts it thus:

"While Edward and those like him, the moving ministry separated unto the gospel, are called upon to forsake all that they have and depend upon God to move the hearts of others to minister to their needs, those who become disciples in fellowship with them, though not required to leave all are required to renounce all that they have and become stewards of what they have renounced."

Thus when Edward preached about the rich young ruler to whom Jesus said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow me," he was giving this as an example of what is required of a sent one like himself who is called upon to forsake all. But, as Fred Wood points out, disciples in fellowship with such sent ones are required to renounce all.

"Renounce", Edwards tells us, "means to bid adieu to all that we possess, so that henceforth what we have belongs to God, and we become stewards accountable to God, and are no longer owners of our possessions."

Conclusion: In our examination of Edward's teaching on the four subjects discussed above, we have seen that in nothing has he departed from New Testament teaching. It is a grave reflection on the 'Christianity' of the day that when one who fulfilled the conditions of apostleship as laid down by the Lord himself, came contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, that he should be regarded as a fanatic, a disturber of the peace, and a perverter of the Word of God. But let us not forget that the Master of the house was called Beelzebub, and he warned his sent ones that their name would also be cast out as evil.

CHAPTER 5 (Part 2)

The Newtownards Mission – 1904

Edward's experiences in his early missions to various towns in Ireland call to mind those of the apostles in the days of the primitive church as recorded in Acts. For, like them, he created a stir by his preaching wherever he went, was subjected to persecution, but remained undaunted and unafraid, ready, as they were, to shed his blood if necessary. In Newtownards, which was no exception, he came close to this. But he continued to hold meetings in Sam Kelly's hall in Francis Street, preach in the open air at Conway Square, and baptize in Strangford Lough. And the crowds continued to come, for the most part it may be presumed, out of curiosity and to

create a disturbance. Yet though the majority came to scoff, there were many who remained to pray and were thus by his ministry won to Christ.

A considerable number of people were baptized by him in Strangford Lough during 1904, 1905, and 1906 – and this despite the uproar created by the mob on that Sunday afternoon in June 1904 when "the Cooneyites were almost driven into the sea." For, during the attack referred to above, one of the converts, who "could not follow Cooney so far as to believe that when he was smote on the one cheek to turn the other, struck one of the pressing crowd." The other converts, however, did not retaliate and could be heard shouting, 'Praise the Lord for persecution.'

Nothing serious happened on this occasion, for a large number of police led by Head Constable Newman were present. They quelled the crowd and restored law and order. When the uproar had calmed, Cooney assembled his converts and sang: 'Though the fight may be tough, go on, go on to victory.' "The Cooneyites then formed in procession and proceeded up the road, followed by the police and a large crowd." The police were following them, it should be pointed out, not because they were disorderly, but to protect them from the mob who created the uproar.

During the following week, services were held by the Reverend W. L. T. Whatham for the purpose of denouncing Cooney. And although these services were largely attended, they could not match the thousands that crowded every night into Conway Square to see and hear Cooney. On one such occasion, during that same week, he addressed the multitude as follows:

"Jeering, mocking and scoffing is the motto of Newtownards. But any man who wants to follow Jesus must be prepared to meet that. Few have ever tried the narrow way that leads to life, but many are on the broad road that leads to destruction. Jesus said, 'I am the Way,' but his way is not popular in Newtownards. The majority of people here are full of pride. When I came here and saw the flounces, the cuffs, and the frock coats, I was glad to know I was in such a place to strike a blow at that pride. Sam Kelly was mobbed last night. Was that honourable? He was mobbed because he kept company with me; and I am considered to be bad company by many of the people in Newtownards. But, never mind; for in the days of Jesus, it seemed right to be with the majority and wrong to be with the few. And it has been that way ever since. Those of you who have received Jesus and walk in His Way have your sins forgiven. But as I look around, I can see that some of the rest of you are good advertisements for the devil." (N.C. June 1904).

A Mrs. Carroll also testified at this meeting. She said that her pastor had ordered her out of his house like a dog because she associated with Edward Cooney.

"The following night at another vast open-air meeting in Conway Square, Cooney thanked God that the devil was roused against him. He said that the Reverend Whatam's remarks regarding him were "horrible filthy lies," so much so, in fact, that he would not and could not repeat them. He criticized the Episcopal Church and in particular its policy of not allowing laymen to preach in the pulpit. He related a conversation he had had with a clergyman who defended the church's position in this matter. Edward asked him if the Lord Jesus came down, would he not allow him to preach in the pulpit. The clergyman replied, tongue in cheek, "Well, I would allow him to read the lessons."" (*The above address was put into direct speech by the author.)

It appears that after these open-air meetings as after the baptisms, the police would escort Edward home to protect him from the crowd that followed him, many of whom were not kindly disposed towards him. It should be noted, however, that it was not just the unruly mob that opposed him. He was bitterly opposed by most of the clergy also, an example of which opposition has been cited above. This is not to be wondered at since his life and teaching struck a blow at the very foundations of clericalism. For he claimed it was not built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone, but that the Protestants had sprung from the Catholics, and the Catholics had sprung from the devil.

Edward Cooney and the Orange Order:

Notwithstanding the opposition of the clergy and the threats and mockery of the mob, Cooney continued his mission in Newtownards; and the newspaper which denounced him served only to whet the curiosity of the multitude, for:

"After the Chronicle had circulated around Newtownards on Friday evening, large crowds gathered at the different corners convenient to Conway Square, waiting for Mr. Cooney and his disciples. Excitement ran high when it was thought Mr. Cooney was on his way to the Square; but no, he did not come that evening, much to the disappointment of the eager crowds. On Saturday evening, however, the Apostle made his appearance, marching from Mr. Kelly's hall down Francis Street with his converts; and a meeting was held in the Square which was largely attended." (Ibid.)

Everything was proceeding in an orderly fashion until some Orange drummers and a fifer, followed by a crowd of supporters, marched down Mill Street and along the Square with the intention of drumming Cooney down. Apparently, the Reverend Thomas McIlwrath foresaw trouble, went out and persuaded the drummers to turn and go down High Street instead. But his remonstrations had little effect, for the Orangemen were soon back in Francis Street moving towards the Square again where Cooney was holding his meeting. This time they were turned back by the police under the direction of District Inspector Hanna and Head Constable Newman. But determined to enter the Square, the drummers approached it from yet another corner, and their intolerant behaviour resulted in a disorderly scene. They succeeded in drowning completely Cooney's meeting but not in drumming him out of the Square. The event was reported as follows:

"Someone protested against the drummers and a disorderly scene took place. The crowd swayed and it looked as if Cooney's meeting was going to be swept out of the Square... We estimate there were about 3,000 people there." (Ibid.)

However, the police as well as some civilians intervened, and so the drummers left the Square. District Inspector Hanna and Head Constable Newman then elbowed their way through the crowd to warn Cooney that his meeting, if continued, could lead to a breach

of the peace; and that if the hostility towards him grew worse, they would have to force him to leave the Square, to which Cooney replied:

"I am not breaking the law or causing an obstruction, and I don't see why I should be interfered with. I am doing my Master's will and I am ready to shed my blood for him." *(Ibid.)* (*This was put into direct speech by the author.)

The Head Constable warned, however, that they would have to remove the cause, to which Cooney retorted: "I am not the cause. The Devil is the cause." The Head Constable's witty response was "I'm sorry, I cannot put my hands on him." This good-humoured remark caused much laughter and helped to siphon off some of the antagonism of the angry mob. So Cooney continued his meeting and addressed the multitude thus:

"Jesus was wounded because he was not afraid of men. He did not go about asking this man or that man what he thought but went straight through the land and pleased God. And because he did that, he displeased everyone else. The District Inspector has told me it is dangerous for me to be in the Square tonight; and I have told him I am willing to shed my blood. My death would mean more than all the works I have done. Stephen was put to death and his blood did more good than the most eloquent sermon ever preached.

"Some of you have howled and booed at me. You have called me a liar, a hypocrite, a blasphemer, a fanatic, a false prophet. I wonder what next. I must be an awful character; but you can't lay a charge against me or bring me to court. This howling mob might put me to death; but I do not fear them, nor care a snap of my fingers for their threats. The drums were out beating; but it was the Devil who was in those who were beating them. Beating drums won't help much at their dying hour. The powers of the Devil himself cannot overthrow me, for I have stood up for Jesus; and if I didn't believe in him, I wouldn't be here tonight. Jesus preached without a salary and poured out his life for all. I, Edward Cooney, stand a conqueror in Newtownards, and the forces of darkness in the hostile crowd can do nothing to me. They could not draw my blood unless it was God's will. The devils in Newtownards have not the courage to draw my blood; I haven't got cut yet. I have enjoyed the battle against the Devil in Newtownards more than Lord Roberts enjoyed the battle against the Boers." (*This address was put into direct speech by the author.)

Edward Cooney was obviously not only a righteous but an extremely brave man. Extraordinary courage and self-sacrifice were also displayed by the men and women associated with him. It was not easy being a Cooneyite in 1904. These people were despised by their communities and it was often as much as their job was worth to be in fellowship with Cooney. They, however, saw something in him the world could not see. Where the world saw a fanatic, they saw something of the life of Christ manifested in a mortal body. This weak and helpless flock were unashamed of the stand they took and unafraid of the powers of this world marshalled against them. For they trusted in an unseen power which they believed was behind them. Cooney knew that anyone who associated with him would suffer, and he never pretended the way would be easy. Jesus said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt. 16:24). The cross to which Jesus referred in this passage, the stake carried by a condemned person to his execution, symbolized the sufferings and shame to be endured by his faithful followers because of their fellowship with him.

Edward acknowledged that the people were losing trade because of him and being discriminated against in the job market. His sense of humour never failed him, however; and whatever one might say about Cooney, one could never say he was dull. He didn't want anyone to get the wrong idea, so he would let his audience know what they were in for if they had fellowship with him. So he told them:

"If any of you want a line to get you 'out' of a situation, come to Cooney and he'll give it to you. If I could get you a good situation, you might join us. Perhaps it would be as much as your job is worth to be associated with Cooney and the people who assemble in Sam Kelly's hall. But the victory is with us and not with the worldlings. And you will have to acknowledge that there is an unseen power behind us." (N.C. June 1904).

His courage in preaching Christ in the face of fierce opposition recalls the boldness of his spiritual predecessors in the first century. For example, when Peter and John were arrested and threatened by the Council who commanded them not to teach in the name of Jesus, they answered: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to harken unto you or unto God, judge ye." And they went right on preaching Christ, only to be arrested again. This time the High Priest said unto them: "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in his name, and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine"? (Acts 5:28). But Peter fearlessly answered: "We ought to obey God rather than men." Edward Cooney was warned to "throw overboard his questionable theological ideas," otherwise he and his followers would be hunted out of Newtownards. Yet he was preaching the same gospel that Peter and John preached, went forth in the same way as they did, and was sent by the same Lord. Peter and John would have been slain for their courage had it not been for the restraining influence of Gamaliel. They were beaten, but they went right on preaching Jesus, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. (Acts 5:41).

Stephen, who was tried by that same Council that had Jesus crucified and Peter and John imprisoned for teaching in his name, was not intimidated by them either, but boldly said to them: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them that showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have no been the betrayers and murderers." (Acts 7:52). But Stephen was stoned to death for his courage. However, did not his blood prepare the way for the conversion of Saul of Tarsus who witnessed his death and consented to it? And although Saul's first reaction was to set off another campaign of persecution, breathing out threatenings and slaughter; and though not aware of it at the time, he saw in Stephen the Christ he was persecuting. But it wasn't until Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, that he realized what he was doing. This zealot going about trying to establish his own righteousness saw Jesus resurrected and heard him say: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me"? (Acts 9:4).

If Stephen's martyrdom was in some way instrumental in bringing a Saul of Tarsus to Christ, it is not too surprising that Edward Cooney, anointed by that same Spirit that caused Stephen to give his life, was also ready to shed his blood if in so doing souls would

be won to Christ. Jesus showed Saul that in persecuting the church, he was persecuting him; but after their encounter on the road to Damascus, Saul, who had persecuted Christ in others, was to experience from then on Christ being persecuted in him. For as soon as he started preaching Jesus, the unbelieving Jews mobbed him and tried to kill him. He was beaten, imprisoned, stoned and driven from city to city.

Now if Christ was persecuted in his body, the church, during the Apostolic Age, it is only reasonable to expect that his sufferings would continue in his body, the church, throughout the present dispensation of grace. This, in fact, was the case during the first 200 years of the Christian era; for as long as the church conformed to the image of Jesus, it suffered persecution. It was not until it became conformed to the image of this world, thus becoming the apostate church, that it ceased to be persecuted, but in turn began to persecute those who truly followed Jesus. The 'Christians' of Newtownards in 1904 would have been outraged at the idea that they were persecuting Christ. But if Christ is rejected in his body, the church, *would not he also be rejected if he were to come in his own body in the 20th century? When he said to Saul of Tarsus, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," he was clearly identifying with individuals through whom he lived and worked as he did in his own body. Jesus said: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." Following in the footsteps of the apostles and prophets, Edward Cooney enjoyed what he called "the battle against the devil in Newtownards." For the persecution he suffered there was an indication that he too was counted worthy, as they were, to share in the sufferings and rejection of the Master.

*The Church is the company of individuals, each living by revelation from the Father, and therefore collectively one. (definition by Edward Cooney).

CHAPTER 6

The First Annual Convention—Crocknacrieve 1904

By 1904, there were upwards of 150 Go Preachers or tramp preachers, as they were now sometimes called. They held missions in halls provided for the purpose by their converts who now numbered in the thousands; they preached in the open air in towns and villages; they conducted baptisms by total immersion in rivers and loughs; and they established house churches after the manner of those recorded in the New Testament. The movement had by this time spread throughout the British Isles and even as far as the United States and Canada. They now branched out into yet another activity, that of holding large annual conventions modelled on those of Keswick. These early conventions lasted several weeks and often as long as a month. The first such convention took place at the home of John West at Crocknacrieve, during September/October, 1904. A contemporary report gives the following account:

"For the past few weeks a conference of the 'tramp' fraternity has been held at Crocknacrieve which has been converted into a huge 'hotel' by Mr. John West for his numerous guests. Over 120 are said to be accommodated in the house alone. Hither flocked 'tramps' from England, Scotland and Ireland. And so far as the outside world can judge, Mr. Edward Cooney (after whom they are generally called Cooneyites) seems to be the accepted high priest or leader, a post at one time held by Mr. Irvine." (IR 29/9/1904).

Actually there really were no 'leaders' in the sense of rulers at this time. It so happened that Edward Cooney was a more outstanding speaker than the rest, had a more striking and interesting personality, and through a so-called 'tramp' preacher, yet had a princely bearing. What is more, he had the firm conviction that he had a commission from Christ to preach the gospel, and he therefore spoke with authority. It was natural then that those looking in from the outside should have taken him for the leader and given the entire group the name of Cooneyite within three years of his going forth to preach. Insiders, however, would still have regarded William Irvine at this time as the 'leader' or rather the first among equals. That Cooney was a more distinguished preacher than the rest of his brethren, including Irvine, is demonstrated by the fact that it was he who got almost all the press coverage of the day. That coverage, though often hostile to the movement in general and to Cooney in particular, yet saw fit not only to concentrate its reportage on him while writing about the movement, but also to record many of his 'sermons' or addresses. The other tramp preachers, if mentioned at all, are referred to only in passing. Irvine got somewhat more coverage than the others, but to the outside world, he too was overshadowed by Cooney.

At the convention referred to above where 120-150 people were lodged and fed in the house alone, the practical aspects in catering for such numbers required a great deal of spontaneous co-operation on the part of the members. For there was no organization, no administration, no fund raisers. All was given voluntarily, time and money, without solicitations of any kind. The following report will give some indication of the spirit of hospitality that prevailed at Crocknacrieve during this convention. It states:

"Miss Gill, who had charge of the cooking arrangements at Crocknacrieve, had no idle time. Assisted by a band of willing helpers, she had a great number to cater for. On Sunday last a whole sheep was cooked for soup for her large company of 150, and there was a lot of bread-cutting for the hundreds who assembled at tea; for the 'tramps' follow the scriptural injunction of being 'given to hospitality,' according to their means. This being 'given to hospitality' is a feature, too often forgotten in the rectory or the manse; and where it is observed it binds people and minister in stronger bonds. The 'tramps' certainly are hospitable and entertain even strangers." (IR 6/10/1904).

As the convention progressed, the converts grew in number, and this resulted in more public baptisms. In Fermanagh these were carried out in the Ballycassidy river near Ballinamallard. Following is a description of one such baptisms:

"Ballinamallard has become the Jerusalem of Pilgrim tramps, and the Ballycassidy river their Jordan. Last Sunday witnessed the baptism of about 27 persons, male and female, and the scene was witnessed by a crowd of interested spectators...anxious to see the uncommon ceremony. Mr. Edward Cooney delivered the address." (IR 29/9/1904).

During the course of his address, Cooney spoke of his own personal experience, namely, his conversion at the age of 17 and how at that time he felt constrained to confess Jesus as Lord; the death of his elder brother and the effect this had in drawing him closer to Christ, causing him to resolve to live not by his own strength but in that given by the Lord Jesus; the circumstances of his going to preach the gospel and the commission given to him by the Lord. "Mr. Cooney," it was said, "had no hesitation in affirming his own authority to baptize, his own authority to preach and teach. 'I am commissioned,' he said, 'by Jesus Christ to declare that you may have your sins remitted.'" And he exhorted the multitude to repent and be baptized. Then he asked:

"What brought so many of you here! Curiosity? Yes, and I thank God for that curiosity as it enables me to speak to you about your eternal salvation. John baptised our Lord in the river Jordan; therefore, our Lord's disciples must confess his name and be baptised in the same manner as all baptisms recorded in the New Testament were carried out. You must be baptised, not as the Archbishop of Canterbury said, nor by the manner prescribed by the Moderator of the General Assembly, or the President of the Methodist Conference, but by the example of Jesus of Nazareth. And he has commanded me, not only to disciple all nations but to baptise them in his Name. I warn you scoffers and jesters not to make light of baptism. You should not scoff at what Jesus himself passed through. It will make your hearts harder and deaden them to good influences. And I will thank any of you to show me from the Bible where we are not acting up to the scriptural method of baptism."* (Ibid.) (* This address was put into direct speech by the author.)

Cooney then quoted examples of adult baptisms by immersion from the Scriptures, from the baptism of our Lord by John to the baptism of Lydia by Paul, and invited anyone to show him a proof from the Bible of infant baptism. The baptism then commenced and is portrayed as follows:

"The party congregated near the bank of the river and sang a hymn, while those to be immersed undressed themselves in a barn at the mill. As the neophytes approached, the party divided itself into two lines in semi-military fashion, and Mr. Tom Elliott, a strong man of powerful build, clad in woollen shirt and trousers, entered the water up to the waist while the neophytes came one by one through the living lane made for them. First came 5 young men, and Mr. Elliott repeating the name of the person to be immersed, said, 'I baptise thee in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' He then dipped the neophyte completely under the water, neatly and without splashing; his great strength enabled him to restore the baptized person to an erect position again easily. Some girls then followed and the shock of the water was so great to the first girl that it was feared she would faint, but she composed herself sufficiently to go through the ceremony." (Ibid.)

Among those who stood by the Ballycassidy River that October day in 1904, as Edward Cooney called people to repentance and Tom Elliott baptized them, some who had not come there for that purpose were moved to repent and be baptized as the publicans and soldiers were when they heard John preach at the River Jordan. For, "a number of young men had caught the enthusiasm of the moment, and they also decided to be dipped, so that on the whole 27 people received the act of immersion."

It had to be admitted that these tramp preachers were an influence for good, for through their ministry sinners were being led to repentance. What many resented, however, was their denunciation of the clergy of all denominations. Their condemnation of other churches and their ministers may at times have been overdone. On the other hand, how could preachers, who were contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints and trying to separate it from the traditions of men, do anything but find fault with the professing church whose doctrines, they believed, had corrupted the Word of God? They saw no possibility of compromise with organized religion which to them was Babylon. For, they believed that God's message to those who fear and love Him in every age is: 'Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not her plagues.' (Rev. 18:14).

Undoubtedly this 'new way' caused a great deal of uneasiness among traditional Christians. Many would have been content to admire the exemplary lives of these preachers and their efforts to convert the so-called sinners as long as their own peace of mind was not disturbed. But the tramps believed that the religious people in their time were in as much need of repentance as were the sinners. Edward Cooney preached that pride and the love of money were the two greatest evils, and that the love of money would send you to hell faster than the love of whiskey. For, he said, it is the love of money, not whiskey, that is the root of all evil. It was this kind of preaching that so vehemently antagonized self-righteousness, the self-satisfaction, and the self-deception of the religious world. Someone once said that no one is ever offended to hear people talking about Jesus. It is when they attempt to live like him and preach that others do likewise that they experience rejection and persecution. So it was with these preachers who were nonetheless in a somewhat enviable position. For they were not obliged to preach what people liked to hear. They were in bondage to no man. They were not the 'hired servants' of any religious organization which, in order to survive, has to please the people who support it. The tramp preachers on the other hand believed themselves to be sent ones of the Lord and owed allegiance only to him. Thus their concern was to please God not men. And it was on him that they depended for their sustenance. Their sole purpose was to win souls to Christ and not to a system of any kind. Like John the Baptist, who did not set out to please men and who called the religious people of his day, 'you brood of the viper,' they too laid the axe at the root of the tree. That these preachers offended people there can be no doubt. But did Jesus, who was called 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence,' not also offend many?

These preachers believed that the servant should not be above his Lord. Thus if Jesus their Master was a poor, homeless preacher, his servants or sent ones should fare no better. They were therefore strongly opposed to a paid ministry. Christ's ministers they believed, should live by faith in the promises of God to supply their material needs. And the more spiritually minded a person is the less his material needs will be. Even those people who considered an unpaid ministry to be rather impractical, to say the least, had to admit that because of their love and concern for a fallen humanity many of these preachers were prepared to take the risks and the consequences of such a way of life. One report has this to say about Edward Cooney:

"It is only fair to say that Mr. Cooney has often slept in a barn and been hungry and exposed. His heart is right; his soul is overflowing with love and compassion for fallen human nature; his mind is full of the great need of preaching to perishing creatures – 'Ye must be born again.' His whole being is seized with 'the Enthusiasm of Humanity,' and he wants all men to repent and be baptised." (IR 27/10/1904).

CHAPTER 7

Cooney Preaches on the Diamond — Enniskillen–December, 1904

Monday night was cold in Enniskillen, and yet a small band of Cooneyites congregated at the Diamond where the principal speaker was Mr. Edward Cooney.

Cooney's address:

"There was a time when I would have been ashamed to stand on the Diamond of my native town and declare that I belonged to Christ. But now, thank God, I am not ashamed. For I have been saved and have given the members of my body for the eternal purposes of Christ. It is not fashionable to speak of Jesus in Enniskillen. You can talk of Joe Chamberlain, of Balfour, or some such people, but the moment Jesus is mentioned, it is looked upon with shame. Yes with shame. Thank God I have come to see the difference and to realise that Jesus is my Saviour – the Saviour who will brighten things for me in the great world beyond. My friends, come to Christ, to the loving Saviour who will give you salvation. Be saved as I have been and give the members of your body to the eternal purposes of Jesus. I thank God I am saved. And because I am saved, I have received a new nature, new ambitions, new aspirations. This is how I have been for some time now.

"I implore you who may think you have glorified Jesus to go to Burgess rooms and learn how you can be saved. If you follow the dictates of this world, you will be satisfied here below. But remember there is a great world beyond, and remember Christ is willing to love all who come to him. Love him, believe him, follow his example, and go to heaven. There is not a single person in Enniskillen who does not believe he is going to heaven. There was a time when I thought so too. But God showed me that if I were to go to heaven, I would have to have a new nature. Thank God I have that now. The Devil wants all he can get for purposes best known to himself. All who are saved are free from that. If you are saved and you should die tonight you need have no fear. For you will know as I know there are brighter worlds beyond. I ask you all to come to Burgess rooms where you will be welcome and learn how to get saved." (Note: The above address has been put into direct speech by the author.)

The dozen people on the Diamond then marched in single file singing to Burgess rooms, and the open air meeting ended. (IR 15/12/1904).

CHAPTER 8

A Presbyterian Appraisal of Edward Cooney

March, 1905

Among the Go Preachers, the one who consistently attracted the most attention was Edward Cooney. And while he disturbed the complacency of Christendom, many clergy regretted that such an outstanding individual was not using his gifts to work inside the established order of religious institutions, but had chosen rather to shake that order at its very foundations. An article about the movement in general and about Cooney in particular, which appeared in the 'Irish Presbyterian,' March 1905, expresses to some extent this point of view. Excerpts from it read as follows:

"A few years ago a religious movement was started in the North of Ireland by a few former members of the Scotch organisation – the Faith Mission. These 'Pilgrims' or 'Tramp Preachers' as they are commonly called, being dissatisfied with the quieter methods of Christian work advocated by the parent society, seconded from it, and developed what may be described as a new sect, distinguished for its bitter hostility to all existing churches. It is believed that the originator of this somewhat erratic development was a Scotch man called William Irvine who, at an early stage of his work, enlisted the sympathy and help of an earnest young man, a native of Enniskillen, Mr. Edward Cooney, formerly an Episcopalian, who devoted himself to evangelistic work in various parts of Ireland, and a member of a most respectable family, several of whom have long been distinguished for their zeal in many branches of religious and philanthropic work.

"As to the evangelist himself, it is admitted on all hands by those who know him best that he is an exceedingly earnest and devoted man who has relinquished fine business prospects to occupy his whole time and energies with Christian work. He is an attractable and forcible speaker, well educated, and gentlemanly in his manners, overflowing with zeal and enthusiasm. Indeed one is tempted to fear that his zeal and ardour in a good cause are at times greater than his prudence and discretion. Being naturally a man of strong will and considerable mental gifts, he exercises a great influence over those whose minds are weaker than his own, and over those who have not hitherto had any very definite or settled religious convictions. Perhaps the most notable feature of his teaching is its uncompromising hostility to all existing churches.

"This so-called hostility towards existing churches included the denunciation of a paid ministry. But the writer of the above article further points out that although the tramp preachers did not receive a salary, they accepted the offerings of their followers. "Surely all this," he says, "is a distinction without a difference. In both cases, those who preach the gospel live by it." But there was a difference. It was a matter of faith. This difference, the tramp preachers would argue, was "accepting the world's provision in preference to the promises of God." The writer of the above article takes issue with another feature of the 'new movement,' i.e., what he calls the

tramps literal interpretation of what it meant to follow Jesus. He claims:

"They insist on a slavish copying of Christ's earthly life... They, for instance, say: 'Jesus and his Apostles were all poor men. Hence every Christian labourer ought now to be poor also.' They also advise their converts to sell their earthly possessions, and share the proceeds with their fellow believers, in Pentecostal fashion; and in justice to Mr. Cooney, it should be stated that he freely gave his own money to his needy brethren."

We have shown in a previous chapter what the tramps or Go Preachers preached with regard to worldly possessions and can only reiterate that their critics constantly misrepresented what they said. It is true that the preachers believed that the Lord who sent them required them to give up all worldly possessions and go to preach as he had done and as he sent the Twelve and the Seventy. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." They did not advise their converts, unless they too were called to preach in apostolic manner, to sell their possessions and share the proceeds with their fellow believers. What they did preach was that the Lord required his disciples (i.e. every born again person) to renounce all that they had, which means that what they possess henceforth belongs to God and they, as stewards, are accountable to God for its disposition. Jesus said: "Unless a man renounce all that he has, he cannot by my disciple." Adherence to this kind of teaching would help eliminate a great deal of greed, selfishness, and materialism, and would foster a spirit of compassion for those less fortunate than ourselves. The article concludes thus:

"In the writer's opinion, it is a great pity that a gentleman of Mr. Cooney's special gifts had not submitted himself to a course of training at such an institution as that of the late D. L. Moody, at Northfield, U.S.A., before setting himself up as a self-constituted critic of other people who have grown grey in their Master's service. In such an event, we doubt not, many of his peculiar opinions would have been so modified that he might, like most other evangelists of our time, have learned to regard the existing churches as his allies and friends in all his vigorous contests with the powers of darkness."

Though the writer of the above article was clearly impressed with the manifest gifts of this unusual preacher, yet how little he understood of the workings of the Spirit in the life of one such as Edward Cooney. Imagine a sent one of Christ who lived by revelation from God, submitting himself to a course of training at a religious institution! It is as ludicrous to suggest such a thing as it would be to say that it was a pity Paul didn't do likewise after the Lord spoke to him on the road to Damascus.

Note: The article quoted in this chapter was printed in the Impartial Reporter 23/3/1905 and was taken from the current issue of 'The Irish Presbyterian.'

CHAPTER 9

The Living Witness' Doctrine

In the early years of its history, this movement was said to have demonstrated the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of men and women since Pentecost. It was considered by some that 1907 was the year when it was at its spiritual best.

"There was manifest among them a spirit of love, kindness and self-sacrifice both to each other and to the general public," wrote a contemporary correspondent. And Edward Cooney was to remark in one of his addresses that he never met anyone who loved his neighbour as himself until he came into fellowship with the tramp preachers.

History, however, shows that when a civilization is at its height, the seeds of degeneration are already present within it. So it is with all human institutions, big and small, and the Church is no exception. Thus a people, who 10 years before had been called out of Babylon to separate the "faith once delivered to the saints" from the traditions of men, now began to show signs of a spiritual decline themselves. For so obsessed had these preachers become with their denunciation of the clergy that they failed to examine themselves and keep their own house in order.

What they did not appear to have realized was that the devil could take hold of the minds even of sent ones, as he did with Peter, unless they were constantly on their guard. But there seems to have been no sentinel at this time to watch for the enemy. And while they railed on the wickedness and blindness of the clergy whom they firmly believed were sent by the devil to lead souls to perdition, the Prince of Darkness with incredible subtlety and cunning, clothed as an angel of light, crept in among themselves. He used their very own weapon, their obsession with the clergy, against themselves by suggesting to Joe Kerr, one of the preachers, that not only were no clergymen born again, but that none of themselves were born again before meeting William Irvine. It was impossible, ran the doctrine, proposed by Kerr and accepted by Irvine, for anyone to have been born again in Babylon, i.e., in the existing Christian churches.

This heresy, which ran counter to all their experiences of the Lord's dealings with them, both individually and collectively, was first mooted circa 1905. At first this doctrine claimed that one could be born again only through Irvine or one in fellowship with him. But by 1907 this had been reduced to Irvine and his fellow preachers only. It did not now include the saints or laity. For if it had, that would not have given the workers so much power. And what a power they were to hold over the souls of men, for they had now made themselves the intermediaries between God and man. Jesus said: "No man cometh to the Father but by me." The workers were now saying: "No one can be saved but through us." They were thus usurping the function of Christ as the means of salvation and the sole intermediary between God and man, and were thereby limiting the power of the Holy Spirit.

This doctrine was resisted by some but accepted by most. However those who continued to oppose it openly eventually found themselves outside the camp. This did not mean that all who remained inside believed it. But its general acceptance, tacit or open, gave Irvine a power and pre-eminence among them which was ungodly. For he gradually became a veritable dictator with some of the

senior workers in positions of authority under him. Thus began to emerge a hierarchical system which was to replace little by little the equal brotherhood of believers that they were in the beginning. Edward Cooney was to say of this development years later that they had put the 'pope' out of the front door, but he had come in through the back.

The reasoning that led these otherwise righteous men into this pitfall is explained by Ida West in a letter to M.A. Schoeff thus:

"The doctrine of the living witness came about as a result of the very able preaching of William Irvine and others, of their exposition of the Scriptures in the clearer light that had been revealed to them, and of the power (i.e., power from on high) they experienced in surrendering their lives unreservedly and unconditionally to Christ by going to preach in the same manner as he sent the Twelve and the Seventy, first to Israel and then to the world. They thought that the effect thus produced had to be explained in this way." (14/5/81)

Furthermore, they based their doctrine on Scripture (Romans 10: 13-15), albeit Scripture misunderstood. Though some of the workers and elders did not believe the doctrine of the living witness, it was extremely difficult, in the light of what they were preaching, to dispute the seeming logic of it. Those who did not accept it were faced with a dilemma. Edward Cooney stood out against it for some time, then he accepted it, but after a few years rejected it again. Among others who did not believe it were John West and Tom Elliott. But it would take time before they could resolve the seeming paradox of requiring preachers to forsake all and go the way Jesus went and the way he sent the apostles if people could be saved without them, i.e., by the Spirit's dealings with the individual human heart. This will explain to some extent why they did not protest sooner than they did. In the meantime, more and more emphasis was being placed on the right kind of preacher. Of this development, Ida West writes again:

"There is no doubt the Holy Spirit moved, and these young men gave their lives without reserve and unconditionally set their gaze and affection on Jesus and the apostles in going forth to do what they did. God provided their needs and gave them souls for Christ Jesus the Lord, which made heaven rejoice. They turned many to righteousness. But in their fervour and zeal they failed to see that their emphasis on what they were doing was slowly taking over from what Jesus did in respect to his expiation." (Romans 3: 21-28). Satan's strongest weapon is to deny the effect of the blood of the Lamb of God. (Letter to the author 2/8/82)

The right kind of preacher might be hard to define. For the Go Preachers, however, this was one who bore the marks of Christ, ever willing to do his will in his way. This is what these homeless preachers ideally were. They were the living witnesses without whom, it was claimed, none could be saved. At the Philadelphia convention, USA, 1907, William Irvine stated: "A person may be born again through a living witness, without one — never." And he asked: "What is the good of a man being a preacher if God can save souls without him"? He further claimed at this same convention: "One cannot be born again through reading the Bible." At the Sydney convention, Australia, 1907, he said that the Bible, apart from the living witness could not save one, and even damned men and women. And at the Croknacrieve convention in Ireland, 1907, he said: "Men say, 'Do you mean to say there is only a handful of people saved'? Yes only a handful, perhaps in some generations none because there was no man willing to let God work in his heart to do his will. Thus nations, generations of men have perished." In other words, there was no living witness about and so the people went to a lost eternity. In short this meant that only by hearing the gospel from the lips of a Go Preacher, i.e., Irvine and his associates, could any be saved; and over and over again, Romans 10: 14 *was quoted to prove this point. Other Scriptures were also misapplied and misinterpreted for this purpose. This heresy was a far cry from the truth they preached in the beginning, less than a decade before, when they held that the Rock on which the church was built was God's revelation of the Christ by the Spirit to the individual human heart, which teaching, Edward Cooney was to point out later, did away with all forms of 'popery', i.e., human control.

And so as one sees dominion gradually being introduced into this once equal brotherhood, one is reminded of the words of the pope to Martin Luther, viz., "If it is so that anyone, however humble, can receive revelation direct from God through the Spirit, then we lose all our power." Were the Go Preachers now about to guard their power after the manner of Rome by claiming that no one could be saved but through them? A similar claim by the pope was considered by the reformers in the 16th century to be blasphemy. Thus as human control, the inevitable result of the living witness doctrine, gradually and progressively replaced the control of the Spirit, so organization increased and faith decreased.

*Note: Romans 10/14: 'How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach unless they are sent?' The workers used this passage as the scriptural authority for the living witness doctrine. When in 1914 Edward Cooney rejected this doctrine as a heresy, he pointed out that Paul answers his own question by referring to Psalm 19 where it shows God speaking to man through nature as he did to the magi, through the law (which is perfect converting the soul), and finally through the preacher the words of whose mouth and the meditation of whose heart are acceptable in God's sight.

CHAPTER 10

The Nicolaitan Spirit Emerges Among God's People

More and more the annual conventions became the focal point of the ministry, and every year these grew larger and more organized. Thousands of people attended the month-long conventions at Croknacrieve. Three two-hour meetings a day were held and three meals a day were provided for all, both insiders and outsiders. There were no collections and no soliciting of funds. All food and all service were given voluntarily by members. We have seen that at the 1904 convention, there were people from all parts of the British Isles. At the one held in 1907, they had come from all parts of the English-speaking world. This convention was, therefore, on a much larger scale than any previously held as the following contemporary report indicates:

"A remarkable religious convention has just concluded near Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh. One thousand three hundred Pilgrims or Cooneyites, last Sunday, assembled at Croknacrieve House, Ballinamallard, residence of Mr. John West, a leading member of the Pilgrims. The convention was mooted three months ago, but no person believed for a moment that it would have assumed such huge

dimensions. Representatives were present from the Far East, America, Australia, India, South Africa, England, Wales, and Scotland. Hundreds of spectators visited Crocknacrieve, and when the devotional part of the programme commenced there was a mass of humanity such as had never before been seen in that part of Fermanagh." (IR 25/7/1907).

With such large numbers to cater for both materially and spiritually, some form of organization apparently had become necessary. On this subject the above report continues:

"Although the Tramps boast of no leaders, no secretaries, etc., still they have their appointments in other departments. In the large farmyard is posted up the list of those who supervise in the kitchen, the dairy, the post office, and "those who cook, shave, hair dress, and tailor, those who repair boots, and cycles, the authorities on railway communications, those appointed to watch over the houses where bicycles are stored; the name of those men and women are all posted up." (Ibid.)

Organization was evidently getting a foothold, and the dictatorial powers of Irvine were becoming more and more apparent. For the report goes on:

"Discipline is carried out more strictly than one would imagine. It appears that some of the Tramps (both men and women) had been guilty of talking at night after retiring to rest to the discomfiture of others. The matter was reported to Mr. Irvine, and at an evening meeting last week, he announced that if anyone in future talked after going to bed, that person's name would be given to him next day and publicly mentioned, and arrangements would be made for his or her departure." (Ibid.)

One of the main functions undertaken at the annual convention was the selection of new workers. During the first four or five years of the movement's history, preachers claimed to have been sent by God. At all events, if any one felt the call to go and was willing to depend on God to move the hearts of others to supply his need, he did not have to confer with man. But by circa 1906, it was Irvine and some of the other leaders under him who decided on the fitness or otherwise of those who volunteered for the work or ministry. They chose for them their fields of labour and they had the power to recall any one who did not 'keep in step'.

About this time another accommodation was made. As stated above, in the beginning preachers depended on the Lord to open up hearts and homes to them. Now it seems at least in some cases, when a worker was sent to an area or country where there were no people of this fellowship, a saint would be transported to that part (with the saint's approval, of course), to provide an open home to receive the homeless preacher. Besides they had movable gospel halls in which a worker could live, if necessary. This latter was a carry-over from the Faith Mission, and had been in use in some areas in the Go Preacher fellowship apparently from its inception in 1897.

Where did Edward Cooney stand with regard to this turn of events a gradual one to be sure? First of all, he never recognized as his leader anyone but Jesus who said, "One is your master even Christ, and ye are all brethren." Also, while most of the chief workers had professed through Irvine, Cooney came to Christ by direct revelation from God, and from Christ he received his commission to preach the gospel. Thus when Irvine and other senior workers assumed the role of sending out preachers, Edward had no part in it. For he believed that Jesus was the only one qualified to do so, and the only one with the power to remove the unfaithful.

Although he was at this period in his life much influenced by Irvine in whose teaching he had not yet learned to separate the wheat from the chaff, he did not subject himself to Irvine's control as others did, but ever claimed the liberty to seek the leadings of the Spirit. Irvine, knowing his worth and the asset he was to the fellowship would never have given him notice to quit as he apparently did some. Cooney may therefore have had more freedom than others (as long as Irvine was in charge) and may have been unaware of the encroachment of human control on this fellowship since he himself was seemingly not subjected to it. For during one of his addresses at the 1907 convention at Crocknacrieve he said:

"Some people have often asked why we have no organization. We have none because organization is of the Devil. Why no secretaries, no directors in the Lord's work? Why no leaders? Because they are all of the Devil. Jesus alone is our captain and guide. He is the bishop of every church formed. He removes those unfaithful to him and he encourages those who are faithful." (Ibid.)

This was certainly true as far as Cooney himself was concerned; and this was how it was in the beginning when they all did without organization and leaders. But the evidence is that by 1907 there was organization and there were leaders or rather rulers of whom Irvine was the chief. He, at any rate, it seems, claimed the right to remove the 'unfaithful' for John Long, his first companion, was ordered at this convention to leave the fellowship because he refused to accept that all outside it were unsaved.

"I continued in their fellowship till 1907," wrote Long, "when I was constrained to leave them owing to a development which I could not accept as true. A young evangelist, named Joseph Kerr, preached that no clergymen were born again because they did not live and preach as Jesus did. At first Cooney opposed this but afterwards accepted it and preached it. This led to the 'unchristianizing' of all others outside their fellowship and to refusing too to worship with them." (Journal).

It appears also that at this convention, Long, in giving an address on Noah's ark, stated what was in it and what wasn't in it. He said, for example, there was no tobacco or pipes in it. But he was interrupted by Irvine who said to him, "Say there were no clergy in it." "No there were no clergy in it," Long quietly remarked. "Say it strong," commanded Irvine gruffly. However Long did not repeat it. The result was, apparently, he was given notice to quit and left the following Tuesday. (IR 25/7/1907).

That clergymen were not born again because they did not live and preach as Jesus did was an aspect of the living witness doctrine which seems to have influenced Cooney for a time. For this is reflected in one of his addresses at the 1907 convention at Crocknacrieve. He took for his text the second chapter of Revelation in which John portrayed under divine guidance the Lord's appraisal of the seven churches. He said that the only kind of churches God was interested in were those of the New Testament which were formed by angels or messengers. And the only one who could form such a church was someone in the right hand of

Christ, i.e. someone ever willing to do his will in this way. John Wesley had not done this and was therefore not his messenger, Cooney said. He used John Wesley as an example of a man who claimed to be an apostle and wasn't one because he didn't go in the manner Jesus laid down for his sent ones. Then he quoted from Revelation 2: 2, 5.

"Thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles and are not and hast found them liars . . . Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will remove the candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."

This message surely was a call to repentance for those who had ears to hear among the Go Preachers as well as the clergy. Cooney's address also included such statements as: "If you can show me that Wesley went to heaven the way that Jesus lived and taught, I'll follow Wesley," and so on with Spurgeon, Booth, Knox, Luther, and other religious leaders and reformers. The inference was that they were not in heaven and therefore must be in hell. Irvine made even stronger statements to this effect, and his influence on Cooney at this time is seen in the latter's denunciation of such men as Wesley, consigning them all to hell. * Of this attitude, Ida West writes:

"Their statements re living witness were a great mistake . . . By stating and restating that all before them, who named the name of Jesus, were in hell, Irvine, Cooney, Gill and others tried to show up the vile only but neglected to grant justice to those they accused. This side would have shown love, mercy, truth, and correct judgment the weightier matters of the law." (Letter to the author 2/8/83). * Cooney was later to give up this position when in 1914 he rejected the living witness doctrine. He came to see that while the various religious systems were unscriptural, men like Wesley and other reformers in them were born again.

In condemning the clergy, however, they thought they had a precedent with Jesus who said to the scribes and pharisees, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell," and with John the Baptist also, who said to the pharisees and sadducees, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." But as Ida West further pointed out: "When we expose error, we must exceed in righteousness." (Ibid.)

While, however, Irvine was enjoying a pre-eminence which belongs to Christ alone and many of the chief workers exulted in positions of power under him, Cooney, though he possessed more natural and spiritual gifts than any of them, and though he spoke with authority, never accepted an authoritarian position among them. Like the pharisees who loved the uppermost rooms at feasts and chief seats in synagogues, the chief workers dined separately from the other workers and the laity at convention time, being given special service in the house and special sleeping accommodation there. Cooney, however, always slept and ate in the communal tent with the people. He remained the humble brother he had been from the beginning, seeking not the honour that comes from men but the honour that comes from God alone. For, "too much honour, O! 'tis a burden . . . 'tis a burden too heavy for one who hopes for heaven," as Shakespeare so wisely observed. Yet he constantly outshone all the rest, including Irvine, and this produced among them the seeds of envy which would in the fulness of time lead to his excommunication. At this time, however, there were as yet no obvious signs of any real schism in the fellowship. Irvine and Cooney were the two most outstanding preachers and were regarded by the world at large as the two 'leaders'. But while Irvine had now become a leader in the sense of exercising authority over his fellows, Cooney was one who was travelling, a step or two ahead of the others, along the lowly downward path trod by the Master before him. Jesus said to his disciples:

"Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you. But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." (Matt. 20:25).

One week before the convention ended, Edward Cooney with two companions left for Keswick, and with him, it would seem, went a great deal of the life and spirit of the meetings. For the week that concluded a month-long convention was something of an anti-climax according to the following report:

"There has been very little public interest at the meetings during this week. Most of the addresses were dry and lacking in spirit. Mr. Irvine and Mr. Cooney are always listened to with interest, but they are exceptions." (IR 25/7/1907)

As far as the laity were concerned, like human beings in general, they, for the most part, preferred to be told what to think and do rather than take responsibility for this themselves. They preferred 'certainty' to honest doubt, and they were content to leave their salvation in the hands of their leaders who now enjoyed a position of near infallibility.

"How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." (Proverbs 6: 9-11).

As in all religious communities, so there were both sheep and goats among the Go Preachers too. Yet for all their faults, most of them endeavoured to follow the teaching and example of Jesus and the apostles more closely than did any Christian evangelists that we know of since the Apostolic Age. The lives of many of them had power and effect, while all one could see in the traditional churches for the most part was form without power. But the living witness heresy had begun to cause within the Go Preacher fellowship partial blindness and considerable bondage. What the devil offered this ministry was dominion; and they accepted it, seemingly unaware that should this trend continue, the forfeit would be the controlling power of the Holy Spirit, the hallmark of Apostolic Christianity which they had set out to revive when they went forth to rebuild the ruined temple of God.

"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." (Acts 15: 16-18) (Amos 9: 11).

CHAPTER 11

An Anti-Clerical Crusade

The convention of July/August, 1908, at Crocknacrieve lasted a month and was said to have surpassed in scope and efficiency all previous ones held there. "Every visitor was surprised at the methodical manner in which all the arrangements were carried out." Some 2,000 people attended the Sunday services, and Cooney and Irvine, the two so-called leaders, "denounced the clergy in no uncertain terms." In fact the general impression given to many was that the convention was primarily an anti-clerical crusade. (IR 6/8/1908)

Before considering the teaching of these two preachers, however, let us look at the men themselves. They were both strong, striking, charismatic personalities. But where Cooney was by nature buoyant, joyous and kindly, Irvine was stern, sombre and fierce. And where Cooney was by upbringing and education gentlemanly, Irvine was rough and rustic. Yet, it was said, they had one characteristic in common – that was the undeniable sincerity of their convictions. Following are excerpts from an analysis of their respective personalities by an anonymous correspondent:

IRVINE:

"The figure we are about to study in this article was born 300 years too late. In an age of bloodshed and disorder he would have found his place; and at the right hand of a Calvin or a Knox would have done yeoman service. But in an age of religious tolerance and tranquillity, he comes like a thunderbolt with lightening in his train ... With clenched fists and beetling brows, he compels his hearers' attention by the power of his intense individuality. His sincerity is ferocious, and his passion for truth has become a fury for his own convictions. Fifteen stone of dogmatism and intolerance, we can hear a casual observer remark ... His nature has evidently been strongly influenced by his early environment. The rugged mountains, the fierce east winds, the hail storms, have all left their mark upon him. His God is like the elements of his native moors – stern, forbidding, relentless and unswerving in his vengeance ..." (IR 6/8/1908)

COONEY:

"By his nature, Cooney is vastly different from Irvine. He has more warmth and humanity, and at times the charm and winsomeness of a St. Francis ... No one could be kinder and more hospitable to strangers than he is ... It would be absurd to doubt the sincerity of Edward Cooney's convictions. They have become his very bone and flesh, and have given him a power and forcefulness which none can deny... In an earlier age he would have been attracted to the monastic ideal or become an enthusiastic Lollard and supported with his whole heart the democratic movement of that day ... In a different environment and with wider training, Edward Cooney might have become one of the strongest spiritual forces of his day." (Ibid.)

The personalities portrayed above are reflected to some extent in the tone and substance of the addresses delivered by them at the 1908 convention at Crocknacrieve. Both were attacks on the clergy. But whereas the main thrust of Cooney's talk was constructive, Irvine's was destructive. And where Cooney spoke in a spirit of love, Irvine spoke, it would seem, in a spirit of vengeance. The impression thus given on this occasion, at least, is that Cooney condemned false shepherds – the clergy because he loved the sheep, but Irvine did so because he hated the clergy.

COONEY spoke first.

"We speak against the clergy", he said, "because we want you to get saved, and this can be hindered if people are led by false shepherds, because clericalism deceives both the sincere person and the hypocrite. It deceives the sincere person by showing him how to be right in the wrong way. The Spirit of God deals with the hearts of all honest people regardless of what religion they belong to, causing them to have a desire to be right. And what the Holy Spirit seeks to reveal to each and every human being as he stirs their heart is Jesus Christ – the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Scripture tells us that there is no other way, no other truth, no other life. Thus clericalism by instituting other ways, in the name of Jesus, than that which he lived and taught, hinders sincere souls from coming to Christ by deceiving them into thinking they can be right in any way that is not like Jesus who said: "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." (John 10:1)

"Why do Roman Catholics go in such crowds to penance?" he asked. "Because the Spirit of God is dealing with their hearts making them long to be right; and the spirit of the devil is speaking to their hearts at the same time showing them how to be right in the wrong way. If God moves in the hearts of men making them desire to be right, the devil is just as active to persuade them that there is some other way to act right than that laid down in Scripture." (IR 23/7/1908)

"Clericalism," he went on, "deceives the hypocrite because it provides a shelter for him. It encourages self-deception and lulls the people into a false peace. People think that if they go to church and don't smoke or drink, they will go to heaven. Pride and the love of money, against which the clergy do not speak, but rather encourage, are more likely to destroy people than either whiskey or tobacco. Clericalism, therefore, not only blinds people from the true way but encourages hypocrisy, self-deception, self-righteousness, pride, and greed. Those outside the church know they are sinners, so there is some hope for them, but those inside feel no need to repent, therefore there is little hope for them. According to Scripture it is not the love of whiskey but the love of money that is the root of all evil. And the love of money is the most prominent characteristic of the majority of church members."

"For," he asks, "who gets the foremost seats in the Methodist Church? Those who have the money bags. Who gets them in the Presbyterian Church and the Church of Ireland? Those who have the money bags. Those are the men who are exalted in the churches. In the Salvation Army they say, 'God bless you' if you put 1 sovereign in their cap. They have a silver 'God bless you' and a copper one too. The rich man is always made a church warden or a select vestryman. And he who is poor is put in the shade." (Ibid.)

He went on to say that in his youth he had been bound by the chains of tradition before he was even aware of it; for they brought him as an infant to the clergyman who sprinkled him with water in the sign of the Cross and made him a member of the Church of Ireland before he could cut his teeth. It was easy by this method to become a Methodist, a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, or a Roman Catholic, he said. "Has God anything to do with such devilry," he asked. "Certainly not." "Did Jesus say, 'Peter get a bowl or can of water and we will baptize them and make them disciples'?" The Tramp Preachers, he said, taught, and rightly so, that followers of Jesus should train their children in the way of Jesus and not in the way of the clergy. "Some think," he went on, "that because there is good in Methodism, Presbyterianism, Quakerism, the Salvation Army, that they are of God. But in so thinking, they are only being deluded and blinded by the devil." He continued:

"Some people imagine that the Devil is horrible to look upon, quite an ugly character. Not at all. The Devil always comes in the most attractive form he can possibly assume. Probably he would put on a clerical collar and assume the holiest possible tone of voice. People wonder why we say that Spurgeon, Moody, and Wesley are not in heaven. I hold that if anyone could prove to me that Wesley went to heaven the same way as Jesus taught, I would follow Wesley. If anyone could prove to me that General Booth would go to heaven the same way as Jesus taught I would follow General Booth and become General Cooney!! We say these men are not in heaven because they did not walk the way Jesus walked." * (Ibid.)

In conclusion he said:

"And so it is good to begin at the beginning. The first words you read in the Bible are, 'In the beginning, God, etc.' So if you are perplexed as to what truth is, you should go back to the beginning and go to God. Your perplexity would then vanish and the light of God would shine in your hearts. I appeal to you all to take Jesus for your pattern, to walk in his way, and follow his teachings as they are found in the New Testament." (Ibid.)

* Cooney was later to reject this position.

IRVINE, who was brought up a Presbyterian, introduced his talk by telling his audience that Presbyterianism was white-washed popery. ('New presbyter is old priest writ large' wrote John Milton in the 17th century). The tramp preachers did not believe in preparing sermons. Irvine, himself held that if God were in the pulpit there would be no need for written sermons, that a man filled with the Spirit had no need to trust to notes or manuscript to preach the Word. In other words, if a man's life was right before God, when he opened his mouth the Lord would fill it. Whether this was always Irvine's experience is open to question. At all events, when he denounced the clergy, he certainly had no need for notes. And so, making no distinction between Catholicism and Protestantism, he attacked the clergy thus:

"Where you see the clergyman, there you see Rome. Where you see collections, there you see Rome. Where you find men worshipping a building put up for that purpose, that is devilry. Why is it that I don't believe in paid preachers? Because Christ, Moses, Elijah were not men like that. Why do I not believe in making collections? Because Jesus never did so. Whenever that is done, it is, the Devil who does it ... Some of you question our right to speak against the clergy ... I will give you my head if I can't prove that there is not the slightest chance of a clergyman being in heaven by the way set forth in the Bible. You say these are strong words. They are not half so strong as the occasion demands God's message to clericalism is the same as it was when Jesus said to them: 'Ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell.' Any man capable of courting the patronage of the clergy is inviting a pat of the Devil on his shoulder on the way to hell." (Ibid.)

He went on to talk about Ireland's sorrows with clericalism. He said that no country in the whole world had suffered so much from clericalism as Ireland. "You don't believe in Rome," he continued, "then why do you believe in clericalism? It's not in the Book. You will not find priests and clergymen in the New Testament."

Irvine's address was listened to throughout by the vast crowds with attention, and after he concluded tea was served to all present. The hospitality tea was extended to everyone at Crocknacrieve, both inside the fellowship and outside it, was impressive as the following account indicates:

"No conception can be had of the way in which such a large concourse of people are fed. On Sunday 1,200 dinners were served, and at tea time fully 2,000 received the welcome cup. The tramps were eager and attentive. No one was allowed to wait longer than was possible. Plates after plates of bread appeared on the tables, and before they were half finished more arrived, cut and buttered, in addition to some fancy bread. Of tea there was an abundance. Their hospitality and kindness was such that everyone partook of it and felt thankful for it." (Ibid.)

This month-long convention concluded with a baptism conducted on the banks of the river which ran by Crocknacrieve House:

"Here some eight persons who had been converted during the convention were immersed in the water, while those on the bank kept singing all the time. The baptism was witnessed by a crowd of people numbering 2,000, who had travelled on bicycles and cars and even by train from the neighbouring towns and country districts ... The principal speakers were Edward Cooney and William Irvine, the two leaders of the movement. The services during the convention were characteristic of orderliness and good conduct and the speakers had a most attentive hearing at all the meetings." (IR 6/8/1908)

After the convention was over most of the preachers left to take the gospel to various parts of the world, while some remained to take care of the more mundane things in the ministry as the following report illustrates:

"Crocknacrieve presented a lonely appearance on Sunday after the crowds, who had attended that place for the past four weeks, had dispersed. Almost all the tramp preachers went away during the past week with the exception of about 50 including dressmakers,

tailors, shoemakers, who are working for the need of their fellow workers. Mr. William Irvine, the leader of the movement, has set sail for America, and is to open a convention in Halifax on Sunday 16th inst. Altogether he has to attend nine conventions before he returns to Croknacrieve again next year." (IR 13/8/1908)

Note: The addresses by Edward Cooney and William Irvine were put into direct speech by the author.

CHAPTER 12

Forerunners of the Go Preacher Movement

The Go Preachers were not the first Christian missionaries to denounce the clergy. There were, for example, the Albigenses or Cathari who flourished in southern France, northern Spain, and northern Italy in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries, and were annihilated by Pope Innocent II in the inquisition of 1229. There were also such preachers as Peter of Bruys (d. 1220) and Henry (whose last name escapes me) both of whom completely rejected the claims of the clergy. Traditionally, preaching was the bishop's function and could be undertaken by others only with his consent. But Peter of Bruys and Henry as well as other enthusiasts refused to be forbidden; and when challenged with Paul's question: "How can they preach unless they are sent"? they quoted the command of the Lord to teach all nations. Thus with or without permission they preached, and disciples gathered about them to do the same. They believed that the great act of religious commitment was to rid oneself of material possessions; and so becoming wandering preachers, this is what they did.

Peter of Bruys denied the need of church buildings for worship, repudiated infant baptism as worthless, the Eucharist as unnecessary, and prayers for the dead futile. He called the cross an instrument of torture rather than a sacred symbol. Henry, a great disturber of religious peace, denied the concept of original sin, prayers for the dead, the need for church buildings. He insisted that the true church was a spiritual one, a congregation of the pure, and thus sinful priests had no power to consecrate the Eucharist or impose penance. The hierarchy should give up wealth and honours; and men need only confess their sins to each other. Only faith, he said, made the sacrament of baptism valid. He rejected the notion of original sin, believing that a merciful God could not condemn innocent children, and he claimed that marriage was a civil affair and a human relationship. In 1135 when challenged to show his authority to preach, he declared that God desired him to deliver a message of love. "I obey God rather than men," he said, "and he who sent me said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'."

Other forerunners were the Waldenses who also inhabited southern France and northern Italy in the 12th century. They were similar to but not identical with the Albigenses. In 1176 Waldo, a rich merchant of Lyons in southern France, gave his property to the poor and went about preaching the gospel. He opposed clericalism and taught the Bible as the sole rule of belief and life. He and his associates, wandering preachers of apostolic life, by their criticism of the clergy and the discredit they cast on the authority of the church, kindled a desire in the people to read the Bible, and thus prepared the ground for the Reformation. They were repressed by the inquisition except in the Alpine Valleys southwest of Turin where they can still be found. Many of them were scattered over various parts of Europe as a result of the Inquisition. Some settled in Bohemia, the homeland of John Huss. Then in the 14th century in England, we have the teaching of John Wyclif. A professor at Oxford, he denounced the priesthood and all forms of clerical practices. He translated the Bible and advocated the people's right to read it. His followers were called Lollards, wandering preachers, whom he sent all over England with the gospel to the poor. It was through his writings that John Huss in Bohemia raised the standard against clericalism. Huss was burned at the stake and his followers almost extirpated by a crusade ordered by the pope.

Savonarola in the 15th century preached, it was said, like a Hebrew prophet, against the evils of the professing church. His influence was enormous. Pope Alexander VI tried to silence him by attempting to bribe him with a cardinal's hat. But he refused to be bribed, and so was hanged and burned in the great square in Florence 19 years before Luther posted his theses.

The Anabaptists appeared in various countries of Europe, during the Middle Ages, under different names, in independent groups, representing a variety of doctrines. But all were strongly anti-clerical, rejected infant baptism, were devoted to the Scriptures, and stood for separation of church' and state.

Thus when the Go Preachers appeared on the scene, after some 400 years of Protestantism, first in the British Isles, then throughout the English-speaking world, and finally in Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, during the first decade of the 20th century, in their denunciation of clericalism, tradition, and corruption, they were not the first preachers since the Apostolic Age to attempt to revive the early church. Like their predecessors of the first century, their preaching had power to the extent that they obeyed God's revelation of the Christ to their hearts.

By comparison what one heard in the traditional churches seemed rather flat. When, therefore, in 1908 Edward Cooney and William Irvine delivered their anti-clerical addresses against not only the Roman Catholic Church but also against all forms of Protestantism, urging the people to reject them and follow Jesus, they shocked the false peace of the religious world.

Undoubtedly, the traditional churches at this time were dull, lifeless places. They were like the churches about which Milton spoke where 'the hungry sheep look up and are not fed,' and where some clerics, at least, were like the hirelings spoken of in John 10: 12-13, who not only had no real interest in their duty but were unfaithful in the discharge of it. The tramp preachers by comparison, in their zeal, sincerity, self-sacrifice, and earnestness, could not have failed to impress. And while their tireless denunciation of the clergy offended and alarmed many, there were also those outside the fold, so to speak, who felt that the clergy were getting perhaps no more than they deserved. One correspondent who signed himself 'Watchman' put it thus:

"As a watchman on the walls of Zion, but without the camp, I have been observing for a long time the doings in Croknacrieve and elsewhere, and again and again I have been forced to ask myself, is there not a cause? Is there not a cause for it in the settled

routine forms of worship (Episcopal, Presbyterian and Methodist) that obtain amongst us. We cannot do now with the services that satisfied our parents and grandparents... The feeling all round is that our ministers are wanting in earnestness, and that our religion is growing to be somewhat like the religion the Divine Master denounced – a religion without heart, a religion as dry as dust, full of infantile forms, that satisfy no longing of the soul. Our people, even in places and parishes by lonely lakes and mountains, are growing tired of this heartless religion, and so it is coming to pass that our settled congregations are growing small, while those at Crocknacrieve are growing large. Priestism, or rather the aping of priestism, is becoming a marked feature with all our ministers. It would be well for themselves and their congregations if they would remember that there never was less priest than Jesus... Then alas, as time goes on, our ministers have less of a 'draw'. ... In some churches we can say of the sermon what Johnston said of his dinner at a wayside inn, 'Ill fed, ill cooked, ill kept, ill served.' ... The result of all this, when the services are ended, our people leave such places of worship dull and heavy, far less spiritual in heart, less cheerful in soul than when they entered it. It is no marvel that many of our young people and middle-aged people are glad to find some other meeting place to satisfy their religious needs and longings. See ye to it, for over many churches may be written: 'Behold your house is left unto you desolate.'" (IR 13/8/1908)

CHAPTER 13

The Jesus Way 'In Jesus we have found the Way'

"We are not starting a new religion. We are earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints and trying to separate it from the traditions of men, because there is not a doctrine in the word of God that has not been corrupted by the professing church. God's message to those who fear and love him in every age is, 'Come out of her my people; be not partakers of her sins that ye receive not her plagues'." (Rev. 18: 4) ('Within' IR 7/10/1909)

The Go Preachers believed that they could not earnestly contend for the faith unless they were willing to walk the way, not merely talk about it. They believed that unless they manifested the life of Christ in their mortal bodies, as the apostles and prophets who walked the way before them had done, they could not be effective witnesses for the Lord. And it was this emphasis on walking the way which largely distinguished them from the rest of Christendom. An anonymous, unbiased, outside observer of the 1909 convention at Crocknacrieve wrote of these preachers thus:

"When people in these days start out penniless and poor, as the early disciples did, with 'no certain dwelling place,' their lot is not likely to be cast in pleasant places. This is what the 'Pilgrims' do. 'We take up no collection' they say at every meeting. Indeed, instead of taking anything from those who come to their convention, they provide food and refreshment for all." (IR 12/8/1909)

What kind of people were these preachers? Our anonymous observer informs us that they were cheerful, kindly and friendly; that they were recruited from a wide variety of social classes, yet no privilege or distinction prevailed; that they were, in short, like one large family with no rights one above another. Here is how he describes them:

"What strikes one most is the cheerful demeanour of the preachers; they are kindly and friendly with each other and with everyone. They are recruited from professional men and from women who belong to good families to farm hands and servants. To outward view, at least, they are all a great family now, with no rights one above the other, and no privileges or distinction... Their accents are as varied as their styles and grammar. A worker from Scotland will be followed on the platform by a mill hand from Belfast, and she in turn by a lady of culture whose family is highly respected in Fermanagh. It is perhaps the strangest gathering of people (there are about 300 preachers) that one could see, their social statuses differing materially, and yet bound closely together by the ties of the fellowship in which they find themselves." (Ibid.)

He also gives a detailed picture of the surroundings in which the 1909 convention was held. He states:

"Crocknacrieve, the residence of Mr. John West, is a spacious farmhouse, with a square yard, ranged around which are the stores and outhouses, which the 'Pilgrims' utilize as a sort of commissariat. For instance, one house is utilized as a bakery, another as a laundry, another as a boot-repairer's shop. The 'orders of the day' are posted up, and the doors of the various departments bear notices giving the names of brothers and sisters in charge. Everything is orderly; there is no confusion anywhere. There is a post office and railway inquiry office, each under the control of some brother or sister. The men mostly sleep in tents or are accommodated with lodgings in houses of friends in the district; the women have quarters in Crocknacrieve house." (Ibid.)

As to how the costs of such an event are met, our observer writes:

"From friends in different parts of the country come money and food. For instance, an associate from Derrygonnelly sent in the first year five tons of flour, whilst a large quantity of meat came from Belfast. The workers do not believe in eating the bread of idleness; to get a living, they are occasionally obliged, as they say, 'to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow' and while they are at Crocknacrieve they engage in different occupations – box making, tree cutting, hay making, and dairy work..." (Ibid.)

Dress and seating arrangements at meetings are also commented on. Apparently "in former years the people sat anywhere in the spacious tent without distinction of sex; but on Sunday the women sat on the right and the men on the left." Concerning dress, it was observed that:

"The 'brethren' who in their manner of life as well as in their spirit, eschew fine appearances, were much more tidily dressed on this present occasion than in the past. The women wore plain white sailor hats with black bands, and blouses of a sober shade. But while, far from 'dressy' the majority were tastefully attired – male and female." (Ibid.)

The convention on this occasion was opened by Willie Gill, for both, William Irvine and Edward Cooney were absent as our anonymous observer remarks:

"On the first Sunday one missed the familiar face of Edward Cooney, the one whose personality is most inseparably associated with the new church. The majority of the 'Pilgrims' would find fault with me for describing them as belonging to a 'new church' whereas they claim fellowship with the oldest. Mr. Edward Cooney was in England at Keswick where the ministers of various Protestant denominations hold the great annual week-long convention. Another who did not appear was Mr. Irvine. Lacking the culture of Mr. Cooney, the rugged sincerity of the other is always a strong factor in missionary work such as the 'brethren' engage in." (Ibid.)

It seems that Irvine was on the premises but did not appear at any of the public meetings until the third week. It was suspected that his conspicuous absence was due to his dissatisfaction with the 'work' carried out by the preachers during the previous year. Willie Gill, who led the convention this first Sunday, spoke of his conversion in a Meath hunting field and of his labours in the gospel in the east of England. He referred to the worldliness of the clergy and their love of money, and on these two counts compared them unfavourably with the tramp preachers. The highlight of the first day's proceedings, says our observer, was not however Mr. Gill but Miss Jennie Gill about whom he reported thus:

"Sunday evening was notable, to my mind, by the address which Miss Jennie Gill delivered. There is nothing of the platform new woman type about this young lady. She does not declaim, neither does she excite, but she talks easily and eloquently – sometimes fluently. She is good-looking and clever, and can treat any subject with intelligence and grace... Beautifully indeed she elaborated a text which spoke of One whose 'white feet were upon a mountain.' Miss Gill also spoke of her early spiritual experiences in Meath. She was a fervent church goer, she said, one seeking the truth. But all the while she walked in darkness until the grace of God descended upon her, and her eyes were opened to the truth. Since then eleven years ago – she has walked with those of whom it may be said, 'Thou feedest them with the bread of tears', the despised followers of the greatly despised man." (Ibid.)

Miss Gill was followed on the platform by a young woman with a Belfast accent who related the story of her conversion. She said that a poor despised preacher came her way, taking neither purse nor scrip for his journey. She had often heard men preach the doctrine of Christ before, she continued, eloquent men and learned; but for the first time she had seen one who lived the life he preached about, one in whom the life of the Master was manifested.

Dinner was always served after the morning meeting and tea after the afternoon and evening meetings. So at the conclusion of this day's meetings "from the platform came in a deep voice the invitation to everybody, 'keep your seats for tea.' In a moment the brethren were at work. From the barns and spacious outhouses attached to Crocknacrieve, came white-aproned bakers bearing pretty currant loaves, others came carrying cans of tea. Again we get a picture of the good will and equality that obtained among these people, for our report states:

"The 'brethren' were kindly with us all. Whether we were regarded as belonging to the Fellowship or outside it, they were equally nice. No distinctions prevailed. Those like Mr. Jeffers, who are 'bishops' and 'overseers' partook of the same fare as the casual passer-by. And ladies in fine clothes and poor girls in plain attire were shown a like attention." (Ibid.)

It is evident from the foregoing that this outside observer was favourably impressed with what he had seen and heard on that first Sunday of the 1909 convention at Crocknacrieve. But he was clearly disappointed that the charismatic Cooney wasn't there. So he went again the following Sunday still determined to view everything with an unbiased mind. For he writes:

"I went to the convention with an open mind, determined to view the proceedings impartially, as one apart and outside. The evident earnestness of the preachers at once struck me. Here are men who believe they hold all the truth, who have given up many worldly comforts for the sake of conscience. Whether you agree with their interpretation of the Gospel or not, you can hardly fail to credit them with pure motives." (Ibid.)

There were about 2,000 people present, and on this occasion the convention was led by Mr. Edward Cooney. The report goes on:

"On the previous Sunday it was led by Mr. Gill. When the latter spoke, he might have been an ordinary evangelical missionary, so impersonal was his discourse. But the individuality of Mr. Cooney was apparent all the time on Sunday in his strong denunciation of the clergy and clergy houses, and indeed of all who are outside the fold of the Go Preachers or whatever name they choose to be known by. Mr. Cooney called upon one of the sisters to sing the well-known hymn, 'Be in Time.' Then he proceeded with his discourse. He spoke with marked earnestness, and at times many of the people were visibly moved; and although he continued for an hour and three quarters, there was hardly a stir, and certainly no indication that anyone was tired." (Ibid.)

The main thrust of Cooney's address on this occasion was the contrast between God's way and man's way. One would lead to heaven, the other to hell. Man's way was manifested in the different religious systems of the world, which resulted only in confusion. God's way was revealed in Jesus. "We did not start the Jesus way," he told the multitude of more than 2,000 people:

"It was started and planned by God before we were ever thought of; and if you go any other way you will perish. We love you and we want you to turn from your own way to God's way. Now Satan was the first nonconformist, the first dissenter from God's way. And you Roman Catholics are very ready to say, of course, that all dissenters will perish. But I tell you that every man who dissents from God will perish."

He said God's way was not the Pope's way, nor Luther's way, nor Knox's way, nor Wesley's way, nor Booth's way, nor Cooney's way.

"If I started the Cooneyite sect," he went on, "I too would go to hell, and all my followers along with me. It is not Cooney's way nor anybody else's way. It's God's plan and way. 'My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow – the Archbishop of Canterbury? No; the Pope? No; General Booth? No. 'They follow Me,' says Jesus."

He went on to show that Roman Catholicism had no foundation in the New Testament:

"It cannot be traced back further than some 300 years after Christ. For during the first 200 years of the Christian era, there were no church buildings for worship of God, no Pope, no paid preachers. The first Christians met in the homes of saints or disciples, and the preachers went forth as Christ commanded them, without money, scrip or purse, or certain dwelling place. Those early Christians walked the Jesus way. 'Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my church,' was never spoken to the Pope living in his immense palace with over 1000 rooms. It was spoken to a man like me and my fellow preachers. Is there a scrap of resemblance between Peter and the Pope, or even the Archbishop of Canterbury with £15,000 a year? Not a scrap. Peter hadn't 15 pence: and Jesus, whose church they claim to represent, hadn't where to lay his head."

He then showed that the Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist and Salvation Army sects had no foundation in the New Testament either. They were founded by Luther, Knox, Wesley, and Booth respectively, and he illustrated his point as follows:

"Episcopalianism," he said, "was founded by Martin Luther at a time when the Devil took advantage of his uneasiness and made the suggestion to him. And the Devil suggested to John Knox to start Presbyterianism by his own standard and judgment. Methodism was not planned by Jesus, but by John Wesley who knew that Episcopalians were wrong – more or less – and that the fox hunting parsons were wrong right through. So he started the Wesleyan system which he thought would be better. The Salvation Army was never founded by Jesus but by General Booth who thought Methodism was rather flat. So with his brilliant intellect – for he is a very capable man – he conceived the Salvation Army with the beautiful music of the band and the preachers dressed in the uniforms of soldiers – a splendid idea – soldiers on preachers' terms! And now he has convinced King Edward VII that he is an excellent man of God. But General Booth has turned his back on God's plan, and has raised millions of pounds in the name of Jesus for the support of the staff – salaries, insurance, immigration, and so on. Think of using the name of Jesus for raising millions of pounds without a scrap of authority from Jesus for doing so! Did Jesus preach with the hope of becoming Pope, or Archbishop of Canterbury, or General? NEVER! These are the Devil's ways."

Cooney then said that he would never cease to thank God for showing him some eleven years before that not only was he wrong but that all the professing Christians in his native town, Catholic and Protestant, were wrong too. "They sing about Jesus, preach about Jesus, pray to Jesus," he said, "but live contrary to the way Jesus lived and taught. They are trying to dodge God." Continuing his discourse on the clergy, he further stated:

"My brother-in-law, the Reverend Sidney Boyton Smith, M.A., Vicar of St. Clements, Bristol, is a clergyman. I saw him a few months ago when I called on him and my sister. I had a talk with him, and we didn't go into preliminaries, as he knows my history, my life, my testimony. He began to tell me of how some people in Bristol were getting converted through his ministry. I said to him: 'You need to get converted yourself.' I told him that unless he followed Jesus he would be lost. And all he could say was 'fiddlesticks.' The reason he said that was because he hadn't a leg to stand on when faced with the truth. But you cling to the clergy because you love self more than you love Jesus – your gold, your high position in society – all of which I had once, but which I now despise. How do you expect to go to heaven when you sell your birthright for a mess of pottage?"

In order to show that clericalism was unscriptural, he drew an analogy between the human family and God's family – the true church. He said:

"God advised that each family should live together in one house. He set a limit to that family. Suppose same reformer suggested gathering hundreds of children of these families into a building and putting in charge of them a man or woman with a big salary. Would that not at once be recognized as an unnatural system? Yet in the family of God, they have gathered the multitude together in one big building to pray and got a man with a large salary to superintend. Love is the highest motive in life, and the parents' pure disinterested love for their little ones is the most beautiful thing on earth. The parents want no pay. They do it all for love. So it is with God's family. The true church meets in a man's home; and there is no scriptural authority for church buildings and paid clergy."

Then vindicating their apostleship, "amid a Profound hush," he said:

"We are the homeless preachers; we have given up everything we possess – all that men hold dear – to go out to preach Christ's word. The Apostles were common men in common dress, so are we. They had no home, neither do we. We have given ourselves to God unconditionally to do with us what he will. And see to it that you do not bring condemnation on yourselves by hearing the truth and hardening your hearts to it."

Cooney did not leave his listeners with the impression that the 'Jesus Way' was a primrose path. It was a narrow way, a way of reproach where pride could not enter. And, as the Lord knew how hard it would be for the rich to enter the Kingdom, so Cooney reminded his audience: "It is harder for those of you in the higher classes to get saved," he said. "For if you were to become one of us, think of the awful drop in society you would suffer!" But it was hard for the common people too, he pointed out. They were scorned often in the work place for being associated with the tramp preachers.

"I know one young man," he said, "whose father is in fellowship with us, and who went to serve his time to business in Enniskillen. As soon as he entered the shop door, they began calling him – 'you dipper, you dipper,' and they tormented him so much that he was obliged to leave the place altogether... But it is better to undergo persecution here than damnation here after. The world says we are fools. So said the world in Noah's day. Many a worldly-wise man had his eye on Noah's farm when the ark was being built. What a fool they must have thought him! But when Noah came out of the ark, he had a bigger farm than the one he had lost, and nobody to dispute about the fences."

It was thus that after almost two hours Cooney drew his discourse to its conclusion. They then sang a hymn, we are told, the first verse of which was sung with bowed heads. And while the converts stood up, Mr. Cooney prayed for them, and the meeting ended with the doxology. Then:

"Tea and cake was passed around to everyone in the tent; and when those inside had finished, those outside were invited in. The brothers and sisters sat at the same tables, and there was manifest amongst them a marked spirit of love, kindness and self-sacrifice both to each other and the general public." (IR 12/8/1909)

William Irvine did not put in an appearance at this convention until the third Sunday. And he did so only for the purpose of expressing publicly what was already suspected he felt privately, viz., his dissatisfaction with the 'work' carried out by the preachers during the previous year. His remarks were intended, he said, for all the workers particularly the leaders with the exception of Willie Gill whose work alone, Irvine said, 'would stand the test that year.' He denounced the others right and left for their mission work all over the United Kingdom, claiming that they had allowed converts to join the Fellowship, who were nothing but sham hypocrites. It was understood that Irvine's strong views in this respect accounted for his absence from all public meetings until this one. Having directed his denunciatory remarks this time not towards the clergy but towards the tramp preachers themselves, he sat down and was silent at all public meetings for the rest of the convention.

One wonders, however, if Irvine's silence during this convention was not due to something other than his publicly admitted statement. Had he perhaps begun to feel himself overshadowed by the far more inspiring Cooney? How strange it is that he should single out Willie Gill as the only one whose work the previous year was praiseworthy! For Gill, while no doubt a good man, was not a stimulating preacher, lacking, it was said, the ability to hold the interest of his listeners. The power of Cooney's preaching, on the other hand, was such that it produced an almost hypnotic effect on his audience. Was this due only to Cooney's fascinating personality, one must ask? Or could it be that he had more of the anointing power of God than all the rest, Irvine included? Do we, in fact, begin to sense the seeds of a power struggle emerge on the part of Irvine who, though possessed of an impressive personality himself, was perhaps beginning to realize that, as a preacher, Cooney now far outshone him? With Cooney's natural gifts, Irvine might well compete; but if Cooney was endowed with power from on high in greater measure than he, how compete with this gift of the Holy Spirit? If this were indeed the case, we cannot help calling to mind how Saul's attitude toward David changed as his anointing power decreased and David's increased.

After Irvine's brief address, the platform was occupied by Edward Cooney, Bill Carroll, Tom Betty, John Kelly, and Ben Boles. Cooney again led the convention on this occasion and was the principal speaker. Bill Carroll, however, was the first to speak after a few hymns and a prayer. The gist of this address was their purpose for being there. It was, he said, to get people to make the right choice. "We are here to get men and women to choose between heaven and hell, life and death, blessing and cursing." He went on to say that most people go to hell because they neglect God's offer. The clergy, though honourable and upright men, preach a gospel that brings no reproach; it is a gospel to suit worldlings, one to please men rather than God. He continued:

"Their gospel never moved my heart. It wasn't until God sent one across my path, who caused me to ponder over these things, that I began to consider my ways, and make my choice between heaven and hell, life and death, blessing and cursing."

He went on to tell his audience that unless they made the right choice, they would go to the pit.

"You are taught to be hypocrites and deceivers," he said, 'though I don't say willingly. You see the hypocrisy of the men who preach to you, and you naturally run in the same direction. And instead of being God possessed on earth and throughout eternity, you are in the hands of the devil – devil possessed on earth and devil possessed throughout eternity."

He next emphasized the importance of hearing the gospel from the voice of a true preacher:

"If a man hears and receives the gospel from the voice of a true preacher," he said, 'he will be made a tabernacle for God; but if he hears and receives the gospel from the voice of a false preacher, he will be made a tabernacle for Satan. God's messengers are his interpreters."

Tom Betty spoke next. His address was described by one listener as being 'characteristic of earnestness,' and was, on the whole, gospel. He also spoke of his own personal experiences and drew comparisons between the false gospel and the true gospel. He said he thanked God for the day he met the tramp preachers and was willing to walk as they walked. One of the greatest snares the devil laid for him was the false prophet and the false gospel that could not change his life, and would finally land him in hell, he said.

Ben Boles then spoke. His address was just a variation on Irvine's theme of the damnation of the clergy and all who supported them. He made such trite remarks (borrowed from Irvine) as, "I never expect to see any clergy in heaven." John Kelly's address was likewise, although he did add something a little original, if not in thought at least in expression. He said that all houses built for the purpose of worshipping God, including the Salvation Army 'barracks' and the Plymouth Brethren hall, were "institutions for the blind."

Finally Edward Cooney delivered his address. He elaborated on the theme which he spoke on the previous Sunday, viz., the contrast between God's way and man's way. He showed from Scripture that down through the ages there had ever been but two ways. It was so in the Old Testament times (in the days of Abel, Noah, Elijah, for example); it was so in the New Testament times; it is so in our own day; and it will be so on the Day of Judgment when the sheep will be on the right hand and the Boats on the left. As he illustrated the two ways from Scripture, he asked his listeners repeatedly, "Which side would you have been on? – the side of Elijah or the prophets of Baal? – the side of Jesus or the Chief Priests and Scribes?" He showed them that in our day the tramp preachers were those who had taken their stand on the side of Jesus and Elijah; and he told them not to take his word for it, but to search the Scriptures to see if these things were so. He opened his address with the text: "God willeth not the death of a sinner but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live."

"That's plain enough, isn't it?" he queried. "It's not God's purpose that anyone should perish. It's God's purpose that every man and woman should be born again and become partakers of the divine nature. It's the Devil's purpose to deceive man. And how does the

Devil deceive us? By getting us to call evil good and good evil. Once he can get you to set a standard of your own or accept any standard other than God's, it's time surely to get your eyes opened. Remember also that the Devil has thousands of years practice in deceiving the human race. Remember also that Eve – the most perfect woman who ever lived, a woman with a perfect human nature – was thoroughly deceived by the Devil. And surely when the Devil could deceive her, it's cause for anyone to ask: 'Have I been deceived by the Devil also?'"

He went on to show how the different religions of the world have set up their own respective standards of good and evil, of right and wrong. The Mohamedans have their standard and the Buddhists theirs. The Methodists accept John Wesley's standard, the Episcopalians Martin Luther's standard, and the Presbyterians, Salvation Armyists, and Plymouth Brethren accept that of John Knox, General Booth, and John Darby respectively.

"But I tell you friends," he went on, "if you are wise you will seek with your own hearts and find out what I found out some years ago. You will find out something of what God's standard is. We don't want you to shut your eyes and open your mouth and drink in all we say before searching the Scriptures to see if these things be so."

He then assured them that if they honestly searched the Scriptures, they would become identified with the tramp preachers because they walked the way that Jesus lived and taught.

"I have never met a man or woman yet," he said, "who honestly searched the Scriptures who didn't cast their lot in with us. So if you, Roman Catholics and Protestants who are here today, honestly search the Scriptures, the result will be that you will cast your lot in with us, because we have cast in ours with Jesus."

At the same time, however, he was quick to point out that there were goats also among those who professed to walk the Jesus way, for he added:

"Some people say that we tramp preachers are very presumptuous. They say we believe most Catholics and Protestants are going to hell, and that only a very few are going to heaven. But you know, we are not all going to heaven either, for there are some hypocrites among the tramp preachers too. Judas was a hypocrite and professed to be in fellowship with Jesus. At all events, according to Scripture, there are few who find the straight gate and the narrow way."

For, says Cooney: "You ask me, 'Is it possible that there is only a little flock going to heaven'? I say, 'Yes.' In Bible times there never went a big crowd. In the days of Noah there were only 8 people. In Elijah's day, there was only a handful."

Then he forced his audience to ask themselves if they had been living in Elijah's day, whose side would they have been on – Elijah's or the prophets of Baal? And he painted the scene as follows:

"Elijah sat on Mount Carmel with the prophets of Baal – 850 reverend gentlemen with nice homes, nice families, and the patronage of the king and queen. Which side would you have been on? Be honest now! We'll suppose you were a cattle dealer, a big draper or a grocer in that country, and here's this Elijah, a man without a salary and with a far hotter tongue than Cooney, a man who called a spade a spade, a hypocrite a hypocrite, a fraud a fraud. He got into hot water, of course, as we sometimes do. But I have never suffered anything like what Elijah suffered. Elijah came to the place where he had nothing to eat, neither breakfast nor supper, nor would the people give him work. They boycotted him. I suppose you know what that means in Ireland. Which side would you have been on?"

Emphasizing again that there are only two ways, he continues: "Elijah said to the people: 'why halt ye between two opinions'? After all there are only two opinions in Fermanagh. We don't believe there are 20: there are just two. Some say we are right; the majority say we are wrong, and if they don't say it, they act it. There were just two opinions in Elijah's day; there were just two opinions in Noah's day; there were just two opinions in our Lord's day; there are just two opinions in our own day; and there will be just two at the Day of Judgment. The sheep, those who believe in God's way, will be on the right. But the goats, those who believed they could get saved in another way than God's way, will be on the left."

Then applying these two ways to the present time, he asks: "Why are we so much persecuted, and why have we such a bad name? Because we believe as Abel did, as Noah did, as Elijah did, and as Jesus did. We believe, as they did, that there are only two opinions, and that God's way is right and every other opinion is wrong and of the Devil. Jesus preached in God's way instead of becoming a 'clergyman.' He gave up his home and became a destitute wanderer on the face of the earth, dependent only on God. They say that the way that Jesus went to preach would not suit today – all right in his day, maybe, but we must now have salaries, incomes, superannuation funds."

He continued: "Everyman who climbs up in the world in the name of Jesus is going to hell. Jesus came down, John the Baptist came down, Peter came down; Judas tried to climb up and went to hell. If you are on the side of the climb-up preachers, you are on the side of the greatest hypocrites in the world; and you will go to the hypocrites' hell unless you repent."

Professing his love for the people, Cooney went on to say: "Do you think if I didn't love the people that I would have taken a step some years ago that left a gulf fixed between my family and me – my father, my mother, sisters and brothers whom I dearly love? Do you think that if I had loved the world I would have turned my back on it to live a life contrary to my own human nature? If I went by my own judgment I would go to hell. I am what I am in spite of my Cooney judgment, in spite of my own intellectual knowledge and personal tastes. I am what I am because of what Jesus was. I follow Him and He was right. And if you fight against that, you fight against God. Though you are looked upon as the most religious man in Enniskillen by Catholics and Protestants, every man who fights against God goes to hell. Do you know that the life that suits you will land you in hell? Every man who does what suits himself

goes to hell; and every man who does what suits God goes to heaven. Jesus did not please himself." And he said: 'You must take up your cross and deny yourself if you are to be my disciple.'

He went on to speak of the true church. And while he believed that Protestantism and Catholicism were both wrong, Catholicism, in one way, was the sounder of the two. For Roman Catholics believed there was only one true church, but Protestantism, with five or six hundred different sects all professing to be Christians, was a mass of confusion. The Roman Catholics, he said, knew that the New Testament recognized but one true church. And there is still only one true church, for God has not changed. The Roman Catholics think theirs is the true church. "But I tell you Roman Catholics," he went on, "yours is not the true church. It is false, and the falsest of the lot." Then he added parenthetically:

"Jesus and the old prophets were like each other. The divine life of Christ was manifested in Jesus 1909 years ago; but remember Christ was in the world before that, for the spirit of Christ was in the prophets. And when you Roman Catholics say that Mary was the mother of God, you blaspheme; you must never say that again. Mary was not the mother of God, for God never had a mother... Mary is never called the mother of God in either the Protestant or the Roman Catholic Testaments. She was not the mother of Christ. She was the mother of Jesus, for Jesus had a human nature. But he also had a divine nature before Mary was ever thought of."

He picked up again his theme of the true church. "How do you know the true church," he queried. Then he answered: "Jesus said to Peter, 'Thou art Peter and upon this Rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' But Peter had said, 'Thou art the Christ,' and Jesus said, 'Thou art Peter.' Peter had the Christ nature in him, and that is why Jesus was able to say these words to him. The true church is therefore not built on the rock of tradition, but on the rock of revelation – the revelation of the Christ to, in, and through the individual human heart. When Jesus said to Peter, 'On this Rock I will build my church, Rock does not refer to Peter but to the revelation of the Christ, which Peter received from God by the Spirit. The true church is composed of those, who, like Peter, have the nature of Christ, and who worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth."

Cooney then told the people it might be the last time he would be able to address them for some time, for he was leaving during the week for America to take part in conventions and missions there, and would probably not return to Ireland for the next three or four years.

The convention continued for another week, on the final proceedings of which a local newspaper reported as follows:

"The closing stages of the annual convention of tramp preachers at Crocknacrieve, near Ballinamallard, were reached on Sunday. As it was stated in last week's Impartial Reporter, Mr. Edward Cooney, who figured prominently as leader this year, left during the week for America where he is expected to remain. He was badly missed at Sunday's proceedings, for they lacked the interest which his personality imparted. At the afternoon meeting attendance showed a considerable diminution from that of the previous Sunday's. It was thought that Mr. Irwin might have a word, but he was conspicuous by his absence from the meeting altogether. The principal speakers at the afternoon meeting were Miss Barton, Miss Gill, and Willie Gill, but all three seemed to be lacking in the power of holding an audience." (IR 19/8/1909) and so concluded the 1909 convention at Crocknacrieve.

Note: The addresses by Edward Cooney and the other preachers in this chapter have as source material the Impartial Reporter 12/8/1909, 19/8/1909, and unpublished members' notes. This material has been edited and put into direct speech by the author.

CHAPTER 14

Towards a Climax – CROCKNACRIEVE 1910

The preparations for the 1910 convention at Crocknacrieve exceeded those for all previous conventions held there. It was expected that thousands of 'Pilgrims' from all over the world would attend. On Sunday alone 1,150 dinners were served, and the huge tent, which for the first time was lit by electricity, could not accommodate all who came. The arrangements for catering for such a multitude were said to be truly remarkable. All was carried out smoothly, orderly, cheerfully and efficiently. Everyone present was hospitably entertained whether inside the fold or outside. Marquees and huts were erected on Crocknacrieve grounds for the more than 300 preachers to sleep in. Some 50 of them were accommodated at Mullaghmeen, the residence of William West, brother of John West who owned Crocknacrieve.

The principal speaker at the first Sunday's meeting was George Walker, a young man who had been a draper's apprentice in the employment of William Rutherford Cooney, Edward's father. For on this occasion neither William Irvine nor Edward Cooney were present. Irvine was on the premises, but it seemed he was not going to address any public meetings following the course he had taken the previous year. Cooney on his way from Canada had not yet arrived. When he did the following day, he was heartily welcomed by all.

The tone of this convention was said to have been conspicuously milder than on previous occasions. Among the speakers were some from America, who confined themselves to the simple gospel, and expressed their gratitude to God for having led them out of the ways of false religion into the 'true way'. As for the singing, we have this impression from an outsider who had an ear for music:

"It was remarkable," he said, "that though such a large number of people sang together without a controlling force of any kind, they kept wonderfully in time; and their singing was brisk and obviously enjoyed by the majority." (IR 28/7/1910)

With regard to the addresses given by some of the women, it was remarked that: "In the sense of preaching the gospel, they do not excel. Their words which were many became very monotonous." The impression left by some of the men was similar. However, concerning the preachers in general, it was said that:

"It must be conceded to them that they preach morality, and that the effect of their preaching, though it sometimes breaks up families, does tend to virtue and in many cases to self-denial." (Ibid.)

It was also reported that for such a large gathering the silence was impressive. George Walker's address emphasized the importance of getting to know God.

"We are not recruiting people to join us," he said, "but we want people to get to know the Lord. For if you join us 70 times over without knowing Him, you will go to hell. Don't think that because you join us, you will go to heaven. How the devil deceives you by telling you such things! If you don't get to know Jesus, you will end up in hell. But if you give him a home in your heart here, he will give you a home in heaven."* (IR 7/7/1910) * This address was put into direct speech by the author.

He spoke of the religious experiences he had in his youth between the ages of 11 and 21. He said that he always knew that as long as he was worldly, covetous and selfish, he would not go to heaven, no matter how regularly he attended church or what he did to promote the cause of foreign missions. He knew that if he would be a disciple, he must deny himself and take up his cross. He was glad that the Lord had ever pointed him to the 'Jesus Way' and enabled him to walk in it. He said that the devil was deluding people into ways of worshipping God – going through a pretense of religion – but such would never satisfy an honest heart.

At the afternoon meeting, George Walker was again the principal speaker, and with him on the platform were John Kelly and Willie Gill. There were other 'brothers' who also spoke. They told of their experiences in foreign lands. They had met other preachers of the gospel, they said who allegedly admitted that the 'Jesus Way' was right but that it was too difficult. They had therefore chosen an easier path and had the world's smile rather than its frown. One of them said that God had a law in nature for carrying out all his plans. The sun, the moon, the stars, all obeyed God's law. God also had his law in the spiritual realm which we disobey to our own destruction.

George Walker in his address on this occasion stressed that although education was not necessary for salvation, it could be used in the service of the Lord. "It is not necessary to go to college," he said, "to walk the Jesus way; for neither Jesus nor any of the disciples went to college." He went on to say that Paul was an educated man, but he made use of his education to promote the cause of Jesus. He did not let pride prevent him from bowing the knee to the lowly Jesus way. Salvation was therefore within the reach of everyone, whether learned or unlearned, whoever cared to stop and read and think on these things. With regard to who would be saved, he said:

"If you ask me if all these multitudes will be lost and only a few will go to heaven, my answer is, wherever God finds a true and honest heart to respond to his truth, he will come into that heart and make his abode there." * (IR 21/7/1910)

* This quote was put into direct speech by the author.

At the Monday evening meeting, Edward Cooney, just back from Canada took his place on the platform and delivered a short prayer in his 'sonorous voice'. But he did not play a prominent role in the convention this year, leaving the leadership to George Walker.

It appears at this convention, great precautions had been taken to keep the 'brothers' and 'sisters' apart. This was not always possible, however Irvine was of the opinion that the women tempted the men. At all events "the consensus was that virtue reigned and there was not the slightest not the faintest imputation against the purity of the convention." For many it was an annual holiday. These people who were bound by such close spiritual ties had great joy in associating with one another. They came from all parts of the world, and so the atmosphere was not just local even national but rather international. A wide variety of nationalities was represented as well as a wide variety of classes. But here they were all equal, none claiming any right one above the other – all believing in one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. But alas a class distinction of another sort gradually crept in as a result of the living witness heresy. For this hitherto equal brotherhood had been divided into two orders – 'saints' and 'workers' – placing the 'workers' in a sort of priestly class above their fellows. And the authority and pre-eminence accorded to William Irvine well nigh cast him in the role of a 'pope.'

It was rumoured that there was a split between Irvine and Cooney. So the 'brethren' urged Cooney to return from Canada, for it was thought that only his presence at the convention could disprove the rumour that was on everyone's lips. There were differences of opinion among others too within the fellowship, as a result of which some workers left. These matters were not discussed in public. It appeared, however, that everything at Crocknacrieve was not working so smoothly as one might think. For if the 'leader', who was to keep to his room during most of the convention, had a strong will, others it seemed had too.

That there were problems with doctrine and practice at this time, there can be no doubt, not the least of which was the living witness heresy. Many people professed to have been born again before ever meeting the tramp preachers, but on hearing them saw that they walked in clearer light and so came into fellowship with them. Even the preachers right from the beginning had believed they were born again in Babylon out of which God had called them as he gradually revealed his Truth – Jesus – to their hearts. But the living witness heresy that had crept in circa 1905 claimed that none could be saved unless they received the gospel from the lips of a 'true preacher,' that is to say one in fellowship with Irvine and his associates. This resulted in problems for many people, causing some to leave the fellowship and others to live in a dilemma for quite a number of years. But the unthinking masses accepted it unquestioningly. And as the workers saw what power it gave them, they made it an article of faith.

There were also other problems that were coming to light at this time. The tramps preached that the fellowship was strictly in accordance with Scripture, yet as an ex-member pointed out: "Neither Jesus nor Paul had their great annual conventions, nor did they have a system of sending out women to preach as the Cooneyites do." Other practices too seemed to be inconsistent with Scripture. For example, the use of movable gospel halls in which sometimes an organ was used. And though there were no collections, a great

deal of money, it was said, found its way into the coffers of the movement, which was used to send workers out to preach. Such practices undermined faith. These problems which began to surface as early as 1910 and possibly before, may have given rise to the rumoured split between Cooney and Irvine.

At this time the movement was growing abroad, particularly all over the English-speaking world. And from an outsider's point of view, a tramp preacher's life didn't seem to be such a bad one after all, as the following observation claims:

"Money and means have been found to transport workers about from country to country. And the ordinary country clergyman has quite an unenviable position compared with the tramp preacher who has only to fancy himself called to some new sphere of labour, and he is provided with a ticket for Australia, Tasmania, New Brunswick, Canada. Thus he gets to see the world while 'working' to obtain converts, and apparently has not a bad time at all." (IR 4/8/1910)

This opinion, while it may have a grain of truth in it, is an uncharitable one nonetheless which distorts the whole truth. To balance this, let us consider some other views. The following is from an anonymous writer who claimed to have been inside the fold at one time. His account, though, on the whole unfavourable toward the tramp preachers, does show that their life was not such an enviable one as the above opinion would indicate. He states:

"Sometimes a preacher may be nigh starvation, but a post card often brings relief when sent to one of the fellowship who may have the means. In other cases, the poverty of such preachers induces converts to give help. They may supply a bed and food, and are consequently said to be saved. Yet time along proves whether the conversion be permanent." (Ibid.)

It, apparently, did not occur to the writer of the above that it could have been the Lord who put it into the heart of the convert to supply the bed and board for the preacher who had the faith to believe in the promises of God. As to whether the conversion be permanent or not, perhaps we shall have to wait until Judgment Day when the goats will be on the left and the sheep on the right. It may be that the person who provided the food and lodging for such a preacher will hear the 'well done' of the Lord when He will say: "As much as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

An excommunicated preacher, Alfred Magowan, who always believed however, that the movement at its inception was of God, writes:

"Tramp preachers did everything but sweat blood in the days of their going forth to strange lands and without visible means of support. They knew what it was to live on raw turnips in Scotland and oranges in California. They also knew what it was to go for days without anything to eat; and I can speak with authority, seeing I was one of them. We slept under the stars, in schools, in churches, in halls, in empty store buildings – with neither bed nor bed covering. We tramped through the snow from morning till night in more than 40 degrees of frost. And speaking for myself, I know what it is to have my tramp preacher companion rub frost out of his frostbitten ear with snow. We were tramps by tramping but we never begged. We were preachers by calling but we took up no collection. We worked in the daytime when people were responsive enough to our preaching at night to ask us into their houses to sleep and eat. We looked about to see if anything needed to be done on the premises or in the fields so as not to be burdensome to them." (13/1/1956)

The above gives an even less rosy picture of a tramp preacher's life. Their experiences were many and varied. Some underwent much greater hardships than others; and at times the way was much rougher than at others. The chief workers who had control of the money probably had it easier than the younger ones. But even among the chiefs there were the sheep (the self-sacrificing ones) and the goats (the climb-up ones). For there was opportunity to climb up in this fellowship too. Edward Cooney was to observe that when the older workers had more than the younger ones, something was wrong. But as it was in the days of the early church, so it was in the Go Preacher movement. For here too there were those who were hungry, thirsty, ill-clad, with no certain dwelling place; and there were those who were growing rich and reigning as kings among them (See 1 Cor. 4)

CROCKNACRIEVE 1911

As soon as the convention was over, the tramp preachers would take off for other parts of the country and the world to attend more conventions, work missions, and in the case of Edward Cooney, at least, preach in the open air in towns, villages, and cities. But every year the pillars of the 'church' showed up again at Crocknacrieve for the July/August convention. For Crocknacrieve was to these preachers what Jerusalem was to the apostles. Thus in the July 6, 1911, edition of the 'Impartial Reporter' the following account was given of the convention that year:

"The tramp preachers were again holding their annual convention at Crocknacrieve, near Enniskillen, and in comparison with former years there is no falling off in numbers or the enthusiasm of members of this sect. During the past month some 30 male members of the sect have engaged in preparing for this annual fete. A large tent has been erected on the lawn with seating accommodation for some 3,000 people, and some dozen wooden halls and marquees have been erected on the grounds for sleeping accommodation, whilst Mullaghmeen, the residence of Mr. W. H. West, has also been transformed into a suitable place for the men to sleep.

"Large numbers have arrived from South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, United States, Canada, England, Scotland, and all the colonies. The principal meeting on Sunday was in the afternoon when some 2,000 people were present, some coming a long distance. Mr. William Irwin, the leader and founder of the movement, was the principal speaker. Meetings are held each day and are well attended. Amongst those present is Mr. Irvine Weir, who was one of the first party to conduct a mission in Enniskillen town some six years ago in connection with this work. Since then he has been conducting missions in various parts of America, and was in San Francisco the time it was destroyed by earthquake."

On July 17, 1911, the following entry appeared in the same newspaper

"The annual convention of the 'Pilgrims' was continued on Sunday in glorious weather, and amid much enthusiasm. From ten o'clock in the morning every road that one would look to were to be found crowds of people flocking to Crocknacrieve, the scene of the

convention, by bicycle, motorcar, and large numbers on foot. The morning meeting was given to those who wished to speak, a large number taking advantage of the open meeting. In the afternoon there was an enormous crowd, the large tent being packed. The principal speakers were Miss Barton, Miss Smith, and Mr. Bill Carroll. All visitors were heartily invited to participate in the tea provided after the meeting. Mr. Edward Cooney was the most important speaker at the evening meeting."

CROCKNACRIEVE 1913

Each year preparations for the convention appeared to surpass all previous ones, and those for the 1913 convention were, if anything, more elaborate than heretofore. For example, two large tents were erected (instead of the one on previous occasions), each to seat 800 people. One was used as a meeting tent and the other as a dining and overflow tent. The whole establishment was lighted by electricity, generated by gas suction, and water was pumped by an electric motor. An electric fan was kept in motion in the cookhouse where three meals a day were prepared by a large staff of cooks. The cookhouse was a busy place since all who cared to accept hospitality at Crocknacrieve were entertained to plain, wholesome food.

This was a self-supporting community, the members of which had various duties. There were, for example, cooks, stewards, carpenters, tailors, and tradesmen of all kinds – men who at ordinary times were preachers. There were others who performed a service of one kind or another, such as taking charge of the postal service or different buildings marked to indicate what trade or service was carried on there. They were labelled – Sleeping Accommodation Office, Railway Inquiry Office, Post Office, Dispensary, Bakery, Carpenter's Shop, Cook House, and so on. All the supplies were provided voluntarily by the saints. Some gave cattle or sheep, for example, others flour in wholesale quantities. The Pilgrims were thus able to bake their own bread and kill their own meat. Milk and butter were also obtained from cows provided by the saints. With such generous voluntary contributions and a voluntary skilled labour force recruited from among the workers, this community was not only self-supporting but was also able to share with the large numbers of outsiders who congregated at these conventions. There were no collections, no soliciting of funds, and what is more, there was no external coercion to push the people to give. All arrangements, it was said, were carried out smoothly, cheerfully, and efficiently.

It was observed that the Pilgrims believed in availing themselves, as far as they could, of all the conveniences modern civilization had to offer; for, the workers who used to travel on pedal cycles now travelled on motor cycles, at least, William Irvine and many of the leading workers did. It was also observed at this convention that there had been a noticeable improvement in dress in recent years. For although the Pilgrims still dressed extra plainly, all were well clad.

Another innovation at this convention was the introduction of a new hymn book, entitled Hymns: Old and New. This book, compiled by Edward Cooney and William Carroll, consisted in large part of hymns taken from such collections as Songs of Victory, Redemption Songs, and Songs and Solos. But it also included hymns by some of the Go Preachers as well.

Baptisms by total immersion were carried out as usual, and the Lord's Supper was partaken of on Sunday mornings when a piece of bread was passed from hand to hand followed by wine in a mug. The men and women were kept within their respective bounds, one half of the large tent being set apart for women. Various parts of the grounds were reserved for the same purpose.

In the absence of William Irvine, the convention was opened by Edward Cooney. Irvine was, however, present at the afternoon meeting and accompanied on the platform by Edward Cooney and Willie Gill. Irvine was the principal speaker at this meeting, and judging by his address, his attitude toward the clergy had not changed. "We are criticized for denouncing the clergy," he said, "but the Serpent in the Garden of Eden was greatly denounced. And what would religious people say today if they were called the brood of the Serpent, as Jesus called the Scribes and Pharisees." Many of the preachers, lately returned from abroad, spoke of their experiences in foreign lands. Some mentioned the trying times they had endured in excessive heat and extreme cold. They had apparently travelled a great deal. William Irvine, in the course of visiting the scenes of work abroad, had been some seven times round the world, and was in San Francisco on the night of the famous earthquake of 1906.

The convention came to a close on Sunday, 27 July after four weeks duration. The numbers which attended during the day were in the thousands. The morning meeting was a 'testimony meeting' when anyone who chose to do so spoke of his or her own Christian experience, making frequent appeals to any outsiders to become partakers of the divine nature. Willie Gill told the religious people outside the fold that "they might be hiding in the tree which they had climbed up, but God was able to strip their religious covering off as he did the fig leaf covering from Adam." Irvine said that the world was full of hatred and pride, that God had no interest in the man who indulged his selfishness either in a saloon or a synagogue, and that the devil's work was to teach people how to get to heaven some other way than the way that Jesus lived and taught. Edward Cooney spoke at the mid-day meeting, and in his address dealt with what one correspondent described as, "what appears to be the foundation of the Go Preachers' theology."

"The world," Cooney said, "was full of idols, i.e. things that occupy the attention of the heart of man. Man was created so as to become a child of God and grow up to be like Jesus. The devil was the adversary of the human race and was very busy keeping man occupied with something else. Perhaps there were some there who knew not the day of their visitation, and so their house would be left unto them desolate. They might leave the meeting in a condition in which God could not save them," he said. (IR 31/7/1913).

Before the curtain went down on this convention of 1913, our correspondent describes the last meeting as follows:

"The closing scene in the glooming was impressive. All the arrangements had been made for the departure of the preachers to different parts of the world, and it only remained for the Go Preachers' founder, William Irvine, to give all the last word of counsel and farewell. Irvine dealt mainly with the duty of those in fellowship towards each other and towards the outside world. There was more heart for one another there, he said, than they would meet with in any other community throughout the world. And what people had heard there during the convention would either torment them in hell or make them glad in heaven, for the word would not return void.

They could do much to soften the hearts of people with a little kindness. Many of them got the Impartial Reporter and they never thought of passing it on to the fellow who had none. They could do many little things among their friends and relatives. The best use they could make of anything was to express a little love." (IR 31/7/1913).

The year 1913 marked the end of a phase in the development of the Go Preacher movement. This was the last convention on a very large scale, where thousands of people attended, to be held at Crocknacrieve or elsewhere; the last that had a 4-weeks duration; and the last William Irvine was to attend. He did not know it would be his last, nor did anyone else at that time. But events moved rapidly; and, for better or for worse, this fellowship was never to be quite the same again.

Note: The annual convention of 1912 took place in Brookeborough. It was only briefly referred to in the press.

CHAPTER 15

Conflict and Crisis

In 1914, Irvine was at the zenith of his power and influence. The recognized leader and founder of a near worldwide religious movement, he had within the brief period of 15 years been elevated to a position of authority which bore, it was said, many of the marks of 'popery'. But as his pre-eminence increased so his anointing decreased. The irony of this was that it was he who said, in the days when he was being used of God. "Seek the place, lose the power; seek the power, lose the place." This prophecy was now being fulfilled in his own life with rigorous inevitability. For the more he got the place, the more he lost the power, that is the anointing power of the Holy Spirit. And, seemingly unaware that God departs from those who exalt themselves, "for no flesh shall glory in His presence," Irvine exulted in the position which placed him above his fellows. But, as says the proverb: "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Irvine, it seems, was attractive to women for whom he had a weakness. This proved to be his Achilles' heel; for when some of the other senior workers (most of whom had been his converts) became aware of this, they told him he could no longer occupy a position of leadership within the fellowship. He would have to accept a humble position among the rank and file if he wished to remain in fellowship. Irvine refused these conditions and so withdrew. His spiritual defeat, apparently, did nothing to humble him. Edward Cooney made one last attempt to help him by going to see him in Scotland after all the other leaders had given him up as hopeless. Although this was not apparently productive, Edward always felt that his visit had helped Irvine. Edward's 'brethren' were displeased with him for going the second mile in trying to restore Irvine. Recalling this incident in later years, Edward writes:

"In the year 1914, when we became aware of William's defeat, the writer was moved to go and see him personally to try to help the man who had been such a help to him and others, and now needed help himself. This desire he had was discouraged by his fellow workers, but as he got to see he should obey God and not man, he went to Scotland to see the man of God, who had lost the power he once had. The writer is glad ever since that he did this, and believes he was of some help to his erring brother." (Circa 1947).

This compassion towards the fallen was characteristic of Cooney throughout his long life. And many were the occasions during his 60-year ministry when he encouraged the shipwrecked to take heart again, sometimes with very rewarding results. He never abandoned anybody, knowing that Jesus put up with Judas till the very end.

He did not, however, appear to have much success in his efforts to restore Irvine; but we must leave the result of that for God to decide. At all events, between 1914 and 1920, Irvine began to believe himself to be one of the two witnesses mentioned in 'Revelation'; and so in 1920, he went to live in Jerusalem to await the Lord's return there. This decision on Irvine's part came as a great relief to the then present leaders of the fellowship. For these chief workers, who had among them taken Irvine's place as the power and authority within the fellowship, felt ill at ease until he was as far out of the way as possible. Irvine continued to live in Jerusalem with his delusions until his death in 1947, convinced to the end that he was the Lord's anointed. In a letter to Bill Carroll he wrote from Jerusalem as follows:

"Sinners who are blind and deceived and robbed can't hurt anyone who has the anointing of God, while people who have no anointing need all the care the rulers can give. This explains the activities of the 'Testimony.' Six years ago in April, I was rejected and cast out to die according to prophecy, my birthright divided amongst my children and enemies (and I was willing); but the anointing God gave me remained with me and nobody seems to get my mantle though many may have tried my shoes, sat in my seat, slept in my bed, ate my meals, and have enjoyed the rise to power and prominence. What seemed wrong in me seemed right in others." (29/2/20).

Irvine's overthrow was for Cooney a sign that God was calling not only Irvine but the whole fellowship, himself included, to repentance. He saw that they had been mixing flesh and blood revelation with God's revelation. They should, therefore, return to God as Jeremiah was exhorted to do, and in the light of His countenance learn to separate the precious from the vile. Cooney saw that Jeremiah, like himself and his 'brethren,' seemed to have been influenced by flesh and blood revelation which he mixed with God's revelation. Jeremiah had found his pain perpetual and his wound incurable, refusing to be healed. The remedy was to return to God and cease mixing the precious and the vile.

Thus in 1914, Edward Cooney, like Jeremiah, returned to God, and in the light of His countenance saw the doctrine of the living witness to be vile – a flesh and blood revelation savouring not of God but of man. He therefore rejected it. He saw that what the Lord required of him was to depart from iniquity, that meant to remove everything from his life that was not like Jesus who is equity, and to exhort all who professed to be God's children to do the same. The living witness heresy he now saw as being the root cause of Irvine's defeat. For, much more serious than his moral transgression was his spiritual transgression, i.e., that spirit of dominion which set him above his fellows. This spirit, Cooney believed resulted directly from the living witness heresy. Regarding this he wrote:

"In 1914, God showed me that the pre-eminence William (Irvine) got through this error led, together with other things, to his ceasing to be the humble brother among brethren that he was in the beginning. (May 1930)"

But although God had removed Irvine from the oversight, Cooney saw that the problem was still with them. For the living witness heresy had already divided this hitherto equal brotherhood into two classes, workers and saints or priests and laity, after the manner of the Nicolaitans, thus investing the workers with a power that was ungodly. For the claim that only through them could any be saved was to monopolize salvation. So Cooney's call to his 'brethren' was, "Let us return unto the Lord, and He will return unto us."

Unlike Cooney, however, his 'brethren' felt no need of repentance. So instead of returning to God (as he exhorted them to do) in the light of whose countenance they too might learn to separate the precious from the vile, the chief workers set themselves above their fellows in the same manner as Irvine had done and, as Irvine said in his letter quoted above, "they enjoyed the rise to power and prominence." Irvine was set aside as one who had committed a moral transgression; but his spiritual transgression, i.e., his rise to power and prominence, did not seem to touch them at all, nor did his fall in any way serve as a warning to them. And as Irvine pointed out, what seemed wrong in him, seemed right in others. For just as Irvine had gloried in the false doctrine which asserted that he was the only channel, either directly or derivatively, through which any could be saved, so they now claimed this pre-eminence for themselves. It seemed irrelevant that practically all of these chief workers (Cooney excepted) had been 'saved' through Irvine; and that until his fall, only a short time before, they had preached that it was necessary to hear the gospel through him or one of his fellow preachers in order to be born again. Of these heirs to Irvine's 'kingdom', Alfred Magowan wrote:

"When dominion began to appear within the fellowship, God's answer was to cast it down in the person of William Irvine. That ought to have been the end of it (i.e. dominion), but it was not taken to heart by any of those who exulted under him. The same spirit that set him above his brethren began to be seen in them, so that in a very little while they had divided the earth among themselves and had established themselves over little 'kingdoms.' They exercised authority after the way and according to the spirit of Rome doing violence to the consciences of men in the name of the 'truth' or the 'testimony.' When the anointing ceased, authority took its place, and cruelty had to be resorted to in keeping people under control." (21/1/1931).

Irvine's spiritual defeat had a far reaching effect. For it caused two spirits to surface within the fellowship in which the sceptre of righteousness had broken down and the sceptre of rules set up in its place. The one spirit, manifested by Edward Cooney and Tom Elliott, sought to restore the sceptre of righteousness and smash down the sceptre of rules. The other spirit, manifested by the chief workers, sought to maintain at all costs the sceptre of rules, and thereby establish their own righteousness. It was therefore inevitable that two such opposing spirits would collide and, in the fullness of time, lead to a division. Irvine had been removed but his influence had not, for the chief workers still accepted what he taught (before his fall) without separating the wheat from the chaff. But when Edward Cooney rejected the chaff, he was seen by them to have gone wrong. Edward makes reference to this in a letter to Jack Owens, in which he states:

"For a period in my life as a preacher, William Irvine was a channel through which God gave me revelation; but I am sorry to say that some of the professed revelation that came through William was only flesh and blood revelation. When God removed him from the oversight in 1914, I began to separate between the wheat that came from God through him and the chaff that was only flesh and blood revelation savouring not of God but of man. My brethren and fellow workers began to form gradually a power against me because of this and now declare I went wrong then." (14/12/1930).

After Irvine's fall in 1914, his heirs set themselves up as overseers in their respective 'fields.' George Walker claimed the oversight in the eastern part of the United States and Jack Carroll in the western part. John Hardy and Bill Carroll held sway in Australia, Wilson McClung in New Zealand, and so on throughout the world. These larger territories were in turn subdivided into smaller areas under the leadership of deputy overseers. The 'pope' in the person of Irvine had been cast down, but now we see a church run by 'bishops' and 'archbishops' so to speak, who exercise authority in the same manner and spirit as he had done. With so much human control then, what had happened, one might ask, to the control of the Spirit in this fellowship? One is reminded of Paul's letter to the Galatians when he wrote: "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth. . . Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh"?

The Holy Spirit still operated in this fellowship, however, for those of God's children who, like Edward Cooney, refused to be organized. The bondage of human control, he saw, would inevitably land them back in Babylon whence they had been delivered a decade and a half before. So he claimed the liberty to be controlled by the Spirit as he and his 'brethren' had done in the beginning. This eventually caused his 'brethren' to accuse him of walking disorderly.

Although a pioneer of the movement and an overseer himself, Cooney claimed no 'field' to rule over as the other chief workers did, and he recognized no boundaries. For, led by the Spirit, he saw the world as his field and himself as one who serves and not as one who rules. Thus while his 'brethren' were securely established as settled rulers over their respective territories, he was on the move with no certain dwelling place.

There was yet another major change which took place in the fellowship in 1914. This was the year the First World War broke out, and all of military age were required to register. In doing so, it was necessary to state one's religion. And although the fellowship had a variety of nicknames, such as Pilgrims, Tramp Preachers, Go Preachers, Dippers, Cooneyites, it had no legal or official name. These nicknames were given it by outsiders but the members of the fellowship did not use any of them. Without adopting it as a name, however, they did refer to themselves as the 'Testimony of Jesus,' often shortened to 'Testimony.' We do not know who introduced this name, but it was in use by members in referring to themselves early in the movement's history.

Since they were by conviction pacifists, they wished to register as conscientious objectors. The problem was what to call themselves. Andy Robb, one of the chief workers, registered as Independent Faith Mission. Edward Cooney registered simply as Christian, and advised Willie Gill, who was head worker in England at the time, to counsel all others to do likewise. But Gill said, "Let us take the name we call ourselves by the 'Testimony of Jesus'", and Edward, against his conscience, gave in to Gill. Of this circumstance, he was to write years later:

"At that time, I'm sorry to say, I used to go contrary to my conscience to avoid differing from my brethren or fellow preachers. I gave in to Willie Gill in this respect and so erred. But I have confessed my sin to God, and He has forgiven me."

Thus in 1914, the fellowship in the British Isles, officially took the name of 'Testimony of Jesus' and was duly listed as such with the Conscientious Objectors Board. Edward was chosen to represent them before a judge in London so as to obtain the status of conscientious objector for the brethren of military age. He succeeded in getting this for the workers but not for the saints some of whom had to go to prison for their convictions. It appears that Edward presented his case so well as to what they stood for that the judge said to him, "the more I hear of it, the more I like it." Willie Gill is also said to have remarked at this time that Edward had received the anointing because he spoke with such power, but that Irvine had lost it.

The taking of a denominational name was a considerable step backwards, and it troubled Cooney greatly. It troubled others too. The name, however, had only been taken for the above reason, and they did not use it otherwise except among themselves. Tom Betty said that if the day ever came when the people of God would be known by a name, it would be a great victory for the devil. In the beginning they had professed to be a people whom God had called out for His name. But it was not only the taking of the name that was wrong; it was the name itself 'Testimony of Jesus.' Edward Cooney came to see that while they could give the testimony of Jesus, they could not be the testimony of Jesus. He, therefore, rejected the name, but it stuck unofficially within the fellowship. To the outside world, however, they were known almost everywhere as Cooneyites.

Apart from these events, viz., Irvine's fall, Cooney's rejection of the living witness doctrine, and the taking of a denominational name, the fellowship seemed to continue much as usual, at least outwardly. And although Cooney's rejection of the living witness heresy caused some consternation among the chief workers, they did not make an open issue of it right away. For, clearly this was not the time to insist upon such a doctrine in view of Irvine's recent fall since he was the sandy foundation on which it had all been built. Besides the chief workers were not sure at this point in time where the people stood, or even where some of themselves stood on this issue. For some, like John Hardy, had stood out against the doctrine for a long time although he too subsequently accepted it. And although Cooney was a marked man from 1914 on, they evidently judged it more expedient to consolidate their power before mounting an open campaign against him.

CHAPTER 16

The Annual Convention — 1914

At the annual convention in July 1914, held not at Crocknacrieve this time but Coolkill, English, Dungannon, County Tyrone, at the home of James Richardson. Edward Cooney and Robert Humphreys were the principal speakers. This convention was not on the scale of those held at Crocknacrieve in former years. For at Coolkill, people numbered only in hundreds whereas at Crocknacrieve they numbered in the thousands. The convention this year (1914) lasted but four days whereas at Crocknacrieve the conventions lasted four weeks. This was not because the fellowship had declined in numbers, but because it was now considered preferable to hold several small local conventions instead of one very large one. Of the above-mentioned convention, we have this contemporary report:

"The convention was much smaller than those that have taken place in former years at Crocknacrieve, Ballinamallard. . . The members, some 400, of this community, were early astir. Breakfast, consisting of porridge, tea, and bread, was provided. The fare was good and hospitality was offered to all. A spirit of friendship and equality was noticeable on every hand; men from various walks of life attended, from different parts of Ulster. They all sat together, ate together, and no distinctions were made. Half of the dining and assembly tents were set apart for women. Mr. Edward Cooney and Mr. Robert Humphreys, two Fermanagh men, were the leaders of this convention. Mr. William Irvine is in Co. Meath. His health is stated not to be as good as usual." (IR 9/7/1914).

A number of people from abroad attended, including one German-American who had been brought up in Germany but had emigrated to the United States at 14. By the age of 20 he had saved enough money to buy a farm. He had cleared the land and built a house on it when, as he said, "the true preachers came round." As a result of this he yielded his heart to the Lord. Finally he decided to sell all that he had and go and preach to the people in Germany. The report goes on:

"The spirit which animated this man would appear to be the moving power among these people, and their addresses all manifest this spirit. On this occasion no intemperate statements were made, and all the speakers addressed themselves to those who adopt their views. . . Two preachers, one of whom Miss Barton of Pettigo, have recently returned from Northern Italy and Switzerland. Some Swedes were also present at this convention." (Ibid.)

Robert Humphreys, one of the leaders, speaking on Hezekiah, said that they were told that he did what was right in the sight of God. Speaking of themselves, Humphreys said that as they went about from place to place, some people admitted they were impressed with their lives. But when they exposed all that was inconsistent with the life and teaching of Christ, people resented it.

Edward Cooney, the other principal speaker, said he did not find it hard to preach the gospel in this way; but he had found that all the sorrow in his life was a result of disobedience to God. God knows what is best for us, he said, though we may not understand it. "If I had planned my life," he went on, "I should not have gone to preach. It was God's plan, and it has been very satisfactory. I hope in the

days to come to have less of my own way and more of God's way." He went on to say that the world would not understand the words of Peter, "Be ye of one mind." But when people who have a little of the love of God in their hearts come together, they taste something of the fellowship that is eternal. And if they love one another as brethren, they will have a foretaste of heaven. There should be true courtesy among the children of God, not the dressed up sham that is in the world. There was a kindly way of talking to people that made those who heard realize you loved them. Worshipping Jesus always means: "I want to be more like him." Cooney continued:

"We need to guard against the marks of sacrifice disappearing from our lives, because then the wall of Jerusalem, the separation between us and the world, would be broken down. We do not want to have a repetition of past mistakes; but we do want to have something of the spirit of sacrifice that was manifest at the outset." *

It is significant that at this convention, perhaps for the first time, there was not one word of denunciation of the clergy. It will be remembered that this was the first convention after Irvine's overthrow, and Edward Cooney was at this time more concerned with what was wrong within the fellowship than outside it. Robert Humphreys had remarked that when they exposed all that was inconsistent with the life and doctrine of Christ, regarding those outside, people resented it. But it was becoming more and more apparent to Cooney that all was not consistent with the life and doctrine of Christ inside either. Thus when he referred to the spirit of sacrifice that was manifested at the beginning, he no doubt remembered from whence they had fallen, and was therefore more concerned with returning to God so as to put their own house in order.

* This quote was put into direct speech by the author.

Note: There was no convention in 1915 because of the war.

CHAPTER 17

Edward Out of Step with his 'Brethren'

In July 1916, Edward attended the annual convention at Crocknacrieve. This convention lasted a week, and it was reported that the gathering, while not a record one, was large. Edward occupied the platform with George Walker, Willie Gill, and Wilson Reid. Walker, lately returned from America, was the principal speaker. Like the convention of 1914, there was no denunciation of the clergy at this one either. People said they had changed their preaching, but George Walker denied this. He said that if they didn't talk so much about the clergy as they used to, it was because the Bible said they must leave the first principles and go on to perfection. He said they didn't want to go on talking about where they had been rescued from for the rest of their lives. They were here to try to encourage others to walk the narrow road, he said.

"Edward and his fellow preachers had for so long been absorbed with exposing the unscriptural aspects of clericalism that they failed to examine themselves in this regard. But from 1914 on, as Edward advanced gradually toward further light, he came to see that some of their own beliefs and practices were also unscriptural, viz., the living witness heresy and organization with all that that involved. But as Edward grew bolder in pointing out these departures from Scripture, his fellow preachers became alarmed. It was in 1916 that Wilson Reid, on home leave from Africa, first became aware that Edward was 'out of step' with his brethren." "Others," he said, "could trace it back much further however." (That was likely to 1914 when Edward openly rejected the living witness heresy).

Wilson Reid was later to accuse Edward of having changed his testimony in 1916 because he claimed he was born again at the age of 17 which, says Wilson, "was many years before he began walking in the Truth," or Testimony! Edward said he had not changed his testimony from the true gospel that he with William Irvine and others had preached in the beginning before the living witness heresy had been introduced.

At a baptism in the Ballycassidy river at Ballinamallard in 1904, Edward Cooney preached about his own conversion in 1884 when at the age of 17 he yielded his life to Christ as a result of God's revelation directly to his own heart. At the same baptism, John West told of his rebirth in 1894. He pointed out that this was not through any human agency but by God speaking to his own heart. In both cases this was many years before coming into contact with Irvine or any of his associates. And a great many workers and saints had similar testimonies. Thus if they in the beginning had admitted to having experienced the new birth before coming out of Babylon, it was reasonable to conclude that God had his children there still. Edward therefore maintained that while all religious systems and organizations were unscriptural and for that reason wrong, yet there were people in them who were born again. "God has his children everywhere", he said, "even among the heathen." The chief workers on the other hand maintained that one could not be born anew unless he had received the gospel from the lips of a true preacher, i.e., one of themselves. They stuck rigidly to Irvine's doctrine that "a person may be born again through a living witness, without one never." This doctrine Edward totally opposed after 1914. He could see that it had introduced into the fellowship a Nicolaitan type of power which was ungodly. He called it the systematizing of error, and he could see as a result of this that the fellowship was becoming increasingly an exclusive sect under human control. It was this kind of exclusiveness that Jesus also rejected. For he found some of God's children among the Samaritans and the Romans, who were often sympathetic towards him while many who claimed the exclusive right to be God's children were strongly opposed to him. Jesus made the universality of his church clear when he said: "They shall come from the east and the west. the north and the south, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God." And just as the chief priests saw the overthrow of their waning power in his teaching, so the chief workers saw the erosion and eventual overthrow of theirs in Edward's teaching if they allowed him to remain in fellowship. Thus in order to guard their power, not only must he be excommunicated but his name must be cast out as evil as well.

Organization too resulted in practices for which there was no scriptural authority. For example, 1) the system of sending women out to preach in apostolic manner. On this subject Edward wrote: "I do believe in 'sisters' preaching, but I do not believe in 'sister' apostles or

overseers. And I believe that some of the 'sisters' are acting in an unseemly and unscriptural way in seeking to be such." He always believed this, but after 1914 he let his views be known more openly. 2) Movable gospel halls which, as we have seen, had become an issue in 1910. These proved, Cooney believed, a lack of faith in those who used them. "I'll have fellowship with you if you use them but don't ask me to use them," he told the chief workers. 3) A worker's field or territory over which a senior worker ruled. Edward did not believe that there should be any such thing as a worker's field, for this resulted in too much human control. All workers, he said, were called upon to serve and not to rule. And with the world as their field, they should be ready and willing at all times to obey the Spirit's leadings. They should never settle down in any particular area, for Jesus said, "As ye go, preach." This was why in the beginning, they were nicknamed Go Preachers. 4) Great annual conventions for which there was no Scripture. These also involved too much organization and therefore hindered the workings of the Spirit. "If Paul had arrived in Philippi with tents and chairs," Edward pointed out, "he would have missed meeting Lydia." But, led by the Spirit, Paul was brought into contact with her. For as Luke reports:

"And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of by Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, 'If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.'" (Acts 16: 13-15).

5) Large bank accounts. These too undermined faith. For although the workers had no fixed salary and no earthly possessions per se, they were now provided for in an organized manner. They, therefore, did not have to rely on faith to the extent those first preachers did in the early days of the movement. In other words, going to preach in the 'Jesus Way' now did not involve the same amount of sacrifice or the same kind of faith as it did at the outset.

It was faith as opposed to organization, and the control of the Spirit as opposed to human control, which were the basic issues that brought about the irreconcilable conflict between Edward and his 'brethren'.

CHAPTER 18

Fred Wood — Fred was to Edward what Timothy was to Paul

In 1916 Edward was in London. On week days it was his custom to preach at Tower Hill during the lunch break, for here at that hour business people from the City, the financial capital of the world in those days, used to congregate to hear preachers of various creeds deliver their message. Among the crowd who used to go there was a young man called Fred Wood who was at that period in his life searching for Truth. It was this quest at the age of 26 that led him during his lunch hour to Tower Hill where for some time he had listened to speakers from the Protestant Truth Society and the Catholic Truth Society. Fred, however, found this confusing, for he reasoned there can be only one Truth. It was at this time, October 1916, that there came another preacher to Tower Hill, who arrested his attention, and who said he was neither Catholic nor Protestant. Fred listened to him every day for two weeks and became convinced that what he spoke was the Truth, the Truth as it is in Jesus. This is what he had been searching for. One day after the crowd had dispersed, the preacher came and spoke to Fred who found that this was a man sent from God, for he not only spoke the Truth, he lived the Truth. That preacher was Edward Cooney. The name meant nothing to Fred at the time. It was the message and a certain indefinable quality – a sort of magnetism – that engaged his interest. Thus began their life-long fellowship and friendship.

Fred was born at Dawlish, Devon, 6 May, 1890, but at the age of 6 moved with his family to London where he grew up and where he worked in the Customs & Excise from leaving school until shortly after he met Edward Cooney on Tower Hill in 1916. At that time he was engaged to be married, and had enough money saved to settle down in comparative comfort. A member of the Church of England, he sang in the choir and participated in other church activities as well. But he became dissatisfied with the church, for although he heard the word there, he didn't see the life. In Edward he saw the word made flesh. Edward invited him to meetings and told him there were 600 preachers like himself. "Well," thought Fred, "if they are all like you, this must be a wonderful fellowship." But Fred was disappointed, for he met not even one of Edward's calibre. The meetings Edward took him to did not come up to expectation either, for neither worker nor saint spoke with such power as Cooney did nor manifested the Life as he did. Nevertheless, Fred knew that he was now on the right road. Edward had told him that his own role as an ambassador for Christ was to link people with Jesus and then stand aside. Jesus was the goal.

Undoubtedly, Edward was further along the path of discipleship than were those in fellowship with him. However, they were presumably all reaching toward the same goal though at different stages along the way. So perhaps Fred was expecting too much if he thought he should find many like Edward. No doubt he found out when he began to walk the way himself that no one comes to bear the marks of Christ to the extent that Edward did without much sacrifice and suffering, and a heart filled with the love of God.

Soon after Fred's conversion, he gave up his fiancée and his job, distributed his money among the poor, and went to preach according to Matthew 10 in fellowship with Edward and those associated with him. He spent the following 20 years preaching in Spain, in South America, and the British Isles. While preaching in Spain and South America, he also taught English; and he preached with Edward at different times in various parts of the British Isles.

Fred may have found during those 20 years that apostolic preaching was not what he was called to do, for in 1938, he married an Ulster girl, Sadie Greenaway, who was one of his own converts. Thereafter Fred earned his living in the offices of Harland & Wolff in Belfast until his retirement. Sadie was like Fred a devout Christian. Fred came to realize that everyone was not called to the apostolic life, i.e., to follow Jesus, the homeless preacher. Others were called to follow Jesus, the carpenter, so to speak, who had a home. Sadie and Fred had a home and four daughters. In this capacity they gave their lives unreservedly to the service of the Lord. Their

home was always open for God's people to stay in and worship in. The church met in their home, according to Scripture, for the breaking of bread on Sunday mornings. It also met there on Sunday and Wednesday evenings as well. They were Edward Cooney's staunchest supporters, and Edward used to say that Fred was to him what Timothy was to Paul. They had to attend to such practical considerations as earning their living and raising a family, but everything they did was done in the name of the Lord. All their spare time was given over to pastoral work including open-air preaching in Fred's case at any rate. Edward Cooney once said that whenever he entered their home he felt that Christ was the head of that house. No doubt, Fred was Edward's prize convert, the brightest jewel in his crown, the seal of his apostleship. When Edward was excommunicated in 1928, Fred was one of the very few preachers who supported him.

After Edward's death in June, 1960, the outcasts everywhere looked to Fred as their elder brother, the one further along the path of discipleship than all the rest. Fred was a leader as one who served, not as one who ruled, and he became an example to the flock. It was on Fred that Edward's mantle seems to have fallen when he died, as Elijah's fell on Elisha. Fred retired from Harland & Wolff in 1960 at the age of 70. From then until shortly before they died, he and his wife, Sadie, as well as shepherding the outcasts in Ulster, also paid regular visits to England and Scotland and made many trips abroad to Canada, the United States and Norway to strengthen the outcasts in those countries. When he was 80 years old, he taught himself Norwegian so as to be able to communicate both orally and in writing to the fellowship in Norway. (He also spoke French and Spanish fluently.). At the age of 82, he told a friend in New York that he believed his best years were ahead of him in the Lord's service. In the spring of 1985, when he was 95 years old, he and Sadie (who had suffered a slight stroke 15 months before), accompanied by their daughter, Joanna, went on a missionary journey to the United States and Canada. For three months they travelled through the eastern part of the American continent visiting outcasts and also some friendly Testimony members. During this sojourn they missed no opportunity to teach and preach Jesus as on former visits; and Fred baptized four young people who had heard him on a previous visit, a few years before.

They returned to Ulster in July, 1985, and in August went on another missionary journey to southern Ireland. Toward the end of September they went on yet another to England, and in November Sadie died after a short illness at the age of 69. She suffered another stroke which this time was fatal. Fred, at her funeral, took the service at the graveside. For the next four or five months, although stone deaf and almost blind, he remained in good health both physically and mentally. He continued as leader of the flock until his physical strength began gradually to fail in the spring of 1986. But though the outward man was perishing, the inward man was being renewed day by day, and his mental abilities never deteriorated. A few months before his death, he said that he had more joy and rest and peace of heart and mind than he had ever had in his life. Surely "the path of the just grows brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." The last words he spoke to the author shortly before he left this earthly scene were: "Without Jesus, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." A mouthpiece for the Lord until the end, he died peacefully at his home in his 97th year on 11 September, 1986.

CHAPTER 19

Edward's Message Reaches the Royal Palace

In 1917, during the first world war, when Edward was holding open air meetings with his companion, John Pattison, in Hyde Park, London, Daisy Bassett, a maid from the Royal Palace, heard him preach. She then began to attend a mission he was holding in Harley Street, and through his ministry there made her choice to follow Jesus.

Edward had obtained a house in Harley Street to hold meetings in, through the good offices of another convert, one Fred Bowman, who had also heard him preach in Hyde Park. One day there, in the course of his address, Edward said: "God wants every man, every woman, every boy, and every girl to be like Jesus." This arrested the attention of Bowman who had just gone out for a stroll after cataloguing a collection of antique porcelain to send to America. Edward struck him as being an unusual type of preacher, different from anyone he had ever heard before. Bowman listened for a while and then went home and told his wife about this remarkable man he had heard preach in the park. Next evening, he brought her along too, and at the close of the meeting Edward spoke to them when he saw them standing nearby after the crowd had dispersed. The result was that they invited him to their home where Bowman questioned Edward about his message saying: "Did you really mean what you said the other day about God wanting everyone to be like Jesus"? "I did," said Edward. They chatted together for some time that night over a meal, and before Edward left, Bowman took out his cheque book. Edward asked him what he was doing. "I'm going to give you some money," he said. Edward flatly refused. It so happened that Bowman was caretaker of a house in Harley Street which was rented by a very wealthy Jew for £2,000 a year, a sizable fortune at that time. Bowman told him that he had met a man who actually despised money. The Jew was incredulous and expressed a desire to meet him. When he did meet Edward, he was so impressed that he offered him the house in Harley Street, free of charge, to hold meetings in.

When Daisy Bassett attended this mission she was personal maid to Lady Keppell who was lady in waiting to Princess Victoria, sister of King George V. One day when Daisy was dressing Lady Keppell's hair, she, Lady Keppell, asked her if she would like a complimentary ticket to attend service in the Chapel Royal in the presence of the king. Daisy replied that she preferred to worship with those who followed the king born in a stable. This was her opening to tell her mistress of her conversion. Lady Keppell was so impressed that she told her husband, Sir Derek Keppell, who was Master of the Household. She also told Princess Victoria who requested to see Daisy. When they met the first thing the Princess said to her was: "They tell me you worship in a stable." But when Daisy told Victoria of her conversion, the meetings she attended, and the kind of preacher Edward was, the Princess showed a marked interest and wanted to hear more. She became very attached to Daisy and used to send for her to talk with her on spiritual matters. She wanted to hear about the meetings, the preachers, their beliefs, and their way of life. Finally Daisy asked her if she would like to correspond with any of the preachers. The princess said she would, and so for three years (1917-1920) she

corresponded with Edward Cooney and also two women preachers, Maggie Patton from Ireland and Emily Ruddell. This correspondence had to be carried out in secret, everyone concerned using codes instead of names, and the letters between the princess and the preachers being carried and delivered by Daisy.

In the course of his correspondence with her, Edward told the princess the following story: He was preaching to a large crowd in the open air just before Christmas one year. So he told his audience how to have the best Christmas they ever had. He said, "Give your life to the Lord." Only one man came back to tell him what had happened. He told Edward he had taken his advice, and indeed had experienced the best Christmas ever. When the Princess read this, she wrote Edward saying that she too had given her life to the Lord. She wanted to get rid of everything and leave the palace. She said she was tired of being a somebody and welcomed the opportunity of being a nobody. But Edward wisely advised her to stay and follow Jesus where she was. She took his advice, but though she was in the palace she was not of it, for she ceased to participate in all the worldly functions there.

When Sir Derek Keppell became aware that the princess no longer attended any social activities, he thought that this was due to Daisy's religious influence. He thus became concerned and called together the Royal Council which was made up of 12 lords and the Archbishop of York. One of the lords on the Council, who was very opposed to Daisy's influence on the princess, is supposed to have said that when the war was over he would stamp out this 'stable religion.' It seems he wanted to sack her but the Royal Family would not agree. They had faith in Daisy and appreciated the comfort she was to the princess. Daisy claimed she was suspected of being a German spy and was shadowed by palace detectives and by Scotland Yard.

It appears that even the Archbishop of Canterbury was brought in to try and dissuade the princess from her new-found conviction, but to no avail. He spoke to Daisy also and asked her: "Do you worship in a stable?" "No," she said, "but if that were so it would be no dishonour. Jesus was born in a stable."

In 1920, Daisy's health broke down. It is believed she had a brain tumour or some kind of nervous disorder. She left the palace and went to live at her mother's home where she died shortly afterwards. The princess left the palace about the same time and went to live in "Coppins," Iwer, Bucks. There was no more correspondence between her and Edward or any of the workers after this.

The princess was 49 years old when she came in touch with the truth as it is in Jesus and decided to walk in his way. Her letters indicate that this brought her great joy. She never did meet Edward or any of the preachers in person. However one record states that she had her coach drive through the park and when she had located the preachers would stop and listen from the coach. In 1919, she was expected at a convention in Ireland. "You will be glad to know that I am going to an Irish convention; I am so looking forward to it," she wrote Maggie Patton. But one of the lords on the Royal Council, it appears, put a stop to it. Her only contact therefore with the fellowship was by letter and through Daisy Bassett, the maid to her lady in waiting. It seems that the princess was a very devout woman and was deeply impressed with what she knew of Edward's life and message and that of the other two preachers as well with whom she corresponded. When she died in 1935, the press referred to her simple faith.

CHAPTER 20 (Part 1)

The Division — 1928

By 1920, Irvine was safely out of the way in Jerusalem. It had been six years since he was removed from the oversight; but the spirit that had set him above his fellows was continuing to manifest itself in his successors, the chief workers. And the conflict that had been brewing between them and Edward Cooney since 1914, over what he had come to see were unscriptural elements in the fellowship (viz., the living witness heresy and organization, both of which resulted in human control taking over from the control of the Spirit), was by 1921 reaching crisis proportions – a crisis of which most of the laity, by and large, were blissfully unaware. During the previous 7 years the chief workers had been gradually mounting a power against him and were plotting to excommunicate him. It seems at this time George Walker was sympathetic towards Edward, for he told the latter's sister that if Edward was put out of fellowship, he would go out along with him. But George, not willing to renounce his power and follow Jesus outside the camp, changed his position and became one of Edward's strongest antagonists.

The chief workers realized that it would not be easy to convince the people of the necessity of getting rid of Cooney since there was nothing they could point to in his life and teaching that was unscriptural. The only fault they could accuse him of was that he was not 'keeping step' with his fellow workers, some of whose beliefs and practices he now found to be unscriptural. He was therefore urging them to get back to the true gospel they had preached in the beginning, before the living witness heresy had been introduced and when, individually and collectively, they had recognized but one leader – JESUS – who said: "One is your Master even Christ, and ye are all brethren," and sought the control of one Spirit, which precluded the need for organization. Now they had both leaders (or rather rulers) and organization.

The chief workers were faced with a dilemma. On the one hand they felt that if they allowed Cooney to remain in fellowship, he would undo its 'foundation' which was according to them the doctrine of the living witness, thus undermining their authority. In Cooney's view, however, this was not the foundation on which the fellowship had been built, but a heresy which had crept in later, circa 1905, and which in 1914 God had shown him to be a flesh and blood revelation that savoured not of God but of man. He had therefore openly rejected it as Tom Elliott was to do in 1916. The foundation, Cooney contended, which they as master builders had laid when God called them to 'rebuild his ruined temple,' was Jesus Christ; and "other foundation can no man lay," as Paul wrote to the erring Corinthians (1 Cor. 3 : 10). The building thus erected would be of stone, i.e., comprised of individuals who live by revelation from the Father progressively given to the heart of each of his children. That revelation is always Jesus, the Christ the Son of the living God. This, Cooney maintained, was the sort of truth they stood for in the beginning when they set out to repair the altar of God which had

been thrown down. He now saw that God's altar, the altar of stone, had once again been thrown down and a brick one set up in its place, i.e., a people or fellowship controlled by man. But the chief workers, who had grown so confident of their own righteousness, were apparently unable to see the difference in a structure of brick and one of stone. Thus they felt sure that Cooney was about to destroy their edifice if they allowed him to remain in fellowship.

On the other hand, they feared that to excommunicate a person of Cooney's spiritual calibre and influence would inevitably cause a division in the fellowship. For, great as their authority was, they could not count on controlling the mind of each and every individual, knowing how considerable Cooney's influence was. So the best course of action, they felt, would be to try and persuade him to change his mind and agree to be organized like the rest of them. Thus between 1921 and 1928, in an attempt to accomplish this, they urged him to go round the world so that they all might have the opportunity to influence him in their respective spheres of authority. And so in 1921 Edward left London with Willie Gill for New Zealand. As the boat train left Euston Station, London, a large crowd of saints, many of whom Edward's own converts, stood weeping on the platform as they waved him goodbye.

The next seven years were spent in New Zealand, Australia, the United States and Canada. During this period, the chief workers tried to organize him, but he refused to give up his liberty; for he ever sought the control of the Spirit. They tried to 'muzzle' him by attempting to control what he preached. This did not work either. They then attempted to restrict his movements by requiring him to seek permission from 'overseers' before preaching in their respective 'fields of labour.' But Cooney recognized no boundaries, for he regarded the world as his field; and he preached the word as God revealed it to him whenever and wherever the Spirit led him. "You can't organize a person controlled by the Spirit," he would say; for: "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but can'st not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." It would be as difficult, therefore, to control one born of the Spirit, as Edward Cooney undoubtedly was, as to organize the wind. He thus became a great problem to the leaders of this fellowship which had now become an organized sect. They could control all the others. Edward they could not control. And agreed among themselves as to what were now held to be the basic tenets of the fellowship, they laid down guidelines for the others to follow. (But Cooney claimed that the only agreement they should enter into was for each individual to agree with God to become more like Jesus). An 'overseer' himself, though not as one who rules but as one who serves, he believed that all religious organization was unscriptural and of the devil, and that human control would land them back in Babylon from where the Lord had rescued them some 2- 1/2 decades before when He led them out of all forms of sectarianism. And the liberty of the Spirit that he claimed for himself, he claimed for all God's children.

How then were the chief workers going to maintain their power if everyone claimed the freedom of the Spirit? If this should happen, they feared they would lose all their control just as the Pope feared the Roman Catholic hierarchy would if, as Luther told him, it was possible for anyone, however humble, to get revelation direct from God. Clearly Cooney would have to go. But how get rid of him without causing a division in the fellowship? This was the problem the chief workers were faced with and unsuccessfully tried to resolve during the seven years between 1921 and 1928. They did not succeed because they had pitted themselves against a power far higher than Cooney. And they did not seem to realize as Gamaliel had done when he advised the chief priests, who sought to destroy Peter and John, to leave the two apostles alone because, "if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught. But if it be of God, Ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." (Acts 5 : 38-40). It was about this time that two workers, one sympathetic toward Edward and one envious, had a chat about him. The envious one said the sympathetic one, Tom Elliott : "If you join me now, we will break Eddie's power in Fermanagh." But Tom didn't join him.

Afterwards, Tom remarked to Edward: "If it had been your power, it wouldn't have mattered."

But the more Edward advanced toward the light, the more out of step he became with his brethren; for he was always, at least, a step ahead. The chief workers in New Zealand and Australia were as disturbed with him as had been those in the home country. In fact, they had perceived him to have got 'worse,' for all their best efforts to organize him had failed. Letters from these brethren indicating that Eddie had 'gone wrong' were therefore circulated to the various leaders in the fellowship throughout the world. Wilson Reid, the head worker in Ireland, was recipient to some of this correspondence. For in his pastoral letter of 1928 denouncing Edward to the saints he writes:

"When Eddie went abroad in 1921, it was hoped that as he mingled with the brothers in other countries he would be helped, but instead of this he got worse until in 1925 some of the brothers in Australia and New Zealand sent home quite a few letters showing that the trouble with Eddie had become very serious." (13/12/28).

The 'trouble' with Edward, it must again be reiterated, was that as a preacher of the gospel and a sent one of the Lord, he claimed the freedom to be controlled by the Spirit and therefore refused to be organized by man.

During the years from approximately 1921 to 1925 when Edward was in New Zealand and Australia, a division in the fellowship there actually occurred, although he had not as yet been formally excommunicated. Some in New Zealand at any rate, among whom Edward's brother, Fred, were in sympathy with him, and for this reason they had been excluded from fellowship and were meeting now as outcasts. We have some indication of this in a letter from a sister worker in New Zealand to Wilson Reid in 1928. She writes:

"We hear that Eddie went to Ireland last month (September, 1929), or he wrote to his brother here saying he was going, and gave Harvey's, Newtownards as his address. His brother is in sympathy with him and some few others too, but some of those who are on his side are outside of us now and having meetings by themselves, and it is the safest place for them."

This woman seems to have been extremely opposed to Edward, for in this same letter she continues:

"There was great talk for a while of Eddie coming over here this year, but I think and others too think that probably because of the turn things have taken, these people being outside now, he feels his power is broken and his opportunity to work under cover is finished.

Perhaps you know far more in detail of the depth of his wickedness than we could tell you, but I thought it might be no harm to send you on the enclosed letters written to Mr. Holman and his son this year. They are very deceptive to anyone who did not know the truth of matters concerning him; and I'm sure he will be using the same spirit to overcome people with, wherever he goes. It will be a time of real trouble to you and many others if he has gone to that side."

Here she writes about the depth of Edward's wickedness, but neither she nor anyone else could ever specify a single scrap of evidence for such a statement. She talks about Edward's power being possibly broken in New Zealand. It seems not to have occurred to her that the power which impelled him to take the fresh advance along the path of discipleship, and for which he was now in trouble with his brethren, might not be his power but the power of the Spirit. She fears that Edward will use the same spirit "to overcome people with wherever he goes." Again she proves herself incapable of being able to discern between good and evil. She accuses him of working under cover. This he never did, for he had nothing to hide since his life was an open book. And as far as the gospel was concerned, like Paul, he never 'shrank from declaring the whole counsel of God,' for which he often suffered persecution and rejection. Concerning the letters to Mr. Holman, to which she refers, unable to find fault with them, she claims they are deceptive. In other words, she is unwittingly admitting that these letters reveal a person in sharp contrast to the wicked individual that she is reporting Edward to be.

Wilson Reid used this woman's letter to denounce Edward and to influence the fellowship in Ireland to reject him as a malefactor. But Edward's prayer for Wilson and for all who falsely accused him and who cast out his name as evil was Stephen's prayer for those who stoned him to death: "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." Thus Edward, like Stephen, manifested that same spirit which Jesus did when he prayed for those who crucified him: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." That same spirit which crucified Jesus and stoned Stephen to death, and which persecuted Christ in Paul, was now persecuting Him in Edward.

In 1925, Edward felt led by the Spirit to leave New Zealand to preach in Seattle where he worked a mission. This was Jack Carroll's 'field.' for he claimed the oversight in the western United States from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Coast. Because of differences that had arisen between them, Carroll was very uneasy to have Cooney in his territory. So he tried to suppress Cooney by attempting to control what he preached; but on failing to do so, he systematically closed doors against him in Seattle.

In his pastoral letter of 13 December, 1928, calculated to turn the hearts of people in Ireland against Edward, Wilson Reid states:

"When Eddie left New Zealand and Australia in 1925, he went to the United States where, in view of the trouble, Jack Carroll asked him not to labour in that part of America where he had been; but Eddie settled down to work a mission in Seattle, a city where Jack had friends both in and around. The result was that Jack had to ask them to keep away from Eddie's meetings."

After the mission was over, George Walker and Jim Jardine approached Edward in Seattle to try and settle the difference between him and Jack Carroll. They presented Edward with a verbal agreement drawn up by Jack Carroll to which they requested Edward to consent. Referring to this meeting, Wilson Reid continues:

"Soon after the mission, however, George Walker and a number of older workers met in Seattle and did all they could to fix things up with Eddie and make it possible for him to be in fellowship. He then gladly agreed to what was suggested, but afterwards did not act upon it, and thus has been out of fellowship since." (i.e., since 1925).

In a letter to Willie Gill, however, Edward explains his position concerning the aforementioned agreement thus:

"At the time Jim Jardine and George Walker approached me in Seattle, I considered it (i.e., the verbal agreement) a suggestive proposal to adjust the difference that had arisen between Jack Carroll and myself. I consented, but afterwards found that what Saul's armor was to David, this was to me. So I told George Walker I had to recede from the consent I had given; for this would have necessitated my leaving Seattle at the time, and I believed the Lord wished me to remain. George said that perhaps it was best to remain as my moving about might cause others to know of the difference which had arisen. It was then that Jack Carroll charged me with breaking what he termed my 'solemn agreement.'" (n.d.).

At Edgar Hawkin's home in 1927, Edward declared to George Walker in the presence of Samuel Charlton that it was his purpose to cut out of his life all that contradicted the Scriptures. George's response to this was to exclude him from fellowship in the territory over which he claimed oversight, i.e., the eastern part of the United States. "John Carroll had previously excluded me in his territory," wrote Edward, "and James Jardine acquiesced in his. The exclusion then spread to the British Isles." Thus by 1927, the chief workers had excluded Edward from fellowship in most parts of the United States, Australia and New Zealand. But as yet there had been no formal excommunication. Letters were, however, circulated throughout the world warning those in fellowship against him. The chief workers evidently hoped that by so thorough a campaign of denunciation, Edward could not survive as a preacher and so would fade into oblivion.

Edward remained in Seattle from 1925 to 1928. During that time the chief workers had succeeded in closing all doors against him except that of a cripple. The cripple was unable to provide for himself or for Edward, so Edward had no option but to go to work and provide for the material needs of both of them. He plied his own trade, that of the clothing business, just as Paul had plied his as a tent maker, so as not to be burdensome to anyone. George Walker told Edward that this was a sign that God was against him. But Edward replied that it was not a sign that God was against him but that man was against him. What Edward was doing in the circumstances was entirely scriptural seeing he had a precedent for it in Paul. He had been forced into this situation because he dared to obey God rather than man. But God had not forsaken him and in due time opened up the way for him to continue preaching the gospel unfettered by the necessity of providing for himself or for others as far as material support was concerned, and above all unhindered by the bondage of human control.

In the Testimony the power of the workers had so increased that they had come to represent the standard by which right and wrong were to be measured. In order to be right, they would tell you, you had to get right with the workers. This was and still is the canon and one of the stock phrases among the laity as well. But Edward Cooney contended that right and wrong were to be decided by what Jesus lived and taught. There were others happily who thought likewise. One such person was John West who in the early 1920s, if not before, began also to see that all was not well in the Testimony. Like Cooney, he had been in the fellowship from its beginnings, and he too saw the drift toward 'popery.' He remembered Irvine in the days when he and others had the anointing, and he longed for those days again. But an authoritarian spirit now reigned, and prophecy had almost ceased among them. Though John West believed that Irvine had lost the anointing power he once had, he still corresponded with him and sent him money for the sake of what he had been. Edward Cooney, for the same reason and in the hope of restoring him, also kept in touch with Irvine. For Edward's compassion and hope for the fallen were never exhausted. But as far as most of the other senior 'brethren' were concerned, Irvine remained in spiritual as well as territorial exile.

In 1928, John West wrote Irvine regarding what he called "the Romish marks of the Testimony," and it appears he expressed a desire in that letter to have Irvine back, as he once was. It is understood that John West did not want Irvine back in his present condition, but Irvine apparently thought he did, for he wrote a worker in the United States as follows:

"I had a very clear letter from a prominent saint in Ireland giving details of the Romish marks of the Testimony and their awful confusion in this interpretation of the Alpha truth. He sent me £5 (pounds) and wanted me to come back and put them right."

This letter fell into the hands of Wilson Reid, the then overseer in Ireland. On August 25, 1928, he wrote John West rebuking him for writing to Irvine; for he had learned that the prominent saint referred to in Irvine's letter, was none other than John West to whom he wrote as follows:

"There is a sense in which I can have no control over what you do either in writing or sending money. But I would like to point out that to my mind it is playing with fire to have much to do with Irvine. The man was a help to many in the days when he was right and a help to me too; but that day has ceased. I believe he got every chance from all the workers who dealt with him, some of whom were his own converts and felt it much. For my own part I am satisfied it is God who is over-ruling and keeping him where he is. And for anyone to bring him, with his present ideas, out in the open and amongst the people of God is playing with fire."

It appears that when Irvine received John West's letter, he wrote Edward Cooney in America telling him about it and asked him to go to the British Isles to put things right. For Wilson Reid's letter to John West continues:

"Another thing that happened is that when William Irvine got this letter, he wrote Eddie Cooney and told him about it, and asked him to go to the home country to put things right. This has moved Eddie quite a bit and he wrote William in connection with it; and he is now about to come home. Willie Gill is aware of this and George Walker has written me about it. I feel sure this will be the most severe test the work has hitherto had. We fully expect some and even a good many to take his side. But it may do good in the end and at any rate clear what is left of the name that has stuck to us like glue all along. (i.e., Cooneyites). You will see therefore that your letter has had quite an effect. I feel sure you never intended it to do so....I trust, however, the Lord's purpose will be fulfilled whatever may follow."

As soon as some of the chief workers in America heard that Edward was homeward bound, they rushed to get there ahead of him. Among those were Jack Carroll and Jim Jardine. They had been corresponding with the chief workers in the British Isles – Willie Gill, Wilson Reid, Joe Twomley and others – warning them of Edward's proposed return and to prepare the people accordingly. They thought they had broken what they called Eddie's power in most of the English-speaking world, but they were shrewd enough to know that this might be more difficult in the home country despite all their denunciatory letters concerning him. For they knew his influence there to be considerable. As Wilson Reid states in the above letter, they expected many to take his side.

Early in October, 1928, Edward arrived in Ireland. Willie Gill met him in Belfast and spent a day with him. Something of what they discussed on this occasion is recorded in a letter written by Edward in 1930. He states:

"When I returned from abroad, the year before last, I had a long talk with Willie Gill about the situation. I told him that we who claim to have the apostolic oversight needed to be converted and become like children so as to enter the kingdom (Matt. 18 : 3). He agreed with me regarding the necessity that we, like the Twelve whom Jesus desired should tend his lambs and feed and shepherd his sheep, needed conversion from the 'who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven' spirit, so as to become like little children as they did on the day of Pentecost, when they entered into the kingdom of which the Holy Spirit became the controller as the executive of the Father and the Son."

But although Gill agreed with Cooney on this point, he did not act upon it. For he was much opposed to him and was active in circulating letters denouncing him. And like others, he tried without success to influence Tom Elliott against Edward.

On 12 October, 1928 (the Friday after Edward's arrival in Ireland), a meeting of 12 senior workers was held at the home of Andrew Knox, Clankilvoragh, Lurgan. These were Jack Carroll, William Weir, Willie Gill, Wilson Reid, James Jardine, Joe Twomley, Andy Robb, Nat Dickson, Robert Miller, Ben Boles, Tom Elliott, and Edward Cooney. The purpose of this meeting was to make one final attempt to organize Cooney by binding him to decrees which he said would have restricted his service and suppressed the influence and power of God in his ministry. These decrees were:

1) That no worker would teach or preach anything contrary to what the worker in whose field he was labouring believed without his permission. (In other words, no worker would express individual revelation, even though true, if that worker in whose field he was labouring had not yet seen it).

2) That if a worker desired to preach anything which the workers as a whole did not agree with, he was to go to a Part where the workers had never been in order to do so.

But Edward refused to be bound. "If I had agreed to abide by these decrees," he wrote later, "I would henceforth have been subject to rules which we in public denied existed in this fellowship." When it was clear that they could not obtain Edward's verbal consent to this agreement, Jack Carroll, who took the leading part in the proceedings, rose and left the room. As he did so, he said to Edward: "I will have no more fellowship with you." This proved to be Edward's formal excommunication, for although the others remained, all except Tom Elliott subsequently agreed with and took the same position as Jack Carroll. Of these twelve workers, only two – Edward Cooney and Tom Elliott – claimed the freedom which can be enjoyed by every born again person, namely, the liberty to move and speak as directed by the Holy Spirit. The other ten, it would seem, chose the bondage of human control rather than the freedom of the Spirit, and to live by man-made decrees rather than by revelation.

Edward did not feel bitter towards his 'brethren' who had excommunicated him, but rather he felt deeply saddened to see how far they had drifted from the unity and freedom of the Spirit they had enjoyed in the beginning. He loved them as Joseph loved his brethren who had wronged him; and he would have given his life for any and all of them if in so doing they too might once again see the necessity of living by revelation from God.

"God's revelation" wrote Edward, "is Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God, progressively given to the heart of God's child from his Father who is in the heavens (Matt. 16 : 16/17). This revelation being progressive cannot be systematized; for we know in part and in part we prophesy. Any attempt to organize this revelation so that it becomes final, produces stagnation; 'for the path of the just is as the dawn that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' If the physical light was organized at the dawn stage, what a catastrophe it would be for the children of men. So any attempt to systematize or organize the progressive revelation of the Christ, the Son of the living God, gradually given to God's children, is equally a catastrophe with more fearful consequences, because the issues are eternal." (E.C. 1929, shortly after his excommunication).

CHAPTER 20 (Part 2)

The Division — 1928

"Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy, for behold your reward is great in heaven; for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets . . ." (Luke 6: 22-23)

With Edward now outside the camp, the chief workers would have to let the people know why he was no longer in fellowship. It must be understood that the Lurgan meeting at which he was excommunicated was a packed jury, and one which no elders or bishops were allowed attend. The laity therefore did not know the real reason why Edward was no longer in fellowship. They didn't even know he had been excommunicated but had been given to believe that he left the fellowship, thereby causing a division.

Shortly after the Lurgan meeting, George Walker arrived from America, and with Wilson Reid mounted an open campaign against Cooney in Ireland and Great Britain. They arranged meetings of workers, elders, and saints in the homes of the various bishops in every community to turn people away from him. Where they could not be present themselves, they sent their deputies. Cooney was excluded from these meetings. He, therefore, could not present his case to the people, for they were not allowed to receive him into their homes.

That was how the chief workers, Walker and Reid, planned it; but it did not work out exactly as they had hoped. For, as they had feared, Cooney had a great deal of support in Ireland. There were, therefore, many who chose to hear him also before taking sides. But even before hearing Edward's position from his own lips, there were many who, on hearing the chief workers' case against him, recognized it to be a false witness. One such man was James Bothwell, bishop of the church in Irvinestown. He was what one might call a prominent saint and a very righteous man. In a letter to Wilson Reid, dated 28 December, 1928, he gives his reaction to the case brought against Edward at the meeting of workers, elders and saints, held at his home. Following is an excerpt from that letter:

"Now with regard to what happened before Christmas when Hugh Breen came to announce about the meeting of workers, elders, and saints in our home, I did all I could to have all present, thinking there might be something wrong with Eddie. But when all was told, I found nothing to condemn Eddie for, no evidence, but only untrue reports written by jealous or false brethren carried across to this country. Now this is what I thought of the meeting held here first. And another thing which I think was unkind, was to come round behind Eddie's back and pour in all the poison, and him not present to defend himself."

Thus dissatisfied with the gross injustice of the way in which the chief workers were handling the situation, Bothwell opened his home to Edward to come and explain his position. His letter to Wilson Reid continues;

"I also opened my home to Eddie for him to explain the awful crimes you and George Walker said he was guilty of. If the crimes were so terrible, why did you state here that if Eddie would consent to fall in line with all the others, you would all be one in the morning. Then when Eddie would not consent to these conditions of peace, hence shut him out of all fellowship."

In addition to these meetings held in every community for the purpose of denouncing Edward, more letters for the same purpose were also widely circulated. The following is an excerpt from Wilson Reid's pastoral letter of 13 December, 1928, in which he attempts to explain to the people why Edward is no longer in fellowship. He writes:

"When Eddie came to Ireland (October, 1929) Willie Gill met him at Belfast and spent a day with him. (George Walker also spent a day talking with him before he came to this side). I too saw Eddie and told him what I had already written him a couple of years ago,

viz., that so long as he was out of line with the other older brothers whom I could not disbelieve in, I could not be one with him."

In judging Edward, Wilson did not use Jesus as the plumb line. If he had, he might well have found that they were all out of line, but Edward less so than any of them. False accusations were, however, brought against him. But when all was sifted the only thing they could honestly charge him with was that he was out of step with his brethren. This seems to have been sufficient reason to condemn him.

Why was Edward such a threat to his brethren? It was because he insisted that Jesus alone was the standard by which right and wrong be judged and not the workers. He therefore urged them to return to God, and in the light of his countenance find out where they had gone wrong. He had done so in 1914, and God had shown him there was much wrong with all of them, himself included. He purposed then to cut everything out of his life that was not like Jesus, and ever since his brethren had regarded him as walking disorderly. They accused him of departing from the "Truth" or 'Testimony' – a system which it would seem had now become an end in itself.

Wilson Reid's pastoral letter continues as he tries to describe what happened at the Lurgan meeting of 12 October, 1928:

"It was then arranged that we would call a meeting of older brothers and let them hear and speak with him. This we held on Friday after Eddie landed, but it accomplished nothing so far as helping him is concerned, although we spent about six hours talking."

Wilson does not explain to the people that 'helping' Edward meant their attempt to bind him to man-made decrees which would have meant spiritual bondage for him. His letter goes on:

"He (Edward) went off to do and say as he himself thought good, and has been doing so since. You will understand therefore that he is out of fellowship with us all except Thomas Elliott who that day, and for a long time previous, was one with him. So far as I am concerned I was and am satisfied that there is not any use talking any more to Eddie, and I have not tried to do so since. We can't bind him down or stop him in any way in this country where he worked for many years and has many friends, but we can tell them where he stands. This I have been slow to do until lately. George Walker and I have spoken to a number and this is written to reach others. And I will be glad if it is made known to all in the family of God, but on no account to those outside it. The brothers who go round for Christmas and New Year meetings can tell you more, and I trust God will enable all to stand fast and be true to Him and to teach others, so that all may be preserved."

Edward also wrote an account of the Lurgan meeting in a pastoral letter shortly after the meeting occurred. Following is an excerpt from that letter:

"It seems to be unknown by many of God's children and unrealized by most that on 12 October, 1928, at the home of Andrew Knox, Clankilvoragh, Lurgan, Ireland, at a meeting of those who might be called the apostles amongst the people of God – indeed there happened to be twelve present – a verbal agreement was submitted by the summer-up, James Jardine, expressed by John Carroll, called by the latter different times a 'solemn agreement' binding all the workers not to express individual revelation even though true if the worker in whose field they were had not yet seen it. This verbal agreement was declared at that historic meeting and apostolic council, 'a basis of fellowship for all workers.' When Edward Cooney refused to bind himself by it and declared he would retain the liberty God gave him when he started forth to preach, John Carroll, who seemed to be foremost apostle in the introduction of this agreement, rose up and left the room, declaring he would have no more fellowship with Edward Cooney. The other eleven apostles remained; but with the exception of the said Edward Cooney and one of his fellow apostles, Thomas Elliott, they all subsequently acquiesced in the graphic demonstration by which his fellow-apostle, John Carroll, had excommunicated Edward Cooney from his fellowship.

"This is a true description of what took place on that memorable occasion; and as the untruth has been spread that I went out of fellowship from my brethren and thereby caused a division, I write to let you know that I earnestly desired, and still earnestly desire to remain in the fellowship of my brethren on the same condition as we had from the beginning, viz., that 'the truth as it is in Jesus' be the only test by which His disciples are to be disciplined, and that the Scriptures are to be the only written revelation accepted as declaring the truth." (1928).

Not having anything to charge Edward with either in his life or in his teaching that was unscriptural, Wilson, without giving evidence, unjustly claims that Edward's outward marks of sacrifice are deceptive because he is wrong inwardly, for his letter continues:

"You may hear of Eddie's work; he could always create a stir, especially in Ireland, and has now as much if not more zeal than ever and as much outward marks of humility; but, I'm afraid also more exaltation and pride of mind and of his own name. I have lately been caused to think much of Col. 2:33 in connection with him. Paul speaks there of the outward show that would not deceive. And while I refer to this I would like to say that I would believe as much as ever I did in having the outward marks in our dress and otherwise. Eddie nor any other took any firmer stand with regard to dress than we did a few years ago at the conventions in Ireland. And we would still do the same if it were needful. But at the same time I see the possibility of having the outward right and the inward wrong."

One wonders why it was necessary to take a firm stand with regard to dress some years before, but that this was not needful any more. Could it be that the workers had grown rich like those Corinthians whom Paul rebuked? (1 Cor. 4: 8-13). Paul was not rich; he was ill clad, buffeted and homeless. Wilson, however, does not choose to see the similarity in Edward's situation and Paul's. Instead, he falsely compares him with those who practiced a mock humility, for his letter goes on:

"Evidently there were those in Paul's day who went in for voluntary humility (see verse 18), a humility of their own, put on and yet vainly puffed up in mind."

Despite this crisis in the fellowship, the Christmas meetings were held in the Orange Hall in Irvinestown as planned. James Bothwell, the bishop of this community, as was his custom, made all the necessary arrangements. Wilson Reid, the chief worker in Ireland, was to preside over the meeting. Members of the congregation, of whom there were several hundred in this area, duly arrived for worship. (The Christmas meetings were special meetings and comprised all the house churches in some several communities). They waited and waited, but Wilson and his companion did not show up. Then after 20 minutes, James Bothwell got up and addressed the people, saying: "Seeing that our brothers (i.e. Wilson Reid and his companion) who were to take charge of this meeting have failed to do so, I will now ask our brother, Edward Cooney, to take the meeting." With that a large number of people, with a display of much unrighteous indignation, rose up and left the hall. But the greater number remained and heard Edward. He preached that day on the foundation of the church. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ." He had a wonderful response from most of those who stayed and listened. With reference to Wilson's absence on this occasion, James Bothwell wrote him:

"I was rather surprised when you turned away, as I did not expect you to do such a thing. You said you were sorry for those who would be disappointed thereby. I would remind you that a true shepherd would not flee when he would see the wolf coming, as I take it you don't think Eddie Cooney is a true shepherd. Then you should, if you were a true shepherd, have taken care of the sheep." (28/12/1928).

This meeting brought things closer to a head. Although Edward had been formally excommunicated, the division of the people had not yet definitively taken place. It appears that at the meeting of workers, elders, and saints, held in Irvinestown prior to the Christmas meetings, Wilson Reid made reference to the separation which he felt would inevitably take place. He said if 9/10 would go (i.e. take sides with Edward), he would be content with 1/10. James Bothwell, in his letter to Wilson referred to this. He states:

"Then about the separation you spoke of in the meeting here, you said if 9/10 would go you would do with 1/10. You did not seem to be moved with much compassion for the ones that would be lost. Jesus suffered Judas up to the very last and did not drive him out. If you are going to separate the family of God, you will need to be very careful about it. For cutting off the members of the church which is the body of Christ is a very serious thing to do." (Ibid.)

Apparently when Edward heard of how Wilson would be willing to divide the family of God, he said he could not accept such a proposal, for he wanted all to return to God and be one in Christ. Wilson's pastoral letter confirms the statement in Bothwell's letter as cited above, for he writes

"I think too of a way which would deceive the very elect and have already said years ago that if such a day came it would have to spring from inside and not arise outside the Lord's Testimony. We may be up against this now as far as Ireland is concerned, but if it takes from us only those not born of God, we shall see in the end it has been a blessing. We see however the possibility of many of the true children of God being moved, and if not moved, harassed and troubled, and we therefore feel we must make it known that we cannot ask Eddie or his companion to take part in any meetings we are responsible for, or encourage any saint or worker to attend theirs. We feel we must henceforth advise them to stay away. We can't at all accept any responsibility for those who decide to go with Eddie nor for those who profess in his meetings now that he is out of fellowship and on his own." (13/12/28).

Here we have a classic example of one of God's servants branding his fellow servant as a deceiver for no other reason than that that fellow servant dared to obey God rather than man. Paul was also called a deceiver by those who professed to be God's people. But if they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, is it surprising, after all, that his servants should be called deceivers?

Basically, Edward's great crime was to tell the workers they needed to repent and be converted, and to know what it is to be checked by the Spirit. He, of course, included himself in this. But as James Bothwell wrote Wilson Reid: "Woe to the man whom God would send to tell the workers they were wrong!" And he continues: "The words of Jesus Christ come to my mind just now in Matthew 23:37 to the end of the chapter:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" RSV.

Bothwell goes on:

"I fear the work of God will be very slow for a long time seeing such a spirit manifested towards a brother who has done nothing only want to be free and to be led by the Spirit of God. God is not the author of confusion, and will not be amongst a people who want to separate and cut off. If our brothers want to be guides and cast out their brethren who want to follow Jesus, I fail to see the manifestation of the true Spirit among them."

Simultaneous with Wilson Reid's campaign against Edward was George Walker's. At a meeting in Belfast he spent two hours denouncing Edward in his own presence but refused him the right to clarify his position. Of this meeting Edward stated:

"Terrible amongst us that it is possible for one to be charged in his own presence and not get a chance to speak for himself. The world's law would never do that. Yet we, the people of God, who profess to be so much above the world, having the liberty which I claim today, fall below the world's standard of justice in this regard " * (1931).

* As Edward was excluded from these meetings, we can only assume he came to this one uninvited.

Walker next took his anti-Cooney campaign to London. There he left no stone unturned until he had closed almost all doors against Edward. Fred Wood who was present at these meetings writes:

"George Walker came to London to turn Edward's converts against him. George preached from Revelation 2:20-23. He told us that Edward had gone wrong and that if we did not cease to believe in him, we would all be cast into a bed of sickness." (13/5/81).

George succeeded in his mission, for there were only two he was unable to influence, Fred Wood and one other. He caused all the rest to reject Edward. These were the same people who seven years before had stood on the platform at Euston Station weeping as they waved Edward goodbye when he left London for New Zealand.

Like Edward, Tom Elliott also refused to be bound by this so-called 'solemn agreement'; but the other 10 workers at the meeting did bind themselves to it, and required all workers who wished to remain in fellowship to do likewise. Tom Elliott was therefore excommunicated by the chief workers along with Edward Cooney although it was Tom who had baptized them all. The vast majority of outcasts were saints. There were only 8 workers among them, and some of these like Alfred and Sarah Magowan were already outcasts before the Division. Tom Elliott and his wife, Ellen, were the only two senior workers who supported Edward. Among the junior workers, there were only Fred Wood and Alex Buchan and two others whose names we don't have. (Fred was Edward's convert and Alex was Tom Elliott's convert). Hundreds of other workers, who were Edward's converts, turned against him influenced by the chief workers. Thus were divided the Lord's people just 30 years after they were called out of Babylon and impelled by the Holy Spirit into the good fight of faith.

The 12 workers who attended the historic meeting in Lurgan, 12 October, 1928, like the 12 Apostles and the 12 Patriarchs, represented the people of God, which this fellowship claimed to be. Edward was aware that things which were happening in our day had happened long ago. In other words, what took place at Lurgan had a precedent. For the Kingdom of Israel had also been divided. This too was a man-made division, because Jereboam divided the people of God and caused Israel to sin. Jereboam would not allow the 10 tribes to go up to Jerusalem once a year to worship with the other two tribes – Judah and Benjamin. But God did not recognize the man-made division and spoke through his prophets of the 12 tribes as one – Israel.

It is perhaps significant that just as the Kingdom of Israel was divided in two with ten tribes on the one hand and two on the other, so in a sense this fellowship was now divided. For as we have shown, there were ten workers who chose the rule of man and two, Edward Cooney and Tom Elliott, who chose the rule of God. The majority of the people allied themselves with the ten and just a remnant with the two. Edward regarded his excommunication and the division caused thereby as an ungodly course of action. He held out for a return of the rule of the Most High individually and collectively, for controlled by man, all would lead to Babylon. Thus he stated:

"The 12th of October, 1928, has been the saddest day in the Kingdom of God, when the workers obeyed an agreement . . . Balaam, the apostate prophet who loved reward, followed the course that dishonoured God. Hired by a heathen king to curse the people of God, and when this could not be accomplished by a direct course, another course was adopted whereby the people were made to disobey God. The enmity of the world has seldom overcome the Christian. The danger arises from its friendship. Balaam said as he looked on Israel, 'I see him not reckoned among the nations.' James Patrick once said he trusted this would not happen to us as God's people – to be reckoned among the nations. A very effective servant of Christ asked: 'Will we go on to be a true people for God or will we just develop into another sect'? He greatly feared we were heading in the latter direction." (1931).

CHAPTER 21

Outside The Camp

"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." (Heb. 13: 12-13)

"The Division arose from the fact that Edward Cooney refused to be organized like the rest of his brethren, and eventually they separated him from their fellowship. He has never disowned them, but he is outside the camp bearing some of the reproach of which Jesus knew so much." (Fred Wood)

1. Edward's desire for unity within the family of God:

He did not disown his brethren who had rejected him, because he believed that with all their faults they were still God's people, albeit God's people gone wrong. And when referring to them he continued to speak of them as 'we' never 'they.' For he claimed that God did not recognize manmade divisions, because when he spoke through the Prophets he referred to the divided kingdom of Israel as one. Thus, says Edward:

"God calls them Jacob and Israel (Isaiah 40: 27) showing he regarded the twelve tribes as one. Man's divisions don't count with God and shouldn't count with us. So officially cast out, let us be spiritually one as far as possible with the 7000 who haven't bowed the knee to Baal." (7/7/35)

Fred Wood has pointed out above that Edward was put outside the camp because he refused to be organized like the rest of his brethren. In this context being organized would mean being subjected to the rule of man instead of the rule of God. And just as Paul's heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they might be saved (Romans 10: 11), so Edward's heart's desire and prayer for his brethren was that they might return to the rule of God. Thus he writes:

"Man ruling instead of God caused the Division. God ruling again among us will heal the man-made breach... This is the rule we need individually and collectively."

The response Edward received from God's people in his native country was a great encouragement to him to press on in the path of discipleship looking unto Jesus. But at the same time sorrow filled his heart at the thought of his brethren seeking to keep the fellowship united by substituting man-made decrees for revelation from God, and organization for the control of the Spirit. Edward knew that at best this could only produce uniformity but never unity. He taught that if each member of the body of Christ lived in touch

with Christ, the Head, that would keep all in union. There was therefore no need for organization. The majority, however, blindly followed the workers; but it was a time of soul searching for those truly born of God. Thus on 6 November, 1928, a few weeks after his excommunication, Edward wrote:

"These are dark days for God's true-born children and the true family of God as Jesus seeks to lead his disciples along the dying pathway he himself walked. And the carnal mind resists the fresh advance and favors the 'pity thyself' seductive voice of the adversary who fears the resurrection of Jesus in his own, and the defeat he must incur thereby."

Even a person of the spiritual caliber of Tom Elliott found himself searching for more light as to the source of union in God's family. For on 20 May, 1929, he wrote Edward, with reference to a letter from Fred Cooney, as follows:

"We did enjoy Fred's letter as we had been hungering and thirsting for more light as to the source of true union and fellowship in God's way. Thought he put it so clearly, viz., that it is not a program of conventions and fellowship meetings but a person, even Jesus himself."

It was vital for Tom as it was for Edward that the people should be set free from the bondage and confusion of human control and be guided once again by the unseen head, Jesus. Thus speaking of Edward and the meeting at which he was excommunicated, Tom writes:

"I was an eye witness and heard every statement made to bind him. Man's control is always Egypt's bondage while God controlling is liberty in the highest sense. How glad we should be to be free." (25/6/30)

2. Edward's attitude toward his brethren who had excommunicated him, and his concern for the sheep whom they had turned against him:

"Edward's great strength lay in his ability to love his enemies. Thus he writes of his fellow workers who had excluded him from fellowship;

'I hope I shall, like Joseph, love more and more my brethren who treat me thus. And although the iron may enter my soul, profit as he did from the experience and become as he became a blessing to my brethren.'" (14/12/30)

On reading this letter and similar ones he wrote at the time, Alice Flett, a 'sister' in the faith, wrote him circa 1931 as follows:

"We did not meet you when you were here, but hearing of you and having had the privilege of reading some of your recent letters, I feel you love all the brethren as Joseph did his; but like him, you have been kept in separation because of measures taken against you by them. I understand you could not agree in all things with them, for you felt some of their works were unscriptural."

Edward replied:

"I am glad you gather from my letters that I love all the brethren even as Joseph did. I am far behind Joseph in the volume of my love, but I would like to increase more and more in the love of God, the breadth of which takes in the whole world, the length of which is expressed by Paul (Eph. 5: 1), 'Be ye therefore imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.' This love is beyond all natural love, and needs to be poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which was given to us. Then we will be willing to die for sinners inside God's family and outside." (1931)

Not only did Edward love his brethren who cast out his name as evil, he counselled all the outcasts to continue to keep their hearts and homes open to them. The chief workers, on the other hand, counselled all those over whom they had the oversight to close their doors to Edward and not to have fellowship with any of his supporters. And in order to justify his excommunication they found it necessary to bear false witness against him. Wilson Reid in his pastoral letter of 13 December, 1928, portrays him as a deceiver, a false shepherd, from whom he felt himself duty-bound to protect the sheep – or rather some of them, for he not only washes his hands of Edward but of all those sheep in fellowship with him. Is this, one might ask, the spirit of the true shepherd? Edward pointed out above that the love of God takes in the whole world, and that those who have that love in their hearts will be willing to die for sinners both inside God's family and outside. Wilson's love, it would seem, far from taking in the whole world didn't even include the whole family of God. For he renounces all responsibility for those whom he believes have been led astray by Edward. On the other hand, Edward agonized over those whom the chief workers had turned against him, especially his own converts whom he had begotten in the gospel. In a letter, dated 6 November, 1928, shortly after his excommunication, he writes:

"A few of us, who are having a little of what Jesus got so much of, are enjoying Isaiah's message.... 'In that day the Lord of hosts will be a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of his people; and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.'" (Is. 28: 5-6)

He goes on to explain that the gate of a Jewish city was where the elders assembled and there judgment was delivered. He continues:

"And it is at the city gate that the battle is at present raging. That is why some of the elders visited London so that a father's influence over his children in Christ Jesus might be hindered. Hope God's children in London at this time may seek the Father's face and get a further revelation of the Christ to their heart to which they may say AMEN, and then have Christ revealed in and through them in resurrection power, bringing them into fellowship with his suffering, loneliness, shame, reproach and weakness."

George Walker was the chief worker who led the campaign against Edward in London, and by false accusation succeeded in turning the hearts of most of Edward's converts away from him. But far from renouncing responsibility for them as Wilson Reid did for the sheep whom he had lost, Edward addressed them thus:

"No matter what you my children in Christ have heard, go to the Father and by revelation to your heart from him, find out whether Edward preaches the faith he lived and preached when Christ was revealed to, in, and through him years ago. Or has he become a deceiver so that you should withhold from him your heart's love and fellowship in Christ. The Father will make it clear to all who are honest." (Ibid.)

The loss of his converts and the fact that he was deprived of influencing them further to grow in the nurture and admonition of the Lord was one of the hardest things Edward had to bear at the hands of the workers. And though they had drawn up an agreement not to preach anything that was contrary to what the worker in whose field they were labouring believed, they systematically for years before the Division sought to undermine the gospel preached by Edward and to portray him to his converts as a deceiver. Edward makes reference to this in a letter to Jack Owens, dated 14 December, 1930. He states;

"Those who framed and agreed to this workers' basis of fellowship have not kept it themselves. For years previously and now, they have undermined the gospel preached by me to my children begotten in Christ Jesus, and have stolen their heart's love from me as Christ's servant to themselves. Hope I may from my heart be able to pray: 'Father lay not this sin to their charge.'"

Though they reviled and persecuted him in this way, he still loved them; and it grieved him to see how far they had drifted from the vision they had in the beginning. In May 1930, concerning his excommunication and the division caused thereby, he wrote a sister in the faith as follows:

"It would grieve me to think of, and grieve me more to write of the appalling change in God's servants and saints who have actively promoted this ungodly course of action. So I ask you to forgive me for not giving you details which my love for those with whom I used to take sweet counsel and together walked in company to the house of God causes me to refrain from declaring what I hope they may yet turn from."

3. Edward's concern for the outcasts:

Outside the camp, unfettered by the bondage of human control, and free to obey the Spirit's leadings, Edward preached throughout the British Isles for some five years following the Division. It was during this period that some of his greatest epistles were written. And while they were written specifically to outcasts, they were intended for the whole family of God. His message was basically for the people to get their eyes off man and return to God. Thus seeking to free the people from the 'cult of the workers', which was becoming a form of idolatry, he warned:

"I believe we as saints of God are losing our liberty. Controlled by man, all will lead to Babylon. It's not what the workers say or what the best of us say that is Rock. We must go to the Father individually and get his revelation of the Christ to our hearts. Then we have Rock. You know why I like that? It smashes the power of man... This is God's way, and if you substitute anything else for it you will land in Babylon." (circa 1931)

God's revelation of the Christ to the individual human heart, which to the extent that it is obeyed, makes each member of the Body of Christ gradually and progressively more like Jesus; and this keeps all in union. There was therefore no need for organization which always resulted in stagnation, barrenness and dearth. This was the truth that Edward Cooney and Tom Elliott lived and taught, and they admitted no substitute for it. In 1930 Tom wrote:

"It was always good and encouraging to see folk willing to buy the truth and sell it not. Buying means possessing and retaining; selling means exchanging for something else."

But if Cooney was seeking to free the people from the power of man, he was at the same time trying to make them aware of their new responsibility. The family of God, he believed, was an equal brotherhood, a priesthood of believers, and it was contrary to New Testament teaching to divide it into two classes, viz., workers and saints or priests and laity. Therefore he told the people:

"All disciples of Jesus are priests today, made so by him who washed us from our sins in his own blood. And to claim that the workers alone are priests is to adopt the Roman Catholic device of overawing God's people by claiming an authority which was as right under the Old Covenant as it is wrong under the New. The priests of Christ's day saw in his testimony the overthrow of their waning power. So if the testimony of Jesus is given by his sent ones today, the would-be priests will excommunicate and put without the camp any whose witness shatters such priestly control, accompanied by its false power to intimidate such as claim the glorious liberty of the children of God." (14/1/30)

He did believe, however, that workers had an eminent place among God's people under certain circumstances, for he writes:

"Workers are given an eminent place among God's people so long as they are spiritually minded, and the spiritually minded give them that place. But when they seek pre-eminence, they proclaim themselves to be carnally minded. The Son is alone to have the pre-eminence (Col. 1: 18). It is through him that the Father gives the revelation to the individual members, which to the extent that they are subject to it makes them collectively one. And all professed revelation that would make the members unlike the Head is flesh and blood revelation and should be treated as such." (circa 1950)

It is significant and perhaps not too surprising that so few workers took sides with him. For they no doubt saw in his preaching the erosion of their power and its inevitable collapse by his proclaiming the doctrine of the living witness to be a heresy, a flesh and blood revelation savouring not of God but of man.

Cooney believed that workers should be servants not rulers, and that all needed to be converted from the 'who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven' spirit to become like little children so as to enter the kingdom. In a letter to a sister in 1930, he points out that from the time Jesus told the Twelve, 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom' until

Pentecost, they were being converted toward this child-like trust in God. And at Pentecost, with 108 saints in fellowship with them, they became converted and so entered the kingdom which the Holy Spirit became controller as the executive of the Father and the Son. Then bringing the Scriptures up to date by showing how they apply to the present situation among God's people, he continues:

"A few of us see our need of turning again to this childlike trustfulness that we had in the beginning. And I believe we are being converted toward it. But our brethren, who as yet fail to see their need of this, have put us out even as the patriarchs put Joseph out. Hope we may so prove God to be with us even as Joseph did that our fellow patriarchs may see their mistake and become again our brothers as Joseph's brothers did in his case." (May 1930)

Edward and some of those workers and saints in fellowship with him saw that unless this conversion took place, they would be just substituting one form of sectarianism for another and therefore risked that Baal or climb-up way of worship apparent throughout Christendom, which they had rejected some 30 years before when they felt themselves called to rebuild the ruined temple of God. In reference to this, Fred Wood writes- :

"It is recorded that the disciples were discussing who appeared to be the greatest among them; and Jesus knowing what was going on put a little child in the midst and showed them first the need of conversion from bigness to littleness, from ruling to serving, like him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister and give his life a ransom for many." (circa 1960)

And contrasting the world's standards with those of the Christian, Fred continues- :

"This world is run by rulers. 'The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them,' said Jesus. This desire for greatness is the cause of wars and other troubles; and Christendom is stamped with this Baal or climb-up way of worship even though Jesus said, 'It shall not be so with you.' Hence we find him refusing to be made a king (John 6). But most people will take the crown if they can get it." (Ibid.)

While the majority followed the workers blindly, and a remnant with clearer light supported Edward, there were many people also halting between two opinions in a state of some confusion. Edward understood their plight. Thus one of the purposes of the epistles he wrote during these years was to explain to both them and the outcasts that as Jesus suffered, outside the camp, so those of his disciples who continued to walk with him would suffer the same reproach. In a letter to Jack Owens, 14 January, 1930, he writes:

"We have been misapplying the Scriptures in the past and have failed to see that the Jews were the people of God and are to be taken as being in a similar position to us who profess to be God's people today. John 4: 22 proves that Jesus regarded the Jews as God's people. He remained inside the camp until his own put him out and crucified him outside. He could not have saved them unless he had seemed to be a transgressor."

This letter was a great encouragement to many, and on 25 January, 1930, Tom Elliott wrote of it as follows:

"We have read it over and over again as it gives us a fair idea where we are as outcasts and why we are where we are. All glory to him who suffered outside the gate leaving others an example to follow in his footsteps."

4. The outcasts and their ministry:

The five years following the Division were active ones spiritually for the outcasts. There was a great outpouring of love and zeal among these people. There was a feeling of release, of being set free from the bondage of human control to experience once again the control of the Spirit. This was how it was in the beginning, and the outcasts were now experiencing a revival of those days. In spite of the workers' campaign against him, Edward's support in his native Ulster was considerable. Unlike the Testimony workers, who claimed the authority to bind and loose, Cooney and those few workers in fellowship with him were together with the saints an equal brotherhood, all the members of which saw themselves as belonging to the priesthood of believers. This had the effect of bringing the saints into much greater participation in the Lord's work. For they were not only more active inside the fellowship of outcasts but also in witnessing for Christ to outsiders. In the Testimony this ministry was restricted to workers only since according to the doctrine of the living witness none could be saved but by hearing the gospel through the lips of a 'true preacher,' i.e., a worker. The whole centre of gravity among the outcasts was shifted from the workers to God through Christ by the Spirit. Each and every member or the fellowship was therefore individually responsible before God.

These years from 1928-33 saw the revival of open-air meetings. Cooney preached as was his custom in towns and villages throughout the country. He could be seen again, for example, on the Diamond of his home town, Enniskillen, on the Square in Newtownards, at the Custom House in Belfast, and in Hyde Park and Tower Hill in London, preaching Christ and the Resurrection. Thousands flocked to hear him, for he seemed to draw the people like a magnet. As in the past he made many converts and there were open-air baptisms as there had been in the early days of the movement. The saints also held open-air meetings with or without the workers. The workers held missions, and the fellowship meetings in the saints' homes flourished as did the special meetings when a number of small congregations would come together for worship once every two months.

The conventions in Fermanagh from 1923 on had taken place at Mullaghmeen, the residence of William West who was a brother of John West formerly of Crocknacrieve. Both William and John West had allied themselves with Edward Cooney at the Division, and were therefore excommunicated along with him. However, the convention already scheduled to be held at Mullaghmeen before the Division, duly took place there in July, 1929. It was a convention of outcasts, for as might be expected the chief workers and their supporters boycotted it. There was nonetheless a huge turnout from all over the British Isles. Edward, Tom Elliott, and Alfred Magowan occupied the platform. Edward had already come to see that these big annual conventions were not scriptural; but most of those in fellowship with him had not as yet seen that far. Thus they expected to have their convention as usual and he did not object. As a result, there were many converts and many baptisms.

This convention was not highly organized as previous ones were. In fact there was a minimum of preparation for it. It lasted three days instead of the usual four. The fourth or last day was when the workers' meetings took place in the past. These were meetings where the administrative, financial and organizational aspects of the ministry were dealt with, matters of doctrine and practice decided upon, and judgment passed on the fitness or unfitness of those who had volunteered for the work. It was also at these meetings that the chief workers decided where all the other workers should be sent to preach for the coming year. The chief workers themselves were by this time pretty well established in permanent fields of labour.

All this machinery, Alfred Magowan pointed out, was necessary in sects under human control. It was this kind of organization that Cooney objected to because it excluded the control of the Spirit and was therefore unscriptural. The outcasts had thus shaken off this yoke of bondage, for under the control of the Spirit, all such organization is unnecessary. An inquirer once asked Fred Wood: "Who sends Cooney and his fellow preachers to different places in the world if you don't believe in organization"? Fred replied: "The Lord sends them, for Jesus Christ is the only one qualified, through his merits, to send men to preach and live like him who had not where to lay his head." Fred then went on to explain that everyone was not called upon to do this, for "we read that Jesus called his disciples unto him of whom he chose twelve. The rest followed Jesus the carpenter who had a home." On one occasion, a young man wrote to Edward saying he wanted to go to preach. Edward did not advise him one way or the other. He pronounced no judgment on his fitness or unfitness as a prospective minister of the gospel. He simply replied to the young man: "If the Lord is calling you to go, he will make provision for you." For to be an apostle required God's approval and faith in his promises, and not man's approval with the provision that would come from any system whatever. As one of the fellowship wrote in 1909:

"Jesus told his preachers and he tells them today to take no thought for tomorrow, to consider how God clothes the lilies of the field, how he provides for the very sparrows and compares their value. He warns them to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and their every want will be supplied." (IR 7/10/1909)

That writer then went on to show that for the 10 years previous, 600 tramp preachers had been proving that these scriptural promises were as true in the 20th century as when they were spoken.

"But," said he, "the world's preachers today do not believe one word of these promises, although they came from the lips of him who sits upon the Throne. We tell them with the authority of God's word that no true prophet or preacher had ever any provision made for him by an established fund of any kind; and anyone who is so blind as to accept the world's provision in preference to the promises of God, proves his want of faith in the everlasting provision promised and made by the king of kings." (Ibid.)

If, however, in 1909, the tramp preachers were proving that the scriptural promises still obtained in the 20th century, by 1929 and for many years previous, they had begun to rely more and more on an established fund of some kind. Cooney saw this development and opposed it. This among other objections he made to the decline of faith and the rise of organization in the fellowship caused his brethren over the years to mount a power against him which culminated in the Division of 1928.

In 1930, Tom Elliot died. This was a bitter blow to Edward, as in Tom he lost the one fellow preacher who had remained true to the revelation of Christ which they had in the beginning. He had been appointed 'Tom the Baptist' by the unanimous consent of all the brethren in the early days of the movement because he was considered by all to be the one the least likely to backslide. It is ironic that it was he who baptized all ten of the chief workers who excommunicated him and Edward at the historic meeting in Clankilvoragh, Lurgan, on 12 October, 1928. Edward afterwards often posed the question: "The baptism of Tom, was it of man or of God"? But the workers were no more able to answer this question than the Pharisees were to answer Jesus when he asked them the same question regarding John the Baptist.

At Tom Elliott's deathbed, Willie Gill and Edward Cooney met once again. Edward recalls that on this occasion Gill wept, and his attitude toward him was that of a brother in Christ. But after that they parted and went their separate ways. Gill remained in an honoured position among his brethren in the Testimony bound by a system of man-made rules and decrees, called a solemn agreement and basis of fellowship for all workers. And Edward, an apostle now almost alone, pressed on in the path of discipleship to follow him who suffered outside the camp, in fellowship with his reproach, loneliness, suffering, and shame, as the Christ was progressively revealed to, in, and through him in resurrection power. Gill had settled for the honour that comes from men; and Edward could have had this too had he bound himself as Gill had done to the workers' agreement. "If I had consented to it," he wrote, "I'd have been back with my 'field marshals,' got back my stripes, and had glory from the workers, which I'm prepared to do without, for I'd have lost the glory of God." When it came to the parting of the ways, Edward saw clearly, which Gill and his brethren probably did not, which was God's way and which man's way. And he had no hesitation in choosing God's way as it is seen in Jesus who said: "Seek not the honour that comes from men but the honour that comes from God alone."

Why then was God's way so clear to Edward and not to his brethren? It was because he constantly went to the Father in the light of whose countenance he learned to separate the precious from the vile. This he urged them all to do, for he knew that it was the only way to know what the will of God is. But they would not listen, and desired only to get rid of him when they found they could not bind him. Thus like the apostles and prophets who went before him, he shared in the rejection of the Master, and found that the closer he followed him, the more the people turned and walked no more with him.

CHAPTER 22

Message to the Outcasts in Other Lands

When Cooney left the United Kingdom in 1933, he had good reason to believe that during the five years of his ministry there since 1928, he had set the fellowship of outcasts firmly back on the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ the chief

cornerstone. And so, led by the Spirit, he set out on another missionary journey which encompassed a good portion of the English-speaking world. The purpose of his mission seems to have been to establish and confirm the outcasts in these various countries as well as to win more souls for Christ. This journey took him to Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. And less fortunate than was Paul, who usually had some companions or helpers with him on his missionary journeys throughout the Roman world, Edward often had to go it alone.

He preached in the United States and Canada from 1933-36, and in Australia and New Zealand from 1936-37. The following letters to the Immigration authorities would indicate that he was in Canada from 1935 to 1936:

Trinity College
in the University of Toronto
Toronto 5

May 21, 1935
Mr. J. W. Mitchell
Inspector of Immigration
Lombard St.
Toronto

Dear Sir,

I have known Mr. Edward Cooney for some time. He is a native of Northern Ireland and a minister of the gospel. In my opinion Mr. Cooney is a thoroughly honest and sincere preacher and I know he has been of great comfort and assistance to individuals in pecuniary difficulties or mental distress.

Believe me,
Sincerely Yours,

J. N. Woodstock
Registrar
Office of the Registrar
Trinity College
in the University of Toronto
Toronto 5

April 16, 1936

I have known Mr. Edward Cooney for some two years and believe him to be a sincere and diligent preacher of the gospel. I feel that when he leaves Canada, I shall be losing a good friend, and one whose spiritual influence has always been valuable to his fellows.

J. N. Woodstock
Registrar

He was back in Canada again by July 1937 and remained there and in the United States for the next two years. He returned to the United Kingdom in 1939 at the outbreak of the second world war. His message, judging by his letters, to the outcasts in the British Commonwealth and the United States, as in the United Kingdom, was: the necessity of returning to God individually so that there might be unity among God's people, as each member became gradually and progressively transformed to the image of his Son. To this end he exhorted them to obey the gospel as it is expressed in the 40th chapter of Isaiah:

1. 'Behold your God'

Thus in a letter, addressed to 'The Little Flock Gathering in Kentucky', he writes:

"The gospel for God's people is, 'Behold your God.' Isaiah tells us this in Chapter 40, verse 9. When cast out as we are today, feeling our weakness and insufficiency, we, conscious of our unworthiness, become depressed because we don't behold our God." (7/7/35).

And using the divided kingdom of Israel as an example, he goes on to show the similarity between God's people then and now. For he believed that those responsible for dividing the fellowship in 1928 were in the same position as was Jereboam who divided God's people and caused Israel to sin. Thus it would seem that he saw the Testimony in the role of the ten tribes and the outcasts in that of Judah and Benjamin. Developing this theme further he writes:

"Our brethren who hate us, who cast us out for His name's sake... say we have sinned, and this is true. But have not they sinned? And does it not add to their sin to say: 'We are of Christ,' and cast out their brethren who are also of Christ? Of all the sectarian positions – 'I am of Paul, I of Apollos, I of Cephas, and I of Christ,' the latter, 'I of Christ,' is to be the most deplored. For it leads to the leaven of the Pharisees, working among God's people, which is hypocrisy, causing such to say: 'Come not near me, I am holier than thou'... The ten tribes treated Judah and Benjamin this way." (Ibid.)

Edward's call was to the individual heart; for he taught that only as each member of the body of Christ kept in touch with the head – Jesus – could there be unity among God's people who were divided because of man ruling instead of God. But the breach would be healed, he said, when God ruled again among them. He sought to comfort the outcasts, as Isaiah had sought to comfort the remnant of God's people in his day, by telling them that what they needed was 'the rule of the Shepherd who feeds his flock, gathers the lambs in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young.' He continues:

May we all submit to his considerate loving rule at this time and so be comforted and set free from our depression as we hearken to the gospel, 'Behold your God.'

2. 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.'

In a letter addressed to 'The Flat Rock Assembly,' (1/11/35), Edward explains what the way of the Lord is. It is His people who become progressively like the Lord – the Way. The valleys and the mountains, the crooked places and the straight, the rough and the plain, all seem to depict the various estates and conditions of God's people. For Edward interprets the valleys as representing those who underestimate what the Lord can do through them; the mountains and hills those who overestimate themselves and who need to be converted and become like little children, so that no flesh shall glory in his presence; the crooked those who profess but don't practice; and the rough those who fail to be the bondsmen of humanity and use their superiority over others.

But the way of the Lord is a straight way; therefore, as said Isaiah: 'Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain.' This is how the way of the Lord is prepared. Edward points out that 120 became the way of the Lord at Pentecost, and that Paul persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women (Acts 22:4). Edward continues:

"When the way of the Lord is prepared, and a highway for our God is made straight in the desert, then the glory of the Lord is revealed through and by His people who, saved from their sins and receiving power through the Holy Spirit, become witnesses unto Jesus. The glory of the Lord, who is love, is to serve those who are His human children, and thus win them to the Lord, the Way (Jesus), seeking that He might work through His people as they become the way of the Lord, which is the way to the Lord – the Way." (1/11/35).

3. Emmanuel — 'A root out of a dry ground'

In this letter to the Flat Rock Assembly, Edward continues to emphasize the unity between Christ and his church by identifying the bride with the bridegroom. For as Jesus, the bridegroom, was the temple of God, so his people, the bride, individually and collectively, are temples of God, as wrote Paul to the Corinthian church:

"For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people." (II Cor. 6:16).

Again, he writes:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy which temple ye are." (I Cor. 3:16-17).

And again:

"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (I Cor. 6:19).

"And as Jesus, the temple of God, was a root out of a dry ground, so his people as temples of God must also be roots out of a dry ground." Thus writes Edward:

"Jesus, the Temple of God, was a root out of a dry ground. All who are temples of God must be roots out of a dry ground. We fear the dry ground which obedience to the progressive revelation of Christ from the Father brings us into. This revelation comes to those who are individual roots out of a dry ground, like the apostles and saints of whom we read in the Acts and Epistles." (1/11/35).

4. 'Repentance'

The word repent literally means to change one's mind or purpose. In the New Testament it always involves a change for the better, an amendment, a turning from self and sin and a turning to God. A corresponding word is convert which also means a turning from sin toward God. This same thought is expressed in the Old Testament in the concept of exile and return (tuva) with reference to the nation of Israel. For the people were spiritually exiled or alienated from God before they were physically exiled and held captive by foreign nations. The prophet's job was to call the nation back to God. A prophet was himself one who was called of God; he could not be born into this vocation as was the case with the priest, for example:

Jesus began his ministry with a call to repentance (Matt. 4:17). His call was however addressed, not to the nation as in the Old Testament, but to the individual. And it was not just the sinner that Jesus called to repentance. For given that repentance and conversion have the same meaning in the New Testament, we know that Jesus called even his sent ones to repent. He told them that unless they were converted and became like little children they would not enter the kingdom of heaven at all. This was when they were discussing which of them would be the greatest in it. Also, in the messages to the churches in Revelation, the risen Lord calls his people to repent.

In his ministry, Edward too stressed that repentance or conversion was not just a once and for all decision on the part of the sinner. It was a continuous process for every child of God and sent one of Christ, all of whom needed to be converted every day. He taught that when God's people reach the state where they do not feel their need of repentance, they are in the same condition as was the Laodicean church who didn't feel their need and to whom the Lord said:

"Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and salve to anoint thine eyes that thou mayest see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent." (Rev. 3:17-19).

In the parable of the lost sheep, Edward saw the 90 and 9 just persons who needed no repentance as being in the Laodicean condition, for he writes:

"The little ones leave the 90 and 9 who are in the Laodicean condition, and get lost in seeking to become better than they are. The shepherd seeks after such and they become a joy to God as his little ones and are representatives of Jesus." (circa 1935).

He goes on to say that when God's people cease to grow (as in the case of the 90 and 9 in the Laodicean condition), they become standardized and organized and need no repentance. These, he says, are spoken of as principalities and authorities in heavenly places, as in Ephesians 3: 8-9 where Paul writes:

"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places." (RSV).

But of the sheep who get lost in seeking to become better than they are, Edward writes:

"The assembly (or church) is composed of the little ones who, receiving progressively the revelation of the Christ, the Son of the living God, from the Father, show forth God's multifarious wisdom which is foolishness to God's people who are carnally organized into principalities and authorities." (circa 1935).

This kind of organization into principalities and authorities, he taught, was Babylonian rule which usurps the rule of the Most High; and only those filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom can overcome this. Clearly, God's manifold wisdom will not be made known but through the little ones who are representatives of Jesus. It is interesting to note that Paul, a chosen vessel with the highest commission ever given to man, regarded himself as a little one, 'I the very least of all the saints,' he says. Surely he had become converted from the 'who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven' spirit. Edward believed that we are living in the days of the Laodicean church when the call was to the individual heart from Jesus who stands outside and pleads:

"Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20).

Throughout his ministry, Edward emphasized the necessity for God's people to constantly repent, i.e., to return to God so as to get a fresh revelation of the Christ thus becoming progressively conformed to his image. This revelation, he stressed, could never be finalized, and any attempt to do so would lead to the stagnation of the Laodicean condition where God's people cease to grow and become standardized because they do not feel their need to repent.

5. The Assembly in New Zealand united by the Spirit.

While preaching in New Zealand 1936-37, Edward seems to have had much to encourage him. First of all some of the Testimony people received him as a brother in Christ, for in May, 1937, he writes:

"I have been visiting some recently in New Zealand where I laboured 12 years ago. I saw twelve, two of whom refused to let the Spirit unite us together. I was glad, however, that ten in Christ did not refuse to let me meet them as a brother. 'Tis encouraging to see some of God's children willing to be led by the Spirit."

Furthermore, the outcasts there seem to have been individually and collectively in good spiritual condition. For some people left the Testimony to have fellowship with those outside the camp. Edward relates how one sister, "feeling the famine in Canaan had heard there was corn in Egypt, " and was glad to be one with the outcasts. He writes of another who became willing to follow Jesus outside the camp and of what caused her to reach his decision. He says: "It was seeing the assembly of those whose names were cast out as evil dwelling together in unity and love that convinced her that God was with them of a truth."

Edward's brother, Fred Cooney, who lived in New Zealand, was one of the elders of the church there. He saw as clearly as did Edward the spiritual decline of the Testimony because of human control. In 1930, he wrote Wilson McClung, the head worker in New Zealand at that time as follows:

"Is it any wonder that spiritual numbness has crept down in the Testimony, when those to whom we should look for an example of spirituality are replacing the unity of the Spirit of God by the uniformity of the flesh, and the liberty and simplicity of the Spirit's leading by the bondage and confusion of human control." (1/6/30).

During this period, Edward, escorted and driven by Fred, visited the outcasts in many different parts of New Zealand.

6. Macedonian Call from Los Angeles

If, however, the church in New Zealand was growing spiritually, there were indications that the churches in other places were not in such a happy state. There appears to have been strife in the church in Ulster, for in his letter to Sara West, 4 May, 1937, Edward writes: "Glad to hear that calm is coming again into your midst." In 1936, he received a Macedonian call from Los Angeles. C. M. Skinner, the bishop or pastor of the church there wrote Edward as follows:

"The church in Los Angeles feels the need for your return at once to continue the ministry which you started here a few months ago. Your ministry in Los Angeles has had its good effect on atheists and communists, that is to say on some of them, in softening their hearts to the truth of God. That you are now needed, if it is possible for you to come, is very evident. So the call comes from the church here even as it did in the days of old, 'Come over into Los Angeles and help us.'" (30/8/36).

Skinner also states that the churches or assemblies in other parts of the U.S.A. were in great need of spiritual help. For he writes: "Reports from the east indicate that the call is great for you to visit the churches in Flat Creek, Alabama; Maretburg, Kentucky, and Flat Rock, Indiana, before entering Canada.

Edward was by nationality British and therefore each time he entered the United States it was necessary for someone there to sponsor him. Such a sponsor had to be in a position to provide for him, if necessary, during his sojourn in the United States to satisfy the authorities. Edward could not shelter under the umbrella of organized religion since he didn't belong to any denomination. At all times therefore he had to rely on the promises of God to make provision for him, for he had no visible means of support. And now an outcast from the Testimony, his faith had to be even stronger since his fellow preachers had closed so many hearts and homes to him. But he continued to prove, as he had done for 36 years, that God's promises were still sure. So when he got the call from Los Angeles, God through the church there made provision for him. For Skinner writes to him as follows:

"Should the authorities desire any guarantee as to your being provided for, the church in Los Angeles will undertake as follows: to provide for you while here; to carry you forward on your journey to eastern points, the churches in the east doing likewise. You would thus be provided for in every way possible. . . Also as pastor of the church here, I am willing to undertake in any way the authorities might suggest to guarantee for your provision while here, and would do so personally and collectively. . . I hereby certify myself and my wife responsible to provide for you while here and also to forward you on your journey eastward.

Truest love in Christ,

C. M. Skinner
Pastor of the church
5672 Ash Street
Los Angeles, California
&
Chief Accountant
Bureau of Assessments
City of Los Angeles " (Ibid.)

From the time Edward received this letter, however, written in August, 1936, it was almost a year before he left New Zealand. And he did go to Canada first, arriving in Vancouver, B.C. in July, 1937. It is possible that the reason for the delay had to do with the time it took the authorities in the U.S.A. to grant him admission. He spent the next two years in the U.S.A. and Canada. For an account of his ministry during this time in the U.S.A., see chapter 30, entitled: "Edward among the Down-and-Outs in Birmingham, Alabama."

CHAPTER 23

The Assembly in Ulster Losing Zeal

On his return to the United Kingdom in 1939, Edward did not find much to encourage him in his native Ulster. When he had left there in 1933, things looked very promising, but much had changed during his absence, apparently for the worse; for the assembly in Ulster like the church of Ephesus was losing zeal. In 1934, Sara Magowan, a most godly woman, died. After this a spiritual decline seems to have set in among the outcasts. Some of the shepherds proved themselves to be irresponsible with the result that the sheep began to go astray. Many of the young drifted into the world, and many of the older ones went back to the Testimony. Others discouraged for one reason or another had given up hope or were adrift in a state of limbo with no one to extend a helping hand. Then there were those strong in the faith who through no fault of their own had found themselves in situations where they deemed themselves unworthy to continue in the fellowship. Nobody in the fellowship of outcasts was ever excommunicated as in the Testimony; but if a person should 'excommunicate' himself, so to speak, nobody it seems took the trouble to encourage him to return to the fold. This was not a matter of policy but rather of indifference or apathy, which goes to show how spiritually barren the church in Ulster was during the last half of the decade of the 1930s. There was a great falling away; and of those who remained many were lukewarm.

It seemed that during Edward's absence, the people wearied in well-doing as the Israelites had done during Moses' absence when he went to receive the law from God in Mount Sinai. Moses had led the Israelites out of Egypt's bondage as Edward had led the outcasts out of the spiritual bondage of the Testimony. In neither case, however, did the majority of the people show themselves willing or able to live by individual revelation from the unseen God, but chose rather to return to the bondage, worldly or religious, from whence they had been delivered. Now as always, however, there was the remnant who kept the faith. And the man most responsible for keeping the outcasts in Ulster together at this time was John West. He was a man of extraordinary discernment – one who could separate the precious from the vile as far as would-be leaders were concerned. He more than most could detect the false or irresponsible prophet, i.e., one who sought the place without possessing the power, and who sought the power without paying the price. He was able to influence for the good many weaker in the faith than himself; for without his influence many might well have been deceived. When Edward returned to Fermanagh from his missionary journeys in foreign fields in 1939, it was at John West's home he stayed as was his custom. For Rossahilly was the Jerusalem for the outcasts as Crocknacrieve had been for the fellowship during the first two decades of the movement's history. John was elder or bishop of the church in Ballinamallard which was one of the oldest and remained one of the best. This assembly with other local assemblies all over Ulster met at Rossahilly for the bimonthly union meeting. In this way the fellowship kept pure from false doctrine and false teachers largely under the influence of John West, a man greatly used of God.

Although the Testimony seemed to be flourishing under the control of the workers as compared with the disarray that the outcasts appeared to be in with almost no workers around to keep them in order, Edward saw no reason to broaden the way to attract or suit the many. For he believed there was no substitute for the unity of the Spirit where each member lived by revelation of the Christ to his own heart. This was the straight and narrow way which the Lord said few would find. Edward's message to the people continued to be – "This is the way, walk ye in it." Undoubtedly he saw the need was great for apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers for the edifying of the church. These, however, should be called of God and not appointed by men. He was virtually the only apostle in the fellowship of outcasts; and God did not send any others it seemed, or none were willing to go. Some pastors and teachers were however raised up from among the remnant, like Jack Healey and Fred Wood. Fred was elder of the church in Belfast from 1939 on; and from that time things began to improve spiritually among the outcasts there, and continued to do so. Fred was one of Edward's greatest helpers. He and his wife, Sadie, dedicated their lives to the furtherance of the gospel in Belfast just as John West and his wife, Sara, had done in Fermanagh.

As was generally the case with Edward, whenever he returned to base a spiritual revival took place. And his return to Ulster in 1939 was no exception. At 72 years old he was as active as ever. He could be seen with flowing beard and bare head preaching on the Diamond of his home town, Enniskillen, particularly on Fair Days, and getting around for the same purpose to other towns throughout the province on his bicycle. He held missions in homes and halls, and all the lost and wandering sheep were welcomed to the fold again and encouraged to make a fresh start. He always sought to raise the fallen, to encourage those who had lost hope, and set them once again on the path of discipleship. How like his Master he had become in this respect! for he had compassion on the people who were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd, like those of whom we read in Matthew 9:36.

When Jesus saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

Edward made converts in the open air, in home missions, and in personal encounters. Pastors like Fred Wood and Jack Healey, and teachers like Ida West were of enormous help in confirming the converts, thus doing their part in edifying the body of Christ. Edward worked a mission at Ballinamallard in the summer of 1940. A great many young people professed at this time, and some who had wandered into the world returned and made a fresh start. When he tested the meeting he would inquire: "Who is willing to say no to self and yes to Jesus"? Those who were willing raised their hands, and in so doing took the first step on the path of discipleship. Edward was emphatic that he was not winning souls to a system but to Christ. "You are not joining anything," he used to tell the converts. Thus the convert would undertake not to join a sect but to become a continuing disciple of Jesus and to enter into fellowship with others who had made the same commitment. "Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me," said Jesus. Once again Edward could be seen as in the past baptizing his converts in the Ballinamallard river. The scene was similar to what it had been in 1904 and subsequent years, though now Edward was full of years and even fuller of zeal than he was then. He told his converts that to follow Jesus it was necessary to have a new nature – the divine nature – which we progressively receive when we make Jesus Lord. For when we obey him and deny self, we become increasingly more like him. God's purpose, he said, for all mankind is that each and every individual should be conformed to the image of his Son. Thus he wrote one of his converts, Sybil Roberts, as follows:

"God desires that we should become as like Jesus as possible, so I hope we will spend more time waiting on God that he may put his desires into our hearts causing us to progressively deny self, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. The more like Jesus we become, the more glorious will be our experience hereafter." (23/11/42)

When we have the divine nature, he said, we have new ambitions and new aspirations. All earthly ambitions are bound ultimately to disappoint. Edward constantly pointed out that there was no standing still in being conformed to the image of God's Son. For, said he, if you don't keep advancing toward the light, you will backslide. And so he wrote a convert who had been backsliding thus:

"I was indeed glad to get yours and to hear you had still a heart to turn to the Lord, and to find that to forsake the fount of living water and turn elsewhere for satisfaction was to prove they were broken cisterns that could hold no water." (15/10/46)

With regard to the conditions of fellowship, he taught that the Holy Spirit will unite us in fellowship when we are individually agreed with God to become progressively more like Jesus. And then when the twos and threes are gathered together, Jesus will be in the midst. Thus he writes another convert:

"Hope you, Hosmer and Oather, may enjoy fellowship, and that others may be added to the twos and threes who meet together in his name ... 'Tis encouraging that Jesus speaks of the two or three agreed with each other because of being individually agreed with God, and could therefore rely on his being in the midst as they met together." (15/3/47)

To prepare people for fellowship, he emphasized the importance of waiting on God. Thus he writes:

"How needful it is that we begin each day waiting on God. You may not have much time; but if you give God the time, he will shoe your feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace. And what he says to us, he says through us to others." (Nov. 1946)

On this same theme, waiting on God, he writes again:

"Hope we shall all in future take time to wait on God, so that the sound of gentle stillness may be heard by our hearts so quieted to hear that God's will may be clear. And as our beings are opened up to Jesus, he may come in and sup with us and we with him. His supper is to do the will of him who sent him through us. Our supper is the satisfaction obtained from him so doing." (15/3/47)

Christ to us, in us, and through us, Edward taught, is the only way that unity can be achieved between Christ and his church. Edward saw Christ manifested in his people throughout human history – "He who was, who is, and is to come." And Christ identifies with his people as the bridegroom identifies with the bride. Thus writes Edward:

"Christ was in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, and is to come in glory to reign on earth 1000 years. He is come not only in his own flesh as the Bridegroom but also as his Bride composed of those who are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

Edward remained in the United Kingdom from 1939 until the spring of 1947.

CHAPTER 24

50 Years Later

In 1947, William Irvine died in Jerusalem at the age of 84 just 50 years after he had founded the Go Preacher movement. To the world he was a dynamic personality and a powerful preacher who had forsaken considerable worldly prospects to become a freelance missionary on apostolic lines, and who was the founder and leader of a religious movement known as the Pilgrims or Dippers. He was lovable, impressive, remarkable, lived frugally, despised money, and was a real Christian. This is how he was described in the Sunday Post at the time of his death. To his family he was a fabulous figure, very generous and well loved. To the fellowship he founded, divided since 1928, his memory is not so unblemished. Two of his former fellow preachers, Edward Cooney and Alfred Magowan, now outcasts like himself but for very different reasons, regarded him as one whom the Lord had sent but who had subsequently lost the anointing. For Alfred Magowan compared him with Saul and Edward Cooney compared him with Samson. It will be remembered that these two Old Testament characters were men who had been anointed of God, but later God departed from them and they lost the power they once had. The point Magowan and Cooney were making here is that as it was with Saul and Samson, so it was with Irvine. But Cooney was aware that this scriptural warning didn't only apply to Irvine, for he adds: "Tis so with all God's servants who depart from revelation from God direct and confer with flesh and blood."

Alfred Magowan, a convert of Cooney's entered the fellowship in 1902. Soon afterwards he volunteered for the work and was a Go Preacher for a number of years. In 1938, he got the opportunity to visit the Holy Land. And although aware of Irvine's fall, he continued to admire him for what he had been. He had never forgotten the power of Irvine's preaching in the early days of the movement: "No man of our time spoke with so great power/ And we had listened to him, rapt, enthralled/ As time tolled on unnoticed by the hour," wrote Magowan of him on hearing of his death prematurely reported. So he went to Jerusalem with an open mind, biased however in Irvine's favour. But his disappointment was great, and the admiration he once felt for Irvine soon turned to pity. For he saw him now as David saw Saul when the latter had lost the anointing. Magowan describes this last encounter with Irvine thus:

"When I saw William Irvine in Palestine in 1938 and heard him expound a chapter of Isaiah on Mount Carmel, it was so weak compared with the mighty expositor of 30 years before that my heart was moved for him. And I understood how David felt on hearing of the death of Saul: 'Tell it not in Gath. Publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice.'"(13/1/56).

On hearing of his death, the poem that Magowan wrote on Irvine is at once a eulogy and a lament – a eulogy for what he once had been and a lament for what he had become when he lost the anointing. However, Magowan believed that God had brought Irvine to the place where he could discipline him so that "he the crown of life at length might wear." But he adds this injunction at the end of the poem:

"Let no man glory in men, we are apostolically advised, but let us mourn over them and repeat after David: 'How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!'" (Ibid.)

At the time of Irvine's death, Edward Cooney, having been associated with the movement from its inception, undertook to give an account God's dealings with them when, as he put it, "God called William Irvine and others of us to rebuild Jerusalem." Following is an excerpt from that narrative:

"There was in the days gone by a certain man called William Irvine, upon whose heart God's Spirit worked to raise him up like the judges of old to lead back those in Christendom to the Truth as it is in Jesus. In fact, he bore some resemblance to Samson. He was strong and warred with spiritual Philistines effectually until Delilah so influenced him that he put her before God. He has died recently in Jerusalem. Let us hope that in his declining days, like Solomon, he discovered that to fear God and keep his commandments is the whole duty of man.

"Some years ago he wrote to the writer and asked him to come and work with him in Jerusalem. The reply the writer gave was that when William let his hair grow again, as it was when they first met, he would be glad to work with him, but not until then. The long hair of Samson seems to speak of revelation from God direct, not clipped to suit his flesh or the flesh of others. When Delilah clipped his hair to suit her flesh and the flesh of the Philistines who feared Samson knowing that God was with him, Samson, although he shook himself, not knowing that God had left him, found that Jehovah had departed from him and that he was weak like other men. Tis so with all God's servants who depart from revelation from God direct and confer with flesh and blood." (1947).

Edward sees therefore in the analogy with Samson more than Irvine's moral fall. More importantly he sees his spiritual defeat which, like Samson's, was caused by mixing flesh and blood revelation with God's revelation. It is significant that Edward does not complete the analogy with Samson whose hair grew again. Instead he holds out hope for Irvine that in his declining years he discovered, as Solomon did, what is the whole duty of man. This would seem to imply that Cooney had no reason to believe that Irvine had ever been restored to his former strength as Samson was. i.e., spiritual strength – a man anointed of God. Yet he had the confident expectation that at least before Irvine died he had repented.

It can be seen from the foregoing that the spirit shown by both Magowan and Cooney toward their erring brother was one not of judgment but mercy. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," wrote Paul who realized that after preaching

to others even he could become a castaway. Edward understood this too. Hence his constant emphasis on the necessity of living by revelation from God and not conferring with flesh and blood.

Having thus given the root cause of Irvine's defeat, Cooney proceeds in his narrative to outline the events within the fellowship, which indicated a departure from the commission given them by Christ through the Spirit in the beginning. These were (1) the living witness heresy of which he has this to say:

"The writer got to see this flesh and blood revelation to be vile and gave it up in 1914, returning to the true gospel preached by himself and William for four years after they met. This gospel recognized John 20: 31 to be true, 'But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.' And also Paul's dialogue in Romans 10: 14-18, answered by Psalm 19 where it shows God speaking through nature as he did to the magi, through the law (which is perfect converting the soul), and finally through the preacher, 'the words of those mouth and the meditation of whose heart are acceptable in God's sight.' The Lord knoweth them that are His. And it is the writer's business to depart from iniquity himself and exhort all who profess to be Christ's to do likewise." (Iniquity means all that is not like Jesus who is equity) (1947).

(2) Their taking a denominational name during the First World War in Great Britain and again during the Second World War in the United States. (3) His own excommunication which caused a division in the fellowship. And he tells us briefly why his brethren excluded him, viz., because he purposed to cut out of his life all that contradicted the Scriptures. But he pronounces no judgment on them or on Irvine. He simply tells us that he is still in the race conscious that God has not excluded him, that his course is nearly run, and that he hopes and purposes to go on.

Now almost alone in the front of the battle, he continued to advance conscious that while he had been rejected by his fellow soldiers, he was still in the service of the King from whom he held his commission and who through the Spirit had impelled him into the good fight of faith some 50 years before.

CHAPTER 25

Missionary Journeys and Encounters in the United States – 1947-1950

A call from Alabama brought Edward back to the United States in the spring of 1947 from the United Kingdom where he had been since 1939. For he writes: "It was through the urgent invitation of Oather and Hosmer that I came to the USA this time." Edward was now more than 80 years old and without a companion or helper to accompany him on yet another missionary journey. But relying, as he had always done throughout his long ministry, on the promises of God, and still without visible means of support, he arrived safely in New York after a pleasant and interesting voyage. For shortly after his arrival there he wrote:

"God has been kind to me in bringing me safely across the ocean and giving me favour in the eyes of some of my fellow travellers who were kind and considerate to me." (26/6/47).

He then relates some of his experiences on board ship. He never missed an opportunity to preach the gospel, and the occasion was often just a personal encounter. It seems one day, on this voyage, he was out on deck reading his Bible, and a man approached him and said. "That's a good book to read." They got into conversation, and the man told him that he had some connection with the Faith Mission and that he had been a missionary in India. He asked Edward if he had ever heard of the Cooneyites. And Edward, in telling the story afterwards, said: 'I asked him concerning them, and he reported they did not wash their bodies sufficiently. I replied, I was Edward Cooney and washed my body regularly; and those that were with me were not Cooneyites but disciples – poor but cleanly.' Evidently the man became quite friendly and seemed attentive to what Edward had to say to him, which was undoubtedly to show him the way of God more perfectly. Edward also relates that he had talks with others on board ship, who showed interest in what they heard, one of whom was a young married woman from Lewis in the Scottish Highlands.

When he arrived in New York, he received a hearty welcome from some Testimony members, although they risked excommunication for this. One of these was Minnie Robinson, an ex-worker, who had given up preaching because of a serious accident. It appears she was badly burned in both legs due to the indiscretion of her companion. In a letter to a sister Edward writes of her thus: "She received me into her home on my arrival in New York. . . and in spite of her suffering showed me no little kindness." And in another letter he writes of her: "She is a brave heroin who has suffered much physically and spiritually. I valued her fellowship and kindness." She told Edward she loved all and wished to be in fellowship with all (which included the outcasts of whom Edward was the chief). He told her this was right, for all God's children should be included and none excluded. He goes on:

"Those who are zealous that some should be included and some excluded are wrong. The patriarchs were wrong to exclude Joseph from their fellowship. He never excluded them; they excluded him. The Galatians were bewitched when they excluded Paul from their fellowship and counted him as their enemy; for the truth Paul told them was ahead of what they were yet. It was the Truth."

This was yet more evidence of how anxious Edward always was that there should be unity among God's people. And like Joseph he never excluded his brethren, but was excluded by them, just as Joseph was by his brethren, and for the same reason. For, like Joseph, he chose to live by revelation from God, and thus became the victim of their envy. Other Testimony members who received him were Margaret Cunningham and Bobbie Buchanan, of whom he writes: "Margaret Cunningham, a daughter of Sam Wallace who used to live in Greenock, was hearty in her fellowship with me... and Bobbie Buchanan (ex-worker) and his wife received me heartily also." But the home where he stayed while in New York was that of Earl and Mae Hammond who had heard him preach some 20 years before and who, despite the workers' efforts to turn them against him had remained his staunch supporters and were therefore

outcasts. Edward spoke of them as being like John and Sara West, and their home, 265 Riverside Drive, as the Rossahilly of New York, where he says, "I spent some happy hours." He continues:

"They are very kind and hospitable to me; and their son, Professor Harold Hammond, Ph.D. of Columbia University is interested. Pray that he may be delivered from the darkness of intellectual atheism into the light of revelation which can be received only by the childlike."

After a brief stay in New York, Edward went to Boston by bus to visit Irvine Weir, another Testimony member and ex-worker, who was with him on the first mission he worked in Edenderry, Ireland, in 1901. A convert of William Irvine's, Weir was one of the young men who formed the nucleus of the Go Preacher movement led by William Irvine who in 1897 was moving toward independence from the Faith Mission. Weir subsequently married and left the work, but with intermittent lapses remained in fellowship. In 1947, he was apparently in good standing in the Testimony when he invited Edward to visit him in Boston. Of this visit Edward reports:

"He (Irvine Weir) was glad to renew his fellowship with me although he risks being put out in doing so. His wife improved much during my stay at his home. She was timid and feared to have me stay, but Irvine was firm."

It appears that while he was staying at Weir's, three more Testimony members came to see him, and a young couple in whose house the church met, came and talked to him for some time. Weir spent his week's vacation with him and accompanied him to Philadelphia and New York, during which time Edward says, "we were pleased to see some service for the Lord." He continues: "Irvine left me in New York and proceeded home to Boston to, I hope, take a bolder stand for the truth than ever." Edward stayed again with the Hammonds in New York and then went to Birmingham, Alabama, of which he writes as follows:

"I left their home in New York for Alabama by bus at 11.10 p.m., arrived at 7.30 a.m., and found my way to Oather Ballinger's from where I now write. He and his wife welcomed me, and they with Mrs. Orr, her daughter-in-law, Inez, Hosmer Durham, his wife, Edith, and Mrs. Oglesby all met in fellowship with me. Mrs. Orr's daughter is also in fellowship. Pray that I may prove helpful to these eight so that they may become bright witnesses unto Jesus. Birmingham is over 1000 miles from New York, and is not far from the equator – oppressively hot – so that one has not the same energy as in the old country."

Well into his 81st year at this time, Edward, after traveling more than 1000 miles alone in the oppressive heat by bus without a stop-over, held a meeting in Birmingham the night he arrived and every subsequent night during his stay there. These Alabamans were not Testimony members but people in full fellowship with Edward, either outcasts like himself or converts he had won since the Division. Others who sought him out during his sojourn there were people not connected with the fellowship at all, but prominent citizens who solicited his help in rehabilitating drunkards and law breakers. Edward concludes this letter with the hope that he may be more spiritually and physically fit to meet the opportunities God is giving him in Alabama where he complains that his brain feels dull with the muggy heat.

In December 1947, he was in Maresburg, Kentucky. During his sojourn there he stayed at the home of Wade Hunt, where he held meetings every night. There was evidently a sizable church in Maresburg at this time, for Edward writes: "We had 16 at the a.m. meeting and intend having meetings every night this week. Pray for us that God's Spirit may influence some to yield to Christ." And at the evening meeting there were 30 present, a number of whom were young people who were children of 9 and 10, when Edward was in Kentucky 9 years before, and were now young men and women. "This is a call to keep spiritually fit," he writes, "so that I may be a savour of Christ to those with whom I come in touch." He continues: "I am old enough to be the father of the grandfathers here, so that makes me a sort of great-grandfather to some. Thus great indeed is my responsibility to keep fit." He made at least one convert during the first week of his mission here, for he writes:

"One has professed willingness to follow Jesus here and spoke of a verse in 1 John that struck me, viz., 'He that saith he abideth in him ought to walk even as he walked.' It was a good verse for a babe to get hold of. He is a school teacher and shows a humble, teachable spirit." (23/1/48).

The Testimony had a church meeting in Maresburg also, but they were unwilling to allow Edward and his fellow outcasts to meet with them. However, some of them did attend Edward's meetings in Wade Hunt's home, for he says: "One came, but he has been influenced to cease coming; however his wife and baby came again Sunday evening." At the same time other Testimony members were writing to him from different parts of the country and from Canada requesting to see him. Of these he states:

"I had a letter from a Testimony brother who wishes to see me. He lives in Vancouver, B.C. I will try and contact him later. Some up north in Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan also wish me to call, which I hope to do if God will." (Ibid.)

So despite opposition and threats of excommunication from the workers, individuals within the Testimony continued to contact him. They too were probably feeling the famine in Canaan and had heard there was corn in Egypt as others in New Zealand had done some years before. While in Kentucky he visited Knoxville, Tennessee, where six people received him as a brother in Christ, four of whom were Testimony members. Of this he writes thus:

"I had a nice visit to Knoxville, Tennessee. Jean Pierce and her husband welcomed me, and we visited three of the Testimony who received me as a brother." (circa 1948).

And of another Testimony brother who received him on this visit he writes:

"I saw the custodian of the courthouse in Knoxville, Tennessee, on Friday morning before leaving for Mount Vernon, Kentucky. He said to me, 'You are my spiritual grandfather; I professed through Alex Rennie and he professed through you.' So that was six in Knoxville who received me as a brother. It shows that the leaven is working in a hidden way amongst the measure of meal." (Ibid.)

In response to the call from Alabama, Edward spent about 9 months in the South dividing his time among the people of Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee; and encouraged with the result of this mission he felt the call to move on. He believed it was not good for a preacher to stay in an area too long in case the people came to rely on him instead of putting their trust in God. He therefore exhorted all disciples to bear the burden of the Lord, for he believed it was the responsibility of all who professed to follow Jesus, not just the responsibility of the preacher, to seek to win souls for Christ, to tend his lambs, and feed and shepherd his sheep. Thus he writes:

"I believe my departure from Birmingham will cause those left to realize their privilege and responsibility to Jesus, to tend his lambs and feed and shepherd his sheep." (Ibid.)

And to the bishop or elder of the church in Birmingham he writes:

"You will have a great responsibility now, and I am sure it will help you to pray and wait on God. I hope you will be able to confirm those who have started to run the race, and by your testimony and influence be able to win yet more." (Ibid.)

And again:

"I hope those who have not as yet been baptized, may seriously consider what it means to die, be buried, and resurrected in Christ Jesus; so that when baptized as disciples, they may become disciples indeed, progressively getting to know the Truth that makes them free." (Ibid.)

Finally in January, 1948, shortly before his departure from the South, he writes from Kentucky to the bishop of the church in Birmingham:

"Glad to hear that Tierce is more convinced than ever that the Jesus way is the only way; and hope that the little flock there will have a right to be called the people of the Way as the early disciples were."

2. We know from his letters that he left Kentucky in January 1948, was in New York in February and March, Massachusetts in April, Michigan in July and August, and Canada (Edmonton and Toronto) in September. He may have done even more traveling than the foregoing would indicate, for he often moved around giving one place as his address. He did it all mainly by bus and alone, for in 1948 he had no companion or helper. But he was constantly on the move, blown about wherever the Holy Spirit led him.

Shortly after his arrival in New York in February 1948, his great friends, the Hammonds lost their son, Russell, a young man of 30 years old, in an auto accident. He was a college teacher, had his M.A. degree, and was studying for his Ph.D. Although he made no profession, Edward, who was with him at the end, held out hope for his salvation because he had responded to what he knew was right before he died. In 1942, John and Sara West lost their son, Ron, in the war. A young man of 27 years and a pilot in the Royal Air Force, he was shot down over Belgium on his last flying mission after which he was due to be grounded. Ron had made a profession as an adolescent but had lapsed as many young people do. Yet in his heart he never rejected what he knew was right; and so, although a volunteer, when he found himself as a bomber pilot he was greatly troubled about what he was doing. He expressed this concern to his parents during his last leave before that final mission, and said he hated to kill, for it went against his conscience and everything he believed in. This indicated to Edward that Ron had turned again to God and so he believed he was saved.

Russ Hammond's death reminded Edward of Ron West's, and so in March 1948, he wrote the latter's sister, Ida, as follows:

"Mae Hammond has just lost a son, 30 years of age, whose spinal cord was severed through an auto accident. He just lived, in terrible pain, about 48 hours. I have similar hope for him as we have for dear Ron, that he responded at the end to what was right. I asked him when moistening his parched lips with water as he lay dying: 'If God spares you, will your mother's God be your God'? He nodded twice. He said in his delirium 'I want to be cleansed right out and be the same old Russ of long ago.' If your mother is led to write to Mae owing to their similar sorrow and similar hope, all I can say is her boy had a disposition like Ron's. He was quiet and thoughtful, and had a great belief in his father and mother. Unfortunately he married the wrong woman." (2/3/48).

Edward had been back in the United States almost a year now (March 1948), which meant that his visa would soon be expired. He believed that the Lord required him to stay longer, however, and so he applied for an extension. Many prominent citizens in Alabama felt that he was an asset to their community, and therefore did all in their power to make this possible. The following letter was written on his behalf by Dr. H. A. Elkourie of Birmingham, Alabama, to J. Edgar Hoover, Washington, D.C. March 3, 1948:

Dear Sir:

May I take the liberty to tell you that Edward Cooney, whom I have known for several years, is the only man I have met within the last ten years who represents the true Christian ideals to the fullest and who lives a life, the example of which is inspiring, uplifting and morally constructive. He is the most unselfish man I have ever known. He is an asset to any community. To lose his guiding spirit and influence in these troubled times is to suffer an inexpressible loss. I hope a way can be found to keep him here and reap the benefits of his teaching and example.

Sincerely yours.

(Sd.) H. A. Elkourie

A way was found, and Edward was given an extension for another year to remain in the United States. From New York he went to Massachusetts, and from there to Michigan where we find him in July and August, 1948. He is now in his 82nd year and seems to be feeling the burden of age and the loneliness of godliness, for he writes to his friends in Kentucky and Alabama thus:

"I may not see you for some time so I thought I would write you. As I am old and alone, my service is more limited than it would be if I were younger and had a companion." (2/8/48).

Irvine Weir, who had accompanied him to various places the year before while on his vacation, was back at work again and was apparently feeling the pressure from the workers because of his association with Edward who writes of this circumstance as follows:

"Irvine Weir has written me that George Walker, Tom Tuft, and the bishop in whose house Irvine meets, came to his home. George Walker told Irvine that he would instruct the bishop to close his house to him unless he promised not to speak in the meetings. Irvine refused, so without any scriptural reason being given, he has been cut off. Pray for him that he may stand firm and seek only to please God." (Ibid.)

In September 1948, Edward wrote from Edmonton, Canada:

"Irvine Weir was ordered off the convention grounds for speaking between meetings to some he met; and bishops have been told not to allow him to speak in the home assemblies. He is getting from six to nine weeks leave from his work and thinks of spending it with me. Hope if we go together, we may be a help to each other." (27/9/48).

3. Early in 1949, God provided Edward with a companion, August Gustafson, from Norway. August was what Edward called the pioneer worker, for he went out to preach according to Matthew 10 at the age of 25 in 1899, quite independently of the Go Preacher movement. He and his companion subsequently met up with the Go Preachers and were received into the fellowship as brothers in Christ. This was before the living witness heresy had crept in circa 1905. August too was eventually excluded from fellowship a number of years after Edward had been. It seems he had objected to the harsh treatment given to one of the young preachers by the chief workers. Thus at the age of 70 after a life of faith for almost half a century, he found himself shut out of fellowship with all doors closed against him. This was August's distressing fate in old age at the hands of the chief workers. He spent the war years (1939-46) as a cook in his native Norway when that country was under German occupation. Like most workers in foreign countries he didn't know the truth about Edward's excommunication since the chief workers had everywhere borne false witness against him. They said, for example, that he (Edward) had departed from the Truth by making himself out to be a great one like the character in Acts 17, deceiving many. What most people did not know was that Edward was excommunicated because he obeyed the Truth as it is in Jesus, refusing to be controlled by man; and, as a consequence had his name cast out as evil by the chief workers.

One day in 1949, August saw a letter from Edward to another worker, in which Edward had written: "I will forgive you for not forgiving me." August was greatly impressed with such a spirit and immediately decided to write to Edward requesting to meet him. Shortly afterwards they met. Edward took August as his companion and fellow preacher, and all homes open to Edward now became August's homes as well. Edward wrote of him later:

"The pioneer worker, August Gustafson, who went out 52 years ago tells me that when he went forth at the age of 25 with a similar companion, the simple pure vision he received was this: 'Only one anointing _ the Holy Spirit; only one Truth – Jesus; all that makes the individual differ from him – error; all that conforms the individual to him – Truth.' I'm glad I have with me this pioneer worker whom I find to be a man humble, distrustful of himself, apt to teach, and willing to be taught." (20/12/50).

And because August and Edward had suffered similar experiences, Edward, by way of encouraging August and other outcasts continues:

"So let us take heart. And although our dear brethren have excluded us, we are still one with them in all things wherein we search the Scriptures and find what they teach is so. We ourselves are fallible and need their help as they need ours." (Ibid.)

It is evident from his letters that Edward did a great deal of traveling in 1949. Alice Muttetbaugh of Michigan, during her three weeks' vacation, drove him between two and three thousand miles. Irvine Weir accompanied them, and August joined them later in Alabama. In August, 1949, Edward writes from Michigan to Hosmer and Edith Durham as follows:

"The time is coming near when Alice Muttetbaugh gets her vacation, and she purposes to drive me and perhaps Irvine Weir to Kentucky and Alabama. We intend starting 9th September and may get to Alabama by 16th September, meeting August Gustafson, my companion, there. I gave him your address in case he gets there before us." (20/8/49).

Although it was at the urgent request of Hosmer Durham and Oather Ballinger that Edward returned to the USA in 1947, Durham appears not to have shown himself particularly friendly, for Edward's letter continues:

"Please let me know if this is o.k. as last time we visited Alabama we saw Edith but failed to see you, Hosmer. This was a disappointment to Irvine Weir and to me also. Please let me know how you are physically and spiritually. It was through the urgent invitations of Oather and you that I came to the USA this time. Dear Hosmer, do you still desire to see me as you did then, or has your desire changed? You are aware of my disappointment last time. How is it with you now? Please write by return and let me know. . . . Whether you are a victor or are being defeated, I would love to see you as it may be my last opportunity to visit you on earth." (Edward is now in his 83rd year). (Ibid.)

As all events, Edward was greatly encouraged with the result of this journey which took him to Ohio and Indiana as well as to Alabama and Kentucky and perhaps some other places as well. For he had the joy of making and baptizing new converts, of being received as a brother by some of the Testimony members who were halting between two opinions and desired to see him, and of visiting again those outcasts in fellowship with him. Of this wonderful experience where he saw so much evidence of the working of the Holy Spirit, he writes:

"We have been humbled here by seeing the outcome of the Holy Spirit's movement on some hearts in Ohio, Kentucky and Alabama. It was a call from Alabama that caused me to desire to cross the ocean and come to seek to help. Alice Muttetbaugh drove me between two and three thousand miles during her vacation. Irvine Weir accompanied us and I had the joy with them of seeing some confess willingness to follow Jesus by being baptized. Others are willing, and we expect to revisit the places where we hope to

disciple others and see those willing to follow Jesus 'buried with him by baptism into death.' Personally I don't feel worthy of such a privilege as having any part in such work. Irvine Weir was a great help, and August Gustafson followed up the work by confirming the disciples and seeing some others become interested." (15/11/49).

By the summer of 1949, Edward's visa was due to expire again, and because he believed that the Lord required him to remain in the United States he applied once again for an extension. This was apparently difficult to obtain at this time, for in July 1949, he writes: "August and I are being refused extensions to stay in the United States so may proceed to Britain unless the Lord lead otherwise."

The Lord, it seems, did lead otherwise through the good offices of Earl Hammond who wrote his congressman, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., on Edward's behalf, and received the following reply on 17 October, 1949:

Dear Mr. Hammond:

Thank you for your letter of October 12 with further reference to the extension of Mr. Cooney's visa. I have again asked the Immigration and Naturalization Service to look into the matter and do everything possible to assist Mr. Cooney in his desire to remain a while longer in the United States.

Sincerely yours.

(Sd.) Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr.

Edward did succeed in getting his visa extended, for on 15 November he writes: "Have got another 6 months extension and am trying to get one for August also. We go for interview to Immigration Bureau on Thursday, 17 November."

On 8 November Edward was already negotiating to obtain an extension for August, for he writes Hosmer Durham as follows:

"Get from Dr. Edmonds and Mr. Magowan statements that will influence Immigration Bureau to grant August an extension. Tell them that August is a most valued help whom I need much... They will know what to write."

On 14 November he writes Durham again: "August and I hope to visit Immigration Bureau together. . . Pray for us that we may obtain favour in the eyes of the authorities."

Edward did succeed in getting August another six months extension also for they both remained in the United States until May 1950.

4. We next find Edward with his companion, August, in Boynton Beach, Florida. It is now January, 1950, and in a month Edward will be 83 years old. August is 77 at this time. In a letter to Irvine Weir, Edward relates some of their experiences in Florida. It seems the police were on their track in Ocean Ridge. They were apparently preaching in the open air, which gave some rabble-rousers an occasion for causing a disturbance. But an onlooker, seeing their innocence, took their part, and invited them to his home. He asked them to stay overnight which they did, and gave them an invitation to come back again. They received favour in the eyes of the mayor of Ocean Ridge also, for he drove them home in his car, listened to their message, and said he would speak to the mayor of Boynton, whom he knew, concerning getting them an opportunity to preach. He must have been as good as his word, because many doors in Boynton were subsequently opened to them.

Edward relates how they attended a coloured church, spoke, and were offered part of the collection which they refused saying love was their motive. He also gives the following account of a number of other churches they were asked to preach in:

"At a coloured Methodist church we were asked to the platform to preach; and on Tuesday night spoke at the white Methodist church. The first Sunday I went there, the Methodist Minister came and sat down beside me. We talked for a minute or two, perhaps more, then he said to me, 'You'll give the message tonight.' Afterwards he announced that I would preach there that evening and asked me to stand up so that the people might see the preacher before they heard him. August, who went to the Baptist church that Sunday morning, accompanied me to the Methodist church in the evening where he also spoke. We got the use of the Episcopalian church in Boynton. Five children came and we both enjoyed talking to them. Afterwards we went to the coloured Methodist church and were again asked to speak." (17/1/50).

Edward then takes the opportunity to rebuke Weir for having sung once as a paid singer in a church choir in Palm Beach. The reader will understand by now that to be a paid singer or a paid preacher in the service of the Lord was strictly against Cooney's religious principles, as indeed it was against those of the Testimony preachers as well. For they all believed that the Lord meant what he said when he told his disciples: "Freely ye have received, freely give." Thus Edward writes Weir:

"The ex-mayor of Ocean Ridge is to call for us and drive us to Palm Beach church where you sang in the choir as a paid singer. Sorry you will not be with us as you could sing from your heart freely under better conditions."

Edward was constantly meeting new people, and while he interested and fascinated many, few were apparently willing to receive his message and act upon it, even though many admitted he was right. It was hard to argue with Cooney because his life spoke. It was the religious people who opposed him most, perhaps because his righteousness so far exceeded their own, and so showed them up in a poorer light. He used to say, "I am always received better by the sinners than by the religious people." His next encounter in Florida was with a Frenchman of whom he writes thus:

"A French gentleman, who was forced down at Shannon airport and sent on to spend the night in Tipperary when flying to or from France, picked me up, and I left my Bible in his car. This meant a journey to where he lives in a fine house beside the sea. There I got my Bible, met him again, got introduced to his wife, and was invited to come back to see him again. I said I had a companion and would bring him with me." (Ibid.)

We do not know the outcome of this visit. It may be related in another letter which we do not possess. One thing we can be sure of, however is that Edward preached the gospel to the Frenchman and his wife, and God alone can judge if the seed bore fruit.

The last letter we have from Edward before he left for the United Kingdom in May, 1950, was also written in Florida. This was in January of that year. But in this letter to Fred and Sadie Wood in Belfast, he gives Michigan as his address. We assume therefore that between January and May when he left the United States for Great Britain, he did spend some time in Michigan and possibly also in New York, for it was from there he sailed for the home country. In this letter he states:

"I am writing this in sunny Florida where August and I are labouring. We came here to see Alfred Youell, Hettie Whitla's brother. We believe it is God's will that we came here, for we have met a few people who show interest in our message... Ye have spoken in three coloured churches and our hearers showed some interest. We hope to return again. In the Southern States the Negroes are as a rule segregated and we are glad not to recognize this, and hope to treat them like our brothers and sisters." (Ibid.)

During the three years between May 1947 and May 1950 when Edward was on this missionary journey to the United States and Canada, he travelled thousands of miles. Often alone, sometimes with a companion like August Gustafson or a helper like Irvine Weir, with the whole continent as his field, he sowed the seed, moved on, and exhorted those established in the way to confirm and strengthen the converts. Thus we have seen that without any organized plan or visible means of support, but led only by the Spirit, God at all times made provision for him, whether with those in fellowship with him, Testimony members, with members of other churches, or with so-called worldlings. And if anyone should wonder why he made no attempt whatever to organize those who heard and received his message, it was because his mission was to win souls to Christ and not to a system of any kind whatever.

He established home assemblies or house churches anywhere he found two or three individually agreed with God, and therefore with each other, to become gradually and progressively conformed to the image of his Son. This was the basis for fellowship. This being so, the Holy Spirit would be in control, and that would keep all in union. There was therefore no need for organization or principalities or powers. These were the ideals Edward set before his fellow disciples. And though, because of their disobedience to the revelation of Christ to their individual hearts, they were often very imperfectly controlled by the Spirit, Edward made no compromise with any form of organization. For he firmly believed from the day God called him out of Babylon to follow Jesus until the end that all forms of organized religion were of the devil.

The Testimony, on the other hand had a vast organization with a well-planned program of hundreds of missions and conventions as well as thousands of house churches all over the world. But Edward believed that God could accomplish more through the twos and threes and indeed the ones (individuals) controlled by the Spirit than by the thousands and tens of thousands under human control. For, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain."

CHAPTER 26

Personal Encounter with Edward Cooney — London 1950

In May 1950, I met Edward Cooney in London. This was not my first encounter with him. I had heard of him through my parents and relatives from earliest childhood, and first met him in person when I was 5 years old at an historic Christmas meeting in Irvinestown at the time of his excommunication in 1928. During the five years he spent in the British Isles from 1928-33, I had often heard him preach in homes, halls, and in the open air. When visiting his native Fermanagh, he always stayed at the home of my uncle, John West, and so many were the occasions when I heard him preach there. I also recall while I was walking home from school one day, he came along on his bicycle, got off, and spoke to me for a few minutes. Then he got on and rode off again. I don't remember what he said, but I can still see his smiling, cheerful face which seemed to shine as he greeted me. This little gesture of his, dismounting to talk to me a rather lonely and unnoticed child – made me feel worth something after all. And to him I was indeed worth something even at that young age, for I was a soul he sought to bring to Christ.

He left the British Isles in 1933, and I did not see him again until 1940 when he was holding a mission in Ballinamallard, and I was home on holidays there from London. I attended this mission at which he made many converts, but I was not one of them. I was young, it was war time, and I was too much taken up with the things of this world. I do remember, however, when he tested the meeting, by asking those who were willing to say no to self and yes to Jesus to raise their hand, the power of his preaching was such that it was hard to resist.

I did not see Edward again until 1943. In August of that year my father, who was converted by him in 1912, died and Edward officiated at the funeral. He visited my mother again shortly afterwards, and on that occasion tried hard to convert me, but I remained unmoved. I can recall, however, two of the things he said to me at that time. One was: "If you are looking for people to love you, you'll always be disappointed." He exhorted to love rather than seek to be loved. The other was: "All earthly ambitions are bound ultimately to fail."

I met him again briefly in 1945 when the first conference of the United Nations was being held in San Francisco. This organization, formed by the victors of World War II in the hope of bringing about a lasting peace, did not impress Edward. On that occasion when he was on a visit to my mother, I remember him saying: "San Francisco is not the answer to the world's problems. There will be no peace until they accept the rule of the Prince of Peace." And in 1947 he wrote:

"Hope we shall discern the signs of the times. The nations are tumultuously assembling and imagine they can get peace by agreeing to agree to flesh and blood revelation, instead of accepting the light which shines from the life of him who was God manifest in the flesh, crucified through weakness, yet liveth by the power of God. This weakness of God is stronger than man. So let us follow Paul's example, and be willing to be weak in Christ; thus proving that not by might nor by power but by God's Spirit will the ruined temple of God be rebuilt." (15/3/47).

By 1949, I was proving some of Edward's statements to be true at least in part of my own life. For some earthly hopes had already been shattered and disillusionment with the worldly life had begun to set in. This caused me to look to things spiritual rather than

temporal for satisfaction. I began to go to church regularly (Church of England) though I was not a member. I heard many good things there which impressed me. Then in March 1950, my mother died. This was another shattering blow. In my distress I went to the Church of St. Martin's in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, in search of comfort and to be alone the day she died. I was sobbing bitterly in one of the pews in the empty church when the vicar came and spoke to me. Through my tears I told him what had happened. He knelt down and prayed with me. Then he said: "The Lord will not take away your sorrow, but he'll be with you in it." This I found very comforting. On the day of her funeral, I remember walking through Richmond Park, and the words that kept coming to mind were: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live." I began now to realize that life didn't end at the grave, and that my mother though absent in the body was still living in a better, happier world.

It was in this condition of heart and mind – a heart stricken by grief and a mind quickened to look for reality in spiritual rather than earthly things – that I met Edward once again. It was May 1950, and he had come to London to retrieve his meagre purse which had been taken from him by the authorities as he entered the United Kingdom coming from America. At this time there was a restriction on taking money in the form of bank notes out of the country. If found in possession of them while entering or leaving the United Kingdom, they were seized and placed in the Bank of England. As Edward carried all his worldly possessions with him, this small sum of money represented all he had. He was, of course, totally innocent of doing anything illegal, but the bundle of notes had, nonetheless, to be placed in the Bank of England until cleared. The authorities told Edward to reclaim it from the Bank when he got to London.

I was working in the Bank of England at the time, and when I heard from my sister, Lena, that Edward was coming to London to see about his confiscated money which was being held in the Bank, I arranged to meet him and take him to the appropriate office to claim it back. I worked in the Regent Street office at the time, and I planned for Edward to meet me there at lunch time. I can still see him sitting on a chair at the entrance waiting for me. He was now in his 84th year. He had a very pleasant manner, warm, friendly, courteous. I escorted him in a taxi to Threadneedle Street, the main office of the Bank of England, for which he was most appreciative. But reclaiming his meagre purse was the least of his concern; for Edward was at all times about his heavenly Father's business. Therefore, as soon as we entered the taxi, he wasted no time in small talk but began on the Word right away. He spoke of how Jesus desired to save mankind but that most rejected his offer. It was the same now as in the days of his flesh when he said:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not."

When we arrived at the office of the Bank of England which dealt with the matter in hand, all who encountered him there were fascinated by him. One lady remarked that he was the 'most magnificent character' she had ever met. The Bank returned his money without question. When they handed him back the bundle of notes, they asked him to count it to see if it was all there. But he said he didn't know how much was in it for he had never counted it. He was much more interested in witnessing for Christ than in getting back the money; and he didn't leave without doing so. He thus got an opportunity to preach the gospel in the Bank of England. He sowed along all waters and left it to God to give the increase. And the seed that he sowed in the Bank of England that day may have yielded fruit though he wasn't there at the harvest. It has often been said of him that no one who met this remarkable man was ever the same again, whether they rejected or received his message.

When I left him that afternoon, he gave me the name and address of the family he was staying with and asked me to come and visit him there. I did so the following Sunday morning. The house was in a working class neighbourhood in Battersea. It was probably one of the few homes in London that remained open to him, his fellow preachers having closed almost all doors to him when they excommunicated him in 1928, even though it was he who had won great numbers of the converts in London and established many of the house churches there.

I had expected there would be a morning meeting in this home where Edward was staying, but he didn't go through any formal kind of worship. He was more interested in spending what time he had in getting me converted, for he didn't know whether he would have another opportunity. He spoke to me of my birthright. He said: "Don't despise your birthright as Esau did, the right purchased for all by Christ to be born anew." He warned me not to exchange this for a 'mess of pottage,' which was all the world had to offer. I told him that I wasn't particularly interested in worldly things now, that I enjoyed going to church, hearing the beautiful singing, the prayers, and the soothing words of comfort in the sermons I heard. At this he quickly became aware that it was not so much from worldly pleasures he had to rescue me but rather from the snare of false religion. So he immediately retorted that the Church of England was a dead thing and that the clergy didn't follow Jesus, their system having no foundation in the New Testament. And if they didn't follow Jesus themselves, how could they point the way to anyone else, he added with undoubted logic.

I now began to find Edward and his message rather upsetting, though I didn't quite know why. I started to compare him in my mind with the vicar at St. Martin's and thought of how comforting the latter had been and how disturbing Edward was. I then told him about the vicar and how he had consoled me when my mother died. To this Edward gently but sternly replied: "The vicar didn't tell you that you needed to be born again." This was a statement, not a question. It was true. The vicar didn't, and Edward did. Was it this that had disturbed me? Was the vicar giving me a false peace? And was Edward the sentinel on the housetop disturbing that peace and warning me of the danger I was in? There was no doubt I was searching for truth at this time, blindly, haltingly, but I didn't know the way. Then suddenly this Elijah man crosses my path again, arrests me, and shows me the one and only direction that would lead to life. For, as one having authority and with the full assurance of the truth he spoke, he told me that Jesus was the Way and there was no other way. "Jesus says, 'I am the Way: and there is no other way:' said Edward.

But it wasn't his message alone that arrested me, for simple as it was I seemed somehow unable to grasp it. It was the presence of the man himself. There was something magnetic about him like a force that constrained one. I did not understand it at the time for I did not see at all clearly; but surely here was a burning and a shining light on whom the Holy Spirit was poured out in anointing power. This was the power that compelled one; for though he disturbed me, I felt I must see him again and hear more of what he had to say. In the hindsight I know now what the Lord meant when he said: "Go out into the highways and byways and compel them to come in that my house may be full." For this injunction was surely only given to those who had the power of the Holy Spirit. It had nothing to do with the forced conversions as practiced by the medieval church and later.

The name of the family with whom Edward was staying was I believe Clarke. Mrs. Clarke invited me to stay for lunch, and Edward was very pleased at this unexpected gesture. After lunch I had to get a bus back to Richmond, so he escorted me to the stop. We had quite a little walk, and so we chatted as we went along. He wasn't preaching to me now. He did not have to go into preliminaries with me, for I knew his background. I knew what he had given up for Christ's sake and the gospel's. I knew that for 50 years he had preached the gospel throughout the English-speaking world with no provision except from God; and that because he had chosen to obey God rather than man, he had been separated from his brethren who claimed to be God's people. Knowing all this, and knowing about the life of love and sacrifice he had led, I was struck by his humility. I asked him concerning his brethren who had excommunicated him. He showed no bitterness toward them, but simply said he had wanted them to continue on the path of discipleship which they had entered into in the beginning, but they had drifted from it. I told him that a friend who saw him at the Bank that day wished to meet him again. His face brightened; and encouraged at this news, he invited us to come to Mrs. Clarke's home one evening the following week.

On the appointed day, my friend, Barbara Leden, whose father was the agent for the Duke of Bedford's estate, and I duly arrived at Mrs. Clarke's home in Battersea. His companion, August Gustafson, had arrived from America in the meantime. Like Edward, he too had a noble and venerable appearance. He was about 6 years younger than Edward, was rather more aloof, and while friendly in a reserved and dignified way, lacked the latter's warm and winsome manner.

Edward introduced us to August, clearly proud that he had found two lambs he was bent on rescuing. He had just returned from spending the day in Bournemouth where he was visiting an aunt of mine, who was in a nursing home there. He hadn't had anything to eat all day until that evening when he returned to London. But despite the fact that he must have had a very exhausting day, he spent the evening exhorting Barbara and me and impressing upon us the necessity of being born again while he opened up the Scriptures to us. He told us that God's purpose for everyone of us was that we become like Jesus. He said that he and August were ambassadors for Christ, and that their role was to lead people to Him. "Once we link you to Christ," he said, "we stand aside, for you must not look to any man; you must look to Jesus only, for he is the only one who never sinned. He alone must be our goal." "And how does one become like Jesus," I queried, because such a goal for me was something clearly unattainable and impossible. Yet I knew I was in the presence of one who in his life manifested to a great extent the nature and attributes of Christ; for he not only preached Christ, he lived Christ. Surely, he could say, like Paul, "I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me."

In answer to my question on how to become like Jesus, he said: "If you make Jesus Lord, he'll come in and live his life through you, and you'll get a new nature – the divine nature. You will have new aspirations, new ambitions, new desires. But you'll still have your own old selfish, human nature as well. So you'll have to daily make the choice of saying no to self and yes to Jesus if you would gradually and progressively grow more like him. It's like entering into a pathway, the goal of which is Jesus. You just go step by step as the Lord leads, for light is progressive, as Scripture declares, "The path of the just is like the dawn that shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." You'll make many mistakes, but if you repent and confess your fault to him, God for Christ's sake will forgive you, and set you on your feet again.

We had expected him to give us a book of rules, a list of do's and don'ts, so we asked him what we should do. He replied, "Jesus will tell you what to do if you yield your heart to him." So there were no rules, no doctrines, no theology. He simply pointed to Jesus as the one to follow. And he said, "Remember, Jesus is much more anxious to receive you than you are to receive him." He told us that he and August would be sailing soon for America. And when we expressed our disappointment that they wouldn't be around longer, he said: "A preacher shouldn't stay around too long in case the converts come to depend on him instead of on Jesus for all they need." He exhorted Barbara and me to meet and talk together about the Scriptures.

What then was the mission of this ambassador for Christ? There was no system to join; there was no religious organization to become a member of; there were no fellowship meetings to go to in London at any rate. It wasn't that Edward didn't believe in the assembling of ourselves together even though he didn't believe in organized religion. But his brethren had excommunicated him and also all those who believed in him from fellowship. They did not recognize his converts. Since, however, his commission to make disciples had come from the Lord, no one could take that from him. So he continued in the work he was sent to do, conscious, as he said, "that he had not been excluded by the One who prunes the Vine."

Had there been something to join, a book of rules to follow, a religious hierarchy to think for one, how much easier it would have been, I thought. But Edward's commission was not to win souls to a system of any kind, but to Christ who says to his sent ones in all ages: "Go disciple all nations." And since he said: "Follow Me," Edward pointed to him as the only safe guide. In like manner, John the Baptist told his disciples: "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." So salvation did not depend on systems or doctrines. Nor did it depend on a program of conventions, missions, and fellowship meetings, nor on preachers whether they be priests or apostles. It depended rather on the surrender of the individual human heart to God who progressively reveals Christ to, in, and through those who obey him. This is the Rock on which Christ builds his church. Yet, one must ask, did it not take a preacher like

Edward who had forsaken an for Christ's sake and the gospel's to deliver such a message and thereby set free those captives who had an ear to hear.

I have since asked myself why it was that Edward at this point in time succeeded in converting me where he had apparently failed before. On looking back I can see now that the Holy Spirit had been brooding over me at various times in my life since childhood, but my heart was not sensitive enough to feel his convicting power in seeking to lead me to Christ until I went through an experience of grief and personal loss. The prophet, Joel, wrote, and he was quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." This would indicate that the Spirit would be poured out not only on those born of God but also on those not born of God, as Edward explained: "The Holy Spirit has been poured out on all flesh and is busy influencing those not born of God to feel their need of the divine nature. And so if we have God's anointing, we shall be prepared to meet those the Spirit has been dealing with." The Holy Spirit is therefore poured out in anointing power on the sons of God and in convicting power on the sons of men.

I have no doubt in my mind that Edward was a man anointed of God, and that he was ready and prepared to meet a struggling soul like me whom the Holy Spirit was convicting, and show me the path of discipleship which would lead to God, while at the same time the Devil was busy showing me another way than the way that Jesus lived and taught. I could no longer resist his message, for he left no holes in the net, so to speak. Since Jesus was the Way, there was no other way to go. As said the apostle: "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

About six months after this encounter with Edward, I left London and moved to my native Ulster where there was quite a congregation in fellowship with Edward. To their faithful lives I am also indebted for showing me the way of God more perfectly. There were among them tender and loving shepherds and shepherdesses who by the example of their Christ-like lives helped me, as a babe in Christ to grow. Two years later Edward returned from America (1953) and by total immersion he baptized me and some others in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Baptism had a deep and sacred meaning for him, which he impressed upon converts. Concerning this he wrote in one of his pastoral letters as follows:

"This last baptism has made me conscious of our need to eat and drink of the cup that Jesus drank of and to be baptized with the baptism he was baptized with. . . So we who have baptized you, and you who have been baptized have great responsibility to bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that those who look on us may see Christ's life shine out through us. Thus dying we shall show Christ's resurrection life to all who grope their way through sins dark night, held fast by Satan's thrall. Be this our aim though Satan wage increasing strife." (20/12/50).

It was thus that Edward Cooney set me on the path of discipleship which he insisted was a continuing process; for, as he pointed out, there is no standing still in being conformed to the image of God's Son.

CHAPTER 27

Faith in Action — New York 1951

In the 85th year of his life, Edward was contending for the faith in Florida when he felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to return to New York and preach there. As was his wont, he obeyed the Spirit's leadings although he and his companion, August Gustafson, did not know where they were going to stay when they arrived in New York, as there was no 'open home' in that city. But Walter Hammond had prepared a lodging for them in the Hotel Nevada. "So God," Edward wrote, "through Jesus Christ our Lord by the Holy Spirit, has again given evidence of his interest in us by his kindness to us."

Edward foresaw a possible opportunity of witnessing in New York as he did in London when he preached at Tower Hill where he made disciples one of whom was Fred Wood. Soon after their arrival in New York on this particular occasion, Edward and August received a phone call from a young man called Raymond with Indian blood in his veins, who identified himself as the radio preacher. He said he had heard of them and wished to meet them. Edward replied, 'Come over and see us.' He did so, and the upshot of this was that Raymond took them to Wall Street where they met a few people who listened with some interest to their message. They went back several times, and Edward wrote Fred Wood that it reminded him of Tower Hill, London, where they first met. He added: "You may know that Wall Street is the greatest money centre in the world." How strange a couple of homeless preachers, who had forsaken all for Christ's sake and the gospel's, must have appeared to the money kings of Wall Street!

Because it was his custom to preach in the open air in many of the large cities of the English-speaking world, Edward was often described as the 'Street Preacher,' but he also preached in churches when he got the opportunity. And although these were Christian churches, he referred to them as synagogues and to their congregations as synagogue people. But while he believed that all such religious organizations were unscriptural, he also believed that God had his people among them. He therefore felt it his duty to seek out such and deliver them from the bondage of sectarianism to the freedom that is in Christ. So during this mission to New York, as on others, this is what he did, for he writes:

"While in New York, I have been a good deal among synagogue people. And since we know our Master sought to help such, why should not we? If we could go amongst these people anointed with the Holy Spirit, though the enemy should come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord would lift up his standard against him. If we could go amongst them as Priscilla and Aquila went, we might find one like Apollos who might become as he became — a sent one of the Lord." (11/1/52).

As we have seen, although Edward and August arrived in New York having no certain dwelling place, God provided one and opened up opportunities for them to preach the gospel. But they had even further proof, during this mission, of God's interest in them. For among the different people who showed kindness to these two obscure, homeless preachers and some interest in their message was

none other than Dr. James Jackson Moore, Resident Physician at the famous and prestigious Waldorf Astoria Hotel, a suite of which was the New York home of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

Their meeting with Dr. Jackson Moore came about in a most remarkable way. It so happened that Edward had been his Sunday School teacher more than 60 years before at the Episcopal Church, Enniskillen. They had not seen each other since, nor had either of them any knowledge of the whereabouts of the other. Over the years, however, Dr. Jackson Moore kept up a correspondence with Millicent Trimble who sent him a copy of a recent book by Charles Duff, another of Enniskillen's distinguished sons. Dr. Jackson Moore was not, however, favourably impressed with this book, for he considered certain allusions in it inferior to decent standards. He therefore wrote Miss Trimble: "If you have nothing better to send me from Fermanagh, send me no more of that sort." She wrote back: "Has any good thing ever come out of Fermanagh.?" In answer to her challenge he sent her the following letter which she published in the *Impartial Reporter*, May 1951:

Dear Sir,

The 'whitest man' I have ever met, during all my life, whether in the jungles of West Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, or the glorious sunshine of the Brazilian Amazon region, or in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York, periodically I have refocused the man who taught small and often mischievous boys at the Episcopal Church, Enniskillen, decades ago. Although a careless, restless and not over attentive youngster, I often gazed on our teacher – a man of striking appearance, of the handsome and healthy type, who radiates warmth and vigour. He was neatly dressed – right down to the fingertips, as cleanliness is often said to be next to Godliness. The purity of the man was not on his well-groomed appearance, but in the divine spirit (grace) that dwelt within....it almost hypnotized me. In later years, I recognized that here is a human being who lives near to his Creator. I have not seen him since. His name is Edward Cooney. He is a Fermanagh gentleman.

JAMES JACKSON MOORE, M.D.

The Waldorf Astoria Hotel,
New York, 22
May 1st, 1951.

Some of Edward's friends in Ulster sent him a copy of this letter, and as a result he and Dr. Jackson Moore renewed their acquaintance. Such a eulogy would have made a less righteous man swell with pride; but Edward's response to it was characteristically humble. For he wrote his friends who sent him the copy thus:

"I was his Sunday School teacher between 60 and 70 years ago; and as I was at that time about 6 years old in Christ, I am glad that what God had wrought in me through Jesus by the Spirit was able to impress him then. Only by the grace of God I am what I am. So any appreciation of the treasure in the earthen vessel is glorifying to God through Christ by the Spirit." (1/11/51).

Dr. Jackson Moore invited Edward and August to dine with him at the Waldorf Astoria where they bore witness unto the truth. Edward wrote later that the medical receptionist and another assistant listened to their message with some interest. "But," he continued, "as far as Dr. Jackson is concerned, he is still interested in a sense; but being a 'big shot,' he is not yet willing to follow Him who became of no reputation." Dr. Jackson invited them back for lunch before they left New York and offered them his bungalow in Santa Lucia, British West Indies, to stay in, giving them a letter to his agent there to that effect. But while Edward appreciated the doctor's kindness and whatever interest he showed in his message, he was not satisfied with this. For he wanted nothing less than to win him for Christ. Thus he writes concerning him:

"I have written Dr. Jackson seeking to show him the necessity of being born again from above. But at present he has too much confidence in what he is naturally. And while he still calls me a prophet and a teacher, yet he seems to be like the hearers that came to hear Ezekiel of whom he writes in the 33rd chapter, verses 31-33 : 'And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for their heart is set on their gain.....'" (Ibid.)

It is noteworthy, however, that Dr. Jackson offered these two homeless preachers the use of his bungalow in Santa Lucia just at a time when, unknown to him, they had received a call from one of Edward's converts in Trinidad to come over and help him. Of this coincidence, Edward writes:

"It is remarkable that his (Dr. Jackson's) offer came about the time Ivan Simmons wrote of the interest he found people were showing in Trinidad, the chief island of the group. We think of going to Trinidad, and may later to Santa Lucia where the bungalow is." (Ibid.)

Ivan Simmons was a young architect whom Edward had met and converted in England shortly before. As a consequence of this, Simmons lost his sweetheart and voluntarily gave up his job in England designing churches and went to Trinidad to design a hospital. Edward was overjoyed to hear of the spiritual progress this young convert was making. So when he got a call to come and preach in another part of the United States, he replied:

"I would be glad to preach the gospel again with August amongst all you mention, but just at present we have a call to visit a dear young man, an architect, who had a degree from university and who gave up his job in England because he could not conscientiously devise the structure of places of worship which he did not believe in. He is now engaged in Trinidad as architect for a hospital. So we think of hearkening to his cry to come over and help him, as he has been able to interest some in the glad message and has been put out of at least one synagogue for giving a testimony regarding the faith once delivered to the saints." (3/11/51).

January 1952, Edward wrote from Michigan: "We are at present preparing to go south towards British West Indies to seek to be a help to Ivan Simmons in Trinidad." (11/1/52).

It was thus in this manner that this aged prophet, led by the Spirit and relying solely on the promises of God for all he needed, preached the gospel throughout the English-speaking world, making disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, establishing home assemblies wherever possible, i.e., wherever he found two or three agreed with God individually, and therefore with each other, to grow gradually and progressively more like Jesus. Then he moved on. Was this not also the manner in which Paul too, contended for the faith as he spread the gospel throughout the Roman world?

CHAPTER 28

Missionary Journeys and Encounters

California, Ulster, Australia & New Zealand — 1952-1954

1. California

By May, 1952, Edward was in San Francisco, California, where he stayed at the home of Jim Roberts who in his youth had been a convert of his. Since Edward was always about his heavenly Father's business he witnessed to all whom he met; and so he did not fail to do so to the friends and relatives who visited the Roberts home. But his message does not seem to have been well received, for he had a hostile reaction from most of them. He was not always the most tactful or diplomatic of Preachers. His abrasive manner at times, therefore, turned people off. During this sojourn in San Francisco, he also tried to witness in at least one church, or 'synagogue' as he called it; but he was met with strong opposition there too. It was apparently a Bible class and he went along hoping to get an opportunity to speak. In a letter written 12 May, 1952, he describes something of his experience there:

"I passed a synagogue last Sunday a.m. Had read of a Bible class at 10.00 a.m. and went in and sought an opportunity to speak. The third of Hebrews was the subject.

"I spoke to them of Christ being the same yesterday, to day, and forever, and that we are called to be his house (Hebrews 3: 6). I was told to speak to the passage referred to; and the very thing Paul wrote of they refused to consider. It was a dead, dark meeting – a systematizing of error. I felt troubled at not being able to weep over them. How much we need to have something of the spirit that Jesus had when he beheld the city and wept over it."

When Edward left San Francisco, he went to Los Angeles where he was not well received either. He was in fact shown such a hard spirit that he returned to the Roberts home in San Francisco. One morning when Jim Roberts got up he found him on the doorstep. He had arrived there early but did not ring the bell in case he disturbed them. Edward said to him: "How good it is to see your smiling face!" Jim was very happy to see him again; for although he had received him into his home, he felt guilty about not having been more supportive of him. At the time he was weak in the faith and was up against strong opposition from all around him for keeping Edward. He, himself, had no doubt that Edward was God's servant; and he considered his return a sign of God's mercy in giving him another chance to show the aged prophet more kindness and hospitality.

Edward was rejected and opposed by many because he disturbed people. He disturbed the self-righteous even more than he did the sinner. For the sinner often admitted that he was a true prophet and was willing to hear but not to do what he said. But the self-righteous, most of the time, sought to brand him as a malefactor and deceiver. He disturbed people for he offered no one a false peace. He had no flattering tongue, and always laid the axe at the root of the tree.

2. Ulster, 1953

Edward left California in January 1953 bound for the United Kingdom via Alabama where he remained until May. This time his ministry seems to have been mainly with the religious world. He made some converts among whom were a Methodist minister and his wife who expressed their desire to be baptized as continuing disciples of Jesus. "We are greatly rejoicing over Eldridge and his wife," he wrote, "and hope they may become a Priscilla and Aquila." And of himself he wrote at this time: "I feel my need to have my feet shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace."

He arrived in the United Kingdom in May 1953. During this sojourn he spent much of his time in Ulster where he worked missions in Belfast and Fermanagh. I was living in Belfast at the time, and so I attended many of these meetings which were held in the home of Fred and Sadie Wood 37 Botanic Avenue, Belfast. Those in Fermanagh were held at the home of my aunt, Mrs. Sara West, widow of John West, Rossahilly, Enniskillen.

Edward was now in his 87th year; and although he still preached in the open air as well as in homes, he was no longer seen riding his bicycle round the highways and byways of Ulster as in former years. Following are some of the scattered notes which I scribbled down and pieced together from Edward's talks during these meetings. I have grouped them under headings I thought appropriate to the subject matter.

Of Jesus: "Christ by his Father's power created all. All things came into being through him. To be like God means to be like Jesus. We have Rock in Jesus. His Rock was God. Jesus was the Christ, not a Christ, the Son of the living God. As the Son of God he was God. Jesus never acted apart from his Father, never sinned. No one can know the Son of God except through the Father, that is by revelation."

Of Salvation: "God, who is the author of our being, wants all the human family to become partakers of his divine nature so that they will live forever. God knew when he created man that the human family might depart from him because he gave them free will – an attribute of his own. Man was intended to use his free will to obey God. To say 'yes' to God means salvation: to say 'no', means perdition. But God said, if the human family say 'no', I'll give them salvation anyway. Man did say 'no' and so was worthy of eternal death. But there was a way out, i.e., God willing to take the punishment man deserved. God could then forgive man, so that Jesus

could rise again in everyone and live through them, thereby saving them from the penalty of their sins and from the power of their sins. His death saves us from the penalty of sin. His life saves us from the power of sin. We are reconciled to God by the death of his Son; and we are saved by his life, as many as become his own. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. The blood of Jesus speaks of cleansing and forgiveness. We are his by right – by creation and redemption. But we must become his by choice. The Lord bought us with his blood, so let us give him back what belongs to him. Give the tent to God. Let God, who gave me this body, live in this body.

"People who are willing to have their bodies as tents for God to live in have the keys of the kingdom. The keys of the kingdom are: Christ revealed to you, born in you, living through you. If you make him Lord, he'll come in and live his life through you. If you make him Lord, he'll become your Saviour. Say no to self and yes to Jesus and you'll do the will of God. We should all be agreed with God to become more like Jesus. We should all be agreed with God to become branches in the Vine, and so get the sap and nature of Christ. If you receive his nature you'll be treated like him. Love Jesus by doing what he says. Eat his flesh means live like him. We can't be sinless but we can be blameless, walking in all the light that God gives us. The only water that will quench the thirst of your heart is the water that Jesus will give you. Believe in a person (Jesus) not a doctrine.

"I, Edward, have talks with you to send you to Jesus. Closing the door on this life and opening it on another. This life is fleeting, perishing, transitory. There is pleasure in sin but no joy in it, for joy cometh from the Lord. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

"Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous."

Of Revelation: Revelation in the Old Testament and revelation in the New Testament are similar in that they both come from God. The Old was written on tables of stone; the New on the tables of the heart. There was nothing on the stone when God wrote on it. So don't go to God with a heart full of your own ideas. Go to God with a blank heart and unquestionably receive what he tells you. What God reveals is always the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Of the True Preacher: The true preacher is not one who talks about God but one whom God speaks through. Most use his name but do not walk his way. There is only one way to go to preach, and that is: the way Jesus went – with no provision except from God. All that glorifies God is right. Man is only the instrument. There are different colors in our personality like the different colors in the rainbow. God is the only source.

I invited a Methodist friend of mine, a religious young woman called Daisy, to come to Edward's mission at 37 Botanic Avenue. Daisy had met the Woods previously and visited in their home. Fred had explain (sic) to her our basic beliefs. And while she was not a mind to throw in her lot with people who practiced a stricter form of Christianity than her own, she admired Fred greatly and thought he was a most godly man. She told me that when she was in his company, she felt the 'presence', i.e., the presence of Christ. But while Fred laid the axe at the root of the tree, his approach was gentle. It was a different story with Edward, however, who greatly upset her. She professed to be a born again Christian and was very satisfied with her church. She wanted to be a 'good' Christian, but did not want the reproach that comes from associating with those in fellowship with a humble, homeless preacher like Edward. She found the Methodist clergy much more to her liking.

But Edward would not allow her to enjoy her 'false' peace. He made a frontal attack by telling her that her religion was false. He asked her what reply she would have when Jesus at the last Judgment would say:

"I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink. I was a stranger and ye took me not in. Naked and ye clothed me not. Sick and in prison and ye visited me not."

Edward didn't even give her a chance to answer. He answered for her. He said: "You will say, 'O! I didn't know any preachers like that! And preachers weren't poor and homeless; they had a home and a salary. Jesus will say: 'But my preachers were poor and homeless'." He also told her that anyone who took money for preaching the gospel was a harlot. He said the true bride does all for love. The harlot has to be paid for it. It is the same in the spiritual realm as it is in the natural. Daisy was speechless. She was about to burst into tears, but she controlled herself. She told me afterwards that she found Edward very rough. She also said that she enjoyed her own church (Methodist) much more than she did his meetings, and that she had no inclination to see him again. However, she could not get him out of her head entirely, even though she was not willing for the straight gate and the narrow way that he set before her. So when she heard he had gone to Australia (and was safely out of the way), she sent him a card, in reply to which he sent her the following message via the Woods:

"Tell Daisy, Paddy's friend, I believe I got her card all right. I'm sorry I did not see herself. What a difference in the case of Mary in the house of Simon, the leper, (Mark 14: 3) when she came to meet Jesus and poured £15 worth of pure nard perfume upon his head; that perfect preacher who was dying because he spoke and bore witness unto the truth, whose mind was the mind of God whose Son and sent one he was, and who said to Pilate: 'To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world that I might bear witness unto the Truth.' The truth in him as a preacher was to be baptized by John, the sent one of the Father, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, then driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He had emptied himself taking the nature of a servant and as a servant carpenter, he was the matured servant. And as he dwelt in Capernaum, then the people who sat in darkness saw a great light. From that day Jesus began to preach: 'Repent, the reign of heaven is near.' Then he called Peter and his brother Andrew and said to them: 'Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.- Dear Fred, if Daisy comes back to the meeting at 37, tell her from me that Jesus desires her to associate with this sort of Preacher; and thanking her for her card, tell her that Jesus wants herself. And ask her to read Luke 8: 2-3 and take the stand those women took who went with Jesus and the Twelve." (29/4/54)

3. Australia and New Zealand, 1954

In February, 1954, when he was 87 years old he set sail on board the Orantes, accompanied by Richard Greenaway and Mrs. Elliott, for Australia in response to a call he received from there. For there was great trouble in the Testimony in Australia at this time. On the voyage he witnessed to a number of people, including a young Indian of whom he wrote:

"I met a nice young Indian like Gandhi and had a short talk with him. He said he would not dare to emulate Gandhi but admired his life. I replied that Jesus was better than Gandhi, and said to the people and his disciples, 'deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Me.'" (15/2/54)

He mentions in the same letter having witnessed to two Spanish priests, the ship's Church of England chaplain, a nice French couple, a man who shared his cabin, and a woman who shared his table. Only the latter seems to have expressed interest in seeing him again and in attending his meetings although some of the others showed a certain amount of interest. The Spanish priests it seems did not want others to hear him witness against them, and the Church of England chaplain wanted to get away from him. Edward was not, however, dismayed or discouraged when he thought of Jesus, and so he writes:

"Many went back and walked no more with Jesus when he spoke of eating his flesh and drinking his blood. So it is today. But afterwards some may have been reached at Pentecost. So if we keep sowing living seed and grow not weary in well doing, in due season we shall reap if we faint not." (Ibid.)

On arrival in Adelaide, Edward and his helper, Richard Greenaway along with Mrs. Elliott, proceeded to Fulham, South Australia, to the home of Murray Sharpe. He and his brother, Bruce, and their wives had been excommunicated by the Testimony. Edward reported that the Sharpe families had been very kind to them. Concerning his experience there he writes:

"We are having an exceptional opportunity of defending and confirming the gospel in these parts, and find God's children who were cast out for His sake and Christ's sake eager to hear the truth as it is in Jesus. We had about 50 in Murray's home the first Sunday after landing, and on request, another union meeting in a shed on his tomato farm with a larger number present. The meeting was from 2.30-5.30, as we do at Rossahilly. Mrs. Elliott and I sought to help and we found the hearers responsive. And from house to house, as invited, we have not ceased to teach and preach Jesus." (18/3/54).

By June, 1954, Edward was staying at the home of Tom Perry in Merbein, Victoria, where Richard Greenaway had preceded him some time before. From there he writes:

"We are seeking to be some help to the few in the part where we are at present. And the faithfulness of the few who seem to have set their faces like flint to go on all the way (as Adam Hutchinson writes in his hymn), cheers us. Three met with us on the banks of the Murray River, and we believe they will go on. A dear brother, Jack Schmidt, in very poor health, showed good heart; and when he met William Hughes he told him that he did not believe in the apostolic sister preachers being sent out in the name of Jesus Two by Two and quoting Luke 9: 10 as their authority to thus go." (30/6/54)

We next find him in New South Wales from where he writes:

"We are seeing signs of increased confusion amongst those who fail to build on the Rock of revelation from the Father to their individual hearts, of the Christ the Son of the Living God. There is however a drawing together of those who fear the Lord and speak often one to another as opportunity offers." (2/9/54)

He is encouraged by letters from Charles Woodard in Queensland, with whom he has been corresponding for years and who was excommunicated because he refused to strike Edward off his mailing list.

By September, 1954, he is on his way to the home of Mrs. Rogers, Mount Albert, Auckland, New Zealand. His intention is to sail the following November from Melbourne to Capetown to visit Joe Kerr and Archie Russell. This, however, he did not do, but went directly from Australia to the western United States where he landed sometime in the spring of 1955. He joined August in Tacoma, Washington, where they ministered to some Testimony people. By April he and August are in Mission Beach, San Diego, California. August seems to have reached southern California before him. He commends August's ministry there. Much of his time during his missionary journeys in Australia and New Zealand and also in the western part of the United States seems to have been spent with Testimony outcasts of recent years.

CHAPTER 29

Rendezvous with Edward — Recent Outcasts in California —1955

In May 1955, Edward had already joined his companion, August Gustafson, in southern California at the home of a young couple called Arvig who had recently been excommunicated by the Testimony. They were of Scandinavian origin as was August though they were both born in the United States. August had been staying with them for sometime before Edward arrived, and apparently they found him much to their liking. August was very smooth; he did not disturb or ruffle people as Edward did, and it wasn't long before Edward had rubbed the Arvigs up the wrong way.

I was living in San Francisco at the time. On the Fourth of July weekend, through a request from August, Mrs. Arvig invited me to visit them at their home in Asuza. By this time Edward and August had left Arvigs and had gone to stay with Judge Cormac at Redlands, not many miles away. On the Sunday the Arvigs and I went to visit them there. The Cormacs were away for the day but left food and everything in readiness for the two preachers to entertain their guests. They had a lovely house and garden, and the weather was perfect. When we arrived that Sunday morning, Edward and August greeted us all very warmly and showed us into the garden where we spent the day. It promised to be a very enjoyable day for the surroundings and circumstances seemed so agreeable. Almost from the start, however, there was a strained atmosphere. I sensed a spirit of hostility manifested towards Edward. It seems that Mrs. Arvig

thought he undermined August as he would not admit that August had 'blazed the trail' in southern California. Mrs. Arvig maintained he had because of the help he had been to the outcasts there. This conflict degenerated into a futile argument which brought out a certain amount of rivalry between Edward and August. The atmosphere thus generated prevented the Holy Spirit from uniting us in fellowship, which seemed to me to have been a lost opportunity. But things do not always happen the way we think they should which may be all for the best.

Edward may have been guilty to some extent of a 'who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven' spirit, a spirit which whenever it manifested itself he roundly condemned both in himself and in his fellow preachers. He believed that none of them were above this weakness and therefore needed to be converted from it daily if they ever hoped to enter the kingdom of heaven. Mrs. Arvig was evidently disappointed that Edward should show this weakness. But she seemed unwilling to admit a similar weakness in August whose quieter manner and calmer disposition prevented him from speaking so forthrightly as did Edward.

However, if at times Edward appeared to some to speak rashly and tactlessly, he never did so with the intent to hurt or humiliate one. His only aim was to bring people to a knowledge of the truth. And if the methods he used were not always the most diplomatic, it was at all times in a spirit of love that he sought to rescue people from every false way. He was therefore misunderstood by many. I felt he was misunderstood on this occasion too and I said so. Likewise, I may have understood Mrs. Arvig when I thought she showed Edward a hostile spirit. For afterwards she asserted that the way she treated him that day was not backed by an unloving spirit. Edward, she said, had shown plainly that he did not hold it against her, but remarked that the day had done him good as well. He was willing to share the blame, to forgive, and ask forgiveness. This humility made Mrs. Arvig realize that he was indeed a true servant of God despite the weaknesses she accused him of. Her experience in the Testimony had taught her to be mistrustful of the leadership of all men. In a letter to the author she stated that if she and her husband had not dared to question their 'counsellors', they would still have been sitting in the land of famine. That was why they had to freely question all who henceforth came to them. She pointed out that, unlike the Testimony workers, August and Edward did not take offense when she and her husband rebuked them. Instead they kept contacting them either by letter or in person, taking great pains to explain all matters, and also to confess their own possible shortcomings. Such love and understanding had won them a place in their hearts. She ends her letter with these words:

"August and Edward left recently for Tuscaloosa, Alabama . . . We miss them greatly but still rejoice to see them able to go to other fields. We pray that we may bring them fruit for their labours." (2/8/55)

That Edward acknowledged he was guilty of a 'who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven' spirit is expressed in the following excerpt from a letter written to the author shortly after he reached Alabama, 2/8/55. He states:

"Since you left, things have gone to show that your perception as a babe in Christ was right. And as the time draws near for us (i.e. August and myself) to part forever, we find ourselves more one than we have ever been. It would only by hypocrisy for us to say we are better than the Twelve sent ones of the Lord. And if they had a discussion as to which of them was the greatest shortly before Christ's death, I at all events admit I am much worse than they were; and I think August would agree he has not advanced as yet beyond them."

Thus through repentance, confession, forgiveness and humility, peace was restored and a divisive spirit overcome. A day, therefore, which seemed to end in defeat was finally one of victory.

CHAPTER 30

Edward among the Down-and-Outs in Birmingham, Alabama

In 1955, accompanied by August, Edward made his final visit to Alabama. This was almost two decades from the time he had first encountered Fred White, a drunkard, whom he unflinchingly tried to rescue, either by direct contact or through others. He first met White in 1938, through Will Vance, an attorney who afterwards became a judge, whom Edward had helped to overcome alcoholism. Vance felt that Edward could also help White who was suffering from the same problem which frequently landed him in the city jail. At Vance's request, Edward went to White's home to see if he could help him; but when he arrived there White was out. His mother was home, however, but her appearance and behaviour were such that Edward had to point out to her that she was setting a poor example to her son.

White arrived back before Edward left and was intrigued to know why he wanted to help him. When he heard Edward's testimony, he didn't believe that it could possibly be true. So he asked him what he was getting out of it, to which Edward replied, 'the privilege of helping my fellow men.' White was still suspicious, however, and decided to investigate Edward by checking in the Criminal Records Office. Unable to find anything against him. White was extremely impressed though still somewhat bewildered. How could it be, he reasoned, that anyone could care so much for his fellow men as to forsake all worldly possessions and prospects to go and preach the gospel relying solely on the promises of God for all his needs? The evidence was before his eyes, however, and this alone caused White to improve his behaviour for a time. But afterwards he reverted to his old habits and landed in jail once again. Aware of the impact that Edward had previously made on her son, White's mother requested the evangelist to come to his rescue once more.

It was on this occasion that Edward went before the Parole Board to see if he could get White released. He succeeded, and took him to the home of one of his converts, Hosmer Durham, to whom he later wrote: "I, though poor, had a haven to take Fred White to where the love of Jesus was shown him." And commending Durham for taking in the convict, he further stated:

"We must not despise the righteousness of the 'scribes and pharisees' who take drunks to hospitals and help them get sober ... This is a step in the right direction, for a sober man can be disciplined better than a drunk. But Christ's righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the 'scribes and pharisees.' You took Fred into your home, and that is the righteousness of Christ." (29/12/47)

Because of his success in helping White, the Board subsequently released other prisoners to him as well, and provided him with accommodation to take care of them in a sort of halfway house which Edward called 'Snug Harbor.' Here, in an upstairs room on South 20th Street, he undertook to rehabilitate, over a period of months, some hundred or so down-and-outs, convicts and drunks for the most part. And so, armed with a letter from the Parole Board, he obtained free of charge the services of the Gas Company, the Electric Company, and the Water Company. Others supplied food and furniture. Dr. Henry Edmonds, a Presbyterian Minister and member of the Parole Board, recalled how Edward went to one of the biggest merchants in the city and asked for 36 pairs of sheets and pillow cases. "The merchant hesitated," wrote Edmonds, "and Edward, as he insisted we call him, said: 'Offer is withdrawn; God loveth a cheerful giver.' The merchant later sent for him and gave him what he wanted." Apparently he had some success in rehabilitating at least some of these people, for on the basis of those 'cured' more were released to him. And as we have seen, he had some hundred persons in his charge over a period of months.

Finally he told the Parole Board that since he was called to preach the gospel, he must therefore be on his way. They tried to persuade him to stay, but he said he had undertaken this task of rehabilitation in order to show them how it should be done. "Now I have shown you," he said, "so you must get on with it." Edward believed that the best way, perhaps even the only way, to rehabilitate criminals, including murderers, was to put them in the charge of people who were born again. These, ideally, would manifest something of the love of Christ in their lives, which might lead the sinners to repent. It was regeneration not reformation that Edward sought to bring about in the lives of these jail birds and drunks. And he knew that this was not possible without, on their part, repentance towards God, which is the first step on the road to newness of life.

Edward left for the United Kingdom in 1939 at the outbreak of the Second World War, and remained there for the duration. But as soon as the war was over, he started to make plans to return to America at the urgent request of some of his converts in Alabama. He was now in his 80th year. He had not, nor did he wish to have, the protection or support of any religious organization. For, believing as he did in progressive revelation, he concluded that all organized religion was, by its very nature, the systematizing of error. It was not easy for anyone to get a visa to enter or re-enter the United States for an extended period at this time, much less an 80-year-old homeless preacher without visible means of support. But strong in faith, Edward believed that if God wanted him to return to America, he would provide a way. For, during the life of faith which he had led over almost half a century, he had proven over and over again that the promises of God were sure. He never doubted for a moment his commission as a sent one of Christ though the religious world, by and large, was a mountain of opposition against him, particularly those preachers and their supporters, who had excommunicated him from fellowship and whom he continued to refer to as 'our dear brethren.'

While he was in Alabama before the war, his unselfish devotion to raising the 'fallen' had commended him to some of the prominent citizens of Birmingham. For this reason, men like Dr. Henry Edmonds, Dr. H. A. Elkourie, and W. H. Magowan, Attorney at Law, considered Edward to be an asset to their community, and they often used their influence with the Immigration authorities to secure him an extension of his visa when the occasion arose. So, after the war when Edward expressed a desire to return to the United States, they were ready and willing to befriend him once again. Thus by 1947, he was back in Alabama from where he wrote:

"W. H. Magowan prepared the legal papers to facilitate my coming here and would take no fee. He says he desires me to meet a man who is overcome through drink and whom he thinks I can help."

Dr. Henry Edmonds whom Edward first met at the Parole Board before the war was to write of him that he was the most remarkable man he had ever met. Edward had challenged him to renounce all, take up his cross, and follow Jesus. As Edmonds said: "He dared me to forsake all and come to the slums with him," which Edmonds did not do. However, when Edward returned to Alabama in 1947, Edmonds phoned to say he was coming to see him. "But," wrote Edward, "I fear he loves the esteem he is held in too much to lose his reputation and know the reproach of Christ."

Although Edward was most appreciative of the kindness and help these prominent people showed him, he believed that they too needed to be born anew. They were very fine human beings, no doubt, but he wasn't satisfied with anything less than that they also should become partakers of the divine nature. Thus his goal for them was the same as for the down-and-outs in the slums, but he did not despair when he saw no immediate or impressive results for his labours. For he believed that the hidden heaven was working in the measure of meal and that the grain-of-mustard seed kingdom was taking place unseen below the ground. And while some of these people may not yet have been born anew, Edward believed that the Holy Spirit was influencing them to feel their need of the divine nature. He felt also his own need and responsibility of having the anointing power of the Holy Spirit so as to be able to lead such as these to yield unconditionally to Christ. One such person, whom Edward believed the Holy Spirit was dealing with, was undoubtedly Dr. H. A. Elkourie, for in 1948 Edward wrote his friend and convert, Hosmer Durham, thus:

"Some time when things are suitable and the Lord leads, phone Dr. Elkourie and ask him to come and help you with the few who meet with you. If he comes and shows the same spirit he showed at the meeting at Inez's he might get to see what it means to be born anew. I don't think he understands that yet." (6/3/49)

Edward was always on the move, for like his Master he had no certain dwelling place. He laboured in a place for as long as he felt the Lord needed him there; but as soon as the leadings of the Spirit showed him to go somewhere else, he moved on. To subject him, therefore, to any kind of organization would have been impossible. As he so often used to say: It would be as difficult to organize one led by the Spirit as to control the wind. He was back in Alabama in 1949 and again in 1953.

When he made his final visit to Alabama in 1955, he was still showing concern for Fred White whom he apparently had not succeeded in winning for Christ, and yet who seems to have shown some signs of progress, for in 1956, W. H. Magowan wrote Edward:

"Your determination to do something for Fred White is wonderful and is stimulating to me. And while you probably haven't won him over, I am sure you have helped him a great deal. I think of you often. It is my wish that at this time you are in good health and that you can continue with your wonderful work for many years to come."

Edward was now in his 90th year. Apparently he kept Magowan apprised of White's progress or lack of it, and at this point in time the report does not seem to have been a favourable one, at least not by Edward's standards, for he wrote Hosmer Durham:

"You may see Magowan from time to time and report to him about Fred White if there's anything to report. But from what Inez wrote of him, he seems to be rebellious and stubborn; and until he repents from his heart, no hope."

Without this change of heart, this turning from self and sin and turning to God, Edward knew there could be no permanent cure for White or any other delinquent.

CHAPTER 31

Edward's Last Years in America — August 1955 – July 1957

We can deduce from his letters what was mainly on his mind during this period. First, his awareness that his course was nearly run; second, his concern for the flock he would leave behind; and third, his desire to return to end his days in the place where he started – his native Ulster. There is a sense of urgency in his wanting to visit as many individuals and assemblies as possible, since he knew it would be the last time he would see them. Thus he spent these final years, August 1955 until July 1957, in America exhorting the faithful in Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan and New York. In a letter to Mrs. Elliott, written 4 August, 1955, he states: "August and I crossed from California to Alabama near 2000 miles, as I had a desire to see the few here e'er I return to where I started from." In Alabama, he was concerned about their worldliness. For although he found them loving and glad to see August and himself, he was disappointed to find that there was a television in the home where they were staying. Of this he writes:

"There is a television in this home we are staying in. I don't like it. It seems to me that television is worldly vision; and coming into a Godly home brings worldly faces, costumes, and levity which jars on the human love of the home. I could not think of Jesus using television to spread the knowledge of himself. Paul did not get television; he got heavenly vision. I may get into trouble for believing and saying this; but Jesus and his sent ones dealt in realities. The thief on the cross got heavenly vision in the only way it can be got." (Ibid.)

He also seems to be feeling the loneliness of godliness at this time, but realizes this was also the experience of Jesus and Paul as the close of their earthly journey drew near. And he has a desire to become more and more like Jesus as his own end approaches for he continues:

"Dear Ellen, you have been a help and comfort to me, and I may see you in the old country before I depart if God spares me and it is his will. For I would like to finish as I began only more so. So pray that if this is God's will it may be accomplished, and that I may, like Jesus and Paul, have a few with me at the end. August joins in loving greetings to all. May we both be a sweet savour of Christ, and more and more so, as our end draws near."

In 1956, August was in Sweden and Edward was alone in the United States. Again his letters express his desire to return to where he started from, his awareness that his end is near, and his concern for the flock. At all events he seems to realize that this is the last time he will be in America. He is concerned about trouble among his converts and is seeking to help those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. For in another letter to Mrs. Elliott he apologizes for not having written to his sister-in-law in England, and explains the reason why:

"I have delayed through trouble arising amongst some whom I recently baptized – a case of smite the shepherd and the flock will be scattered. So I am at present seeking to help some who value whatever of God they recognize in me as a sent bondsman of Jesus, my Master, and theirs for his sake." (28/11/56)

He further states:

"I am on my way to New York, calling on assemblies en route to give the final exhortation on the eve of finishing my course. If I am spared till February 11th, I shall be 90 years old; so I may die on the way. Have written to August who is at present in Sweden to try and meet me in Ireland whence I started forth from and where I would like to finish if such be God's will." (Ibid.)

And again he expresses his concern for the flock thus:

"Paul wrote that at the finish he had no man like-minded who would naturally care for the state of the little flock except Timothy and Titus and a few others. I am getting toward that time, so hope his experience will encourage."

In July 1957, Edward now in his 91st year left America for the last time and proceeded to Ireland where he had hoped to end his days.

CHAPTER 32

Homecoming — 1957-1959

Ulster was a place where Edward had many friends and more fellowship and support than anywhere else in the world. Even before he died he had almost become a legend in his home town, Enniskillen, where many believed in him although they were not willing to follow his teaching and example. He was anti-clerical to the last, denouncing both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in the open air. Yet many of them believed in him, Catholic and Protestant, clergy and laity, some of them even regarding him as a prophet and a saint.

For him there was no such thing as the Catholic faith and the Protestant faith. There was only one faith, the faith once delivered to the saints. This is what he contended for and what he gave his life for. What then is the faith? It is believing 'into' Jesus. He likened it onto a pathway into which those who profess to become continuing disciples enter, the goal or object of their journey being Jesus. By denying self and obeying the progressive revelation of the Christ from the Father by the Spirit to his own heart, the disciple keeps moving toward this goal becoming as he does so gradually more like Jesus; for, as Edward pointed out: "There is no standing still in becoming conformed to the image of God's Son.

While he was still able to ride his bicycle, he thought nothing of cycling from Belfast to Enniskillen. The last time people can remember seeing him ride his bicycle along the highways and byways of Ulster with his long flowing beard, would have been about 1947 when he was more than 80 years old. On one occasion when he was cycling from Belfast to Enniskillen about this point in time, he made a detour round by Swanlinbar where he had preached in the open air some 50 years before with John West and Tom Betty. At that time they were pelted with rotten eggs and stones, and the parish priest came out with a stick to beat away any of his flock who were listening. But on this last occasion when Edward preached again in the same place, none protested. He had a sympathetic, attentive audience; and when it began to rain people came and held an umbrella over him. Thus the so-called sinners, the outsiders, the 'uncircumcised,' so to speak, seemed to have been attracted by the power of the divine nature in this unusual man. But his 'brethren' in the Testimony never softened to him. He had, however, a great deal of love, sympathy, and understanding from those in fellowship with him. As I observed this, I wondered if they realized how much opposition and rejection he suffered as he carried the gospel, often alone, to many parts of the English speaking world.

At all events, now in his 91st year, he felt sure he was going to end his days among friends – those he felt he had the closest and deepest fellowship with – in his native Ulster. But it was not to be so. Edward had held a belief for many years, which he did not preach for he thought people weren't ready for it. But he felt compelled to do so before he died, and time he knew for him was getting short. Briefly, this belief was that God's mercy didn't end at the grave, "His mercy endureth forever," and that there still would be an opportunity for repentance even after the death of the body. This caused a great deal of disturbance in the fellowship, and some of his staunchest supporters turned against him. Some held an open mind about it, neither accepting it nor rejecting it. But the majority accepted it, often, I'm afraid, without giving it much thought. Of those who were down right opposed to it, some left the fellowship and returned to the Testimony, while others remained within the fellowship but were in such strong disagreement with this belief that it more or less caused a division among the outcasts.

For Edward's last year in Ulster then, there was nothing but conflict, contention, schism, and confusion within the fellowship of outcasts. Things got to such a pitch that he felt he could stand it no longer, so in his 93rd year he decided to leave Ulster, where he had hoped to die in peace, and go to Australia. He was in very poor health at the time and was by no means physically able to undertake such a journey. His good friends, the Woods, who supported him to the end, went with him as far as England from where he sailed for Australia, accompanied by George Greenaway and his mother, Mrs. Lizzie Greenaway, on board the Orsova [Orontes], March 1959.

CHAPTER 33

The Last Journey and Final Struggle — March 1959 – June 1960

George Greenaway, who accompanied Edward at this time, gave the author the following account of that last journey, their reception in America and their sojourn there during Edward's final year on earth:

"Edward wasn't well, mainly from general bodily weakness. Unfortunately there wasn't a lift on the Orsova, which meant that he spent most of the time in his cabin, except when he went up to the dining room for dinner and tea. This meant getting him dressed and up the stairs, which was hard as he leaned so heavily having no strength in his legs. Occasionally some kind person was drawn to him and offered to help. At breakfast time he stayed in his cabin, and the steward with whom he made friends brought him fruit and porridge. The steward was from the south of Ireland and didn't show himself very friendly at first. He softened, however, when Edward gave him some of the 'mammon of unrighteousness.' Or it may have been that he really did see something unusual in this remarkable man.

"One day, Edward, arrived on deck with his cabin steward. He looked quite happy and may be a little defiant as he loved to challenge the difficulties. He lost no time getting into his gospel stride. Quite a number of people there showed interest by listening and asking questions which we tried to answer. It was then that Edward launched into that wonderful story of a woman of Samaria from the 4th chapter of John. This was one of his favourites. One of the women present listened very attentively and seemed to love what she heard. When he had finished, people asked more questions. This greatly delighted us as it opened up opportunities for us to sow the seed when we met some of these people later.

"On another occasion he was up in the writing room and found he had forgotten his pen. So he borrowed one from a priest who left the writing room before Edward had finished. But he made a point of contacting the priest again to return the pen and give him his testimony. The priest was intending to visit Rome, so Edward said to him: "Tell the Pope that if he gets converted, I'll take him round the world with me."

Arrival in Perth: "It was good to arrive in Perth where Robin (Dane) Eddy, and her daughter met us. They greeted us so warmly and, in a spirit of true friendship and hospitality, wanted to take us to their home for a meal. Unfortunately there wasn't sufficient time. Edward was too weak and too frail to come up on deck, so Robin went down to see him in his cabin. She has never forgotten the love he showed her as he threw his arms around her and hugged her. Edward did not have to preach a sermon to Robin, for it was the love of

God shed abroad in his heart that touched her. She, no doubt, brought joy and encouragement to his heart too, for he was at this time going through his Gethsemane of rejection and would still have more to face before his race was run. He was aware that love was growing cold, for he makes mention of this in a letter he wrote on board ship. So Robin's loving greeting during that brief encounter brought comfort to his heart and encouragement on this last lap of his earthly journey."

Arrival in Adelaide: "Our next stop was Adelaide where we were met by Murray Sharpe and Lance Ashman. This was my first time in Australia and my first meeting with these men. Edward had, however, met them on a previous trip to Australia in 1954 when they received him gladly. It was, in fact, Murray's father who helped Edward financially at that time. But now there was some reservation in the welcome. I don't want to give the impression that Murray and his wife, Vy, were unkind. They were very kind, but there is a limit to human love – that love that is not of the all-embracing kind – and Edward was very ill at their home. He was suffering physically and seemed to moan so much as if he were groaning in his spirit. Then too, always loyal to his calling, he fought for what God had revealed to him. So when he preached that God's mercy endureth forever, even after death, he suffered at the hands of those who did not or could not accept it. But Edward knew that as he progressed toward the goal, he would have fewer and fewer walking with him. He expected this. He used the symbol of the bull's eye or centre of a target to illustrate what it cost to reach the goal. The centre of the target represented Jesus. As you get closer to the centre where he is, you have to cross all the larger outer rings of people and suffer the loneliness of godliness. He expected this individual loneliness. But what he lost in reputation he gained in power and likeness to his Master. He used to say he wasn't afraid to die. Certainly the path that Jesus trod is not one for self-savers. And certainly only through death comes resurrection. Paul, who said, 'I die daily,' knew this."

Arrival in Mildura: 'No Room at the Inn': "I believe it was according to God's plan that Edward and I left Adelaide and joined Mother, Maureen Donnelly, Richard and Emily (my brother and sister-in-law) in Mildura. Lance Ashman kindly drove us down and loaned us his caravan. Richard was building a house, but when we arrived it was not yet completed. The reason for this unpreparedness was as follows: Richard and Emily had been staying at the home of a man called Jack Schmidt, an outcast and good friend of Edward's on his previous visit in 1954. Emily and Richard had promised to look after Jack until his death; and Jack having a large accommodation, which had been convention ground, it was arranged we would all go there. Richard could then finish his house as time permitted. But this was not to be. For Jack's daughter would not permit us to stay at her father's home. Richard therefore had to work day and night at his house in order to make room for us pilgrims and strangers. Then Jack having lost the constant loving care of Emily, fell and broke his leg and had to go to hospital. This was of great concern to Edward and to all of us. So we went to see him. It was Edward's first time out since his arrival in Australia. I can still hear Jack repeat, with reference to how his daughter and her husband had treated Edward by refusing him admittance to her father's home, "In as much as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto Me." We never saw Jack again, for his daughter made a complaint to the sister in charge of the hospital that Edward and others of us were upsetting her father. So she had her way.

"The next time Edward ventured out was to the home of Otto Schmidt, Jack's brother. Otto had been a worker but had subsequently married an English girl whose home had been a convention ground in Staffordshire. They had one son and owned a fruit block or farm. They met in fellowship with a few others who differed on some things with the workers but weren't completely excluded. Otto was a convert of Sam Jones, one of the many Germans whom Sam had won; and Sam was a convert of Edward's. The workers were at this time effecting a purge and sought to cut off affected parts. However, some still retained a tie although not totally in accord. But Otto and those who met at his home never did come to the meeting in Richard's home although Emily visited Mrs. Schmidt and used to do her hair for her. She was an arthritic invalid and remained in bed for years until her death. She loved Emily to do her hair. It seems she was able to listen and even take part in the meeting in their home, held there Wednesdays and Sundays.

"It was to one of these Wednesday night meetings Edward went. He had not been invited, and so they were hostile. Bert and Mrs. Rouse from Swindow, England, were there. Bert felt moved to get amongst our 'brethren'. He spoke out a lot against what he thought was wrong with them, but he was also opposed to Edward. He had now started attending the meetings at Otto's home which Edward called the half-way house. Bert was not happy about Edward coming there. Most of those people are gone now. Bert and Mrs. Rouse, both fine people, died wiser in realizing you can't put a new patch on an old garment. Two others who were at that meeting returned to the Testimony fold completely.

"During our sojourn in Mildura, we had visits from a young English worker called Tony Knighton. He had a companion but seemed to be a loner. He told Maureen Donnelly of his going out experience which greatly impressed her. So with great joy she told Edward about how Tony had gone out to preach with only a bicycle and two shillings and sixpence in his pocket. But this was no great tiding to Edward. In fact, he took a most serious view of it; and on another of Tony's visits he began to show him his great error. Edward explained the importance of going out 'clean'. Having any possession, he claimed, destroyed that vital faith. A bicycle one could sell if need be. This allowed Satan a foothold which would weaken us. He said it was this cutting of all ties, financial and human, that gave the clean launch into following the pattern of the sent ones. What you receive afterwards in the way of loans and gifts was different. After giving this a great deal of thought, I concluded Edward was right. Tony later married and left the work. He ran a Post Office and a fruit block or farm. He remained friendly and continued to believe in the ministry but had doubts about other things.

"I must not forget Charles Woodard from Queensland, who made the long journey down to Mildura to see Edward. Charles was from New Zealand originally and worked at one time with Edward at Christchurch. It was through his sister, Mrs. Stanley, that we met so many in New Zealand. Charles sat on the arm of Edward's chair and had a long talk with him. If Edward had been stronger he could have visited some others too. There was a John Anderson from Brisbane who wanted him to go there. John came from Newtownards originally. He too has passed on."

Conclusion:

"As I accompanied this true servant of Christ during the final year of his earthly journey and witnessed the terrible opposition and rejection he encountered by some who professed to be God's people, but who did not recognize him as a sent one of the Lord, I may have been doubtful at times as to the outcome. But with the passage of time, I believe more than ever that every word and action of God through Edward will bear fruit and is bearing fruit. For it is written, "My word will not return to me void." Like John the Baptist, Edward was a burning and a shining light. But darkness cannot comprehend the light. And, "if that light that be in you be darkness, how great is that darkness." Edward became a stumbling block to the carnally minded who picked on little isolated things, little mole hills which they saw as mountains of error but were blind to all the demonstration of the power of God in his life. But if we were perfect, there would be no need for Christ, the perfect one who, though sinless, was crucified as a malefactor."

George Greenaway

2. For a few months before his death, Edward was not able to go out and was confined to bed for the most part. As he had expected, there were not many with him at the end. Nevertheless, he was well cared for and was surrounded by loving kindness at Richard Greenaway's home in Mildura. This household consisted of Richard, his wife, Emily, his mother, Lizzie, his brother, George, and a friend, Maureen Donnelly, who was also in fellowship at that time. They were all supporters of Edward believing him to be a sent one of the Lord. Thus they all ministered to him. He was too weak to write during these last months of his life, but he dictated some notes and letters to Mrs. Lizzie Greenaway. One of these letters was addressed to Fred and Sadie Wood. "Edward," writes Mrs. Greenaway, "dictated this letter as he was anxious to send you something to help you and probably others:"

17/3/60

"My dear Fred and Sadie:

I am weary of my journey. It is about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman and there must be a lot of women like her throughout the world. Jesus began not to preach a sermon to her but to talk. The world is full of sermons. First he asked her for a drink. If he comes to us and asks us for a drink, he is thirsty. As he hung on the cross, he spoke a message of two words: 'I thirst.' Jesus loves all humanity and he thirsts to get their love. He loved this woman and he thirsted for her love; and before they separated he got it. He explained to her what it meant to worship God. He said: 'God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him.' She was occupied with a place of worship and did not know how to worship God. This represents private, individual relationship with God by one who wants to know how to worship him but does not know that we must become part of God to worship him. God can't do without this worship. He gets it from his Son, from the angels, especially that man Gabriel and Michael whose name means 'as for God', one of the names of Jesus."

Yours lovingly,

Edward

Mrs. Greenaway added in a postscript:

"I was asking him about the sin unto death that we must not pray for. He replied that it was unforgiveness. If we do not forgive, we cannot be forgiven."

Edward's last message to the scattered 'little ones,' which he dictated to Mrs. Greenaway shortly before his death:

"I, Edward, am writing thoughts revealed to me to the scattered 'little ones' who are being harassed by heady, clever scribes who pick and choose Scripture to turn the babes away from Christ who said: 'I thank thee oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth that thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent and revealed them unto babes.' Except we become like little children, we shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven. Let us be converted day by day and follow Jesus who said to Peter, 'Follow thou Me.' Jesus is soon coming back. Let us have our loins girt, and our lights burning, and be as those waiting for our Lord."

Edward Cooney

In the following letter from Richard Greenaway to Charles Woodard, we have an account of Edward's death and burial:

24 June, 1960

"Dear Brother:

We were pleased to get your telegram Tuesday, 11:00 a.m., and your very helpful letter today. I was very upset after I sent the telegram when I realized the long journey and expense for you, so it was a great relief when I got your telegram. You were one of the few who cared for and valued our dear brother. so our first thought was of you when the sad time came. We would all have loved to have seen you again. You will be glad to know that everything went well at the funeral.

It was good that we were all with Edward when he breathed his last. He was unconscious for only an hour. There was no struggle at the end; he just gradually slowed down. Emily and I helped him out of bed and in again at 4:00 a.m. We fixed up his back and he settled down. But he called Emily and thanked us all and the doctor for our kindness. He then quoted Philippians 3:12/14: 'Not as though I had already attained either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

"I did not see him conscious again, but the rest were in and out until the end. Maureen asked him near the end if he wanted anything. He spelt out L O V E – the last word he spoke.

"Lance Ashman and Murray and Vy Sharpe came up from Adelaide. Others present at the funeral were, Mr. and Mrs. Rouse and daughter, Tom Perry. Mrs. Matz, Wm. and Eileen, John Heook, Tony Knighton (a worker), Harold Gillies whom Ron Campbell (a

worker) sent here to see Edward, John and Gwen Barrett, my boss Charlie Cotterell and his wife, Violet, Ernie Walsh from Belfast (the man you met here) and ourselves. We sang (320) 'Lord we are met together,' composed by Edward, in the home. At the grave we commenced with 'Take up thy cross,' (24), and then 'Come let us follow Jesus,' (90) as we buried the coffin.

"We all miss him very much, but are glad we had the privilege of having him with us the last year of his life. His love and concern for others consumed his life and, like Paul, he never shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. There is much we could write, but he being dead yet speaketh.

"We must thank you very much for all your help and for your kind invitation. Mother will be writing later. Must close now. Love and greetings to you, your wife, and all other friends."

Richard Greenaway

Emily, Richard's wife, added:

"Well, we believe that all was carried out as Edward would have wished. Richard spoke in the house and left it open for anyone to have a word. Then George spoke, next Murray Sharpe and Lance Ashman. A man from Swan Hill had a word too. He came here a few months ago to see Edward as he had heard about him and wanted to find out for himself if the things he had heard and read of him were true. He said he did get a surprise how Edward could talk to him. He got real fond of Edward and came back several times. Murray Sharpe and Charles Cotterell spoke at the grave and Bert Rouse closed with prayer. There were about two dozen people there. We didn't expect many. We miss him; and will, I believe, understand better later on the things he spoke about as we seek to go on ourselves in the race."

Love to all from

Emily

It was thus in his 94th year that Edward Cooney's earthly journey drew to its close, 20 June, 1960.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4: 7/8)

POSTSCRIPT

POINTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT EDWARD COONEY

by IDA WEST

1. For over 60 years he protested against and broke away from the usual forms of worship and worldliness of the existing denominations represented in Northern Ireland.
2. In great faith he claimed a preacher should be like the twelve apostles – sent ones – unfettered by money and material possessions, free to attend the Holy Spirit's call anywhere at any moment. Thus he proved God's providence never failing throughout his long life without resort to usual methods of support.
3. His purity of life, zeal for God, hearty appeal to the sinner to repent and believe the gospel, and earnest forceful urge to all who named Christ's name to receive him as one of Christ's little ones and sent ones, so that they would receive Christ because of receiving him.

These traits prove beyond doubt that he ranked amongst the pure in heart – the reward of whom is to see God. The fact that he had these qualities was often obscured by the dynamic force of his personality when pressing home his point.

Thirty Years After

The year is 1990, and it is now 30 years since Edward Cooney die. (sic) But the truth to which he bore witness – the truth as it is in Jesus – lives on in the hearts and minds of those who gladly received his message. Toward the end of his life he was concerned about what would happen to the flock when he passed on. He feared as Paul did that grievous wolves would enter among them not sparing the sheep. The fellowship that he left behind still survives, however, in at least some half dozen countries – Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, Norway, Australia, and the United States. There are now no workers among them, for God hasn't sent any, no leaders in the sense of rulers, and no organization. But, an equal brotherhood, they continue to have fellowship one with another believing that the revelation of the Christ to, in, and through the individual human heart is alone the Rock on which Christ builds his church which Edward Cooney defined as: "The company of individuals each living by revelation from the Father and therefore collectively one." And the Lord continues to add to their number those who are being saved.

They shall come from the east and from the west from the north and from the south and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. (Matt. 8:12; Luke 13:29).

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"'Jesus the same, yesterday, today and forever'. Edward Cooney was one in whom this same Jesus during the 20th century, lived over again the same lowly, suffering, misunderstood, triumphant life. And isn't this the only evidence that this same Jesus is alive today as he lives his life over again here on earth in his body, the church? This was the blinding evidence that convicted Saul of Tarsus while traveling on his way to Damascus: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me'? These words were spoken to him by Jesus from the right hand of God, where he himself could not be persecuted anymore. Not being an eye witness to all the events in this chronicle, yet an eye witness nevertheless, the writer has had to gather together and set forth in order a cluster of material somewhat resembling a jumbled diary, here an old letter, there a faded newspaper clipping, a host of jottings – all of which have been thoroughly treasured and preserved by sister Sadie Wood and her husband Fred. There were valuable data and little anecdotes contributed by Mrs. L. Greenaway and others also. But, 'he being dead yet speaketh' was by far the most vital contribution of all.

"Often when we meet together we are reminded of the great truths our beloved brother lived and preached from the housetops and can still take courage from them. For, if Christ lives in us while we are here on earth, we shall continue to influence after our departure.

"Whatever the shortcomings of this somewhat patchy chronicle; the writer has derived consolation from the fact that he has remained faithful to the information at his disposal, not having added to or taken from."

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

Bishop (episkopos) or Elder (presbuteros): In this fellowship, bishops and elders are members of the lay ministry and not the apostolic ministry. They are modelled on those in the New Testament. See Acts 20: 28; 1 Tim. 3: 1-7; Titus 1: 7-9. Vine points out that elder is

another term for bishop or overseer, elder indicating the mature spiritual experience of those so described and bishop the character of the work undertaken. He further shows that throughout the New Testament several of these were appointed in each church. See Acts 14: 23; 20: 17; Phil. 1: 1; 1 Tim. 5: 17; Titus 1: 5.

Church of Ireland: Anglican.

Nicolaitanes: (Nikao = conqueror, laos = people) (conquerors of the people).

A priestly order that afterwards became the clergy and changed a hitherto equal brotherhood into two classes i.e. priests and laity. Schofield states: "There is no ancient authority for a sect of the Nicolaitanes. If the word is symbolic it refers to the earliest form of the notion of a priestly order or 'clergy,' which later divided an equal brotherhood (Matt. 23:8) into 'priests' and 'laity.' What in Ephesus was 'deeds' (Rev. 2:6) had become in Pergamos a 'doctrine.' (Rev. 2:15)."

Outcasts: Those who were excommunicated from this fellowship because of their belief in and fellowship with Edward Cooney from 1928.

Overseer: Although overseer and bishop mean the same thing, in this context bishop refers generally to leaders in the lay ministry and overseer to leaders in the apostolic ministry. There is no logical explanation for this. It seems to be simply a matter of usage to distinguish between lay leaders and apostolic leaders within the fellowship.

Pilgrims: A term taken from the Faith Mission as was also 'worker' with the meanings somewhat changed. Here the term Pilgrims refers to the whole fellowship of workers and saints. Synonyms are Go Preachers, Tramp Preachers, Dippers, Cooneyites, Testimony. (The terms Go Preachers and Tramp Preachers refer in general to the whole fellowship and in particular to the preachers).

'Popery': In this context the term means authoritarian human control.

Rock: The rock on which Christ builds his church is, Cooney said, 'the revelation from the Father of the Christ by the Spirit to the individual human heart'. When Jesus asked: 'Whom say ye that I am?' Peter answered: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus said: 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee that thou art Peter and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' (Matt. 16: 15-18). If we substitute the Greek words for Peter and rock, we have: 'Thou art Petros and on this petra I will build my church.' Petros denotes a movable stone, petra a massive immovable rock. Cooney pointed out that petra refers not to Peter but to the revelation he received from the Father of the Christ by the Spirit to his heart. Cooney went on to say that what the Father reveals is always the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that this revelation being progressive can never be systematized or standardized.

Saints (hagios): Here the term refers specifically to the believing laity or lay ministry in this fellowship. The word in the New Testament means believers. See 2 Thes. 1: 10; Rev. 18: 20, 22: 21 (RSV), a believer being one who has made Jesus lord. Cooney said: 'If you make Jesus lord, he'll become your Saviour,' indicating the progressive nature of salvation as in Acts 2: 47: 'And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.' (RSV) Vine points out that believe (pisteuo) is the corresponding verb of the noun faith (pistis), and that the elements of faith are: 'a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgment of God's revelation or truth, a personal surrender to Him, and a conduct inspired by such surrender.'

Synagogue: Edward Cooney sometimes used the word synagogue for Christian churches and referred to church goers as synagogue people. (Why? We don't know)

Testimony: The shortened version of the name 'Testimony of Jesus' which the fellowship took when it became a registered sect in 1914 to avoid military service. Edward Cooney was later to reject this step (See chapt. 24). After the Division of 1928, the term Testimony refers only to the main body of the fellowship, not to the outcasts.

The Work: The apostolic ministry.

Workers: Apostolic ministers, i.e., homeless, unpaid preachers who have given up all worldly possessions to preach the gospel by faith.

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