

Early Workers

Letters of Protest

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Revised June 5, 2017

Letters by the Outcasts (Ed Cooney's Excommunication):

James Bothwell's Letter to Wilson Reid, December 28, 1928

Wm West's Letter to George Walker, October, 1929

Alec Buchan to Tom Elliott, November 15, 1929

Fred Cooney's Letter to Wilson McClung, June 1, 1930

Charlie Woodard to Ed Cooney, February 3, 1957

Richard Greenaway to Charles Woodard re Ed Cooney's death, June 24, 1960

These Letters are reprinted from: ***The Go-Preacher Movement an Anthology*** compiled by Patricia Roberts

Fred Cooney was a brother of Edward Cooney, who lived in New Zealand. Patricia Roberts wrote: *"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, 1928], or he wrote 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.' (*The Life and Ministry of Edward Cooney 1867-1960 by Patricia Roberts p137*)

Fred Cooney's letter to Wilson McClung

Havelock North, New Zealand

1 June, 1930

My dear Wilson, [McClung]

It has been often on my mind to write you but recent happenings impel me to do so now. As regards Eddie, [Edward Cooney, Fred's brother] I am more convinced as time passes that God had something for you and others to learn through him, but none of you appear to have been willing for it. And so he became a stone of stumbling to you. So also his faults were learned and conned by note to cast in his teeth or rather at his back; for you waited until he had sailed from New Zealand before you set the ball rolling. Furthermore you forbade fellowship with those who declared belief in Eddie as a servant of God; so brother denied brother and Satan smiled as Isaiah 9:20-21 was being fulfilled among us.

You could have had clear guidance as to the class of people deserving of excommunication from I Cor. chapter 6 instead of following the lead of the Exclusive Brethren. 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 same Spirit's leading for the bondage and confusion of human control.

As regards the doctrine, that only through the lips of a true preacher can salvation come to a human soul, I do not believe it; and I refuse to add conditions not found in God's word. Romans 10:14-15 is not so easily understood when you read in verse 17 that *"hearing comes from the word of Christ."* (R.V.) And true it is that as *"the wind bloweth where it listeth...so is everyone that is born of the Spirit."* John 3:8

Perhaps I should have opened my mind to you long ago had I not realized that you have walked the narrow way much longer and much more faithfully than I have. So may I hope that you will forgive whatever I have written that may seem to you unwarranted.

Your brother in Christ,

Fred Cooney

NOTE: **Wilson McClung** was the Overseer of New Zealand
Wilson Reid was the Overseer of Ireland and Africa simultaneously.

Fred Cooney was one of the first seven members of a missionary work called the **Egypt Mission Band** started in 1898. Further details about this Mission are found in the book: **Blessed by Egypt edited by Wm. J. M. Roome**. Their mission statement is on pages 35-38. A chapter written by Fred G. Cooney begins on **Page 52**, in which he gives his testimony. Click Here to view **photo of the first seven men**.

James Bothwell's Letter to Wilson Reid

Main Street Irvinestown N. Ireland

28 December, 1928

My dear Brother Wilson,

Just a few lines in answer to your note of Sunday's date regarding your not coming to the meeting. I did not get your note until 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon after the meeting was over. I had written to you that all arrangements would be made for meeting. We waited after the time the meeting was supposed to commence not knowing you would not come. Then I stood up and said: "Seeing that our brothers who were to take charge of the meeting (you and your companion) have failed to come to take charge, I will now ask our brother Edward Cooney to take the meeting."

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 that you do not think that Eddie Cooney is a true shepherd. In that case you should, if you were a true shepherd, have taken care of the sheep.

Now with regard to what happened before Christmas when Hugh Breen came to announce about the meeting of the apostles, elders, and saints in our home, I did everything 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 and carried across the country by false and jealous brethren. 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 that poison and him not here to defend himself.

I also opened my home to Eddie for him to explain the awful 'crimes' he was being accused of by you and George Walker. If the 'crimes' were so terrible, why did you state here that if Eddie would consent and 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, you shut him out of all fellowship. Then about the separation you spoke of in the meeting here. You said if 9/10 would go with Eddie 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 careful about it. For cutting off the members of the church which is the body of Christ is a very serious thing to do. I would remind you of 3 John verses 9-11:

I wrote unto the church but Diotrephes who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

I would also refer you to 2 Cor. 10. Now I think the proper way to have tried Eddie would have been as was done in Acts 15, and not to have asked him to put on a yoke which he could not bear on his neck (see verse 10).

That is a 'great' letter you have written to some of the churches. You were delivering it to some on Saturday evening. If it is a 'saviour' why then pass this house and give it to others. The epistle Paul wrote was not for a special few like your epistle but was for the whole family of God. On hearing your epistle read, I noticed you said you would have gone to India but your elder brothers were not for your going. If God wanted you in India, you should have gone there.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he said; "But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Galatians 1:15). It is clear that Paul was led by the Spirit and you conferred with flesh and blood instead of allowing the Spirit to lead you. I might say to you in those words of Paul to the Galatians: "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel which is not another, but there be some that trouble you and pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6). Read also verses 8-12.

Hitherto, conventions and all other big gatherings were for all the saints, but now the tide has turned and the workers need a convention for themselves. But woe to the man God would send to tell the workers they were wrong. The words of Jesus Christ come to mind just now:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that were sent to you. How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ((Matt 23:37)

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. When in conversation with some of the young workers and hearing them speak in such a sarcastic manner about their elder brother, Eddie, I would remind them of the words of Job in chapter 30: *"Now they who are younger than I have me in derision and now I am their song, yea I am their by-word."*

Now in conclusion, you might think my home is closed to you, but **'NO'**. I am the same to you and my wife is the same to you as ever. If you are willing to have fellowship with us and our brother, Eddie Cooney, who is preaching the same gospel that he preached 26 years ago only in a much clearer way; and if you are willing for all that it means to go on to the very end. But if you separate yourself and count myself and my wife unworthy, even then we are the same.

Yours in His truth and way,

James Bothwell

Letter from Wm West to George Walker

Mullaghmeen

October 1929

Dear Brother George,

I thought of writing to you many a time since you were here in December last to let you know what had happened in this part since Christmas last; but I felt so keenly the awful things that have taken place that I could not bring myself to begin as I could not express what I felt about it all.

You said when you were here that it would be no harm for anybody who felt so inclined to go and hear Eddie; and above all you said there could be no separation, excommunication or division in the family of God. The tares and wheat would have to grow together until harvest. Fortified by this assurance, I like many others went to hear Eddie; and again at the Christmas meetings in Irvinestown I heard him explain the differences that had arisen between his brethren and himself. I also went to see him at Rossahilly where he was staying.

Now, as a result of this, instead of being treated in the way you said, the first thing I found was two workers (Sam McClements and Hugh Breen) going round the saints that came to the church in our home and warning them not to come any more. I soon found that half the church had turned against me, my family and my home. My wife and I were judged and treated as if we were enemies of God's truth and way. You can imagine how we felt on finding ourselves the victims of bitter hatred and prejudice from the people whom we had for twenty-five years taken into our home and worshipped with and for whom we had turned our backs on all our worldly friends in order that we might have their fellowship and friendship because we believed them to be our friends in Christ for all time.

When you were here you said that up to a very recent period (I think, three or four weeks) before you came over, you were not against Eddie. This being so we all felt Eddie could not be so terribly wrong. To review the happenings at that time, the first impression a great many of us got when we met Eddie was that he was nothing different to what he always was except this: He had ceased to talk of his own people and if anything he was more Christ-like than ever.

The charges Wilson Reid brought against him, put on paper and circulated against his brother in Christ were so easily refuted, and of such trivial character that even Eddie's enemies admitted there was nothing in them. When I came to think of it, I could hardly believe it possible that you, George Walker, who knew Eddie's character and had admitted that he had so many Christ-like qualities could turn against him. And when I looked at this poor rejected man whose zeal and earnestness for God had put so many of us to shame I could hardly believe that his brethren who used to love him and had twenty seven years of fellowship with him in the gospel could turn so bitterly against him for the few trifling faults you and others told us of.

I have heard him perhaps on twenty occasions during the past six months and I have never once heard him utter one word of doctrine that could be taken exception to or one word against his brethren. On the contrary, he always referred to you as his brethren and warned the saints not to utter an unkind word against you because he said: 'They are all my brethren.'

To come to the sad happenings in this county, immediately after Christmas last two workers spent almost all their time during the winter and spring going around the little churches and then round to individuals, applying the test of whether or not the people believed in Cooney. Churches were visited on Sunday mornings for the sole purpose of closing them, including the one at my home, Mullaghmeen. Several of them were actually closed. Then individuals were tested privately as to what they thought about Eddie. And if they had any softness in their hearts towards him they were cast out and refused further fellowship.

This happened in several instances. In my case, a new church was formed at Reids of Gortaloughan (my brother-in-law) and now half the church meet there. The other half continue to meet at my home. It all seems so strange. It seems to me that the workers simply lost their head. We have asked again and again: Where is the Scriptural authority for all this? Where does the love that should bind us together come in? What authority has any man to do this thing in the family of God? Where is any man's authority to deprive God's people of the fellowship of their brethren in Christ because they showed kindness to a servant of God whom they knew and loved. It's all so unchristlike, so different from what we were taught in the beginning, so unlike the love that Jesus had even for Judas. I tell you we have passed through heartbreaking times. Our faith has been tested as never before.

I wrote Wilson Reid to come and meet eight or ten of us elders but he would not. Evidently our opinions count for nothing and God's word counts for nothing. We are cast out. We did not go out. We were put out. I was written to not to go to the convention at Pogues (in this county). This all seems unbelievable; yet it is true and all happened since you were here.

As you know, I professed through Eddie 25 years ago. Although I did not always see eye to eye with him, yet I love him in Christ. I would rather die than see him cast out. I could do nothing else but stand by him when he was forsaken by his brother workers. We brought him to our home and the home was immediately 'blacklisted' and even our life-long friends, Tom and Mrs. Betty, told us they could not have any more fellowship with us because we committed this awful 'crime'. The strange thing is that no one has yet showed us what the 'crime' is.

George, my reason for writing you is: You know Eddie, you know us, one and all, you were brought up in our midst. You are God's servant to us all. You know Eddie better than most of us. We want you to come back and meet us. We know you could put matters right. You know how cruelly Eddie and his friends have been treated — all in His Name. You said when you were here that you were never a strong man. You ought to thank God for that. We know certain workers here have been on Eddie's track for a long time. They could see nothing in him but faults. We believe these workers have influenced you and it was evident when you were here your task was anything but congenial to you.

We attribute all that has happened to jealousy, just the kind that was manifest in Cain against Abel, the brethren against Joseph, Saul against David, and even among the apostles when the Master was yet with them. You don't seem to have been aware of it but some of us suspected it years ago — this jealousy that has now borne its awful fruit. Like Nehemiah, Eddie says that all including himself need to repent.

One thing is sure and that is we all must face the Judgement day when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed. All must meet this brother who has been cast out in his old age when he had laboured and sacrificed and loved as few men in any generation ever did before him, when it can be truly said of him, *'The zeal of God's house has eaten him up.'* Ye must also meet us simple folk who have been cast out because we gave this prophet of God meat and drink in His Name.

I'll say no more, George. **I now appeal to you to come back and heal these wounds.** I know you have a place in your heart for Eddie yet and for all of us. It will be the crowning act of your life. I yield to no man in the love and respect I have for you. No man ever helped me as you did at the beginning.

George, I will expect a reply to this letter as soon as you can.

Your brother in Christ,

William West

Letter from Charles Woodard to Edward Cooney

Archibald St

Mackay, Queensland, Australia

3 February, 1957

Our dear Eddie,

Time runs on and we often think of you as we ask our heavenly Father to grant you continued life and help. We are grateful for and conscious of your sufferings in the body for us and others because of the Lord's favour bestowed upon you. And we know that you rejoice in spirit with us all who are conscious that the Lord is mindful of us and grants us a measure of victory in ourselves and over the powers of darkness. We enjoyed your last letter speaking of His strength being made perfect in weakness. Others here also were helped by what you passed on. I wrote you a reply before Christmas giving you some names of our friends here. I hope it reached you safely. We understand you cannot always reply like the rest of us.

You mentioned you would be 90 years old on the 11th of this month. We hope the Lord will grant you many happy returns of the day as we need your help. We have two men who have reached 100 years in a neighbouring town, so keep hoping dear brother; and we feel sure the Lord will comfort your heart. Paul wanted to go 'home' but he also wanted to stay and be helpful. We feel sure this must be your desire also. That brother who put you out for telling him the truth might yet see. I had to experience a lot myself before I was clear enough to take steps in confidence. We have taken so many further steps of late that it has now brought what I term a 'boil-over' with those in command.

On January 23 two workers gave us a ring on the phone to say they would like to bring some brothers 'to talk things over;' but when they came there were 7 cars with 18 men in all. So with others whom we had already invited ourselves we had an interesting evening. The accusation was that I was contending against those the Lord had sent and so they had come to 'help me' to think differently and also not to say anything about the Division nor mention Eddie Cooney's name to others. Having made their accusations I said it was now my place to reply. I said as I wished to retain them as brothers in Christ, I must now read a letter which had helped me greatly when I needed it most.

They wanted to know who it was from before I read it; but I said that as it was my home they were in they must abide by what I do. So I produced your letter and read it to the workers and all present. I told them I had every confidence in the writer as a true man of God and wished all God's people to be one in the order in which the letter describes and points out in the Scriptures. This seemed to take a lot of wind out of their sails; and their progress became difficult when several spoke of our helpfulness to them and our Christ-like

attitude to the world. However the odds were against us when they took a show of hands to see if we should continue to speak in meetings. We could attend but not take part. One brother objected to the possibility of 'Charlie getting control of the meeting'. So possibly the Lord was closer than we realized and we were glad of the opportunity to declare ourselves as were some others with us. I could go into some very unchristlike things we have experienced at the hands of those who demand obedience to them but space will not permit. In any case you will have had similar experiences yourself, dear brother, and you know quite well what human nature is.

We did go to fellowship meeting the following Sunday but the air was very cold and faces had changed. Yet we went to show there was no ill feeling toward them as they had for us. The next Sunday we were out in the country because of a holiday and we attended the Sunday morning meeting at the home of one who came to accuse. He made no difference so my wife and I took part as usual and enjoyed the meeting. All the rest said we had a lovely meeting probably thinking we had repented but it all went to show that it was the human element and not the divine that was in control. So far so good. We went to our usual meeting today but received no welcome. My wife got her prayer in but when I attempted the elder stopped me and said: "*as yet you are not permitted to speak.*" I made no comment. We then sang a hymn which closed the prayer altogether before all had taken part. Next they denied us the bread and wine point blank. Strange to say the elder who stopped me got done out of it himself in the confusion. The meeting is held in the home of an aged woman and as soon as this '*sweet fellowship*' (as they tell us) had finished, she went over the head of the elder and said to me "*Charlie, as you have spoken against the workers, do not ever come into this church or home again.*" I replied: "*I am glad I have never spoken against the Lord, Alice; and I will shake hands with you and wish you and all here God's best and hope you will see differently as time goes on.*" The elder then said to me: "*Charlie, I want you to know I have nothing against you;*" but as yet he is not prepared to stand out. The convention is here the week before Easter so we'll be attending if allowed. Several brothers and sisters are standing with us against these men we must name as dictators, and we will appreciate all the help you can give us by your prayers or any other way.

We would like to have you know that since we have made up our minds to defend the truth as it is in Jesus, the Lord has given us his comfort and support. And we can say like the prophet of old: "*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies and my cup runneth over.*" It is so much better to know the Lord for ourselves than to put confidence in '*princes*'. We all feel that the Lord is interested in getting things on a sound footing as He will not have anyone take the place He himself should have in the hearts and lives of his people. We told the meeting that the men who were most against the reform had not commended themselves to the honest and good hearts. I mentioned some names to support my contentions and caused quite an uproar. Last year when Tom Turner visited me to hear accusations from others re my writing to you, I asked him in the presence of other workers why it was that Wilson McClung found it so hard to break with Eddie? So much so that it affected his health. Tom got agitated and would not stay for a cup of tea although the night was rough weather.

Now will close as I have said plenty. We hope this finds you and August and all with you fairly well and enjoying the Lord's presence. Ron Campbell often writes.

My wife and family join me in sending our love in Christ,

Charlie Woodard

NOTE: Charles Woodard was excommunicated for continuing to communicate with Edward Cooney.

Richard Greenaway to Charles Woodard re Ed Cooney's death, June 24, 1960

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 Cotteral 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