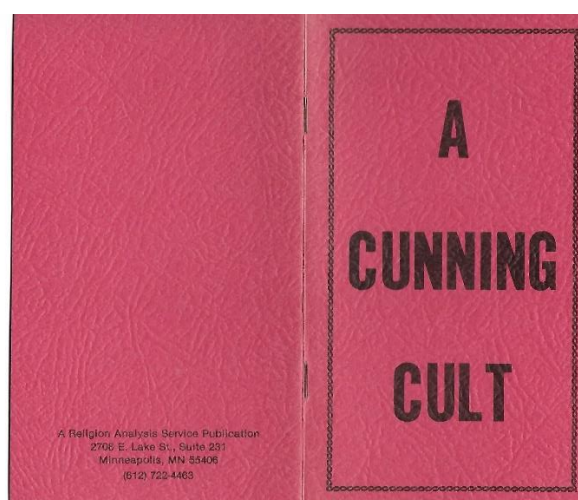


'COONEYITE CONTROVERSY'

Over the years of **'Take Heed'** when I have been speaking publicly about **'cults'** I have mentioned that the Island of Ireland has 'imported' most of the well-known groups such as **Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science** etc. I have however also mentioned a 'home-grown' **'cult'** that we have 'exported' to various parts of the world and that group is known variously as **'The Cooneyites,' 'The Two by Twos,' 'The Dippers'** and an assortment of other names.

Perhaps you think the designation of **'The Cooneyites'** as a **'cult'** is being overly harsh. This image is of a little booklet I have in my possession –



After quoting Ephesians 2: 8-10 **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"** the author goes on to say –

'At one time my husband and I were "in" a false cult, and it was over a year before we realised how false it actually was. Since coming out of the cult we have been sked by numerous people how we became involved and how we determined it was false ... Our first contact with this cult was through a neighbour of ours who drove approximately 200 miles round trip weekly to attend meetings held on Sunday mornings in the home of one of the group's "elders" ... The cult claims absolutely NO NAME and will flatly deny they are a denomination. However, others have tagged to them the name COONEYITES, also known as GO PREACHERS, TWO BY TWO and on occasions they are referred to as BLACK STOCKING.'

I mentioned this was a 'home-grown' **'cult'** that was exported from Ireland and in the book **'Heresies Exposed'** concerning **'The Cooneyites'** we read this on page 73

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

In his book **'Two by Two,'** Irvine Grey who had personal first-hand experience of this group wrote on page 29 –

'Although this movement had its beginnings in County Tipperary it quickly took hold in County Fermanagh'

In their book **'The Secret Sect'** Doug and Helen Parker wrote (pp 6 & 14)

'Tom Turner, a schoolteacher from Tipperary ... was influenced by Irvine when he conducted a mission in that part of Ireland ... Conventions were organised to recruit preachers and to further indoctrinate their converts. In 1907 over six hundred adherents gathered at a great convention at Crocknacrieve on Lough Erne, County Fermanagh, Ireland, the home of the sect's annual gatherings for many years until 1920'.

On the following link there is a fascinating newspaper article with pictures about this location and the conventions that took place there –

<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/retro/old-photos-tell-the-story-of-a-world-wide-movement-that-started-locally-90533>

In the light of these quotations I hope it is clear that **'The Cooneyites'** are rightly designated as a **'cult.'**

So, what is the **'controversy'** that I have referred to in the title of this article? In early March 2026 an article was published with the following heading –

Irish-based Christian sect 'protected abusers for decades'

The following are two links on which the article can be accessed

<https://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/2026/03/31/26294/>

<https://archive.ph/BD35Y>

Here are some excerpts from that article –

'The Irish authorities are liaising with the FBI as part of a widening international investigation into alleged sexual abuse within a Christian sect founded in Ireland. The sect, commonly known as the Two by Twos, is facing documented allegations via survivor groups against more than 900 individuals in more than 30 countries. It has by international borders. These allegations are denied by the sect ... Alleged victims in Ireland have been coming forward amid concerns within the fellowship that what is known is "just the tip of the iceberg", with survivors saying a culture of forgiveness has at times discouraged reporting to civil authorities ... Jonathan O'Reilly, a Cork-based advocate who grew up in the fellowship and has spent more than a decade challenging its handling of abuse, said: "The way this organisation operates has given opportunity for sex offenders to operate. Workers move from home to home with complete trust and these people are held up as holy, but some of them clearly are not. "When something terrible happens, the first question is never, how do we protect this child? It's, how do we protect the ministry?" This view is disputed by Craig Fulton, the fellowship's leader, or overseer, in Ireland.'

Specific case details can be found by reading the article in its entirety. This is not the first time that mention has been made of allegations of impropriety. In the 1990 book-publication **'The Church Without A Name'** by **David Stone** (a pseudonym) we read the following on pages 52-55

'There have been cases of sexual abuse of children, as well as other scandals that should have been brought to light in order to protect other potential victims. Paul scolded the Corinthian church because they failed to openly reprimand scandals. I believe the reason the workers enforce quietness about the scandals is an effort to keep up the appearance of perfection that is so necessary to this church ... This is a wicked practice! Human nature is such that many people do not repent of their sins unless they are brought to light. Look at the story of David's sin with Bathsheba. God told Nathan to reprove David ... Even if workers wanted to teach moral principles there is no framework within the church tradition to handle this type of counselling (Keep in mind this book was published in 1990). Anyone who knows of a scandal or a crime that was committed against himself or his family should not let the scandal be hidden. This is aiding and abetting the sin or crime... However, be prepared for the church response towards yourself. Don't expect a lot of sympathy!'

When referring to this group I usually stated that they were generally held in high esteem by people who knew them because of their outward 'piety' and indeed some actually thought that because of the women's lack of 'worldliness' that they were perhaps members of the 'brethren.' In some ways this reflects the human 'mistake' or 'failing' expressed in **1st Samuel 16: 7** **"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."**

In conclusion, the much more serious matter concerning this group is that they offer a false hope of 'salvation' for those who believe what they teach. In **'The Church Without A Name'** by **David Stone** wrote this on pages 180-181 –

'Two by Twos don't understand that He (Christ) took our sines and gave us His righteousness. Jesus mentioned one thrown out of the wedding into outer darkness because he came without the wedding garment. Our righteousness is as filthy rags. Only the righteousness of Christ is acceptable. We are NOT SAVED by our self-denial or righteousness, by our affiliation with a certain church, by our worthiness, by our humility, by our sacrifices, but we are made clean by OUR TRUST IN HIS BLOOD ... instead what is stressed is the church or WAY, the ministry as the way of salvation plus the keeping of certain outward standards of piety ... Tye ministry does acknowledge that salvation is by Christ and His blood BUT the emphasis is on the standard, the ministry and the WAY as the requirements to attain the salvation by Christ. In other words they have inserted themselves and obedience to legalism in FRONT of the GATE of SALVATION.'

Another helpful quote is from a little booklet **'They Go About Two by Two'** by **William E Paul (pp19-20) –**

'Perhaps the testimony of one who has left this cult and written an "Open Letter" to them best summarises their understanding of Christ's atoning work on the cross. The "Open Letter printed by W.M. rule, in his tract states – "you deny the atonement made by our Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross ... your denial of this classes you with every anti-Christian sect ... Everywhere in the Scriptures we are shown that the blessing flows to us through the death and blood-shedding of Christ, WHICH YOU DENY ... the devil does not mind what else you preach so long as you deny the efficacy of His atoning work at Calvary.'

In conclusion, here are links to several **'Take Heed'** resources –

<https://www.takeheed.info/cooneyites-in-ballynahinch/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlcdMMDyl44>

<https://reachouttrust.org/cooneyites/>

Cecil Andrews –'Take Heed' Ministries – 17th April 2026