



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

The Cardinal at the Cathedral

Should members of the Church of Ireland who wish to remain true to their Protestant heritage be alarmed??

A sermon preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church
by Rev. Ivan Foster.

And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves , Mark 11: 15-17.

The week of prayer for Christian unity is an important event for those engaged in overturning the work of the Protestant Reformation. It has its origins in special seasons of prayer for the return of the "separated sheep" to the fold of Rome. This year it was marked in Belfast, Northern Ireland, with a special service in St. Anne's Cathedral, one of the main centres of Irish episcopalianism. This year the guest preacher was Carlo Martini, a member of the Society of Jesus, a Jesuit, and a cardinal who many have suggested will be the next pope!

Of course, another feature of the service was the Free Presbyterian protest outside. It takes place every year, though this year it attracted a little more publicity because of the character of the ecumenical guest in the cathedral. As usual, the Free Presbyterian Church came in for criticism for opposing ecumenism. The presenter of a BBC Radio Ulster programme: TalkBack, Mr. David Dunseith, repeatedly called Free Presbyterians "lunatics" because they dare say that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven and those who die without experiencing His saving grace shall not enter heaven but perish everlastingly. I am sure that the BBC would not dare permit its presenters to miscall thus any other religious or racial group in such a fashion. True to its anti-Protestant bias, BBC Radio Ulster will, however, permit Free Presbyterians to be so attacked.

Do such ecumenical ventures give us cause for concern or is it just a matter of lunacy on the part of the Free Presbyterians and those who share our views? Are we justified in acting as we did on Tuesday 23rd January outside St Anne's Cathedral? We hope to address these and other related matters in the light of God's Holy Word.

By way of introduction, there are some matters relating to this affair that should be observed.

1. The event in St. Anne's Cathedral clearly shows us what ecumenism entails.

Ecumenism is a vehicle by which Protestantism is being deluded into returning to the fold of Roman Catholicism. That is manifestly the case when we consider what happened the other evening in St. Anne's. The ecumenical service was a venue for Methodists, Presbyter-



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rians and, of course, Church of Ireland members to come and sit at the feet of a cardinal of the Church of Rome. That is what ecumenism is doing on a world-wide scale today. Numerous ecumenical documents, produced by churches engaged in the unity movement, make it clear that ecumenism does not entail its participating denominations meeting on common ground in the middle, but rather, it means returning to Rome. Rome remains the same system of spiritual iniquity that our reforming forefathers left under the direction of God's Word. Many of their descendants in this generation have been seduced away from the teaching of the Bible by false prophets and are now engaged in the perilous journey back to the Papal fold. That is what the service in St. Anne's Cathedral was all about.

2. It must be noted that the Church of Ireland is playing a major role in this betrayal. The cardinal was the guest of the Church of Ireland. He was given a standing ovation by the congregation at the service. Yes, there were members of other denominations there, Methodists, Presbyterians and I am sure that other denominations were also represented amongst the applauders. But let Church of Ireland people take note that, on this occasion, their church was giving the lead.

3. The only course of action open to a Christian on such occasions as this is to protest. I am glad through and through that I was found amongst the protesters on Tuesday evening. I thank God for the hour that He saved my soul and brought me out of the darkness of apostate episcopalianism some 32 years ago.

We shall turn to our text which is the key verse in a brief narrative of an incident well known, but not so well understood.

The Saviour was nearing the end of His three-year ministry among men. Indeed, this incident took place just a few days before His arrest and crucifixion. It is given added significance, therefore, since it is among the last acts of Christ before He died upon the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of His elect.

I. THE INCIDENT APPEARS AS AN ACT OF UNSEEMLY BEHAVIOUR

The Saviour rightly describes Himself as being meek and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:29), yet here we find Him acting in a most stern and in what many would consider a violent way, and that in the temple of God.

1. He forcefully drove out those whose conduct offended Him. The word cast is the one most commonly used of casting out evil spirits. It surely indicates considerable force.

2. He overturned the furnishings used by the merchants. The word overthrew refers to the action of the blade of a plough when it turns over the soil. Thus it was a thorough upsetting of all that the merchants had brought into the temple. Nothing was left standing. There are no half-measures with Christ. He will spare nothing that is contrary to His Father's honour and glory.

3. This was not the first time the Saviour had done this. He had begun His ministry with a similar act as He is now ending it. John 2:13-17 describes the first incident for us. On that occasion, He had employed a scourge of small cords to drive the merchants and the livestock that was being sold out of the temple. However these actions may appear to



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men, to the believer they are the acts of the sinless Son of God and are therefore not wrong in any way. Furthermore, they are recorded that we might know that He acted so and learn from His actions. For the Saviour to begin and to end His ministry with this act of cleansing the temple must indicate that His purpose amongst men does include a casting over of that which is wrong as well as an establishing of that which is good and right. It reminds us of the commission of Jeremiah. Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant, Jeremiah 1: 9-10.

II. THE ACTIONS OF THE SAVIOUR WERE MOTIVATED BY A TRUE ZEAL FOR GOD

1. He acted out of the same motive as that displayed when He was twelve. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Luke 2: 49. He specifically refers to His Father when He rebuked the violators on the first occasion of His cleansing the temple. And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise, John 2: 16.

2. His actions were supported by Holy Scripture. That is seen in the words of rebuke which He addressed to the violators of the temple. Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves, verse 17. This was a zeal for God according to knowledge. A zeal that acts contrary to God's revealed will is fleshly and destructive.

3. The Saviour sought to explain His actions to the violators of the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, verse 17. He was anxious to impart knowledge to those whose tables and furnishings and animals He had overturned and driven out of the temple. Surely this demonstrates the spirit in which the Saviour acted. This was no fit of earthly rage or act of wanton destruction. No! He acted out of a concern for the spiritual wellbeing of the offenders as well as a zeal for His Father's glory. Indeed, there can be no zeal for God that is not linked with a compassion for the souls of sinners. The Father is glorified by the winning of souls to Himself, John 15: 8. In the midst of our protesting against the evils of this age, let us be sure to seek also to teach those who are engaged in these evils that there is a right way, even the way set forth in God's Word.

III. THERE ARE THINGS DONE IN GOD'S NAME WHICH WE MUST NOT TOLERATE

The Saviour would have those who had violated the temple and all those who read these words understand that some matters cannot be overlooked and ignored but must be protested against. Many have charged the Free Presbyterian Church with a denying to others the right to civil and religious liberty. Foremost amongst these has been the Dean of Belfast, Jack Shearer. Are we denying the rights of others to worship God as they wish when we protest as we do? I would unhesitatingly say that not only are we not denying the rights of others, but the wellbeing of men and the honour of God require us to protest against services like those conducted in St. Anne's Cathedral. We shall demonstrate the truth of this assertion.



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1. It is our Christian duty to oppose those who promote themselves as God's servants but are not. That was deemed a very important duty by Jude, the servant of God. When he perceived a threat to believers, arising from deceivers creeping into the church under the guise of servants of God, he left off his task of writing to them of the doctrines of salvation and, instead, issued a general call to contend for the faith and resist the claims of these false teachers. All this may be seen by a simple reading of the first four verses of his epistle. We must oppose the preachers of ecumenism and popery for, despite their claims, they are not the servants of God. How do we know a servant of God? Hear what Christ says. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, John 14:21. This is in essence what the prophet Isaiah had said many centuries before. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them, Isaiah 8:20. A man's spiritual pedigree may be discovered by an examination of his message. The heart may be told by the words of the mouth. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, Matthew 12:34. The words of ecumenists tell us that they are not God's servants and must therefore be opposed, since they masquerade as such and nothing could be more dangerous to the souls of men than this. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works, II Corinthians 11:15.

2. It is our Christian duty to oppose that which is presented as God's way but is not. If any country is in need of finding the right way it is Ulster! For twenty five years and more we have been spiralling downward into deeper and deeper chaos and wretchedness. Much of what many of us can recall as the fabric of a decent society has been destroyed by those who claimed they were leading us in the path of advancement and peace. Against these trends there has been a voice raised. It was the voice of those who know from God's Word that we are going in the wrong direction, irrespective of the opinions of the experts and the gurus. The path we are on may appear right to many but it is not. There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death, Proverbs 14:12. Have we not a duty to cry aloud against the dreadful folly of following a path that God says leads to destruction, no matter what others may say of it? This was the issue against which Jeremiah had to contend. Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein, Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken, Jeremiah 6:16-17. What path did they wish to follow? The path pointed out by the false prophets. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace, Jeremiah 6:14.
timely

What could be more timely than this verse? Ulster has been pursuing the path of false peace, following at the heels of the false prophets of ecumenism. They, not the protesters, are the destroyers of Ulster. Countless multitudes are passing swiftly onward to eternity, hoping to get to heaven by depending in the sacraments, their church membership, their supposed good works. Such will undoubtedly be lost. Hear the gospel as it was preached in



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apostolic days. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved , Acts 4:12. O heed the message! Salvation is in Christ alone.

3. It is our Christian duty to oppose that which is preached as God's Word but is not. Today, at the bidding of the ecumenists, Ulster has forsaken God's truth. Jeremiah sums up the sin of this age when he spoke of the sin of his age. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water , Jeremiah 2:13. As a nation we have forsaken God. We have forsaken His Bible for numerous perversions; we have forsaken His Day and turned it from a Holy Day into a holiday; we have forsaken His Law and given licence to immorality of the most perverse nature. Sin and lewdness have become the entertainment of the nation. This all stems from heeding the modernistic critics who would have us despise the good Word of God and look upon it as a book of fables and outdated notions, over which we may all exercise our own authority, retaining and removing just whatever takes our fancy. Against such preaching we must protest while God gives us strength. To remain silent while the truth of God is perverted by those, who hold their office by virtue of falsehood, would be to act as a traitor to the Lord Jesus Christ.