



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Ecumenical Fall-Out From IRA Bombs



Tragedies such as that in Omagh breed ecumenism. In the atmosphere of shock and confusion, Protestant people are hustled into religious gatherings that they would know to avoid in less emotionally-charged occasions.

Ecumenism sought to harvest the sympathy felt in the wake of the Omagh bombing. Roman Catholic symbols and trappings are everywhere seen. The candle-lit processions and gatherings. The reading of prayers for the dead. The profusion of floral tributes. These things are alien to Protestantism but they are now part of the public's reaction to tragedy. Articles, apparently written by Roman Catholic reporters, in the two Northern Ireland newspapers, once considered unionist in outlook, *The Belfast Newsletter* and

The Belfast Telegraph refer to "prayers for the dead" being said at various town gatherings to demonstrate sympathy with the Omagh victims. Prayers for the dead are utterly repudiated by the creeds of Methodism, Anglicanism and Presbyterianism, yet under the guidance of ecumenists, this pagan practice has become acceptable to Protestants.

Orangeman and leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, David Trimble, breached his Orange oath and attended a requiem mass for the three young boys from Donegal, murdered in Omagh. One of his Orange colleagues was quoted in *The Daily Mail* of 21/8/98 as saying that, because of the atmosphere prevailing at present, no one dare challenge him over his actions. It is very likely that there will be no political challenging of his breach of his Orange oath. But he will be challenged one day. His action, oath or no oath, is offensive to the Lord. The 39 Articles of the Church of which he is a member says of the mass that it is a "blasphemous fable and a dangerous deceit." He may never be called to account in the political forums of Ulster, but a greater forum will require an answer from him and all such oath-breakers. As a lawyer, Mr. Trimble ought to know something of the moral significance of oath-breaking. As the First Minister designate of Northern Ireland's Assembly, one might expect him to keep his word. At least now we know that when it is expedient, he will cast aside his oath and break his word. The local councils, in company with the clerics of the area, take a lead in organising these ecumenical events in the wake of IRA bombs. The civic element helps the ecumenical pill to go down, since a civic function appears less offensive to any Protestants who might still harbour a reluctance to join in popish worship.

Banbridge

That recipe was followed in Banbridge, following the bombing of the town by the same republican group which was responsible for the Omagh bombing. No serious injuries or deaths resulted from the Banbridge bombing, but the council and the ecumenists felt that there was a need to hold an ecumenical service to encourage the people. A Roman Catholic priest and gospel-denying ministers shared the platform with unionist





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councillors and took the opportunity to tell all attending the service that "they were all the children of God." Ecumenism has thus advanced a little further and become even more en-
sconced as the religion of Ulster.