



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Former Presbyterian Moderator complains that Romeward trend is too slow



An article appeared in the last edition of *The Presbyterian Herald* written by former moderator, Dr. John Dunlop. He is aggrieved that the General Assembly in June '99 voted to reject, by 144 to 244, proposals to reorganise and constitute the Irish Inter-Church Meeting. His complaints highlight the on-going drive for unity with Rome within the Irish Presbyterian church.

Here are some of his comments.

"The decision of the General Assembly bothers me a very great deal for I find the Assembly moving in a direction which is at variance with how my life, and that of many others, has been moving for more than 30 years."

"The central issue has to do with our relationships with our Roman Catholic neighbours and with the Church to which they belong."

"There are many good things which can come from locating our particular Church in a network of relationships with other Churches, whether at a local level, or national and international levels. The effective Christian witness which went around the world from Christian people, including the priests and ministers in Omagh, and the moving Act of Reflection on the following Saturday afternoon would not have been possible had the relationships between the churches in Omagh not previously been consolidated in trust, understanding and co-operation over many years. Such witness does not come instantaneously out of nowhere. I well remember preaching in the Dominican Church in my home town of Newry in 1998. It was a cold wet January evening but the church was warm and bright and the welcome and worship uplifting and encouraging. It was an act of Christian witness in a town which has suffered much from the effects of violence. If anyone had told me when I was growing up that I would ever preach in the church in Dominic Street I would have found it difficult to contemplate. So much has changed for the better."

"When the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland knocks on our doors with offers of co-operation and fellowship, they hear the door being barred from the inside."

"A Presbyterian elder who is married to a Roman Catholic spoke to me about his and her dismay at the decision of the General Assembly. A teacher recently spoke to me about Protestant young people in her secondary school speaking of their hatred of Roman Catholics through clenched teeth. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland ought to represent a strong counter sign against this. The decision of the last Assembly sent out the wrong message. Our Presbyterian particularity should be located within a wide network of belonging with other Christian people and Christian Churches."

These are the thoughts of a man who, at his ordination, signed a statement of his faith which included the declaration that he believed the pope was the

