



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Presbyterians protest as their New Moderator invites Roman Catholic Archbishop to General Assembly.



Ken Newell speaking at a "Mass for peace in Ireland" in Seattle, USA on March 17th, 2004. (<http://www.pbase.com/jal/mass4peace>)

The annual installation of the new moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has traditionally been the scene of a protest by the ministers and elders of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster. The protest is maintained in order to highlight the continuing defiance of God's Word and the departure from its own Confession of Faith that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is engaged in, as it persists in its involvement in the ecumenical movement. This year will see an additional protest, this time from within, because the new Moderator-elect, Rev. Ken Newell, of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church in Belfast, a prominent ecumenist, has invited the head of the Roman Catholic church in Ireland to be his guest at the General Assembly. This has annoyed quite a number of the more evangelical members of the Presbyterian Church. A letter which appeared in the *Belfast Telegraph* from the minister of Buckna Presbyterian Church, Rev. Mark Neilly highlights the annoyance of many at their new moderator. It is written in response to an article by *Belfast Telegraph* columnist, Alf McCreary, a life-long advocate of ecumenism, a Presbyterian elder and someone very opposed to biblical Christianity.

Here is the full text of the letter as it appeared in the *Belfast Telegraph* of May 29th 2004.

"I am one of the "conservative backwoodsmen" mentioned by Alf McCreary (*Belfast Telegraph*, May 22) and I am a member of the Ballymena Presbytery who sent a letter to the Moderator-elect the Rev Ken Newell regarding the invitation to the Roman Catholic Primate.

How did Mr McCreary receive information regarding the Presbytery's letter? The decision of the Presbytery was that a personal letter should be sent to Mr Newell, asking him to reconsider his decision.

The Presbytery did not go to press regarding this issue because we believed things would be best resolved without such media interest. However, now it is in the Press, I feel it necessary to defend the stated position.

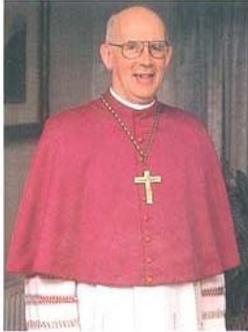
Never in the history of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has the Pope's representative in Ireland been invited along to our Assembly, yet this year, an invitation has gone out, bearing the logo of our denomination to Dr Sean Brady.

When ministers are installed in congregations, they too have the right to send out private invitations. Such invitations bear the name of the congregation to which that minister is



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being installed. No minister, in his right mind, would invite someone who would cause embarrassment to the people he is going to be working among, yet we have the incoming Moderator creating resentment amongst many thousands of Presbyterians.



**Roman Catholic
Archbishop, Dr.**

Mr Newell enters the post of Moderator with the support of just over half the Presbyteries, on his second year of being nominated. Surely it is extremely unwise to make such controversial decisions in the light of that, and run against advice offered, with the best intentions, from Presbyteries that represent many of our Church's largest congregations.

As far as the Ballymena Presbytery goes, it was not "some members" who expressed a desire to write to Mr Newell regarding this, but it was a unanimous decision taken. The attendance of Dr Brady at the opening night of our Assembly this year will be of even greater concern to many of our people than the invitation to Sinn Fein's Alex Maskey two years ago. Mr Maskey came as a political representative, whereas Dr Brady would be coming as a religious representative of a system of belief our Supreme Standard (the Bible), and our Subordi-

nate Standards (Westminster Confession of Faith and Shorter and Larger Catechisms) teach us, not only contains errors, but which contradicts true Christianity. For many (and it is very wrong to underestimate how many) this will be the straw that breaks the camel's back. There have been many Moderators before who doctrinally stand in the same corner as Mr Newell, but who understood practically the need to keep the unity of the Presbyterian Church. To Mr Newell, however, having the representative of the Pope along to the Assembly seems more important than the views of a large number of his own people.

MARK NEILLY,

Minister of Buckna Presbyterian Church,
Broughshane, Co Antrim."

Such a letter is very welcome but what must be noted in this unusually outspoken protest is the acceptance of previous moderators holding the same heretical views as Rev. Ken Newell and the terming of the ecclesiastical manipulation that went on during their terms of moderatorship as a maintaining of the "unity of the Presbyterian Church"!!

There can be no Biblical unity within any denomination that professes to adhere to the Word of God and yet tolerates the heresies of a Ken Newell. If Rev. Mark Neilly would enjoy unity with Christ then he must break his fellowship with Ken Newell and all who support him.