



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

The deceit propagated by Enniskillen ecumenical ministers and priests

In Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, so-called Protestant ministers joined with Roman Catholic priests to issue a statement in response to the comments of Pastor James McConnell, with regards to Islam and its origins.

The issuing of the statement was reported in the "Fermanagh Herald" as follows.

And, in last week's Fermanagh Herald, retired minister, Rev Ivan Foster, formerly of Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, and Bethel Free Presbyterian, Enniskillen, said that 'in general terms' he agreed with Pastor McConnell's views on Islam.

This week, nine local church leaders from a range of denominations released a statement in response to 'regrettable comments about Islam in particular'.

"We reaffirm our commitment to embrace diversity, promote religious freedom and build inclusive communities," the statement read, "We fully reject racism, sectarianism and violence, and we want to demonstrate respect and welcome to people of all faiths and none in society."

The statement read that despite fundamental differences between Christianity and Islam: "We believe that such differences must be voiced respectfully and from the point of view of friendship."

It went on: "We welcome those who come from different parts of the world and varying traditions to live among us.

"Many from this island went abroad to make a new life. Do those who come here with goodwill not deserve from us what we would wish for our own sons and daughters who live and work abroad?"

"We rejoice in the positive and significant contributions of different world cultures to our common life, and also the major contributions which individuals from those cultures make to our local community, especially in the fields of health, education and commerce.

"No culture is perfect. In being aware of the shortfalls in freedom and tolerance elsewhere in the world, we acknowledge that we too have fallen short of Scriptural standards. We must seek to rise beyond a culture of criticism to the Christ-like ideals of the Gospels in the way that we treat our neighbours, both new and old."

The statement was signed by Rt Rev Mgr Peter O'Reilly, Parish Priest Enniskillen and Lisbellaw; Very Rev Kenneth R J Hall, Rector of St Macartin's Cathedral and Dean of Clogher (Church of Ireland); Rev Sam McGuffin (Minister, Enniskillen Methodist); Rev David Cupples (Minister, Enniskillen Presbyterian Church); Rev Joe McVeigh, CC, Enniskillen and Lisbellaw; Rev David Donnelly, CC, Enniskillen and Lisbellaw; Rev Raymond Donnelly, CC, Enniskillen and Lisbellaw; Rev Rob Clements curate (Church of Ireland); Rev Brian D'Arcy C.P (Rector), St Gabriel's Retreat, The Graan.

Much of what is said in the statement must be seen as hypocritical, given the support for the 30 years of the IRA terrorism that was manifested amongst the Roman Catholic community whose priests signed this statement. That support continues to be increasingly given to Sinn Fein, the IRA's political party which reaped the benefits of that terror campaign.

Had the Roman Catholic priests practised what they here preach in this statement, then I have no doubt it would have served to curb the support of their congregations for the IRA and its terrorism, with the result that many of those innocent Protestant neighbours done to death in atrocious crimes such as the Enniskillen bombing of 1987, would still be alive.

Of course, history tells us that the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church toward those who rejected her teaching and embraced the truth of God as set forth in the Bible was very much akin to the intolerance shown by Islam throughout its history. Rome has shown little of that "respect" and "friendship" demanded



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of Pastor McConnell. That is irrefutable.

It is therefore rather difficult to accept as genuine the sentiments expressed in the statement by the priests of Rome. Furthermore, it is exceedingly naive, at the very least, of the professedly Protestant ministers to join with these priests in such an act of hypocrisy. Many of the members of the churches from which these ministerial signatories come have members whose loved ones suffered more than the abuse of "regrettable comments"! They suffered death and terror at the hands of Roman Catholic murderers!

That, apparently, these ministers have forgotten or at least ignored as they join with the priests to condemn Pastor McConnell.

The statement creates the impression that strong, plain denunciations of error and false teaching is unchristian and contrary to the "Christ-like ideals of the Gospels".

I have written an article on this matter entitled - "**Offending Without Apologising**" (read it **here**). In the article I have sought to show that the Lord Jesus Christ was most forthright in His denunciations of sin and the wickedness of men. Indeed, I have no doubt that, had those who issued this statement been around in the days of the Saviour, they would have been putting pen to paper against Him and His preaching!

Discourtesy or coarseness of language is not required in order to refute faithfully error and present the truth. But earnest and faithful expostulation must never be condemned as abuse and sectarianism. The Muslim, the Sikh, the Hindu, the Roman Catholic etc., have no greater friend than the one who zealously seeks to turn them from the error of their ways and directs them to Biblical faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul the Apostle affirms this when he told of the Saviour's command to him on the day of his conversion on the road to Damascus.

"And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me," Acts 26:15-18.

A tolerating of the errors of our neighbours in the name of friendship and inclusivity is a sin roundly condemned by God in His Word.

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds," 2 John 1:10-11.

That is Biblical Christianity!

Ivan Foster.

16th June 2014.