



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

### Ecumenists blame sectarianism on Bible



Rev. Wesley McDowell hands a letter of protest to Rev. Johnston McMaster

#### ***Public money used to promote attack on Bible Christianity***

Public representatives from the Ulster Unionist and DUP parties, along with representatives from Baptist, Brethren and Reformed Presbyterian churches, were in attendance at a conference on Community Relations at which the main speakers were from the Irish School of Ecumenics. The chances are that some of those who attended were foolishly unaware of the ecumenical character of the conference. The official conference report contained a sinister attempt to blacken Bible Christianity. Such an attempt augurs ill for the liberty to preach the Word of God and to apply its teaching to the evils and deceptions, such as ecumenism, of today.

#### **The following report is from Rev. Wesley McDowell, minister of Limavady Free Presbyterian Church.**

In conjunction with five other Councils, which included Ballymoney, Londonderry, Magherafelt, Coleraine and Moyle, Limavady Borough Council organised a "Churches and Community Relations Conference" on September 30th. 1998. This took place in the Lodge Hotel in Coleraine.

Along with others in his area Rev. Wesley McDowell of Limavady Free Presbyterian Church was invited along. He declined the invitation knowing from the listed speakers and the topic outline for the conference, that it would turn out to be a solely ecumenical affair. Rev. McDowell was proved right as the recently distributed report of that day shows.

The contributors for the day were Rev. Dr. Johnston McMaster, Ms Cathy Higgins, Drs. Cecelia Clegg and Joe Leichty, all from the Irish School of Ecumenics. Rev. Doug Baker from the "Mediation Network NI" was also there. In a contribution on the subject of "Moving Beyond Sectarianism" Messrs Clegg and Leichty identified Fundamentalist Protestantism as leading to sectarianism. In doing so they caricatured those who endeavour to be faithful to God's Word in the matter of separation and completely misrepresented those who stand for God's Truth. In the delegates list at the end of the report it was surprising to find that representatives from the local Baptist, Brethren and Reformed Presbyterian Churches were present at the September conference. Delegates also included local Unionist and Democratic Unionist councillors.

Recently another invitation arrived for Rev. Mc Dowell to attend a Churches Forum in Ballykelly near Limavady. This was a spin-off from the conference the previous September and again Rev. Dr. Johnston McMaster was to be the chairman.



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Rev. McDowell declined this invite as well but, along with a member of his church, he went to the venue to hand in a letter of protest to both Rev. McMaster and Limavady Council Chief Recreational officer, Mr. Sam McGregor. The letter highlighted the misrepresentation of Protestant Fundamentalists. Rev. McDowell also indicated that a letter of protest to the Council would be forthcoming as it was a sponsoring body in the September conference and was the sole sponsor of the Ballykelly conference. To finance and support blatantly un-biblical and anti-Protestant ventures using ratepayers' money under the guise of community relations is immoral and deceptive.

Whilst the Londonderry Sentinel gave good coverage of Rev. McDowell's protest, the Coleraine based Chronicle and Constitution newspapers refused to deal with the matter even though their photographer and reporter had full details. One wonders was this because a number of reputedly evangelical ministers of the Presbyterian hue were at these events.

In the past, the same newspapers have refused to carry issues relating to ecumenism, notably the protest against the activities of Rev. David Armstrong of Limavady who led his Presbyterian congregation to share worship in the local Roman Catholic chapel on a number of occasions. Following local Free Presbyterian protests, Mr. Armstrong was forced to resign by his congregation. He went to England and joined the Anglican Church there.

### **The letter of protest handed in to Limavady Council by Rev. Wesley McDowell**

#### ***Limavady Free Presbyterian Church***

***Minister: Rev. Wesley McDowell,***

***6a Scroggy Park, Limavady, County Londonderry, BT49 ODE***

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Mr John K. Stevenson BA,

Limavady Borough Council,

7 Connell Street, LIMAVADY, County Londonderry, BT49 OHA

22nd. March, 1999.

Dear Mr Stevenson,

I write on behalf of the above congregation to object to our council sponsoring and financing the above mentioned Churches Forum. This objection also includes the co-sponsorship of the Conference held last September in Coleraine. We have nothing against enhancing community relations, indeed we as a local church have been to the fore over these last number of years in providing practical help to Limavady residents both Roman Catholic and Protestant. I refer to our involvement in distributing EC Produce. However, under the pretext of furthering community relations, the council has sponsored an event which was solely ecumenical in a religious nature. The submissions of the Coleraine conference included a blatant lie and a misrepresentation of evangelical Protestants. As the Limavady Forum was a spin off from the Coleraine event we have no reason to believe that it was any different in nature. We question the council's legality in making funds available to



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sponsor such a religious event, the outcome of which will be to alienate people rather than promote understanding of different and legitimately held religious views. We therefore submit our objection to you and advise you that we will be seeking legal advice as to this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Wesley McDowell.