



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

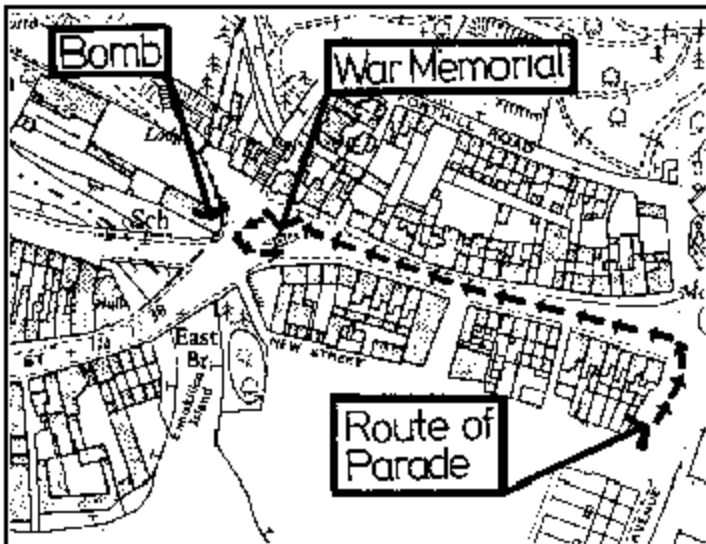
The Remembrance Day Massacre in Enniskillen

The reprint of an article written by Rev. Ivan Foster, minister of Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, immediately following the IRA bombing in Enniskillen on 8th November 1987. Over 50,000 copies of this article were distributed at the time of the massacre

Massive media coverage has followed the Enniskillen bombing. The murder of eleven Protestants and the injuring of scores of other Protestants while they gathered to remember those who fell in two world wars and in the troubles in Ulster has touched the heart of the most indifferent to Ulster affairs. The explanation offered by the IRA, that the bomb went off accidentally, has served only to heighten the outrage. Paul Corrigan, the leader of Fermanagh's Sinn Fein, the IRA's political party, deliberately avoided condemning the IRA for the massacre as he offered his 'regrets' for the bombing. Such double talk has rightly been spurned as non-genuine and empty. However, while the Province concentrated its wrath upon the IRA and Sinn Fein, others who must share greatly in the blame were skillfully edging out of the limelight and hastily covering up their own guilt and endeavouring to wash the victims' blood from their garments.

RUC COVER UP

On Monday, November 9th, the Chief Constable of the RUC visited Enniskillen and gave a news conference in which he admitted that the building in which the bomb had been planted had not been searched. He then excused this action by saying that since the building offered no threat to the Security Forces involved in the Remembrance Day ceremony it did not require searching. He went on to say that the building used to conceal the bomb was customarily the place where people gathered to watch rather than a gathering place



for members of the Security Forces and, therefore, they had not expected that it would be used to conceal a bomb.

Apart from the obvious question, 'Since when did the IRA care whom they killed?', such a view is a blatant denial of the practice of many years and an attempt to deny the obvious danger the building posed. A glance at the diagram we have printed of the scene of the explosion will show how close the parade passes the building which contained the bomb.

Each year for at least the last six years the building has been searched in preparation for this ceremony. It was always considered in the past as a possible cover for a bomb. Why then should senior police officers in Enniskillen change their mind this year? The truth of the matter is that the



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story is a cover-up. From within two hours after the explosion, reports were coming to me from within the RUC that the reason why no search took place was because of opposition from the Roman Catholic Church in former years. Such searches, it was being alleged, were an example of police harassment.

THE REAL REASON

As Tuesday 10th, the day of the first funerals, dawned and the full horror of what had happened began to weigh ever more heavily on the minds of the Protestant people of the town, I was sent details of a meeting of senior policemen convened prior to the parade to discuss the searching of the building. The decision taken by those men was that it was better to take whatever risks were involved in going ahead with the ceremony without searching the building than arousing the anger of the Roman Catholic Church by doing a search of its property. That is the truth concerning why the building was not searched.

DERELICTION OF DUTY

Such a decision, viewed in the light of the death, pain, injury and grief that could very well have been prevented (a thorough search of the building with 'sniffer' dogs would almost certainly have uncovered the bomb) displays the gravest possible dereliction of duty on the part of a small group of senior officers in Enniskillen. There has now been woven a web of plausible excuses to cover up the truth. The newest recruit to the RUC would have known enough to have ordered a search of the building.

<h2>Blast probe call</h2>		
<p>A group of rank and file RUC men are demanding a full inquiry into how the IRA was able to carry out the Enniskillen massacre.</p> <p>They claim that senior officers were "negligent" in failing to search St Michael's Hall where the bomb was placed.</p> <p>And they intend to raise the issue with unionist MPs at Westminster.</p> <p>One constable told the News Letter that about 30 men stationed in a town</p>	<p>By GARETH GORDON</p>	<p>near Belfast met to discuss the issue on Tuesday night.</p> <p>He said: "We feel there should be a full inquiry into the negligence of our senior colleagues in Enniskillen."</p> <p>"They will try to avoid this because it would reflect badly on senior officers from the Chief Constable down."</p> <p>"But when two INLA</p>
		<p>men were shot in Armagh a few years ago they wasted no time in bringing men from the junior ranks to court."</p> <p>Sir John disclosed, just hours after Sunday's blast, that the hall had not been searched even though the rest of the route was cleared by men using sniffer dogs.</p> <p>However, the constable said: "If Mr Hermon had been attending that building and every other for a radius of 200 yards would have been searched."</p>

POLICE ANGER AT THE COVER-UP

The enormity of this blunder is underlined by a call by some policemen for an enquiry into the decision. Their comments with regards the failures on the part of policemen of lower ranks and the action taken against them makes interesting reading. The following report appeared in the Belfast Newsletter on Thursday 12th November.

The efforts made by the chief Constable to fool the people were not successful. Even the sombre restraint that grief and sorrow impose at funerals was not enough to contain the anger of one young man whose loved one had been murdered. The Chief Constable had to be hustled away as he was plainly told the truth about how many view his term as head of the RUC. This protest continued even after Hermon had sought shelter in his 'bunker on wheels,' In the end it took two of the Chief Constable's aides to intervene to stop the protest.

NEEDHAM NEEDED

Another unpublished protest against the hypocrisy that the massacre aroused in Government circles took place in the stairway of the Erne Hospital. Richard Needham, one of the 'handwringers' that Northern Ireland Secretary of State, Tom King, employs on such occa-



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sions, was touring the hospital assuring the injured that the guilty men would be caught. He was met by Mr. Ivan Morrison, Clerk of Session of our Church in Kilskeery. Ivan's sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Alan Stephenson were injured in the explosion. Both were buried beneath tons of rubble. Alan was released first, and despite desperate efforts to find his wife by those at the scene he was forced to go to hospital believing that his wife was killed. Miraculously Daphne was finally uncovered and when taken to hospital was found to have escaped very serious injury. Although she will be in hospital for quite some time a full recovery is expected. It was while Mr. Morrison was in Hospital visiting Alan and Daphne that the confrontation with Needham took place. Brother Morrison challenged him by saying, "You are one of the rascals from England who is over here ruling us. Your hands are dripping with the blood of the innocent." Needham attempted to say that he was sorry but Mr. Morrison continued. "Sorry! You're not sorry. Every day you are trying to shove the Anglo-Irish Agreement down our throats." By this time Needham's 'minders' decided he could take no more of the truth and whisked him away down the stairs with Ivan Morrison in pursuit. He was also told some home truths by another grieving relative as he hurriedly left the Hospital.

When the news was first brought to me by the RUC as I preached in Ballynahinch Free Presbyterian Church that two members of my Church had been caught in the explosion and that it was believed that they had been killed, I went through a frenzy of emotions until the full facts were relayed to me when I rang my wife when I was half way home. She told me that they had both been spared. Our people in Kilskeery have rejoiced in God's mercy in sparing Alan and Daphne Stephenson and they continue to pray for their recovery and the recovery of all those injured.

ECUMENICAL EXPLOITATION OF GRIEF

Ecumenism has seized this tragedy with both hands. It has exploited it in every conceivable way. The interview with Mr. Gordon Wilson, the father of Miss Marie Wilson, a young nurse killed as she stood by her father's side waiting for the Remembrance Day parade to begin, has been given world- wide coverage. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson have suffered a terrible and tragic loss. Their daughter was indeed a lovely young girl whose gentle Christian character has been told me by Free Presbyterians who met her at college. As a father of three girls I can envisage, in some little way, what these grieving parents have gone through. I pray that God will comfort them both. However, the use being made of Mr. Wilson's words is not to the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ. Ecumenism is cleverly promoting itself through a father's willingness to forgive the murderers of his daughter and to hold no bitterness against them. Ulster, like Mr. Wilson, has shown a remarkable willingness to forgo bitterness in the wake of innumerable IRA outrages. One has only to consider how that Corrigan and the other Sinn Feiners in the Province, who have openly supported and condoned the murder of Protestants, walk our streets unmolested.

NO SUPPORT FOR ANTI- ROMAN CATHOLIC TERRORISM

Protestants have never supported the murder of Roman Catholics and for that reason anti-Roman Catholic terrorism when it emerges has never continued long nor has been widespread. There has never been the equivalent of the Enniskillen bombing perpetrated upon Roman Catholics by Protestants. Consequently, to hear it suggested by the media that Mr.



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Wilson's words are the manifestation of a new attitude by Ulster Protestants is a slander of a long-suffering people.

To the fore in promoting this image of Ulster have been the so-called Protestant clerics. Time and again, they have inferred that Protestants are at the throats of their Roman Catholic neighbours and that it must cease. What a foul calumny against the Protestant people by those that should be standing up for them. They are shepherds doing the work of the wolves. Protestants have not given support to the loyalist equivalent of Sinn Fein, indeed, the like does not exist. They have watched their Roman Catholic neighbours repeatedly and in large numbers going to the polling booth and casting their votes for those whose political slogan is, "THE ARMALITE IN ONE HAND AND THE BALLOT BOX IN THE OTHER." This is especially so in Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

MAKING THE INNOCENT GUILTY

The ecumenical clerics are falling over themselves to pressurize a shattered, shocked and devastated Protestant Community into feeling a sense of shame for a cowardly bombing in which they played no part other than that of the victims and into accepting a share of the guilt that justly does not belong to them. Pulpit after pulpit has echoed to the calls for Protestant penance in the form of ecumenical bridge-building and closer religious ties.

IMPARTIAL REPORTER REFUSES TO PRINT STATEMENT

As I observed this hi-jacking of the tragedy by ecumenists I drew up a statement and submitted it to the local Fermanagh paper, 'The Impartial Reporter' The Editor refused to print any of it. As a minister in the area for over twenty years and having had members of my congregation seriously injured and friends killed, I feel that I had some basis for expecting my comments to be published. However, the ecumenical spirit is never very partial to hard truth. I am glad, however, that what I said in my statement is now being echoed by others. Perhaps the 'Impartial Reporter' will print their words.

The following is the statement refused by the Fermanagh newspaper.

STATEMENT FROM REV. IVAN FOSTER.

Wednesday 11th November 1987.

"Much has been said about the Enniskillen Massacre. Strong words of condemnation have been quite rightly used. Sadly, an examination of many of the statements show a total lack of understanding of what it is that the Ulster Protestant is facing. The whole tragic affair could have been avoided had the premises containing the bomb been properly searched before the parade. The bitter anti-police feelings within the Roman Catholic Church, which, in past years showed itself whenever the building was searched before the Remembrance Day ceremony, caused senior police officers in Enniskillen to forgo the search this year. I was contacted by a member of the RUC and asked to make this known as the Chief Constable's statement was a cover-up. The decision not to search the building is an example of the continual capitulation to Roman Catholic Nationalism which has enabled the IRA campaign to continue until now. Effective measures against the terrorists are curtailed because it would bring a storm of protest from the Roman Catholic Church. Consequently, Protestants must live and die with tragedies like Sunday past. It is forgivable, therefore, if a person views a little sceptically the sympathy of those who in different circumstances would



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have been crying 'police harassment.'

As a Gospel Minister who longs to see his country return to the paths of true Biblical righteousness, I have watched with grieved heart the exploitation of this terrible tragedy by the ecumenical clerics in Enniskillen. That which should be used to turn the people back to the God of the Holy Scriptures is instead being used to advance unity with Romanism. Is it not ironic that the Church of Rome, whose intransigence and anti-police feelings are largely to blame for the bomb not being detected, should now be a trustee of the fund established to help the victims of the bombing? Surely Enniskillen Protestants are not so deceived as to not see this deceit. The fact that Mrs. Thatcher is to be brought to Enniskillen further emphasises this deception. Can the grieving and the injured from Sunday's bombing be comforted by a Prime Minister whose policy has been one of totally ignoring the community which was bombed and who is actively engaged with Dublin in subverting the constitutional rights of that same people?

My prayer is that the message of the terrible events of Sunday 8th November will indeed prove to be a catalyst, as referred to by the Bishop of Clogher, but, unlike him, I wish to see the people turn to the God of the Bible and not to the false god of ecumenism. Let every one who fears God read Amos chapter 4 verses 6 to 13 and heed the message of the bombing."

I do believe that the clerics have gone too far and their attempts at promoting unity through the grief caused by this massacre is beginning to sicken Protestants. "It is not good to eat much honey.." says the Scriptures. It is certainly so with ecumenical honey!

ROME'S EFFRONTERY

Rome has quietly and surreptitiously encouraged the Enniskillen ecumenists. Recognizing that too high a profile might alarm and alert the confused Protestant community she has kept her head down. But she has been active. The presence of the priests and nuns 10 or 12 rows back among the mourners epitomized Rome's stance at the first. But Rome grows bolder every day as she senses the ripeness of the opportunity. The following statement appeared in The 'Impartial Reporter' on Thursday 12th November.

The priests of St. Michael's Church have organised a special Mass this evening (Thursday) at 7.30 p. m. for the dead, bereaved and injured of Sunday's tragedy. The priests of the parish will con-celebrate the Mass in St. Michael's Church.

It is difficult for evangelical Protestants in Co. Fermanagh to take in the effrontery of Rome in organizing a mass for the repose of the soul of Johnny Megaw, Sam Gault and the other believers who were murdered. That mass was attended by Mr. Gordon Wilson. Does he, a Methodist, really believe his daughter is in purgatory? I, and thousands of others in the area certainly do not. She is with the Saviour who shed His blood for her redemption and needs no Romish mass, rightly called by the 39 Articles of the Church of Ireland 'a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit,' [Art 31], to bring her to Heaven. Christ's atonement on Calvary accomplished that eternally. Irrespective of the offence which may be caused, and we wish to cause none, we must stand up for the efficacy of the Saviour's death and the finality of His atonement. The mass is an insult to Calvary and a denial of the all-sufficiency of the Saviour's sacrifice for sin. Our view of the mass is not new. It is that of



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our Protestant forefathers as the quotation from Article 31 shows. Above all, our view of the mass is Scriptural.

Mr. Wilson and his minister, Rev. Derrick Haskins, who accompanied him to the mass, should heed the words of Article 22 of the Church of Ireland Articles. It says of Purgatory, 'The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration as well of Images as of Relics, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.' The mass was a chance Rome did not miss to assert her position as 'Mistress of the World,' Bishop Duffy called the Church of the Rome 'the voice of Christ' which all must obey.

It was at this mass that the Roman Catholic Cardinal asked the Protestant people to forgive his community for the awful crime they had committed against them. Are we to treat his words as sincere? I must confess I would be much more ready to accept them as genuine if he could explain how it is that fairly recently he was saying of the Protestant community that they were guilty of 99% of the bigotry in Ulster!

PROTESTANT REMEMBER!

Statements by the Pope and the Irish Bishops should always be examined carefully by Protestants before being swallowed. Their calls for help to be given to the RUC will be greeted with scepticism by Protestants with active memories. It is not that long ago that the Cardinal was justifying Roman Catholics joining Sinn Fein by saying that it was 'morally justifiable in some circumstances.' The local Parish Priest "Monsignor" [the title means 'MY LORD'] Sean Cahill, the priest in charge of the premises where the bomb was planted, called on his flock to give every assistance to RUC detectives investigating the crime. The most telling comment I can make in response to "Monsignor" Cahill's call is to ask why he did not give every assistance to the RUC in the past when the church building, where the bomb was planted, was being searched. Had that been done then likely Enniskillen and its Protestant people would have been spared the unforgettable horrors of November 8th. The assistance the Roman Catholic community will give to the RUC may be gauged by the response of Cardinal O'Fee to Peter Barry's call for Roman Catholics to join the RUC. "The time is not yet right," the Cardinal advised his flock.

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK

The cup of ecumenism is being pressed urgently to the lips of the Protestant Community. I appeal to Protestants before they drink and consequently lose all ability to grasp what is taking place that they heed God's Word. Amos the prophet asked the startling question "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it"? Amos 3:6. The IRA planted the bomb that slew 11 Protestants and injured 61 more. They must bear that dreadful guilt. Senior officers of the RUC took a decision not to search the building and they will bear responsibility for that failure. Rome will also share in the blame through her opposition to the police taking precautions in years past. But high over all the actions of men GOD IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY ALLOWED IT TO HAPPEN - WHY? I believe we are given the answer to the bombing in the prophecy of Amos. Amos 4: 6-13.

1. GOD WILL AFFLICT A PEOPLE WHO WILL NOT HEARKEN TO HIS WORD.



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The Word of God to Israel was simple. It was a word of condemnation for the evil of their ways 2:4-8. The Israelites were riddled by spiritual and moral corruption. They had the Word of God but they despised it and transgressed it by refusing to submit to its injunctions. Instead, they followed gods of their own and their fathers' devising. They believed the lies of the false prophets and in consequence followed them farther along the road of error and apostasy. Because of Israel's rebellion against God's Word He sent them affliction. Hunger, v6. Drought, v7-8, Blight, v9. Pestilence and War, v10. Sodom-like Destructions, v11. Following all these rebukes, instead of repenting of their sin God says of Israel, "Yet have ye not returned unto me."

ERRORS OF ECUMENISM

God has warned of the errors of ecumenism. Ulster has been faithfully told the TRUTH IN CHRIST JESUS. Despite the efforts of ecumenists to have the people forget the doctrines of the glorious Reformation God has been pleased to maintain a faithful witness to the simple gospel. The message of the Saviour's redeeming blood is not unknown in our Province. Few have not heard their need of being converted. Many may cling to their baptism and their church membership as their hope for eternity but few of them can say that they have never been told that such a hope is vain and that Christ alone is the sinner's door to Heaven. John 10:7, 14:6. The whole purpose of the affliction was a merciful one. It was in order to promote Repentance and Reformation.

Surely God's mercy can be seen in the Enniskillen bombing. It would appear that all, or nearly all, of those that were killed were professing believers. They had a personal experience of the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Three of them I am very sure were saved because I knew them well. I knew Johnny Megaw for over twenty years. He was a regular attender at my Sunday night services in Lisbellaw and Enniskillen. Ted Armstrong I know was saved recently because of my contacts with his family circle. Sammy Gault attended my meetings in Lisbellaw and Enniskillen in the early 70s and received Christ at that time. Other Christians have testified of their knowledge of the faith of the Mullens, the Armstrongs and the Johnstones. God in his mercy took away believers rather than unbelievers. Let Enniskillen and Ulster hear the message of this affliction. He desires our turning from our sins unto Him and His word. May God's message not be overlooked and lost through the clamour of those who are preaching the false gospel of unity.

2. REJECTION OF GOD'S WORD AND REJECTION OF GOD'S AFFLICTIONS WILL BRING DREADFUL JUDGMENT.

"Therefore this will I do unto thee O Israel ... Prepare to meet thy God O Israel." Verse 12. This meeting God speaks of was one of combat. God was coming to fight Israel. Ulster has known many against her in the last few years. Subversion and terrorism within. Political intrigue and betrayal without. Notwithstanding, Ulster remains undefeated. This is because God has not been against us. Rather, in answer to the prayers of a remnant, He has preserved this little Province in the face of overwhelming odds. We are in danger of seeing God become our enemy because of our continued rebellion against His Word and His afflictions. We cannot withstand His blows. We must be defeated if He takes up arms against us. Woe unto Ulster then! There truly will be none to help. He is the Creator, the All-knowing God. He is the Lord of Hosts, the Commander of the armies of Heaven. Verse 13. It behooves us now to yield to the corrections of God rather than continue to defy Him and



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so bring upon our heads certain judgment.

Come let us to the Lord our God,
With contrite hearts return;
Our God is gracious, nor will leave
The desolate to mourn.

His voice commands the tempest forth,
And stills the stormy wave;
And though His arm be strong to smite,
'Tis also strong to save.

Long hath the night of sorrow reigned:
The dawn shall bring us light:
God shall appear, and we shall rise
With gladness in His sight.

Our hearts, if God we seek to know,
Shall know Him, and rejoice;
His coming like the morn shall be,
Like morning songs His voice.

As dew upon the tender herb,
Diffusing fragrance round;
As showers that usher in the spring,
And cheer the thirsty ground.

So shall His presence bless our souls,
And shed a joyful light;
That hallowed morn shall chase away
The sorrows of the night.

Paraphrase 30.

What mercy there is with God that forgiveness and salvation is offered even to those who have been so stubborn in their resistance. How gracious He is to strive with us in order to turn us to Christ! May there be a turning in our country. Away from sin and self. Away from ecumenism and Rome. Away from apostate Protestantism and empty ritualism. Away to holiness and purity. Away to Christ and the Bible.

" Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel" Ezekiel 33.11.

Over dear Ireland Lord send the fire.
Free State and Ulster, grant our desire.
Set Ireland free Lord, all power is Thine
Send us revival as in '59.



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Those words, so often sung in prayer meetings, must ever contain the only true hope for the people of this land, north and south. I know that it is the desire of the Free Presbyterian Church that God will visit this country and sweep men and women, Protestants and Roman Catholics, into the Kingdom of His Dear Son, by the power of Christ's Gospel. May the tragedy of the Enniskillen awaken those who love Christ and stir them to pray. May the activities of the ecumenists alarm all who value their Gospel heritage and cause them to man the ramparts of the watch-tower of prayer. "O GOD GIVE US NOT OVER AS A PREY TO OUR ENEMIES."

This is the burden of my soul.