

The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Should Mr. Nigel Dodds, MP, have attended the Queen's "Golden Jubilee" ecumenical service in St. Anne's Cathedral in Belfast?



The Queen and Prince Philip

The synopsis of a sermon preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, Lord's Day 19th May by Rev. Ivan Foster.

"And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?" Ezra 9:13-14.

Our civic duty is summed up in the words of Peter in 1 Peter 2:17: "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king." We are to "honour" or place a value upon the ruler. In our case, it is Queen Elizabeth II.

Let me say that I do place a value upon our Queen. I hope that I do not undervalue her contribution to the well-being of the nation but I would also be careful not to over-estimate her influence. I trust that I can look upon and appreciate what she has done for us as a people. I believe that the Queen, in many ways, has been a pillar of modesty in her personal deportment and she has displayed lady-like decorum in the midst of many trying circumstances. But I likewise hope that I am not blinded by patriotism as to how she has been used by the ecumenical movement to advance its evil cause. She has openly espoused ecumenism and against that I must protest.

On Wednesday past, a special service marking the Queen's Golden Jubilee was held in St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast. It was heralded as an ecumenical event. The leaders of the ecumenical churches took a prominent part in it. The head of the Roman Catholic church, Archbishop Sean Brady, prayed during the service. He did not pray for the Queen but thanked God for the Bible! How ironic that the head of the Roman Catholic church in Ireland should thank God for the book which his church officially rejects and which he, and every fellow priest, defies by the teaching of doctrines and a way of salvation which are in contradiction of the Bible's message.

But this was not the only hypocrisy witnessed that day. Indeed, the hypocritical heart of ecumenism was displayed for all to see.

The faith of Sean Brady is denounced in the strongest terms by the official creed of the denomination hosting the event, the Church of Ireland. Its official creed is the 39 Articles of Religion. Article 22 states: "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



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to the word of God." Articles 31 states: "The offering of Christ once made is the perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said that the priests did offer Christ for the quick and the dead to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits." There can be no mistaking the intentions of the compilers of these articles. They were of the opinion that Romanism was anti-Christian!

Another participant, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, swore an ordination oath in which he claimed he believed that: "There is no other head of the Church, but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself, in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God", The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 26, paragraph 6. That means he professes to believe that the Roman Catholic church is anti-Christian. It is a counterfeit of the devil!

The position of the Methodist Church, which was also represented at the service, is basically the same, as John Wesley's notes on the New Testament, a foundational statement of Methodist beliefs, clearly demonstrate. Officially, Archbishop Sean Brady is denounced as a representative of anti-Christianity by the other churches participating in this service but here he is leading all of those assembled there in prayer!

It is on just such an occasion that the Christian's duty to God takes precedence over his duty to man. To attend the service and so honour the Queen required the Christian to dishonour God by disobeying His clear command to remain apart from such unscriptural activities. Ecumenism is built upon the premise that the Reformation was wrong and that it is God's will that all of Christendom reunite, and that under the Pope. The Free Presbyterian Church, in company with like-minded believers throughout the world, has contended against such teaching and has striven to call the people of Northern Ireland out of the ecumenical denominations. Furthermore, the Free Presbyterian Church has claimed that the troubles through which we are passing and the devastation that the cause of Biblical Protestantism has endured over the last 50-odd years, are a direct result of the judgment of God upon the land for its wilful departure from His Word and His holy standards and the paths that our forefathers walked in under His blessing.

Some may point the finger at the terrorists and blame them for our troubles. They, and the other troublers of our land, are but the rod of chastening in the hands of a God, offended by people heeding the evils of ecumenism! This has been a central truth in the witness of the Free Presbyterian Church and God has honoured us for stating it and standing against ecumenism.

The choice for the Christian, regarding the service in St. Anne's, was a simple one. Honour God or honour the Queen by becoming involved in a Bible-denying ecumenical gathering. It was not an unprecedented choice. Hear the Word of God. "And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak." 1 Kings 22:13-14. The prophet chose jail rather than dishonour God by denying His Word and uniting with the false prophets. Shadrach,



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Meshach, and Abednego, commonly called the three Hebrew children of Daniel chapter 3, and Daniel himself in chapter 6, also provide us with examples of the choice often faced by God's people.

That, basically, was the choice faced by Mr. Nigel Dodds, MP, when presented with an invitation to join the ecumenical gathering in the cathedral.

It has to be said that the penalty for refusing to attend the ecumenical service was not life-threatening, but at the worst, would have been a little name-calling by his political opponents — something which most politicians in Northern Ireland accept as part of the job.

Sadly, however, Mr. Dodds decided to attend the service and, consequently, disobeyed the plain teaching of the Word of God and defied the stand and witness of the Free Presbyterian Church. Tonight, I want to reiterate the teaching of God's Word on this matter and comment upon the significance of such a going back on the stand of separation from apostasy that such an action entails.

Tonight is a sad night for me and for all who love the cause of Christ in this land. For many, the issue of the ecumenical service is a very minor matter. It is not so for me or any of those who have given themselves over to combatting what they deem to be the greatest threat to the gospel of Christ today. The incident has caused me grief of heart and I stand in the pulpit tonight to carry out a duty which I earnestly wish I had not to perform. The central issue The issue that lies at the heart of this matter may be for some of little importance. I believe that heaven does not consider it so! Please turn to God's Word, to Ezra 9:13-14. These verses are set in the midst of a chapter in which one man grieves over the news of what many amongst the people of God are engaged in. The fact that he seemed, for a time, to be on his own in grieving over the matter does not mean it was of no importance.

Please consider with me:

I. THE NATURE OF THE SIN OVER WHICH EZRA MOURNED.

Our text tells us that the actions in which many leading Israelites engaged, are:

1. A breach of God's law. The issue at the heart of this matter is obedience to God. Their marrying into the heathen nations around them was a breach of God's law. This is made plain in verses 1-3; 10-11. This is what broke Ezra's heart. Note that in verse 2 it is stated that the princes and rulers were the chief offenders.

2. It entailed an affinity with abomination. It entailed a marrying into heathendom and therefore marrying the cause of the heathen. Nigel Dodds formed an affinity with ecumenism when he went to that service, irrespective of whether he intended to or not. That is the teaching of 2 Corinthians 6:14. He will not ever again be able to protest effectively against it until he repents and publicly repudiates his action!

3. Ezra identified himself with the sin of the people. Note the use of the words "our iniquities", "our trespass", verses 6-7. He takes the guilt of the sin upon himself though he would have had no active part in the transgression. In truth, none of us can hold up our hands and say I have no guilt in this matter. Within the Free Presbyterian Church there has been a breaking down of the walls of separation for some time. Ezra was saying, "I should have seen this happening and acted earlier. I must share in the guilt of this matter." So



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must we all regarding the St Anne's ecumenical gathering. Such actions do not take place without signs of their approach, but many have been content to ignore the break-down of separation, aye, even been ashamed of the stand we used to take as a denomination. In so doing, we contributed to Wednesday's sad event. Gaps (Ezekiel 22:30-31) have been evident in the hedge, but they have been ignored. Parents have been willing to send their children to a state school system where, for some years, a programme of ecumenical "inter-mingling" has been compulsory. Multi-faithism has been promoted while the presentation by teachers of Christ as the only Redeemer of sinners has been forbidden. Parents have been willing to watch their children attend social functions within the ecumenical denominations and church officers have seen it too and done nothing. These things lead on to the more obvious breaches such as what happened at St. Anne's Cathedral.

II. THE AGGRAVATION OF THE SIN.

Ezra uses the word "again" in verse 14.

1. Israel had done this before. Verses 7-10. Israel had suffered great judgment for sin and had but recently been recovered from the consequences of God's judgment and now they were about to repeat their folly.

2. God had mercy upon them. Verse 9. He delivered them from the bondage that sin had brought upon them. The Free Presbyterian Church is a church brought out of bondage. Many here tonight can recall the darkness in which they dwelt when God had mercy upon them. Are we to return to that darkness? May God spare us from such madness.

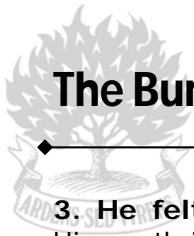
3. They had enjoyed a little reviving. Do we so despise that blessing we enjoyed that we should consider returning to the apostasy? Has not God built us up? These recent blessings made the sin all the greater. Let Free Presbyterians weep lest such breaches in the ranks become acceptable and we see our children return to the soul-damning darkness of ecumenical apostasy.

III. THE DREADED OUTCOME OF THE SIN.

The reaction of Ezra was no exaggeration or unwarranted display of emotion. He had cause for the fear he evidently felt.

1. He felt the unreasonableness of such a sin. Hear God's view of such actions. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Isaiah 1:2-3. This is the measure of the stupidity exercised by any who return to ecumenism.

2. He felt shame. Verses 5-6. His first words were words of shame. "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens," Ezra 9:6. How can we look God in the face again if we do not denounce this sin and oppose it forthrightly. This is a time for those who are on the Lord's side to show themselves, declare themselves, irrespective of who is offended or annoyed.



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3. He felt fear. He dreaded what God could do. We are in the hands of God. To provoke His wrath is dangerous. God's anger would be stirred by this action and a consuming judgment follow without possibility of escape. This entails an action which is more damaging by far than any political sellout or terrorist outrage we may have seen. God is not an indifferent spectator of our affairs.

IV. THE ONLY RESPONSE OF THE BELIEVER TO THE SIN.

Please note the reaction of Ezra to the news, for it is the reaction we should all engage in.

1. He did not consult with anyone. Verse 3. Before preaching this message, I did not consult with others as to the advisability of speaking out on this issue. I did not need to. There is only one authority in this matter. There is only one opinion that needs to be considered — The Lord's! This is not an issue that must be brought to the bar of public opinion or considered in the light of what may gather a few votes. It is not a matter of being "politically correct" but rather of obeying God's Word.

2. He prayed. Verse 5. Note the time of his prayer — at the time of the offering up of the evening lamb. This reminds us of Calvary. It was at this time of the day that the Saviour offered up Himself upon the cross. If we are to be heard of God, we must mingle our prayers with the sweet incense of the sacrifice of Calvary. Such prayers will tell with God and with men. Others took a lead from him and prayed alongside him. His actions must have been very public.

3. He rebuked the sin. His prayer was one of rebuke. He made plain to God just what he felt about what had happened. This is a very important element of Christian protest. Men may take little heed to what I say in a small place like Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church but we must ever be mindful of God's eye upon us. He will see and hear us protesting.

4. He taught. A willingness to be taught was manifested amongst those who had sinned, 10:1-9. The man who condemned their sin was seen by them as the best guide and the truest friend in this time of trouble. So they said to him, "Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it," Ezra 10:3-4. Ezra was deemed the man to help them. Would it not be wonderful if there was a turning to the Word of God and a following of its guidance? May God give an ear for His Word again to His people in this land for we have undoubtedly turned our ears away and have despised the stand and teaching of former days.

Revelation of Rome's iniquity

It should be borne in mind that the ecumenical service in St Anne's Cathedral was set in the context of a time when God's merciful providence has been laying bare the evil corruptions of popery worldwide. God's people have been praying that the revelations of the perversions of the Romish priesthood may cause many Roman Catholics to see the true nature of that system to which they belong.

To think that in the midst of such revelations, Christians would consider fellowshipping within a service designed to promote a return to that perverted system! Is not this a day of



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confusion of face?

May God have mercy upon His cause and turn us back to Himself.