



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

### Separation from the apostasy of the Presbyterian Church still a live issue! Part 2.

For some weeks, an exchange between a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, who signed himself " Bible believing evangelical," and the Editor has taken place on The Burning Bush website guest book. The challenge raised by the PCI minister was why Free Presbyterian ministers call the PCI 'apostate' and yet still participate in its funeral services. It was



thought that this exchange might be of interest to our readers since many do not have access to the internet and so part of the exchange was reproduced in last month's issue of The Burning Bush. Here is the remainder. Others posted their thoughts on the issue — some siding with the PCI minister and others opposing him. To see the full exchange visit our guest book ([http://www.ivanfoster.org/guest\\_view.asp](http://www.ivanfoster.org/guest_view.asp)). It is to be noted that the charity shown by those FP ministers who did share funeral services with this PCI minister had their charity turned against them and used in an attempt to show that the FP Church was recanting its views on the PCI's apostasy or otherwise they would not have fellowship with him. A charitable view of those who are in disobedience will always be used by them to justify their disobedience. The Editor's responses are in bold type.

4/8/2005 Ivan, this whole issue I think revolves around what we understand as to what the church is. This is really where we disagree. Can there be error in a church and it still be a true church? '...particular churches, ... are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and publick worship performed more or less purely in them.' (WCF25.4) I am in PCI because I believe while there is error in it (as there is in the FPC) I have a responsibility to work for its reform. When you consider the OT church particularly in the time of the Kings, was there terrible error? There was, but the prophets did not leave that church but worked for its reform. I wonder can you accept the WCF definition of what the church is? Can FP ministers who don't accept infant baptism accept the WCF definition of the church? 'The visible church ... consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children...' (WCF25.2) As someone who has debated these issues before with Baptists, this is where the dividing line came down, the definition of the church.

**You are deliberately clouding the issue and that in itself indicates that you know you have lost your case. The definition of the church does not come into it. The**



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**issue is — “Should a believer maintain an association with other professing believers who by their words and by their activities, deny the faith they profess?” That is something a Baptist such as CH Spurgeon or a Presbyterian such as Henry Cooke would agree on. The PCI is a denomination which has departed from the faith and you remain within it and thereby become guilty of its sins. Your choice is that of Lot, of Israel in the day of the golden calf ( Ex 32:26) and of God’s people on many subsequent occasions. It was the prophet Jehu who said: “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD,” 2 Chron 19:2. That is a question you too must answer. I repeat my challenge to you. If I have it all wrong, well here is the opportunity to show Ulster that you have it right!**

4/8/2005. Dear Ivan, Sorry for not responding sooner as I was away. Regarding the vote at the last assembly, I want to state clearly that it was not a vote about retention of the doctrine of justification but rather whether or not our doctrine committee makes a report on how the doctrine can be relevantly proclaimed today. I'm surprised in you trusting in the 'ecumenical press' for you information. The full text of the motion was 'The the report be received and in its further deliberations the committee be asked to consider how best the historic doctrine of Justification by Faith can be proclaimed relevantly in our present situation.' The voting on this issue was on wider issues than just theological convictions. Regarding your response to my critique of your use of the scripture references, I am very disappointed that you wish to judge that my interpretation is based on a desire just to stay in PCI. Let me say the opposite is the case, I am still in PCI as I believe from scripture this is God's will. Your teaching on Matthew 23 and 24 remains unconvincing. Nowhere do we see Paul telling the other apostles to break the 'link with Judaism' but rather in the light of the death of Christ, he teaches against them continuing or insisting on Jewish practices which Christ has fulfilled by His death. As regards the Acts 19 account I'm glad you accept this does not imply this was the end of Paul's contact with Jewish synagogues. I cannot see how Paul leaving that synagogue in Ephesus when the people stubbornly refused to accept the Gospel (and no doubt Paul and the believers staying became unworkable), with my situation as a minister in the churches I'm in. Before I came as minister I preached a clear gospel message, speaking clearly of sin and the need of salvation, after that sermon the congregations gave me an unanimous call. How does that relate to Paul leaving the synagogue in Acts 19 due to stubborn unbelief? In regards to Prof Davey, I'm not saying the events of his trial were a myth, but I was highlighting that since you have failed to understand and accurately portray what happened at the General Assembly just 1 year ago, what hope is there of accuracy regarding events at the General Assembly 80 years ago? Davey was acquitted after his trial on the grounds of what he said that day. While both you and I can find it very hard to understand how he was acquitted, none of us know all that was said in that trial. Holmes in his History of Presbyterianism stated that Davey was acquitted as the church was convinced of his orthodoxy and not because the church was moving away from orthodoxy. In any case it is impossible to rerun the trial today. Even if



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we both accept that the church did make a mistake 80 years ago it is wrong to condemn the PCI children of today for the sin of their spiritual forefathers. The church today does not deny the Deity of Christ or the merits of His atonement. Biblically, is it necessary to publicly condemn all who are guilty of heresy in the past, or is it enough to condemn the heresy? In some cases in the scriptures the writers have named the false teachers as they thought it necessary and beneficial but not in all cases. 2 Peter 2 the false teachers are not named but their practice and false teaching refuted. In regards to saying that there is no value in the signing of the WCF as now those signing do not have to accept a part of Chapter 25 Section VI, this is ridiculous considering that the FP ministers and elders do not have to accept Chapter 28. In that you mention the WCF let me quote a section of it - 'The visible church ... consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children...' (WCF25.2) '...particular churches, ... are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and publick worship performed more or less purely in them.' (WCF25.4) I'm not saying PCI is a pure church, but as it is made of those who profess the true religion and as such it is a church of Jesus Christ. Your problem is a Baptist rather than a Presbyterian doctrine of 'the church'.

**I do not believe that you are being as forthright as one would expect a minister of the gospel to be. The report of the speech by Rev Andrew Kerr, nephew of Presbyterian Moderator, Rev Ken Newell and minister of Coagh, Ballygoney and Saltersland congregations, indicates that there was disagreement in the General Assembly on whether or not the doctrine as set forth in the Catechism was being preached. Rev. Kerr appears to have wanted to have the doctrine proclaimed as stated in the Catechism, irrespective of offence caused in ecumenical circles. His amendment narrowly won the day. My natural scepticism of press reports was overcome by the fact that I never read any Presbyterian minister or elder seeking to deny and refute the report. You let that report in the press stand and you thus gave the impression to all who could not attend that meeting that it was a true report of events. Now, when it suits you, you wish to deny the report and fault me for believing what you by your silence, gave credence to! Furthermore, I was led to believe that the press report was accurate by the comments of Rev. Neilly of Buckna PCI on my website last year. I quote: We believe that although our denomination has wandered away from the truth in practice, that the foundational principles of our church are still founded upon the Word of God, and we seek to bring our church back to standing on that Word alone. At our General Assembly we moved an amendment that the doctrine of Justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone be examined by the doctrine committee and applied throughout the church again -we won that debate. There were others that we lost, but we live to fight another day. In closing, can I once again thank you for your article, and encourage you to pray for those of us who are seeking to take a stand upon the Word of God, fighting error, and upholding truth, Yours in**



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Christ, Mark Neilly (Minister of Buckna Presbyterian Church) Your answer to me on what Paul taught is a mere exercise in semantics since what you say amounts to what I stated despite your rejection of my views! There is no difference between "Judaism" and "Jewish practices". Your reference to your "unanimous call" is not relevant since you are not comparing like with like.

There was support for the gospel within the synagogue in Ephesus just as there is within the PCI. But the support for the gospel in the PCI is not unanimous as the regular election of an ecumenical and Bible-denying moderator indicates. There is no unanimous or even majority support for the gospel in the PCI therefore your continuance in fellowship with it is not sanctioned by the Word of God. How jesuitical you are! Either Davey was a heretic or he was not. His writings, never retracted by him, plainly say that he was. Your statement about children suffering for the sins of their fathers shows how far you have drifted from the Word of God. I thought that the Bible taught that all mankind was suffering as a result of Adam's transgression, S. Cat 15-19. Of course, a succeeding generation suffers as a result of the failures of their forefathers. What I said to your friend James Allan on this point is worth repeating. 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,' Galatians 5:9. Achan's sin brought judgment on all of Israel. Why? Because it was not dealt with by all and thus they partook in his sin. It was only when they did act against the sin that God lifted His judgment. Listen to the warning of John. "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. Those that fellowship with those guilty of sin become guilty themselves of the same sins! Revelation 18:4 states that plainly too. "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." These were God's people. They showed the marks of grace and doubtless acted as Christians in many ways, even to the point of witnessing to and winning some of their neighbours to Christ. But they were still in the wrong place. It is not our experience and enjoyment of God's grace that indicate that we are in the centre of His will but what God's Word alone says.' The Bible's teaching on the treatment of heretics is rather simple. "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject," Titus 3:10. The PCI failed to do either of these things. They neither admonished Davey nor rejected him. Instead they elevated and have honoured him to this day. On the matter of signing of the WCF, you are again being, at best, obtuse. I merely pointed out that for quite a few decades the WCF had been signed by many ministers and elders and had not been accepted, contrary to the public declaration their signing entailed. What value may we therefore place upon any signatures if such chicanery had been practised and tolerated for so long? My problem with the PCI stems from my being a Christian! God's Word tells me plainly what to do, Ephesians 5:5-11. I am to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." How can you say that you obey this when you are a member of a church which is in fellowship with Roman Catholicism. Do you agree with your moderator's eulogy of the dead pope? If you don't, where may I read of your disassociating of your-



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**self and your congregations from it. And do you really believe that all within the PCI profess the “true religion”? One final thing. Did you notice the challenge I issued? In the light of your response above, it is more relevant than ever.**

4/12/2005. Dear Ivan, it's 'brass neck' back again. Let me agree with you that there is a lot of things that go on within PCI which are clearly wrong. I'm opposed to all ecumenism, the compromising 'alpha course', the personal invitation to the head of the RCC to the opening of the Assembly, the ordination of women. These things are wrong, on that we agree. Where we disagree is what should evangelicals do as a response to these things. You say leave and give many verses to support your position. I will come back to you on these verses in due course but not now due to my limit of 750 words. My main support for maintaining my position within PCI is my understanding of what the church is. As the WCF states the church can have impurity and still be a true church. As I need to take time in considering the verses you have given in regards leaving PCI, may I humbly suggest you need to take more time in considering this whole issue of the nature of the church. Let me respond to 'confused' in Tyrone. One of our difficulties in regards to disciplining those who are ecumenical is that they are orthodox in their theology. I can't speak of all the ecumenists but some who I know well are saved men who preach the need of salvation. You and I will both agree there is a tremendous inconsistency here. As regarding the debate at the last General Assembly let me clarify a few things regarding the points you make.

1. What was been discussed was actually a General report by the doctrine committee on the whole area of ministry. When any committee makes a report at the assembly the first resolution is always that the report be received. This is the point members of the assembly can put forward an amendment to basically introduce a new resolution.

2. What the amendment in practical terms means is that the doctrine committee will look at the whole issue of how the doctrine of justification can be best shared. At this years General Assembly the doctrine committee will give a report on this issue.

3. I can't give the reason why all those who voted against the motion did so. Some probably don't want this report as they don't hold to the biblical doctrine of justification (although they'll not admit that), others oppose it because of the impact it may have on ecumenism, some opposed it because they just don't want anything that causes disagreement. I know some evangelicals were not particularly supportive as it would time taken away from the doctrine committee concentrating on the very important issue of ministry which they have been working on for sometime, others may feel this is more an issue for the Board of Mission rather than the Doctrine Committee. Many different reasons and things are not just as black and white as some would make it out to be.

4. I'm not exactly sure about the 'vitriolic name calling' in this case. What I can say is that sometimes some ecumenists get pretty annoyed when things don't go their way. To be honest this is a sight to enjoy.

5. In regards to the further questions put forward by Rev Kerr, these questions will have to be considered by the doctrine committee. You ask what is being done regarding compromise, can you not see that this report will in fact challenging compromise? Much goes on within PCI to fight against compromise but I have to say the main way has be through prayer and Biblical preaching so that a generation will rise up who will know, love and hold



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to the truth of Jesus Christ. Many of us are quietly working at this and bit by bit seeing progress. Please pray for us. In regards the comments of Rev Andrew Foster, (I see I'm taking on the family) I kept my name hidden as I was dealing with funerals and not wanting to cause pain to families involved or embarrassment to the FP ministers involved. You may not accept my reasons as genuine, that's up to you. As for my boldness in proclaiming the truth, I've been told I'd make a good Free P Minister. I can't figure that out, is it a compliment or insult???

**I have to tell you that you will not be using this website to continue your rather shallow defence of your untenable position. From the beginning of this discussion, I have repeatedly asked that you indicate who you are but you have refused. Out of a desire to be as fair as possible and to let you have your say, I have tolerated your abuse of anonymity. I have offered to debate the issues raised here with you at a venue of your choice but again you have failed to respond. There is a limit to which I am willing to go in order to provide you with a platform to air your unbiblical views and you have reached it. As for the WCF stating "the church can have impurity and still be a true church" I have no trouble with that fact. I fully accept it. The true believer is but a miniature of that scenario. But "impurity" is one thing, APOSTASY is another. Apostasy has no place within the true church and cannot be tolerated but rejected either by expulsion or, if that cannot be done, by the obedient Christian separating from the church thus embracing apostasy. It is apostasy not impurity within the PCI we are speaking of. Henry Cooke campaigned in the 19th century for the removal of Arianism from within the PCI and won. Had the church voted against him, he would have separated himself from that body since it would have embraced apostasy. However, embracing apostasy is what the PCI did in 1926 and again in 1953. You cannot hide behind a misuse of theological terms, at least not on this site. If you are not going to abide by the simple courtesy required of those posting comments then no further posting will be accepted from you.(The Editor. PS. You enjoy the luxury of seeing who it is that is answering you. We don't!**

4/13/2005 Dear Ivan, I accept your surrender!!!

**It would be a little difficult to surrender to you (if that were my mind) since you still have not had the courage to give your name. What a contrast with Paul the apostle who was unashamed of his message and his stand, Rom 1:16. I dare say you likewise believe that you have defeated the ecumenists in the PCI and that they have surrendered to you. You have displayed for all to see a supercilious and**



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shallow “evangelicalism” which accounts for the onward march of the apostasy within your denomination. Doubtless the enemies of Christ in the same manner counted it a victory for them when “he answered . . . to never a word.” The Editor.