



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Presbyterian leadership “pendulum” swings back to ecumenism



The New Moderator

The new moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Dr. David Clarke of Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, is on the ecumenical wing of the denomination. His election with the support of 14 of the 21 presbyteries within the denomination is a reminder of the base compromise of Presbyterian evangelicals each year when they engage in this sinful “merry-go-round” of annually swapping the highest office in their church between a violator of their doctrinal creed and one who professes to adhere to it.

Dr. Clarke, a 59-year-old Ballymena-born man, is pastor of Terrace Row Presbyterian Church, Coleraine.

He will succeed the present moderator, Rev Dr Harry Uprichard, at the Church’s General Assembly in June.

Dr. Uprichard is an evangelical. How strong his evangelical convictions are may be judged by the fact that he is willing to hand over the care of the denomination to a man who openly acknowledges that he rejects the Bible’s view of Roman Catholicism. In truth, for Dr. Uprichard to hand over to the new moderator is a betrayal of Christ and His people within that denomination. It is a failure to stand up for Christ, to uphold the interests of Christ’s cause, crown and covenant and that for the sake of ecclesiastical expediency.

Predecessors

Not for Dr. Uprichard and his many evangelical predecessors, who have gone down this road of compromise before him, the path travelled by the apostle Paul. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,” 2 Timothy 4:7. Dr. Uprichard may have finished his course as moderator but he will not have fought a good fight or have kept the faith. Instead he will betray it by handing over the reins of moderatorship to a modernist and liberal.

The new Moderator said: “While I’m surprised, I consider this an immense honour for myself, my family and my congregation and, though unworthy, I will seek to serve my Master and my Church to the utmost of my ability.”

Dr. Clarke will, of course, present himself as a faithful man of God. In one interview he gave, he spoke of himself as “ . . . preaching what I hope is Biblically faithful and rooted in real life, yet which is encouraging and at the same time challenging to the listener about their own lives and lifestyles.

The Real Agenda



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However, his real agenda may be seen in other comments he makes. "Pastoral care, growing good relations with other churches and providing activities for all ages that develop our faith are also important aspects of our congregation's ministry to the community in Coleraine."

Reservations

He did, however, express strong reservations about inter-faith worship, involving Christians and other worldwide faiths. Back in 1992, Mr Clarke travelled to major cities in the United States with the then Coleraine-based Roman Catholic priest Sean Rogan, on a "Rev" trip aimed at accurately informing the American public about the situation in Northern Ireland. He said he found this "a valuable experience."

In these weasel words is found the true theology of Dr. David Clarke.

He clearly indicates that he is "comfortable about taking part with other leaders of the main denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church, in community initiatives and civic worship, where matters of theology, peculiar to his Presbyterianism, would not be compromised."

Chicanery

Such a statement is a model of chicanery. There is no act of "civic worship" in fellowship with Roman Catholicism, which is not in direct contravention of Presbyterian theology! When Christ commands His Church: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them," Ephesians 5:11, He includes acts of "civic worship" amongst those activities prohibited.

Dr. Clarke took an oath that he would uphold the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith. That Confession states clearly what the Presbyterian view of Roman Catholicism is. "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." Chapter XXV, para VI.

Compromise

With such a system there can be no compromise. The differences between Romanism and Biblical Christianity are not matters on the periphery of truth but centre upon those doctrines central to the gospel: the character of God, the person of Christ, the headship of the church, the means of redemption, the authority of the Bible. These and many other matters of cardinal importance separate us from Rome.



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Dr. Clarke is one who is “comfortable” fellowshiping and worshipping with representatives of that system which he swore he believed was led by the one termed the “man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ . . .”

Hypocrisy

This declares him to be the grossest hypocrite and deceiver.
Into his hands Dr. Harry Uprichard will, doubtless accompanied by many glowing terms of congratulations and approbation, commit the care of the people of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

What a sham and a shame that once great church has become!