



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Separation from the apostasy of the Presbyterian Church still a live issue! Part 1



ministers call the PCI 'apostate' and yet still participate in its funeral services. It was

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**

thought that this exchange might be of interest to our readers since many do not have access to the internet and so it has been reproduced here. 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). 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.

3/25/2005. Dear Ivan, If the Presbyterian Church is apostate as you claim, why do Free Presbyterian Ministers take part in funerals and weddings in Presbyterian Churches?

We have a policy of requiring those who post comments or questions on this site to identify themselves as it seems rather a cowardly way for a Christian to ask questions. If you come back with a further comment please bear that in mind. I am not the best person to answer that question since it is not my practice to do so but I presume that on the very few occasions where such a situation arises the ministers in question draw a distinction between the denomination and the individual minister. A denomination may be apostate yet have within it those who are genuinely saved. I believe that the Bible says that they should not be there but they do not see it that way. Again, I presume that any partaking in the funeral is either in the home or at the graveside, which again draws a distinction between the apostate denomination and the service taking place. I have never been asked by a minister of an ecumenical denomination to participate so I do not have the difficulty of finding an answer to the question and that at a time of family grief. To get a definitive answer I would suggest that you ask those ministers you are referring to rather than coming to my website.



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3/27/2005. Dear Ivan, One reason I use a pseudonym is that I don't want to embarrass the Free Presbyterian Ministers involved in these funerals or to bring embarrassment to those going through a time of grief. On two occasions recently I have shared funerals with Free Presbyterian ministers in Presbyterian Church Buildings. On another occasion I was asked by a Free Presbyterian Minister to take part in a funeral service he was conducting. As I'm a Presbyterian Minister, I think this shows that in reality not all Free Presbyterian ministers hold to the view that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is apostate. If someone advocates the position you hold, then that would surely mean that Jesus, the apostle Paul and the other disciples were wrong to take part in worship in the temple and Jewish synagogues.

I have just returned home from a trip so I apologise for the delay in posting the more recent comments. In response to your latter point, it is precisely for this reason that Paul "separated the disciples" from the synagogue in Ephesus "when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude", Acts 19:9. It is for the same reason that the Saviour turned His back on the temple after He condemned the Jewish leaders in Matthew 23 and closed His condemnation with those memorable words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple," Matt 23:37-24:1. The words and actions of Christ and His apostles do not favour your position as a minister of a denomination which voted into the office of moderator a man who denied the deity of Christ and the merits of His atoning blood. Rather they condemn you. That crime stands yet in God's book against the Presbyterian Church and it has neither apologised for nor repudiated the exonerating of Prof. Davey from a charge of heresy or later endorsing his wickedness by voting him into the office of moderator. I notice it does not seem to trouble you when you "embarrass" me by public criticism though you use the exceedingly thin excuse of not wishing to embarrass unnamed FP ministers in order to cover your cowardice in not giving your name.

3/31/2005. Dear Ivan, I'm sorry if you think I'm "embarrassing" you with public criticism". As far as I was concerned I was raising a point for debate not criticising you. If you are willing I will debate this issue but only in a spirit of brotherly love.



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You do not embarrass me. I was merely contrasting (with a little touch of irony) your concerns for those you are seeking to shield by remaining anonymous and your readiness to criticise my calling the Presbyterian Church apostate, which is the view of my denomination and which every F P minister swears to uphold at his ordination. "Brotherly love" requires openness and honesty. You imply that "brotherly love" is absent on my part. How is it brotherly to criticise me without even identifying yourself? And how is it lacking in "brotherly love" to publicly stand for and defend from Holy Scripture that which you swore to uphold at your ordination?

3/31/05 Dear Ivan, Before responding on your last comments to me, I want to point out a very dangerous inaccuracy in your comments on the General Assembly voting on the doctrine of justification. (This comment was contained in my response to another correspondent who was supporting "Bible- Beliving evangelical"— The Editor.) It was not a vote regarding the retention of the doctrine of justification. Please get your facts right. Let me also say I was not implying that brotherly love was absent on your part. I was referring to the manner I hope future debate would be conducted. You were reading into the text something that wasn't there. I hope you don't do that on Sunday! In regards your biblical support for your position of separation, I think it is weak. The Matthew 23 incident of Jesus leaving the temple did not mean a rejection of the worship at the temple as Peter and John return to the temple in Acts 3. In regards to Paul going to the lecture hall in Tyrannus it is more than stretching the text to say that this was an end to contact by NT believers with Jewish synagogue worship. As regards your favourite subject of Prof Davey (this incident took place before even my father was born I may add) what did he say? Where did he say it? When did he say? What evidence do you have he said these things? I hope your evidence is not hearsay and more accurate than your comments regarding the vote at the last General Assembly on justification. That is a fact that the subordinate standards of PCI are still the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. All ministers have to subscribe to them. This is the official position of our church. You previously made a comment about Dr Uprichard being involved in the ordination of unsaved elders and ministers. But you cannot guarantee me that every elder and minister in the FPC is saved. If there were false teachers in the church in the NT times (2 Peter 2) there will be today. If a PCI minister is proved to have denied the truth of the Gospel he will be disciplined.

[1] The inaccuracy consisted in my stating that the majority in favour of the retention of the Confession's statement on Justification was 1 vote when I should have said 2. I apologise for that for with a majority of that size I can well understand that every vote counts! The following quote is from the Newsletter's report of the debate. "A Tyrone Presbyterian minister was a prime mover in a vote at yesterday's General Assembly which upheld the traditional Protestant Reformed tenet of Justification by Faith. The Rev Andrew Kerr, minister of Coagh, Bally-



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goney and Saltersland congregations, made a surprise intervention during a debate on doctrinal matters. He tabled an amendment which called on the Presbyterian Church to consider how best the truth of the historic doctrine of Justification by Faith can be proclaimed relevantly in the modern situation. The amendment was carried on a 163-161 vote."

[2] The text I preach from each Sabbath does not appear to say one thing only to be changed by the author as soon as that interpretation becomes uncomfortable. If brotherly love was already being displayed in your estimate, you would not have insisted that it be displayed!

[3] Your critique of my use of two passages of Holy Scripture is to be expected. After all, you cannot allow God's Word to say that which would condemn your position within an apostate denomination. The Saviour not merely went out of temple never to return but, as I quoted, He declared that "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," Matthew 23:38. In the next chapter He detailed the coming destruction of the temple to His enquiring disciples, 24:2. As for the practice of the Jewish converts still attending the temple as did Peter and John, if that is your basis for continuing in the PCI then it brings you into conflict with the stand of Paul against the link with Judaism as he battled the reluctance of men like Peter to break with the temple etc. As for your response to Acts 19, it clearly demonstrates the difficulties you face when considering God's Word on this topic. Paul broke fellowship with the synagogue in Ephesus when the majority utterly rejected the gospel. That indicates his practice. Yes, he did enter other synagogues to give to them (as commanded by the Saviour) the same opportunity and if they reacted as did the Ephesus Jews then he would again have "separated" (I am sure that you know that the word means to "sever, to mark off by boundaries") the Christians under him. The principle is there for us to follow or reject as you have.

[4] It is amazing that you would suggest that the well documented history of the Davey trial, exoneration and later honouring, is merely a fiction I have invented. It seems that more than Communists indulged in "historical revision"! I have beside me three books: "The Changing Vesture of the faith" by J E Davey; "Faith in an Unchanging Vesture" written under the pseudonym "Leloumenos", an answer to Davey's heresies; "Presbyterianism on Trial" by Rev. James Edgar of Clonaneese Presbyterian church. In these three publications alone there is a full setting forth of the issues surrounding the betrayal of Christ by the PCI in the Davey affair. I can well understand your reluctance to give credence to the truth of this matter and it would not surprise me if you have been brought up to believe that it is all a myth. But the Judgment Day will show sceptics, if they refuse to acknowledge it before then, that I speak the truth. You claim that all ministers and elders of the PCI sign the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. Doubtless that is true. But of what value is that signature when back in the 1980s, the General Assembly had to amend the basis of subscription so that the viewing of the pope as "that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God" is no longer binding upon PCI ministers and elders. Up until then, many were signing it but rejecting that sec-



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tion. It is clear from the vote on "Justification" that the same pertains to that doctrine as well. Sign the Confession yes but believe it no. That is not the spirit of the Church of Christ. Regarding the standing of all of our ministers and elders, they must give a credible testimony of saving faith and that must be backed up by their life. If any elder is discovered falling short of that he will be dealt with by trial and punished accordingly. On the other hand, it is well known that there are those who are elders of the PCI who exhibit every evidence of worldliness and unregeneracy. Of course the same may be said for a number of ministers as well. Moderators frequently join in joint worship with Roman Catholics in violation of their stated faith. This is a denial of the faith. Tell me when such an action was followed by a trial? If the leader publicly acts so, it is not hard to imagine just what is done by the rank and file more furtively! As for debating me, this is not the forum for such a course of action. There are, however, many large public halls in Co. Tyrone in which I would gladly meet you and answer your questions about J E Davey. Though I suppose before that could come about, you would first of all have to find the courage to identify yourself!

The remaining exchanges between the Editor and one who calls himself "Bible-believing evangelical" will be printed in our next issue as space prohibits the printing of the full discussion.