

The Burning Bush—Online article archive

PCI Moderator turns down RUC ecumenical service invite



The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Dr. Harry Uprichard

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Dr. Harry Uprichard, has declined an invitation to attend an inter-denominational service.

The ecumenical service, scheduled for the first Sunday in June, is held to mark the annual RUC George Cross Day. Dr. Uprichard said his decision was taken “simply and purely” on the grounds of personal conscience regarding joint worship.

“We are allowed that option as moderator and the church is being represented,” he said. Past Moderator, Dr. Ken Newell will take Dr. Uprichard’s place at the ecumenical service.

“I am more than happy and more than encouraged to support the work of the RUC whatever the religious affiliations of those connected with it are.”

The Moderator said he appreciated “totally, completely and absolutely, the fine work that has been done and is being done in that particular aspect”.

“My concern is that the involvement of inter-church worship to that degree publicly aligns those of the reformed faith with those not of the reformed faith,” he said.

Deep Fundamental Difference

Dr. Uprichard said there were “insuperable difficulties” connected to interfaith worship and he felt it was “incorrect to be so aligned under those circumstances”.

“There are deep fundamental differences,” he said.

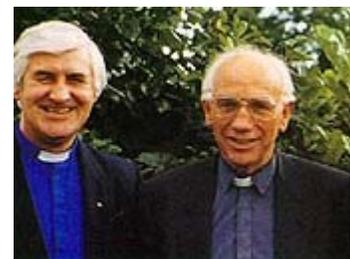
“I respect those who disagree with me, I respect their opinion but I disagree with it, feel I must agree to disagree and that puts me in the position where I can’t be party to involvement.”

The action of Dr. Uprichard is commendable in as far as it goes. However, his refusal to attend this ecumenical service, on the grounds that he gives, raises many questions for himself and others who share his position within the PCI.

If the invitation to share in this ecumenical service must be refused by Dr. Uprichard because of the “deep fundamental differences” he sees existing between Biblical Christianity and the Roman Catholic faith, then how is it that he is content to fellowship with those who see no such “deep fundamental differences” between the PCI and Rome?

He took over as Moderator from a man, Dr. Ken Newell, who virtually runs a joint ministry with a priest in Clonard monastery, Gerry Reynolds. They call their joint witness, “The Clonard/Fitzroy Fellowship.”

Ken Newell is walking in a disorderly fashion as far as the Word



“Bosom Buddies” — Dr. Ken Newell & “Father” Gerry Reynolds.



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of God and the subordinate standards of his own church are concerned. The Christian's attitude to a Ken Newell is clearly set out in God's Word. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us," 2 Thessalonians 3:6. The word "disorderly" carries the meaning of "out of step". How can Dr. Uprichard keep in step with Ken Newell and his ilk within the PCI and at the same time attempt to keep in step with God's Word? It is an impossibility and necessitates a disobeying of God.

I repeat, Dr. Uprichard was correct in refusing to attend the RUC ecumenical service but in so doing he but highlights his ongoing, day to day, compromise with ecumenism within his own denomination.