

Presbyterian Moderator Norman Hamilton is not a 'Mainstream Evangelical'

On his blog site back on 3rd February 2010 Radio Ulster presenter, William Crawley, posted a piece about the 2 leading contenders for the election to the post of Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

In relation to Norman Hamilton, minister of Ballysillan Presbyterian Church in North Belfast who was eventually elected to the post William Crawley wrote this –

'Norman Hamilton, 64, minister of Ballysillan Presbyterian... is a mainstream evangelical who has served on the advisory board of the Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland (now the Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland).'

This statement is in effect an oxymoron [a contradiction in terms] for anyone with an honest understanding of its makeup and aims would know that the 'Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland' or ECONI as it was known was a state funded ecumenical endeavour posing as being 'evangelical'.

In the article located on <http://www.takeheed.info/clouds-of-concern-over-new-horizon/> I wrote -

'in Northern Ireland one organisation that has sought [with government help and funding] to 'break down the barriers' and to promote the 'pathway to peace' has been **ECONI** [**'Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland'**]. The record of this group shows that it is a 'far cry' from historic evangelical thinking and practice and rather than confronting the false gospel of Roman Catholicism it has sought to accommodate Romanism within the boundaries of Orthodox Christianity. The attempt by **ECONI** to 'break down the barriers' and to promote 'the pathway to peace' – a noble and worthy ideal in itself – has sadly been at the expense of 'gospel truth'

Back in 1996 I identified the assistance given by ECONI official Gary Mason to currently suspended priest 'Father' Paul Symonds in the run up to his debate with Rob Zins. I wrote in the short article located on <http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-december-1996/> -

I have just mentioned the debate in which 'Father' Paul Symonds took part last year on the topic of **'Getting To Heaven.'** On that occasion, he was in debate with Rob Zins. In August of this year I wrote to Paul Symonds on a particular issue and took the opportunity to send him a copy of the book - **'Protestants and Catholics: Do they now agree?'** by John Ankerberg. In his reply Paul Symonds wrote

*"Thank you too for the copy of **'Protestants and Catholics: Do they now agree?'** which was infact lent to me by a dear friend (whose father died on 23rd August this year). My friend. a Protestant. thought that book would help me prepare for the encounter with Robert Zins. How right he was! I would have been completely floored by Zins' line of thought - so utterly different to anything I've encountered before in my life - if I hadn't been prepared for it by Ankerberg's book."*

I checked the death notices for 23rd August and saw an insertion relating to the death of the father of the now Methodist Minister (formerly a Baptist Pastor) Gary Mason. Mr Mason is a member of the Steering Group of E.C.O.N.I. (Evangelical Contribution On Northern Ireland) - this is the group which was the subject of my little booklet "**The 'Evangelicals' of E.C.O.N.I.**" in which I challenged their use of the title '**Evangelical**' in the light of the public ecumenical activities of a number of their leading officers and officials. Mr Mason has attended most of the public debates I have organised and by helping the Roman Catholic priest Paul Symonds prepare for his debate with our true brother in the Lord, Rob Zins in his defence of the true biblical gospel as opposed to the false '**gospel**' of Roman Catholicism, Mr Mason has shown himself to be neither friend nor ally of true Evangelicalism. This is one more example of the debasement of the term Evangelical.

It has just emerged in recent days that Mr Hamilton, in his role as Presbyterian Moderator, will attend a 'Papal-attended' service in Westminster Abbey – this is how William Crawley reported it on his blog of 12 September 2010 –

Dr Norman Hamilton has altered his travel plans in order to be present in Westminster Abbey next Friday for an invitation-only service of Evening Prayer which Pope Benedict and the Archbishop of Canterbury will attend.

Thankfully there are still some men within Irish Presbyterianism who take their ordination vows seriously and Mark Neilly, minister of Buckna Presbyterian Church has written the following to several local newspapers –

I write to express my great disgust, frustration and hurt at the news that the Presbyterian Moderator, Dr. Norman Hamilton will be attending an ecumenical service in Westminster Abbey with Pope Benedict XVI.

When elders and ministers are ordained in PCI we sign the Westminster Confession of Faith which states, "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."

Dr. Hamilton will have signed this declaration of his faith also, which makes his attendance at the ecumenical service with the Pope a matter of confusion. If he is now prepared to contradict his earlier confession of faith, what other statements and beliefs that he has previously signed and agreed with are no longer to be believed?

Not only is Mr. Hamilton's desire to pay homage to the Pope an offense to many Presbyterians, but it is an offense to all those of the Protestant community since this same Pope declared in Dominus Iesus, "It is nevertheless difficult to see how the title of "Church" could possibly be attributed to [Protestant communities], given that they do not accept the theological notion of the church in the Catholic sense and that they lack elements considered essential to the Catholic Church."

Pope Benedict XVI teaches that the Roman Catholic Church is the sole true church of Christ and that all other denominations are "not Churches in the true

sense.” Ultimately Dr Hamilton’s desire to attend this service is an offence to the Lord. After all God’s Word asks us, “what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial?”

I would yet urge Dr. Hamilton to reconsider his decision to attend this service and realign himself with the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Protestant Reformation and above all the Word of God!

Mark Neilly (Minister of Buckna Presbyterian Church)

What I have written thus far clearly shows that, contrary to the opinion expressed by William Crawley back in February, Norman Hamilton is no **‘Mainstream Evangelical’**.

In closing I want to share with you a letter that I wrote to Norman Hamilton back in June 2009 – the content is self-explanatory but it illustrates the potential damning eternal consequences of his ecumenical leanings and practice – sadly I have to report that I received no response of any kind to my letter.

Dear Mr Hamilton,

To the best of my knowledge we have never met each other in person but it is possible that you might be familiar with my name and the ministry that I represent. Should that be the case you will probably then be aware that we would view the matter of ‘ecumenism’ from different standpoints. That said please be assured that what I write now is out of sorrow and not anger and is motivated solely out of concern for the eternal well-being of precious souls.

This letter has been prompted by a phone call that I received on Wednesday [24th June] from a good friend and brother in Christ. By way of background he was born and raised in Ardoyne and his parents, both Roman Catholic, ensured that he was brought up in that religious tradition. However, just over 20 years ago, in the gracious and sovereign providence of God, this young man was truly ‘born again’ of the Spirit of the living God and brought to a real and saving faith in Christ alone for His salvation.

Since then he has faithfully sought to be both an obedient son to his parents [his dad is now deceased] and a faithful witness to His Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. His earnest desire has been to see his mum, who is a very devout Roman Catholic particularly devoted to Mary, come into that same living relationship with the living God.

In his phone call he shared with me how in a recent discussion with his mum she had said to him something along these lines – *‘the minister and members of Ballysillan Presbyterian church come to us here at Holy Cross to worship with us and we go up to them to worship there. If they can accept us as Christians why can’t you?’* My friend rang me just to share the total frustration that he feels at how his efforts to witness to his mum concerning the gospel truth that he knows is not found in Roman Catholicism [having himself been saved out of that system] were being thwarted by this ‘ecumenism’.

I am well aware Mr Hamilton of the civil strife that gripped the area where you live and labour and I can understand how you might feel that ‘peace’ on the ground is best served by such joint ‘ecumenism’. However, the eternal ‘peace’ of a sinful soul having been reconciled to God through the preaching of the pure gospel will never be realised by such joint ‘ecumenism’ and

my friend knows well that his mother, as things currently stand, is a lost Roman Catholic who will go straight to hell because of the false teaching that she has been exposed to and is trusting in.

Why am I writing this to you? In the simple hope that you might reconsider your ecumenical involvement and take a fresh look at what is most important – as Paul wrote in **2nd Corinthians 4:18** “**we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal**”.

Just in the post today I received a card from a Christian couple in Australia who have recently begun to receive my ministry newsletter and I enclose herewith a copy of it as it again testifies to how the Lord saved the husband out of the religious deception that is Roman Catholicism. To use a recently coined expression [where MPs published expenses are concerned] I have ‘redacted’ their names to preserve their anonymity.

Finally I enclose a copy of the ministry newsletter they referred to and also a copy of a little booklet that was produced and used by us a few years ago by way of outreach to Roman Catholics.

Once more in closing I would emphasise that in writing I have no desire to be aggressively contentious but wish purely and simply to be a servant of the truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I should add that I did phone your house yesterday and understand that you will be on holiday until towards the end of July so I’m aware that if you do respond it will be somewhat ‘down the line’.

By His grace I am your servant for the Lord Jesus Christ

Cecil Andrews