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lion & lamb



From the Director

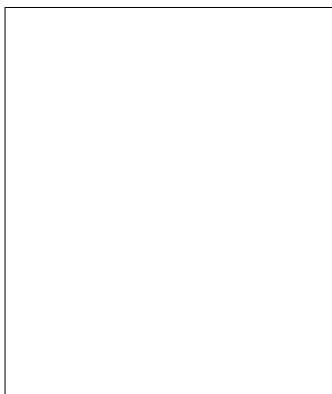
Few of us living in Northern Ireland are under any illusions as to the challenge facing us all over the coming days and weeks. Our experience of a long winter of picketing, commissions and several commendable attempts at accommodation temper our hopes for a resolution of the parades dispute. Yet in the midst of the inevitable confrontation we must continue to plant and nurture the seeds of a better way.

Recently two prominent evangelical members of the Armagh Orange Order signed a letter to the residents of the Garvaghy Road. This action itself is such a seed and it is to be commended. The attitude and approach of the Order in addressing this issue marks a defining moment for the organisation. In this issue we publish the full text of ECONI's open letter to our fellow evangelicals within the order.

It is no secret that evangelicals have always held differing viewpoints on the validity and appropriateness of the Orange Order as an expression of Christian witness. Some of the differences are presented in this issue of Lion & Lamb.

Several of us in the ECONI Steering Group have personal and family backgrounds in the Loyal Institutions. Our journeys of Christian discipleship have brought us to biblically challenge and critique many of the assumptions at the heart of Orangeism.

Equally, in our engagement with members of the



**God calls us all to
a new relationship
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enemies.**

Nationalist community, both at conferences and in meetings with residents groups, we are concerned to apply a biblical challenge to their attitudes and positions. We must not contribute further to the incipient sectarian apartheid of our society by making our streets no go areas for the cultural and religious expression of our neighbour. God calls us all to a new relationship with both our neighbours and our enemies.

However, it is the Loyal Institutions alone who stand on their professed Christian foundations and character. Like all institutions Orangeism is complex. It does have social, political and cultural dimensions, yet what is the defining character, the essence of the organisation?

The leaders tell us religion, the promotion of biblical Protestantism. However is true religion in danger of losing out in the clamour of competing voices? That is the basis and thrust of our open letter. It has been read as an attack, as a call for re-routing. It is simply a plea for gospel ethics and values as God's effective counter measures to the hate and bitterness that our sectarianism breeds.

To use the analogy of our cover - in this storm of crisis that faces Orangeism, is Jesus in the boat with them? In our commitment to our brothers in Christ in the orders, we pray and look for the evidence that he is as they show it by their actions in our community at this difficult time.

David Porter is the Director of ECONI.

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Comment

"Jesus is Lord - William is Dead"

At a recent conference I heard the story of two German street preachers in Nuremberg in the early 1930's. Following one of the huge Nuremberg rallies the men took up positions on the streets to preach to the crowds leaving the stadium. One preacher proclaimed that "Jesus is the only way to God". He was ridiculed and jeered by many making their way home still high on the sights and sounds engineered by Goebbels, and fired up by the anti-Semitic and Aryan rhetoric of Hitler. The second preacher was also speaking about Jesus only he proclaimed that "Jesus is the only Fuhrer". The crowd set on him and left him for dead.

The first preached the truth, the second preached the truth and its implications. The first preacher was tolerated as he aired his particular religious convictions. The second preacher paid dearly for tearing down the idols of his day for the sake of Christ and his glory alone.

This poignant story invites us to reflect on the nature and content of our proclamation of the Gospel in the context of Protestant culture. Evangelical preaching will be tolerated by many at Orange services, services at the Fields, at improvised protest services up against RUC lines and in many other churches and situations over the marching season. The preaching will - no doubt - be faithful to the uniqueness of Christ and his atoning work on the cross. But will its implications be spoken or heard? Perhaps we need to find a new

vocabulary to express the full meaning of Christ's lordship in an Ulster Protestant context. A vocabulary such as:

Jesus is God's man for Ulster; The only walking that needs to be done this summer is to "walk as Jesus did" (1John 2:6); Walking in the truth is more important than walking on the streets; God commands that we should "walk in love" (2 John 4&6); Christian people must follow the Bible and not banners on which Bibles are painted; Salvation was accomplished in the first century not the sixteenth or seventeenth; we are called to follow Jesus of Nazareth not William of Orange; Jesus is Lord, William is dead.

It is possible that many evangelicals who see themselves as good Ulster Protestants and sympathetic to the Loyal Institutions would, when pushed, accept the basic sentiments I have expressed here. I could understand their annoyance at what they might perceive as my dismissal of God's gracious provision through history. Equally, I have no doubt that the first German street preacher, if pushed, would have agreed with the radical announcement "Jesus is the only Fuhrer". However, only the second preacher proclaimed it and courageously told the whole truth.

David McMillan is the Pastor of Windsor Baptist Church, Belfast. He is the chair of ECONI's Central Co-ordinating Group and a member of the Steering Group.

**By
David
McMillan**

seek peace and pursue it

Over the past number of years, public parades have generated a great deal of controversy and, at times, violent conflict. While only a small number of parades are controversial the impact is felt throughout the community.

At a time when the political process is at a critical stage it is incumbent on all of us to avoid situations that could complicate or undermine that process.

It is not our intention in this letter to adjudicate on the issue of parades or to apportion responsibility or blame. Instead, we offer a biblical perspective which we believe is pertinent to this issue. Our comments are therefore specifically addressed to those of evangelical conviction in the Loyal Institutions, particularly those in positions of leadership or influence.

However, we wish to set our comments in the context of a public acknowledgment:

- that the Loyal Institutions number among their members many of sincere Christian conviction and personal integrity,
- that the Institutions have often been an influence for good in calming tense situations and providing a legitimate outlet for the frustrations and fears within the wider Protestant community,
- that the Institutions' traditions are not exclusively a celebration of triumph, but also a celebration of survival,
- that parades organised by the Institutions have not been planned with the deliberate intent to cause offence,
- that while there are elements within loyalism that are more interested in confrontation than resolution, there are similar elements among those who oppose parades.

While the nature of the Loyal Institutions is disputed, we recognise that many members see them as primarily Christian organisations. We also recognise that many sincerely believe that the manner in which contested parades have been dealt with by the authorities is not always justified. While we have assumed that this is how the great majority within the Institutions perceive the situation and have drawn up our biblical response accordingly, it should also be clearly stated that both of these convictions are open to debate. Many outside the Institutions, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, do not see the parades as expressions of Christian faith, viewing them instead as political acts.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

What is the example Christians are called to follow?

"If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

"When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." 1 Peter 2.20-21,23; 3.9

The nature of the 'good' that God requires is made clear in the same New Testament writing:

"Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 1 Peter 3.10-12

As Christians - whatever our position on this specific issue - our example is the example of Jesus who chose to suffer injustice and, rather than stand on his rights, entrust himself to the justice of God.

an open letter to Christians in the Loyal Institutions

THE SALVATION OF OTHERS

We recognise that Christians within the Loyal Institutions desire the salvation of others, seeing their organisations as religious bodies and viewing the parades as a testimony and a statement of belief. Yet, is it not true that causing unnecessary offence to others compromises Christian witness and thus hinders the proclamation of the gospel? Further, is it not true that the experience of many in the nationalist community does little to encourage them to see the parades in this light?

It is clear from Jesus' teaching in Luke 9 what a disciple's response should be where that testimony is not welcome. "If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet." Luke 9.5

Having "resolutely set out for Jerusalem" Jesus put this principle into practice when he chose not to enter a Samaritan village in which he was not welcome, choosing instead to go to another village (Luke 9.51-56). To his disciples who would have called down fires of judgment on those who did not welcome him, Jesus issued a rebuke (Luke 9.54-56).

Those in the Institutions who consider the parades to be an act of testimony should consider the words and example of Jesus, turning aside from those who do not welcome them and resisting the temptation to condemn.

LIMITS OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

The dispute over parade routes is often expressed in the language of rights and liberties. Yet the demand for the exercise of these liberties takes us to the heart of the matter. For in a dispute over contested rights whose rights should take priority? In this situation, one liberty exercised is another liberty infringed. However, against the insistence on exercising our rights and liberties the Bible counsels Christians to exercise self-limitation for the sake of the consciences of others and, ultimately, for the sake of the gospel.

The Bible's instruction to Christians is that they should not be a cause of stumbling or offence to

anyone, even if the offence is a consequence of their exercise of God-given freedoms. (1 Corinthians 10.23 - 11.1). While it is acknowledged that "Everything is permissible", it is also asserted that "not everything is beneficial...not everything is constructive." (1 Corinthians 10.23). While Christian liberty is affirmed, for the sake of the consciences of others who stumble, Christians are exhorted to restrain voluntarily that liberty (1 Corinthians 10.25-29).

In the current situation it is vital to recognise that the judgment of what causes offence is not solely a matter for the Institutions, or for those of Christian faith within the Institutions. The judgment of others outside the Institutions is a crucial factor. Thus while the Institutions may not intend to give offence, clearly people do take offence. Their views are not to be dismissed, as misguided or uninformed, but must be taken with great seriousness in making decisions concerning the exercise of Christian freedom.

SUBMITTING TO THE AUTHORITIES

While some in the Institutions may feel that the decisions taken by the authorities are unjustified or politically motivated, Christians are under a biblical injunction to submit to the divinely instituted authorities. Decisions taken by the police, who represent the authority of the state, should be accepted and obeyed, even if the Institutions believe those decisions to be wrong.

"Everyone must submit to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, anyone who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves." Romans 13.1-2

THE BIBLICAL CHALLENGE

These biblical imperatives challenge and bind all who identify themselves as evangelical Christians - whether in ECONI or in the Loyal Institutions. There can be no

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hoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. (1 Peter 3:10-11)

exceptions. We would encourage all evangelical members of the Loyal Institutions to consider this Biblical perspective.

Is it not possible that the best way to follow in the example of Christ would be to choose to give up their liberty and entrust themselves to the justice of God?

Is it not possible that doing the good that God requires might involve refusing to create or be involved in the kind of situations which common sense and experience tell us will almost certainly become occasions for evil?

Is it not possible that giving up their Christian liberty would be a more potent testimony to the grace of God and a more effective witness to the gospel than any other? Is it not possible that any 'loss' sustained by giving up the right to march along sensitive routes would be as nothing compared with the gain to the furtherance of the gospel?

Should Christians within the Institutions not consider voluntarily giving up that liberty for the sake of the consciences of others who - rightly or wrongly - take offence, both at the parades and, as a consequence, at the gospel?

Is it not possible that choosing options that reject confrontation might be the most effective way of challenging the bitterness, sectarianism and triumphalism that exists among some elements on both sides of this dispute?

Are not the Institutions under a clear biblical imperative to submit to the authorities by accepting the decisions of the police concerning parade routes?

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given this biblical perspective there are a number of practical options open to the Institutions.

As noted in the Orange Order's publication "*The Order on Parade*", parades have been voluntarily rerouted in the past. In taking this option the Order has willingly dropped some traditions and instituted new ones. Clearly, traditional parade routes have never been considered inviolable.

The nature of parades has also been changed to accommodate others. The Order on Parade gives a number of options for making parades less controversial. These include removing or silencing bands, more selectivity in band regalia, flags, names and so on, playing of hymn tunes only, removal of followers of bands and other disruptive elements.

The Qualifications of an Orangeman make clear that in their opposition to the Roman Catholic Church members of the Order should be "ever abstaining from all uncharitable words, actions, or sentiments towards Roman Catholics..."

If this claim is to be credible among ordinary Roman Catholic people - which is where it needs to be credible - the Loyal Institutions need more forcefully to challenge sectarianism within their ranks and among their supporters. In this way the Institutions can demonstrate forcefully and unequivocally their commitment not to cause offence to Roman Catholic people.

As well as the fundamental issue of parade routes, the Institutions also need to deal with the songs and tunes, the speeches, the actions of individuals in sensitive areas, as thoroughly as they have tried to deal with the problems caused by certain bands. All of these things contribute to perceptions of the parades as sectarian.

The failure of the leadership to deal quickly and forcefully with displays of sectarianism reinforces the perception among Roman Catholics that their concerns are not taken seriously and that the Institutions do not consider sectarianism within their ranks to be a major problem.

CONCLUSION

We recognise that the Institutions have a democratic and diffuse nature built around local lodges. However, while it may not be possible to issue direct instructions to lodges and districts, we believe that there are Christians within the Institutions who could increasingly bring a powerful moral influence to bear. Such a course of action would bear strong testimony to the effectiveness of evangelical witness within the Institutions.

The traditions of the Loyal Institutions, including their parade routes, may be old - though they do evolve and change - but the traditions of Scripture are older and authoritative in a way human traditions can never be. They demand an allegiance and a submission that no human tradition should ever usurp. Christian members of the Institutions are under a biblical obligation to ensure that their actions and words are determined by the word of God, not human traditions.

This letter was sent on behalf of the ECONI Steering group as an open letter to Evangelicals within the Orange Order on 19 June 1996.

blessed are the arrogant

on these charred streets of belfast
there are scars on minds and hearts
the only thing we do together
is to rip one another apart
it's hard to find the chinks of light
in this god forsaken place
if he don't send his judgement down
it's an even more amazing grace.

and cursed are the peace makers
for they might compromise
cursed are those who mourn
for they might apologise
cursed are the poor in spirit
for they might confess and regret
and cursed are the merciful
for they might forgive and forget
and cursed are the meek
for they won't ride their high horse
but blessed are the arrogant
for they will maintain this curse.

on these broken hearts of belfast
there are spoken open lies
no matter what your fancy dress
the truth can't be disguised
we belligerently spit in the face of god
and this miraculous peace time space
if god don't send his judgement down
then it's an even more amazing grace.

steve stockman

Steve Stockman is a member of the Presbyterian chaplaincy team at Queen's University, Belfast. He is a frequent speaker at churches, universities and conferences and the host of BBC's Radio Ulster programme 'Rhythms of Redemption'. He is also a member of ECONI's Steering Group.

'blessed are the arrogant' is taken from his latest collection of poetry 'skeletons' and is available from Family Books, Belfast.

What is the Orange Order?

In recent years the high public profile of the Orange Order has raised for many people questions about the true nature of the Institution. There are many misunderstandings of what the Order actually believes and practices and there is therefore a need to explain the purpose and function of the Orange Order in our society today.

The Rev. Dr F.Rupert Gibson, a former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland said. 'Probably there is no human institution claiming to be based on the Bible and professing to maintain the principles of the Reformed Faith, which has been more bitterly maligned by its avowed foes and more falsely represented by those who profess to be its friends, than the Orange Order'.

So, what is the Orange Order? The Education Committee of the Loyal Orange Institution of Ireland has in recent years embarked on a programme to help answer this question. Guided by our Mission Statement, 'The Committee will engage in the process of continuing to educate the Brethren of our Institution and the general public in the truths and principles of the Reformed Religion, and our historical and cultural heritage.'

The following article is part of this ongoing process of education and the material has been produced as a leaflet for general distribution.

THE ORANGE ORDER, more correctly the Loyal Orange Institution of Ireland, came into existence after the Battle of the Diamond, near Loughgall, on 21 September 1795. This 'Battle' was instigated by a Roman Catholic revolutionary brotherhood known as

the 'defenders' who were part of the 'ethnic cleansing' programme of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the attempt was made to remove the Protestant witness from the Island of Ireland.

The purpose of the Orange Order was to bring together the 'Protestants' of various denominations - Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Independents, Huguenots, Quakers - into one homogenous grouping. The concern was to maintain the Protestant religion and way of life and to make a distinctive affirmation that they intended to hold fast to the freedom of religion won at such a high cost at the Reformation.

The Orange Institution became an international organisation as the benefits of a religious and fraternal organisation became obvious. Military Warrants were issued from the earliest years of the Institution and this may have added to the growth of Orangeism as serving soldiers carried their culture and identity throughout the Empire. Orangeism spread to Montreal in 1818, Australia in 1845, Togo in 1915 and Ghana in 1928.

The Orange Order is fundamentally a Christian organisation, as the basis of the Institution states, 'The Institution is composed of Protestants, united and resolved to the utmost of their power to support and defend the... Protestant Religion.'

The Orange Institution therefore unites Protestants of all the Reformed denominations, in opposition to Biblical error and the encouragement of Scriptural truth.

According to the 'basis' to which all members must assent before admission into the Institution. 'It is exclusively an Association of those who are attached to

**Brian
Kennaway,
Convenor of
the Education
Committee of
the Orange
Institution,
gives us
his answer**

the religion of the Reformation,' The religion of the Reformation is both spiritual and moral (Belief and Duty).

The Institution stands in the Reformed tradition as the various statements contained in the 'Qualifications' illustrate. Therefore members should have:

A love for God - 'a sincere love and veneration for his Heavenly Father'. 'He should never take the name of God in vain.'

Faith in Christ - 'steadfast faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind.'

Authority of Scripture - 'he should honour and diligently study the Holy Scriptures and make them the rule of his faith and practice.'

Respect for Sunday- 'he should remember to keep holy the Sabbath day, and attend the public worship of God.'

There is something of a 'bonding' between the members of the Orange Institution, because those things which we share in common and hold dear are much more important than things which may divide us.

The brotherly bond which unites the members is based on the spirit of 'tolerance', tolerance towards those within the brotherhood with whom there may be differences of emphasis and towards those outside the brotherhood who differ from us in religious persuasion. This emphasis is seen in the 'Basis of the Institution' which states that the Orange Order 'will not admit into its brotherhood persons whom an intolerant spirit leads to persecute, injure, or unbraid any man on account of his religious opinions.'

If you are a practising Protestant in the truly religious sense: regularly at your place of worship, morally upright in your life, and if you display a tolerant spirit towards those with whom you may disagree, then you will be welcome within the orange institution.

Basis of the Institution

The Institution is composed of Protestants, united and resolved to the utmost of their power to support and defend the rightful Sovereign, the Protestant Religion, the Laws of the Realm, and the Succession of the Throne in the House of Windsor, BEING PROTESTANT; and united further for the defence of their Persons and Properties, and the maintenance of the Public Peace. It is exclusively an Association of those who are attached to the religion of the Reformation, and will not admit into its brotherhood persons whom an intolerant spirit leads to persecute, injure, or upbraid any man on account of his religious opinions. They associate also in honour of King William III. Prince of Orange, whose name they bear, as supporters of his glorious memory.

Brian Kennaway is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. He is a Deputy Grand Chaplain of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland and Convenor of the Education Committee. In 1995 the Committee published the booklet The Order on Parade. Together with Ian Meredith, he has written The Orange Order - An Evangelical Perspective (1993). He has been a member of Christian Crusaders LOL 1339 since 1964.

Covenanters and the Orange Order

The Reformed Presbyterian testimony maintains that it is inconsistent for Covenanters to belong to the Orange Order. We recognise that discussion of this subject can be controversial. It stirs up old fears and suspicions buried deep in our psyche as Protestants living in a divided society. It contributes to the heated argument on a current vexed problem of law and order on our streets as another 'Marching Season' approaches, namely, should the Orange Lodges have the right to parade through nationalist areas? However, since the issues raised touch on the very heart of Reformed Presbyterian identity, as a separate dissenting Church, they must be faced.

Therefore we first need to consider why the Orange Order came into existence, because in Northern Ireland we tend to be prisoners of the past. It cannot be denied that the massive Protestant population relocation during the Plantation took place in an atmosphere of fierce hatred and bitterness, not least because the traditional property rights of the native Catholic Irish were swept away. Their land was simply confiscated and either they were driven away or became tenants at the will of the new landlords. When the Catholic peasantry saw that resistance was futile, some resorted to revenge through acts of terrorism as gangs roamed about at night.

by Rev. Prof. Norris Wilson

This provoked counter activities from the settlers. In 1641 there was a massacre of Protestants as part of the rebellion against English rule. The cruelty shown during Cromwell's time in Ireland in 1649 was in part retribution for this, with massacres at Drogheda and Limerick. Such massacres

were to become part of the folklore of each side in the conflict. They also served to instil in the settlers a 'siege mentality'.

Catholic Irish resurgence however received a massive setback by the famous events of 1688-90 when 'Protestant ascendancy' was established on the basis that Roman Catholics should be formally subjugated. The draconian 'Penal Laws' were enforced against them. Roman Catholics were banned from parliament, the armed forces, government service and the legal profession. They could not teach, maintain schools, or send their children abroad to be educated. They could not hold arms, own a horse worth more than £5, or buy land. Their land leases were restricted to 31 years. Pressure was put on wealthier Catholics to join the Church of Ireland and many Catholic landowners and professional people did so (at least outwardly). In the case of a Catholic landowner his eldest son could inherit the estate only if he became a Protestant. Otherwise the estate was divided among all the male heirs, with the result that Catholic landholdings became steadily diminished in size. Catholic bishops and regular or monastic clergy were banished. Parish priests could be registered, but only if they took an oath of allegiance to the Crown. With the ranks of Catholic merchants and landowners so depleted, the Catholic peasantry tended to look to the priest for political leadership. Such priests tended to carry on their work quietly in cottage chapels or even in the open air at 'Mass rocks'.

As a result of these things relationships between Catholics and Protestants became even more embittered and, as the eighteenth century wore on, the sectarian problem worsened (even though the Presbyterian dissenters of the North were themselves suffering a measure of religious persecution from the government). Sectarian gangs formed themselves into oath-bound secret paramilitary societies. Arms came into the situation when the Government formed Protestant corps of Volunteers to meet the threat of invasion by revolutionary France. One of

the tactics of such corps was to march through Catholic areas with bands playing loyalist tunes! As tension increased Protestants formed the 'Peep-O-Day Boys' to ensure that no arms fell into Catholic hands. The situation degenerated into ugly tit-for-tat violence. The Catholic response was to structure with lodges, grand masters, initiation rituals, oath-bound secrecy, secret signals and passwords.

Things came to a head at an affray between Defenders and Peep-O-Days at the Diamond in Loughgall in 1795. As rival groups gathered Protestant and Catholic clergy persuaded them to disperse, nevertheless a melee did follow and the Defenders were hunted off with some loss of life. The triumphant Protestants retired to Dan Winter's Inn in Loughgall and there and then founded the Orange Order. Taking a leaf from the Defender's book, they too modelled their organisation on Freemasonry (which is not surprising in that several of the organisation's founders were already Freemasons). Thus from Freemasonry they took the four tier lodge system (primary, district, county and grand lodges), ceremonial (e.g. initiation rituals), symbolism and oath-bound secrecy. Official Orange historians maintain that the Orange Order was formed because the Masonic Order had proved ambivalent when Protestant members had appealed to it for help against the Catholic threat.

Two years later the Black Institution was formed and though its origins are officially shrouded, it's believed it was founded by disaffected Masons after many of their brethren were involved in the United Irishmen Rebellion of 1798. Thus it was formed on similar lines to Masonry (e.g. it has 12 'degrees' through which initiates can pass), but is pledged to loyalty to the Crown.

The ruling class in Ireland was at first opposed to the Orange Order. However as the war with France went on and the United Irish Movement was increasingly taken over by Catholic Defenders, preaching rebellion rather than the constitutional struggle initially espoused by the Protestant founder of the United Irishmen, Wolfe Tone, they began to support it as a counter-revolutionary movement. The Government's response to the failed 1798 Rebellion was to pass the Act of Union - against which the Orange Order was the loudest opponent! Only when Catholic Emancipation came in 1829 did they go over to the side of Unionism which is where they have remained to this day.

**The
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As Orangeism grew in Ireland it developed a second 'degree', the Purple. A separate self-governing 'degree' also arose called the 'Royal Arch Purple'. Only those who have passed through the Orange and Purple degrees can be admitted to it and only those who have passed through these three degrees can be admitted to the Black Institution. It's significant that when the Order was persuaded to drop oath-binding secrecy (scarcely proper in a loyal organisation as it threatened to undermine the legal system - though the oath was replaced by a promise binding to secrecy) the Royal Arch Purple maintained its oath of secrecy. In its rituals Orangemen would admit the Royal Arch Purple most closely resembles Masonry.

The Influence of Freemasonry

Covenanters strongly reject Freemasonry as an antichristian pseudo-religion. Yet Freemasonry has strongly influenced Orangeism, not just in its organisational structure and ritualism, but in the way it presents itself with its display of grand titles and regalia with mysterious symbolism. An Orange historian has written '..the Prince of Orange ..was himself a Freemason', and speaks of the 'services of the (Freemasonry) in keeping alive the principles of the Revolution and in preserving the name of Orange, many of the Freemason Lodges being called Orange Lodges'.

In a 1993 publication two evangelical ministers (I. Meredith and B. Kennaway) have sought to defend the Orange Order. They admit there are, 'similarities in organisation, style, ... decorum and ceremony' with Freemasonry. They speak of similar rituals, 'Within the lodge system, initiation is drawn out over several stages of 'advancement' known as degrees. The degree is a ceremony or a drama in which the candidate for initiation is the main actor'. Concerning the ritual of the Royal Arch Purple they say, 'It has to be admitted that this is the most 'Mason-like' part of our ceremony', yet go on to defend it as a 'ceremony of instruction with an emphasis on the pilgrimage through life, death, judgement and eternity. For many it is a very moving experience...' Yet what actually happens in this ritual? One writer on the Orange, W.J. McCormick, spells it out - 'Initiation requires a whole evening. The candidate has both trouser legs rolled up above the knees, the left breast is bared and touched with a sharp instrument, he

**How
can you
defend the
faith in
secrecy?
How can you
stand for an
open Bible
behind
closed
doors?**

is blindfolded, led around the Lodge, his bare legs are beaten with a holly-bush or such-like prickly plant...Eventually he is pushed off a high 'platform' only to be caught in a tarpaulin held by several 'brethren'. An oath of secrecy is administered and taken. All this is jocularly referred to as "The Ride on the Goat". Meredith and Kennaway admit, 'several of the ritual features of our Order are 'Masonic' in character', yet they maintain, 'Orangeism could be described as a Christianised or "Reformed Freemasonry", with the unscriptural and erroneous bits cut out...' Can such a thing as

Freemasonry be 'reformed' from within? Covenanters remain dubious about an organisation with such carry-overs.

engaged in a system of secrecy, passwords and signs' and they quote Mark 11:3 and 14:13-15. However, such an interpretation of these events assumes that Christ had a prearranged plan and agreed 'passwords' and altogether discounts His supernatural knowledge of events that were simply Divinely ordered. Even assuming it was such a one-off as they interpret it, this can hardly be used to justify habitual secrecy. Anyway such secrecy is clearly contrary to the example and method of Christ who declared, I have spoken openly to the world...in secret have I said nothing'. He urged His followers to let their light shine saying, 'Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he has done has been done through God.' Meredith and Kennaway state that in their view the Order seeks to work alongside the church to, 'defend and promote the Protestant faith... to advance pure biblical Christianity.' But as one ex-Orangeman, who left the Order to join the R.P. Church, says, 'How can you defend the faith in secrecy?' How can you stand for an open Bible behind closed doors?'

Unscriptural Secrecy

Many (including Meredith and Kennaway) would deny that the Orange is a secret society, yet the above writers also say, 'However part of our ceremonial work which includes instruction on how we may recognise each other is a matter which we wish to keep to ourselves... we have our enemies, so in order to safeguard our meetings and members we have a measure of secrecy.' In fact each Orangeman who joins the first degree has to make the following promise, 'I promise not in any manner to communicate or reveal any of the proceedings of my brother Orangemen in lodge assembled, nor any matter or thing therein communicated to me, unless to a brother Orangeman, well knowing him to be such, or until I shall have been authorised to do so by the Grand Lodge.' Moreover secrecy is practised in the use of secret passwords, handshakes, signs and in the use of tylers (door guards who take this promise, 'I do solemnly declare that I will not admit any person into the Lodge without having first found him to be in possession of the password, or within the sanction of the worshipful Master of this Lodge'). Meredith and Kennaway try to equate this secrecy with the privacy or confidentiality of, for example, a church elders' meeting, but such an equation is hardly justified. Moreover they assert that the example of Christ gives them warrant for such secrecy - 'Towards the end of his life our Lord

Unlawful Oaths

As we have said the Royal Arch Purple administers an oath binding to secrecy. We hold such extra-judicial oath-taking to be contrary to Scripture. No Master of a self-appointed Lodge has any God-given right to administer such an oath, for such oath-taking we believe is only valid within the framework of God-appointed government. Moreover as our Testimony rightly states, 'Membership in secret societies involves taking an oath before being aware of the obligation. No man is at liberty to bind his conscience by oath without a knowledge of the nature and extent of his obligation.'

Usurping the Place of the Church

In their booklet in defence of the Orange Order Meredith and Kennaway make a telling admission - 'If the criticism of the Orange Institution is that it is a 'para-church' and therefore as such it is unbiblical because it is not under the authority of the church, then we will gladly concede.' Yet they also say the Order is necessary to, '...defend..support..uphold..and promote the Protestant faith..to advance pure biblical Christianity.. to (serve) as a bulwark for the Reformed faith.' They quote from Orange texts concerning the requirements of an Orangeman, that,

Can
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'An Orangeman should have..a humble and steadfast faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, believing in Him as the only Mediator between God and man...A true Orangeman should diligently read the Holy Scriptures and make them the sole rule of his faith and practice.' Candidates for admission are asked, 'Do you promise to support the Protestant religion and earnestly endeavour to propagate its doctrines and precepts..and will you endeavour, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to walk in public and in private consistently with this profession?' This is all very well, but we ask the

question - by what right can such an extra-ecclesiastical para-church organisation take to itself such tasks, exact such professions of faith, exercise discipline and even bind the conscience of a person? Of course Meredith and Kennaway wish to defend the role of the Orange Order as fulfilling a role that the church has failed in - i.e. 'pointing out the erroneous doctrines of the Church of Rome, banding Protestants together in the defence of their faith and seeking to maintain Protestant principles in church and state.' But this is the role of the Reformed church! The church alone, as the pillar and foundation of the faith, is the Lord's instrument for the defence of the faith, the propagation of the Gospel and the nurture and discipline of believers. One could add - What kind of witness to truth is in fact being made by Orangeism when Non-Subscribing Presbyterians are not only in membership, but act as chaplains, when one can hear 'British Israel' statements from Orange platforms which are espoused by its leaders, where brother Orangemen whose lives are an open denial of the Gospel remain undisciplined and where official charity work is confined to the Orange brotherhood?

A Political Protestantism

The Orange Order lays great stress on the political aspect of the Revolution Settlement of 1688. Meredith and Kennaway state, 'The basic Constitution of the United Kingdom as enshrined in the Bill of Rights of 1688 has been the bedrock of our nation.' They admit the Order's allegiance with a Unionist ideology in Ireland because, '...it is Unionism which expresses in political

terms the hopes and aspirations of Orangemen, who affirm their allegiance to the British Crown and Constitution.' The Orange writer Dewar goes further, '..it is almost impossible to separate 'religion' from 'politics'. In 1688 Protestantism and Patriotism were one...It is inevitable that we should maintain in the twentieth century as in the seventeenth the Protestant religion...A faithful Protestant is bound to support our constitutional system which maintains the Protestant religion and preserves the Union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland...the border (being) as secure a bulwark to his religious faith and political freedom under the...Union Jack...as were the old grey walls of Derry...' Covenanters cannot be so fulsome in praising and accepting the Revolution Settlement of 1688 and a political stance that gives it such unqualified support. In fact the Covenanters of 1688 were grievously disappointed with the 1688 Settlement since it refused to acknowledge either the Covenants of 1638 and 1642, when Christ's Kingship over the nation was acknowledged. How can we glory in celebrating a Constitution when something is awry at its very heart?

The Credibility of the Gospel

Something else needs to be said about the Orange Order's mixing of spiritual loyalty to Christ and political loyalty to the Crown and Constitution. It was well stated by Rev. John Dunlop, writing in the Presbyterian Herald. 'We appear to be so obsessed with our own anxieties that we cannot understand with compassion the traumatic experiences of the other people with whom we share this Island. Do we realise that 1690 is not only about glorious victory and civil and religious liberty? It is also about defeat, humiliation, and dispossession. Can you love your neighbour and at the same time celebrate the anniversary of his defeat?'

Covenanters believe that our great task in this Island is the loving and sensitive evangelism of our Roman Catholic fellow countrymen, so that they come to see that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, on the basis of Scripture alone. Covenanters, untrammelled as they are by prior commitments to organisations and political parties on one side of the socio-political divide in this Island, believe they are well placed to undertake this task and are presently doing so. Any cultural, historical or political baggage that gets in the way of it must be laid aside. In that light we have to ask the question - What sort of witness to the Gospel is it when a nationalist Roman Catholic sees a triumphalist

Orange parade deliberately routed through his area? How does such an action even square with the Orangeman's promise that he will, 'abstain from all uncharitable words, actions, or sentiments, towards Roman Catholics'? At the end of the day a Christian's ultimate loyalty must not be to any side of our political conflict, but to the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, a Kingdom which transcends all human barriers and divisions.

Unqualified Allegiance to the British Constitution.

Every Orangeman takes a promise that he will, 'to the utmost of his power support and maintain the Laws and Constitution of these Realms.' Covenanters cannot take such an unqualified promise. This is because the Constitution usurps Christ's sole Supremacy as Head of the Church (in giving the Monarch the title 'Head of the Church') and because it usurps Christ's sole Supremacy over the State. Our nation has made man the source of authority, power, sovereignty and morality, in place of God's Word. As a result not only are the Biblical qualifications for rulers not met, but immoral laws now govern us. This is why Covenanters dissent from involvement in politics. Civil and religious freedom is only freedom under God's Law and ignoring this our nation finds itself in bondage to sin. Given this, believers, instead of marching to celebrate the glories of our Constitution and laws, should rather be in the posture of men like Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel, who, in shame for their nation cried out, 'O Lord to us belongs confusion of face...O Lord forgive...O Lord act...O Lord revive.' It is significant that in 1859, the year of a great spiritual revival in Ireland the 'Twelfth' passed over quietly and peacefully and instead of processions there were great meetings for prayer and praise. Moreover, in districts where there had been sectarian trouble expressions of kindness were peacefully exchanged between the sides. Do we not long for such days again?

In the conclusion to their pamphlet Meredith and Kennaway pay the Covenanting Church a significant compliment when they quote an Orange writer. 'The most alarming feature in the religious situation in Ireland at the present time is...the inadequate and unsatisfactory spiritual life of Protestants. What a contrast there is between the religious Protestantism of...the Covenanters...and the merely nominal Protestantism of thousands to-day.' We share the sorrow in such sentiments.

In recent times some within our denominations have questioned our Church's clear stand on the

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Orange Order. As a Covenanter I found this to be disappointing and disquieting. Of course we are not saying that membership of the Orange Order is a heinous sin in the same category as sexual immorality, murder, stealing etc. Many who appear to be sincere Christians will not agree with our view and interpret things differently. With them we are happy to debate. However, if some Covenanters are now saying that it is a matter of no consequence to take an unqualified vow of allegiance to the Crown and Constitution of Britain as it stands since 1688-1690 (as Orangemen are required to do), then, by implication, they are surely saying that our Covenanting forefathers were wrong. They were wrong to dissent from the Revolution Settlement and Church and maintain a separate witness (as we, their spiritual descendants, do still) and we are found guilty of the sin of schism. We would maintain that they were not wrong and that we are therefore not guilty.

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review

Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation

Miroslav Volf

Nashville: Abingdon Press 1996

The very title of this book announces its relevance to a Northern Ireland, not to mention a wider, readership. Miroslav Volf is a native of Croatia, now teaching theology at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, so his credentials for tackling this theme are certainly not found wanting. Nor does the execution of the project disappoint. This volume is rich, deep, sobering and imaginative. Situated in a world of pain, it does not indulge in sterile or self-absorbed misery, nor encourage flight to the realms of impassible abstraction through the escape hatch of theology. Let our first word be a word of commendation.

'Exclusion' and 'embrace' proffer the alternatives with which we are presented when we indwell a world of confrontation, conflict and violence. These very terms indicate Volf's resolution to root the problem in the area of human relationships. We are not primarily about social arrangements. We are not so much about 'agreement' and 'disagreement', or even 'right' and 'wrong', as about 'self' and the 'other'. The cross can never offer us an authentic vertical Christianity if its horizontal significance is denied. That significance is spelled out in terms of a Christianity not of exclusion, but of embrace. After an initial chapter emphasizing the multicultural reality of the body of Christ, the locus of our primary belonging as Christians, the first part of the book analyzes respectively the two themes in the title. Exclusion stems from a self wrongly centred on itself. Such centring also establishes an excluded other. Embrace stems from a self crucified with Christ, now re-centred in a spirit of reconciliation with the other. The chapter on embrace is the longest, and perhaps the most important, in the book, and Volf's determination to impress on us its importance is shown especially in his analysis of the phenomenon of embrace as a metaphor for the dynamics of reconciled relationships. Its foundation is God's embracing self-giving.

Part Two proceeds to examine three areas. A chapter on 'Oppression and Justice', alert to the problem of varied notions and traditions of justice, proposes the transcendence of love over justice, without blunting the

demands of the latter. The argument that follows, on 'Deception and Truth', culminates in proclaiming the significance of Jesus' claim - 'I am the Truth' - in the face of one of its great antitheses, the celebration of power. In his final chapter, the author turns to the question of 'Violence and Peace', reconciling the nonviolent way of the Crucified with the divine prerogative to don the robe of the White Rider of Revelation. Divine 'violence' against evil can be explained only by the fact that it is God, and God alone, who has the right to it, and that God exercises it only when nothing else will rid creation of violent evil. Volf's concluding thesis could, I think, be stated thus: embrace is God's last word; if there is exclusion, it is a self-exclusion.

This is an essay of considerable theological power, but it is not directed principally at theologians. It aspires to engage nontheological moderns and postmoderns, and intellectuals at that. Herein we meet two problems for a readership in Northern Ireland, problems obviously not peculiar to such a readership. The first can be simply stated. Most Christians will find much of the book difficult, yet its message about how, as Christians, we should think, is vital. The second must be stated more tentatively. The running dialogue with postmodernists and feminists may be exhilarating, but runs the risk of toppling over into the realm of exchange of ideas, grave and sombre as these ideas are. Theologians are apt to forget just how strenuous are the demands they place upon themselves in attempting to engage painful existential realities in the idiom of sophisticated intellectual analysis. It is to the author's credit that it is occasionally, and not constantly, that the reader feels the pull away from attending to these realities in the direction of attending to the relatively abstract conceptualities. Certainly the book ends as it begins, concentrating the mind on the warp of violence. There is an urgent need to translate and to communicate its insights to those who will not be its readers... but only after internalizing its message for oneself.

None of this implies that the content is uncontroversial. Even

theological fundamentals need scrutiny. Volf glosses 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' in terms of 'My God, my God, why did my radical obedience to your way lead to the pain and disgrace of the cross? The ultimate scandal of the cross is the all too frequent failure of self-donation to bear positive fruit...' (p.27). This is clearly contestable, even allowing for the need to amplify our perspectives on the cross, as the author does, and for the fact that he is not aiming at a complete theology of the cross. Further, the book is somewhat marred by a chapter on 'Gender Identity' at the close of Part One. Its stated rationale can not conceal the fact that, at least in this form, it throws our attention off the scene of war and conflict hitherto before our eyes. Certainly one could in principle integrate the particular theme of gender into the primary discussion. As it is, the chapter forces us to seek some more clarification on what that primary theme is, and puts some pressure on the coherence of its outworking. The preoccupation with the roots of physical conflict and the general interest in engaging feminists are here allied uneasily. Further, some of us will worry about the nature of the theological foundations that are revealed in the blunt (though contextualized) disregard of Pauline 'subordinationism', on the ground that it is just 'culturally conditioned' (p.183).

Whatever its defects, *Exclusion and Embrace* is the mightily impressive contribution of an excellent mind. Does not Northern Ireland need a theology of the cross? We have heard much of the cross erected on this earth for the sake of our justification and the everlasting security of the saved. But we do not, in fact, understand it, if we do not grasp it as a cross which is for the sake of horizontal reconciliation and the inclusive embrace of the other. Miroslav Volf has trenchantly taught us this. We are most grateful to him.

Stephen N. Williams

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NEWS & events

Journey In Understanding

**Exploring the influence of Culture, history
and Religion in shaping our identity**

Journey in Understanding is a six week evening course designed to help Christians increase their awareness of the nature of a divided society and consider the attitudes and actions needed for an authentic Christian witness. The first Autumn course is from **23 September - 28 October** and the second from **11 November to 16 December**. For details contact Earl Storey (01232 325258).

ECONI Sunday

November 2nd 1997

ECONI Sunday is an opportunity to consider, in the context of a Sunday service, issues facing Christians in a divided society. Each church will receive a ministry and resource pack designed to help congregations plan their day. Last year 65 churches took part and ECONI staff and members of the Steering Group spoke in different services around the country. To register please contact the ECONI office and ask for details.

ECONI Conference **The Politics of Holiness**

Saturday November 1st

At this years conference we will be exploring, through keynote speakers and a variety of seminars, the nature of separation & sharing in a divided society. Put a note in your diary and watch this space for further details.

Back to the Future

A Second Look at Protestant Culture

This four day residential conference of Bible reading, workshops and field trips is designed to help you reflect biblically on themes relating to religion, culture and identity.

Bible teaching - Robert Dunlop

Facilitators - Ann Dickson & Derek Poole

Relevant contributions by invited guests

Thursday July 10th - Sunday July 13th.

Belfast Bible College (kindly granted)

Residential £80. Non-residential £50

There are still places available for this event.

Bridge Builders

2nd October - 11 December

A ten week course (Thursday evenings) designed to motivate and equip leaders to address the issues relating to the conflict in Northern Ireland. The goal is to enable leaders to run a 'Journey in Understanding' programme in their situation.

Lion & Lamb

The last few issues of lion & lamb have developed to a point where we feel the magazine can become a useful forum for different perspectives on issues facing our community. Therefore we hope that future additions will include a broad range of articles from a Christian perspective and on occasions from others in the community who have a relevant contribution to make. Obviously these will reflect the views of their authors and not necessarily those of ECONI. We will of course continue to bring you news of ECONI initiatives and events.

ECONI: Resourcing Christians for a Biblical Response