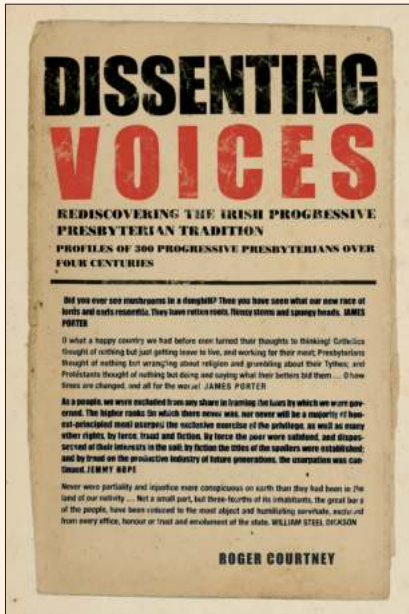


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# DISSENTING VOICES

REDISCOVERING THE IRISH  
PROGRESSIVE PRESBYTERIAN TRADITION

Roger Courtney



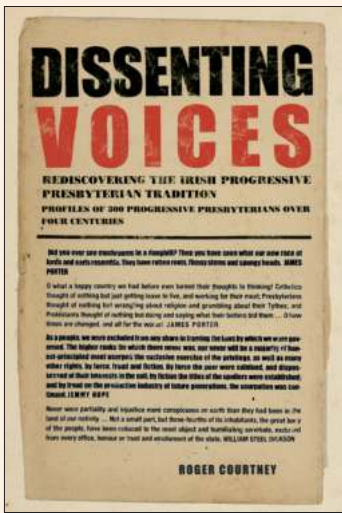
GUEST SPEAKER  
Rev. Bill Shaw (174 Trust)

in the  
Christ Church Library  
Royal Belfast Academical  
Institution  
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Wednesday 30 April 2014  
6:00pm for 6:30pm

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The stereotypical belief that there are two religions in Ireland, Catholic and Protestant, whose highly-charged fault lines have led to confrontation, fear and misunderstanding, has ignored the strong, vibrant and often courageous dissenting tradition. This book is a long overdue account of the lives of some 300 Presbyterians who over the last 400 years have exemplified many of the admirable characteristics of that tradition.

The early days of their persecution, principally by the Established (Protestant!) Church, did not deflect from their independent thinking, their respect for the practice of other religions and basic humanitarianism. In the eighteenth century, their emphasis on the value of education gave them the ability to articulate their views. It also equipped their migration across the Atlantic and their intellectual and practical contribution to the establishment of the world's first democracy.

The leadership role of radical Presbyterians in the formation and development of the Society of United Irishmen, with its inbuilt respect for their Catholic 'brethren', re-emerged in the following century. And their involvement in the tenant-right campaign, the revival of the Irish language, and the rise of the labour and trade union movements continued their libertarian ideals. In the recent past they have been foremost among those who have taken a courageous stand in the ongoing, often faltering, peace and reconciliation process.

The lives charted in this book are about more than just the contribution of fascinating individuals to our history; they also amply demonstrate the integrity and conviction of those 'dissenting voices'.

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