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FREE PRESBYTERIANISM -- What is it?

(written as a tract by Rev. Ivan Foster in 1997)

Many and various are the answers you would receive, were you to ask the question, What is Free Presbyterianism? The ecumenically controlled national newspapers of our land have for many years been answering this question, but not always truthfully.

As a minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, I wish to answer a few of the many slanderous and false accusations levelled against us. Let me begin by stating what we are not.

1. We are not haters of Roman Catholics.

One of the most persistent slanders, spoken against us, is that we hate Roman Catholics and urge others to do likewise. This is utterly false. Never have I or any other Free Presbyterian minister preached hatred against Roman Catholics. Proof of this has been wonderfully given by the Lord. In many of our congregations we have converted Roman Catholics as members. Were we to preach hatred, there would be little hope of the conversion of Roman Catholics. One of our ministers is a converted Roman Catholic from the Irish Republic. However, let us say plainly that we have no love for Roman Catholicism. There is a vast difference between hating individuals and hating false doctrine. Let me illustrate this. There can be no doubt of the love of Christ for sinful men. His substitutionary death on the cross, where He bore the sin and guilt of many, is ample proof of his love. But the Lord Jesus does not love sin. In Revelation chapter 2:15, Christ says the following words, "... the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which thing I hate." The Lord Jesus Christ hates doctrine which is contrary to His own Word. For this very reason, Free Presbyterians are opposed to the unscriptural doctrines of Romanism. We take the same position in relationship to the Roman Church as our Protestant forefathers. Men such as John Knox, John Calvin, Martin Luther, and the founders of Methodism, John and Charles Wesley, all took the view that Roman Catholicism was unbiblical. Our desire is to bring the simple Gospel of saving grace to the Roman Catholics of our country and to see them set free from the bondage of popery.

2. We are not people who seek to cause strife.

In Acts 16:20, we have an accusation made against Paul and Silas. They are accused of exceedingly troubling the city. Needless to say, this was a false charge. What really happened was that an evil spirit was cast out of a witch. When the men who made money out of her evil practice saw the source of their profits cut off, they seized Paul and Silas and cast them into prison. Paul's crime was that he preached the Gospel and exposed sin without fear or favour. Free Presbyterians have, time and time again, brought the curses of unscrupulous men upon their heads, simply by denouncing the evil trends in Church and State today. Truth has never yet caused trouble. Trouble comes from the enemies of truth only. Surely a man cannot be blamed for the actions of his enemies.

Let me now tell you what we are.

1. We are a people who love the Lord Jesus and His precious Word.

Each communicant member of our congregation is one who has been born again. We be-



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lieve in the old-fashioned doctrine of salvation by faith through grace. (Ephesians 2:8) Praise God, we are of the old school of theology - we believe the Bible. Our services are not given over to essay reading and empty sermonettes but rather to the preaching of the living Word of the eternal God. 11 Tim. 4:12, 1 Peter 1:23-25.

2. We are people who stand for the faith of our forefathers and resist modern ecumenism.

Scripture warns us that in the last days there shall be a departure from the faith. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction , 2 Peter 2:1. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time , 1 John 2:18, See also 1 Tim. 4:1-6, 11 Tim. 3:1-5. Surely we can plainly see this departure today. The historic Protestant faith is no longer adhered to. The ancient creeds of the reformed church are an embarrassment to the ecumenical clerics. John Wesley's Notes on the New Testament, Presbyterianism's Westminster Standards and the Episcopal church's 39 Articles of Religion are all creeds from which there is departure and apostasy. We in the Free Presbyterian Church recognize this departure, and in our desire to remain faithful to the Bible and our consciences are forced to remain separate from the apostate ecumenical movement.

In 1951, our seceding church was constituted in Crossgar, Co. Down. During the 46 years which have since lapsed, our church has grown to over sixty congregations in Northern Ireland with congregations in mainland Britain, the Irish Republic, Germany, USA, Canada and Australia. Are we wrong in separating? Is it wrong for Christians to leave the ecumenical movement? The Bible says No. Lack of space prevents me giving all the Scripture references but 11 Corinthians 6:14-18 is sufficient to illustrate the Bible's teaching on separation. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty , 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

The weapon with which we resist ecumenism is God's Word. By faithfully preaching it, we shall not fail to topple the ecumenical Goliath which has invaded our land. Reformation and revival is our aim and we know that with God's help we shall see our nation turned back to the old paths of Gospel truth.

Let me close with a verse and a question.

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls...."

Jeremiah 6:16. Will you obey God?