



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

“Whither Free Presbyterianism?”



“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD,”
Joshua 24:15.

In the 56th year of its existence, the FPC of Ulster is facing its greatest challenge regarding its future path and witness.

On March 17th 1951, the FPC was born. Its purpose was to continue the witness of the Reformation and proclaim the gospel of Christ.

That purpose has been dangerously undermined by the yoking together of the DUP and Sinn Fein/IRA in a political alliance. The threat lies in the fact that Dr. Ian Paisley is the leader of the DUP and he is also the moderator of the FPC.

Sinn Fein/IRA is an organisation guilty of the terrorist slaughter of men, women and children, most of whom were Protestants, in their 30-year pursuit of political power.

The power-sharing arrangement with Dr. Paisley's DUP has rewarded the terrorism of Sinn Fein/IRA by giving them much of the power that they have sought.

In the recent election in the Republic of Ireland, Sinn Fein/IRA failed to achieve the increased representation that it expected. In fact, it lost a seat it had previously held. Some DUP representatives have gloated at this, saying that the people had rejected Sinn Fein/IRA.

The fools fail to realise that the people of Ulster did the same but the DUP imposed Sinn Fein upon the electorate by going into a power-sharing government with them!!

As the Moderator of the FPC, Dr. Paisley forms a link between the FPC and this political alliance between Sinn Fein/IRA and the DUP.

In proposing a motion to the Presbytery on this matter at the beginning of March in an attempt to highlight this folly, I made the following points.

The motion: “Dr. Paisley, should he enter upon the duties of First Minister in a power-sharing Executive, with all its arduous duties, should simultaneously relinquish the office of Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster in the interests of the well-being and unity of the church.”

It is not my purpose in proposing this motion to discuss at length the merits or demerits of the St Andrews Agreement.



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It is however, my desire to have it recognised by all in this Presbytery that there is a deep division of opinion within this Presbytery and the Free Presbyterian Church generally about the St Andrews Agreement and that we cannot remain indifferent to it.

There are those who utterly reject the St Andrews Agreement and all that springs from it because they deem it totally unacceptable to see the unrepentant murderers of many, many innocent people, Roman Catholic and Protestant, in government.

This Presbytery has accommodated diversity of political opinion in the past and I hope that it will continue to do so.

There is no divine authorisation claimed for the St Andrews Agreement or the political coalition that it appears about to give birth to. There can therefore be no question of defying the will of God when one rejects the St Andrews Agreement.

However, a real difficulty will arise for those who reject the St Andrews Agreement if Dr. Paisley takes up the office of First minister in coalition with Martin McGuinness.

That would mean that the FPC would be linked undeniably, through its Moderator, to a political regime and to the pronouncements and actions of that regime, which is utterly rejected by many in this Presbytery and by many within the ranks of general church membership.

In the past, our Presbytery maintained that a link exists between church leaders and the members of the denominations they led. Even when the members rejected the actions of their leaders it did not, in the view of Free Presbyterianism, exonerate them from being party to their leaders' activities.

Such a view by our Presbytery was and is perfectly scriptural only now it applies to us. I cannot repudiate the activities of the Coalition government while the Moderator of this Presbytery leads that government.

We, as a church, become linked to all that the coalition government will be and will do and will say. That would be totally unacceptable to many ministers and elders as well as hundreds of members of our church.

The Free Presbyterian Church must at all costs be yoked to none but Christ and His Word. We must not be linked in any way to that which will espouse views and policies that are repugnant to God and His Word.

Who is there to say that Sinn Fein/IRA can espouse anything other than that which is repugnant to God.

This Presbytery must maintain its independence and its freedom to speak for Christ without equivocation or inconsistency.

I cannot imagine anyone disagreeing with this fundamental truth. To that end I propose this motion.

As time has passed, and the power-sharing executive has been established and government restored to Stormont, it has become clear that all within that government will be linked to activities which are abhorrent to God and to His faithful people. The matter of its funding of sodomite organisations through the departments under the control of Dr. Paisley and Mr. Edwin Poots, a Free Presbyterian, is sufficient example of what I mean. The future can only hold actions that will be even more repugnant to holiness and the God of Heaven.

That being so, the question for every Free Presbyterian is: **“Do I wish to be linked to such abominable activities?”**



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The answer is surely plain. Dr. Paisley must be persuaded to leave this evil political alliance or vacate the position of moderator. We cannot permit ourselves to be yoked together with such wickedness.

Let us hear the Word of God.

I. SUCH A SOLEMN CHOICE IS OFTEN FACED BY GOD'S PEOPLE

- 1. There is only one path for God's people to follow.** It is called by various names. "The old paths", Jer 6:16; "God's statutes", 1 Kings 6:12; "Fear of the Lord", Neh 5:9; "In the light", 1 John 1:7. We have only one rule of faith, Isaiah 8:20.
- 2. This is a fundamental question.** We are declaring Who our God is!
- 3. This question frequently faces a new generation in particular.** It was so here for Joshua was soon to die (verse 29) and it is so with us. Exodus 32:26; Ruth 1:15; 1 Kings 18:21; John 6:67.

II. IT IS A CHOICE OF GOING BACK OR GOING ON

It was a matter of forsaking the Lord or a fresh commitment to Him and His Word. ". . . whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (See v 2.)

- 1. The issue is clear and simple.** Many attempts have been made to confuse the issue. My bitterness against Dr. P, a matter of personalities. These are falsehoods designed to deceive.
- 2. The question of procedures are raised in order to confuse.** We are told that our objections should not have been raised as they were. The truth is every possible effort was made to raise the matter for a proper debate but these efforts were opposed.
- 3. My media interview on 23rd Nov '06 is used as a criticism.** There was nothing improper in my speaking to the press or in what I said.

III. THE CHOICE CENTRES UPON SERVICE FOR THE LORD

Note how often Joshua refers to "service"! The word first appears in Gen 2:5 and again in verse 15. We are to be "tillers" and "dressers" of God's garden. We are the Lord's bond slaves, Ex 6:5, Lev 25:6. It is the distinguishing mark between the righteous and the wicked, Mal 3:18.

- 1. Service of God is our primary function.** This is why we were made, Deut 10:12. This evening we sang hymn 521.

God made me for Himself, to serve Him here



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*With love's pure service and in filial fear;
To show His praise, for Him to labor now;
Then see His glory where the angels bow.*

2. Our service is to be in sincerity and truth. Can we be sincere while linked to Sinn Fein/IRA or can we do so in truth when we act contrary to His Word? (Rom 13:1-4.)

3. Such service is born of a fear of the Lord. How can I fear the Lord and yet be at peace and in union with those who are His enemies? "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3.

IV. HOW THIS CHOICE IS TO BE MADE

1. It must be made before the Lord. Verse 1. Tony Blair, Bertie Ahern, Ted Kennedy, "Fr." Alec Reid, Peter Hain — all were present at Stormont for the launch of this power-sharing executive. But was the Lord there?

2. It must be made with an awareness of God's grace and mercy to our fathers and to us. Verses 2-13. Joshua traces the history of God's deliverances from the enemies of Israel the worship of whose gods they were now considering. Aligning ourselves with those who have ever opposed our enjoyment of God's mercy throughout the last 400 years here in Ulster cannot be right.

3. It must be done individually. This is a decision that all will have to make.

4. It must be done publicly. We will have to stand up and be counted. Ministers especially need to face this. We have to "watch" and "care" for the flock of God, 1 Tim 3:5, Heb 13:17.

Some fear to speak lest they split their congregations. They can never unite them except by teaching them the truth. Only then will the flock know the way they should go. 1 Sam 9:6. Samuel, the man of God, knew the way they should go. So it should be with the ministers of the gospel.

This is the issue God's men should be addressing today.

"If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the Word of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Him. Where the battle rages there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battle front besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

(Luther's Works. Weimar Edition. Briefwechsel [Correspondence], vol. 3, pp. 81f.)

5. It must be done now. This matter cannot be delayed. Delay means further entrenchment for the roots of sins and error.

We now must declare unto the Lord where we stand!

The substance of a sermon preached by the Rev Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church at 7.00 pm on Lord's Day 27th May 2007.

A recording of the sermon is available—See sermons page