



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

A word to the distressed amongst God's flock today.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair," 2 Corinthians 4:8.

by Rev Ivan Foster  
Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church



Dr Ian Paisley MP, MLA, whose political activities in recent days have caused so much heartache to many believers in Northern Ireland and much further afield.

*"The great king Solomon said, 'To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to break down and a time to build up. A time to get and a time to lose. A time to keep and a time to cast away. A time to love and a time to hate. A time of war and a time of peace'.*

*I believe that Northern Ireland has come to a time of peace, a time when hate will no longer rule. How good it will be to be part of a wonderful healing in our Province. Today we have begun to plant and we await the harvest."*

**Dr Paisley's speech at the ceremony marking the beginning of power-sharing with Sinn Fein/IRA (Belfast Newsletter, 9th May 2007)**

By telephone, by email, by letter, in personal encounters in churches, on the street, in shops and even in the airport, I have been asked by Free Presbyterians, most of whom are of many years standing, about the events in Ulster between October 2006 and the present day, at the centre of which have been Dr Paisley and the Democratic Unionist Party and the decision to enter a power-sharing government with Sinn Fein/IRA.

Sadness and distress have filled the voices and furrowed the brows of those who have approached me with the oft-repeated enquiry: "Why did Dr Paisley do it?"

This is not an attempt to answer that question. That is not for me to answer.

What I do wish to do is offer a word of direction and hope to those who have struggled with the deep disappointment and sense of betrayal they have suffered and the despondency which has settled into many a Free Presbyterian heart.

My own distress of late has been exacerbated by the silence amongst many of God's servants within the Free Presbyterian Church during these turbulent and trying times. Whatever fuelled that silence, be it a lack of understanding of what was happening or a



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fear of speaking out on the issue because of what others, more senior, may say or the reaction that may take place amongst their own church office-bearers and members, that silence was wrong!

I am thankful for the support given publicly and privately by ministers, elders, deacons and ordinary Free Presbyterian members and for the prayers that were offered for the stand being taken.

God's servants are appointed as watchmen and should give guidance and counsel in times of conflict and dispute. Failure to do so, negates the reason for one's calling and ministry!

This silence has brought men into bondage and cost them respect in the eyes of many who looked to them for leadership and It must surely have caused offence to the Lord. Free Presbyterian pulpits, in the past, have been strong in their denouncing of those in other denominations who were deemed to have transgressed God's law. That is but proper. However, if we then fail to show that same boldness and faithfulness when faced by wrong-doing in our denomination then we leave ourselves open to very severe and justified criticism.

Sadly, there have been some Free Presbyterian ministers who have been so criticised by those who have seen this inconsistency in the attitude taken toward wrongdoing within our ranks in recent days.

It is not easy to answer such criticism when it is grounded upon truth. It is best in such circumstances if it be acknowledged and repented of.

Paul said: "I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, . . . . I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," Acts 20:20, 27.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine," 2 Timothy 4:2.

David said: "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest," Psalm 40:9.

The duties and solemn responsibilities of the preacher of God's Word were set before Ezekiel. "O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me," Ezekiel 33:7.

Such is the spirit that should move and control the mouth of the servant of God in all circumstances. Happy is the man who can look such verses in the eye and not wilt before their stern gaze!

Here then is a word of comfort for those who are burdened and distressed by the events within Ulster and the Free Presbyterian Church over the last eighteen months.

### **1. I WOULD HAVE THOSE DISTRESSED TO TAKE HEART AT THEIR DISTRESS!**

It is true that there were all too many members of the Free Presbyterian Church who felt it



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to be their duty to support the coalition with Sinn Fein/IRA that Dr Paisley initiated. Many of those who did, at the first, voice their support have begun to fall silent as the spiritual and moral ramifications of Dr Paisley's taking of the office of First Minister alongside his partner and equal, IRA leader, Martin McGuinness, have become clearer. That, of course, is to be welcomed.

The thinking that made Martin McGuinness acceptable as a political partner by those who had utterly rejected the concept a very short time before would, of necessity, promote the notion that other matters of morality, formerly rejected as unacceptable, might now also be permissible.

That became evident very soon. The implications of this decision began to manifest themselves from the very first day of the setting up of the political institutions.

The Stormont celebrations that marked the beginning of the new Executive, presented a scene which was very disconcerting for Bible believers. Here was a company that was not the believer's crowd celebrating that which had been made possible by a dramatic change of heart by Christians.

Job was wrongly accused of keeping the wrong company. "What man *is* like Job, *who* drinketh up scorning like water? which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men," Job 34: 7-8. The scenes at Stormont on that first day indicated that the new political circumstances meant that keeping company with a new crowd, a wicked crowd, was now acceptable.

It was a scene of liquor glasses in the hands of a motley cross-section of those, who had long been opposed to every thing Protestant, laughing uproariously. It was reminiscent of a scene from Babylon of old!

The likes of "Father" Alec Reid and Ted Kennedy and those infamous for their terrorist activities, and, it was later learned, leading members of the IRA "Army Council" all celebrating the inauguration of this new regime made many supporters of the DUP begin to doubt the wisdom of what it was they had been led into.

The handful of Christians, including some Free Presbyterian ministers, showing some evidence of being out of place amongst such a crowd, did little to quell the growing anxieties but rather added to them.

It was evident a new era had begun and it was one in sharp contrast to former times in Ulster. The new politics would require adjustments to the old attitudes on what was considered acceptable behaviour for the Christian.

This was not the answer to prayer for revival and deliverance that thousands of Free Presbyterians had sought from God for over half a century!

This awakened spirit of concern amongst Christians quickly grew as the new regime got into its stride. Indeed, it has become ever more evident that the manifestation of the spirit which was casting aside the views of what hitherto has been orthodox political unionist thinking in the spring and summer of 2007 is the same spirit which is rampant amongst some young people who are rebelling against orthodox Christian views on music, the conducting of young people's meetings, attendance at cinemas and theatres and much more. There is a common link and it is being recognised more and more to be the case by those who now realise that they were perhaps too slow to see that link and give their voice



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against this tide of backsliding, designed to undermine the foundations and standards of old-fashioned Christianity in today's society when it first was manifested.

About the time the new political institutions were announced, the newspapers were highlighting the news that the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), would become responsible for the distribution of a fund set up by the outgoing Secretary of State, Mr. Peter Hain, MP, for the support of sodomite organisations. He had already paid over £100,000 to the 'Coalition on Sexual Orientation' (CoSO) for the period January 1st 2007 to April 1st 2007. The remaining £130,000 was to be paid over by OFMDFM before September 2008. Could such a thing be?

Here is part of an article I wrote on the subject of Peter Hain's funding.

*"From documents I have obtained under the "Freedom of Information Act 2000" it is clear that negotiations between civil servants within the Department of the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) took place back last year during its consultations on the "draft sexual orientation strategy and action plan" (covering letter from OFMDFM). An announcement of the funding of sodomites, represented by the "Coalition on Sexual Orientation" (CoSO) was made by the Secretary of State, Peter Hain, on 29th July 2006. In that statement it became clear that the OFMDFM would be the vehicle by which this funding would take place.*

*On March 22nd 2007, it was announced by OFMDFM that the short term funding package of £100,000 announced by Peter Hain on 29th July 2006, would be increased to a total of £230,000 which will end in the Summer of 2008.*

*The first payment of £100,000 covered the period January 2007 to March 31st 2007. This was stated in a letter from the OFMDFM dated 29th January 2007.*

*It is interesting to note that one of the terms under which the grant was given was that CoSO would give proper publicity to "assistance made available by the Department (OFMDFM) to the Organisation . . . in any publicity or brochures or other material produced by or on behalf of the Organisation and in which the Project is mentioned" (paragraph XIX). The OFMDFM is obviously very proud of its support for sodomites and wants that fact to be known!*

*This grant of £100,000 was augmented by a further grant of £180,000 for the period 1st April 2007 to 30th September 2008 (Letter from OFMDFM to CoSO, April 2nd 2007).*

*The same demand for publicity for the OFMDFM's role in this funding was repeated."*

This funding of sodomites through the OFMDFM was repeatedly denied privately but never in any public statement of policy. These denials were in order to placate the ever deepening concerns of Free Presbyterians in particular.

However, the truth of the statements made by Free Presbyterian critics of the power-sharing executive was finally borne out in a letter from the OFMDFM in response to a demand under the Freedom of Information Act.

The letter is dated January 30th 2008 and it states: *"I refer to your request for information about funding from the 2008 – 2011 draft Budget for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual groups which was received on 2nd January 2008. I am writing to confirm that OFMDFM*



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*has now completed its search for this information – please see below. OFMDFM's 2008 – 2011 draft budget bid did not contain a specific allocation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual groups. However, I can advise that the 'Coalition on Sexual Orientation' will receive approximately £80k funding from this department in the 2008 / 2009 financial year. This represents the **last instalment** of a short term grant fund provided by the previous Secretary of State. No further funding has either been requested or identified in respect of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual groups at this time."*

Please note the term "last instalment"!

Peter Hain had made the first instalment of £100,000 in the period January-April 2007. The last instalment of £80,000 is to be paid within the period of the 2008/2009 financial year.

That leaves £50,000 which must have been paid within the period May 2007 - April 2008 - a period in which repeated denials that any funds were paid over by OFMDFM to sodomite groups were being whispered in the ears of the gullible!

It should be noted that the website of CoSo announced on October 2007 that it had just received a payment from the OFMDFM and would be allocating this money to its member organisations. The following statement appears on its website:

***"LGB Voluntary Organisations Grant Fund - grants have been allocated to successful LGB groups - updated 3 February 2008***

*The lesbian, gay and bisexual Sector has received a financial package of support from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. This package is being managed by the Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO) on behalf of the Sector and a Steering Group made of up CoSO member organisations, non-CoSO LGB organisations and a representative from OFMDFM sit on this group and oversee the Project.*

***This project has provided the opportunity to offer a one off small grant opportunity to LGB groups and organisations across the LGB sector in Northern Ireland.***

*Applications to this fund were invited by 30 November 2007. A number of LGB organisations have been successful and have received grants to undertake specific projects in accordance with the overall aims of the LGB Sector Project."*

In a more recent development, a Free Presbyterian was sent the following reply regarding the issue of denials about the funding of sodomites during Dr Paisley's tenure as First Minister. The reply shows clearly, despite its diplomatic terminology, that funding took place throughout Dr Paisley's time in office.

Here is the reply from the OFMDFM dated July 23rd 2008.

### Freedom of Information Act 2000

I refer to your request which was received on 16th June 2008 for information about the funding of lesbian, gay and bisexual groups. I am writing to confirm that OFMDFM has now completed its search for this information, and I have set out our responses to each of your questions below.



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Q.1 *“How much money has been provided by OFMDFM to lesbian, gay and bisexual groups in each of the last three years?”*

OFMDFM has provided the following amounts under the short term funding package announced by the then Secretary of State, Peter Hain, in July 2006 and agreed by him.

Funding to CoSO from OFMDFM

06/07 £50k

07/08 £100k

08/09 £80k

Total £230,000

Q.2 *“On what dates was that money paid by the Department?”*

Actual funding to date

March 07 £50,000

July 07 £50,000

February 08 £50,000

TOTAL £150,000

Q.3 *“On Sunday 30th March 2008 in a statement in Martyrs’ Memorial Free Presbyterian Church Dr Paisley claimed that money which was to go to lesbian, gay and bisexual groups from the Department was not agreed by him, payments to these groups were held up as a result and, in order to resolve the situation, the money was – somehow – allocated by Westminster rather than the devolved administration. Although Dr Paisley was speaking in his capacity as a minister of religion rather than First Minister, what he says in the statement clearly relates to his duties as First Minister. I request all documentation held by OFMDFM which support the former First Minister’s claims.”*

While the Department holds information relating to the funding of lesbian, gay and bisexual groups, this does not, however, reflect the circumstances you outline above.

In July 2006, the then Secretary of State Peter Hain announced his intention to award short term funding for the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Sector (LGB Sector). A total of up to £230k was awarded to this sector and made available by Direct Rule Ministers in early 2007 for capacity building, community relations and tackling social exclusion. The first payment of funding was made in March 2007 and the final payment is due to be made by end March 2009.

So much for the denials of OFMDFM funding of sodomites! The new regime had brought in a new attitude toward the most wicked of sins.

Just a few days ago, Mrs Iris Robinson, MP, MLA, wife of the new First Minister and leader of the DUP, Mr. Peter Robinson, MP, MLA, found herself under attack for comments she made about sodomy on a BBC programme. Here is how the matter was reported in the



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"Belfast Telegraph" of June 7th 2008:

*"Northern Ireland's first lady was last night at the centre of a new row after she said gay people needed psychiatric help.*

*DUP MLA and MP Iris Robinson sparked outrage among the homosexual community with the claim that gays and lesbians could be "turned around".*

*The Coalition on Sexual Orientation has angrily condemned Mrs Robinson's remarks and the Royal College of Psychiatrists refuted her claims.*

*Last week Mrs Robinson, a born again Christian, caused controversy when she described homosexuality as an "abomination" and yesterday she added further fuel to the fire with the offer of psychological assistance for gays.*

*She said: "I have a very lovely psychiatrist who works with me in my offices and his Christian background is that he tries to help homosexuals — trying to turn away from what they are engaged in.*

*"I'm happy to put any homosexual in touch with this gentleman and I have met people who have turned around and become heterosexuals. They are married and are having families. It does work."*

*Her comments come during a debate on the Stephen Nolan show on Radio Ulster which followed a homophobic attack on a man."*

I am in support of Mrs Robinson when she says that sodomy is an abomination. That is what the Bible teaches concerning this wickedness. "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it *is* abomination," Leviticus 18:22.

However, I differ strongly with her on the question of a "cure" by way of a psychiatrist's couch! It is the way of the cross that brings deliverance from sin for that is what sodomy is. It is not a disease; it is a depravity from which a person may find deliverance only through the blood of the Lamb. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

I am amazed that Mrs Robinson can condemn sodomy as she does while at the same time support her husband who now holds the office of First Minister, since it is through the Office of First and Deputy First Minister that funds are supplied to sodomites for the promoting of their lifestyle!!

Herein is the hypocrisy that riddles the DUP.

But the matter of the funding of sodomites was not the only evidence of the alarming course being taken by the power-sharing coalition. Press reports of statements by Dr Paisley as the First Minister and gatherings at which he appeared further alarmed Christians and forced a rethink by many who had blindly voiced their support for the DUP's political initiative.

Here are some examples of reported events that alarmed and saddened believers.



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### **Dr Paisley's appearance at the opening of an ecumenical centre at Lurgan.**

The "Belfast Newsletter" of 29th May 2007, reported: "A new £2.4m community development resource centre was opened yesterday in Lurgan by Lord Robin Eames.

The Jethro Centre has been developed by Shankill Parish Caring Association, and has created 15 full and part time jobs in the area.

Lord Eames said the Church of Ireland ought to be "extremely proud" of the project, particularly because it represents the way forward for the Church and community in the future.

"It represents excellent co-operation for the good of the community and that co-operation has been between the voluntary and statutory authorities for the good of the entire local community," he said. "I hope to see many more examples of this type of co-operation."

First Minister Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness also attended the event.

Dr Paisley said: "They (Shankill Parish Caring Association) recognise the valuable contribution which churches continue to make to the development of relationships within and between all communities."

### **His praise for the Roman Catholic St Vincent de Paul Society.**

"First Minister the Rt Hon Dr Ian Paisley MP, MLA and deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness MP, MLA have delivered a Christmas tree with a difference to Stormont.

The tree, however, was not one bedecked with tinsel and baubles. Instead it was a Norwegian Spruce which was planted in the grounds of Stormont Castle. They were joined by Major David Jackson, Leader of the Salvation Army in Ireland and Aileen Coney, Regional Administrator from the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

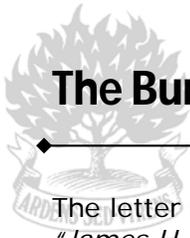
Dr Paisley said: "I believe it is appropriate to recognise and commend the important everyday work of charities especially at this time of the year. In particular both the charities present today work very hard to provide festive gifts to children in our society whose families are less fortunate than ourselves. These efforts are very much appreciated." (13th December 2007 Executive press release.)

### **The communication from the OFMDFM to Dr Sean Brady on the occasion of his "elevation" to a cardinal.**

The Cardinal-elect stated at a press conference on Wednesday 17th October 2007: "I would like to acknowledge the many expressions of support and good wishes received from across Ireland today. I am very grateful to the President of Ireland, Mrs Mary McAleese, to An Taoiseach and the Irish Government, to the various members of Dáil Éireann and the Seanad. I am also grateful to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the various members of the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly for their warm congratulations."

Dr Paisley denied he had sent any "congratulations" to Dr Brady but a letter was sent from the OFMDFM to Sean Brady for which he publicly issued a statement of thanks.

The law states that no letter can be sent from that office without the express approval of both Dr Paisley and Martin McGuinness. The OFMDFM confirmed that such is the position in a reply to Jim Allister MEP.



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The letter reads:

*“James H Allister QC MEP  
139 Holywood Road  
BELFAST  
BT43BE  
15 June 2007*

*Dear Mr Allister,*

*I am replying to your letter to me of 8 May seeking clarification on the procedures which will apply to the sharing of information between the First Minister and deputy First Minister and, specifically, information conveyed in correspondence.*

*I apologise for the slight delay in replying, due to the need to ensure that the First Minister and deputy First Minister are content with this reply.*

*Any correspondence addressed to the First Minister and deputy First Minister, either individually or jointly, and which relates to a matter for which they exercise joint responsibility, will be seen by both Ministers. Official advice on the matters raised in the correspondence will be submitted to both simultaneously and, after joint consideration, the response will be agreed and signed by both.*

*You will appreciate, therefore, that in the exercise of their statutory responsibilities, they will be unable to comply with any request that correspondence should be seen only by the office-holder you specify.*

*Yours sincerely  
NIGEL HAMILTON”*

### **Dr. Paisley’s hosting of a book launch at Stormont for the singer and former MEP, Dana and the terms in which he spoke of her faith.**

The book being launched was devoted to promoting the errors of Romanism for Dana is a devoted Roman Catholic charismatic. Dr. Paisley was widely reported in the press as saying of her at the Stormont reception that she was “a woman of great faith and steel who had stood up for what she believed in, and added: “I’m glad to stand with her” (Belfast Telegraph, 7/11/07). He is also quoted in the same article as saying : “I hope that when everyone on this island reads this book I hope they ponder what it says.”

It was in response to this statement that we wrote an article entitled: [“The faith of Dana - not a faith to be commended”](#) in which we said: “To speak of someone who believes the doctrines of Rome as a person of great faith is to suggest that she has embraced the true faith as set forth in the Word of God. That is most certainly not so.”

### **The meeting between Dr Paisley and the former Presbyterian minister, Rev David Armstrong, who was required by his congregation to resign from Limavady Presbyterian Church because of his growing links with the local Roman Catholic priest.**

David Armstrong is now a Church of Ireland minister in Co. Cork. He attended the function at Stormont for Dana’s book launch and was persuaded to approach Dr Paisley by the likes of former Roman Catholic Bishop of Derry, Dr Edward Daly, who declared that Armstrong would find Dr Paisley a very different man.

Subsequent to the newspaper reports, Rev David Armstrong confirmed in a phone conver-



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sation on 27th December 2007, that he had been encouraged to approach Dr Paisley at a gathering in Stormont by news reporter, Eamonn Malley and by the retired Roman Catholic Bishop of Derry, Edward Daly, both saying to him that he would find Dr Paisley a very different person from what he had been.

While refusing to give details of his conversation with Dr Paisley, David Armstrong said that he spoke with him in the presence of Lady Eileen Paisley. He also said that it was inaccurate when it was stated in some press reports that Martin McGuinness was present. He repeated that as a result of what Dr Paisley said to him he went home a very happy man! David Armstrong refused to affirm or deny that he had received an apology from Dr Paisley. All he would say was that he went away from the meeting with Dr Paisley a much happier man.

### **The attendance of two DUP politicians, Culture minister, Edwin Poots and Lisburn Mayor, Councillor Tinsley, at a Hindi festival in Lisburn.**

These news items, along with the almost daily news pictures of Dr Paisley and Martin McGuinness laughing uproariously together in some part of the world or other, added to the discontentment of a growing number of Christians and the belief that they had been misled about the true nature of the Stormont political arrangement and just what it entailed.

It was seen that one who had been a beloved and revered leader and who had castigated former unionist leaders for compromises of a far lesser degree was now, through this compromising political arrangement, placed within a circle of activities and people unbecoming a Christian and was being engulfed by such in a way that no Christian should.

The final straw for many took place in Ballymena.

### **Dr. Paisley and his wife attended a religious service for Boy Scouts at which a priest, "Father" Symonds, led the gathering in prayer.**

Dr. Paisley then spoke to the Scouts. Some excused this behaviour by saying that he was there as the First Minister and therefore had a civic duty to attend!

It later was revealed in a letter from the OFMDFM, that Dr. Paisley was not at the service in Ballymena as part of his duties as First Minister. So the "civic duties" excuse, such as it was, was invalid.

The letter from the OFMDFM stated: *"I refer to your request for information about the First Minister's attendance at a service in Ballymena which was received on 22nd January 2008. I am writing to confirm that OFMDFM has now completed its search for this information, and have established that such information is not held by this department. As Dr Paisley did not attend this event in his capacity as First Minister, the invitation was not handled by OFMDFM."*

Even if it had been the case that Dr Paisley was there in the exercise of his civic duties, it must be remembered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to do their civic duty when it meant partaking in idolatrous worship but told the king, "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up," Daniel 3: 18.

The incident brought home to many that compromise of Biblical standards was the price that must be paid for high political office in a settlement that met with the approval of Lon-



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don, Dublin, Washington and complied with the demands and desires of the IRA.

This was further illustrated by an event just a few days ago. Here is how the matter was reported on the BBC website.

### **“High spirits at charity auction**

### **A bottle of whisky signed by teetotal Ian Paisley has been auctioned to raise money for Macmillian Cancer Support.**

Rev Ian Paisley was keen to scrawl under his name: "I cannot recommend the Devil's buttermilk".

The bottle of Highland Single Malt was also signed by PM Gordon Brown and Conservative leader David Cameron.

The auction took place during a charity tug-of-war between the House of Lords and the House of Commons, which raised over £120,000.

Macmillian general manager Heather Monteverde said: "We are delighted that one of the final acts the former First Minister took as he left his post, was to put aside his personal views to help Macmillian raise vital funds to improve the lives of people affected by cancer by providing practical, medical, emotional and financial support".

After a lot of flexing and gritted teeth, the winner of the Westminster tug-of-war was the House of Commons." (Underlining ours for emphasis)

How things have changed when Ian Paisley, whose father's evangelistic ministry resulted in the closing of some public houses in Ulster and who was noted himself for his "anti-booze" stand, would have participated, for whatever good cause, in a venture which promoted the sale of whiskey!!

A scrawled line on the whiskey bottle label does not exonerate his action by which the sale and consumption of alcohol is condoned if not encouraged.

That signature will remain on that bottle as a condemnation and a stain against the name of a man long revered for his stand for the old-time religion of Jesus Christ.

The number of people with concerns about the implications of power-sharing with Sinn Fein/IRA increased over the summer of 2007.

That there was an increasing concern amongst Free Presbyterians was seen in the June Presbytery when a Commission was set up as a result of the opposition by members of Presbytery to Dr. Paisley holding the Moderatorship of the Free Presbyterian Church while also holding the office of First Minister in partnership with a man deeply involved in IRA murder and terror, Martin McGuinness.

At the September Presbytery meeting, the discussion on the report of this Commission led to a decision, when it became clear that a majority in the Presbytery were of this mind, that Dr Paisley should not seek re-election as Moderator.

The activities of the office of First Minister were deemed by a majority in Presbytery to be incompatible with the duties of the Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church and since Dr Paisley was determined to remain in his political post then he must relinquish his leadership of the the denomination.



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When Dr Paisley asked to be allowed to remain until the end of the year, this was readily acceded to, since no one had any desire to humiliate him.

In hindsight, let it be said that the sorrow of heart felt by many at the way things had gone was the outworking of God's grace within the hearts of a faithful people and is something over which we should be thankful to God for His mercy.

The sorrow of heart seen among Moses and those members of Israel who stood weeping at the door of the tabernacle over the terrible events they were witnessing in the camp of Israel, Numbers 25: 6, was in like manner the outworking of God's grace in their hearts as they mourned over the sin of Israel.

Much more terrible would have been the situation in Ulster if there had been none to grieve over the events of the last 20 months and cry unto God for His intervention! The response of Ezra to the sin of his day should teach us that a heart that mourns over the sins of God's people is a grace to be cherished.

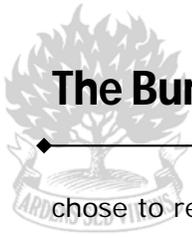
*"Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice,"* Ezra 9: 1-4.

Those, like the men spoken of by God in Ezekiel 9: 4, "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done" should not be despised and derided but seen as those who have rightly discerned the spirit of the age.

I repeat, more terrible indeed would have been the consequences if in Ulster there was none who reacted to the situation which developed with distress of heart and soul for the wellbeing of the gospel witness.

### **2. SOMETHING ELSE OVER WHICH THE DISTRESSED IN ULSTER SHOULD TAKE HEART IS THE NUMBER OF YOUNGER MINISTERS IN THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH WHO DISPLAYED A CONCERN OF HEART AT RECENT EVENTS AND WHO HAVE DECLARED THEMSELVES FOR THE 'OLD PATHS'.**

There were disappointing reactions to the direction taken in the political world amongst ministers of my own age group. Perhaps if more senior men had had the foresight, wisdom and courage to see where this political initiative would end and had spoken to Dr Paisley as they should, then he and the church may well have been spared the recent tragedy. For whatever reasons however, all too many senior ministers either supported Dr Paisley or



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chose to remain silent.

However, something unusual did take place. Many of the younger ministers did speak out and did resist the trends.

Historically, whenever a drift away from the 'old paths' takes place within the ministerial body of a denomination, it is invariably led by younger men seeking change and resisted by the older men desirous of holding onto that deemed to be orthodox.

In the recent controversy in the Free Presbyterian Church, the opposite alignment could be observed between the older and the younger ministers.

That, for me, augurs well for the future of the Free Presbyterian Church. While some of the more senior ministers were prepared to dismiss the views of the Presbytery as expressed in the 1998 Presbytery statement on power-sharing in government with unrepentant terrorists as no longer relevant, younger men, many of them ordained since 1998, were most anxious to stand by that statement and maintain it still as the position of our church, believing it to be a statement of the teaching of God's Word on the issue.

The 1998 statement read:

*The Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster recognising the Bible as our sole rule of faith and practice — vehemently opposes the recent April Agreement (the Good Friday Agreement). Our opposition to the Agreement stems from the fact that it is unscriptural, unethical and immoral.*

*Scripture makes it abundantly clear in Romans 13: 1-5 that it is the duty of the Government to punish evil and reward good. The fundamental principle which lies at the heart of any stable and peaceable society has been dispensed with in this Agreement. Set against a backdrop of lies and deceitfulness it ensures that those who have supported and advocated violence will sit in government over our people. . . . Such a position is contrary to the divine law of God where He commands punishment of an evildoer (1 Peter 2: 14).*

Thank God for the presence within our Presbytery of many younger men of the spirit of Phinehas who were prepared to act against the developments that were threatening to engulf the witness of the Free Presbyterian Church and send us off in a path of decline and disaster.

Here is solace indeed in the midst of today's distresses!

### **3.THE POWER-SHARING POLITICAL INNOVATION HAD THE STAMP OF DIVINE DISAPPROVAL UPON IT IN THE WAY DR. PAISLEY'S TENURE IN OFFICE ENDED**

That which is of God endures. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ," Philippians 1: 6.

How many trials the work of grace within the believer faces and conquers! "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and *of* Barak, and *of* Samson, and



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*of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect," Hebrews 11:32-40.*

The Burning Bush has long been the symbol of Presbyterianism for, despite the efforts of hell, it continues to burn but is not consumed.

In an interview shortly after the setting up of the power-sharing executive, Dr Paisley was asked the question, "Is this God's will?" His reply was an alarming but highly informative, "I hope so."

A news reporter, who makes no profession of faith in Christ, during a conversation with me some nine months after that interview, mentioned it to me as something that stuck in his mind. He felt that for such a man as Dr Paisley to reply to such a question in the manner he did was in great contrast to his whole demeanour in former times regarding such matters. "I would have thought that he would have been absolutely confident that it was God's will for him or else he would not have ventured forward. It really struck me that he was able only to say, "I hope so"!

For Dr Paisley to launch such a venture, which defied the stand of the Presbytery in the past and which faced decided opposition amongst those who had been his loyal supporters in prayer for decades, on the basis of "I hope it is God's will" is totally out of character with the man's bold and brave actions in the past.

Dr Paisley was a man who had prefaced his opposition to the various enterprises of ecumenists and Romanists with the oft-repeated scriptural declaration: "Thus saith the Lord"!

A believer dare not go forward unless he is confident that he is moving in the will of God. When it comes to such a mould-breaking political enterprise such as entering into a power-sharing government with an organisation of the nature of Sinn Fein/IRA with its very recent involvement in terrorist murders and violence, one would expect that the mind of God would have to be known in an unmistakable fashion.

But it was not so, as Dr Paisley acknowledged to the reporter when he said that he hoped that it was God's will!



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He had every indication that it was not God's will. He had his own arguments against such a step in the past. He had preached on the issue. He had written on the issue. He had issued innumerable statements on the issue. In all cases he had declared unequivocally that power-sharing with the IRA was contrary to the revealed will of God.

Here is an example of his statements on the matter. On May 20th, 1998, the General Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster was associated with an advert in the local press, calling on all to say "NO" in the referendum on the Good Friday Agreement. It was signed by most if not all of the then ministers of the Free Presbyterian church.

The wording of the advert makes timely reading in the light of the present agreement between the DUP and Sinn Fein/IRA in which they are both committed to a power-sharing government in Northern Ireland.

Included in the advert was a statement from the Presbytery. Dr Paisley was the chief author of that statement. Part of the statement reads:

"The Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster recognising the Bible as our sole rule of faith and practice — vehemently opposes the recent April Agreement (the Good Friday Agreement). ***Our opposition to the Agreement stems from the fact that it is unscriptural, unethical and immoral.***"

Another part of that 1998 advert reads: "We the undersigned, having professed faith in Christ as our Lord and Saviour and bound in conscience by the infallibility of the Word of God, declare the truth that governments have divinely been given the power of the sword for the punishment of evil doers, and the power of protection for the praise of them that do well.

The Agreement flies in the face of Holy Scripture and punishes those that do well and praises those that are evil doers.

We protest against this outrage.

'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil,' Romans 13:3-4."

Little wonder he could not answer the reporter in the affirmative. At best, he could only equivocate and say, "I hope so"!

Of course, as time passed, he had gone on to speak more confidently of the future of the power-sharing coalition that he headed. He declared that he would serve out his full four years. Christians everywhere noted the absence of such a statement of scriptural caution such as "God willing" when he did make that declaration!

As it turned out, his confidence was ill advised and fatally flawed. He was constrained to announce his resignation from his office after ten months.

For the Bible-believer, the reason for this turn of events was simple though sad. God was not in Dr Paisley's decision to head such an unscriptural governmental set-up and the



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hopes and confidence that he displayed had been ill-conceived.

No Free Presbyterian takes any pleasure in noting these facts but there is a gladness that God did intervene and did answer prayer and did end His servant's occupation of this office in the way that He did.

### **4.LET THE DISTRESSED SOUL NOTE THAT THE BIBLE-BASED CASE MOUNTED AGAINST POWER-SHARING WITH SINN FEIN/IRA WAS NEVER ANSWERED.**

Sermons and articles opposing the decision of Dr Paisley were preached and published. The fact that they were never seriously confronted and countered should serve to ease the doubts and fears and vexation of the concerned Christian in Ulster.

Those sermons and articles brought encouraging responses from Christians across the world. They also drew insults and derision from far and near as well, though happily to a lesser degree. We were labelled as "Free Presbyterian pastors who despise Dr. Paisley and slander him at every opportunity" by those who ought to know better and who believe that they serve God and His truth by misrepresenting us so.

What the articles and sermons did not provoke was any serious attempt to answer what was set forth within them.

It is true that some tried to parallel the political strategy of power-sharing with Sinn Fein/IRA to that path followed by Joseph and Daniel. This was discussed and circulated amongst the supporters of power-sharing but was never really put forth in any public fashion as a defence of the initiative. The main reason being that in the company of those who knew little of God's Word such a parallel may have sounded impressive but a more public proferring of it would bring strong arguments from the Word of God showing such a view to be utterly without foundation.

There is a world of difference between entering upon a voluntary coalition with unrepentant murderers in order to obtain political power and the actions of Joseph and Daniel!

In both instances, these Old Testament saints had providentially thrust upon them the political status they attained. They never once sought after or desired the offices they entered upon.

Nor did either man shackle himself to those rulers under whom they served as the First Minister is shackled to the Deputy First Minister, a noted IRA terrorist leader and gunman, in the present Stormont power-sharing arrangement.

Nor did they enter office after publicly declaring for years that to do so was the essence of treachery and betrayal.

Never at anytime did the holding of high office rob either Daniel or Joseph of independence of thought or action. The power-sharing coalition, on the other hand, entails entering a po-



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political pathway that required actions which doubtless would otherwise be spurned. The joint office of First and Deputy First Minister is the prime example of this. Neither Dr Paisley nor Martin McGuinness may act independently of the other within the parameters of their office. It has been conceded in communications from that office that neither can as much as sign a letter without the approval of the other. Such “political slavery” was not part of the conditions under which Joseph and Daniel served.

Neither of these men went back on any moral undertaking or political pledge in order to gain office. That cannot be said of the DUP. The independence of Daniel and the sovereign power exercised by Joseph was as far removed from the Stormont regime as it is possible to be.

History does not record that their elevation to high office was seen by their enemies and critics to be “a political conversion” and the adoption of a path long eschewed and despised by them both!

How different has been the reaction to the setting up of the Stormont Executive! Praise has been heaped upon Dr. Paisley by his former bitterest critics for this amazing reversal of position, policy and direction. It has been termed a “Damascus Road” experience, so great has been the contrast to his views and position before May 2007 and that which followed after that date.

To so many long associated with a deriding of Dr. Paisley he suddenly became a favourite and was gleefully renamed “Dr. Yes” after bearing the epithet “Dr. No” for many years.

Joseph was able to say of his elevation within the government of Egypt that it was the out-working of God’s sovereign purpose for His people Israel. “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive,” Genesis 50:20.

Dr Paisley was unable to state clearly that he thought that his entering upon power-sharing with unrepentant terrorists was even God’s will!

As for Daniel, despite the attempts by his enemies to bring him into disfavour with the various rulers of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires in which he lived and served, God maintained him in positions of favour and influence for many, many years, some 70 years in all. Thus it is stated in Daniel 1:21 and 10:1. “And Daniel continued *even* unto the first year of king Cyrus.” “In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing *was* true, but the time appointed *was* long; and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.”

Such longevity and preservation betokens God’s favour upon the man and his actions. This can hardly be said of Dr. Paisley’s tenure as First Minister!

In the past, the Presbytery of of the Free Presbyterian Church condemned power-sharing with Sinn Fein/IRA. The declaration of the Presbytery was the work of Dr. Paisley. No public answer to the Presbytery’s position of 1998 was ever mounted by the Free Presbyterian



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proponents of the new deal. It was as if the Presbytery had never spoken in 1998! They simply chose to ignore it.

This silence concedes the rightness of the position of those opposed to power-sharing in 1998 and in 2007.

That surely is grounds for taking comfort in the midst of the distress of recent times.

### **5. THE SPIRIT OF GRIEF WITHIN THE HEARTS OF MANY BELIEVERS, THE READINESS TO BEAR REPROACH AND OPPOSE THE POLITICAL AND SPIRITUAL SELL-OUT COUPLED WITH THE SILENCE OF THE PROMOTERS OF POWER-SHARING IN THE FACE OF THE PUBLIC CASE MADE AGAINST THEIR UNSCRIPTURAL ACTIONS, HERALDS HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF FREE PRESBYTERIANISM.**

We are not against peace within our society or the promoting of the well-being of all men, be they of whatever creed or race.

We are against any scheme which is clearly based upon unscriptural foundations being peddled as God's way to peace and prosperity and what is more, we are opposed to Christians participating in and promoting such innovations.

Any scheme involving the masterminds of murder and terrorism, promoted by the deceits of Westminster and Dublin, aided by a scheming US administration, gift-wrapped in false assurances, sealed with deceitful promises of financial aid and lauded by a chorus of ecumenists, Romanists and the leading songbirds of compromise and betrayal, cannot be of God even when the "Belfast Telegraph" says otherwise!!

Not all in Ulster have been intoxicated by the heady wine of worldly advancement, unsparingly served up at St Andrews and Hillsborough Castle!

There are those who still prefer to walk with Christ outside the camp bearing His reproach for that presents the best and only means of bringing God's blessing upon our land and its inhabitants.

Unlike the favours which men bestow, most of which at best prove worthless or carry with them costly hidden payments, God's blessing "maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it," Proverbs 10:22.

Such was the view of our Protestant forebears and the founding fathers of our church. It is still the belief of a remnant within this Province.

The position adopted by the Free Presbyterian Church in former times, even by those who now would have us abandon it, is still the position of victory and the only position from which we can exercise a godly influence upon the present generation.

Worldly conformity will not save our land from decline and downgrade. Forsaking the path of holiness for a morally liberal and accommodatingly broad road will not benefit those who may, at the first, welcome such a change of direction.



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Rather, should the Free Presbyterian Church chose that path it will earn the curses of the rising generation and those who will succeed it throughout eternity.

Those souls saved in past years within our congregations rejoiced in the faithfulness of the men and women of 1951 and those who stood firm during the hard and difficult years of uncompromising loyalty to God and His truth which followed.

But our sons and daughters, the future generations which will follow on, will have a different response to the actions of this generation should it accept and embrace the notion that the only hope for the future of our children is to abandon the path 1951, the path of separation from the world and error to which the Bible directs us still, for the philosophy that gave birth to the May 2007 power-sharing executive.

If that is what the Free Presbyterian Church chooses then we have cause indeed to be distressed for the work and witness of God.

But a stand against such a course being adopted has been taken and I believe that under the mercy of God support for that stand is increasing as providence reveals the displeasure of God against the Stormont folly of recent days.

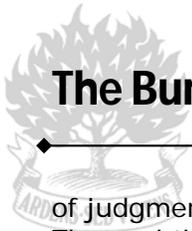
The matter is not yet over nor has it been fully disposed of. What has taken place in Ulster within the last 20 months has revealed the workings of a spirit that must be faced up to and dealt with in the manner God has decreed before we can relax and consider the danger as being past for the present.

When Moses came down from the mount and confronted the idolaters in the camp he knew what he must do. "And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder, and strawed *it* upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink *of it*," Exodus 32:19-20.

He went on to challenge Aaron and rebuke him for his part in the folly. But that did not end the matter.

"And when Moses saw that the people *were* naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto *their* shame among their enemies:) then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who *is* on the LORD'S side? *let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, *and* go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men," Exodus 32:25-28.

The folly of the people and their involvement in the sin had also to be dealt with. It was not enough to bring home to them the bitter folly in which they had been engaged by making them drink the bitter waters comprised of the incinerated and ground up golden calf. There had to be a pursuing and rooting out of every remnant of the evil and an exercising



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of judgment upon it.

The zeal the sons of Levi showed was an indication of their consecration to God. They put Him before their own flesh and blood who were guilty of idolatry and did not spare them. "For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day." Exodus 32:29.

The Saviour still calls upon us to show such consecration. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me," Matthew 10:37.

There must be a like rejection of the spirit of compromise with the world and an unsparing putting of such away from our midst if we would know again God's power amongst us.

Wrong has taken place amongst God's people in Ulster. It must be faced up to, judged as such and repented of and put away. It cannot be ignored if we would regain God's blessing upon us. What has been stated in this article may have the taste of the drink of the ashes of the golden calf mixed with water, but such is as the bitter herbs which had to be eaten on the night of the Passover.

Repentance, bitter as it may be, must be partaken of if we are to recover from the follies of recent years.

Take hope, dear believer. Pray for the flickering embers of Gospel truth that remain yet in Ulster that God might be pleased to fan them and fuel them until a mighty blaze of love for the Lord Jesus is ignited again within our pulpits and pews and that an awakening of sinners to flee from the wrath to come is witnessed once more in this so often favoured land.

Rev Ivan Foster.

14th June 2008.

(Subsequently updated).