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Statement by the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster

Reaffirmation of this Presbytery's position on marriage in the light of the increasing abandonment of Biblical teaching on the matter

As apostasy from God and His Word deepens in our nation, all kinds of immorality abound throughout society. The consequence of every aspect of this increasing immorality is that God's institution of marriage is constantly treated with scorn as a sinful people give vent to their corrupt lusts. Sadly, in a relatively short period of time, there has been an alarming abandonment of the teaching of Scripture on marriage as ordained by God. This contempt for Biblical marriage includes, not only the abandonment of it as a divine institution, but also direct attack upon it in the promotion and acceptance of so-called same-sex marriage. Legislation to allow same-sex marriage in England and Wales was passed by the Parliament of the UK, July 2013. In Scotland the legislation of same-sex marriage was passed by the Scottish Parliament, February 2014. Currently there is an increasing lobby for its legislation in Northern Ireland. Those who spearhead this lobby do so in defiance of God's moral law and with arrogant contempt toward those who wish to honour the Lord's revealed will for marriage. Moreover, this attack upon the divine institution of marriage, through favour and acceptance being shown toward same-sex marriage, is witnessed in varying degrees among visible bodies within professing 'Christendom' in the UK.

In such a day it is the duty of every section of Christ's Church to remain faithful to Scripture on the subject of marriage and to reaffirm in a public manner a clear, Biblically-based position on this issue. That is the purpose of this position paper as formulated by the Officers of the General Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster. We believe that this reaffirmation is in keeping with the ordination vow taken by all ministers and ruling elders in which they promise before God to believe "...the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments not merely to contain but to be the verbally inspired Word of the Living God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice." This vow in relation to Scripture binds our consciences on what God has revealed about the institution of marriage.

GOD'S INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

In Genesis 1:27 Moses writes – "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." This is a general statement of the creation of man in God's image but stressing distinction of gender. In Genesis 2 the Holy Spirit gives us some of the finer details, not only of human creation but of the institution of marriage also. The account of the two events melt into one as is especially seen in the record of the creation of Eve. The striking fact is that while Eve was taken from Adam in her creation, she was then joined to him again by the act of marriage. This is the import of Adam's words in v.23 – "And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.'" Adam's words indicate that the beautiful creature brought to him by God was of the same species and nature as he possessed; a human being like him. Yet at the same time he knew that there was a difference, indicated by his next words – "... she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." In our English translation, but even more especially in the Hebrew original, it is seen that the man and the woman, while the same in nature, were different in gender. The Hebrew word for 'man' is ISH – one sense of the word being that it signifies husband. But the Hebrew word for 'woman' is ISHA – indicating one who is designed by God to be a wife.

The clear message is that the creation of Eve paved the way for the divine institution of marriage. God's intention for marriage was that marriage would be constituted by two human beings coming together; but two people of different genders – male and female, as the Hebrew words ISH and ISHA signify. This fact is then reinforced by the divine comment in v.24 – "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Again, the word for man in this verse is ISH. The word for 'wife' is the same Hebrew word as for 'woman' in v.23. So, the verse could be read – "...a husband shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his woman and they shall be one flesh." The Genesis 2 record of the divine institution of marriage is fundamental to a Biblical view of marriage. It undergirds all that the rest of Scripture has to say on the subject. It contains the implicit warning that any attempt to erode God's



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revealed will for marriage – such as is inherent within same-sex marriage – will bring His just displeasure. In addition, Genesis 2 makes it incumbent upon Christ's Church to be the voice for God's institution of marriage when that institution is under virulent attack by the same-sex marriage agenda.

CHRIST'S PROPHETIC WARNING ABOUT THE LAST DAYS

The Lord Jesus Christ, the only Head of the Church, in Luke 17:28-30 delivers teaching that shows that the sin of same-sex or sodomite practices will mark the last days. In these verses the Lord draws a parallel between the days of Lot and the time of His Second Advent. In the course of what He teaches, the Lord specifically verifies the historicity of the destruction of Sodom. He declares – "...the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all." Certainly the focus of Christ in Luke 17 is on the sudden destruction that will come on sinners at His coming just as sudden destruction came on the people of Sodom. However, other Scriptures such as Genesis 19 make it exceedingly clear that the sin for which the people of Sodom and its partner cities were destroyed was the sin of same-sex alliances. Therefore, in the parallel that Christ draws in Luke 17, there is surely the inference at least that the sin that brought God's wrath on Sodom will characterise the times that precede His coming again. In the light of the global acceptance of same-sex or sodomite behaviour, Christ's Church would do well to heed His prophetic warning in Luke 17.

GOD'S ABHORRENCE OF SAME-SEX SIN ABOVE OTHER SINS

Our Shorter Catechism teaches that while every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, yet there are some sins that are more heinous than others. Scripture leaves us in no doubt that same-sex partnerships at any level constitute sin that is heinous in the sight of God and is utterly abhorrent to Him. It is a sin that God specifically abominates, Leviticus 18:22; 20:13. The language used plainly speaks of a sexual alliance between men; and declares that "...they have committed an abomination." In Romans 1:24-28 Paul describes the state of the Gentile world of the 1st century. His description plainly refers to same-sex sin on the part of men with men and women with women, vs.26-27. His exposure of this sin reveals that when nations and peoples are overrun by such sin it is a sign that they have been abandoned or given up by God. In Jude v.7 the sinners of Sodom and its associated cities "...are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." It is very striking that while the Spirit could have presented other Old Testament examples of sinners enduring such suffering, He chooses Sodom and its allies. His choice underlines the divine abhorrence of same-sex sin.

FORGIVENESS FOR ALL WHO REPENT OF SAME-SEX ALLIANCES

While Almighty God abhors the sin of sodomy and will judge all who refuse to repent of this sin, yet He is merciful to those who turn from it and seek forgiveness through Christ's one atoning sacrifice. This is the clear teaching of the Spirit of God in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. The sin of sodomy is in view in the particular sins that Paul highlights. In v.9 the Apostle includes those who are "...effeminate," and "...abusers of themselves with mankind." These terms refer to both passive and active participants in same-sex relationships; thus debarring those who are guilty from entering the kingdom of God. However, v.11 gives the assurance that where there is repentance from such sin, for the penitent one there is cleansing from this sin, to be set apart to live a holy life through Christ, accepted and declared righteous by God in justification.

CONCLUDING AFFIRMATION

In the light of these Scriptures this Presbytery affirms:

- That marriage between one man and one woman was ordained of God and is therefore a divine institution;
- That since civil government is to base its laws on marriage upon divine law, the law of the land should uphold the divine institution of marriage. It follows –



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- That while marriage is also a civil contract, no civil government has the right to change the divine institution of marriage;
 - That the introduction and legislation of so-called same-sex partnerships or marriages by the state is a violation of God's moral law in relation to marriage and is abhorrent to Him;
 - That all ministers and elders of the General Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, who at ordination subscribed the Westminster Confession of Faith, which in Ch.24, Section 1 states that "Marriage is to be between one man and one woman," are thereby before God bound by that ordination oath not only to uphold the divine institution of marriage between male and female but are also required not to condone or endorse any same-sex or sodomite alliance. It follows, therefore –
 - That as ministers and elders of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, being bound by our adherence to the infallible Scriptures and by our ordination vow to defend the truths of the said Scriptures; we hereby re-affirm our adherence to its unchanging and unchangeable teaching on the divine and sacred institution of marriage and our opposition to acceptance and promotion of same-sex alliances.
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Response by Rev. Ivan Foster

I understand that the statement has been read in many churches on the Lord's Day just past, as was appointed by Presbytery and that it has been mounted on social media as well.

That being the case, it is in order for me to make a public statement regarding it.

I am responding to the Presbytery Statement because it is not representative of the Free Presbyterianism with which I been associated since my conversion to Christ in April 1964!

I cannot therefore allow silence to give the impression that I agree that this statement is an adequate response to the challenge presently facing the Free Presbyterian Church - namely, the support given by some Free Presbyterians, a number of whom are elders, by their membership of the DUP to that organisation's support for the sodomite life-style!

The matter chiefly addressed by the statement - "Same Sex marriage", is not something for which any Free Presbyterian to my knowledge has voiced the least support. Rather, it has been repeatedly denounced as an abomination. The topic of "Same Sex marriage" is not the subject that cries out to be addressed at present!

There are Free Presbyterians, members and elders, who by their membership of and support for the Democratic Unionist Party, have allied themselves with that party's pro-sodomite position, embodied as it is in the party's endorsement of a sodomite candidate in the recent Local Council elections. One, Alison Bennington, a woman who openly acknowledges her sodomite lifestyle, was commended to the public by the DUP as a suitable person for its support.

The Presbytery Statement was endorsed by some who hold high office in the DUP and well as others who are in membership of it. Is it not hypocritical of them to support such a statement which in general condemns that which the DUP endorses and promotes? Surely we all know that we cannot have a foot in both camps! The Saviour said: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon," Matthew 6:24.

Men cannot be both for the Presbytery Statement and for the DUP and its endorsement and promotion of the sodomite lifestyle!

Mrs Arlene Foster, the leader of the DUP, is a member of the Church of Ireland and as such she has intro-



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duced that apostate church's view on sodomy into the DUP and ousted the Biblical view on this matter once held by the party. Last year, she took the advice of one of her bishops on the matter of Sabbath desecration when she was invited to attend a GAA football match on the Lord's Day. He said she could go and she did so, ignoring the Word of God on the matter and overthrowing the long-held DUP view of the sanctity of the Lord's Day.

The Presbytery statement should have addressed the issue of church members giving allegiance to an organisation that now supports sodomy as an acceptable lifestyle and supports Sabbath desecration, in utter defiance of the Word of God. I believe that many ministers and church members wished that to have been done.

We cannot fight the Lord's battles by setting up and knocking down 'straw men'!!

It would be churlish of me not to say that the Presbytery Statement is a very good presentation of Scriptural truth on the subject of marriage.

However, what I am saying is that good and all as the Statement is, it does not address the issue that caused some Free Presbyterians to withdraw from the DUP, following its putting up of a sodomite candidate but, sadly, not all.

Saul's armour was most certainly a kingly item but it did not suit David's need at that time and he put it off.

I have stated in my response to the Presbytery officers as to why, in my opinion, the salient issue was not addressed. A spirit of compromise was at work!

Such a failure has permitted sin to remain unchallenged in the Free Presbyterian camp! Until it is dealt with then I believe we can say that the Lord, as He revealed to Joshua, is saying to us in the Free Presbyterian Church, ". . . . neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you," Joshua 7:12. That which we declared against ecumenical denominations for their failure to deal with sin properly, may now be directed at us!

However, as with Joshua and his generation, we MAY STILL ACT TO THE PLEASING OF GOD AND THE SAVING OF OUR CHURCH.

We must deal with the 'Achan' in our midst rather than skirting around it and pretending it does not exist for the Lord sees it and will not ignore it!

Free Presbyterian, get on your knees and pray that grace will be given to ministers and elders to obey God and act to the putting away from our midst this dreadful compromise and break all links with the sodomite-embracing Democratic Unionist Party!

Let us remember the Lord's warning to Israel:

"And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers; when thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God," Deuteronomy 13:17-18.

Below is the response I sent to the Moderator and the Clerk of Presbytery a short time after I received a copy of the statement which is now in the public domain.

Brethren,



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As I read the statement from Presbytery, I was reminded of Luther's wisely astute observation.

"If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth 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 Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved to be steady. It is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

What is said in the statement is very good and scriptural BUT, what is NOT SAID sadly underscores the fact that the FPC is not the fighting, faithful, contending church it once was!

The one matter the statement does not refer to is the fact that there are Free Presbyterian elders and members who by their support for the Democratic Unionist Party, endorse that party's pro-sodomite sympathies. It may be, as Luther puts it, a 'little point', but is THE ISSUE facing our church today!

Failing to deal with that issue creates the impression amongst such supporters that what they do has been sanctioned by the Presbytery. Furthermore, it suggests that those who are deeply concerned about the DUP/FP members' affiliation, are wrong to be concerned.

I am deeply distressed that the opportunity has not been taken to be faithful to God and His Word and to the flock of God over which you hold a measure of authority and thereby responsibility.

It would appear that our church is subservient to the interests of the DUP and a tiny minority within our ranks! That is not what we as a denomination solemnly covenanted before God in 1981 when we promised the Lord to be "for all that Christ was for and against all that Christ is against."

We cannot be against the actions of members within our ranks who are supporting the sinful pro-sodomite position of the DUP if we do not utter one word of condemnation against those actions! Surely failure to condemn this sin and take action against it makes us guilty of the sin by association!

May God stir His ministers to meet the challenge of the hour and may He answer the prayers of the many faithful members within our church who are longing for such courageous leadership!

"Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved," Psalm 80:19.

Sincerely in the cause of Christ,

Ivan Foster.

Saturday 8th June 2019.