

## Welcome to the Church of Ireland Diocese of Sodom and Gomorrah

In **Luke 17** the Lord Jesus Christ outlined what conditions would be like just before He returns again to “**judge the world in righteousness**” [Acts 17:31]. He referred back to God’s earlier judgments by a worldwide flood and localised fire and brimstone and said, “**as it was in the days of Noah so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat...until the flood came and destroyed them all. Also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat...But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in THE DAY when the Son of Man is revealed**” [Luke 17:26-30].

Conditions pertaining “**in the days of Noah**” are vividly described in **Genesis 6:5** “**And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination [purpose and desire] of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**”. As the saying goes, it does not take ‘rocket science’ to look at today’s world and to see and to read of the uncontrolled wickedness that pervades every continent on planet earth and to realise that the heart of mankind is today spewing forth those evils identified by the Lord Himself in **Matthew 15:19** “**out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies**”.

Sandwiched in amongst that list of evils identified by the Lord we find “**fornications**” and the Greek used, according to Vine’s Expository Dictionary, means ‘*illicit sexual intercourse*’. We also learn from Vine’s that in **Jude 7** a strengthened form of the Greek for fornication is used meaning ‘*to give oneself up to fornication, implying excessive indulgence*’.

In **Jude 6** the matter of God’s future judgment of fallen angels when Christ returns is addressed when Jude writes, “**And the angels, who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day**”.

The future judgment of these fallen angelic beings is then likened to what happened “**in the days of Lot**” and in **Jude 7** we learn what

conditions were pertaining then for we read **“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about themselves in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh are set forth for an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”**. Again it does not take ‘rocket science’ to look at today’s world and to see and to read of the uncontrolled **“fornications”** [*implying excessive indulgence*] that pervades every continent on planet earth.

But there was another perverse feature identified in **Jude 7** that pertained **“in the days of Lot”** – the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were not only given over to **“fornication”** but also to **“going after strange flesh”** – a sin that apparently the fallen **“angels”** that are **“reserved...unto the judgment”** had also been guilty of. What can this possibly mean?

The following is a portion from a sermon preached by Pastor John MacArthur - full text can be seen on -

<http://www.biblebb.com/files/mac/sg2124.htm>

“The angels left the habitation in heaven that God had designed for them. Having deliberately turned away from that which was consistent with their nature, the angels became apostates by also turning their backs on the place that God had assigned to them. Verse 7 gives us some clues as to the specifics of their iniquity: **“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, [these angels] giving themselves over to fornication...”** Whatever those angels did, it was the same thing that Sodom and Gomorrah did, namely, committing fornication: **“going after strange flesh”** (v. 7b).

The angels are described in verse 6. They appear to be a likely antecedent of the word **“themselves”** in verse 7. Therefore, I believe that verse 7 is saying that the angels were giving themselves over to fornication.

So, what did those angels do? They didn't keep their first estate. Second, they left the normal place that their nature and design by God required of them. Third, they gave themselves over to a gross kind of sexual evil in the same way that Sodom and Gomorrah did.

Do you remember what the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was? The men of those cities lusted after the angels who were staying with Lot. The fallen angels in verse 6 did the same thing that Sodom and Gomorrah did, except in reverse--they lusted after humans. They entered into a terrible perversion of sex. The **“strange [Gk. heteras = `different'] flesh”** was of a different nature than theirs.

Just as the men of Sodom lusted after the angels, so the angels lusted after human flesh and committed fornication with human women’.

To expand on ‘**so the angels lusted after human flesh and committed fornication with human**’ Pastor MacArthur goes on to say –

The account involving those angels is recorded in Genesis 6:1- 4: **“And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all whom they chose. And the LORD said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bore children to them, the same became mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”**

The following verses tell us that God destroyed almost all life on the earth because man had become so corrupt.

I believe that **“the sons of God”** refers to fallen angels, who produced a race of mighty creatures: half demon, half man. One of the reasons God brought the flood was in order to destroy that half-breed race. Now some people object here. They say, **“You can't have angels there in Genesis 6 because of Matthew 22:30.”**

That verse says, **“For in the resurrection they [people] neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven.”** Where is it that angels don't marry? In heaven. That's the first distinction you have to make. Matthew 22:30 is limited to the holy angels, the ones in heaven. It's not saying anything about angels that had been cast out of heaven and are now

on earth. Matthew 22:30 only implies that angels cannot procreate among themselves.

People will say that angels couldn't impregnate women, because they assume that angels are without sex distinction. But the Bible doesn't say that. On the contrary, whenever they took on a human body, they always took on that of a male. The verse is only talking about the holy angels in heaven, and it merely implies that angels can't procreate among their own kind. It's not talking about the demons, and it's not saying that they can't unite with humans'.

We need to note from what Pastor MacArthur preached that fallen angelic beings wanted to engage in sexual activity with humankind and that equates to **“going after strange flesh.”**

In consequence, we learn from all this that just as fallen angels lusted after **“strange flesh”** so the men of Sodom likewise lusted after **“strange flesh”** when they lusted after these obviously male-in-appearance angels.

We read Lot's greeting to these angels in **Genesis 19:2** **“And he [Lot] said, behold now, my Lords, turn in I pray you into your servant's house and tarry all night”** and we read of the entreaties of the men of Sodom in **Genesis 19:5** **“And they [the men of Sodom] called unto Lot and said unto him, Where are the men who came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us that we may know them”**.

So, the men of Sodom wanted to **“know”** these male-in-appearance guests staying with Lot. Pastor MacArthur in his Bible Study notes writes about this desire to **‘know’**

**‘They [the men of Sodom] sought homosexual relations with the visitors. God's attitude towards this vile behaviour became clear when he destroyed the city’**

From a much earlier generation Matthew Henry in his commentary on this incident writes as follows –

‘1. It was the most unnatural and abominable wickedness that they were now set upon, a sin that still bears their name, and is called SODOMY. They were carried headlong by those vile affections [Romans 1:26-27], which are worse than brutish... Those that allow themselves in unnatural uncleanness are marked for the vengeance of eternal fire. See Jude 1:7.

2. They were not ashamed to own it, and to prosecute their design by force and arms...

3. When Lot interposed, with all the mildness imaginable, to check the rage and fury of their lust, they were most insolently rude and abusive to him... He reasoned with them, pleaded the laws of hospitality and the protection of his house which his guests were entitled to; but he might as well have offered reason to a roaring lion and a raging bear as to these head-strong sinners, who were governed only by lust and passion. Lot's arguing with them does but exasperate them; and, to complete their wickedness, and fill up the measure of it, they fall foul upon him... They threaten him, and lay violent hands upon him; and the good man is in danger of being pulled in pieces by this outrageous rabble... Those that hate to be reformed hate those that reprove them... Abuses offered to God's messengers and to faithful reprovers soon fill the measure of a people's wickedness, and bring destruction without remedy.

See Proverbs 29:1 **“He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.”**

In recent days, I have had my attention drawn to a group calling itself **‘Changing Attitude Ireland’**.



**Changing Attitude Ireland**

On the welcome page of their website we read the following -

### **WHO WE ARE**

A network of people, gay and straight, lay and ordained, working for the full affirmation of lesbian and gay Christians within the Churches in Ireland.

### **OUR GOALS**

1. The full inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the Churches in Ireland.
2. The blessing of same-sex relationships in church using an authorised liturgy.
3. Working for change in the official teaching and attitude of the Churches in Ireland.
4. Equality of opportunity to LGBT people, including the ordination and preferment of partnered lesbian and gay clergy

Changing Attitude Ireland  
Cathedral Buildings  
64 Donegall Street  
Belfast BT1 2GT  
Northern Ireland

Basically, this group are seeking to ‘sanctify’ and legitimatise’ practices that quite clearly are viewed by God as exceedingly sinful and that shall warrant His certain judgment just as in times past. They are of course seeking to advance their views under a cloak of being ‘Christian’ and so they have their own ‘Statement of Faith’. I plan now to reproduce some sections of it [portions underlined] from their own website and to add **in red** by way of response some very relevant **verses of scripture**.

### **WHAT WE BELIEVE**

## We believe that:

- there is integrity in being both Christian and gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered. **“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...shall inherit the kingdom of God [1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:9-10].**
- gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people are called by God to express their sexuality in loving, faithful and committed relationships. **“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” [Genesis 2:24-25]. “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” [Hebrews 13:4].**
- same-sex orientation is a God-given reality for a large minority of people, not a sin or a sickness. **“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...And God saw every thing that he had made and behold it was very good” [Genesis 1:27-28; 31]. “He who made them at the beginning made them male and female and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they two shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder” [Matthew 19:4-6].**
- as the positive contribution of the gay community towards society becomes clearer, the church’s mission to this expanding group becomes urgent. **“God who made the world and all things in it...now commandeth all men everywhere to repent because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness” [Acts 17:24; 30-31]. “And he...**

showed me that great city, the HOLY Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God...And there shall in no way enter into it anything that defileth, neither he that worketh abomination...For outside are...fornicators...and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” [Revelation 21: 10 & 27; 22:15]

- The lives of Christian gay lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people can offer evidence of the fruit of the Spirit “**Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are adultery fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness**” [Galatians 5:19]. “**A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit...neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit**” [Matthew 7:17-18]

### Prejudice is unacceptable

- our present experience requires a re-evaluation of scripture and tradition “**Every word of God is pure; he is a shield unto those who put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar**” [Proverbs 30:5-6].
- to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered is not limited to sexual activity or sexual identity but encompasses every dimension of life. “**For ye were once in darkness but now are ye children of light in the Lord; walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth**” [Ephesians 5:8-9]
- prejudice against gay lesbian, bisexual or transgendered people in the church is as unacceptable as racism or prejudice against women “**have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness**” [Ephesians 5:11]
- the church should stop colluding with cultural repression and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in all parts of the world. “**it is a shame**

**even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret” [Ephesians 5:12].**

### **What about the Bible?**

We have a high view of the bible - the Word of God nourishes all we think and do. Bible reading and study is one of the things that all Christians are called by God to take seriously. **“Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it” [Luke 11:28]. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me...Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me he will keep my words and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings” [John 14:21; 23-24]**

We do not accept that biblical references to homosexual behaviour in scripture can be fairly applied to the kind of faithful, lifelong relationships we wish to defend. The Sodom story [“But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly” Genesis 13:13] in Genesis concerns gang rape [NO! -“going after strange flesh” Jude 7], not a loving, permanent partnership, and its primitive morality (for example, when Lot offers his daughters to be raped instead of the men) means we can hardly take the text as an ethical guide. Similarly, while Leviticus includes homosexuality in its list of ‘abominations’ we must also note that it condemns a number of activities (lending money for interest; shaving the beard; weaving two kinds of cloth together), which scarcely worry us today. [In a letter published in the Belfast Telegraph on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2008 John Montgomery wrote – ‘Many of the rules given to Israel during their wilderness wanderings were specifically for their health and welfare in that particular situation. Some were ceremonial laws for the Jews and were fulfilled in Christ and abolished (Colossians 2:13-17). However the moral law summed up in the Ten Commandments is perpetually binding on all mankind. The New Testament makes it clear that theft, murder, fornication, adultery and homosexual practices are sinful and if not repented of will exclude people from the Kingdom of God’ (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:9-10).]

When Paul mentions homosexual behaviour in Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Timothy 1, it is highly unlikely that he had in mind the concept of an equal same-sex partnership **“Lean not unto thine own understanding” [Proverbs 3:5]**, but rather homosexual prostitution and pederasty, which were the most visible kind of homosexual practice in his own society. Also, it is clear from Romans 1.26 and 27 which mention men and women ‘exchanging’ homosexual sex, that Paul, like other Jewish and early Christian writers, believed homosexuality was a free and perverse choice, whereas we now understand that for most gay people there is no choice in the matter at all. **“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of death” [Proverbs 14:12; 16:25]. “God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not seemly...who knowing the judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them” [Romans 1: 28 & 32]**

We find it ironic that most of those who disagree with us quote these few, highly ambiguous passages at us, **“Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself” [Leviticus 19:22-23]“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field...And he said...Yea hath God said” [Genesis 3:1]** while finding reasons to ignore other much clearer and more numerous scriptural texts - against divorce and remarriage, for example, or against women holding positions of authority. Their highly selective brand of literalism shows clearly that their position is based on prejudice, not on any genuine concern for biblical authority. **“woe unto them who are wise in their own eyes...who justify the wicked for reward and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him” [Isaiah 5:21 & 23]**

How does God view those nations that tolerate Sodomy in their midst – in **1<sup>st</sup> Kings 14 21 & 24** we read **“And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins...And there were also sodomites in the land; and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel”**. One chapter later we read in **1<sup>st</sup> Kings 15: 11-12** **“And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did**

**David his father. And he took away the sodomites out of the land”.**

A promotional leaflet issued by this group lists the following 3 clergymen as being ‘Patrons’ – Canon Fred Graham; Rev Gordon Graham and Very Rev Victor Griffin. A browse of the groups’ website on <http://www.changingattitudeireland.org/> will reveal details of other ‘clergy’ [including a number of Roman Catholic priests] that are happy to be associated with the aims of this organisation.

To them in particular God sends this message **“Woe unto them who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness...Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness and their blossom shall go up as dust because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel”** [Isaiah 5:20 & 24]... **“To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them”** [Isaiah 8:20]... **“such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if HIS ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works”** [2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11: 13-15].

**REFORM IRELAND** are a group of professing Evangelicals within the Church of Ireland and in one of the articles on their website that can be viewed on <http://www.reform-ireland.org/article/242> they wrote the following - **‘It is now apparent that the Archbishop of Armagh, and others, have an open agenda to work for the full acceptance and inclusion of the LGBT lifestyles within the Church of Ireland...It has become clear over recent times that there is now a co-ordinated effort to promote the acceptance of liberal-revisionist sexual agenda within the Church of Ireland. Reform Ireland are saddened that no ‘orthodox’ bishop has spoken out against this latest development but that once again it will be left to parochial clergy to give leadership to the majority of people within the Church of Ireland who are opposed to such innovations and**

**departure from the Word of God and historical Church teaching.'**

Perhaps the 'parochial clergy' may be able to draw strength and direction from the following. Close to my computer workstation I have the **2008 Motto Text** of a group of believers that meet monthly in a little mission hall in Co Fermanagh and it seems to be a most appropriate text to quote in closing this article - **“Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”** [2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7:1].

**Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2008**