



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Those who journey through life clasping their own destruction

Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him, Psalm 140:11

A sermon preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church by Rev. Ivan Foster in the wake of the IRA bus bomb in London in which the IRA bomber was killed

The death of the IRA bomber, Edward O'Brien, in a London bus, killed by the premature detonation of his own bomb, will be seen by many as his reaping what he sowed since, it is likely, that he was involved in the bombing ten days previously that had killed two innocent men. We feel that we can but express our own reaction to the news of the bomber's demise in the words of Deborah and Barak, when they sang unto the Lord in the day of Israel's victory over Jabin, king of Canaan. *So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might*, Judges 5:31.

boyhood warning

As a boy, I was often warned against the treachery of Roman Catholicism. I was told of a raid upon a Protestant farm house and the occupants returning fire and shooting one of the raiders. The next morning, the farmer found his Roman Catholic neighbour lying on his doorstep where he had fallen after being shot the night before. The neighbour was a man with whom he had what he considered cordial relations, the two frequently and freely lending each other various items of farm equipment. There are those who would consider the telling of a child such a story as this but an example of the bigotry in which Ulster Protestantism is steeped. That is not so.

There are adequate grounds for such warnings as is demonstrated in the death of Edward O'Brien. He was what even his own family did not know him to be. His neighbours in Lewisham, in London, where he had come to live, did not suspect that he was storing explosives and manufacturing and planting bombs. Any one of those neighbours could well have been one of his victims. This is a modern version of the story I heard as a lad. It is a story that has been re-enacted many times in Ulster. Not far away, in Castlederg, just seven years ago, Joseph Connelly was killed when a bomb he was seeking to attach to a police reservist's car blew up. He was a workmate of the policeman and often travelled with him in the same vehicle to work. He had helped to build the reserve policeman's house. He had even shared his lunchbox on occasions. Throughout the troubles in Ulster, neighbour has betrayed neighbour and brought about their death.

illustration

The death of Edward O'Brien serves to illustrate the truth of our text. He was hunted and overthrown by the evil that possessed him just as God's word says. But for a short time this evening, I wish us to learn the lessons that this man's violent death teaches. It is not just terrorists that are being hunted by evil.

I. NOTE THE ASSURANCE WITH WHICH DAVID SPEAKS



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The word shall indicates that the thing will take place.

1. There are matters that the child of God is sure about . There are matters about which the child of God can be assured. That which is revealed in God's word is something we are utterly confident of. *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us* , Luke 1:1. The confidence of faith breeds confidence in our testifying. *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ* , Acts 2:36. Space forbids me listing all the Scriptures which indicate the things about which the child of God has an unshakeable assurance. Hearken to Paul. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief* , II Timothy 1:15.

2. This confidence comes from a revelation of the divine will . God has revealed His will to men on many matters in His word. *I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing* , Hosea 8:12. See also Deut 29:29, Matt 16:17.

3. Furthermore, the certainty stems from David's praying. In verses 9-11, David has been pouring out his heart to God, imploring His intervention to save his life. The confident utterance that is our text springs from his praying. Having asked God for His help, David is completely assured that retribution shall fall upon those who sought to slay him. Few realise that the prayers of God's people determine the course of many events. *And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily* , Luke 18:7-8,

II. PLEASE NOTE OF WHOM IT IS DAVID SPEAKS WITH ASSURANCE

It is *the violent* . This violence is much more widespread than many imagine. It affects many who would consider themselves the opponents of terrorism. The Hebrew word that is used here is *chamas* . The *ch* is pronounced with a harsh, guttural *H* sound. Significantly, it is pronounced in virtually the same manner as the name of the Palestinian terrorist group, Hamas, which has been responsible for the recent suicide bombings in Israel. The name Hamas is an acronym formed from the initial letters of the words in the Arabic title of the terrorist group. It is rather a significant coincidence that the acronym spells the English transliteration of the Hebrew word for violence. How this Hebrew word is employed in God's word will give us a fuller understanding of its meaning and just who it is that is guilty of the violence referred to in our text.

1. This violence was particularly seen in days of apostasy . *The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. . . . And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth* , Genesis 6:11, 13. This was a day of wholesale rebellion against God. This violence is closely associated with man's wicked rejection of the rule and command of God. The same link is seen in Ezekiel 8:17. There is no greater violence than that of overturning God's statutes and rebelling against God. Parliaments and legislatures have engaged in the wicked overthrow of God's Law. This is violence indeed.



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2. This violence may be committed in our hearts . *And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee* , Genesis 16:5. The despising of Sarai by Hagar was an act of violence within her heart. The word translated *wrong* is *chamas* . The rejecters of the gospel today are as guilty of despising Christ as were those who crucified Him 2000 years ago. *For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on* , Luke 18:32. This is what God calls violence. It is a hardening of the heart against Christ and a turning of the back upon Him. *But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts* , Zechariah 7:11-12.

3. This violence may be committed by our lips . In God's eyes, to lie and bear false witness is an act of violence. *Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness* , Exodus 23:1 (unrighteous = *chamas*). *If a false (chamas) witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong* , Deuteronomy 19:16. Little is thought of lying today. Yet God considers it a crime of violence. Much violence has been done against Ulster, the Protestant majority and, above all, the gospel testimony in this land by the lying lips of men. *False (chamas) witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not* , Psalm 35:11.

III. NOTE WHAT IT IS OF WHICH DAVID SPEAKS SO ASSUREDLY

Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him . The word *evil* is the Hebrew word *rà*. It is another word which may be translated by a number of English words such as *hurt, trouble, adversity, affliction* and quite a few others. If you would know what it is that is hunting those who are violent, consider this word and how it is employed by God in His word.

1. They are hunted by that which will sadden . *And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?* Genesis 40:7. The word *sadly* is the same word that is translated *evil* in our text. Sorrow of heart will follow hard at the heels of the violent.

2. They are hunted by that which will promote ill-favour . *And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed* , Genesis 41:3. Many will be familiar with the dream of Pharaoh which Joseph alone was able to interpret. Seven starving cattle emerged from the river and devoured the seven well fed cattle that had emerged just before them. It was a warning from God of seven years of famine following seven years of plenty. The word *ill favoured* is our word: *evil* . No one prospers who rebels against God and His word. Ill favour shall hunt the violent.

. That which will displease . *And when the people complained, it displeased (Hebrew, *rà*.) the LORD* , Numbers 11:1. Vexation of mind and heart will hunt the violent. There shall be no ease or quietness of soul, either in time or in eternity, for those who show violence to God and His gospel.



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4. That which will hurt . *And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore (Hebrew, rā.), upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household* , Deuteronomy 6: 22. What sores and pains shall dog the heels of the wicked. *Many sorrows (physical and mental pains) shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about* , Psalm 32: 10.

Such is the life that the violent can expect to experience. They will reap what they sow. It shall overthrow him. It shall catch him as the hunting lion catches its prey. It shall cast him down and destroy him. There is no escape for the Christ rejecter, the gospel despiser. Perhaps there is someone who utterly repudiates the violence of the terrorist and who is offended by our equating them with such evil individuals. Please remember that God is not limiting His appraisal of men's hearts and lives to their actions toward their fellowmen. No! It is based upon man's attitude toward God also. The mildest citizen may be violently opposed to God and His truth. The pacifist may, in God's eyes, be as the terrorist. He is a violent opponent of Christ and will not submit to His rule and dominion. Is the matter becoming clear to you? Do you realise just how God sees you? I call upon you now to cease your rebellion, repent and believe the gospel. *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. . . . But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it* , Isaiah 1: 16, 18, 20.

How many are riding a bus through life clutching a bomb and know it not!