



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

### The Dunblane Massacre ..... the answer to the question on the lips of the nation

"Wherefore come these things upon me?" Jeremiah 13:22.

Based upon a sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church

One of the chief fruits of sin is ignorance. Paul's description of unregenerate man declares this to be so. *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*, Ephesians 4:18. Sin separates men from God Who is the only light that can illuminate the darkness of this world. In consequence, all that follows sin -- retribution, judgment and misery -- is inexplicable to men.

Nowhere has that darkness and ignorance been better illustrated than in the sequence of events that followed the massacre of 16 children and a teacher in the school at Dunblane, a small Scottish town north of Glasgow. At least one of the floral tributes that was laid outside the school in the wake of the shootings had the word **Why?** upon it. In the thousands of words subsequently written and spoken by the nation's wise and learned, there is to be found no answer to that question. In the souls of the discerning, the tragic death of those little ones was overshadowed by the revelation of the darkness and ungodliness and the mantle of spiritual death that engulfs the mind and soul of this nation which once enjoyed the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly, the question was answered in many fellowships and assemblies of God's people scattered throughout the nation, but their voice is unheard and unheeded by the nation's multitudes. May God be pleased to give this nation an ear for the gospel once again.

One particular aspect of the questioning of the nation related to the viciousness of the murderer, Thomas Hamilton, toward that most innocent segment of society, the children of tender years. Why such violence and why direct it against children? To the Bible student, the violence is shocking and distressing but not surprising. The picture of human nature given us in the Bible clearly indicates that unregenerate man is capable of unimaginable cruelty. There have been Thomas Hamilton's before and will be again. I wish tonight to set the violence of Dunblane in a scriptural context.

#### **I. SUCH VIOLENCE IS NOT A MODERN PHENOMENON**

History records incidents that cause Dunblane almost to pale into insignificance.

**1. We have only to remember the tens of thousands of Jewish children deliberately murdered by the Nazis just over fifty years ago to see that this is so.** Children, clutching the skirts of their mothers, were ushered into death chambers and ruthlessly done to death.

**2. Going back further, we have the slaughter ordered by Herod following the birth of Christ.** The motive of Herod was simply that of a monarch anxious to protect his right to sit upon the throne. He hoped to slay the "One born King of the Jews" by slaying all the male children, aged 2 years and under, in the area where it was prophesied that He would be born.

**3. Further back still, there are the cold-blooded murders planned by Haman the**



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**Agagite** . Haman plotted revenge against Mordecai, the man who refused to honour him as he felt he should be honoured, He planned to slay all the people of Mordecai, the Jews. A special emphasis seems to have been laid upon the killing of the children. The story of Haman's persuading king Ahasuerus to proclaim a decree, authorising a general slaughter of the Jews on a certain day, is told in the book of Esther. *And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey* , Esther 3:13. By the merciful providence of God the evil scheme was overthrown and Haman, who had built a gallows upon which to hang Mordecai, was himself hung on the gallows.

**4. We could go back yet further still to the planned slaughter of Israel by Pharaoh** . Again, the wickedness of man's heart is displayed. Had Pharaoh had his way, what countless thousands of little ones would have perished beneath the swords of Egyptian soldiers'. Instead it was Pharaoh and his army who perished in the Red Sea.

**5. But if we return to our own day we shall find evidence of this spirit of slaughter that outweighs all that I have mentioned already** . Why is it considered so surprising that such a violent crime should take place against children in a land which has legislated for the slaughter of over 2,000,000 unborn babies since 1967? What is not widely known is that on the day 16 children were brutally murdered in Dunblane, 500 unborn babies were murdered in various abortion clinics in England, Scotland and Wales. If anything, those 500 were even more innocent than those 16 little ones in Dunblane. The nation has not only just cause to mourn over the death of little ones but to hang its head in shame at the unlamented deaths that legally take place ever day. There are no heaps of flowers to mark the place where they were brutally murdered. There are no weeping multitudes attending their funerals being videoed by sombre-faced newscasters. Indeed, they have no funerals. How dreadful to think that this nation condones the constant murder of little ones and the incinerating of their unmourned corpses! Ought we not to shed some tears for these innocents?

Seen in this context, Dunblane is indeed no new thing.

### II. SUCH VIOLENCE IS EVER LINKED WITH GODLESSNESS

The violence of the type which occurred in Dunblane, rises to the surface in times of man's open rejection of the precepts of the Bible.

**1. Wherever we find apostasy, we find violence** . *The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty* , Psalm 74:20. Where there is no light from the Bible there is darkness and the cruel deeds of men. Violence is a consistent feature of rebellion against God. *But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it* , Jeremiah 22:17. *But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands* , Jonah 3:8. So cried the humbled king of that wicked and rebellious city, Nineveh, following the preaching of Jonah. Read Romans 1:20-32 to see the downward course and the characteristics of a people who have departed from God. Consider just one word used by the Holy Ghost in verse 29 to describe such a people. *Maliciousness* comes from the Greek word *kakia* which means *a vicious disposition* . See what Paul says of apostasy in II Timothy 3:1-5. Again, look at just one word, the word *fierce* in verse 2. It means *savage* . Nowhere is this vicious disposition



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and savage nature better illustrated than here in Ulster. The present trouble was born in the wake of ecumenical apostasy and that trouble has witnessed savagery and viciousness that has often been indescribable.

**2. Where the influence and grace of Christ is known, violence is suppressed .** *And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth ,* Isaiah 53:9. In Christ there is none of the vicious cruelty that lies in the breast of all sinners. Rather, He delivers men from the power of their sin. *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another ,* Titus 3:3. Paul thus describes what Christians were. Now see the difference that Christ has wrought upon them by His grace to cause them *to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men ,* verse 2.

Christ is gentle and by His grace creates gentleness where once there was the viciousness of a sinful nature, Gal 5:22-23. The preaching of God's Law restrains violence. I Timothy 1:8-11. The modern hater of Christianity mocks the standards of the Victorian society and charges it with hypocrisy, claiming that outwardly there was uprightness while secretly there was immorality. Such a criticism but proves our point. In a day of the preaching of God's word, sin is driven underground. It is held in check. As ploughing holds the weeds at bay, so preaching God's Word holds the depraved instincts of men at bay. Thomas Hamilton, the Dunblane murderer, was a child of the permissive age. The decline in powerful preaching released him and many like him from the restraints that have held them in check.

**3. Where violence becomes a feature of society's behaviour there you have a devil-dominated society .** *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it ,* John 8:44. Murder and lying are an evidence of the power of the devil at work, and in turn are an evidence of the decline of that preaching of the truth that binds the devil and restricts his activities.

### III. SUCH VIOLENCE IS THE FORERUNNER OF JUDGMENT

**1. It is a rule of judgment that we reap what we sow .** *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap ,* Galatians 6:7. Rebellion spreads until it fills the land with its fruit--violence. The doing of violence to God's Word by false teachers has led on to violence on our streets. We have witnessed the violent taking away of the rights of the majority in Ulster. All have observed the increase in the crimes of violence within society. This is the spreading consequence of apostasy. Spiritual corruption and a cruel society go hand in hand.

**2. He that is slow to anger and of great mercy has times of fury also .** When? When men have refused to hear Him and demonstrated their fury against Him, He will then arise to judge the evildoers. What was said of Israel by Isaiah may be said of Britain now. *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward ,* Isaiah 1:4.

**3. There is no greater act of violence than the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ .** *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have*



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*taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain* , Acts 2:23.

The cruel action of those men is endorsed and repeated today when sinners reject Christ freely offered to them in the gospel. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame* , Hebs 6:4-6.

It is to avenge this wickedness that Christ will return. *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them . . . that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ* , 2 Thessalonians 1:8.