



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

WHAT IT WAS CONVINCED ME TO ESPOUSE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Seminar, 17th August 2017.

Rev. Ivan Foster

Looking back on life, we become aware that behind the decisions that were made in years past where many interwoven influences and events, all of which served to move one's mind in a certain direction and bring about a crossroads decision that had a major impact upon our future life.

So it was with me and my wife Ann concerning Christian Education.

I am going to employ the letters A, B and C in the three points I wish to set before you.

I. WE WERE ALARMED AS PARENTS BY WHAT CHILDREN WERE BEING TAUGHT IN THE STATE SCHOOL.

My wife trained to be a teacher of French, German and Latin but because of her membership of the Free Presbyterian Church was unable to obtain a post. Her experience in Enniskillen Girls Collegiate School illustrates this well. She was invited to take up a post and even introduced to some staff members as a new appointee. The headmistress then, seeing her engagement ring, discovered that she was to marry me. When she returned to the school a few days later to prepare for teaching she was told that the school committee had not endorsed her appointment. That was the sort of discrimination carried out against Free Presbyterians back in 1967!

The late Mr Ronnie Hill, the former Principal of Enniskillen High School, privately told my wife that she would never obtain a post within the Western Area Education Board. She should have her name put down in the Southern Area Board as a supply teacher. This she did and shortly after was requested to fill a vacancy in Fivemiletown High School as a supply teacher. Within a few weeks, the head of the French Department who was a part-time member of the UDR, a Green Finch, as they were termed, Private Eva Martin, was killed by a fragment of an IRA rocket fired by a certain "Sean O'Callaghan" at the Deanery base of C Company, 6th Battalion, The Ulster Defence Regiment, in Clogher, County Tyrone. That was on the 2nd May 1974.

My wife was immediately asked to take on the duties of Miss Martin. At the end of the term, she was approached by the Principal and asked if she would consider coming into the school full-time. My wife and I prayed about the matter and believed that it was God's will that she should accept the offer.

However, when the school management committee met they appointed a Roman Catholic from Newry to the post! But God had a purpose in it all for the lady appointed later contacted the school to say that she was accepting a post in Newry Convent school and would not be coming to Fivemiletown.

The initial decision created quite a controversy amongst the parents in the school and a protest was organised by an Ulster Unionist councillor, without our knowledge it has to be said, against the decision and a boycott was threatened. However, the decision by the teacher appointed not to come changed everything. Under the rules governing appointments, in such circumstances the next candidate on the list would automatically be appointed. However, so biased was the committee, that they had not even listed my wife's name even though she was the only other candidate! Providentially, for the sake of time as the term was nearly ended and to save having to advertise the post again etc, my wife was duly appointed by the Principal.

Looking back now we realise that all this led on to my wife obtaining classroom experience but, above all, gave her first hand knowledge of the State School curriculum and the atmosphere and environment of a state school in the mid-70s.

Evolution was rampant in a large number of subjects within the curriculum. So-called 'Religious Education'



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

was at best a pale shadow, a mockery of Bible Christianity. The language of pupils and staff was abhorrent to any Christian. Overall, the state school was no place for the offspring of God's people.

Our oldest son was due for transferring to secondary school in September of 1979. It became evident that placing him in the environment of a state school would conflict with everything we taught him at home and in church. There was a particular incident when my wife was asked to step in and supervise the showing of a film on 'health' education to a class. Such was the content of the film and the gross and vulgar responses of the pupils that she switched the film off, reported to the Vice-Principal that she found the film offensive, felt it should not be shown and would not supervise the showing of it.

That incident played a major role in our decision to educate our family outside the state system.

I raised the matter of Christian Education in Presbytery in 1978 and set forth a document I entitled, "Is there not a cause?" The outcome of the discussion was that a Presbytery Education Committee was elected and I was appointed Chairman. The Committee met with the Department of Education to explore the possibilities open to us and the outcome of that was that the Committee recommended in September of that same year that permission be granted to those desirous of commencing Independent Christian Schools.

From September 1978 through to September of the next year, the small church in Kilskeery geared itself for the building of an extension to house the school.

My wife and I had originally planned for her to educate our children at home but the parents in the congregation, on hearing of our plans, requested that their children be allowed to attend the 'school'.

Thus Kilskeery Independent Christian School opened on 4th September 1979 with 13 pupils and my wife as principal and sole teacher.

II. I BECAME INCREASINGLY CONSCIOUS OF THE BIBLE'S DEMAND FOR A SEPARATIST ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR CHILDREN.

That crystallised into the simple conclusion that we should not place our children in the care of the Philistines for if we do so they will most certainly learn the ways and the habits and the thinking of the Philistine.

A chief verse was that found in Proverbs: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Proverbs 22:6.

1. There could be no doubt about the way our children should be taught to go in. The Saviour tells us clearly of the 'way' our children should travel. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," John 14:6. The word 'way' in this verse corresponds in meaning with the Hebrew word in Proverbs 22:6. The 'curriculum' appointed by the Lord for our children is stated clearly. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," Ephesians 6:4. We are not to have one system of teaching in the home, the church and a very different one in the school we send our children to. Indeed, it is a measure of Christian maturity that we take great care in the educating of our children. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him," Genesis 18:19. The care Abraham took of his household's education was the yardstick by which God measured him and deemed him fit to share with him the future of Sodom.

2. Great diligence is to be taken in this matter. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up," Deuteronomy 6:7. The word 'diligently' is one which speaks of the sharpening of a sword, a putting of an edge on a weapon. Dullness will not do! It is something that requires 24 hour attention! Sitting, walking, lying down and rising up are the constant activities of our daily life and in them all we are to be diligently talking and teaching our families the truths of God. Surely we can see



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

that the practice of sending children to a state school involves an abandoning of the procedures God has set down.

3. Great good comes from such a practice. "Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments," Psalms 78:3-7.

Continuity of faith and witness is the outcome of a right educating of children in the way of God.

III. A CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE OF THE WORK AND WITNESS OF THE GOSPEL IN ULSTER WAS A MAJOR FACTOR IN OUR DECISION.

If our children were not protected from the lying philosophies of men, there could be little hope for the continuation of the witness of the gospel in our land. We had already encountered the antagonism of the state system to the gospel. I had tried to gain access to Kilskeery Primary school where nearly 50% of the pupils were Free Presbyterians but was hindered and blocked for quite some time before finally being allowed in to teach them Scripture, a right under the law, but the powers that be feel they can flout the law when it pleases them.

In the second Christian Education Seminar, held in Martyrs Memorial Church on March 29th 1986, I preached on the subject: Christian Education and the future of Free Presbyterianism. I spoke from the text: "If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore," Psalm 132:12.

I sought to warn that sending our children to state schools would greatly harm the next generation.

I made a number of points.

Firstly, the attitude to discipline in state schools is basically anti-Bible.

Of course that has become more so now with every form of physical punishment being banned in schools and soon parents will also be banned from smacking children. This of course had its origins in the European Court of Human Rights!

I also quoted God's Word on the subject.

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes," Proverbs 13:24.

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying," Proverbs 19:18.

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him," Proverbs 22:15.

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell," Proverbs 23:13-14.

We pointed out that God uses corporal punishment on His children.

"Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail," Psalm 89:32-33.

"The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death," Psalm 118:18.



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

"I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath," Lamentations 3:1.

Secondly, school text books are anti-christian.

The degree of anti-Christian content depended upon the subject of the text book but there was no subject free of anti-Bible bias. Evolution is advanced in science books, history books, biology books, astronomy books, geography books, physics books, chemistry books. The Biblical origins of creation and man, the flood of Noah are all absent from state school text books and more often than not openly mocked.

English literature text books are polluted by every form of gross indecency and lewdness and foul language. Religious Education is unmitigatedly ecumenical and pro-Rome.

This can only subvert the minds of children from the truth and undermine the witness of the church.

Thirdly, The general moral atmosphere in state schools is anti-Christian.

Foul language, improper relationships, the effects of drug taking and drunkenness are not uncommon in the state school corridors. There is little done to curb it. Gone are the days when a parent's mind could be at ease while their child was in school.

Let me emphasize today that we must not learn or adopt the ways of the world or adopt its views for that negates the whole purpose of God. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God," Romans 12:2. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever," 1 John 2:15-17.

We must ever preserve that distinction which God highlights in 1 John 4:4-5. "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."

I then went on to highlight 3 important points.

I. OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE IS DECIDED TODAY.

Our text indicates that the future wellbeing of David's throne depended upon his descendants remaining faithful to God's Word.

So it is with the future of Free Presbyterianism. If our children are raised in the environment of the state school system it is inevitable that they will depart from the faith set forth in God's Word.

II. THE ANSWER TO THIS DANGER IS TO PLACE OUR CHILDREN UNDER THE LORD'S INSTRUCTION.

"If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them." So says our text. God has a means of teaching our children and that is by our employing believers with the skills to teach them the truth of the knowledge of God's creation.

If children are taught the truth in one place and the lie in another we know that which will gain supremacy over them! The harvest of lies is set forth in Romans 1:25. "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." The lie leads on to departure from God and the embracing of idolatry.

III. IF WE COMPLY WITH THE CONDITIONS OF GOD'S PROMISE WE WILL PRESERVE THE NEXT GENERATION.



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

God warns us most plainly what will be the outcome and the harvest of state education.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children," Hosea 4:6.

"My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God," Hosea 4:12.

"For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge," Jeremiah 4:22.

Similar verses could be multiplied many times over, all setting forth the calamity that follows the abandoning of the Bible and the embracing of the devil's lie.

These are the things that moved my wife and me to step out in obedience to God and start a Christian School in Kilskeery 38 years ago.