



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

The spiritual bankruptcy of Irish Methodism



John Wesley - the founder of Methodism

The Methodist Church has become the first religious organisation in Northern Ireland to sign up to a community relations charter aimed at encouraging people to play their part in building peace. Several councils and leading figures have already backed the 'One Small Step' peace initiative which was launched in October last year. Rev Fred Munce, of the Methodist Church, as he signed the initiative said: "The Methodist Church recognises that the admirable objectives of the One Small Step campaign are crucial goals for society in Northern Ireland. "We must all take steps to steer our communities in the right direction and we all have our parts to play in securing a better Northern Ireland."

Michael Wardlow, who sits on the One Small Step committee, said it was crucial that churches took a leading role in helping to create a more integrated and respectful society. Welcoming the support of

the Methodist Church, he said: "As we strive towards greater integration in our schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods, it is crucial that churches and religious leaders play their part in helping change attitudes. "This is a time for the Christian communities to offer strong leadership by sending out a clear message that we need to work together to secure a better

future."

Steps

The "One Small Step" organisation suggests 10 steps that it believes will help promote peace but actually lists only 7 on its website. One wonders just what the other three are! The 7 steps listed are:—

Read a newspaper from 'the other side' for a day/ week.

Listen to an Irish Language, Pipe band programme on radio.

Watch a Gaelic/ Rugby/ Cricket game on TV.

Go on the internet search for information on political parties other than the one you support.

Talk to children/ grandchildren about Education for Mutual Understanding in schools.

Talk to member of the order from your own tradition and see if you can understand what they are / believe.



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Get a partner or two people and arrange to discuss perceptions and how they differ from 'the other'.

Gospel message

How different is the gospel message, whereby individuals and communities are changed, not just for time but for eternity! The Methodist Church in Ireland indicates its spiritual bankruptcy when it advocates such futile measures to promote the good of the people in our land. These are not the measures taken by the Methodists of old such as Gideon Ousley and Charles Graham whose preaching of the gospel brought life and peace to thousands in many parts of Ireland.

Apostles

When Paul and the other apostles came with the gospel, they did not promote peace amongst the nations they evangelised by seeking to prop up the heathen society into which they came. No! rather they turned the old order of society 'upside down' by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Any ordering of society upon a basis that is devoid of the influence and impact of the gospel is but a house built upon sand. It will not stand! The society that the "Good Friday Agreement" will bring about is just such a flimsy structure, since its whole thrust is to purge Northern Ireland utterly of all links with its Protestant past. The principles of Holy Scripture have no place in the new land that ecumenists and republicans envisage for us.

It must also be remembered that those who are the disciples of Christ can never be integrated with the community of worldly men. Loyalty to Christ and His Word will always produce a conflict between the believer and society generally. Jewish society murdered Christ. Heathen societies murdered the apostles. The martyrs and the reformers of more modern times, along with the Puritans (whose very memories are still vilified and hated), the John Bunyans, the Wesleys and the Whitefields, the Spurgeons and Nicholsons, have all been repudiated in their day. Only those who have forsaken Christ and His Truth can hope to be integrated with our ecumenical and immoral society and play a part in the consolidation of its present structures. There will ever be a place for a Gerry Adams or a Martin McGuinness but no place for an Ian Paisley or his like in our present society.

Boycott

The four SDLP councillors in Ballymena will not be in attendance at a reception given for Dr. Paisley in his home town of Ballymena, when he will be granted the freedom of the borough. They are protesting at what they see as Dr. Paisley's "divisive" politics. You can be sure that they would not be boycotting such a reception if it were Gerry Adams that was being honoured!

Reason

The reason for this is very simple. The Saviour said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword," Matthew 10: 34. Again, we read in Luke 12: 51-54. "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against



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two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."

The child of God cannot be faithful to Christ and His Word without coming into conflict with the world. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. He said so Himself to those Jews who opposed Him. "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world," John 8:23.

This conflict has always existed for the people of God from the days of godly Abel who was murdered by his wicked brother Cain. Jeremiah the prophet complained of the strife his preaching aroused. "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me," Jeremiah 15:10. This was society's reaction to the preaching of the "weeping prophet."

It was said of a greater than Jeremiah: "So there was a division among the people because of him (Jesus)," John 7:43. Wherever His witness is raised the reaction will ever be the same. "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost," Acts 13:44-52.

Such persecution has ever been the response of the ungodly to the Word of God, until such times as God in His great mercy has wrought mightily amongst the people and by the power of the gospel changed the disposition of multitudes and so altered the thinking of that society. It was the gospel that made the change, not the reading of a newspaper from the 'other side' or the watching of a 'Gaelic/ Rugby/ Cricket game on TV!' To believe that such antics would work any real benefit to the people of this land shows a gross ignorance of God's Word and the needs of the human heart.

Sad

How sad it is to see Irish Methodism scrabbling in the gutter of man's vain philosophies for an answer to the needs of today, while all the time the real answer is in the Bible which has been all but abandoned by the pulpits of Methodism.

Peter warns us: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye



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also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness," 2 Peter 3:17. That is what has happened to many within the ecumenical denominations. From such deceivers and false prophets as Rev. Fred Munce of the Methodist Church, we are told by Paul to withdraw. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them," Romans 16:17. The answer to today's troubles is not to be found in the empty activities devised by men but in a turning to Christ in accordance with His Word.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," John 10:10. May we seek out for ourselves that which Christ has come to bestow freely upon sinners and pray for and encourage others to do likewise.