



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Irish Methodism's departure from God's Word



Former licensed premises where the meetings were convened

A letter of protest from Rev. Ivan Foster against a supposed gospel outreach in licensed premises in Enniskillen by the local Methodist church, was printed in the Impartial Reporter which had given coverage to the venture in its columns. The letter read as follows.

Sir, The article headed "Church service with a difference for those who find Sunday is not for them" in last week's edition of "The Impartial Reporter" made sad reading for anyone who loves the Bible's message of the gospel. It is praiseworthy to be anxious about those who do not assemble to hear God's Word preached. However, those

involved in the "45", "Bar M" gatherings are not engaged in bringing the Word of God to sinners, whatever else they may be involved in! Your article makes clear that this is an "alternative" to Lord's Day worship, something which is commanded of God. Any tampering with the order ordained of God with a view to placating those who are in rebellion against God and reject His commands is obviously sinful. Many mistakenly believe that this is what Christ did. The Saviour brought to men the timeless Word of God and did not alter it in order to accommodate rebellious man. The format of the gathering is decidedly unscriptural with "a loud live band" and "no congregational singing" (Ps 35:18, 107:32, 111:1, 149:1). To give a talk entitled, "The gospel according to the Simpsons" borders on blasphemous. The fact that the gathering will take place in premises with the name "Bar-M", a licensed premises, I understand, indicates clearly the character of it all. A spokesman for the enterprise is quoted as saying: "We hope that people will arrive in town a little earlier and come to 45 before they head out to the pubs, restaurants and clubs." It is clear from this that they do not expect conversions to follow these meetings or the lifestyle of those attending to change. Rather, pubs and clubs are places very acceptable to this new form of "Christianity". How different was the objective of the Wesleys and the Ousleys and many other brave men who travelled Ireland calling on men and women to repent. How different is the Bible's stated objective in gospel preaching. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," 2 Corinthians 5:17. That such an unscriptural venture should be sanctioned by Irish Methodism indicates just how far that denomination has departed from the Word of God.

Yours sincerely, Ivan Foster.

A reply to the protest letter appeared the following week. Here is that letter.

Dear Sir, – Once again the Rev. Ivan Foster has put pen to paper in your newspaper (29th September, 2005) to attack a new Christian initiative, the "45 Bar M" outreach. He refers to the "Wesleys and the Ousleys" (there were two Wesleys, only one Ousley). I am sure he knows that the Rev. John Wesley stayed in inns and enjoyed his glass of port, provided the revenue duty had been paid on it. He always made sure that local beer was served to his



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preachers at conference and in his medical treatise he listed hot punch as a cure for colds and other agues. The Lord's day term for worship is interesting. Which Lord's day is Mr. Foster referring to? Is it the seventh day of the week, the day when our Lord worshipped in his local synagogue, as did all Jews of his time, or is it the first day of the week, Sunday, ordered by the Roman Emperor Constantine, after he had won a great battle and commanded that all Roman citizens must embrace Christianity? Mr. Foster is a preacher of the gospel. I am sure he expounds the words of our Lord contained in Matthew chapter 25, verses 31 to 46. This portion of scripture led the Rev. John Wesley to write: "Do all the good you can to all the people you can for as long as you can."

And by the way, our Lord was heavily criticised for mixing with publicans and sinners. Knowing Mr. Foster's knowledge of church history, he will know that the Rev. John Wesley listed a number of spiritual books by Roman Catholic authors for his preachers to read, the best known being the Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis. Also, his knowledge of church history will let him know us who have signed this letter to him. Cyrus and Araspes.

Rev. Foster's reply

Sir, When the Wesley brothers used the pen-names Cyrus and Araspes, those whom they were addressing were well aware of their identities for such an arrangement was mutually agreed. This is somewhat different from the situation where a correspondent to your newspaper conceals his identity from the general readership and in particular from the person he is criticising. That the Wesleys never did. I am always loath to answer cowardly correspondents who hide behind pseudonyms. However, rather than leave a lie unanswered I will respond to your correspondents' letter. If the thinking displayed in the letter signed by Cyrus and Araspes is representative of Irish Methodism generally then it adds credence to my allegation that there is a departure from God's Word amongst that people who once rejoiced in the simple message of "Christ crucified." I will ignore the sneering irrelevancies and come to the two matters that require an answer.

1. Christ was indeed criticised for "mixing with publicans and sinners." That is not, however, the basis of my criticism of the "Bar - M" enterprise. This I stated clearly in my first letter. I wrote: "The Saviour brought to men the timeless Word of God and did not alter it in order to accommodate rebellious man." The scene at the "Bar - M" is not Christians mixing with the unconverted in order to see them converted to faith in Christ and a life of holiness but Christians acting like and adopting the attitudes and behaviour of the unconverted! Christ never altered His behaviour or His message in order to ingratiate Himself with sinners. Rather, He spoke the Word of God faithfully and plainly and called for repentance, Matthew 4: 17. There is no repentance called for in the "Simpson's gospel" message presented at the "Bar - M" for the patrons are openly told that it is quite acceptable to go from its meeting to "the pubs, restaurants and clubs" of Enniskillen. Christ's message, on the other hand, was "go, and sin no more . . . except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," John 8: 11 and Luke 13: 3.

2. Your correspondents ask, "Which Lord's day is Mr. Foster referring to?" They then suggest a number of alternatives as if the matter is anything but clear and settled. Again there is manifested a spirit far removed from the Methodists of days gone by. I am not referring



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to the Jewish seventh day Sabbath or day of rest. This day the Lord Jesus observed for His ministry was conducted in the era of the Old Testament when that day was the rest day ordained of God. In the New Testament the Christians were required to observe a new rest day, that commemorating the resurrection of Christ and His finished work of redemption on the first day of the week rather than commemorating the completion of creation on the seventh, as had been the practice commanded of God for Old Testament believers. The Saviour did rise on the first day of the week, Matthew 28:1; He held His first meeting with His disciples on that day, John 20:19. Acts 20:7 indicates that it was the practice of the apostolic Christians to meet for worship on the first day of the week. This is also seen to be so in 1 Corinthians 16:2. It was this day that John termed the Lord's Day in Revelation 1:10. These are matters about which Bible-believing Methodists have no queries or doubts. No matter how learned the terminology employed when casting doubt on the teaching of God's Word may appear, it is still the work of the devil to stir up unbelief and conceal wrongdoing.

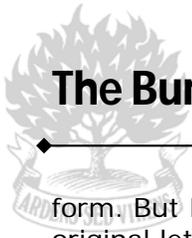
A further reply from Cyrus and Araspes.

Dear Sir, - We read with interest the Rev. Ivan Foster's reply (13th October) to our letter in your newspaper (6th October). We make the following comments in Christian love and charity. Mr. Foster refers to "sneering irrelevancies" and "a lie." Does he consider the Rev. John Wesley's instructions to his preachers and his taking of revenue paid port sneering irrelevancies and a lie? Does he consider the Rev. John Wesley's words: "Do all the good you can to all the people you can for as long as you can" sneering irrelevancies and a lie? Does he consider the reference to Matthew chapter 25, verses 31 to 46, sneering irrelevancies and a lie? Does he consider the Rev. John Wesley's booklist for his preachers sneering irrelevancies and a lie?

Does he consider the Emperor Constantine's Imperial command to make the first day of the week the official Lord's day throughout the Roman empire and to make everyone embrace the Christian faith sneering irrelevancies and a lie? Unfortunately Mr. Foster appears to be slightly confused: in paragraph one of his letter he refers to "a correspondent" but in other paragraphs he refers to "correspondents" and "correspondents." Yours faithfully,
CYRUS & ARASPES (Spelling errors in the letter have been corrected, Editor of TBB).

Rev. Foster's reply.

Sir, It is a strange charity indeed that lauds itself while anonymously criticising me in the columns of your newspaper. It is not Christian charity that is manifested by your correspondent/correspondents. Christian charity "... rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). His/their charity rejoices in concealment and deceit. When replying to the letter attacking me, I switched between the plural and singular because in the letter there was a use of both "I" and "us". The letter was also signed by two names. Your correspondent/correspondents cannot make up his mind/their minds whether he/they are an "I" or an "us"! I think that if there is confusion it is not me that is at fault. At least I am aware of what I wrote and in what mode I wrote!! I am more than willing to answer all the questions listed in the letters of Cyrus and Araspes either in your columns or on a public plat-



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form. But I think it but right that first they give an answer to the main points I made in my original letter and which I reiterated in my first reply. I suggest that Cyrus and Araspes cease their cowardly use of pen-names and debate with me on a public platform the issues which lie at the heart of the matter — that there is a departure from Bible teaching within the Methodist denomination. After all, it ought not to be difficult to dispose of the arguments of a “confused” Free Presbyterian preacher!

Sincerely, Ivan Foster.

Any further letters will be published in our next edition of *The Burning Bush*.