



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

NSPCC opposes Bible on discipline

Corporal punishment of children
European Court of Human Rights says NO, God says YES

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled in favour of a nine-year-old boy whose step-father had beaten him with a cane. The step-father had been tried and acquitted on a charge of causing actual bodily harm some five years ago in a British court. The court decided that the step-father's actions were reasonable and allowed by a law dating back to 1860. The boy was described in that trial as difficult to handle and unresponsive to school discipline. He was beaten on one occasion for threatening his brother with a knife.

The ruling by the ECHR has brought an immediate promise by the British Government to change its law in order to make such punishment illegal. It says that "smacking" within the home will remain legal.

Anti-corporal punishment groups, who have campaigned against corporal punishment, have heralded the decision as signalling the end of corporal punishment of children.

What saith the Holy Scriptures??

Just what the Bible has to say on the matter of child discipline and corporal punishment is all important to a Christian.

Today, disobedient children have become a major social problem. The reason for that is that there has been a departing from the teaching of God's Word on this matter, as in so many other matters.

The Bible is plain in its teaching as a few verses will demonstrate.

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

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.

The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame, Proverbs 29:15.

It is clear that the same standards of discipline were taught in the New Testament.

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby, Hebrews 12:9-11.

Above all, the Lord employs the rod of chastening upon his wayward people.

O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation, Isaiah 10:5.

Who is man to challenge the teaching and practices of the Almighty?

Under the headlines: Clergyman says 'spare the rod...' A Free Presbyterian minister has said that disobedient children deserve to receive corporal punishment." The Irish News, Northern Ireland's main Roman Catholic newspaper, reported on the article on disciplining children carried in the October edition of The Burning Bush.

The report contained comments by the Belfast *National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children* team manager Patricia McGoldrick. She is reported as having said: "Under UK law, reasonable chastisement is allowed but we believe the law should be reformed. Many European countries have banned corporal punishment and after changing the law there has been a change in attitudes in society.

We believe there are other positive ways of dealing with disciplining children. Children should be afforded the same rights as adults. If one adult hit another they could be prosecuted for assault. We see no reason why children should be different."

We take issue with Patricia McGoldrick on this matter. Firstly, irrespective of what changes other European countries may have introduced, the Word of God stands unchanged and unchanging and is the only rule of faith and practice for those who call themselves Christians. God knows better what is best and right for our children than does any European parliament and it is His Word we ought to obey, rather than the changing notions of societies cut adrift from truth.

Secondly, she rightly says that if "one adult hit another they could be prosecuted for assault", the grounds for prosecution being that the striker had no authority to do

so. But God has given parents the authority to discipline their children physically whenever they do wrong and defy parental authority. Such action is not unlawful. Such a view has been enshrined in law for a long time and it is only in this day of apostasy and lawlessness, when right has become wrong and wrong has become right, that there is a lobbying for change.

If it is now the policy of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to deprive parents of the right to punish their children in the manner God decrees, then it is not acting in the interests of children. It is hardly living up to its name since to deprive children of proper discipline is one of the cruellest things that adults can do. God's Word says : The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to



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shame, Proverbs 29:15.

I have no hesitation in saying that behind the sad cases in recent times, involving children engaged in the most heinous criminal acts, there lie a neglecting of parental duties and a failure to exercise the loving discipline that God's Word directs parents to engage in.