



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Father sentenced to jail for smacking his child

A father from Armagh who smacked his three-year-old daughter for mistreating her pet rabbit has been sentenced to two months imprisonment. The 36-year-old man was released on bail of £250 pending an appeal against the sentence.

At an earlier hearing, the court was told he smacked the child after she poured bleach into the eyes of her pet rabbit. He had pleaded guilty to causing actual bodily harm to the child on 23 May. The magistrate at Armagh Court, Mervyn Bates, issued an order banning publication of any details which would lead to the identification of the three-year-old girl at the centre of the case. Passing sentence, the magistrate said there was no doubt the child had done wrong, but that a child of three had no criminal responsibilities and needed guidance, not the type of punishment that had been inflicted. He added that he did not think the anger and violence demonstrated was justified.

Comment. . . . The degree of force used in the smacking of the child is not indicated other than to tell us that three or four slaps were administered by the father after the mother slapped the child's legs. It was also reported that an altercation between the mother and father resulted in the child receiving a cut to its face from a blow the father intended for his "partner." Despite the apparent disorderliness of the domestic relationship, it has to be said that this case appears to set a precedent that ought to alarm Christians. Physical punishment of children is a necessary element of discipline according to the teaching of the Word of God (see Proverbs 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15). This Bible-rejecting generation is already beginning to reap the consequences of its failure to discipline its children aright. Perhaps, if a proper dose of the old fashioned rod had been applied in a proper fashion to those now plaguing old-age pensioners, it might not be deemed necessary by some to use a baseball bat upon them!