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"GOD SAVE THE KING"

A look at God's means of rescuing and reviving the cause of Christ amongst us as it is suggested to us in 2 Chronicles chapters 22 and 23.

by Rev Ivan Foster.

It is sad to realise that the lasting impact of the life of that good man, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was one so contrary to the overall testimony of the man. At the beginning of the divine record of his life it is recorded of him.

"And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; but sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah," 2 Chronicles 17:3-6.

This does not mean that he never did wrong or sin against the Lord. No, how sad to realise that the very best of men may act most sinfully at times and that their sinful actions live on in the lives of their offspring and thereby much evil is wrought!

In Jehoshaphat's case, he was most wrong in aligning himself with Ahab the wicked king of the northern section of the divided kingdom called Israel.

After he did join forces with Ahab, he was challenged for his sins by Jehu the prophet. "And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God," 2 Chronicles 19:1-3.

Sadly, the good king did not learn from his experiences on the battlefield alongside Ahab where he nearly lost his life (2 Chronicles 18:31). Nor did he fully heed the warning of Jehu the prophet. He again formed a sinful alliance with a king of Israel.

"And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly: and he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongeber. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish," 2 Chronicles 20:35-37.

Jehoshaphat was foolish, persistently foolish, in the matter of his links with Ahab and the northern kingdom. While we rejoice in many of the virtues of this great man, we must note with grief this weakness in his character.

Indeed, how slow we all are to heed the chastenings and lessons of the Lord!

Sad Harvest

From Jehoshaphat's associations and fellowship with the sinful Ahab, there came a sad and lasting consequence.

"Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead. And he had brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah: all these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. And their father gave them great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah:



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but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram; because he was the firstborn. Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel. Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD," 2 Chronicles 21:1-6.

His political connivances with Ahab brought his family into contact with Ahab's wicked household and the consequences were dire as the above verses testify.

While seeking to instruct our children in the ways of God, we must always combine this with a shielding and sheltering them from the influences of the world. Because of man's fallen nature the child has a propensity, a strong inclination toward wickedness which, if not combatted, will outweigh and overthrow any efforts made to instruct it in righteousness. This is what Jehoshaphat's folly regarding his family teaches us.

All of this good man's family was wiped out, with the exception of his wicked son Jehoram, as a direct consequence of his foolish alliance with the house of Ahab. Furthermore, the kingdom of Judah suffered greatly as a result of the sinful example of Jehoram.

We are told that Elijah, moved by the Spirit of God, wrote a letter to Jehoram prior to his translation into heaven. He, who by the spirit of prophecy, foresaw this defection of Jehoram left a letter, likely with Elisha the prophet, which rebuked his wickedness.

"And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself: behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: and thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day," 2 Chronicles 21:12-15.

Thus a good man's legacy is marred and ruined by some acts of folly by which he offends God and brings His judgment upon him.

Please consider how that despite man's folly and disobedience and failure, God's purpose continues and will prevail. The wonderful story that unfolds in the two chapters we wish to look at is one of the heroic actions of a faithful few and how the cause of God is rescued from what appears to be certain ruin and is preserved.

I. THE SATANIC RAGE AGAINST GOD'S KING

The kingdom of Judah was brought under the wicked influence of the evil house of Ahab, the man who from the beginning of his reign, had this testimony.

"And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him," 1 Kings 16:30.

Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, having chosen to walk in the ways of Ahab, dies in ignominy under the judgment of God.

"And after all this the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. And it came to pass, that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers," 2 Chronicles 21:18-19.

The judgment of God continues when Jehoshaphat's grandson, Ahaziah, also died under the hand of God.

"And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. And it



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came to pass, that, when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, and found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah, that ministered to Ahaziah, he slew them. And he sought Ahaziah: and they caught him, (for he was hid in Samaria,) and brought him to Jehu: and when they had slain him, they buried him: because, said they, he is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart. So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom," 2 Chronicles 22:7-9.

Thus the kingdom of Judah was left in the hands of Athaliah, the depraved and evil daughter of Ahab and mother of Ahaziah.

Deterrent

What a deterrent to sin amongst people is a realisation of just what may come of our disobedience of God and defiance of His Word!

Evidence of the wickedness that now prevailed in Judah, all stemming from the folly of Jehoshaphat remember, was seen in the first act of Athaliah following the slaying of her son by the Lord.

"But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah," 2 Chronicles 22:10.

How the "royal seed" is hated by the devil and his agents! There is a seeking to cut off ALL the descendants of Jehoshaphat by the one who undoubtedly orchestrated the slaughter of the sons of Jehoshaphat when her husband, Jehoram, succeeded his father (21:4-6).

Advancing years had not softened the heart of this murderous daughter of the devil!

Messiah

It must be remembered that God had promised that the Messiah would come of the tribe of Judah and of the royal house of David. This point Christ made plain to His critics: "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David," Matthew 22:42.

It was for this reason that Athaliah was moved to target the descendants of David, though it is likely that she was thinking more of the immediate control of the throne than any long-term policy of seeking to overthrow the redemptive purpose of God in Christ. But such was undoubtedly the thinking of the devil who moved this evil woman to act as she did. We see this scenario repeated in the actions of Herod when he slaughtered the innocents in Bethlehem some 850 years later. His immediate goal was the elimination of any threat to his position of power while the devil, who controlled him, was desirous of subverting God's eternal purpose in Christ.

Crisis

What a state the kingdom of Judah was in as a direct result of Jehoshaphat's folly!!

And yet, dear Christian, all was not lost. God's purpose cannot be destroyed or defeated by the evil machinations of men or women or the foolish disobedience of His own people.

Hear the Word of God!

"But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not," 2 Chronicles 22:11.

Praise God for the "BUT" of God's providential and merciful interventions!

Where the devil has his evil Athaliah, God has His righteous and courageous Jehoshabeath. Her name means



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"Jehovah is an oath" or "Jehovah is her oath". I believe the name underscores both Jehoshabeath's sworn allegiance to Jehovah and Jehovah's oath to His people. Both motivating principles may be seen at work in her actions to save the child Joash. She believed herself obligated to act so, out of her duty toward God and the preservation of His Kingdom amongst them and also out of a sense of God's providential placing of her where she could act to the saving of the child.

She felt, no doubt, the hand of destiny upon her! It is good to be in the way which God directs us to, where the blessing and presence of God may be expected. Abraham's servant said, "Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren," Genesis 24:27.

II. JEHOSHABEATH PROTECTS THE YOUNG KING AT ALL COSTS

"But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not," 2 Chronicles 22:11.

She "stole" the child away from the very clutches of Athaliah and "hid" him from the murderous queen.

Cost

Standing up for God and His cause will always involve risk and danger. Even in days in which many would claim that the gospel is not under the threat that it has been in former ages, there is still a price to be paid for seeking the "welfare of the children of Israel." (Nehemiah 2:10).

The enemy may not resort to the use of the martyr's stake as it did in former times, but it will seek to heap disparagement and ridicule upon all who dare to "Stand up for Jesus"!

People in this day have lost their employment, have faced court fines and have been treated as social pariahs as a result of simply owning Christ and His honour and seeking to live in obedience to His Word.

Such is the atmosphere in this modern "kingdom of Athaliah"!

In recent days we have heard of the price that some have paid within the workplace for seeking to honour the Lord and defend His cause. I have but to mention "Asher's Bakery" for Christians in Northern Ireland to understand what it is I am saying.

Sodomites and their "guardians" such as the Sinn Fein Party, the Ulster Unionist Party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party here in Ulster, and in Great Britain, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives along with every other political institution in these islands which campaign for the acceptance and legitimising of the abominable wickedness that is sodomy, have long campaigned to ostracise and outlaw every act and effort by Christians to uphold the truth of God and live by His Law.

It must never be forgotten, despite the tendency to forget there is amongst many Christians, especially those involved in the political life of Northern Ireland, that the power-sharing regime in Stormont, when it took over the government of Northern Ireland from Westminster, took over the administration of the funding of sodomites which had been initiated by the Labour Government during the last days of "Direct Rule" in Northern Ireland.

Those Christians involved in the Stormont regime of 2007 and onward cannot wash away the guilt of aiding and abetting this monstrous wickedness, no matter how loudly they may now pronounce against sodomy. We cannot protest against sodomy and at the same time support and participate in a regime which has funded this wicked defiance of God's holy law. These Christians must share the blame, along with those political parties such as Sinn Fein, which have openly sought the legalising of sodomy and all its associated evils. For the Democratic Unionist Party this is but another part of the political conundrum in which their



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greed for power has involved them.

III. THE PLACE WHERE GOD'S HERITAGE WILL BE PRESERVED

"And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land," 2 Chronicles 22:12.

What a glorious place the temple of God was! It was the centre of all spiritual life in Israel. It was the place where the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat reposed. God had said: "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel," Exodus 25:22.

In this place, the future hope of Israel was hidden and safeguarded.

The House of God is still the ONLY place in which the future of the gospel kingdom and the honour of Christ may be safeguarded. The place where the God-ordained ordinances are preserved and observed will yet prove to be the stronghold within which the light and testimony of God will be maintained.

The symbolism is so very obvious and wondrously rich and edifying.

Marks of the Saviour's ministry

The Temple, during our Saviour's ministry was linked to His activities and what He said of it and the use that He put it to is instructive today.

PRAYER. "And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves," Luke 19:45, 46.

This was the chief function of the temple. It was a place to meet with God.

PREACHING. "I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled," Mark 14:49.

PROTEST. To "protest" is to witness against error and for the truth. Thus God employs the word. "For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not," Jeremiah 11:7-8.

It was in this spirit of protest that the Saviour witnessed and protested against the sins of the people and their leaders on many occasions in the temple.

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves," Matthew 21:12. "And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, and say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things," Mark 11:27-33.

POWER. "And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them," Matthew 21:14.



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Cause maintained

The place today where the cause of Christ will be maintained and preserved will be the place where these four features of witness are to be found.

When God directed Ian Paisley to lead a secession from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, back in 1951, and to establish a new denomination, the denomination formed was one which was marked by these four features.

If the Free Presbyterian Church is to be a witness for God in the land TODAY, then it must see to it that EVERY pulpit within its ranks is marked by these four elements of a true gospel ministry.

Where any one of these four features is absent or neglected than that pulpit and that pastorate will wither and die!

The Free Presbyterian Church must be a PRAYING, PREACHING, PROTESTING church, experiencing and enjoying the POWER of the Holy Ghost.

So it was in our earlier years, those years of advance and influence.

It is within such that the future hope of the God's Kingdom will be preserved while "Athaliah" reigns over the land.

IV. THERE MUST BE A SPIRIT OF BATTLE AMONGST THE DEFENDERS OF GOD'S CAUSE

"And in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him. And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD hath said of the sons of David. This is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you entering on the sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, shall be porters of the doors; And a third part shall be at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation: and all the people shall be in the courts of the house of the LORD. But let none come into the house of the LORD, save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites; they shall go in, for they are holy: but all the people shall keep the watch of the LORD. And the Levites shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whosoever else cometh into the house, he shall be put to death: but be ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out," 2 Chronicles 23:1-7.

We must bear in mind that the Levites had a special role in the life of the nation of Israel.

The Levites

"But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle. And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts. But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony," Numbers 1:50-53.

They were the stewards of the tabernacle, looking after its erection and transportation and guarding its precincts from intruders.

Surely they provide every Christian today with a role model to emulate? Does not Peter draw from the role



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of the Levites a lesson for us all to follow and obey? "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," 1 Peter 2:5.

In the passage we are studying we see that the Levites are given a very special duty to perform. It was not one that they ordinarily engaged in but nevertheless was within the God-ordained duties given them.

"And the Levites shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whosoever else cometh into the house, he shall be put to death: but be ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out."

The role of the 'Soldier' is part of the duties of the believer. It is by no means a popular role and many believers shy away from it. Controversy and contention do not make for popularity, approval, admiration or acclaim! All too many desire such and therefore avoid "contending for the faith!"

Jeremiah knew well the cost of standing up for Christ. "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. Jeremiah, being human, felt greatly the evil reputation his contending for the truth of God in his day earned him.

No one who has ever been moved by a spirit of love for Christ to stand up for Him and own His name and cause in a day when many, including those who are purporting to be His friends, speak ill of His Word but knows the high cost of such a stand.

God may enable the contender to smile amidst the abuse and shout "Hallelujah" but the mortal frame still feels the blows and buffetings of the opponents of Christ. Jeremiah's cries of protest against the abuse he suffered illustrate this. It was not that the prophet was a quarrelsome and contentious man, but others quarrelled and contended with him, and that for no other reason than for his faithful discharge of his office as a prophet. He was brought so low as to wish he had never been born!

But such are the consequences of being a soldier of Jesus Christ and must be borne patiently by those honoured with the task of defending the gospel of Christ.

Jude shows us the pattern that gospel ministers are, on occasions, to follow. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," Jude 1:3-4.

Jude laid aside the duties of proclaiming the "common salvation" and instead took up his pen to "earnestly contend for the faith" and to plead with others to join with him in this crusade.

So must we at times. When the King's person and honour is threatened then we must obey the call to arms that Heaven sends forth. Jude's plea was God's plea for he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

Let not one of God's people be absent from the ranks of the defenders of Christ and His truth today.

V. THERE ARE ARMS TO BE FOUND IN THE HOUSE OF GOD WITH WHICH TO DEFEND GOD'S CAUSE

The Levites were armed from the armoury that was found within the temple. "Moreover Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds spears, and bucklers, and shields, that had been king David's, which were in the house of God. And he set all the people, every man having his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the temple to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about," 2 Chronicles 23:9-10.

Paul has taught us that ". . . the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds," 2 Corinthians 10:4.



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Our armoury is even greater for we have weapons fashioned by Enoch, Abraham, Moses and a vast host of mighty warriors, laid up for us in the arsenal of God's precious Word.

Bless God for the sweet and precious memories of hearing Dr Paisley in his heyday, opening that arsenal and displaying the weaponry that God has for His people to use in defence of the gospel.

I recall, when just a student minister in Lisbellaw Free Presbyterian Church (it would have been in 1967) telephoning a local Methodist minister who was an evangelical, and asking him why he did not stand up and defend the cause of Christ against the ecumenism and modernism that was rife within his denomination even back then. (It is more than rife now; it is nearly totally pervasive!) I recall his answer to me still today. "God doesn't need me to defend His cause!!" My instinctive and immediate answer was to ask him another question. "Why then did Paul say that he was "set for the defence of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17)?

That was the end of the telephone conversation!

Soldiers

It is our duty to enlist as soldiers. Indeed, when we were converted we were instantly made "soldiers"! "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," 2 Timothy 2:3. Such is the calling of every believer.

Proof of this role may be seen in the weapons that God has prepared for the use of His people in this war. He has armed His people. As we have already quoted: ". . . the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds."

Drill sergeant

Paul adopts the language of the army drill instructor in Ephesians 6:10-20. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

Here are the items of armoury that we must don in the service of Christ. It is especially required in a day of contention and protest such as we presently live in.

Here is the sword to attack the enemy, the shield to ward off his blows, the breastplate to preserve our heart from being wounded. Here is girding for our loins to strengthen us in the battle and shoes to tread upon the enemy.

Saul's armour

Here is all we need. We need not resort to "Saul's armour" as some are tempted to do, 1 Samuel 17:38-39. The "contemporary gospel music" programme is a weapon out of Saul's armoury that many ministers resort to in order to counter the influences and attractions of the "New Evangelical" witnesses that draw away the young and not so young. It will not work. It can but fail. Cast it away as did David Saul's armour.

It is time indeed to "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus", for the counsel of Ahithophel is in operation today amongst the enemy. "Smite the king only," 2 Samuel 17:2. There is a need for men such as those who were



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deployed about the bed of Solomon. "Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel," Song of Solomon 3:7.

VI. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE WHOLE EXERCISE

"And he set all the people, every man having his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the temple to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about. Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king," 2 Chronicles 23:10-11.

It is the re-establishing of God's King upon the throne and the deposing of the usurper.

In a word, this is the continuing engagement of God's people. The removal of the Lord Jesus from His rightful place as Sovereign amongst His people has ever been the objective of the devil throughout this age. An instance of this spirit of usurpation at work may be seen in that very well known but little contemplated passage of God's Word in Revelation 3:20. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Christ was outside the door of His own church as a result of the devil-incited rebellion within the church of the Laodiceans.

Much ground has been lost to the devil's deceits and craftiness today and that ground must be regained for the Saviour or this land of ours, which once enjoyed a rich endowment of God's blessing will become a spiritual wilderness where darkness and its works will be enthroned.

Can we not see the encroachment of the enemy all around?

I know that all too many do not want to see this fact for the simple reason that the action which a recognising of the enemy's advance would demand would prove too costly to their status and standing. Sadly, all too many love "the praise of men more than the praise of God," John 12:43.

We must not be willing to permit a deposing of Christ from His throne in our lives. Too many believers are prepared to share their hearts with the world today. Power-sharing is no new thing nor the innovation of compromise at Stormont. Rather, if it were not for the fact that many Christians were already sharing their heart and life with the world, there never would have been an acceptance of the wicked political contrivance that is Stormont today and the moral morass that society has become.

In earlier times, no Free Presbyterian, who was under the influence of a pulpit preaching the whole counsel of God, would have tolerated for a moment what is now quietly consented to.

VII. THE JOY THAT VICTORY BRINGS IS PARTICULARLY VEXING TO THE ENEMY

"Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king. Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the LORD: and she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of musick, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, Treason," 2 Chronicles 23:11-13.

As this wicked woman saw the hope of political gain gone she vented her anger by screeching "Treason, Treason."

Gall

It is amazing that a woman who organised the murder of Jehoshaphat's sons and grandsons and who had usurped the throne of David, should throw such a tantrum when the true descendant of David and the rightful occupant of the throne of Judah is presented to the kingdom!



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Amazing and yet ever so common! The devil and his agents have never been short of brass-necked effrontery!

Here in Northern Ireland, we have a Deputy First Minister who masquerades as a "peace-maker" even though he makes no secret of his holding of a senior position within the Provisional Irish Republican Army, a murderous terrorist organisation which in a period of 30 years was guilty of the slaughter of hundreds men, women and children, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. Indeed, Martin McGuinness and his many cohorts glory in their terrorist escapades.

This hypocritical persona is exacerbated by his and his Party, Sinn Fein, being in the front rank of those who condemn every word and action that emanates from the camp of Bible Christianity. They denounce those who oppose abortion on demand; those who enunciate the truth of the Bible against immorality and they loudly accuse such as trouble-makers and rabble-rousers and inciters of hatred!

Here, in this age, are echoes of Athaliah the arch-traitor's screams of "treason"!

VIII. THE OVERTHROWING OF THE ENEMY'S SCHEME TO WIPE OUT GOD'S TRUTH WILL BRING WIDESPREAD BENEFITS

Athaliah may well scream and throw a tantrum for her day is over. Once God's King is rightly enthroned her reign is over and the darkness and evil that she introduced and promoted will be removed.

"So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king's house, they slew her there. And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORD'S people. Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the LORD by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was ordained by David. And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the LORD, that none which was unclean in any thing should enter in. And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of the LORD: and they came through the high gate into the king's house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom. And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword," 2 Chronicles 23:15-21.

With God's king upon the throne, the advances of evil are reversed and the ordinances of God reinstated.

That is what reformation and revival always bring. It is what we need again in Ulster and doubtless in many other places within Christendom also.

This portion of God's Word highlights the path back, the battles to be fought and the joys of victory. It, of course, is a record in miniature of the struggle that encompasses the period from the Garden of Eden until the return of Christ in glory to claim for Himself His kingdom.

Praise God for the many, many Jehoshabeaths and Jehoiadas whose faithful and fearless exploits have, under God, ensured the continuance of Christ's cause throughout the ages.

But there is a need for such today. May God in mercy raise up such amongst us again.

Ivan Foster.

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