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THE ULSTER PROTESTANT AND THE WILLIAMITE WARS IN IRELAND



Carrickfergus Castle with a statue of King William III in the foreground

Back in 1990, I published a series of messages I had preached in Carrickfergus Free Presbyterian Church. I believe it would be profitable to reprint these messages.

There is an ominous parallel in the 'de-protestantising' of Ireland under James II with that which has been happening in Ulster over the last 30 years. Romanists and republicans have come to prominence, through British Government duplicity and also compromising and self-serving so-called Protestants! Evidence of this may be seen in the Civil Service, where recently a senior civil servant was paid a large amount of money as compensation for the distress he has suffered having to walk under a portrait of the Queen! See a news report [here](#).

We have seen the same changes in the security forces! The disbanding of the Ulster Special Constabulary, was followed by its replacement, 'The Ulster Defence Regiment'. Both were seen as 'too Protestant'!!

The Royal Ulster Constabulary was destroyed and replaced by the present Police Service of Northern Ireland, recruitment to which has pointedly favoured Roman Catholics.

There have been incidents which have been seen by many as examples of police bias against Ulster's Protestants. See the following news reports.

- **Police withdraw from Belfast bonfire site amid fears over public safety**
- **Police investigating symbols displayed by band in Apprentice Boys parade - five arrests**
- **Apprentice Boys: PSNI defends tactics at Derry parade**

The influence of Republicans and the ready compliance of the authorities to their demands may be seen in these cases.

The prosecution of aged former British soldiers at the demand of Republicans while those who openly boast of their part in the 30 years of Sinn Fein/IRA led terrorism have been presented with a form of 'political sainthood' (I refer to the likes of Martin McGuinness and many others) is but further evidence of the parallel between 1688 and today.

This morning I read Psalm 16. Verse 6 of that Psalm states:

"The lines (the portion portion allotted to me) are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Ulster Protestants may well repeat those words had they but an understanding of God's great goodness in years past. There are lessons in history which need to be heeded!!!

I am including the original introduction followed by the first article.

I was invited by Rev Ian Harris, minister of Carrickfergus Free Presbyterian Church, to hold a week of meetings in his church in June 1990. The theme was the events in Ireland during the Glorious Revolution. Carrickfergus, the town in which William, the Prince of Orange, landed on his way from England to the Battle of the Boyne, was to be the main venue for activities to mark the tercentenary of the Glorious Revolution. Consequently, Rev Harris and his congregation were anxious to set before the town the spiritual significance



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of the events of 1690. I began the week of meetings on Lord's Day, June 3rd and continued until Friday 8th.

During the activities in the town, most of which were organised by the Orange Order, the Free Presbyterian Church distributed 20,000 gospel tracts and leaflets.

The messages I delivered in the church were later published in The Burning Bush, a magazine which I edit. Following their appearance in the magazine, I was asked to consider printing them as a booklet. Hence this publication.

The Williamite Wars did not end with the victory at the Boyne. Hostilities continued into 1691. In July 1691 there was the victory of Aughrim. The Wars ended with the defeat of the Irish forces at the siege of Limerick. The military terms that ended the siege allowed 14,000 Irish soldiers to leave Ireland with their arms and enter the service of the King of France. The civil articles of surrender, couched in the spirit of tolerance in keeping with the attitude of King William, were not ratified by Parliament though signed and agreed to by William's general, Baron van Reede-Ginkel. Instead, there was issued the first of what became known as the penal laws.

The information contained in this booklet is chiefly for young people, though I have no doubt that the older generation will also enjoy its contents. The objective of Satan, through the Ecumenical Movement in the churches and the classrooms of the State school system, is the concealing of the true significance of the glorious events of the past when the God of Heaven intervened in the affairs of our nation for the good of His people and the glory of His name. Jeremiah encountered just such a scheme of concealment. "How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceits of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal." Jeremiah 23:25-27.

I hope this publication counters that objective to some degree.

I would like to thank Mrs Sharon Kirker, a member of Carrickfergus Free Presbyterian Church, for the drawing of Carrickfergus Castle which we have used on the front cover of the publication.

May the Lord be pleased to bless this testimony to the honouring of His grace and mercy to our forefathers.

I have decided to republish the articles for we all need reminding of the mercy of God to our forefathers long ago.

Here is the first article.

SPIRITUAL LESSONS FROM ULSTER IN 1690

When Charles II was enthroned in May 1660, the Presbyterians in Ireland could well expect to be treated rightly. They had sided with him to a very great degree and opposed Cromwell when Charles I was executed on 30th January 1649. The Presbytery, meeting in Belfast on 15th Feb 1649, prepared a Representation which was to be read from every pulpit. In it, the execution of the king was condemned.

Their opposition was not that of the Episcopalians — that the king was above the law — but, as Dr James Reid puts it, they protested against the execution of Charles, not on the servile figment that the king is above the law and not amenable to justice; nor upon the unfounded plea that he had not grossly violated the fundamental law of the constitution which he had sworn to uphold; nor yet from opposition to the abstract principle that it is the right of a nation to resist and depose a king, and even proceed to the infliction of death, if absolutely necessary to rescue the liberties of a people from the ruinous grasp of a tyrant. But when the nation, by its legal governors and representatives, the lords and commons in parliament assembled, had freed itself from the yoke of despotism attempted to be imposed upon it, and was able to dictate satisfactory



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terms of peace and ensure their observance, they conceived it to be a monstrous violation of all liberty and law, and a more arbitrary and dangerous exercise of power than any which could be laid to the charge of the King, for an armed force to expel with violence out of the House of Commons the majority of its members — to abolish the House of Lords by the mere might of the sword — and then to execute the King and wholly alter the frame of the government, in opposition to the overwhelming majority of the nation, who beheld with amazement, but were unable to resist, these tyrannical acts of a military usurpation. (History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Vol. II, pages 86-87, Dr. James Reid.)

John Milton

Naturally this brought them no favour from the Cromwellian party who were now in absolute power in the three kingdoms. The document was felt to be of such a calibre that the Council of State in London commissioned John Milton to answer it. His answer portrays none of the genius of Paradise Lost.

Presbyterian Ministers suffered during the early years of the Commonwealth because they refused to swear the oath called the Engagement. The oath renounced Charles Stuart and his line and bound the swearer to the Commonwealth. Believing as they did that Charles II was the lawful king and that Charles I was, in fact, murdered, the Presbyterians refused the oath. All but half a dozen ministers were unable to remain in Ireland. One effort to overthrow Presbyterianism involved all ministers being commanded to move from Antrim and Down to the counties Kilkenny, Tipperary and Waterford.

Growth

The plan was never executed. Cromwell intervened and, seeing the law-abiding nature of Presbyterians, rescinded the plan and lifted the persecution. Indeed, under Cromwell, Presbyterianism began to flourish. He even provided State endowment for all ministers who applied, which amounted to £100 per annum or somewhere in the region of £3000 – £4000 in today's money! The one Presbytery grew to five. Congregations sprang up in new districts. In all, the church grew to about 80 congregations with seventy ministers gathered under the government of a General Synod. Such was the state of affairs at the restoration of the monarchy.

Now that the Commonwealth era was at an end and the monarchy restored, would those who upheld the principle of the monarchy receive recognition and honour?

King's duplicity

The General Synod sent over a delegation to London to greet the new king. When it arrived in London it quickly learned that Charles II would favour Episcopacy. The address they carried contained a petition for him to establish religion in Ireland according to the terms of the National Covenant. Seeing the preference that Episcopacy was being given, they decided to delete this section of the address. Such a precaution in an address presented to a king, who, when the Scots Presbyterians had crowned him, swore that he would have no enemies but the enemies of the Covenant, indicates the duplicity expected from Charles II. The King received the Irish Presbyterian delegates and promised to protect Irish Presbyterianism. His word on this occasion was as trustworthy as it had been when given to the Scots.

Prelacy preferred

Under Charles II, Irish Presbyterianism was once more persecuted. Charles preferred Prelacy to Presbytery and, consequently, the national church in Ireland was once more under the rule of diocesan bishops. The new bishops, when consecrated, went to work expelling Presbyterianism with vigour. One of the most zealous was Jeremy Taylor, of Down and Connor. He was a merciless bigot. Presbyterian ordination was no ordination in his eyes. He declared thirty-six pulpits vacant in one foul sweep. Other bishops followed his lead. Soon every Presbyterian minister who was not prepared to conform to the Established Church was ejected. All told, sixty-four were ejected. This happened in 1661. Irish Presbyterians have the distinction of being the first to suffer under the Episcopalian bigots during Charles II's reign. In 1662 the Act of Uniformity was



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passed in England. Every minister who refused to submit to Episcopalianism and denounce the Covenant was to be ejected from his church. About 2,000 godly men were ejected under this iniquitous law. Episcopalianism proved itself to be little removed from the popery from which it claimed to be purged. In Ireland, Presbyterians were fined and imprisoned for not attending Church of Ireland services. The faithful were impoverished by these penalties and little support could be provided for those preaching the Gospel. Many Presbyterians sought refuge in America. It was at this time that Francis Makemie, the father of American Presbyterianism, left Donegal, as a licentiate, for the freedom of the new world.

Friends

Though many good men suffered much for their loyalty to the truth of God, and though their enemies were many and occupied high places, yet they were not altogether without friends. For instance, Sir Arthur Forbes (a man of some standing with the King) intervened on behalf of twelve ministers who had been summoned before Bishop Boyle, the successor to Jeremy Taylor. They faced excommunication, and worse, for their non-conformity. Sir Arthur Forbes' representations caused the prosecution to cease.

Popery advanced

The death of Charles II and the formal proclamation of James II in Dublin on 11th Feb 1685 was greeted with foreboding by Irish Presbyterians. Charles had offered some pretence of being a Protestant. James offered none. He was a thorough-going Romanist who, true to his creed, would use his position, power and prestige to advance the cause of popery.

At first, there was no evidence of any change in the management of the nation's affairs. It was but the lull before the storm. The grand objective of James was to overthrow Protestantism and soon he made a start on his enterprise. In a letter to the Pope from Dublin, November 26th 1689, he indicated that the opposition that he encountered was all because he had embraced "the Catholic faith" and was determined to spread it in England, Scotland, Ireland and the American colonies. The sense of impending doom that filled the whole of Great Britain and Ireland was manifested in the risings against James II under the Duke of Argyle in Scotland and the Duke of Monmouth in England. Both these attempts to overthrow James were unsuccessful and Argyle and Monmouth were executed. Hanging Judge Jeffreys presided over the trials of many of those involved in the rebellion in what were termed the Bloody Assizes because of the horrific severity of the sentences.

In the wake of these uprisings, James turned his attention to Ireland. Using the risings as an excuse, James ordered the exclusively Protestant militia to be disarmed and the arms deposited in storage. There was no resistance to the disarming though there was much unspoken suspicion of the king's intent. Purges of the judiciary followed. The Lord Justices were replaced and government put in the hands of Lord Clarendon. He was a Protestant but utterly loyal to the throne. Under his direction, the administration of government and the army in Ireland became almost totally Romanist. The order of the day was favouritism towards Romanism; hostility toward Protestantism. This process was accelerated by the replacement of Lord Clarendon by one described by James Reid as the most obnoxious Romanist in the empire. He was Colonel Richard Talbot, the Earl of Tyrconnel. The removal of Lord Clarendon was considered so ominous by Protestants that 1500 Protestant families left Dublin at the same time. Dark days are indeed on the way when wicked profligates, such as Talbot undoubtedly was, rise to power. Sir Alexander Fitton, a convicted forger, became Lord Chancellor. Others of similar moral pedigree were elevated to high office by Talbot. Of course, the Established Church did not escape the attention of the Romanists. To their shame, many of them converted to Romanism in order to gain the King's favour. What was felt most by the land-owning section of society was the repeal of the Acts of Settlement and Explanation by the Parliament, composed almost exclusively of Roman Catholics, which James had summoned on his arrival in Ireland after fleeing from William, Prince of Orange. This did more than anything to alarm the monied and the influential in Ireland. Another Act declared 2,400 peers, barons, clerics and gentry guilty of high treason, and adjudged to suffer death, unless they surrendered within a stated period. Yet another act endowed the Roman Catholic priests with all the tithes and ecclesiastical dues payable by their own community. Before this encircling manoeuvre, Protestantism retreated



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and sought refuge. Derry and Enniskillen became the centres of resistance. They also became the platforms upon which God displayed His power on behalf of His people.

Before concluding, let me set forth some maxims that we should never forget from this period of history.

1. God's truth is not to be sold in order to obtain the smile of this world.

Our forefathers believed this and suffered in their attempts to live by it. We would not presently be enjoying the many Gospel privileges we do, had our forefathers sought to appease the demands of Church and State.

2. Let us not despise and disregard the opinions of Romanism formed by our forefathers.

The Westminster Confession of Faith with its denunciation of Romanism is considered anathema by the ecumenists. It should be remembered that the views of Romanism held by our fathers were learned in the hard school of experience.

3. Tyrannical kings are not humbled as a result of parliamentary procedures but rather because of the intervention of God, on behalf of a faithful and God-fearing remnant.

Our hope today is not in the various political talks taking place. These are a necessary part of the scheme of things in Ulster. However, without God's blessing they cannot lead to any improvement in our nation's affairs. Rather they will bring us deeper into the morass of political betrayal. The resistance of the Enniskilleners and the Men of Derry would have been in vain, but for God. God's blessing is needed upon the people of this province and only the praying remnant who are prepared to pay the price of utter surrender to God can avail with Heaven.

To be continued...