



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

There are worse things than the alleged “worse things” which might follow rejection of the St Andrews Agreement!!



Daniel in the lions' den

Newspaper reports have clearly stated that DUP members are being told that if they do not accept the St Andrews Agreement, then the alternative would entail political changes that would be far worse. The effect that is meant to have upon the Protestant electorate is to create such a dread of what might be that it will not stop to rightly consider what will be if they accept the terms of the “St Andrews Agreement”!

In truth, nothing is worse than being intimidated into surrendering your freedom and principles by the vague and amorphous threat that the political options on the table are better than those which will be imposed if the offered terms are rejected.

Bertie Ahern, who has made it clear that he would not enter a coalition with Sinn Fein in the Dublin government is hardly likely to come riding to the rescue of those he cannot stand within arm's length.

As for Blair, he is looking for a glorious swan song which picking a fight with the unionist people in Northern Ireland would hardly provide.

And anyway, even if such dire threats were true, would that justify capitulation to a deal which imposes upon us a murderer?

I hardly think so.

The Bible provides us with the responses of men who stood in circumstances, in principle, similar to ours.

Moses

Moses came to a crossroads and had a choice to make. The Bible tells us what his choice was and the decision he made.

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned,” Hebrews 11:24-29. The riches and glory of Egypt or reproach, wrath and a wilderness journey! The penalty for fidelity to truth and righteousness for Moses was somewhat higher than a MLA's lost salary and pension!

Joshua

What of Joshua? He too came to a crossroads. “Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you



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to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD," Joshua 24:14-15. Joshua was going on with God no matter what the rest decided to do. God's company and fellowship are to be more highly valued than any majority and no price is too high to safeguard it.

Elijah

Elijah lived in a day, the spiritual climate of which was very like ours. It was a day of apostate ecclesiastical institutions and a corrupt and depraved government. He boldly challenged these powers of darkness and called on the people to stand for truth, irrespective of the cost. Consider his words at the time of national crisis. "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word," 1 Kings 18:21. His call for a decision was not met by enthusiasm by any means. "And the people answered him not a word." Total silence, no support. But he pressed on in his stand and witness. "And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God," 1 Kings 18:36-39.

His uncompromising stand was owned by God in a most unusual way. Had he compromised in the face of the public indifference to his call, what a blessing would he and the land have missed!

Daniel's band

The stands taken by Daniel and his friends are very well known but oftentimes deliberately misconstrued. They had a stark choice to make. The price that they would pay if they did not accept the "terms on the table" was very real and very high indeed. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced a stark choice. "To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace," Daniel 3:4-6. The alternative to going for the government's proposal was not open to speculation — it was the fiery furnace!

In Daniel's case, the choice was likewise very clear-cut. "All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition



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of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions," Daniel 6:7. Neither Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego nor Daniel needed a referendum to aid them in making up their mind. Hear their answers.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up," Daniel 3:16-18. What admirable fortitude and forthrightness! Daniel was similarly bold and decisive.

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime," Daniel 6:10. Just what would such men think of the notion of us selling our gospel freedoms, rather than face the feeble threats of a Blair or a Hain??

The Apostles

Consider those men upon whom we would seek to model our church order and gospel witness — the apostles.

"And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us," Acts 5:27-28. They had been taken out of prison to face this interrogation. The authority of the ecclesiastical system of Israel, backed up by Caesar, lay behind the command to cease from preaching Christ. The apostles did not hesitate for a moment.

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men," verse 29. There is a higher authority and more important principles to be considered on our Christian path. Those more important matters were stated earlier by Peter and John in this fashion. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye," Acts 4:19. So it is with our future actions in Ulster.

The Saviour

The actions of one final person will end our consideration of the course taken by the good and the courageous when faced with a life or death choice. That person is the Lord Jesus. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," Hebrews 12:2-3. None had such a choice to make as that which faced the Saviour. To please His Father and redeem His elect, the Lord Jesus had to endure eternal damnation. He had, as C H Spurgeon put it, "to drink hell dry" for His people.

He chose the cross and its indescribable sufferings, unhesitatingly and joyfully. "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart," Psalm 40:8. So sang the Saviour



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as he set His face to go to Jerusalem and the cross of our redemption.
How can Ulster Christians for one moment hesitate in rejecting the shameful political arrangement which would place a murderer in the leadership of our country?

The choice is as stark as that between heaven and hell!