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Strife between God and His People!

"Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." Micah 6:1-2.

There is nothing more difficult for the servant of God to undertake than the task of rebuking sin amongst His people. When we contend against the wickedness of the ungodly, you will have the sympathy and support of the people of God. However, when it is necessary to contend against folly, for sin is the greatest of all follies, amongst the people of God you lose, to a great degree, that sympathy aforementioned.

The necessity of what you are doing is questioned and the motive that moves you is classified as the basest.

However, it must be done. Earlier in Micah, we read those solemn words: "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin," Micah 3:8. Such fulness of power will result in only one thing. The servant of God will obey that command given to Isaiah so long ago. "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins," Isaiah 58:1.

The controversy that the Lord is referring to in our text is explained in Micah 6:15-16. "Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine. For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people."

These words explain the CAUSE of the controversy and also the CONSEQUENCES.

Just what were the "statutes of Omri"? The Bible tells us clearly. "But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities. Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he shewed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria: and Ahab his son reigned in his stead," 1 Kings 16:25-28.

Omri walked in the sins of Jeroboam and went even further in those sins than he. The sins of Jeroboam are likewise recorded for our learning. "After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth," 1 Kings 13:33-34.

We can summarise the sins of Jeroboam in this manner. He abandoned the order of worship ordained by God and, for base, vainglorious and self-promoting reasons, instituted a counterfeit system of worship which proved popular in Israel but which brought the judgment of God upon the ten tribes over which he ruled. This is made plain in the verses I have just quoted and also in 1 Kings 14:15-16. "For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the LORD to anger. And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin."

Omri took up Jeroboam's sins and enlarged upon them and spread the disease and apostasy from God and His Word. Matthew Henry notes: "The statutes of Omri are kept, and all the work of the house of Ahab. Both these kings were wicked, and did evil in the sight of the Lord; but the wickedness which they established by a law, concerning which they made statutes, and which was the peculiar work of that house, was idolatry. Omri walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin of provoking God to anger with their vanities. Ahab introduced the worship of Baal. These reigns were some ages before the time when this prophet lived, and



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yet the wickedness which they established by their laws and examples remained to this day; those statutes were still kept, and that work was still done; and the princes and people still walked in their counsels, took the same measures, and governed themselves and the people by the same politics."

The follies of one man and his silly notions can bring great destruction upon a people when the warnings of God go unheeded and despised.

TODAY

We ever stand in danger of such folly being committed again. Indeed, history tells us that the introduction of a little worldly "leaven", meant to help and advance the cause of God, has brought about its ruin. In our generation we have watched the great denominations which once stood astride our nation crumbling as a result of "Jeroboams and Omris" introducing folly and sin amongst God's people.

Sin, like physical illness, usually has a very small beginning. As the wound of a thorn may lead on to blood poisoning and death, so the introduction of a small "deviation" from God's Word may lead on to a terrible devastation!

I was prompted to write these few words upon Micah 6:1-2 by a recent advert which was drawn to my attention on a Free Presbyterian Church's Facebook page.

The advert announced a meeting for young people which would consist of a "Beauty and the Beast" night! For the boys there was "a night of sports and games!" The girls were invited to "come to be beautified with nail painting, a hair dresser, baking and nice treats!" As a sop to God, the advert continued: there will be "an epilogue at the end."

If anything that only adds insult to injury! God's rule and order is supplanted by the follies of men.

Is that what Free Presbyterian Youth meetings were established to promote? I think not. When this matter was rebuked there was a modifying of the advert to some degree but in essence, the same programme was going to go ahead according to the amended advert on Facebook. That is frightening for it is evident that the organisers recognised that the thing was wrong and offensive and therefore reshaped the advert in a less offensive fashion but did not turn from their folly. They merely placed a heavier disguise upon what was planned.

Here is, in a smaller measure, the same spirit at work as was evident in Jeroboam's and Omri's day. It should be noted that the only woman in the Bible of whom it is recorded that she underwent "beauty treatment" was Ahab's wife Jezebel. "Jezebel painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window," 2 Kings 9:30.

She was not a good role model for young Christians girls!

Irrespective of the motive behind the introducing of such an innovation into a YPF meeting, and I would be ready to concede that the motive was likely good, but it is nevertheless wrong!

Sincerity must ever be coupled with truth, as the Lord teaches us. "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," Joshua 24:14. These very sentiments the Saviour Himself reiterated. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," John 4:24. We can "sincerely" concoct schemes whereby we hope to advance God's cause but those schemes are not according to God's Word.

Introducing worldly schemes and practices into YPF meetings in order to entice the attendance of those who love the world is utter folly and most dangerous. Those who do so have embarked upon a road from which there is no turning back. The "worldliness" which attracted the "worldly" will have to be maintained in order to keep them.



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Thus God and His ways are abandoned in a foolish attempt to gain the interest of the world.

What I am saying is nothing new. It is exactly the same as that which was uttered a generation or so ago by those who saw just such innovations being introduced into the Irish Presbyterian Church and the Irish Methodist Church. Those warnings were rejected, the innovations persisted in and now those two denominations wallow in apostasy and rebellion.

That story has been repeated throughout the ages across the world. Are there those in the Free Presbyterian Church who, despite the warnings and the plain evidence of what deviation from God's Word brings, are going to ignore the warnings of Scripture and history and insist upon their follies?

I sincerely hope not.

PROTEST

We must protest (and we have lodged our concerns with the church in question) and pray against such departures from the simplicity and purity of God's Word. We must act as did Micah.

"Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets. In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed," Micah 7:7-11.

We must humbly acknowledge that such imprudence has manifested itself amongst us. We must cry unto God for His help and intervention and also rebuke the sin that threatens the wellbeing and future of the Free Presbyterian Church.

Only then can we expect God to "plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."

Dear Christian, please heed God's Word today.

Rev. Ivan Foster (Retired).

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