

527 An Image of Gold

In Daniel Chapter 3 we read – “Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold”. It was massive, about 90 feet high and 9 feet broad, and “he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon” (from Daniel 3.1, KJV). The plan was simple, grand, and utterly idolatrous: “Then an herald cried aloud, ‘To you it is commanded, O people, nations and languages’, (when they heard the racket from that wonderful collection of instruments, vv.5 and 7) – ‘ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up’” (from 3.4-5). To encourage mass obedience to this command, any who disobeyed would be promptly “cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace” (3.6). Little wonder then, when they heard the “all kinds of musick”, “all the people” did indeed fall down and worship the golden image” (from 3.7); “all” that is, save three “certain Jews”, holding high office in Babylon. Their Chaldean accusers gleefully told the king, “these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image ...” (from 3.8-12).

We have various similar “golden images” in our own day, before which everyone with any sense of self-protection is required to “fall down and worship” – or else. One of these vast golden images is labelled PROGRESSIVISM. This image has been set up by people of radical Left-wing political views who hold positions of influence in our society. Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister in the Scottish government, has been a faithful “herald” for this Progressive image over the years, but she has now resigned as leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP).

One of the leading candidates to replace her, Kate Forbes, is described in the media as “a devout evangelical Christian, and a member of the Free Church of Scotland”. Mrs Forbes has had the nerve to admit she would have voted against so-called ‘same-sex marriage’, and has distanced herself from liberal views on issues of gender, “trans-rights”, abortion and sex outside marriage. As a Bible-accepting Christian, her entirely normal biblical beliefs on such matters have provoked shrieks of outrage among the self-appointed “heralds” of that great image of Progressivism, before which all must bow down. Press comments include – “uproar over a top contender’s conservative views on gay marriage ... nosedives her own campaign” (The Canary), and – “Gay Labour MSP accuses SNP’s Kate Forbes of devaluing his marriage to his husband” (Daily Record). The “appalling” Kate Forbes is now experiencing a metaphorical but all-too-real “fiery furnace”, and is in great need of our prayers.

One of the ironies of the situation is that one of Kate Forbes' main leadership rivals is Humza Yousaf, described on Wikipedia as "the first Muslim Cabinet Minister in the Scottish Government". If Mr Yousaf is devout in accepting the teachings of the Qur'an, then he too will be as equally-opposed to the liberal social agenda as is Kate Forbes. But! – not a word of criticism has come Mr Yousaf's way for his presumably equally "outrageous views". This blatant discrimination between a Bible-believing Christian and (we presume) a Qur'an-believing Muslim is both highly revealing and deeply sinister: Bible-believers to be chucked out, Qur'an believers to be waved through. Is such discrimination not based on the old, wilful rejection of God's Word, along with the current demand to avoid upsetting Muslims at all costs?

We see in God's Word, in both the Old Covenant of Law and the New Covenant of Grace, that "the world" has always caused trouble for the Lord's peoples, a few obvious sufferers being the children of Israel in Egypt, the God-fearing kings, the prophets, John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ, Stephen, James, Paul and many Christian martyrs since. These days Christians are by far the main recipients of religious persecution around the world, very often, it must be said, at the hands of Muslim nations, groups or individuals. What our sister-in-Christ Kate Forbes is going through on account of her biblical Christian faith is far more common than we might think.

Yet by God's grace His Christ-redeemed people are well-equipped to respond and to cope. For example, "Therefore being justified by faith" (right now), "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (right now). Within that Christ-won peace we can even "glory in tribulations" (right now), from which come patience, experience and hope (from Romans 5.1-5). And in I Corinthians 16.13-14 we read, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all things be done with charity". (See also egs., Acts 4.18-31; 5.29-33, 40-42).

In finishing this time, in II Peter Chapter 3, the Holy Spirit tells us through Peter that "there shall come, in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts" (from 3.3) – and, we might add, building their own "images of gold". Yes indeed. In response, under that same Holy Spirit may we continue to "abide in Christ, the true vine", thereby "bearing much fruit to the Father's glory" (from John 15.1-8).