

Editorial: Wisdom, Good King John and his prophets

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There once was a king who had 400 prophets, and whenever the king wanted affirmation, he called the 400 prophets together. One year, the king wanted to take land he counted as his and asked a neighboring king to join the fight. They decided to ask God.

The first king asked his 400 prophets, "Should I go to war?"

They said, "Get after it because God is with you, and God will make you a winner."

The second king smelled something fishy and asked for a second opinion. So, the two kings went off to seek the counsel of an odd prophet.

"But I warn you," said the first king. "He never has good news for me."

On finding the odd prophet, the first king asked if he should go to war, and the odd prophet joined the rest in a hearty, "Yes."

Smelling something fishy, the first king said, "Give me a break already."

The odd prophet said, "You want the truth? You can't handle the truth! But here it is. You're doomed! All your 400 prophets? They're part of the plan to lure you to your death."

Does Good King John really want the

prophets' counsel?

Perhaps the story sounds familiar. It's a paraphrase of 1 Kings 22, in which Ahab wants to know if Jehoshaphat will join him in going to war against Ramoth Gilead. Before settling on war, Ahab tries to firm up a blessing by consulting his sycophant prophets.

What Ahab thought was a blessing turned out to be a sinister curse. The worst curses are disguised as blessings, after all.

Good King John recently sought similar affirmation, [calling his prophets to the table](#). With smiles all around, they proclaimed him great, just as he loves to hear.

In trying to secure such blessing, is Good King John really bringing a curse upon his own head? Is it really wise for Good King John to assume that the clerics attending his banquets bear blessings behind their smiles?

Likewise, the prophets

At the same time, Ahab's prophets thought they could keep their heads by blowing sunshine whenever the king called. In doing so, they used the trappings of God as their source of authority while ignoring the authority of God. This rarely went well for prophets.

Relying on the strength of powerful people rarely produced the desired results for anyone.

In the particular case of Israel, whenever they made alliances with Egypt and others, God reminded them how foolish it was to seek security in things that ultimately fade away or in empires never strong enough to stave off being replaced by other empires.

In trying to make a similar alliance with Good King John, in trying to win his favor, are the prophets of today forsaking their birthright?

In proclaiming the name of God in their appeals to Good King John, have the prophets of today turned away from their true source of security and adulterated themselves with only human-all-too-human security?

Legality really isn't the question. Wisdom is.

Whether or not it is legal for Good King John to assemble his prophets really doesn't matter. The bigger question is one of wisdom.

Is it wise for Good King John to place so much confidence in what such a narrow group of people tells him? Similarly, is it wise for Good King John to think such a narrow group of people can give him the political advantage he seeks?

Likewise, is it wise for today's prophets to put so much confidence in what Good King John promises? Is it wise to cozy up to a human king in the name of the eternal King?

To the first question, we ought to remember how Ahab's prophets were an instrument to bring down one of the wickedest kings in Israel's history.

To the second question, we ought to remember what tended to happen to the people of God when they sought security in human sources.

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