

Publishing Editor's column

ONE OF the enduring images of the recent Iraq War is that of an enormous statue of Saddam Hussein in the centre of Baghdad being toppled by crowds of people, jubilant at the overthrow of his tyrannous régime. This was but one of many such statues to be found all over Iraq, as well as posters and murals depicting the dictator; and the mustachioed features of this evil tyrant have become instantly recognisable to many. It is a characteristic of dictators that they like to erect statues of themselves all over the place, and in the most extreme cases they are part of a system of things that virtually involves the worship of the dictator.

Saddam Hussein liked to portray himself as a latter-day version of a tyrant who flourished in this area about 2,600 years ago, Nebuchadnezzar. Whereas Saddam Hussein had only pretensions to greatness, Nebuchadnezzar was a truly great emperor, the absolute monarch of an empire that dominated the world of his day; and, like Saddam, he sought to exalt himself by the construction of a great statue of himself. After his dream of a great image with himself represented by the head of gold, his response was to make an entire image of himself of gold and instruct the people to bow down and worship it. Nebuchadnezzar, however, has long since gone to the grave, though not before he was brought to recognise the supremacy of the one true God; and, not many years after, his empire collapsed overnight, to be replaced by that of the Medes and Persians.

Although Nebuchadnezzar's image dream foretold in a most remarkable way the history of the world in times future to his own, the real message of the dream is of the overthrow of all human dominion and its replacement by the Kingdom of God, ruled over by His Son. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein's great statue, in the very part of the world where Nebuchadnezzar received his dream, surely made us think of this overthrow to come. We hoped, as we always hope when conflict breaks out in the Middle East, that the Iraq War would lead to that overthrow. It did not, but it did demonstrate that the Middle East is an area of great importance and intense interest, and in the aftermath of the war we have seen the attention of the nations turn to Israel, just as we expect.

Though the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's statue may have reminded us of the great overthrow yet to come, there is a fundamental difference between the overthrow of his régime and the great overthrow symbolised by Nebuchadnezzar's dream. We do not yet know what will replace Saddam's régime, but we do know it will be human government in some form or another. In contrast, the overthrow yet to come will be complete, and result in the replacement of all human governments by the righteous rule of Christ and the saints, as symbolised by the breaking into dust of all the different parts of the image and the wind blowing it all away. Men may hope to improve things by overthrowing corrupt and evil régimes, but only the coming of the Son of God can bring righteousness and blessing to the earth, and this will necessarily involve the sweeping away of all elements of man's rule.

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