Three Competing Faiths - Week 71

Before Easter the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, urged us to be proud, even "evangelical", about Britain's Christian heritage and culture. This was a very un-British thing for a Prime Minister to say!

A few days later, Tony Blair, a former British Prime Minister, and currently an "envoy" to the Middle East, urged "the West" to set aside differences with Russia and China, and unite in the common cause of tackling "militant Islam", which Mr Blair believes is now a major global threat facing us all.

Mr Cameron's "Christian country" remarks were instantly rebuffed in a letter to a national newspaper, from fifty humanists, atheists and secularists - philosophers, scientists, media people, authors and the like - whose God-dispatching views we are frequently "blessed" with. Their argument was that the Prime Minister's remarks were ..... sectarian and divisive.

These topical examples demonstrate the growing competition, locally, nationally and internationally, between three major Faiths - Christianity, Islam, and what we will describe here, as an umbrella term for brevity's sake, Secularism. Now this competition is nothing new, but its emergence into political debate is quite new, and significant.

First, western politicians can no longer ignore the fact that Islam is posing an increasing threat to what they call "western values" - by which they mean such things as democracy, liberty and tolerance.

Now those values, prized so highly in the West - and by many Muslims who choose to benefit from them by living in the West - only exist because of the West's underlying Christian heritage and culture. In short, Mr Cameron is (almost) quite right to speak of Britain as a "Christian country", for so much of who we are and how do we things springs from our Christian roots.

I say "almost" quite right, because things have greatly changed in this country since 1945. Over those years, in all sorts of ways and by all sorts of people, the solid Christian framework underlying British society has been systematically dismantled, step by step.

Second, this Christian framework has been slowly replaced by very different values, the buzz-words for which include liberalism, pluralism, progressivism and above all, *tolerance!* - in other words, the values of the competing Faith of atheistic Secularism.

Because of this rise of Secularism, and in recent years also the growing presence of Islam in our midst, it has become very rare for any British politician to speak up about Christian things. Instead we are constantly told in Parliament and the media that we are all one happy, tolerant, pluralist society, (and to an extent, most of the time, perhaps remarkably, we are). To preserve the peace between

distinctly different racial and religious groups now within British society, there must be no talk at all of anything remotely smelling of "exclusivism".

So British politics prides itself on being secular, above any particular religious beliefs. Yet few acknowledge that such Secularism is just an alternative set of "religious" beliefs anyway! - that is, a set of core beliefs by which its adherents seek to steer their lives. The core beliefs of Secularism are a wilful denial of any relevant divine authority over us, and the placing of Man at the "top of the stack". In short, Secularism is just a tired old re-run of the spirit of the Tower of Babel.

Faced with the rise of Islam, the West is in a muddle regarding its own beliefs and values. Until recently, these have been unashamedly built-on-the-Rock, Christian-based beliefs. But the politicians have retreated, not back to the Christian Faith that has shaped us, but into the mere built-on-the-sand castle of Secularism - which in itself is another opponent of the Christian Faith.

For the competition between Christianity, Islam and Secularism is at heart a *spiritual* clash, and needs, before anything else, a *spiritual* response. This means Bible-believing, God-acknowledging, Christian people - in the Church, politics, the media, education and so on - courteously comparing the credentials, claims and fruits of the mutually-exclusive Faiths of Christianity on the one hand, and of Islam and Secularism on the other.

For only one of these Faiths can be true, meaning the other two are false: either Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or He is not the Son of God. None of us is in the realm of proof here, so we must establish which of these three Faiths has the soundest credentials, and hence is *the most likely to be true*. And the trump card in that quest is the Christian card - the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Such a God-honouring approach will not be comfortable or easy. After all, there is war on, a war being closely fought by the opponents of Jesus Christ. Under whatever banner these opponents may come, they are well-established in politics, education and the media, and, when it suits, are capable of being vicious in word or deed.

Christian concern and courtesy are to be the watchwords of our behaviour in this war, as we engage on the battlefield with all the resources the Lord provides, but may our courtesy never lead us to compromise one jot over the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For **"Christ is risen! - He is risen indeed!".** These words are the battle-hymn of Jesus Christ, in the face of which His opponents, try as they will, have absolutely no answer at all.