

232 Unity Rules, OK!

(Suggested: Copy, paste and read in Subfolder: Faith and Topicals)

Since the attack in Manchester the other day, Coptic Christians have been killed in Egypt and hundreds have been killed in Baghdad and Kabul. Clearly these foul deeds emanating from Islam in one form or another are not confined to western countries alone.

In the various gatherings after the Manchester atrocity one response came through loud and clear – we are united, we will not be defeated, we will not be divided, we are not afraid. Three features of this response – true as it is in so far as it goes - are most significant from our biblical standpoint.

The first is the primacy given to what we could call “our common humanity”. All differences are thrust aside, downgraded to being of little importance compared with the one great dominant truth of our unity as human beings: truly it is a case of “Unity Rules, OK!”, with Man seated firmly on the throne. Nothing will be allowed to interfere with this defiant human unity and its modernist assumptions - not Islamic bombers, and, by implication, not Christians either with their talk of the divinity of Christ or of their “bigoted / extreme / divisive / etc / etc” biblical views on such matters as homosexuality, abortion or marriage. (Ironically in the midst of the many unpleasant divisions of the current election campaign in Britain, this “unity-rules” approach instantly kicks in when Christian candidates, known to hold conventional biblical views, are vilified with astonishing hatred, surely a case of Ephesians 6.10-12).

A second feature arising from the Manchester wickedness is that members of non-Christian Faiths in our country appear to have no problem in displaying their Faith, perhaps because they have distinctive dress. For example the Sikhs were there in the aftermath giving out free food and drink to any in need, in obedience to the teaching of one of their gurus as their spokesman readily explained. Muslims, as Muslims, affirmed our unity together as they always do, telling us that Islam is a religion of peace. But this kind of public, natural display of faith does not seem to apply to the Christians! They must have been right there helping in the midst of the horrors, but they were unseen, unrecognised as Christians, the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Two consequences spring from this. For a start, the members of what we could call the “non-indigenous” Faiths now present in this country are clearly visible, while the members of the “indigenous” Christian Faith, the Faith which over the centuries has brought to our society so many of the blessings we possess today, are far less visible. Next, not surprisingly, we saw the instinctive, wonderful compassion shown that night in Manchester coming mainly from the majority population in those parts, the “home-grown” English people. Yet it is likely that very few of these folk would acknowledge that their compassion sprang from their allegiance to the Christian Faith – it was simply “the right thing to do”, with no need for any “Jesus-motive” undergirding it.

These two consequences give much food for prayerful Christian thought in our land. We must somehow address the need for greater, appropriate, unashamed, Christian visibility in our society, as the Lord explains in Matthew 5.14-16 for example. Then going on from that, we must address the profound alienation we see among the “indigenous population” between themselves on the one hand and the Christian Faith on the other. The Lord has entrusted His Church with the effective proclamation of that Faith in this land, but with its squabbling divisions and drifting departure from God’s Word the Church seems to have largely failed in its great task. “Lord, have mercy ...” is surely a good place to start, but that is only a start.

The third feature of the Manchester murders concerns Islam itself; (as suggested last week, several previous Weekly Reflections deal with various issues on this). While most Muslims may indeed just want to get on with their lives, let there be no doubt that Islam strongly denies the divinity of Christ; it is about submission not peace; it is incapable of handling fair criticism; and it is intent on world dominance, with a clearly-publicised agenda as to how this is to be achieved and is being achieved. Wherever Islam gathers momentum, true biblical Christianity is crushed and a society emerges that is very different from a Christian-shaped society. How vital that with Christian love we continue to “hold forth the word of life” to Muslims as well as to others (Philippians 2.16), for all of us need the one and only Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 11.25-26 / John 14.6 / Acts 4.10-12 / II Corinthians 5.17-21 / I Timothy 2.3-6).

“Jesus Christ is Lord” is the Truth now at stake more than ever before, the Truth that is ultimately shown to be the Truth by the undeniable fact of the empty tomb (I Corinthians 15.12-20).

What is more, “Jesus Christ is Lord” is the Truth which Satan hates more than anything, and the Truth he is doing all in his power to conceal.