

506 A Pearl of Great Price

“Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks”
(Psalm 75.1a, KJV).

On Tuesday 6th September 2022 at Balmoral the Queen received the resignation of Boris Johnson and invited Liz Truss to form a government as the Queen’s fifteenth Prime Minister. Two days later, on Thursday 8th September, the Queen died, with rainbows over Windsor and Buckingham Palace when her death was announced. There then followed eleven astonishing days, culminating on Monday 19th September with the Queen’s funeral at Westminster Abbey. This was attended by up to 150 foreign dignitaries, and, so we learned later, was watched on television in Britain by up to 29 million people, and around the world by an estimated 4 billion people.

“Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks”. We give thanks for the life, the Christian faith and the decades of selfless service of our late Queen. Her death has shown just how highly she has been regarded in Britain, the Commonwealth and the wider world.

We give thanks to the Lord for the seamless transition of power in these recent days, both politically and constitutionally - not many other countries in the world manage such transitions so calmly. This comes from centuries of precedent, and, with regard to the Queen’s death, many years of meticulous planning, practice and readiness. This meant that when the time came, despite it being a massive shock, everyone involved knew what to do and when, and from all appearances, they all did it and did it very well.

We give thanks to the Lord for our new King, who has spoken and acted wisely throughout, and has pledged to keep to the responsibilities now placed upon him in his new role as monarch.

We give thanks to the Lord for the competence of those involved in the media, both those in front of the cameras (despite some of them honing their waffling skills to unprecedented heights ...), as well as the many more behind those cameras making the whole broadcasting enterprise work so efficiently.

We give thanks to the Lord for the police and security services, for whom these vast public occasions must have posed numerous security challenges. Again, not many countries could or would risk their national

leaders being so close to huge crowds, in city streets, and with routes and timings published beforehand.

We give thanks to the Lord for the extraordinary contributions of the armed services, in their service to their late Boss, Commander-in-Chief, and Queen: practice, practice, practice! - at all hours of the day and night, presumably over the months and years beforehand. It paid off magnificently.

We give thanks to the Lord for the clerics and choirs involved in the planning and carrying-out of the various Christian services in recent days. The Holy Spirit's instruction through Paul was indeed honoured – "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Corinthians 14.40, KJV). What is more, and (sadly) perhaps rather surprisingly, the Christian Gospel, of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, was set out pretty clearly on most occasions, using the late Queen's own faith and service in Christ as an example. For the millions or even billions who heard this Good News proclaimed, may the Lord's Word indeed not "return unto him void" (from Isaiah 55.11).

Finally we give thanks to the Lord for something else. In normal times, when politicians hold sway in the media, you would very rarely detect that we are still a Christian country. Yet by pushing the politicians to one side for a time, the Queen's death has brought to the fore the monarchy and Royal Family, the oft-derided "Establishment" and the Constitution itself. Because of this change of emphasis, goodness and kindness have poured forth in abundance, and we have been much blessed.

In a brief parable in Matthew 13.45-46, Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to "one pearl of great price". By God's grace over the centuries, has not our utterly-Christian Constitution also become, in its much more limited sphere, a "pearl of great price"? For the purpose of our Constitution is to align this "kingdom of earth", through its Crown and Coronation Oath, to Almighty God, to the Word of God, and therefore in a sense to "the kingdom of heaven" itself.

In recent weeks the workings of our Constitution have been plain to see. Its various components have calmly "swung into action", with immense success; mighty, if formal, Christian occasions have been seen as normal and appropriate in our land; and millions of people have shown their true feelings regarding the monarchy.

“Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks”. In Christ, God has saved the Queen, and in Christ may He also save the King. In Christ may He foster repentance and revival in our nation, for by His grace we still possess in our Constitution a “pearl of great price”.

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