

537 Lord of lords, King of kings

“And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon” (I Kings 1.39, KJV).

All is now set for the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla, a rare, central occasion in the life of the nation and Commonwealth, which serves among other things as an accurate snapshot as to where the country thinks it is “at”.

As the great day approaches, much has been made of a tension that lies at the heart of the proceedings. It is a tension between centuries-long tradition with solidly Christian content on one side, and current stark realities within the nation on the other. Since our late Queen’s coronation in 1953 we can all see that changes in British society have been rapid, massive and irrevocable. Those changes have numerous causes, a few of which we can mention here in passing: the rising standard of living for the many; the replacement of the “nuclear family” as the basic societal norm with cohabitation, sexual licence, socially-acceptable divorce, mass abortion, feminism and homosexuality with its various offshoots; large-scale immigration, both legal and illegal; the virtual disappearance of deference and instinctive respect for those in authority; and casual, random violence, often related to gangs and drugs.

The upshot of these changes is that the country, at least as expressed in most of Parliament and most of the media for most of the time, is now wilfully distant from any every-day public, official allegiance to the Judeo-Christian Faiths, despite these conjoined Faiths having played such a major role in shaping who and what we are as a people and nation. We saw this distancing in stark terms when the death of Princess Diana in 1997 revealed a national, groping, spiritual emptiness – a profusion of flowers and tears followed by a sort of Christ-shunning hopelessness at the heart of her funeral service. Interestingly after the death of our late Queen in September 2022 the shock was as profound as with Diana’s death, but the national mood was more mature – sombre, with profound gratitude, love and respect, The immaculate, long-planned and practised funeral arrangements were unashamedly Christian, and brought a tangible dose of national pride.

Just so, those responsible for the wording and rituals of this impending Coronation Service have had to tread carefully between the old, solid, straightforward Christian allegiance of previous coronations, and the

very different realities of our country today. Thus we read from the Archbishop of Canterbury's office, that "this will be a coronation of many faiths and many languages. Roman Catholic, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh leaders will take part in various aspects of the coronation ...(it is) an act of Christian worship that will reflect contemporary society", including female bishops for the first time; hymns and prayers sung in Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic, as well as English; 'Faith leaders' will be the first to walk into the Abbey; and Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh members of the House of Lords will present the king with 'objects with no explicit Christian symbolism'. The Archbishop has said in a statement, "It is my prayer that all who share in this service, whether they are of faith or no faith, will find ancient wisdom and new hope that brings inspiration and joy".

The Archbishop's statement is significant. Firstly, there is no person on the planet within that frequently-mentioned "no faith" category: every human being who has ever lived unavoidably has faith, even if that faith is in nothingness. The distinctions between us do not involve those with faith and those with no faith, but - far more importantly - between those whose faith is in God's revealed truth as now set forth in the Holy Bible, and those whose faith is misplaced and lies elsewhere. We know that the various non-Bible Faiths of today have developed from growing distortions of God's original truths, memories of which were carried away in the scattering from Babel (Genesis 11.8-9). Secondly and sadly, are not the words about the finding of "ancient wisdom and new hope" a classic fudge which deliberately ignores Christ and elevates the various Christ-ignoring Faiths now in our midst? (egs., John 1.17,29; 10.9; 11.25; 14.6 / Romans 5.1-2 / I Corinthians 15.12-26, 54-58 / Ephesians 2.4-10 / Hebrews 10.19-23 / ...).

We will have been praying much for God's guidance, mercy and protection upon all concerned in this great national occasion, and how those prayers must continue, for forces with no love for this country or monarchy are intent on disrupting the Coronation before a worldwide audience: "Lord, have mercy".

May Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, indeed "save the King", and, notwithstanding the multi-Faith realities of our times, may Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God and the unique and ultimate "Lord of lords and King of kings", be given the glory and honour which are His due (Revelation 17.14).

