IN PRAISE OF MONARCHY (SORT OF)

Posted on October 4, 2019 by Eddie

All human institutions, including monarchies and nation states, are ultimately fallible. If we want true reconcilliation across the barriers which seperate us, we need to look elsewhere for our King.
Category: Observations

Apologies to those who prefer me to stick to writing about world mission. Today, I'm going to go off-piste and think a little about big-picture politics.

In British terms, I am a republican; I don't believe in the principle of hereditary monarchy. This is no reflection on our current queen, whom I regard as a remarkable and thoroughly admirable person. My problem is that I have no control and no say about her successor. Perhaps Charles will be a good king, perhaps not; only time will tell. But there is nothing that I can do to influence this one way or another.

There are two quotes which sum up my underlying view of monarchy, one is from Tony Benn

> *If I meet a powerful man, I ask five questions: What power have you got? Where did you get it from? In whose interests do you exercise it? To whom are you accountable? And, how can I get rid of you?*

And the other from Terry Pratchett

> *Royalty pollutes peopleâ€™s minds, boy. honest men start bowing and bobbing just because someoneâ€™s granddad was a bigger murdering bastard than theirs was.*

I realise that many (most?) readers won't agree with me on this, but I'm not trying to convince you of my position, I'm just setting out where I'm coming from because I've had an epiphany. Only a very small epiphany, but an epiphany all the same.

Both in the UK and the US, the two countries whose politics I follow most closely, things seem to be hopelessly divided. In the US, things break more or less along party lines between Republicans and Democrats, while in the UK, things are more complex with party allegiance and Brexit fracturing things in a variety of directions. What is common to both countries (and I'm not taking sides) is an apparent unwillingness to to listen to one another, a visceral condemnation of things that the other side does (even when they are tactics originally employed by one's own group) and a slow, but steady eroding of a sense of common nationhood and vision. If our countries are to thrive (or even survive) into the future, we will need to find some commonality and there will need to be some sort of reconcilliation between parties who are reluctant even to speak to one another.

Enter the monarch! There is no figure in today's British politics who can serve as a uniting force, a person who can give a sense of national identity around whom we could rally. However, the monarchy does, perhaps, occupy that sort of space - a space which might permit some sort of reconcilliation around our common Britishness. The monarcy is an ancient tradition which predates our modern party system and which certainly predates the Brexit kerfuffle. We are rightly appalled when politicians appear to use the monarch for their own party political ends; the Queen is above all

this. Perhaps, just perhaps, the monarchy can provide an opening, at some point in the future, for the sort of national dialogue and reconcilliation that is needed. I don't see how it might happen, but the presence of a non-political head of state seems to be a very positive thing at the moment. We have an opportunity which is not available in those countries where the office of the head of state is heavily politicised.

I'm still not one hundred percent convinced about the concept of the monarchy, but for once in my life I can actually see a value (beyond the oft-cited, they bring in tourists) in the whole concept.

But there is a limit. If there is one thing that the Hebrew Bible teaches us, it is that kings will eventually let you down. Â A good king who sorts things out is likely to be followed by a bad king who will mess them up again. All human institutions, including monarchies and nation states, are ultimately fallible. If we want true reconcilliation across the barriers which seperate us, we need to look elsewhere for our King.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lS1MvlCvkrI