



ust over a year ago, I was packing to set off to come to the US for a lengthy visit. The night before my flight though, a dear and now recently departed friend, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, a very significant scholar of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Great Britain, phoned asking me to call on him. You don't say no to such an invitation! He gave me a command (and his blessing to enable me to strive to fulfill it): "Go," he said, "and really listen; go to understand; go to love and bring love." This command informs my outlook and actions to this day.

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DEFENSOR

DEFENDING FAITH

to Enable Communities
of Reconciliation

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THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PEOPLE OF FAITH

The faith traditions many of us share can provide valuable context for our lives. In the grand scheme of things, each human soul has an inalienable dignity. We are known before being formed in the womb, and we are invited to assent to the will of divine love in our mortal journey. Through the trauma of birth, we come into a variety of contexts in order that we may, in Archbishop Kallistos's words, really listen, really understand, and learn to love.

We spend a lot of time in our lives planning individually, plotting for our personal careers and our personal flourishing. But we soon learn that all of that is but preparation for a more profound calling and responsibility to each other and to our world. Often it is trauma rather than virtue itself that prompts us to recognize this greater vocation of serving others and inspires the virtue to pursue it. Failure and pain can be paths to truth. Life and death call us out if we are people of faith or principle.

And we—people of faith or principle—are many. That is perhaps why *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church at Vatican II, for example, describes the Church as all practicing Catholics, all baptized people, and all people of good will. Now, some people may think, “I’m a good Hindu” or “I’m a good Jew”—“I don’t want to be an anonymous Catholic.” But that is not exactly what the Vatican Constitution is trying to say; the Vatican Constitution is saying, “You’re all part of this project and, more significantly, we’re all part of one another.” Such an openness aims to be inclusive and reinforces the intuition of people of many faiths that God is interested in forming and restoring souls and in shaping our civic international life. The structures, communities, and processes of our world really matter to God, and for these to function as He intends, freedom, truth, and religion are pivotal and foundational.

AN UNCOMFORTABLE EPIPHANY

We have all been prompted to consider what the role of religion is in redeeming injustice in the world. When we began our conference on Sunday, we heard some examples of terrible injustice described very eloquently by Daniel Philpott and Nury Turkel. I think we were all left rather traumatized together as we stood in solidarity with them at that presentation and felt the urgency that these injustices must be stopped now. There is a process of setting right ancient wrongs, and we are invited into that mission in this conference.

I am reminded of the one time I met Desmond Tutu. To my surprise, he commented that it was much easier to be a Christian and to distinguish right from wrong in the context of apartheid in South Africa. You could see injustice and cruelty and know these were wrong. He wasn't saying everything was lovely in apartheid or in oppression. Far from it. But in that context, one could look and discern what was right and what was not. Desmond Tutu thought he'd faced his biggest task in calling injustice out and being an international figure. But he had an even bigger challenge ahead with his involvement in South Africa's transition from apartheid.

The next phase in South Africa's history first brought the election of Nelson Mandela and a new and important agenda focused on redemption and understanding. It got much harder, Desmond Tutu said. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission met with tears, fears, tremblings, and hopes—and resilient faith often bursting into song. Amid the despair and horror, this redemptive journey was necessary in order to build a new justice. It took energy and renewed commitment every day. Sustaining peace is not cheap. But as my friend Jeffrey R. Holland said to me, if you think that is expensive, just look at the alternative.

There are many examples of abuse of leadership, such as when monarchy veers to absolutism or elected leaders drift towards tyranny. We know well that these abuses drastically compromise religious and other freedoms. Whilst it is a great honor to have been with you since Saturday, reflecting with you on the role of religion in peacebuilding and peace-maintaining, it has not been

*Archbishop
Desmond Tutu
calls out the
injustices of
apartheid in
South Africa on
April 9, 1981.*



an entirely comfortable epiphany. We've witnessed some very raw wounds and have heard about the real and current dangers many representatives' nations and communities face. There is no immediate cure for this pain. But sharing one another's pain is an imperative prompt for us to reach together for the energy to sustain the wild hope of human flourishing for our whole human family—not merely for ourselves or for our friends or for our nations or for those who think the way we do, but for all of humanity.

DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

I'm going to present the model of governance and peacebuilding of an extraordinary leader, Queen Elizabeth II, who spent 70 years trying to understand and redeem centuries of human trauma in her nation. This trauma included wounds of expansion across centuries: from the colonies to the empire and then to the commonwealth, with all the exploitation and violence that went with that journey, including the continuing issues of competing nationalisms on the island of Ireland. "Britannia ruling the waves" was no unmitigated glory.

Queen Elizabeth didn't begin her rule with her eyes closed; she went into it with a promise of faithfulness. At her coronation in June 1953, she gave her allegiance to God before getting allegiance from anyone else. She had the vision to remain humble enough to be filled and replenished by the grace of God daily in order to face the changes and chances of the countries she governed. In crowning her, the Archbishop of Canterbury put the ring of "kingly dignity" upon her finger with the words, "As you are this day consecrated to be our Head and Prince, so may you continue steadfastly as the Defender of Christ's Religion."¹

Queen Elizabeth's many titles included "Defender of the Faith." What does this mean? In considering this question, I want to look at the US dollar. It contains the words "In God We Trust," which I know is provocative to some people in the United States at the moment. You might think that because we have different currency in Britain, it's not quite the same. It is the same. On a pound coin, you'll see the name of our late Queen, "Elizabeth II," then "DG Reg" (Dei Gratia Regina) and "FD" (Fidei Defensor), which translates to "by the grace of God, Queen, Defender of the Faith." So, on British money you also have a reference to God and to the grace of God and even to the role of the Crown as "Defender of the Faith."

"Defender of the Faith" is a title originally given by a pope to a Catholic king who became a Protestant and took the title with him. I think this is one of the reasons why the Catholic Church doesn't make saints until they're well and truly dead—in case they go the way of Henry VIII. But the British constitution is not codified. It's personal. It's embedded in a person: the monarch, the Crown. The responsibility for ensuring and safeguarding constitutional freedoms is rooted in the person who embodies the nation. So before her coronation Queen Elizabeth asked people of all faiths to pray for her and assured them that she would protect their liberty in society. The Queen understood that people of faith deserve the protection of the State, and in connection with her Diamond Jubilee in 2012 she delivered an address at Lambeth Palace in which she commanded, as Supreme Governor of the Church of England, that it was a task of the Church of England to protect and promote religious liberty in her realm.² She played her card. She would, indeed, defend the faith.

Queen Elizabeth interpreted her oath to "defend the faith" broadly. For example, she presided over the prohibition of hate speech. Hate speech isn't a problem specific to Britain. When I first attended the general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints about four or five years ago, I was quite surprised that there were people outside the Conference Center dressed up as Satan and other things shouting abuse at my new Latter-day Saint friends. Upon encountering this crowd again on this visit, I decided to tell them that the Saints are nice people. As I approached, one of them yelled, and I'm sure it was the same person as last time: "You're all going to hell today, Saints! And *you*"—pointing to me in my clerical attire—"you're worse than them all!" And I thought: "Thank you, I have made it."

In the United Kingdom, some of the things he was shouting at people would have been illegal because religion is a protected characteristic. You cannot be discriminated against



in any way (and this includes hate speech) because of your race, your religion, or many other things, and the Queen made sure that religion remains a particularly protected characteristic. And so if you're an American in England and you think Brits are discriminating against you because you're American, they're breaking the law. Proving it might be rather difficult, but we cannot legally demean other people created in the image of the God we share.

The Queen's speeches over the last decade of her life were marked by much more explicitly faith-based content. Charles III, our new king, also has profound religious influence from the Orthodox faith of his father, born Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark—and, indeed, for many decades, King Charles III has promoted interfaith commitments in Britain. We may well see him really embracing his role as “Defender of the Faith.”



A RELIGIOUS REAWAKENING

If you watched the funeral of Her Majesty, you might think that Britain is a rather religious country. But there are shocking census figures from the years 2011 to 2021 reflecting a 13.1 percent decline (to 46.2 percent) in stated affiliation with Christianity.³ In 2021 that was 27.5 million Brits who identified themselves as Christian out of a total of 56 million people who chose to answer the religion question in Britain, where our sovereign is both head of state and head of the state's Christian church, the Church of England.

An equally notable change is in the category indicating affiliation with “no religion,” which went up to 37.2 percent (22.2 million people) in the 2021 census, continuing the trend between 2001 and 2011, when the number of people reporting “no religion” rose from 14.8 percent (7.7 million people) to 25.2 percent (14.1 million).⁴ This is concerning if you are a theist or are practicing religion of any sort. Of course, the census doesn't capture religious affiliation with the same precision as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does, with its scrupulous membership records. Rather, the affiliation reflects whether a Brit, upon waking up in the morning and filling out the census, decides, “I feel like a Buddhist,” or any other religion, or no religion at all. And yet, notwithstanding this imprecision, there does seem to be a trend away from religious affiliation. A detailed 2018 British Social Attitudes survey on religion reported 52 percent of the population in Britain affiliating with “no religion.”⁵

But something happened when the Queen died: the whole nation went into shock. And while you might say that you can't really deduce actual increased interest in religion from the numbers of people who were carried along with the tide of this major unrepeatable event in most of our lives, the death of the Queen does seem to have revealed a deep religious pulse in the United Kingdom. The Queen's death encouraged the discussion of the God in which she believed. The Queen's God was not just any old God, not just a tribal deity for the English or the Welsh or the Scots, but the God of all the world.

There seems to be something peculiar happening in the sense of a religious uplift in the United Kingdom. On Sunday, when I return to my duties as university chaplain, I'll see whether people are coming to chapel and whether the recent renewal of attendance at chapel continues. But it was the case when I left last week that, in Oxford colleges at least, there had been significantly increased interest in the life of the chapel and in questions of faith and spiritual exploration. So although our national statistics are discouraging, our very recent experience is quite encouraging.

*The funeral
cortege for Queen
Elizabeth II
passes through
Horse Guards in
London following
her funeral at
Westminster
Abbey on
September 19,
2022.*

LAUREN HURLEY / NO 10 DOWNING STREET / UK GOVERNMENT / FLICKR

IMPROVING OUR IMPERFECT WORLD

The privilege of our being at this conference reminds us not to be naïve enough to think that by the end of this day we will have solved all our issues or even healed the wounds we have seen borne by fellow delegates' experiences. Yet there is meaning in our being here. And virtue—even intended virtue—brings life and light to places where indulgence and moral collapse have brought fog.

We have seen that the role of religion in peacemaking does provoke hope amid despair. This doesn't mean that everything will be okay now, but it also doesn't simply abdicate to a view that there can be little improvement to our world and that we can only hope for pie in the sky when we die. President Russell M. Nelson reminded us of this at the general conference session we witnessed on Sunday when he urged us to “find true rest—meaning relief and peace—even amid [our] most vexing problems.”⁶

We need the urgency which speakers at this symposium have set before us. We have heard convincing pleas that religion isn't a final luxury or icing on the cake but rather the very foundation of stability and peace. We have heard that freedom is the tender daughter of Mother Truth, and we have spoken less about freedom *from*—that adolescent resistance to another's authority so that we can do what we like—but rather freedom *to*: to serve, to listen, to labor, and to love.

Today, on St. Francis of Assisi's day, a new book by Pope Francis has been published in English: *A Wound Full of Hope: Remembering Those Who Have Gone Before Us*. Followers of some faith traditions here will regularly pray for those whom we count as dead, through requiems or through temple ordinances. The mission and responsibility of people of faith to each other extends beyond the veil to bind us to our dead. We are not called to avenge the dead nor to forget them. We are called to build peace for the living and the dead.

But the pain and loss from the tragedies we see can fuel retribution and spiral into ongoing violence, causing us to see others as enemies with whom we do not want to have a relationship. Our vigilance is the antidote to the temptation of vigilantism. Our faith traditions offer us no escape from the ultimate destiny of being in relationship with those whom we may demonize, distrust, and hate. The prophetic crying out, that necessary first step in resolving injustice now, is indispensable in the building of peace and requires our commitment to justice for the living and for those yet to come. Prophetic warnings prompt our commitment to redemption, restoration, and sustained vigilance.

Thank you for modeling these principles through your commitment both out in the world and here together. This conference has bid us to learn a new humility together, and I'm grateful for the friendships and connections that I've made with so many of you who embody the gifts of grace, commitment, forgiveness, and joy and who have a tireless commitment to searching for peace and reconciliation. May God take our meager offerings and feed and heal the world through them. [cm](#)

NOTES

- 1 *The Music with the Form and Order of the Service to be Performed at the Coronation of Her Most Excellent Majesty Queen Elizabeth II* (London: Novello, 1953), 68.
- 2 See Queen Elizabeth II, “A Speech by the Queen at Lambeth Palace, 2012,” address given at the Diamond Jubilee, February 15, 2012, royal.uk/queens-speech-lambeth-palace-15-february-2012.
- 3 “Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021,” Office for National Statistics, UK Statistics Authority, November 29, 2022, ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021.
- 4 “Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021.”
- 5 David Voas and Steve Bruce, “Religion,” in *British Social Attitudes: The 36th Report*, John Curtice et al. (eds.), London: The National Centre for Social Research, 2019, bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-36/full-report.aspx.
- 6 Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, November 2022.