

EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH –June, 2023

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Defender of the Faith?

A few days ago King Charles III was officially crowned as king of the United Kingdom. For 500 years his predecessors have all been recognized as being head over the Church of England and assumed the title, ***“Defender of the Faith”***. However, back in the 90s, Charles said in a famous interview with journalist Jonathan Dimbleby, “I personally would rather see it as Defender of Faith, not the Faith because it [Defender of the Faith] means just one particular interpretation of the Faith”. EXACTLY! The phrase “THE FAITH” is narrow and defines Christianity exclusively in terms of New Testament truth, and that is offensive! The way of the cross is offensive to the world (cf. Gal. 5:11).

To truly be a defender of THE FAITH means standing for the true faith of Christ in opposition to all that is false. Paul spoke in terms of “the offense of the cross” (Gal. 5:11) and said, “if I still pleased men, I would not be a slave of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). One can’t defend the true gospel and a false gospel at the same time. Paul was most emphatic when he said, “if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” (Gal. 1:8-9). It doesn’t sound like he was too affirming of other “faiths”! In fact, he clearly pronounced a curse on anything which is contrary to the true gospel!

For months leading up to the coronation it was speculated on whether or not Charles would take his oaths in relation to being the “Defender of THE FAITH” or simply “Defender of Faith” in a general sort of ecumenical and politically correct way that embraces all faiths whatever they may be.

In the end, the king did take his oaths under the verbiage of “Defender of the Faith” because he did indeed want to be king. The Church of England determined the king does not have the right to change the coronation oath but rather such a change would require legislation which presented an obstacle. However, a “wiggle room” consolation was made. For the first time, the coronation oath was prefaced with the words, “The church established by law, whose settlement you will swear to maintain ... will seek to foster an environment in which people of all faiths and beliefs may live freely”.

In reality, hardly anyone took the king’s oaths regarding *THE FAITH* very seriously. No one expects the king to be a serious defender of the Christian Faith. In fact there is no record of the king ever making a clear or solid confession of the true gospel! And in England hardly anyone cares as only a minority even profess to hold to any form of Christianity and most who do, only do so nominally. The coronation was merely a “show event” full of pageantry and tradition! It was merely a “form of godliness” which denies any life-transforming power (2 Tim. 3:5). The phrase “THE FAITH” rang hollow!

The king’s actions speak louder than the oaths he mouthed. The king in the past has shown great interest in a wide variety of “faiths”. He is said to be interested in all kinds of spirituality, including Eastern Orthodoxy, and various aspects of Islam. Those representing Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Sikhism all had an officially recognized part in the coronation ceremony. One commentator said the king is “much more committed to a progressive agenda than Christianity is comfortable with”. That would be consistent with defending faith in a nebulous sense, but totally inconsistent with being a true DEFENDER OF THE FAITH which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

Jesus was clear that “narrow is the gate” that leads to life (Mt. 7:13-14). Jesus claimed He alone is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6). To be an elder in Christ’s Church requires that one hold fast to the faithful word and be able “by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). Jude wrote to the saints exhorting them to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3). Paul constantly put his life on the line for the faith and at the end of his life could say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim. 4:7). Paul warned of the time to come when MANY in Christendom would not endure SOUND doctrine but rather would be given over to false teachers (2 Tim. 4:3-4). We are there! For many, ***THE FAITH*** is all about SHOW which lacks reality!

Thot: To be a DEFENDER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH you must first possess that holy faith! (Jude 20)

Earnestly Contending, Pastor Dwight J. Oswald