

*Touching the Untouchable:
Observations on Evangelical
Response to the Queen's Death*

If I had been writing this 500 years ago in England, before the ink was dry I would have found myself incarcerated in the Tower; next stop, the gallows, or worse. There's little fear of that today, I'm relieved to say, but even so, because of what I write here, I suspect that I'll find a certain measure of hostility coming my way. After all, I am having the effrontery to touch the untouchable, to question the unquestionable.

As I write, Queen Elizabeth II has very recently died and been buried, and, quite naturally, the media has gone into overdrive. But so has the religious world, including evangelicals. It is the reaction of the latter which calls for a response. At least, that is my conviction.

I am not, in this article, concerned with the reactions of the leaders of the State Church to the Queen's passing, their comments, or their performance of political and religious acts in connection with it. The Established Church of England is an institution unequivocally founded on the Judaistic teaching of the Fathers.¹ So what else could be expected of the leaders of such? Think of it: Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor, daughter of the Duke and Duchess of York, was born on 21st April 1926, born as every other procreated child is born; that is, as a sinner. She was christened – that is, religiously sprinkled with water – on 29th April 1926 by the then Archbishop of York, Cosmo Gordon Lang, in the Royal Chapel in Buckingham Palace. In accordance with the teaching of the Thirty-Nine Articles

¹ See my *The Pastor; Battle; Priesthood*.

and The Book of Common Prayer of The Church of England, the baby Elizabeth, so it was claimed, was radically and fundamentally transformed by this ritual: she was regenerated, taken out of Adam and brought into Christ. *First*, prayer was made to God for her:

Give thy Holy Spirit to this infant, that she may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

And after the administration of the rite, the priest categorically assured everybody of the effectiveness of this stupendous act:

Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits, and with one accord make our prayers [for?] her, that this child may lead the rest of her life according to this beginning.²

Then, on 2nd June 1953, she was taken to the so-called house of God (Westminster Abbey) and placed into the hands of the highest officials of both State and Church. During the religious ceremony which followed, as the choir sang George Frideric Handel's anthem: 'Zadok the Priest and Nathan the Prophet Anointed Solomon King', the then Archbishop of Canterbury (Geoffrey Fisher) anointed her, transforming her from a mortal into a virtual god, and untouchable.³ In short, by the priestly administration of the rites of the Established Church, Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor had been regenerated as a baby, and, in early

² As with many others, the process was repeated for her great grandsons, George and Archie See my 'The BBC Gets It Wrong Again!' above.

³ 'Touch not the LORD's anointed' (see 1 Chron. 16:22; Ps. 105:15).

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womanhood, made Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and Defender of the Faith.⁴

With such a pedigree – baptismally regenerated as an infant, and thus made a member of the Established Church, and later consecrated by anointing at the hand of the highest priest of the Established Church to be made Supreme Governor of that Church – she must have been a child of God, mustn't she? What else?

Consequently, when she died and was buried, the response of the leaders of the State Church could only have been what it was. What else could it have been? The priests of the State Church, according to its doctrine, canons, rubrics and tradition, had taken this child out of Adam and taken her into Christ, and then transformed her into their Supreme Governor in matters spiritual. Imagine how shocking it would have been if, at her death, any officer of State or the Established Church had in any way expressed the merest whisper of a doubt about her spiritual condition and standing before God!

In all this, we have seen played out before our very eyes, the majestic, ceremonial flowering of a Christendom Church acting consistently with the Judaizing doctrine of the Fathers upon whose teaching that institution is based.

Scripturally speaking, the mingling of the old and new covenants by the Fathers was a disaster of the first water.⁵ Nevertheless, my point at this time is not to deal with this. Indeed, in recent days the Church of England and the State have acted consistently – in this respect, at least. And so I say no more about it at this time.

Nor am I interested in criticising the Queen. That is not why I write now. Inevitably, of course, she gets caught in the crossfire of what say. I am not trying to hide my view.

⁴ As was Charles II, James II, George IV, William IV and Edward VII, to name but a few.

⁵ See my *The Pastor; Battle*.

But I am not setting myself up as her judge; Christ, and Christ alone, is that.

What does concern me in this article is the reaction of evangelicals to these solemn events, much of which has been exceedingly disturbing – to me, at least. Frankly, I have come across what I can only describe as overblown evangelical sentimentality, wishful thinking and straw clinging. Worse, I have met evangelical comment which displays unscriptural thinking of a most serious and dangerous kind. It is this that I want to address. It is this that I am convinced must be addressed. I know I am touching the untouchable; questioning the unquestionable. I know I invite censure. But we dare not allow any confusion, vagueness or error over what constitutes a child of God. It matters not whether a sinner is born, lives and dies in a palace, or in a two up, two down; every human being is born a sinner in Adam and must be regenerated, must be brought in saving repentance to Christ, and must exercise a saving trust in Christ alone – in his person, work, sacrifice, his blood and righteousness – and so be a new creature in Christ. Or perish. The same goes for the Queen as for a tramp, for a prince as for a pauper, for a monarch as for a minion.

What is more – and this is the material point – infant sprinkling, the claim of baptismal regeneration,⁶ a life of

⁶ C.H.Spurgeon, in his famous (infamous, notorious, many at the time angrily thought it was) sermon on Mark 16:15-16, against baptismal regeneration, declared: ‘Wherever the apostles went they met with obstacles to the preaching of the gospel, and the more open and effectual was the door of utterance the more numerous were the adversaries. These brave men who wielded the sword of the Spirit as to put to flight all their foes; and this they did not by craft and guile, but by making a direct cut at the error which impeded them. Never did they dream for a moment of adapting the gospel to the unhallowed tastes or prejudices of the people, but at once directly and boldly they brought down with both their hands the mighty sword of the Spirit upon the crown of

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impeccable decency, religious talk and observance, Church attendance, keeping of vows, peerless honour, unquestioned sincerity and faultless dignity is not saving. It does not get even close to the biblical way of conversion and salvation.

Yet evangelicals have flown to their laptops to declare their confidence in the Queen's undoubted conversion to Christ, and justification by grace. In a culture where scriptural distinctives count for less and less among evangelicals, those evangelicals who have gone into print may not have used the actual words, but their intended meaning is clear: the Queen was indeed a child of God.

the opposing error. This morning, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, my Helper and Defence, I shall attempt to do the same; and if I should provoke some hostility – if I should through speaking what I believe to be the truth lose the friendship of some and stir up the enmity of more, I cannot help it. The burden of the Lord is upon me, and I must deliver my soul. I have been loath enough to undertake the work, but I am forced to it by an awful and overwhelming sense of solemn duty. As I am soon to appear before my Master's bar, I will this day, if ever in my life, bear my testimony for truth, and run all risks. I am content to be cast out as evil if it must be so, but I cannot, I dare not, hold my peace. The Lord knows I have nothing in my heart but the purest love to the souls of those whom I feel imperatively called to rebuke sternly in the Lord's name. Among my hearers and readers, a considerable number will censure if not condemn me, but I cannot help it. If I forfeit your love for truth's sake I am grieved for you, but I cannot, I dare not, do otherwise. It is as much as my soul is worth to hold my peace any longer, and whether you approve or not I must speak out. Did I ever court your approbation? It is sweet to everyone to be applauded; but if for the sake of the comforts of respectability and the smiles of men any Christian minister shall keep back a part of his testimony, his Master at the last shall require it at his hands. This day, standing in the immediate presence of God, I shall speak honestly what I feel, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me; and I shall leave the matter with you to judge concerning it, as you will answer for that judgment at the last great day' (C.H.Spurgeon sermon 573). See my *Infant; The Hinge; Luther*.

What evidence have evangelicals produced to justify their confident claims about the Queen's acceptable spiritual standing before God? None, to my mind, none that stands up, even though, it seems to me, many have scraped the barrel to find the best quotes they could. Despite all their efforts, nothing I have read fits the bill and demonstrates that the Queen was truly regenerate, truly trusting Christ's blood and righteousness alone for her salvation. If any reader can supply evidence to the opposite, I will, without delay, express my gratitude in print, acknowledge my mistake, and withdraw this article.

So much for the negative. Now for the positive. There is something far more serious in all this – and this is the major point that I want to make: by their quotations from the Queen's writings and speeches, and by their deductions – both implied and explicit – these evangelicals have given the clear impression that salvation from sin is obtained by a life of decency, by some kind of 'faith in God', by Church attendance, and by observance of rites, and performance of good works based on the ethics of Jesus. It is not! Let me remind you of the scriptural position. But before I do, let me very briefly make some important observations and define vital terms. My justifying arguments can be found in my works noted.

Justification means that a sinner is accounted, regarded as, made righteous in God's sight.⁷

This is by faith. Now there has been much talk of the Queen's 'faith in God' and 'her faith'. No vagueness can be tolerated at this point. Saving faith means 'trust' – trust in, reliance upon, Christ alone, his blood to wash from sin, his perfection to clothe and so present faultless in God's eyes.⁸ The sinner's works or observances make no contribution to this justification – whether it be attempted obedience to God's law, or the keeping of *any* rules or standards; both

⁷ See my *Justification*.

⁸ See my *The Secret; No Safety*.

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essentially amount to the attempt to earn salvation by personal merit. And that is entirely unscriptural and utterly impossible for fallen men and women.

Now for the scriptures to establish all these points, and more:

There is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law... God... will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith (Rom. 3:22-30).

To the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin' (Rom. 4:5-8).

Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but... Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works... Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness... Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. 9:30-32; 10:3-4).

We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed

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in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified... I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:16,21).

All who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written: 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them'. Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for: 'The righteous shall live by faith'. But the law is not of faith, rather: 'The one who does them shall live by them'. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree' – so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:10-14).

You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph. 2:1-9).

I am not saying the Queen boasted of her works for salvation. Nor am I accusing her of relying on her works for salvation. I cannot read any man's (or the Queen's) heart. But I am saying that many evangelicals have spoken about her in such inflated terms that they have given the inevitable impression that the Queen was saved by her

works, and, consequently, that salvation *is* by works. And I deplore it. It is but the latest straw piled on the growing heap of evidence showing that the biblical doctrine of regeneration and conversion is being robbed of its biblical distinction.⁹

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I close with a few extracts. *First*, I will give some words of the Queen as quoted in evangelical articles, words which the writers chose to support their case (whether made explicitly or implicitly) that the Queen did indeed savingly trust in Christ. *Secondly*, I will quote from C.H.Spurgeon on the futility of any sinner attempting salvation by works. *Thirdly*, I will leave the last word to Christ himself. I make no comment on any of this. I leave you, reader, to decide whether I have made the point. Moreover, I hope this article may disabuse any who are in any way trusting in their works to put them right with God. Saving trust in Christ and his finished work is the only way. Above all, what a joy it would be to know that, by reading this article, some sinner had been awakened and turned to Christ, thereby proving the truth of God's promise:

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved
(Rom. 10:13).

And now for the extracts.

The Queen's words as quoted by evangelicals

Christianity Today:

For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life... I, like so many of you, have drawn great comfort in difficult times from Christ's words and example.

⁹ See my *Conversion Ruined; Relationship; A Case*.

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I know just how much I rely on my own faith to guide me through the good times and the bad... Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God.

Faith plays a key role in the identity of millions of people, providing not only a system of belief but also a sense of belonging. It can act as a spur for social action. Indeed, religious groups have a proud track record of helping those in the greatest need, including the sick, the elderly, the lonely and the disadvantaged. They remind us of the responsibilities we have beyond ourselves.¹⁰

Billions of people now follow Christ's teaching and find in him the guiding light for their lives. I am one of them because Christ's example helps me see the value in doing small things with great love, whoever does them and whatever they themselves believe.

I have been – and remain – very grateful to... God for His steadfast love. I have indeed seen His faithfulness.¹¹

Christianity:

[Before her Coronation, she appealed to the nation:] Pray for me... that God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve Him and you, all the days of my life.

I hope that, like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish and sacrificial life... He makes it clear that genuine human

¹⁰ The Queen said this when 'celebrating her Diamond Jubilee in 2012, [and she] attended a multi-faith reception at Lambeth Palace, hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, featuring the leaders of eight faiths in the United Kingdom including Buddhism, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism'.

¹¹ Dudley Delfs: 'Died: Queen Elizabeth II, British Monarch Who Put Her Trust in God: In her seven-decade reign, she spoke regularly of the importance of her personal faith' (*Christianity Today*, 8th September 2022).

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happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving; more in serving than in being served.

This is the time of year when we remember that God sent his only Son¹² 'to serve, not to be served'. He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ. It is my prayer this Christmas Day that his example and teaching will continue to bring people together to give the best of themselves in the service of others. The carol, 'In the Bleak Midwinter', ends by asking a question of all of us who know the Christmas story, of how God gave himself to us in humble service: 'What can I give him, poor as I am?/If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;/If I were a wise man, I would do my part...'. The carol gives the answer: 'Yet what I can I give him – give my heart'.¹³

I close this brief selection with an extract quoted in a tract by Roger Carswell. Unlike the previous writers, Carswell made no claim about the Queen's spiritual standing before God, but he clearly selected the following words for a purpose:

For many, this Christmas will not be easy. With our armed forces deployed around the world, thousands of service families face Christmas without their loved ones at home. The bereaved and the lonely will find it especially hard. And, as we all know, the world is going through difficult times. All this will affect our celebration of this great Christian festival.

Finding hope in adversity is one of the themes of Christmas. Jesus was born into a world full of fear. The angels came to frightened shepherds with hope in their voices: 'Fear not', they urged, 'we bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord'.

¹² Original 'son'.

¹³ 'Queen Elizabeth's faith: Queen Elizabeth is known for her sense of duty. She is head of the Church of England and has a genuine Christian faith of her own' (*Christianity*).

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Although we are capable of great acts of kindness, history teaches us that we sometimes need saving from ourselves – from our recklessness or our greed.

God sent into the world a unique person – neither a philosopher nor a general, important though they are, but a Saviour, with the power to forgive.

Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families, it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God's love.

In the last verse of this beautiful carol, 'O Little Town of Bethlehem', there's a prayer: 'O holy child of Bethlehem,/Descend to us we pray./Cast out our sin/and enter in./Be born in us today'.

It is my prayer that on this Christmas Day we might all find room in our lives for the message of the angels and for the love of God through Christ our Lord.¹⁴

C.H.Spurgeon extract on Galatians 2:21:

The idea of salvation by the merit of our own works is exceedingly insinuating. It matters not how often it is refuted, it asserts itself again and again; and when it gains the least foothold it soon makes great advances. Hence Paul, who was determined to show it no quarter, opposed everything which bore its likeness. He was determined not to permit the thin end of the wedge to be introduced into the church, for well he knew that willing hands would soon be driving it home: hence when Peter sided with the Judaising party, and seemed to favour those who demanded that the Gentiles should be circumcised, our brave apostle withstood him to the face. He fought always for salvation by grace through faith, and contended strenuously against all thought of righteousness by obedience to the law.¹⁵ No-one could be more explicit than he upon the doctrine that we are not justified or saved by works in any degree, but solely by the grace of God. His trumpet gave forth no uncertain sound, but gave forth

¹⁴ Roger Carswell: 'Queen Elizabeth II: 1926 – 2022', DayOne and 10Publishing.

¹⁵ Original 'obedience to the precepts of the ceremonial or the moral law'.

the clear note: 'By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God'. Grace meant grace with him, and he could not endure any tampering with the matter, or any frittering away of its meaning.

So fascinating is the doctrine of legal righteousness that the only way to deal with it is Paul's way. Stamp it out. Cry war to the knife against it. Never yield to it; but remember the apostle's firmness, and how stoutly he held his ground: 'To whom', says he, 'we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour'.¹⁶

Christ must have the last word

Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get'. But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying: 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted (Luke 18:10-14).

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As I said, I realise my words will offend. While I do not apologise, I wish to repeat what I said earlier.

I have not said the Queen boasted of her works for salvation. Nor have I accused her of relying on her works for salvation. I cannot read any man's (or the Queen's) heart. But I assert that many evangelicals have spoken about her in such inflated terms that they have given the inevitable impression that the Queen was saved by her works, and, consequently, that salvation *is* by works. And I deplore it.

¹⁶ C.H.Spurgeon sermon 1534.