

## **The Kirking of the Parliament**

### *Thought for the Day*

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On Tuesday, I had the privilege of taking part in the Kirking of the new Parliament in St Giles Cathedral in the presence of Prince Charles, the Duke of Rothesay. It was a highly symbolic occasion: even with the political atmosphere at its most highly charged, with as yet no clear victor from last week's election, and the losers still smarting from defeat, politicians from all parties came together with representatives of public life and all Scotland's communities to bid a fair wind to the new Parliament.

There in the shadow of a statue of John Knox, the very personification of Scottish Presbyterianism, we held a moving service of music and readings that was not just ecumenical in the Christian sense, but genuinely inclusive. An Imam read from the Koran, I read a specially composed prayer in Hebrew, and the Principal of the Free Church College prayed in Gaelic, before the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Primus of the Episcopal Church, and the Cardinal jointly blessed the new Parliament.

It is difficult not to see patterns on the very day that the lion lay down with the lamb – or perhaps the lion with the tiger! – to form a new administration in Northern Ireland. This is how it should be, weaving difference into the fabric of society can only give it strength, whereas attempting to deny that difference by sweeping it under the carpet can only, as we saw in the French suburbs last summer, fuel resentment and ultimately lead to violent disorder.

I make no apology for preferring the Scottish model of consensus and inclusion, indeed I believe it is self-evident, requiring no argument, that a society that recognises and seeks to understand, is better than one that refuses to acknowledge even the existence of difference and discrimination, leaves them to fester, and then send in storm-troopers to suppress the inevitable unrest.

A pressure-cooker will eventually explode. Isn't it better to recognise, as the Psalmist says, 'How good and pleasant it is for brothers to live in unity', or as our own psalmist, Burns, put it, "That man to man, the world o'er, Shall brothers be for a' that".

*Ephraim Borowski*

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