

27th August 2021

Flags

**“And many an eye has danced to see
that banner in the sky.”**

Oliver Wendell Holes, A Metrical Essay

The Covid-19 restrictions at the *Euro 2020 Football Championship* games at Hampden Park earlier in the summer were stringent. There was a “slot” during which you were permitted to enter the stadium – to avoid large crowds at “pinch-points”. I was inside Hampden at 5.30 pm for a match that didn’t start till 8 which meant I could see the stadium in all its glory before masses of people arrived. It was then I saw something I hadn’t noticed before was, simply because of the lack of people. At either end of the ground, the colours of the seats were arranged to form two massive Scottish Saltires. The odd early entrant like me, sitting in the blue of the flag or the arms of the white cross, were insignificant in comparison with the size and boldness of my country’s flag shining in the sunshine.

By the time the game began, the flags on the seated terraces were obliterated by the crowd, but they’d been replaced with a plethora of other flags – the Saltire and Lion Rampant predominating. In the small crowd of visiting Croatian supporters below me, Croatia’s flags were in plentiful supply. Their country’s flag mattered to them too.

Song of Solomon 2:4, in the New International Bible version, tells us:

*He has brought me to the banquet hall,
and his banner over me is love.*

This is a wonderful image for me of God gathering us together in his stadium, where excitement abounds, anticipation is high, and flags of love are waving all around. There’s a massive banner that reads, “I love you”. There are smaller flags that interpret love in a multitude of ways. But the whole place is full of colour, noise, togetherness, pleasure, and excitement.

“Many an eye has danced to see that banner...” *Many* an eye, through countless generations, has seen the banner that matters most. And God says to us again: Look! My banner! It tells you I love you! Maybe you’ve not noticed it before. But it’s there, in all its glory, waiting for you to dance and sing under it. Got that? Now, go on, and enjoy the game!

A prayer for today

Let the flag I fly show God’s love today. Amen