

9th August 2021

Finality

“Finality is not the language of politics.”

Benjamin Disraeli, Speech, House of Commons, 1952

The Euro Football Championships final is almost a distant memory; the finals at Wimbledon are long-since over; the *Champs Elysée* in Paris is clear of cyclists now the *Tour de France* is done; the Open Golf's "Claret Jug" has been safely packed away for another year; and any number of Olympic finals have been decided in the past few weeks.

But "finals" aren't just confined to the sporting world, as we know. Think of a wedding, finally taking place after months of preparation; the final episode of a TV drama series, the *denouement* of a complex plot; the signing of a contract, finally concluding what might have been lengthy negotiations. "Finals", in one way or another, are around us all the time.

Do we ever reach the finality of our quest for self-awareness and clarifying a life-stance? I'm not sure we do – or should! I hope, to paraphrase Disraeli's statement above, that finality is *not* the language of faith. If it is, and we conclude that we're absolutely certain of everything, then we've stopped growing and learning and wondering. And, even worse, we might have arrived at the stage when we feel God has nothing to reveal to us anymore. There can be no finality to our journey of faith.

In *The Ancient Sage* from 1885, Alfred, Lord Tennyson writes this:

*For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!*

If we've finally proved what we've set out to prove, we have nothing left of the mystery of faith. What a sterile and unexciting world we would live in then. So, says Tennyson, we should be wise, and "cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt" and "cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith". We need, as Professor Robert Davidson wrote in 1983, "the courage to doubt". If we believe that true Faith is "beyond the forms of Faith", then it isn't doubt that's the problem. The anthesis of faith is what we feel we've achieved when we believe ourselves to be the triumphant finalist.

A prayer for today

Lord, have I finally understood you? I doubt it. Amen

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