

12th September 2022

Succession

**"In Eternity, in the Now, all is existent, perfect;
in Time only is there succession, the unfolding of one thing after another."**

Annie Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form* (1898)

This week, like many of you, I'm faced with an issue I've never had to think about in my life before – the succession to the throne. With the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, the crown has passed to the heir to the throne, Prince Charles, Prince of Wales and Duke of Rothesay, who is now king Charles III. That succession has been known since his birth, and his own elder son, Prince William, now as the Prince of Wales, will be heir to the throne. The succession is known and secured.

Annie Besant's take on succession quoted above has been helpful to me today. Besant, a British socialist, women's rights activist, writer and educationalist, was clear. As we discover "Eternity, in the Now", we glimpse what is perfect, timeless, invariable. In religious terms, we express that in God's promise to be "Alpha and Omega", the beginning and the end, the unchanging creative Love in all things. But even if we don't use religious language and metaphors, we know about timeless attributes and attitudes, our human glimpses of perfection: respect, equality, self-giving, forgiveness, duty, and much more.

But if "in Time only is there succession, the unfolding of one thing after another", how *we* deal with that succession? What do we pass on to our children that exhibits righteousness, values, standards, the "gifts of the Spirit", as the New Testament has it? Yamamoto Tsunetomo, an 18th century Buddhist priest and Zen philosopher, wrote this in *Hagakure*:

There is surely nothing other than the single purpose of the present moment. [One's] whole life is a succession of moment after moment. If one fully understands the present moment, there will be nothing else to do and nothing else to pursue. Live being true to the single purpose of the moment. Everyone lets the present moment slip by, then looks for it as though he thought it were somewhere else.

When the succession of all that is good is in your hands, don't let the present moment slip by. That, I believe, will be uppermost in the mind of king Charles III, and is surely something we would all do well to ponder.

A prayer for today

Lord, as I cherish this moment, help me to pass on what is good to the next one. Amen