

## **The Honours of Scotland**

### ***Thought for the Day***

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The Talmud says we should pray for the welfare of the government because without it people would eat each other alive – hardly a resounding endorsement, and a bleak assessment of the “state of nature” famously described by Hobbes fifteen hundred years later as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”!

That was one of the many thoughts swirling around my mind as I sat in St Giles last week as the ‘Honours of Scotland’, the Scottish crown jewels, were presented to the King. It was an historic event in every sense of the word – the ancient Stone of Destiny, a 15th century sceptre and a 16th century crown in a 12th century church, in a modern adaptation of a time-honoured ritual anchored in biblical sources.

That said, Jewish tradition is not exactly positive about rulers in general – candidly, we’ve had too many bad experiences over the millennia! Even in the Bible, when the Jewish people ask for a king as other nations have, the prophet Samuel warns them that a king will take their sons as soldiers and servants, their daughters as maids, and their possessions for his own use.

So as chants of “Not my king” filtered into the very fount of John Knox’s Presbyterianism, my first thought was “be careful what you wish for!”, for your aspiration may be trumped by truth. My second thought was how important it is not to confuse aspiration with fact – flying a pennant reading “Not my speed limit” will not protect me from a speeding ticket! So by all means campaign for constitutional change, but in doing so recognise that wishing does not make it so.

There was much to welcome in last week’s event – a Muslim First Minister reading from the Hebrew Bible and the participation of leaders of so many faiths epitomised how Scotland now sees itself – diverse, inclusive, welcoming. It was an honour and a privilege to be part of it.