

We would be much better off on our own, surely, without the burden of all these extra laws and extra people? We know who we are as Catholics. Bring the rest on board and we won't know who we are any more. And France and Germany, after all, are only in it for their own aggrandisement. And what about the fishermen no longer free to fish where they like? And we have a Pope going all the way back to St. Peter and a Queen going all the way back to the Conquest - and even before. And so we disdain any move towards greater unity, whether religious or political: a lack of vision inherent in history, as we see so clearly in the story of Jonah and the story of Christ.

Jonah goes, somewhat reluctantly, to Nineveh, the avowed enemy and threat to Israel. He eventually goes in the belly of a whale and, in what must be one of the shortest prophetic messages ever, simply says, 'Only forty days more and Nineveh will be overthrown,' in the hope, no doubt, that he could now go home, leaving Nineveh to its fate, but, to his great surprise and vexation, the Ninevites believe him and repent and God shows them mercy, even down to the last of their animals. And, in a vivid and touching scene, God declares to Jonah, and to us, God's magnanimity to all whom God chooses. We can have no bounds on God's mercy. Note, however, that there is no plan here to incorporate Nineveh into Israel in any formal or institutional sense. No, this is God as person, transcending any religious or national boundaries. And this is Christ, too. We hear something of Herod's fears echoed in that of the Pharisees and Scribes as Christ succeeds John the Baptist in reaching out to others; in the nature of his call which begins and ends with a personal and not an institutional touch. Christ isn't after our votes or our money but our persons, our trust, our love. If we have disunity it is here where the trouble begins: the mis-perception of what Christ, what God, is about; not reinforcing Israel or the Church as an institution, with too many laws and too many people, but as a body of all people, all subject equally to God's love. As Clement Attlee once remarked of the Labour Party, but equally applicable to the European Union and the Church, it's a 'fundamental fallacy' to believe that 'it is possible by the elaboration of machinery to escape the necessity of trusting in one's fellow human beings.' (*Postwar*: Tony Judt p.730) Tony Judt uses this comment to explain the 'democratic deficit' or lack of personal attachment which so many feel towards the EU, across Europe, including here. The United States of America have also been finding this out in a rather painful manner: this dynamic that is. If we want unity, we have to love - there is no other way. And the fishermen will then be free for a much greater harvest.

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