

ST MATTHIAS.

“And the lot fell on Matthias”. I used this as the title of my first dissertation many years ago which was an exploration of the history and the workings of selection conferences for ordained ministry in the Church of England. It had very little to do with St Matthias except maybe reference to the criteria of knowing our Lord and showing that there was some evidence that a potential candidate had walked with other Christians and began to grow in intimacy with the life and teachings of Jesus, and that selection conferences employ other means than just drawing lots to aid preference over one candidate and another.

Other than what St Peter says about Matthias, that he was one of the men that had shared the apostolic life from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, nothing much else is known of him. But what I think is important is that St Luke in Acts does not say that Matthias was God’s preferred choice. He simply says the Lot fell on him, which suggests that God did not predetermine which way the coin would fall, so to speak.

So Matthias is chosen and Joseph known as Barsabbas whose surname was Justus was not. John Pridmore has, I think, something very pertinent to say about this situation. It is what he calls the “capacity to consent to the contingent.” Basically it is the acceptance that what befalls us in life is just happens to happen. He says, “The gift to accept with serenity all that is random and accidental in the ordering of things is not the most celebrated of Christian virtues, it’s not up there with faith, hope and love; but it is a grace to covet.”

Maybe alongside being counted worthy to be one of the ones who walk with the Lord, whether that results in being called to high office or not, we should try and cultivate like Matthias and Justus that virtue of consenting to the contingent. That at least will allow us to live in the knowledge of the gift of free will and to move away from a crude theology that says God determines which way even a coin will fall.

AMEN