

363 “A Sacred Trust”

In last week’s Reflection, as the critical General Election drew nigh, we took comfort from the gracious truths given to us in Psalm 9, notably concerning God’s faithfulness, protection, mercy, and righteous judgments – qualities greatly needed and appreciated by God’s people in these turbulent times.

Thanks be to God, this Weekly Reflection can have a different feel to it, written as it is in the wake of a large Conservative majority being returned to the House of Commons as a result of yesterday’s General Election. No matter our own particular political views, we can surely be deeply thankful for such a clear result, enabling a period of stable government after years of deadlock and delays. So much unpleasantness has occurred since the “Brexit” referendum of 2016 – discourtesy, deceit, threats, anger, violence, protests, hatred, falsehoods and the rest. Yet the political system we have in our country, that has slowly developed through many turmoils of past times, has more or less coped despite the twin modern plagues of saturation news coverage and rampant social media. It has now enabled this decisive election result to occur and to be accepted within the country without civil unrest or worse. Truly on such grounds we have much to be thankful for.

In previous Reflections we have noted the three broad strands involved in Brexit. First is the economic strand, being the most publicised and regarded by the “Remainers” as being by far the most important. Second is the constitutional strand, the regaining of independence in its various forms, and emphasised by the “Leavers”. Third, hardly ever mentioned but arguably the most foundational strand of the three, the spiritual strand, whereby Britain can be freed from being yoked to the Roman-Catholic-inspired European Union and – if she has the sense – take seriously once again our Protestant heritage and identity.

It is primarily because of this third strand that so many Bible-believing Christians have been earnestly praying, since before the 2016 Referendum, for God to extricate this country from the EU with its steady march to “ever-closer union”. In view of this election result such prayers can praise the Lord afresh for His faithfulness in heeding all the heartfelt prayers over the years.

Now few would deny that the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, is a controversial figure with many flaws but also very evidently with many gifts. It was therefore surprising and encouraging to hear him speak as

he did earlier this morning (13th December) in the aftermath of this great political victory.

Above all, he was humble. He acknowledged that this Commons majority has come about largely because so many traditional Labour voters in the Midlands and the North have voted Conservative, many for the first time ever and many, as he put it, with their hands quivering in hesitation as they contemplated putting their X in the Conservative box on the ballot paper. He spoke of these people as having only lent their votes to the Conservatives in this particular election, with their deep-seated Labour loyalties perhaps returning in a future election. He acknowledged the need for the Conservative Party and for Parliament itself to change, in reaction to the new political map of the country. And he also said – this is extraordinary coming from such a man – he has been given “a sacred trust”.

All these things can give us profound thankfulness before the Lord, who seems indeed to have responded in mercy to the prayers of His people lifted on behalf of this country, notably over “Brexit”. The road ahead is of course still fraught with difficulties wherever we look, prompting our continuing prayers “for the High Court of Parliament” as the Book of Common Prayer puts it, a prayer that is worth quoting in some detail here due to its continuing relevance: “Most gracious God, we humbly beseech thee ... that thou wouldest be pleased to direct and prosper all their (the MPs and Lords) consultations to the advancement of thy glory, the good of thy Church, the safety, honour, and welfare of our Sovereign and her Dominions; that all things may be so ordered and settled by their endeavours, upon the best and surest foundations, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations. These and all other necessities, for them, for us, and thy whole Church, we humbly beg in the Name and Mediation of Jesus Christ our most blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen”. That is quite a prayer, which surely every God-fearing politician could also go along with, no matter their party label!

Political realities change but the key spiritual reality never changes, namely, that “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2.11). Praise God, all those in Christ are called to make this great spiritual reality known in this sinful, needy world - a calling that is to be humbly received and recognised for what it is, “a sacred trust” in itself.