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As we have been considering in recent Reflections, democracy has much to commend it as far as it goes, but because it is based only on voting numbers it possesses no reliable moral compass of its own. For politicians to win the next election, their need for popularity with the electorate can easily outweigh any desire they may have to keep in alignment with God's Word, the one true moral compass which God has graciously given us (eg., Psalm 119.105 / Proverbs 3.5-6 / Matthew 7.24-27 / Mark 12.28-31 / ...). The result is a string of liberal laws that have been passed in Britain over the decades, with socially negative effects.

No wonder our politicians, and especially those of them who are our fellow-Christians, need our prayers! – as they seek to tread that sometimes fine line in their policies between popularity before the people on the one hand, and acceptability before Almighty God on the other.

At the Coronation, the Archbishop of Canterbury asks the new monarch these questions (among others which do not concern us here this time): "Will you to the utmost of your power maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel? Will you to the utmost of your power maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law?". The monarch replies – "All this I promise to do. The things which I have here before promised, I will perform, and keep. So help me God".

So there we have it. Constitutionally in the United Kingdom: Almighty God is above all, and quite right too; beneath Him comes the Crown; beneath Almighty God and the Crown come the Church, the People and the Parliament, each of these bearing particular responsibilities. It is plain therefore that all authority in our land, whatever its level or nature, is exercised within this Christian framework, and is ultimately accountable, via the Crown, to Almighty God Himself, whether or not this is recognised. How blessed we are to have this belt-and-braces Christian constitution, put in place over the centuries by those who have gone before, and which keeps everything in its proper place when allowed to do so.

But unfortunately for reasons we have covered, the great solid lighthouse of God's Word is widely ignored, leaving policy to be decided solely on the morally-suspect seas of democracy. Hence we see decent Christian citizens, holding conventional biblical beliefs that are entirely in line with the country's constitution, being pilloried in public life or being hauled before the courts because they have come up against various God-flouting laws that have been passed. The case comes to mind of the Christian confectioners in Northern Ireland who declined to make a cake praising "homosexual marriage": they have since faced years of vilification and court appearances and are not through yet. (When Bible-upholding Christians are forced to choose between obedience to God or to Man, not surprisingly they tend to follow Peter's example of Acts 5.29, "We ought to obey God rather than men"). This woeful case, along with others, shows what can happen when unfettered House of Commons democracy is deemed to be the only authority. Such cases also raise a crucial question: using a different maritime illustration, just how far up the beach of national policy-making should the tide of popular democracy be allowed to reach?

Yet the correct relationship between our Christian constitution and popular democracy could be restored quite simply. If our political leaders referred approvingly to our Christian heritage and constitution as they made their policies, how quickly the whole mood of debate could change! Two simple questions would serve well: first, what are the basic biblical principles within which our policy on this or that matter should be developed? and second, will any laws that we pass be such that the Queen can grant them the Royal Assent without causing her to break her Coronation Oath?”. These questions emphasise that politicians, along with the rest of us and with popular democracy itself, are all under the authority of the Crown and of Almighty God Himself, whether we happen to like that fact or not.

Now nobody is claiming that complex issues of the day will be effortlessly sorted out as a result of these suggestions, or that all politicians must be born-again Christians (John 3.3-8). But we can certainly see how beneficial it would be if our politicians openly functioned within our Christian constitution once again, and were not afraid of saying so.

That famous verse from Proverbs is relevant here: “Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14.34, KJV). Here are God’s words of guidance concerning the true priority for policy-making at all levels within a society, in which democracy has its particular and valued place within the wider, greater picture.

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(For those who may wish – and with some hours to spare! – these previous Weekly Reflections cover different aspects of this week’s theme – see [fsmins.org/WeeklyReflection/Full List by Theme](http://fsmins.org/WeeklyReflection/FullListbyTheme): In 03 Practical Discipleship, No. 113 // In 05 Faith & Topical Issues, Nos. 60, 61, 66, 71, 80, 116, 133, 176, 186, 187, 232, 233, 234, 240, 266)