

323 Governments and Bibles

Last week we applied those telling words in the Book of Judges, “In those days there was no king in Israel” (17.6 and 21.25), to modern British society, and saw how the second part of those verses - “Everyone did what was right in their own eyes”, goes a long way towards explaining the numerous social problems our country currently faces.

But even when there was “a king in Israel”, that was no guarantee of national well-being. A few of the kings were God-fearing and sought to uphold the covenant, but most were the proverbial “bad-hats” who usually rejected the warnings given from the Lord via His prophets.

Intriguingly there seems to be no clear pattern between a God-fearing father as king producing a God-fearing son as his successor: sometimes yes, and sometimes no. Similarly some bad kings produced good sons, and some, not surprisingly, produced bad sons. A glance through the records of some of the kings of Israel and Judah (II Samuel 1 – I Kings 22ff) makes the point.

There is a telling lesson in this for us today, for in both the Old and New Testaments responsibility for the rearing of the children in any family, be that of a king or a peasant, rests of course with the parents, and notably with the father.

Biblically we know that man and woman are spiritually equal in status before the Lord while being functionally complementary, with different roles assigned to them for mutual harmony and blessing (egs., Genesis 1. 26-28, 2.21-25, 3.1-24 / Galatians 3.26-29 //; in the home and family – Exodus 20.12,17 / Ephesians 5.15-6.4 (with a parallel made with Christ and the church) / Colossians 3.12-21 //; in the church - I Corinthians 14.34-35 / I Timothy 2.8-15 (based on creation and the fall). When this blend of God-given equality and complementarity is practised, then all is set fair for stable, loving marriages, the proper rearing of children, the acceptance of the different roles and gifts within the Church - and a peaceful society.

Now for more reasons than we can go into here, clearly such basic biblical teaching has been largely abandoned across swathes of British society, with inevitable consequences – short-term relationships; abortions; cohabitation rather than marriage; children born out of wedlock; absent fathers; single mothers; abuse; and shambolic family arrangements. Does all this confusion, dissatisfaction and downright misery not play a part in explaining the rise of male and female homosexuality, as well as the prevalence of depression, self-harm, gangs and drugs among the young? Unfortunately our society is very sick, a sickness brought on by the decades-long love-affair with liberalism which promises such joy but delivers something very different.

Yet so often we see astonishment and puzzlement when society is confronted with ruined lives. The cries go up - “Isn’t this terrible? How could this have happened? Whatever can the government do to fix it?”. Such reactions reveal how government, via the welfare state, is now seen as “the go-to place” for the solving of society’s problems, while the Holy Bible, despite its central role in having shaped our society, is ignored.

But of course the prime responsibility for problem-solving, or, much better, problem-avoiding, lies not with a government or a welfare state but where it always has lain, with the parents, and ultimately with the fathers, within each family home in the country. Promoting this basic truth in word and deed is where a government can indeed play a part, (and how good it would be if this followed the lead of bishops of the Established Church), in encouraging men to be men, husbands and fathers, and women to be women, wives and mothers, as always used to be the case.

Our social ills can be traced directly back to the turning-away from the Christian Faith by those in power since 1945, and the breakdown of stable family life as one consequence of that turning-away. The solution therefore is to do a complete about-turn! – a deliberate and unapologetic turning-back to the Christian Faith on which our constitution and society are still based, by those in leadership at whatever level, be that in a palace or a council flat, in a parliament or a television studio, in a school, factory, office or wherever.

Humanly speaking such an about-turn may be fanciful, but in Christ “we are on the Lord’s side”, and democracy, despite its shortcomings, does give power to the people, including to Christian people like us. Christian voices raised, from the grassroots up, of Yes to biblical goodness and No to biblical badness, do make a difference, with those in leadership having to pay heed.

We long for the day when the true King is in power, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (egs., Philippians 2.9-11 / Revelation 11.15). But until then we His people, using the God-given resources provided for us – one of which is the democratic process - can set about showing that Christians have rather more influence than we may realise.

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