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Much has happened since our Weekly Reflection 258 of December 2017, in which we considered some implications of the then-just-announced engagement of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. To set the scene for us now, a brief portion from that Reflection is worth quoting here -

(Arising from God's Word) - "... the spiritual principle is clear: any form of leadership is critical, and the consequences of whatever leadership is provided will always follow, sooner or later, for better or worse, for blessing or cursing. Herein lies the true context of the significance in the United Kingdom of the Royal Family, Christian leaders, and politicians at national and local level. This is why the engagement of Prince Harry is so telling. There has been much comment about Meghan Markle: a glamorous American actress, a divorcee of "mixed race" ... a global campaigner for "human rights", a "commoner", and in her own words, strong, independent, successful, "comfortable within herself" and a vocal feminist ...".

And so to today. Prince Harry has long held a special place of affection, sympathy and respect within our country, due in particular to the tragic death of his mother, his front-line army service and his creation of the Invictus Games, so there was much national joy over Harry's obvious personal joy at his engagement to Meghan. All the signs were that Meghan was warmly received by the Royal Family and in the country, and hopes were high for the future role of this couple in national life.

Their wedding at Windsor went off in fine style: Prince Charles gave the bride away in the absence of her father and crowds turned out in their thousands to wish the couple well. Harry and Meghan soon took their part with William and Kate in "the Fab Four", and all seemed set fair. Perhaps as an early sign of how things were developing, the newly-married couple soon chose not to live in central London, so Frogmore Cottage on the Windsor Estate was refurbished for them at lavish public expense. Their first child was duly born and christened, with a strong emphasis on secrecy and privacy, a deliberate departure from royal precedent.

Then Harry and Meghan announced they were stepping back from their royal duties. They moved first to Canada and are now settled in Meghan's home city of Los Angeles. A "tell-all" interview they have given to Meghan's friend Oprah Winfrey is to be broadcast on American

television on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March, and in Britain a few days later. Meanwhile other senior members of the Royal Family continue in their work, the Duke of Edinburgh remains in hospital, and the Palace authorities are investigating claims of bullying made against Meghan by former members of her staff.

This saga is therefore a sad, topical example of our Lenten reflections from last week, notably, whenever temptation arises, our need to shun the wrong and embrace the right, as much as we are able under the Lord, and always drawing on His resources.

Three features seem to lie at the heart of what has happened with Harry and Meghan. The first involves this forceful, independent woman finding herself in a situation not to her liking, with her husband, presumably out of his love for her and his fear of otherwise losing her, going along with her desire to return to her old friends and surroundings. Those key passages about the marriage relationship come to mind, Ephesians 5.21-33 and Colossians 3.16-19. Perhaps Meghan is now more content, though determined to right the wrongs she feels have come her way and their way from the Royal Family. As for Harry, we can only wonder what is in his heart as he tries to justify what they have done.

Secondly, notably for Harry, but for his new wife too who knew what her life was now going to involve, is the setting-aside of his calling and duty. Some parallels with King Edward VIII's abdication are worth pondering.

And thirdly comes the old, old menace of loose, hasty talk, our physically small tongues being likened so accurately in God's Word to a horse's bit, a ship's rudder and a spark of fire (James Chapter 3), that fire in particular being fanned these days by social media and television. Just look at the damage already done, and unfortunately yet to be done. (On the This Week page of our website is shown for two weeks a free-to-download pdf list of all references to speech within the Book of Proverbs – a timely read; also shown there is TWR 258, "Harry and Meghan", from December 2017).

So we need to pray very earnestly for the Royal Family for we can be sure that among much else "spiritual wickedness in high (that is, heavenly) places" is involved (Ephesians 6.12end). We pray that, under God's grace and wherever necessary, there may be repentance, forgiveness, healing and restoration. We can finish this time with one of those Proverbs verses – "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (25.11, KJV).

Quite so, for them, for us, and for us all.

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