

476 Democracy rules, OK? (February 2022: Faith & Topical Issues)

In our recent Weekly Reflections we have been surveying the broad sweep of changes that have occurred in our country during the Queen's seventy-year reign since 1952. Undoubtedly some of these changes have been for the good, bringing a marked rise in living standards for millions of people, for which we give deep thanks to the Lord God. Other changes though, through an unfortunate mixture of technical advances and liberal laws, have led the nation further and further away from our Protestant, Christian identity, and deeper and deeper into a pronounced social quagmire.

Much of this quagmire - involving marital breakdown, broken homes, abuse of "sex", drugs and alcohol, violent crime, mass abortion, homelessness, depression, suicides and so on - stems directly from the downgrading of marriage and the nuclear family. Putting it another way, the Ten Commandments, the essence of God's Law, have been swept aside, including the simple fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother ..." (Exodus 20.1-17; 12).

This social shambles has been created by numerous liberal laws enacted in a democratic system. We are mindful here of Winston Churchill's famous remark, "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others". The great man was partly right, for democracy acts as a strong safeguard against totalitarian government: those democratically elected into power by "the people" know that before long they must face the people again to ask for their votes once more. (One reason for President Putin's extraordinary invasion of democratic Ukraine may be his fear of similar genuine democracy developing in Russia).

Churchill was also right in realising the serious weaknesses of democracy. For a start, democratic decision-making has little to do with seeking out genuine Right over Wrong, or genuine Good over Bad. Liberal laws on social matters have been justified to the electorate as being "progressive" (but progressing to where?), and "in step with 'current majority opinion'". But who is to say what that "majority opinion" really is within the national electorate on any issue? And even if this majority opinion is accurately known, that knowledge in itself is no true guide as to what laws, if any, should be passed on the matter.

In practice therefore, we see that the various liberal laws now affecting millions of people in Britain, (notably concerning abortion and marriage), were passed by a very small number of MPs of the ruling party in the

House of Commons at the time. Such MPs were, and still are, “whipped” into obeying the party line, perhaps in defiance of their conscience but in support of party loyalty and of their own career prospects. Seen like this, British democracy is not quite so noble after all.

We must also note that democracy’s greatest weakness is revealed in its very name, for the word from the Greek means literally “people power”. Democracy makes no reference to Almighty God or to His Word; instead it grants power to the people rather than acknowledging where power really belongs, with Almighty God Himself. We see clearly in God’s Word that the best and highest form of human government is not democracy – how ever shocking that statement may sound! – but rather Judeo-Christian THEOcracy. We find that within Scripture democracy is surprisingly rare, with authority residing instead with God, and expressed from Him through His own appointed leaders, such as Moses, Joshua and the judges in the Old Testament; and the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostles, elders and other recognised holders of spiritual gifts, in the New.

But when for example Samuel’s sons, Joel and Abiah, were “bad eggs”, this prompted the people to ask Samuel – “now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (I Samuel 8.1-5, KJV). Samuel was displeased, but the Lord told him – “Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (from 8.7). Samuel duly warned the people over what would happen, but to no avail (8.9-22). This removal of the rulership of the people away from Almighty God and on to a human king was a small, key step on the long road to the democracy of today, which, as we have seen this time, is a mix of useful strengths and disturbing weaknesses.

Positively, the British Coronation has for centuries seen the crowning and anointing of the new monarch based on Old Testament practice, within a solemn Christian service of Holy Communion, thus upholding in our constitution the true sequence of power, from God, through the monarch, to the people. Next time God willing we can consider this sequence further, before identifying some practical, scriptural precedents as to Christian living within these un-Christian times.

But meanwhile, praise God, we are cheered by the future prospect of God’s true theocracy here once again, first on this earth in the rulership of Christ in the millennial kingdom (Revelation 20.4end,6end); and later, in “the new heaven and the new earth”, in “the holy city, new Jerusalem” (Revelation 21.1-2,10, 22-27).

Almighty God, not democracy, shall have the final word!

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