

543 Fret not

It seems necessary to start this Weekly Reflection by delving into the hurly-burly currently surrounding us, as we ask “What on earth is going on, and why, and so what?” for the nations, churches and individuals.

We see turmoil globally, nationally and locally on many fronts – political, economic, social and spiritual. We are told that humanity faces dire threats from artificial intelligence, digital currencies, mass surveillance, the weaponisation of space, climate change, global warming, globalisation, genetic research, future pandemics and “one-world government”.

The formerly Christian West is in comparative decline, deeply divided and beset with knotty problems mostly of its own making, such as vast debts, chaotic social breakdown and uncontrolled immigration. Meanwhile expansionist China is on the rise, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine remains highly dangerous, and Islam’s longstanding intention to take over the West continues in plain sight, by means of large-scale immigration, higher birth-rates, and the exploitation of the many opportunities on offer in open democratic societies steadily to further the advance of Sharia law.

In passing and by way of topical example, two recent Islamist atrocities, in Annecy and Nottingham, have evoked the usual reactions: scarcely a mention of Islam; frequent mention of the “mentally disturbed” possibility; incomprehension among the targetted communities over such vile behaviour, (the answer being found in Qur’anic teachings, to which, thankfully for the rest of us, most Muslims pay lip-service but nothing more); and finally, the prompt, (often officially-promoted) vigils to express social unity. Sadly such unity is ever-delicate due to Islamic doctrine being fundamentally at odds with western, originally Christian-shaped, democratic societies. Political concealing of this friction is understandable but merely delays the time when it will have to be honestly addressed.

So we see that on the one hand Man’s cleverness is reaching into wholly new, highly dangerous, highly controversial areas of achievement (no doubt producing, so we are told, undreamt-of benefits for all, as well as, which we are rarely told, undreamt-of risks of mass extinction); yet on the other hand, Man’s headlong dismissal of Almighty God as our Creator, Lord and Judge is by now very deeply embedded. Truly, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools”, and - “Be not

deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Romans 1.22 / Galatians 6.7, KJV).

Thankfully, when we observe all that is going on from the perspective of God’s character, Word and promises, things become much more understandable. By God’s allowance, fallen, sinful Man is indeed doing his sowing, and by God’s allowance Man is now indeed reaping what he has sown. Step by step, under God’s steady guidance and in accordance with His clear promises, the journey gathers momentum towards its fulfilment with “the man of sin, the son of perdition ... that Wicked ... ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists ... He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son ... And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist ... For many deceivers are come into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (from II Thessalonians 2.3b, 8; I John 2.18,22; 4.3 / II John 7).

We gather from such Scriptures that “antichrist” is a longstanding God-defying movement of people and attitudes over time, finally becoming focussed in one individual, whose aim is not just to be *against* Christ, but to be *in place of* Christ. By God’s allowance this figure will burst forth in the 7-year tribulation period yet to come, making a covenant with Israel (Daniel 9.27a) perhaps involving security promises and/or the rebuilding of the temple on the Temple Mount – (but then comes verse 27b). Meanwhile in both Matthew 24 and Revelation Chapters 4-19 there is no mention of the believing Church, strongly suggesting that “the rapture” (I Thessalonians 4.13-18 - the Lord Jesus’ return for those sleeping and those living in Him), is to occur before the tribulation (egs., Romans 5.9 / I Thessalonians 1.10; 5.9).

So things are certainly difficult, and are likely to become more so under the strong hand of the Lord as His promised judgments unfold. Politicians offer hope – a flimsy hope - of prosperous times to come amid the present realities. By contrast Almighty God offers His rock-solid, Christ-wrought hope of blessed times to come in the new realities of Christ’s Kingdom being established here on earth (egs., Matthew 24.29-31 / Revelation 20.4-6), and in all to follow thereafter (eg., Revelation 20.7-22.21).

Our Christ-abiding responses are familiar and straightforward, as in, “fret not because of evildoers, trust in the LORD, commit our way to the LORD and do good, rest in the LORD and wait patiently for him,

avoiding anger, wrath and evil” (from Psalm 37.1-8). We hold before us, and before others when possible, Jesus’ quiet words of promise, assurance and warning, “No man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14.6).

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