

Are Some People Worth More Than others? Do We, Should We, All Have Influence Concerning the Way Things Are Ordered?

Christianity is the Source of *Real* Democracy

Such as I – and that might also include people who read this blog – can perhaps easily be tempted into what might be called a certain kind of *elitism*. This “us” consists of people who have education, intelligence, and perhaps some kind of professional status (in a word, *middle class*). It is perhaps easy for us to be tempted into thinking that we are somehow “above” people who have less, and perhaps little, of these things, and that consequently our opinions and ideas count, naturally, for more than those of the less-endowed – or at least (this is the worst of all) *should* do, if things were better arranged. In this thinking – should we succumb to the temptation, which not all of us will – we might get to suppose that society ought to be ordered on the basis of what *we* think, not what those others might choose.

This, I believe, is the bad thinking that lies at the heart of the anti-democratic spirit of elitism that very much comes to the fore in such things as the reactions against the recent EU referendum result, in Britain. It is bad because – I am convinced – education, intelligence, wealth and status have nothing whatever to do with virtue or moral goodness; indeed, such things have little, I would add, to do with common sense or the instinct to do the (morally) right thing. Of course, many political, media, and Establishment people and organisations pay much lip-service to the virtues of democracy and universal suffrage (just *why* did one-person, one-vote, take so long coming? How *brave* those suffragettes were!); but such events as the one that I have cited reveal that, actually, few of them ever really believed in such sentiments, rather, they believed that everything should be decided by people ... well, people like themselves.

A marvellous illustration of this is found in Kazuo Ishiguro’s 1989 novel *The Remains of the Day* (though it takes a bit of explaining if you don’t know the book/film). It is around 1935. Mr. Stevens is butler to Lord Darlington at a great house, Darlington Hall. Lord H. is well connected with major political/economist figures from the key nations, those nations which created the conditions for a second world war, shortly after the first.

These he invites to a conference at Darlington Hall, in the belief that if he gets important, well-informed men together, in a non-confrontational atmosphere, they may come to empathise with one another, and a later war can be averted. One of the key men at the conference insists on quizzing the hapless Stevens, in front of his employer, about the crucial issues of the day, requesting Stevens’s insights and advice. The butler has none, and can contribute nothing; “And yet [says his interlocutor] we persist with the notion that this nation’s decisions be left in the hands of our good man here and to the few million others like him. Is it any wonder, saddled as we are with our present parliamentary system, that we are unable to find any solution to our many difficulties?” (1990 paperback, p. 204-6). The great-men-and-true in question, it then transpires, are seemingly arranging – whatever their overall intentions - some kind of rapprochement with the Nazis, intended, no doubt, to appease them (in a way which subsequently did occur, and thus made their evils possible).

Christianity – and only Christianity, I believe – requires *real* equality, not the bogus sort the politicians make appeal to. It makes clear to us that all are one, and none are in any way superior or inferior to any others, because we are all made by God, in God's image, and after short sojourn on this passing-away earth, all may share in the same beatific eternity. And this is not just a matter of theology. Join the discussion group at any church, and you quickly find yourselves with people of all kinds; what you will soon learn is that basic goodness has nothing to do with levels of education, intelligence and social status. And if you have the slightest insight into the nature of the world and of people, you will know that *goodness* is what the world needs, particularly of those who take all the decisions, and mould the society in which we have to live – until, in God's good time, the present realm is replaced by that to come.

April 2017