

Havering Interfaith Forum – What does our Faith say about Brexit

21st Feb 2018 – Christian Perspectives

What I hope to demonstrate throughout this talk is that there were, are and will be a breadth of varying standpoints across Christian Communities regarding Brexit.

A Christian case for Brexit

Christians are generally not advocating that we cease working with our neighbours, or that we want the UK to become “detached and self-regarding”, as Lord Deben persists in caricaturing the leave position.

After centuries of warfare, the continent finally came to recognise that this religio-cultural homogeneity offered a foundation for peace and prosperity, and so expressions of democracy began to develop which drew together the fractious and heterogeneous strands of national allegiance to forge a new progressive identity for the modern era.

But that identity has been hijacked by an aggressive, coercive, supra-national secularism of categorical imperatives which gnaw at the threads of Europe’s carefully-woven patchwork of civilisations.

The European Union is no longer a benign fraternal association based on cooperation and collaboration: some believe it is an anti-democratic, bureaucratic, political union which is incrementally imposing an entire corpus of diktats and directives that are antithetical to centuries of the British democratic tradition and common law.

And they also believe - it may have begun with the noblest of motives – that is, peace and reconciliation – but you only have to look at what uniform “economic governance” has done to the people of Greece to understand that the EU is fast becoming a threat to peace and social stability.

When people feel detached from their governments, and those in power ride roughshod over the rights and freedoms of the people, history teaches us that those people will rise up.

God made the nations with diverse qualities, and these variations of national characteristics and cultures display a wonder of His creation.

If the story of the Tower of Babel teaches us anything, it is that segregation occurs along these lines, and that attempts to re-build a unified tower are doomed to failure.

There was never meant to be a bland uniformity

Free states extend the hand of peace and friendship to their neighbours in an appreciation of other cultures and nations. The love of one's own country permits an understanding of the love - others have for theirs.

But indulge me for a minute while I strip away some of the excess fat that has attached itself to the referendum and let's take away clumsy terminology like 'Brexit' and 'Bremain'.

What we're left with is an incredibly important moment in our nation's history. It was a decision about which direction we want the UK to head in for the foreseeable future. The outcome will affect how we address international aid, human rights and the environment. It will also affect sovereignty and where power is focused.

To a greater or lesser extent Brexit impacts the 500 million people that populate the EU nations, as well as many generations to come.

And as Christians, whether we are a Brexiter or a Breainer this is also a unique opportunity. The EU referendum ultimately offers us a chance to demonstrate what it means to 'love our neighbour'.

While in Jesus' day there were Jews and Samaritans, today – in the run up to the referendum – we have left and right, Europhiles and Eurosceptics, with disagreement bubbling over at dinner tables, in pubs, and on that most heated of battlefields - Twitter.

As Archbishop Justin Welby warned, the EU referendum had the potential to leave the UK 'dispirited and divided'.

When we voted we were following Paul's instruction in Philippians 2:3 to think outside ourselves and to consider others.

Neighbourly love can shape how we disagree, avoiding personal attacks as well as a 'them-versus-us' mentality, which does more to sow division and discord.

When we voted Lord Ashcroft's report showed that the younger you were the more likely you were to vote remain in and the more traditional cultures & faiths voted to exit.

The influential Ellel ministries blog argued that "for deeply spiritual reasons" Christians should vote Brexit.

On the morning after the vote under the title of "God has spoken", Peter Horrobin wrote the result was a "massive answer to prayer" and said: "God has acted to set the UK free from the external spiritual control of the European Union."

"He's going to set the captives free and it's going to start in Britain. The Lord says, 'keep your eyes on Britain'. He said.

Some Christians believe – that a Bible Prophecy Foretold a Brexit!

God says He “brings to nothing what the nations plan; but the Eternal’s purpose stands for ever, and what he plans will last from age to age” (Psalm 33:10-11;).

Bible prophecy explains what God’s plans are and the purpose. He is working out. Some 2,500 years ago, biblical writers preserved prophecies describing what would happen in the 21st century. In these prophecies, the Bible names every important city and nation on Earth and forecasts what will happen to them.

Genesis 48 prophesies that Ephraim would become a great company of nations and that Manasseh would become a great nation (verses 18-20). Genesis also specifies that these descendants of Abraham would control the world’s most strategic mountain passes, ports, canals, capes and other choke points (Genesis 22:17-18).

Only two nations in history can fit God’s promises to these two tribes: the British Empire and the United States. These two peoples share a common ancestry. In the 19th and 20th centuries, both came into possession of the majority of the world’s wealth and all of its most important trade routes and sea gates. No other two nations have received these promises so abundantly.

But even if you prove the details of Britain’s biblical identity, how does that inform you about the what lies next in Britain’s relationship with Europe?

And who does the Bible prophesy will take them into captivity?

The very people from whom the British are trying to free themselves politically.

Those prophecies are tied directly to what is going on between the United Kingdom and the EU!

There are pages of more justification that show that in the end world government – block by block will be torn down as it is not working in or for God’s will.

Conclusion

Now this last perspective is very different from the previous perspectives and indeed God clearly wants us to care about our neighbours and befriend them – but being ruled by them is as different as was being ruled by the Romans to the Jews in Israel.

Only God rules a Christian Heart, and whilst we are told to follow the Government laws unless they break Gods – then we work to ensure that our only ruler is God and that our government legislates according to His will with love and compassion.