

2<sup>nd</sup> May 2022

## Parties

**“Then none was for a party; then all were for the state;  
Then the great man helped the poor, and the poor man loved the great:  
Then lands were fairly portioned; the spoils were fairly sold:  
The Romans were like brothers in the brave days of old.”**

*Thomas Babington Macaulay, The Lays of Ancient Rome*

I don't know enough about the morals, structure or political processes of "Ancient Rome" to evaluate the truth of Macaulay's affirmation above. He may be looking at the past through rose-coloured spectacles or seeking to insert into Britain's 19<sup>th</sup> century consciousness what he considered an ideal societal state from ancient times. But as we move inexorably towards the local elections of 5<sup>th</sup> May, might Macaulay have offered some principles on which our voting decisions can be based?

"When none was for the party ..." We might consider our political processes to be too firmly based on a "party" structure. One party presents a manifesto; another offers a different set of ideas; we have to choose. I understand that, because there will always be a variety of ways to envision a future society. But I worry when "party" predominates over collaboration and cooperation, and when the sound principles which Macaulay espouses are eroded by the domination of "the party line".

Whatever decision you make in your voting this coming Thursday, whatever material is presented to you or opportunities you have to question your candidates, you might base your consideration on Macaulay's ideals. Will the poor in our society benefit from this promise? Will society's benefits be shared fairly through these pledges? Might we move towards collaboration and away from tribalism in all aspects of our lives? And even more than Macaulay's critique, Jesus said: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. And love your neighbour as yourself." Is there any better principle on which to base a fair, just, inclusive, tolerant and loving society than that?

Rose-coloured spectacles or sound principles? An ideal societal-state or a pipedream? You decide – but make sure you base your decisions, and the out-working of those decisions, on the right things.

### **A prayer for today**

*Loving God, I vote for your way. That's decision enough for today. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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