

Publishing Editor's column

THIS ISSUE of the *Testimony* coincides with the election campaign in the UK. This campaign will expose the electorate to the promises and visions of the respective party leaders and their organisations. Claims and counter-claims will be made. Attempts will be made to portray opponents in a bad light. It may be that some crucial truths will be studiously avoided or deemed politically incorrect by the various candidates. An electorate concerned about their material prosperity, and often holding a cynical view of politics and politicians, will cast their votes (or not) to decide the outcome. But whatever happens, it will forward the purpose of God to set the world up for the return of Jesus as King.

It is instructive to consider how the democratic process cannot produce a just society. There is no consensus about what is right or what is for the benefit of all, or even for the majority. Politicians are subject to pressures from a variety of groups with their own agendas of self-interest. Individuals have their ambitions, interests and concerns that inevitably conflict with those of others. Politicians themselves have their own ambitions to fulfil. Consequently, objective discussion of the truth of the situations facing the country, and sound policies to address these issues, are often avoided. Indeed, it has become a feature of modern politics that professionals are employed to ensure that information is presented in a biased way to favour a particular viewpoint—whence the role of the 'spin-doctors'. Additionally, no leader can adopt demanding policies that do not mature in the short term. The weakness of the democratic system lies in the self-interest of each citizen; that is, in human nature.

It is becoming obvious that, in an increasingly secular society driven by humanistic philosophy, the believer would have great difficulty in finding either a candidate or a party to support. Of course, our acceptance of God's choice of ruler precludes us from participating in making that choice. It is well for us to remember that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men" (Dan. 4:17, ASV).

Two features of this election are apparent. First, potential leaders claim that they have the right character for the job. Secondly, there is considerable emphasis on the image of each candidate. The emphasis on these two features is in a sense a

contradiction. Character has to do with the internalised principles that guide a person's thinking and action; they are not immediately visible. Image has most often to do with appearance: being seen in the right situations and poses. This is essentially superficial and capable of manipulation.

God is concerned with character, not image. That should be our concern too in our own discipleship. Samuel was reminded that the man he saw as the most obvious choice for kingship in his day was not suited. Despite his appearance his character was inadequate: "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). God, through David, identified the essential quality of a king: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (2 Sam. 23:3). Other passages, such as Isaiah 11:1-5 and Psalm 72, detail the characteristics of the ruler that God has chosen. They are not the features of those who aspire to leadership in the world of today; but they will be seen in Jesus, the lowest of men, when he is set up as the King.

In his ministry he was "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief". He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". He was also the man who was not deflected from what is right, either by those who had vested interests (as the Jewish rulers), or by those who would have followed for free meals (see Jno. 6), or by attempts to get special favours (as the sons of Zebedee). This is the man that has conquered what no other man has—human pride—and is thus fitted to take the prime position in God's rulership of the earth, and to bring about a world that glorifies its Maker and brings true joy and blessing to its inhabitants.

The result of this election may bring surprises and challenges to believers as God works His will on earth. But let us be certain that there is no better candidate than our Lord Jesus for rulership, not just of these islands, but of the world. Our calling now is to be conformed to his image and thus fitted for exaltation when he comes.

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