

Publishing Editor's column

THIS ISSUE of the *Testimony* starts a new publication year. It does so in the context of a preceding year of turmoil in the financial, political and physical worlds.

The financial crisis is still affecting the world, and the UK in particular. Whatever politicians promise and devise to cope with the situation, it is obvious that there will need to be a period of austerity, which will put pressures on a society that is used to having abundance. Sadly, it will also further pressure those areas in the world where there is already poverty and dire need.

The political arena continues in turmoil. War in Afghanistan and Iraq continues unabated. Tension continues to rise in the Middle East as Iran pushes on with the development of nuclear capability. Israel is under pressure from most of the world, which favours concessions to Palestinian claims. The ratification of the Lisbon Treaty signals the political unification of Europe and the inevitable inroad into the sovereignty of the member states. The scandal of improper expenses claims by some UK MPs has served to generate cynicism among the electorate.

The physical world has also mirrored the turmoil, with considerable loss of life and property from storm, flood, earthquake and more extreme weather conditions.

In the UK there is a developing culture of secularism, often supported by legislation, which has the effect of sidelining religious belief, particularly Christian belief. This will no doubt impact on those who wish to uphold the ways of God and His standards. We are rapidly heading for a world very similar to that in the days of Noah.

The believer has been expecting such developments, but perhaps not appreciating the challenge

that this environment makes to faithful discipleship. It will no doubt get worse until the iniquity of our generation is full and Jesus returns. What should our response be? Rightly we will pray, "How long, O Lord?" But we have been warned that "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night". The issue for us is not so much predicting the day of the Lord as being ready whenever he comes. Watching the signs of the times and seeking to understand the prophetic message is part of that, but seeking first God's Kingdom and His righteousness as part of our thought pattern and behaviour is even more important.

Readiness comes from a familiarity with, and love for, God's ways. These are counter-culture; they are not the ways approved by our contemporaries, but they are the ways that will predominate in the Kingdom that we look for. We are looking for the age in which God will be honoured, when men and women choose to do His will. We are seeking "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God". As faithful disciples we are looking for "a better country, that is, an heavenly", knowing that for such "God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city". Now is not the time to turn back, but to "look up, and lift up [our] heads; for [our] redemption draweth nigh".

The Testimony Committee takes this opportunity to thank readers for their support over the past year, and we hope that you will continue to subscribe to the magazine. We are also grateful to those who have sponsored additional copies for those who cannot afford the magazine but who benefit by receiving it. Until our Lord comes we will try "to provoke unto love and to good works" by the articles that we publish.

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