

Publishing Editor's column

DURING the weeks prior to writing these words the news media in Britain have been dominated by the Hutton Enquiry, the high-powered investigation into the suicide of the Ministry of Defence weapons expert, Dr David Kelly. Many people, from the prime minister downwards, have given their account of their role in the affair. Though it is perhaps premature to comment before the enquiry report is published, the investigation has given much food for thought concerning the weaknesses of human nature and the inadequacies of government by fallible human beings.

Two things have become evident from the reports of what those appearing before the enquiry have said. Firstly, there is the extent to which government statements, announcements in parliament and that kind of thing are subject to behind-the-scenes discussions and manipulation to present matters in the best possible light for the government. This is the 'spin' that we hear so much about, and it can and does lead to disregard of inconvenient facts and distortion of the truth. Secondly, there is the readiness of people to try to justify themselves, and their reluctance to admit they are at fault. These things are, of course, part of human nature, tendencies that we individually strive against, and it should be no surprise to see them emerging into prominence when the inner workings of government are exposed.

There is no doubt that believers in the Western world benefit much from living in countries governed by democratic means, especially in the freedom that we now take for granted. It is obvious, however, that governments beholden to the views of the masses are liable to be weak and driven by the need to be sufficiently popular to retain power. It was shocking to hear how much time the prime minister and some of his most senior advisors and ministers have spent on the David Kelly affair, rather than on more important matters of government. It illustrates that the most effective form of government is that of dictatorship by an individual or group of individuals, who have the interests of the people they govern truly at heart and know what to do for the best, but do not need all the time to concern themselves about how people see them.

The trouble is, however, that people who fit this criteria are rare, if not nonexistent. Truly, as the prophet Jeremiah declared, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23). What the world needs is a ruler who firstly truly understands God's ways rather than being knowledgeable in man's wisdom, and secondly has overcome all the greed and selfishness which is so much a part of man's nature, and can truly look to the interests of others. As we know, such a one exists in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We look for the time when he will return and establish God's Kingdom, when "he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth" (Isa. 11:3,4).

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