

Publishing Editor's column

THIS IS THE TIME in the UK when political parties hold conferences. This year their significance is enhanced because there will, in normal circumstances, be no more conferences before the next General Election, which is due at the latest in June 2010. For the party in government there is the pressure from the financial crisis, an unpopular war in Afghanistan, negative publicity over M.P.s' expenses, adverse media comment and the desire to remain in office. For those in opposition there is the need to formulate popular policies, give the impression that they are competent to govern, and show empathy to the concerns of the electorate. Consequently, all parties indulge in accusations against each other, make attractive promises to the electorate, and claim to be better at government. Most use public-relations experts to help present their message in the most favourable way—a practice often referred to pejoratively as 'spin', where, at worst, a totally false impression of actions and proposals is given. The approach of all political parties is based on humanistic thinking, the faith that supposes that mankind can solve all problems and produce an increasingly prosperous society. The inadequacy of such faith ought to have been exposed by the international credit crisis, amongst such other intractable problems as the Middle East troubles, global warming and rising world population.

The followers of Jesus will be interested in what happens politically, but have placed their faith in the most High God, Who "rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will and sets over it the lowliest of men" (Dan 4:17, ESV). The lowliest of men whom He sets over the kingdom of men is Jesus; he will transform it into the Kingdom of God. At his first coming he took the role of a servant, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). Of him, after his resurrection, it is said, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). This is the man under whose feet God has put all things, as promised in Psalm 8. This is the man for whom we have cast our vote, for there is no other who can bring salvation.

The believers' view is that of Abraham, who looked for a new society, a city with foundations,

built by God. We have confidence in the God Who cannot lie, Who tells us how things truly are regarding our nature and destiny and His purpose to fill the earth with His glory. Therefore, whether we benefit by, or are disadvantaged by, the government of the day, we have opted to belong to another polity, the Kingdom of God: "our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20, ESV). The setting up of the Kingdom upon earth awaits the return of Jesus; in the meantime we are, as the Apostle Peter states, "sojourners and exiles" (1 Pet. 2:11, ESV). This places on us the responsibility to obey the laws of the land even though they may be onerous. It also requires us to show a life appropriate to our citizenship, that is, patterned on our Lord Jesus. Therefore our 'yea' will be 'yea' and our 'nay', 'nay'. Our way of life will be "honest among the Gentiles" (v. 12).

How do we live in this age without being absorbed by the ungodly culture around us? Only by seeing the Divine perspective, by maintaining a clear vision of the promises of God. Paul was aware of this challenge when he wrote, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). This is achieved by reading and meditating on the Word of God. It is also helped by meeting regularly with brethren and sisters both formally and informally and using these opportunities to speak about the hope of the gospel and to support and encourage our discipleship. In this way we will be encouraged to "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life . . ." (Phil. 2:14-16).

Like its readers, the Testimony is affected by the financial situation. Loss of interest income means that the magazine is now operating at a loss. However, the Promoting Committee has agreed to keep the rates for 2010/11 unchanged, and to introduce a student rate for 25 years old and under. This decision will avoid increasing the financial pressure on subscribers. Donations that any feel able to make to support the magazine's effort "to provoke unto love and to good works" will be gratefully received.

Eric Marshall