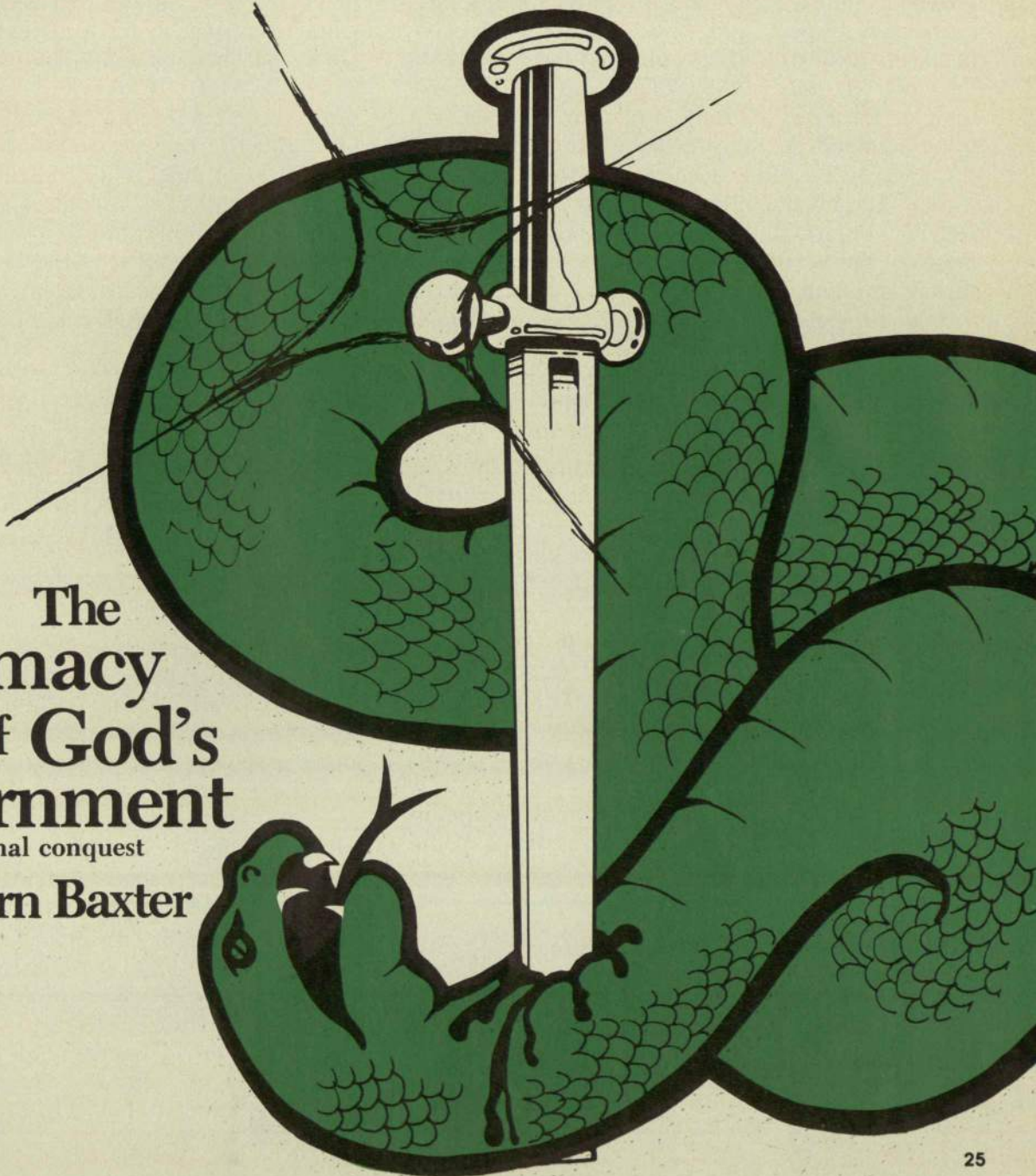


WHY IS THE WORLD in such turmoil and so full of unrest? Why do the masses support plans and programs which are so unproductive of permanent good? Why do leaders offer so little positive direction? These vexing "whys" are often voiced in our time. Are there answers? We believe there are. In fact, the same questions were asked and answered hundreds of years ago by the inspired psalmist.

"Why are the nations in an uproar,
And the people devising a vain thing ('an empty scheme'—Berkeley)?
The kings of the earth take their stand ('rising in revolt'—Jer.),

And the rulers take counsel together ('conspire together'—NEB),
Against the LORD and His anointed ('the king of his selection'—Bas.),
Let us tear their fetters apart ('break away from their bondage'—Knox),
And cast away their cords from us ('fling off their control'—Moffat)!" (Ps. 2:1-3, NAS).

The answer to the "whys" is clear. "Nations. . . people. . . rulers" would rather follow their own counsel than submit to the benign government of Jehovah and His King, Jesus Christ. Humanist consensus is preferred to divine revela-



**The
Ultimacy
of God's
Government**
The final conquest
by Ern Baxter

tion. The blessed bondage of God's beautiful plan is rejected in favor of the cruel and frustrating tyranny of the empty scheme. The perennial cry of earth's rebellious citizens rings out in our day, "We do not want this man to reign over us" (Lk. 19:14).

It is fallacious to consider the struggle between scheming humanists and God the Supreme as a contest between equals, the outcome of which is in question. Many Christians who should know better are paralyzed by the fear of humanist conquest and divine defeat, and so succumb to passive despair. The psalmist invites us to look up and see the one "that sitteth in the heavens." The heavenly throne and its divine occupant is a favorite theme of Bible writers as they affirm God's sovereignty and seek to encourage respect and faith among men. God declares, "heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool" (Is. 66:1, NAS). "The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven. His eye is upon mankind, he takes their measure at a glance" (Ps. 11:4, NEB). "In heaven has the Eternal fixed his throne, and his dominion covers all the world" (Ps. 103:19, Moffat). In Revelation, the book of consummation, the cosmic control center is seen as "a throne standing in heaven, and one sitting on the throne" (Rev. 4:2, NAS). The supremacy and finality of that throne is seen in vision by John and described for us. "And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever'" (Rev. 5:13, NAS).

The enthroned Jehovah was the source of the psalmist's hope. "To Thee I lift up my eyes, O Thou who art enthroned in the heavens!" (Ps. 123:1, NAS). And we in New Covenant times "see Jesus. . . crowned with glory and honor" (Heb. 2:9). As far as the heavens are above the earth, so far is "He that sitteth in the heavens" above "the kings of the earth." The ultimacy of God's victory and government is assured!

How does the Throne-Sitter respond to human rebellion? We return to the second Psalm for some inspired insight into God's ways and intentions.

He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.
Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury:
"But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain" (Ps. 2:4-6,
NAS).

God surveys man's petty plottings with sovereign contempt. He laughs at the pompous petulance and childish conduct of creatures challenging their Creator. One gets the picture of a little boy, in an angry outburst of rebellion, pummeling his father's knees, as the father looks down at him laughing. The frustrating and ineffectual behaviour of the child provides a ludicrous sight. There is no way the childish blows are going to harm the father. So, man's equally ineffective behavior toward God elicits the laughter of pure ridicule. This is not the only place in the Bible where God's laughter is referred to. We quote two other passages which will help us in understanding the nature of such laughter. "The godless man makes plots against the good, gnashing his teeth at them; but the Eternal laughs at him, knowing his doom is near" (Ps. 37:12-13, Mof.). Evildoers "snarl like dogs, they prowl at even around the town; there they are, blustering, arrogant, insult on their lips—for, 'Who,' they think, 'will hear us?' Thou, O Eternal, thou wilt laugh at them, wilt mock at all the insolent pagans" (Ps. 59:6-8, Mof.).

But laughter is not the end of the matter. "Then He will speak to them in His anger." Laughter gives way to anger and judgment. The unknown bounda-

"It could be fatal to mistake God's longsuffering for indifference."

ry between laughter and anger is marked by that ominous adverb of time—"then." When is "then"? The "thens" of God are kept in the secret archives of God's purposes. "Get right with God the day before you die," was the counsel of a teacher to his disciples. "But how do we know on which day we will die?" they responded. "You can't know, so get ready today," was the wise reply. It could be fatal to mistake God's longsuffering for indifference. History is marked with the "thens" of God, all of them pointing to the final "then" when time will be no more. There is a limit to divine patience. After laughter comes judgment.

"As for Me," God says, "I have installed My King!" In verse 2 we saw where the "kings of the earth" had adopted their stance. The position adop-

ted by earthly rulers arises from human counsel, while the position secured to Jesus Christ, God's King, is founded on God's omnipotence—"I have installed!"

It is significant that God specifies exactly where He has installed His King. It is "upon Zion, My holy mount." Zion is a special place with distinctive associations. It was that part of Jerusalem which was considered impregnable and was held by the Jebusites. After the death of Saul all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron where "King David made a covenant with them" (2 Sam. 5:1,3). Following this, David and his men went to Jerusalem where "David captured the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David" (2 Sam. 5:7). The ark of the covenant was brought to Zion, where it remained until the building of the temple (2 Sam. 6:12; 2 Chron. 5:2, 7). God's presence, God's King, God's covenant people were all concentrated on Mount Zion. Zion was more than a geographical locality. It was a combination of divinely designed ingredients which made it not only the city of David but the "city of God" (Ps. 87:3). It also pointed to a larger, new-covenant city, whose inhabitants would be "from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues" (Rev. 7:9; Ps. 87). It stands for the redeemed covenant community, celebrating and declaring the divine presence and purpose in and through a supernaturally united brotherhood. It is here "the Lord bestows his blessing, life forevermore" (Ps. 133:3, NEB). Hebrews tells us that we "have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22, NAS). God's King reigns *in* Zion, and sends forth His power *out* of Zion (Ps. 110:2).

So far we have listened to Jehovah's declaration concerning the installation of His King. We are now to hear the King speak, as He states the nature and scope of His Kingship.

"I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord:
He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son,
Today I have begotten Thee.
Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as
Thy inheritance,
And the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.
Thou shalt break ('rule'—margin) them with a
rod of iron,
Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware'"
(Ps. 2:7-9, NAS).

The right of this King to reign is not based on some tenuous political arrangement among humans,

but upon a "solemn and authoritative edict." The indestructible purpose and word of the infinitely powerful God is the foundation of His throne. The God who cannot fail had said to David, "When your days are complete and you lie down with your father, I *will* raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I *will establish his kingdom*" (2 Sam. 7:12, NAS). Peter, on the day of Pentecost, tells us that the enthronement of David's distinguished descendant was fulfilled in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:29-36).

Christ's Kingship is based, not only on decree, but on relationship. He who always was Son in His deity, became Son in His humanity, and was "declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4, NAS). He became "the first-born from the dead" (Col. 1:18, NAS). This was in accord with the decree, "I also shall make him My first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth" (Ps. 89:27, NAS). The glorious God-man, David's seed and God's Son, reigns by divine decree!

The decree determines that the Sovereign Son shall have universal dominion. Since "the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Ps. 24:1, NAS), and inheritance is the natural right of sonship, then all that belongs to Jehovah is the inheritance of His Son-King. Christ affirmed His right of inheritance when, following His resurrection, He declared, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:18, NAS). It is significant that in the light of Jehovah's decree that His Son should possess the nations, Christ follows His declaration of "all authority" with a command to His disciples to "Go therefore and make disciples of *all the nations*" (Mt. 28:19, NAS).

Those who reject the decreed dominion of God's Son-King must face His righteous judgment. Jehovah's will and government are ultimate. Men must either submit to His saving sovereign sway, or suffer the consequences of following their own counsel. All forms of humanism must inevitably be shattered by the rod of God's governmental authority.

As always, God's affirmations of authority and declarations of inevitable judgment are put in a context of mercy and appeal. This magnificent revelation of His purposes, Psalm 2, is no exception.

"Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;
Take warning, O judges of the earth.
Worship the Lord with reverence,

And rejoice with trembling.
Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry,
and you perish in the way,
For His wrath may soon be kindled.
How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!"
(Ps. 2:10-12, NAS).

God's decreed Son-King is enthroned and secured. The ultimacy of God's government is determined. It has been established that as an integral part of that government's policy, all rebellion shall be broken and shattered. But is there not a way for the rebel to avert such destruction? Indeed there is, and the psalm closes with the gracious offer of blessing through reconciliation.

It is interesting to note that the appeal is made to kings and rulers. "The King of Kings" appeals to all human kings to show discernment and submit to the supreme and benign government of God. This is no simple revival altar-call. This is God appealing on the highest level of human governmental responsibility. We are not minimizing the appeal to all men. This is clearly supported in the last line of the psalm,

where all are blessed "who take refuge in Him." However, the impression of many has been that God appeals only to certain classes, with political governmental leaders somehow exempted. God "commands *all* men to repent." Leaders in all areas of human life today need to be presented with, and to hear, the claims of God's ultimate governmental authority, His Son, King Jesus.

As I am writing this, a nationwide news program on television has just aired the views of a leading "authority" on sexual behavior. He asserts that the moral ethic which has been observed in the past, which is obviously the Christian ethic, is "no longer viable." In its place was offered an alternative which is a sickening illustration of "flinging off control" as referred to in verse 3 of the second psalm. This sort of thing seems epidemic. However, just because it seems to have consensus support does not exempt it from the Son's anger which is "quickly kindled."

The divine appeal is still extended. Will man continue to follow his humanist counsel and reap inevitable judgment; or will he "kiss the Son" and find reconciliation and divine blessing? ♡

The Conflict of the Ages
Continued from page 9

view." We are not just "redeemed." Ultimately, the purpose of that redemption is that all things may center in Jesus Christ. Every knee shall bow. The whole of creation is going to be affected in time in the purposes of God.

3. *The covenant community has a ministry of reconciliation.* By this we simply mean that the purposes of God will be brought to pass by a community of God's people in covenant together, demonstrating the way, the truth and the life. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed!

4. *As Christians we affirm that the family is the basic institution of God.*

5. *We affirm individually and corporately that obedience is the key to blessing.*

6. *We affirm our eschatology of victory—that is, the doctrine of last things is a doctrine of ultimate victory.*

We would be naive if we simply imagine that the Church, continuing on its blind, lethargic and indifferent way, will be able to produce anything in the last day, even if it were alert enough to recognize that it was the last day.

God is raising up a people, and He wants to judge His people. Just as obedience is the key to blessing,

cursing is the result of disobedience. God is now hanging over the balustrades of heaven, waiting to hand out a blessing to the obedient and a curse to the disobedient. It happens to be a law. To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. To give lip service to what God is doing today is not enough. ". . . this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me" (Is. 29:13).

God is calling people to repentance so that, in their understanding of the nature of the conflict, they shall be ready. Not in defense, for the Kingdom of God has never been on the defensive, but they shall be ready, alert and on the attack.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44).

"The major political confrontation in the 1980's will not be between liberals and conservatives, socialists and anti-socialists, but between Christianity and humanism. It will be war to the death, and everything will be done to disguise from Christians the reality of that battle so that, at the time when it really matters, they will halt between two opinions." ♡