

to wait twenty-two years for events to make this possible.

Moreover, those who, like H. V. Morton, contrast “the smooth, spoiled Jacob to the honest, hairy Esau” (*Women of the Bible*, p. 35), show a complete disregard for the judgement of Scripture, which not only describes Jacob as an ‘upright man’ (as the AV ‘plain’ seems to mean) but also makes it clear that by his actions Jacob prevented his father from defying the prophetic insight of

the Lord (Gen. 25:23). When Isaac realised how fundamentally he had transgressed in his misjudgement of the character of his two sons he “trembled very exceedingly” (27:33).

This is surely a warning to us that human judgement is fallible and that we should refrain from blaming anyone whom God does not condemn.

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## From the Editor's postbag

### Comments on items received from readers

#### Leaving Europe

I began the previous two Editor's postbags with items about the development of a united Europe (Nov. 2000, p. 422; [Feb. 2001, p. 53](#)). This time the first item for consideration is an article in the *Daily Mail* of 9 December 2000 advocating that Britain should leave Europe. It says that Britain would benefit economically from being able to develop its agriculture and fisheries without controls imposed by Europe (we are not allowed now to produce all our own milk, nor fish some of our own waters) and without industry being hampered by EC-imposed rules and regulations. Britain would be free from European obligations, such as having to spend large sums of money on strengthening bridges to allow bigger lorries to cross them, or not being free to set our own VAT rates.

The article states that Britain has the world's fourth largest economy, a larger network of diplomatic and trade relationships than any other European nation, and the best military forces in Europe. It could well stand on its own feet, therefore. Surprise is expressed that no mainstream politicians have taken up the case for leaving,

though the significant comment is made, “What politicians on both sides say off the record is another matter”. The article concludes with a forecast: “The fierce national debate about Europe will continue. But it will shift gradually and remorselessly from the terms on which we stay, to the terms on which we leave. Hard facts will prevail over political nonsense”.

#### Russian-American tunnel

It is sometimes forgotten that Russia and the USA are only twenty-three miles apart at the Bering Straits, between Siberia (still part of Russia despite the break-up of the Soviet Union) and Alaska. A reader has sent an article from *The Times* of 2 January about a proposal to link the two countries by a tunnel under the Straits, in order to assist Russia in the exploitation and sale of its massive mineral resources. Similar proposals exist for linking Russia and Japan, via the Russian-controlled island of Sakhalin, just north of Japan.

The significance of all this is that, after the collapse of 1998, Russia's economy is growing apace, its oil and gas reserves being particularly valuable at a time when market prices have risen sharply. We look more to

Europe, especially Germany, for economic ties with Russia, and these are certainly growing, but perhaps Russia's ultimate push into the Middle East will be in part financed by selling its minerals to the resource-hungry nations of Japan and the USA.

#### Interpreting the ‘dry bones’ prophecy

In the [February Postbag](#) (p. 54) I raised the question of which of the two views held amongst us regarding the fulfilment of the ‘dry bones’ prophecy of Ezekiel 37 was the original one held; the first view being that the coming together of the bones to form living bodies is a continuing process that began with the Zionist movement of the late nineteenth century, and the second being that the ‘dry bones’ state will exist in the future when the State of Israel is destroyed, with the coming to life of the bones being something that takes place after the return of Christ. I pointed to the fact that the scant references to this prophecy in early Christadelphian writings pointed to the latter being the view held during the nineteenth century, despite the assertions of a reader to the contrary.

I pointed to the fact that the transcript of a lecture by Brother

Robert Roberts, entitled "The heavenly Kingdom, a Jewish one", published in the *Christadelphian* in 1899 (Nov. p. 453; Dec. p. 492), made no reference to this prophecy, despite Ezekiel 37 being given as the reading. I am indebted to a reader for going through issues of the *Christadelphian* during the period 1897-99 and providing the following information.

In August 1897 the first Zionist Conference was held, and, following briefer references to this in earlier issues, a full report was published in the February 1898 *Christadelphian* (p. 47), but without any reference to Ezekiel 37. Elsewhere in the same issue, the monthly review of the 'signs of the times' referred in more general terms to the moves towards restoration of the Jews, and then, passing on to other matters, said: "While Israel's 'valley of dry bones' is thus vibrating with the formative energy of God's purpose. . ." (p. 75).

In March 1899 a monthly review of Jewish matters entitled "The Jews and Zionism" was revived, after having lapsed for some years, in recognition of the significant developments that were taking place. In August 1899 this review printed an address by Theodore Herzl to the English Zionist federation, during which (without reference to Scripture) he referred at some length to the seemingly dead Jewish nation beginning to come to life. This section of the address is given (by the *Christadelphian*, not Dr Herzl) the subheading, "'Can these bones live?' (Ezek. xxxvii.)".

In August 1897 Brother Roberts left England for Australia and did not return, falling asleep in September 1899 in San Francisco. Though he re-

mained editor of the *Christadelphian*, the routine editing of the magazine must have been done by the assistant editor, Brother C. C. Walker, and this would presumably have included reviews of the 'signs of the times'. It is likely therefore that the above references to the fulfilment of the 'dry bones' prophecy are from the pen of Brother Walker.

#### Joy at the feasts

In "Gleanings from the Land" ([Jan., p. 30](#)) I said that the Feast of Tabernacles was the only one at which the Israelites were told to rejoice. In fact this is not so; rejoicing was also involved in the Feast of Weeks (Deut. 16:11), but not in the Feast of Passover.

#### Nazi soldiers in Britain

A correspondent has drawn attention to a television programme on 7 January entitled *The SS in Britain*. SS is an abbreviation for the German *Schutzstaffel*, meaning 'protection squad'. The SS were a paramilitary corps within the Nazi party responsible for guarding Hitler, acting as guards at concentration camps, staffing the Gestapo (the secret police), and forming an elite corps of troops. The programme asserted that in 1947 the Labour prime minister, Clement Attlee, invited 8,000 Ukrainian former members of an SS division of troops to take refuge in Britain, despite the fact that this division was known to have committed atrocities against civilians. At the time this information was suppressed and these Ukrainians continued to live here, with about 1,500 still surviving today.

Our correspondent draws attention to the fact that, at this time, Britain, under Foreign

Secretary Ernest Bevin, was adopting an anti-Jewish policy, preventing Jewish refugees who were fleeing the death camps of Europe from entering Israel. Bevin himself soon died, and the Labour government, which came into office in 1945 with a huge majority (comparable to that achieved by the present Labour government in 1997) and produced the welfare state that we know today, was thrown out of office after six years, during which the economy of the country suffered greatly. The promise to Abraham, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Gen. 12:3), comes to mind.

#### The world turns against the Jews

A correspondent, commenting in January about the violence in Israel that commenced at the end of September 2000, refers to a new development arising from this continuing conflict: worldwide attacks on Jewish targets. Though there have been sporadic attacks on synagogues over the years, this occurred on a much more widespread basis last autumn. This illustrates how opinion is turning against Israel; the Arabs are winning the propaganda war.

Under the new 'hard-line' prime minister, Ariel Sharon, we can expect a severer clamp-down on Arab violence against Israel, with world opinion turning even more against the perceived Palestinian underdog. Our correspondent suggests that this could even extend to ourselves if we continue to express our Scriptural conviction in public lectures and literature that the Land is promised to the Jew, not the Arab. It is important that we place stress on the fact that what we put forward is

Biblical teaching rather than our own views, that the current State of Israel, though a remarkable fulfilment of Bible prophecy, is not what God intends for His Land, and that the future Jerusalem-based Kingdom will bring benefits to all people who will accept it.

#### Saddam the survivor

The tenth anniversary of the end of the Gulf War has led to comment. An article in *The Times* passed on by a reader refers to the speed with which the allied forces overwhelmed the Iraq forces in the land campaign which ended the war, but con-

cludes: "Ten years on, much has changed. The Western leaders who lined up against Saddam have left the scene. Sanctions are crumbling. The no-fly zones have virtually no international support. In Iraq, a resurgent Saddam remains in power and is, according to the US and Britain, once more a significant threat to regional security".

The current US President is the son of the President at the time of the Gulf War. Israel is on its fifth prime minister since the one in office at that time, the succession being Yitzhak Shamir, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Binyamin Netanyahu,

Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon. Yet Saddam Hussein continues. Shortly after he invaded Kuwait, Mrs Thatcher was removed as prime minister by her party. According to a reader, she recently commented that if she had remained in power she would have ensured that Saddam Hussein was removed from power. Given her reputation as the 'Iron Lady', this may have been so, but the fact is she was not in power to do so. The One Who rules in the kingdom of men was no doubt at work, and Saddam Hussein surely remains in power for a purpose.

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## Prophecy, History and Archaeology

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# The scrolls and the Book

## 5. The Book

John Carder

**T**HE EARLIEST copies of the 'classical' works of the ancient Greek and Roman authors were almost all found in Egypt. They were found on papyrus scrolls, made from the pith of the reeds that grew so plentifully along the Nile. Though fragile, papyrus scrolls could survive in the dry conditions away from the river.

Until the twentieth century it was generally thought that papyrus could not survive outside Egypt and that there was no other writing material, apart from clay tablets, until the second century B.C. when animal hides were used in what is now Turkey at Pergamum, from which the term 'parchment' is derived.

In fact, remains of a number of texts on papyrus have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. They include several copies of the Septuagint, the oldest translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, and of other works. Although most of the existing scrolls are on parchment, papyrus

scrolls do seem to have played a major role in the invention of books as we know them today.

The earliest papyrus rolls found in Egypt were long strips with general dimensions and internal layout similar to the Dead Sea parchment scrolls. There was perhaps a stage when, instead of being rolled, the long strips were folded between columns like the bellows of an accordion.

There is definite evidence of the existence of papyrus in separate sheets. The first example was found in Egypt and published in 1899. It was a single sheet containing the first and last chapters of the Gospel of John. Clearly it was the outer sheet of a folded quire of which the inner sheets, now lost, contained the rest of the Gospel. A 'quire' in the strict sense means four sheets folded together in the middle to make eight leaves, that is sixteen pages. But in common usage these days 'quire' is applied to any number of sheets folded together, or a number of such