

the temple of the future age are clear, particularly in relation to size. The interpretation of the details of the wall described in Ezekiel 42 has been a matter of debate for centuries amongst scholars and translators, and also amongst Christadelphians since the beginning of the community.

Many things in Scripture follow a Divinely ordained pattern. Moses was commanded to

make the tabernacle according to a Divine pattern. The same pattern was copied by Solomon, and it will be copied again in the future.

Finally, as Brother Carlo states, "we both agree that there will be a temple in the Kingdom age and that there will be animal sacrifices". May that day soon come.

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## From the Editor's postbag

### Comments on items received from readers

#### Religion in the White House

In the previous ['Editor's postbag'](#), under the heading 'Christian Zionists', attention was drawn to the strong support for Israel amongst the numerous evangelical Christians in the USA ([Feb. 2003, p. 60](#)). After I had written that piece, but prior to its appearing, another reader passed me an article which appeared in the *Financial Times* of 4/5 January 2003 under the title, "Preaching to the converted". It draws attention to the extent to which religion has penetrated the White House. Here are some examples:

- A number of lunchtime Bible classes are held at the White House, attended by various members of staff
- President Bush himself says he starts the day on his knees in prayer, and reads from the Bible each day
- His chief speech-writer, Michael Gerson, is a fundamentalist Christian who often uses Biblical language in the President's speeches
- The attorney general, John Ashcroft, is a Pentecostalist who has a prayer meeting in his office every morning.

Americans are, of course, far more religious than Europeans, especially the British. About fifty per cent of Americans claim to

attend religious services regularly, whereas the figure for Europe is twenty per cent. I have no figure for Britain, but it is certainly less than that. There are some strange paradoxes here. The constitution of the USA separates church and state, yet it was the belief of the founders of the state that it was set up under God's hand, and it is the belief of many (including the present President) that it has a Divinely ordained mission for good in the world. In Britain, church and state are not separated; the head of state, the Queen, is also head of the Church of England, and bishops are members of the legislature. Yet the nation is about the most irreligious in the world, and religion plays little or no part in shaping the nation's policies.

A true Biblical faith, of course, requires separation from politics and recognition that the world can only be put right by the intervention of God through His Son Jesus Christ. If politicians are really prepared to govern on the basis of Biblical principles of morality then it is all to the good, but this does not seem to happen very often. President Bush seems to see conflict with Iraq as good versus evil, with God on his side. He may even see it as part of a fight-back of

Christianity against encroaching Islam; immediately after September 11 he spoke of a crusade against terrorism, though he soon backtracked on the idea of a crusade because of its connotations. But what are his real underlying motives? God uses such things to achieve His will: "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Prov. 21:1); and war on Iraq (which is likely to have broken out by the time these words are read) may well be significant in fulfilling prophecy concerning the time of the end.

#### An Arab perspective

A brother and sister who stopped off at Dubai in the Persian Gulf on their way to Australia passed me a copy of an English language newspaper published in the Gulf area entitled *Gulf News*, drawing my attention to a couple of items of correspondence. Dubai is one of the federation of Arab sheikhdoms known as the United Arab Emirates, a close ally of the USA. Yet this newspaper reveals a violently anti-Israel view of things, as shown by the following extract from a letter:

"Western corporate media invented the cliché 'Israel's

right to exist'. Who gave such right to a parasitic racist entity that was carved by force in 1948?

"It is no coincidence that Arabs surround Israel on all sides. The land on which Israel was concocted belonged to the Palestinian Arabs, who lived there for the past 2,000 years. The claim by Israeli Jews to the land of Palestine, based on a fictional divine promise or the premise that their ancestors lived there 2,000 years ago, is absurd. The fact that Palestinians lived in Palestine for the past 2,000 years is more relevant and much more meaningful".

This complete distortion of the truth is not just the view of one deluded reader. A news report refers to the showing of a film about the supposed massacre that happened at Jenin in April 2002, when Israeli forces entered a Palestinian refugee camp, a hotbed of Arab militancy, during Israel's attempts to subdue the Palestinian intifada. According to the report the film "highlights the war crimes committed by Israeli forces" and "tells a story about the Israeli atrocities against the Palestinians, including the massacre of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, which the Israelis committed last April". It also refers to "the catastrophe of the occupation of Palestine in 1948 and the eviction of millions of the Palestinian people from their homeland".

All this is a gross distortion of the truth. Although allegations of an Israeli massacre quickly surfaced in April 2002, independent investigators from the United Nations investigated the matter and concluded that no such massacre took place. It is

true that over fifty Palestinians died, but this was in bitter house-to-house fighting which cost the lives of over twenty Israeli soldiers as well. As for the idea that millions of Arabs were evicted from their homes when Israel became independent, what actually happened was that the Arab leaders advised Arabs to go to neighbouring countries temporarily while the Jews were being defeated and then come back and take over all the Jewish property. There were hundreds of thousands rather than millions who did this, only to find that the Jews were not defeated; and many other Arabs chose to remain and were left in peaceful possession of their homes.

These two items well illustrate how the Arab world has been deluded by propaganda against Israel which their leaders know full well is not true. Both history and current events have been distorted to create a virulent anti-Israel feeling amongst the masses. Yet the United Arab Emirates are expected to form part of the Sheba and Dedan group of Arab nations which join in the protest against the Russian-led invasion of the land, but presumably because they think their economic interests are under threat, rather than out of a desire to support Israel.

And talking of Ezekiel 38:13, with its reference to the young lions of the English-speaking nations, it was interesting to read another letter in the same newspaper, headed "Let lions lie", and referring to the effect of the terrorist acts of September 11 as "waking this sleeping lion", that is, the USA.

#### **European union rolls on**

One of the most exciting aspects of world affairs today for the student of Bible prophecy is the

onward march of European union, and when it comes to European union there is more going on behind the scenes than is apparent on the surface. A glimpse of what is really going on is revealed by William Rees-Mogg in *The Times* of 3 February in an article passed on by a reader. He drew attention to a lunch meeting which Prime Minister Tony Blair had with Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, a former French president and now chairman of the Convention on the European Constitution.

The Downing Street press machine usually likes to make much of Mr Blair's meetings with foreign dignitaries, but, according to the article, this meeting was given no publicity, although it was no secret. The reason for this is simple: the government is keeping under wraps moves towards a United States of Europe, for this is what the Convention is all about. There is to be a European Constitution which all member states will have to sign up to, which will entail a much bigger loss of individual national freedom than anything so far agreed. If the government brought out in the open what is really going on then there would be an uproar.

The following has already been planned for Europe once it has expanded to twenty-five states: majority voting in foreign policy, whereas at present nations have the right of veto; a European president elected by members of the European Parliament instead of direct by voters; the creation of a European Union diplomatic service, and the adoption of a European Charter of Human Rights. These have not been properly debated in Parliament. The article indicates that the government will continue to fudge the issue,

attempting to get changes agreed without the implications being realised.

The article uses the following phraseology to describe what is going on:

"We already knew that Tony Blair had decided to agree a further massive transfer from British self-government to European bureaucracy";

"The Government still denies that we are being taken into a single European state, destroying our ability to change our government";

"The dangers of transferring sovereignty to a single European state without genuine consent are all too obvious";

William Rees-Mogg suggests that the government is running into trouble over this. Such major changes ought to be agreed by the people in a referendum, but it knows that the people of Britain are unlikely to vote for such a loss of sovereignty. So far the government has tried to smuggle changes through bit by bit without their significance being noticed, but agreeing a European constitution is too big for that. If the government tries to get agreement without a referendum then it could be severely damaged, "self-destruct" as the article puts it. Are we approaching a time when European union will develop at such a pace and to such an extent that Britain will find itself outside?

#### **Franco-German aims**

A rather startling claim as to what is really behind the push for a united Europe is to be found in a letter by Lord Walsingham which appeared in the *Daily Mail* for 17 February, sent to me by a reader. It goes as follows:

"There have always been two versions of Europe. The

publicly declared democratic free trade area and the less well-known totalitarian version, based on the scheme sold to the French during their Nazi occupation, aimed at the Thousand Year (European) Reich.

"It was this latter version of Europe which France and Germany had in mind when they signed the European Coal and Steel Community Treaty in 1949 with secret codicils to work together to 'pastoralise' Britain, to destroy her heavy industry by secret subsidies of their own industries. The trauma of blood-letting in the last century had left European statesmen indulging in fantasies. History is now slowly catching up with them. This recent Franco-German-Russian declaration of opposition to America [over war on Iraq] marks Tony Blair's finest hour, for it was he who triggered it by challenging the hegemony of the two central powers in Europe with the letter he published with European support for the U.S. The old European former major powers did not see Europe as a free coalition. They see it as a means of renewing their power base for challenging for world leadership. This conspiracy (which is not too strong a word for it) is of course what lay behind Sir Con O'Neill's 1964 warning of the serious risk that the EU and the U.S. might fall out later. It was diplomatic speak for the German threat from the centre of Europe".

There is, of course, no way of knowing how valid are the assertions made in this letter, nor those made in the following

item. But let us bear in mind that, when the European beast emerges in its final form, "they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is" (Rev. 17:8). We should therefore expect some very dramatic developments in Europe which will take the world by surprise, but not ourselves, instructed as we should be by Bible prophecy.

#### **A Catholic superstate on the way**

The fact that the Roman Catholic Church is behind the moves towards a united Europe, and the significance this has for the fulfilment of Bible prophecy, has often been remarked upon. A reader has drawn my attention to a section of the BBC's Website called 'Book of the future' in which readers are invited to write short articles on what the world will be like in the future. It was quite a shock to see one entry entitled 'The Catholic Superstate'.

The short article draws attention to the secretive Roman Catholic organisation called Opus Dei, meaning 'God's Work', founded in 1928 by Jose Maria Escriva de Balaguer, recently elevated by the Church to sainthood. Opus Dei has 80,000 members, made up of leaders in all walks of society, and dedicated to the promotion of the Roman Catholic Church. Membership is by invitation only, and it has the strong support of the current pope. Such is the influence of the organisation that future popes are expected to come from it.

The following is an extract from the article:

“Opus Dei will take over the running of the majority of the Catholic schools now in existence and will teach their particular brand of strict education and morals for future leaders. It is Opus Dei who will make the Church money openly on the stock exchange. The money will go towards creating new centres of learning, new churches, and establishing new communities in countries where religion has taken a back seat.

“But what is frightening is the immense shift in the global balance of power. With the pope having the ear of presidents, bankers, ambassadors, generals, monarchs and educators the world over, the true world power (both financial and nuclear) lies in the hands of a man whose followers will follow his orders, not those of their elected leader”.

There is something of a dilemma attached to the woman Babylon in Revelation. Though the symbology indicates the great false church, there is much emphasis also on wealth and trade; and, for all the evidence of immense Roman Catholic wealth presented in, for example, Avro Manhattan’s *The Vatican Billions*, the church does not seem to have quite the economic dominance currently that the prophecy indicates. This could all change over the next few years if what the article says is true.

The article can be found (or could, since it may have gone by now) on <http://www.bbc.uk/dna/onthefuture/C1004>. Readers with the time and inclination may wish to monitor this site and see if anything else interesting turns up.

### How many were killed in papal persecutions?

According to Daniel 7:21, the little horn of the fourth beast “made war with the saints, and prevailed against them”, words which are quoted in Revelation 13:7 regarding the sea beast. Later in Revelation 13 we read of the image of the beast, which would “cause that as many as would not worship [it] should be killed” (v. 15). These verses have long been recognised as foretelling the development of the Roman Catholic Church as a great persecuting power in alliance with the governments of the day.

This application of the prophecy appears on a Christadelphian Website in which the following statement appears: “An estimate has been made . . . incriminating the popes of Europe to have directly or indirectly slain *fifty million* of the best of mankind”. This resulted in an interested friend asking for the source of this figure. An Australian brother, asked to reply to the query, emailed me. I in turn emailed others and this resulted in (at the time of writing) two replies, which were emailed back to the brother in Australia. I mention this as an illustration of the good use to which the Internet can be put.

The two replies themselves are far too detailed to reproduce here, but here are some details of information given and points made. Regarding the statistical side, one of my informants provided the following quotations:

“The records of historians and martyrologists show that it may be reasonable to estimate that from fifty to sixty-eight millions of human beings died, suffered torture, lost their possessions, or were otherwise devoured by

the Roman Catholic Church during the awful years of the Inquisition” (John B. Wilder, *The Shadow of Rome*, Zondervan, Grand Rapid, 1960, p. 87);

“From the birth of popery in 606, to the present time, it is estimated by careful and credible historians, that more than FIFTY MILLIONS (50,000,000) of the human family, have been slaughtered for the crime of heresy by popish persecutors” (John Dowling, *The History of Romanism: From the Earliest Corruptions of Christianity to the Present Time*, Edward Walker, New York, 1846, p. 541);

“It is estimated that Rome has shed the blood of at least fifty million Christians” (Edward Beecher, *The Papal Conspiracy Exposed, and Protestantism Defended, in the Light of Reason, History and Scripture*, Stearns & Co., Boston, 1855, p. 212).

It should be noted that these statements are all said to have been derived from the work of others, none are the result of the writer’s own investigations.

The other reply took a rather different line, suggesting that quoting specific figures should be avoided for three reasons:

- 1 There is no way of telling how accurate specific figures are, and attempts to quantify deaths from persecution will always be subject to challenge;
- 2 Many of the Protestants who were persecuted themselves persecuted others when they got the chance;
- 3 Depravity cannot be assessed statistically.

He quotes one writer as follows: “The memorials, indeed, of many of her [the Roman

Catholic Church's] persecutions are now so scanty that it is impossible to form a complete conception of the multitude of her victims, and it is quite certain that no powers of imagination can adequately realise their sufferings . . . These atrocities were not perpetrated in the brief paroxysms of a reign of terror, or by the hands of obscure sectaries, but were inflicted by a triumphant church, with every circumstance of solemnity and deliberation" (William E. H. Lecky, *History of the Rise of Religion and Rationalism in Europe*, 1879, Vol. 2, pp. 35,37).

Our correspondent also makes the point that defenders of Roman Catholicism today seek to draw a distinction between the teachings of the Church, which, it is alleged, are correct, being based on the supposed infallibility of the Church and its head, the pope, and the actions of the Church, which have been wrong at times, as with putting people to death in such barbarous ways as burning them at the stake. He points out that the necessity of persecuting those who did not believe the doctrines of the Church was the official teaching of the Church, and the persecution which took place was not just the mistake of its leaders at certain times.

He quotes some examples as follows:

"The lords of the districts shall carefully seek out the heretics in dwellings, hovels and forests, and even their underground retreats shall be entirely wiped out" (Pope Gregory IX, 1229);

"Know that the interests of the Holy See, and those of

your own crown, make it a duty to exterminate the Hussites" (Pope Martin V, 1417-31, writing to the King of Poland);

"It is not more morally wrong to put a man to death for murder . . . in many cases persecution for religious opinions is not only permissible, but highly advisable and necessary" (Article "The lawfulness of persecution" in a Roman Catholic magazine called *The Rambler*, 1849).

#### The weather and war

In the previous ['Editor's post-bag'](#) I concluded with an item about the weather still being an important factor in modern warfare. Evidence for this comes in a short article forwarded by a reader, which reads as follows:

"The Israel Meteorological Service (IMS) will cease giving weather forecasts in the event of a US-led war on Iraq, to prevent providing what could be crucial information to the régime of Saddam Hussein. As in the 1991 Gulf War, there will be no public broadcasts of weather information or transfers of IMS simulations to forecasting centres abroad, to minimise the possibility of accurate forecasts specifically related to Israel.

"Climatic conditions could be a critical factor if Iraq were to launch missiles armed with chemical or biological warheads or try to reach Israel with planes with non-conventional payloads. Strong winds and heavy rains could influence the spread of biological or chemical agents, and foreknowledge of wind direction would be essential in accurately targeting population centres".

#### Avoiding the *Titanic* disaster

A brother recently mentioned in an email the following which he heard from a brother some forty years ago. This brother's wife, already a sister in Christ, was due to travel on the *Titanic* to Canada in order to marry him. On embarking she asked a purser if the ship was safe. He replied, "Madam, God couldn't sink this ship". She immediately disembarked. Her practical faith probably saved her life.

#### National Darwin Day

A reader has copied to me a letter published in *The Times* on 12 February, the birthday of Charles Darwin, which reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, support proposals for the creation of a new public holiday, Darwin Day, on February 12. This is the birthday of Charles Darwin, one of the greatest British scientists and thinkers that ever lived. At a time when creationism appears to be gaining ground in English schools, the public celebration of Darwin's contribution to modern science could send out a clear message of support for scientific thinking. It will be the 200th anniversary of his birth in 2009, and we very much hope that this new public holiday will be in place by then".

The letter is signed by six members of the British Humanist Association.

Rather neatly, our correspondent has photocopied against it an article from the *Daily Telegraph* of 22 February referring to the studies in Bible prophecy carried out by the man whom the article calls "Britain's greatest scientist", Isaac Newton. Why not a public holiday on

his birthday instead? The article referred to the researches of Brother Stephen Snobelen, and trailed a television programme, which appeared on 1 March.

Returning to the "creation" (as the letter put it) of a Darwin Day, the response of one reader the next day was to suggest that

"the day should be left to evolve through natural selection"! We hope and pray that by the time the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birthday arrives in 2009 our Lord will have returned and made clear the falsity of the teachings of Darwin and his followers. However, if Newton's

conclusions on Bible prophecy are right, we shall have to wait rather longer for this to happen, for according to the article he "set 2060 for the end of the world". Perhaps we shall be able to report further on this in a future issue.

Tony Benson



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## Joel 3, two sickles and two psalms

Nigel Bernard

**I**N JOEL 3:9 we read: "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up". As we see the military might of America deployed in the Middle East, these words in Joel take on a special relevance. In an address to a Joint Session of Congress given on 20 September 2001, President Bush stated: "Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom".<sup>1</sup> The mighty man of America has indeed been woken up, and the presence of American forces in the Middle East is evidence of this awakening.

### The vision of peace

The purpose for gathering the nations to the Middle East is stated in verse 2: "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted My land". The nations, of course, do not have this intention in mind. America has its own vision of what will happen in the long term. In a speech given on 15 March 2003, President Bush stated: "We have reached a hopeful moment for progress toward the vision of Middle Eastern peace that I outlined last June. I spoke of a day when two states, Israel and Palestine, will live side by side in peace and security".<sup>2</sup>

There are three points which can be made about these words in relation to Bible prophecy.

Firstly, notice the phrase "peace and security", a recurring theme in international affairs, and which shows that the time of the end is near: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3). The second point is that the goal of peace in the Middle East coincides with what is required by Bible prophecy, for, at the time of the invasion by Gog, Israel will be "at rest" and dwelling "safely" (Ezek. 38:11).

Thirdly, we see that America is working towards the formation of a Palestinian state. When Gog invades there will be a significant Palestinian power which will join with him in spoiling Israel, as shown in Joel 3: "Yea, and what have ye to do with Me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render Me a recompense? and if ye recompense Me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head; because ye have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My goodly pleasant things" (vv. 4,5). The "coasts of Palestine" correspond to the Gaza Strip. America envisages both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to be part of a future Palestinian State. Whereas Ezekiel 38:8 indicates that the mountains

1. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.
2. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/2851525.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2851525.stm).