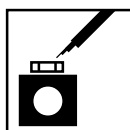


on to show that observers are concerned at Russia's real priorities: "And a year into his presidency, there is a sense that Putin is placing a greater importance on rekindling Russia's former sense of power—based on ruthless security apparatus—than connecting his country with economic opportunities and increasing liaison with the West".

What of ourselves? When speaking to the Jews concerning the invasion of the Assyrians, God asked: "and where will ye leave your glory?" (Isa. 10:3). The "glory" referred to here was

wealth acquired by exploiting the poor through "unrighteous decrees" (v. 1), the antecedents of the traditions of the scribes, which the Lord Jesus condemned (Mt. 15:1-9). Regarding the impending events of A.D. 70 James wrote of how the Jews in those days were pointlessly acquiring wealth: "Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days" (Jas. 5:3). Let us ensure that, as we see the day approaching, we lay up for ourselves "treasures in heaven" (Mt. 6:20) where no one speeding to the spoil and hastening to the prey can break through and steal.



## Correspondence

*Comments on articles appearing in the magazine are always welcome, and should be addressed to the editor in whose section the article appears.*

# From the Editor's postbag

## Comments on items received from readers

### Autocratic Europe

I began the previous "From the Editor's postbag" (Nov. 2000, p. 422) by referring to an article which compared the developing united Europe of today with the medieval empire of Charlemagne, a comparison interesting to us because of the way Revelation 17 predicts a revival of the beast of Revelation 13 before the return of Christ. On this same theme, a reader has passed on to me an article by the chairman of W. H. Smith, published in the *Financial Times* of 19 October 2000, commenting on the Danish people's rejection of the euro in a referendum. He expressed himself pleased with the result, not so much because he is against the euro, but because of what he sees as an increasingly autocratic Europe, one which pays little regard to the views of ordinary people.

Having referred to the rejection of the euro by the Danes as

"a distinctively protestant act", he goes on to draw a very interesting parallel between the Europe of today and the Europe of the Middle Ages:

"I use the word 'protestant' deliberately. For the EU is increasingly taking on the forms and habits of the late medieval papacy. To the Church's economic clout it adds sway over princes, its millennial ambitions, its relentless propaganda, its idealistic origins, its power for good and evil, its control over its own myth . . . The relationship of modern heads of government to Brussels eerily parallels the tension between renaissance monarchs and popes".

The purpose of the article is to plead for the move towards a more authoritarian structure in Europe to be halted, and for there to be greater room for democratic participation in decision-making, even if this slows

the development of a united Europe. He concludes the article with the following thought: "Meanwhile the extremist, populist Danes and the xenophobic, isolationist, centrifugal British public are playing an invaluable role in encouraging the EU, with all its achievements and all its promise, to question its own infallibility". Cutting through the irony, he sees Britain having a significant role in directing the EU down more democratic paths. But is this really so? Are we not seeing a developing rift between Britain and Europe as the latter develops into a Catholic-dominated superpower?

### Threat to oil

In the October "Publishing Editor's column" I commented on how the blockade of oil depots in Britain in the previous month had shown the vulnerability of modern society, with its heavy dependence on transportation of goods by vehicle, and its

philosophy of everything being delivered 'just in time' instead of the former practice of keeping stocks of vital items. A Canadian reader has observed that in the State of Ontario alone there are a million trucks on the road, with sometimes as many on a highway as cars.

He links the heavy dependence of modern society upon 'just in time' deliveries with the current state of tension between Israel and the Palestinians, and the way the Muslim world might seek to put pressure on the West to side with the Palestinians. This can be done in two ways. Firstly, much of the oil needed to keep the West's economy growing comes from the Middle East, and the cutting off of these supplies would soon bring many Western nations to their knees. Secondly, many Western nations have substantial numbers of Muslims in their midst. These might take note of the effect which the blockade of the British oil depots had and take the same action for political ends. In either case chaos would soon ensue.

#### Interpreting the 'dry bones' prophecy

There are two views amongst us regarding the fulfilment of the 'dry bones' prophecy of Ezekiel 37:1-14. The first is that the 'dry bones' state applies to Israel in their long dispersion that began in Roman times, with the coming to life of the bones being a process which began with the return of the Jews to Israel in modern times but which will not be complete until Christ comes and establishes the Kingdom. The second is that the 'dry bones' state is that which will exist in the future when the State of Israel will be destroyed, with the coming to life of the bones

being something that takes place after the return of Christ.

The latter view was referred to in two articles in *The Testimony* published last year. In "A major prophecy expounded" (Jul. 2000, p. 281), a review of Brother John Allfree's book *Ezekiel*, Brother John Nicholls referred to the fact that Brother Allfree takes the view that the 'dry bones' state results from the destruction of the State of Israel wrought by the Gogian invasion of Ezekiel 38. In "The future of Israel" (Aug., p. 298) Brother Ian White also linked the 'dry bones' state to a future destruction of Israel, though without specifying the powers responsible. Following publication of these articles, a letter was received protesting at the publication of what the writer said were "futurist views". The writer further said: "Long before there was the slightest movement towards Jewish regathering in Palestine, Biblical scholars—relying principally upon Ezekiel 37—were convinced that [there would be] a regathering of the Jews back to Palestine prior to the Advent"; and, "An examination of Christadelphian magazines from 1860 to 2000 demonstrates that every sign (however insignificant) that indicated the *gradual* return to the Holy Land was hailed as a fulfilment of Ezekiel 37".

It is undoubtedly true that in the nineteenth century much attention was paid to signs of the restoration of the Jews to their land as a fulfilment of prophecy that must occur before the Master's return. However, Brother Allfree says in his book that in fact our nineteenth-century brethren did not regard the 'dry bones' prophecy as one that would be fulfilled before the return of Christ, but rather that

the 'dry bones' situation results from the conquest of the land by the Gogian host. Our correspondent was therefore asked to substantiate his claim that the early Christadelphians thought that the pre-adventual return of the Jews to the land was the initial stage of the fulfilment of the 'dry bones' prophecy. His response was that he did not have the time or the facilities to provide actual examples, but was adamant that Ezekiel 37 was the "principal prophecy" used regarding the return of the Jews to their land, and the "corner stone" of the prophetic expectations of our early brethren.

What then is the true situation? Despite what has been written to the contrary, I still take the view that the 'dry bones' prophecy is one of gradual fulfilment and that we are part way through seeing it fulfilled. However, I have seen nothing to show that this was the view of our early brethren. As far as I can discover, references specifically to Ezekiel 37:1-14 in early Christadelphian literature are very sparse. Brother John Thomas refers to the passage three times in Volume 3 of *Eureka* (pp. 11,413,656) but clearly takes the view that the bones come together after Christ's return. In 1899 *The Christadelphian* published a transcript of a lecture given by Brother Robert Roberts entitled "The heavenly kingdom, a Jewish one", for which the reading was Ezekiel 37, but, although he talked about the significance of the return of the Jews, and quoted passages of Scripture about it, he did not refer to Ezekiel 37:1-14 at all. These were all the references I could find.

Despite what our correspondent asserts I therefore remain to be convinced that Ezekiel

37:1-14 was regarded by our early brethren as a prophecy of the pre-adventual return of the Jews. There may have been areas in the Brotherhood where it was used in this way in preaching, but not committed to writing. There may exist writings outside the mainstream of Christadelphian publications which so used it. I would be interested to receive any factual information on the matter.

#### The candlestick

In "Jerusalem scenes" (Oct. 2000, p. XX) I referred to the "seven-branched candlestick", or lampstand, of the tabernacle. This prompted a reader to query the Christadelphian use of this term, since the instructions for building the tabernacle refer to "the candlestick" and the "six branches [which] shall come out of the sides of it" (Ex. 25:31,32; cf. 37:17,18).

Our correspondent has a valid point in that Scripture never refers to it as a seven-branched candlestick. It in fact only ever calls it 'the candlestick'. Brother Robert Roberts in *The Law of Moses* refers to "the lit candlestick with the seven branches", and Christadelphian usage may well derive from this. It would of course be rather long-winded to refer to it as 'the candlestick with a central stem and six branches', and, after all, the essential point is that the central stem as well as each of the six branches had a lamp on the top. Then there is the connection with the Apocalypse and its seven candlesticks (1:12,20), and further, it seems much more fitting to think of it as having seven branches rather than six in view of the fact that seven represents completeness and six is the number of the flesh. Perhaps if we want to preserve strict Scriptural accuracy

along with the symbolism of seven we should speak of 'the lampstand with its seven lamps'.

#### Was the AV ever revised?

The term 'candlestick' is, of course, an AV one, and we now generally recognise that 'lampstand' is the better term, for its function was not to hold candles. This brings us to an interesting question about the AV. Was it ever revised, that is to say, revised but still known as the AV, rather than revised and then being known, for example, as the Revised Version? A reader has drawn my attention to a discussion of this matter on the Website [www.scourby.com](http://www.scourby.com), referred to by Brother Ewan MacLeod in the final article in his series "Bible study on computer—an update" (Nov. 2000, p. 412).

There is apparently a view in some conservative Protestant circles that the AV is the God-given translation of the Bible into English, which all true Christians should use. Later revisions and translations, it is said, corrupt the Word of God and should be avoided. (Though there is a strong preference still for the AV within Christadelphia, very few would go so far as to take this view.) Critics of this position assert that the AV was revised more than once and therefore there can be no objections to further revisions such as the RV, the RSV and the RAV (now usually known in its latest form as the NKJV). An article on the above website, entitled "Why the King James Bible is still the best and the most accurate", refutes this argument, stating that the AV was not in fact revised until the appearance of the RV.

Though the argument itself is not of particular concern to us, the information provided in the

article may be of interest to readers. Apparently after the AV was first published in 1611 there were four later versions produced, but these were not revisions to the translation. The first two appeared in 1629 and 1638 and corrected printing errors found in the original printing, including some omissions of words. The others were in 1762 and 1769 and mainly modernised and standardised the spelling, with some further printing errors being corrected. One or two printing errors have survived in modern AVs, for example, "strain at a gnat" in Matthew 23:24 should be "strain out a gnat". There have, however, been no changes to the translation itself.

#### Has the body of the Pharaoh of the Exodus been discovered?

A report in *The Times* in early September claimed that the body of the Pharaoh who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus has been discovered. What I received was an incomplete copy of the article over the Internet, but the gist of the report was clear. The body is in fact a mummy, which has been in a private museum at Niagara Falls for 140 years. American Egyptologists who have examined the mummy now think it is the body of Rameses I, which is believed to have been stolen from its tomb in Egypt. Tests were to be carried out to check the similarity of the DNA of this corpse with that of the corpses of the son and grandson of Rameses I, but I have not heard of the result.

It is highly questionable, however, whether Rameses I was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Bible chronology indicates that the Exodus would have occurred in

the fifteenth century before Christ. Rameses I reigned about 1300 B.C. according to the standard chronology. This has been challenged by several people in recent years, but they put Rameses I later rather than earlier. However, this is in fact irrelevant; Rameses I only reigned one year and is not thought to be the Pharaoh of the Exodus anyway, so we probably will not hear any more of this story.

### **The religious/secular rift in Israel**

An article in *The Times* of 20 September, forwarded by a reader, well illustrates the divided nature of Israeli society, quite apart from the Jew/Arab conflict. It concerns a campaign by the then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak to institute what is termed "a secular revolution", sweeping reforms designed to get rid of some of the religious restrictions in Israeli society, such as the prohibition on public transport on the sabbath, the closure of shops on that day and the fact that all Jewish weddings have to be performed by an orthodox rabbi. It would seem that Mr Barak, having failed to get the support of the religious parties for the by now collapsed peace process, gave up on them and sought to stay in office by getting the support of the secular citizens of the country, who are the majority.

The difference between the two parts of Israeli society is shown by the following comments in the article about the two biggest cities: Tel Aviv, "which is the centre of the drugs and club scene, with a huge gay population and a Western outlook", and Jerusalem, "politically dominated by the ultra-Orthodox sects, which scorn cellular telephones for women because

they 'encourage harlotry'". The article refers to those who make a point of eating pork in order to defy religious prohibitions, especially pork with cheese because this breaks two regulations in one, the other being the prohibition against eating meat with milk products.

Though Judaism today still deserves the condemnation that Christ placed upon it for its emphasis on tradition and neglect of the true principles that the Law was meant to teach, blatant defiance of the Law given to the Jews by God must surely be even more displeasing to God, as must be the descent into the moral cesspit of Western society depicted by the comment above about Tel Aviv. This sad situation illustrates the need for the judgements of God to be poured out upon the nation before they truly turn to God.

And as for Mr Barak, since being prepared to make major concessions to the Palestinians and proposing the secularisation of Israel, his fortunes have taken a strong turn for the worse, surely the hand of God at work. The man who was hailed as the one to unite Israel and achieve peace is now widely denigrated, even by his former supporters, as arrogant and incapable of exercising true leadership, and has lost his position.

### **Internet warnings**

In the previous Editor's postbag I drew attention to problems of interference with Christadelphian websites (Nov. 2000, p. 426). A brother has informed me that his website was registered as a pornographic site by MSN, a fact that he discovered when checking by means of a tracker the criteria used by visitors to locate the site. This was presumably intended as a

joke. He has now deleted the registration with MSN. Here is something which needs to be watched.

While this article was being written I was faxed a copy of an article from the Canadian journal *The Report* regarding an alarming development in the dissemination of pornography on the Internet. Purveyors of this material use apparently innocuous keywords to get people onto their sites, and have developed techniques that make it impossible to get out of such sites without shutting down the computer. Moves to censor sites have run into legal difficulties, not least because they can be maintained anywhere in the world; and filtering software, which is supposed to block unsuitable material, does not always work due to the increasing sophistication of the purveyors of filth. Parents are being advised to monitor carefully what their children are doing on the Internet.

### **A view of world history**

A reader has forwarded a copy of a review published in the *Age* (a Melbourne newspaper) of a book called *A Short History of the World* by Geoffrey Blainey, together with a copy of a letter which he wrote to the author of the review, Stuart Macintyre, Dean of the Arts faculty at the University of Melbourne.

The reviewer draws attention to the fact that in Mr Blainey's history, "Western Europe remains a backward extremity of the Euro-Asian landmass until we are a third of the way through the book", and, "The industrial revolution comes some way into the final third of the book, and consolidates Western dominance over the rest of the world" and "is speedily followed by two

world wars and the dismantling of that supremacy". In his letter to the reviewer our correspondent draws attention to the way this fulfils the prophecy of Noah that "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. 9:27). The fulfilment of this prophecy concerning Japheth, from whom the Western nations are descended, reached its apogee at the time of the First World War, since when the dominance of Japheth has declined, the resuming of Jewish control over Jerusalem being an indication that "the times of the Gentiles" are close to being "fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24).

#### Whither the weather?

The heavy rainfall experienced in Britain during the autumn of last year has caused much talk about it being the consequence of global warming, a topic which I have commented on from time to time over the years. Global warming over recent years is a fact, evidenced by extensive melting of glaciers and icecaps, and an overall increase in measured temperatures. Two matters are, however, still under debate. The first is the question of whether this has happened as a result of increased emissions of 'greenhouse gases' such as carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere because of the increasing industrialisation and overpopulation of the world, or whether it is part of a natural cycle of increasing and decreasing temperatures. The second is whether global warming in fact causes bad weather anyway.

I have received copies of various articles from newspapers and magazines over the years regarding global warming and its effect on the weather. For a change I have received several

items recently putting the other view. These articles have been prompted by widespread claims that the extremely wet autumn experienced in Britain was caused by global warming and is the precursor of more of the same sort of thing still to come.

Two of these articles came from the *Daily Telegraph* of 31 October 2000. One claims that journalists want good stories, and bad news sells better than good, so environmentalists and meteorologists, knowing this, emphasise forecasts of disaster. It disputes the claim that overall the weather is getting worse, points out that extreme weather has always happened from time to time, and says that the oft-quoted ninefold increase in insurance claims during the last twenty years has been caused by increased population in vulnerable areas and the increase in people's material possessions. Whilst it is not doubted that recent years have seen much extreme weather, it is suggested that spells of extreme weather have always occurred from time to time, with spells of less extreme conditions in between.

The other article suggests that we have been too inclined to dismiss the view that extreme weather may be a punishment from God, saying:

"God, after all, must find an awful lot to be angry about when He casts His all-seeing eye over Cool Britannia. Look at the sequence of events: on Friday, the Archbishop of Canterbury announces that modern Britons are a bunch of atheists; the very next day, the heavens open over his cathedral and plunge the people of Kent up to their knees in water.

Coincidence, eh? When the winds howl over Bognor, might not the Almighty be commenting on Parliament's decision to lower the age of homosexual consent? Or the abortion rate? Or the breakdown of marriage? Or the sheer greed and selfishness of so many Britons these days? These explanations are at least as plausible as the theory of global warming".

These comments may, however, be missing a point. It may not be a question of either opting for global warming or the wrath of God as the explanation for extreme weather. Perhaps God has so arranged His Creation that misuse of the resources He has placed upon the planet for man's good brings retribution in the form of worse weather.

Another pair of articles on the same topic, published in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 26 November, deal with the scientific questions. One, by a meteorologist, points out that the autumn of 2000 (defined as the months September to November) were the wettest since rainfall gauges were first installed in Britain 300 years ago, and this before November had even finished. He then goes on to say that nevertheless the sort of weather that has occurred lies within the range of previous experience and does not necessarily indicate climate change. Only when records are broken frequently and by increasingly wide margins can it be stated with any certainty that there has been a change in climate.

The other article refers to what is believed to be the cause of the recent high rainfall and succession of mild winters in Britain, a phenomenon called

the North Atlantic Oscillation. This is all about high and low pressure areas in the North Atlantic Ocean, which if set in one pattern bring mild, wet and stormy winters to Western Europe, and if set in a different

pattern bring colder, drier and calmer weather. One pattern tends to exist for a few years, then it switches to the other, hence the use of the word 'oscillation'. Some scientists thus think that global warming in fact

has nothing to do with the weather we have been experiencing; others, notably those at the Tyndall Centre for Climatic Research at the University of East Anglia, think it does.

Tony Benson

### The names of God in the New Testament

Brother Stephen Pinfield's thought-provoking article (Oct. 2000, p. 376) and the letters of brethren Russell Ebbs and David Dudding (Dec. 2000, pp. 453,454) agree that the Old Testament Hebrew name YHWH found fulfilment in God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Since the names and titles of God portray the characteristics and graces of His person rather than being mere appellations by which He is known, we see the same truth in Christ: "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col. 1:19).<sup>\*</sup> I feel, however, that the meanings and significances of the Name YHWH carried forward into the New Testament are central to our addressing God as "our Father".

God is our Father through our own experience of Him, by His redemption of us and by our first being baptized into Jesus Christ. We thus become "sons of the living God" (Rom. 9:26). Peter explains the privilege further: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy" (1 Pet. 2:9,10).

We rejoice knowing that yet more is in God's purpose for those who love Him, as Jesus prayed to his Father: "that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and Thou in me, that they may become perfectly one . . . I made known to them Thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (Jno. 17:22,23,26). This exalted theme we call God manifestation. We cannot overstate our privilege in Christ Jesus, but we should acknowledge too that inherent in the Name YHWH was the same prospect for those who were God's people under the Old Covenant (Heb. 11:39,40).

If we concentrate on the sense given to God's Name YHWH from the context where it is especially explained (Ex. 3:6,14,15; 34:6,7) we observe God with His attributes vouchsafed in the *continuous* present tense of the verb 'to be'. Jesus himself seems to adopt this approach in his contest with the Sadducees on the subject of resurrection: "And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living" (Mk. 12:26,27).

The point was not that the patriarchs were physically alive when God spoke to Moses, nor when Jesus was speaking to the Sadducees, but that He is continuously active in fulfilling His purpose until in the fullness of time the manifestation of Himself is complete in those who are His covenanted people. The concept is probably most succinctly explained in Revelation: "'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty" (1:8). We are thus presented with the ambit in which God reveals Himself to His people in all ages in their lives through His Word so that His purpose may be fulfilled in them.

Abraham knew God as YHWH: "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, 'Fear not, Abram, *I am* your shield; your reward *shall be* very great'" (Gen. 15:1). At that time the fulfilling of God's promises lay future to Abraham, but he believed God, so it was reckoned to Him as righteousness (v. 6). He, with Isaac his son, lived out in cameo what was in store for God's only begotten Son, so by oath God confirmed the promise: "*By Myself* I have sworn, says the LORD" (22:16); and, in God's eternal purpose, through faith Abraham "obtained the promise" (Heb. 6:15). Yet God was to continue the revelation of Himself to Abraham

<sup>\*</sup> All quotations are from the RSV.