

Zionist cause in and out of government, and also to rally the British people in defeating Nazism, which, unchecked, would not have allowed the State of Israel to be born. The reviewer can remember certain brethren who lived in the Home Counties and would go to the public gallery in the House of Commons and listen to Churchill and his contemporaries debating British policies in Mandatory Palestine. As Paul said in Romans, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (10:1). Their salvation and our personal redemption are

linked together. This book is highly recommended to those whose pulses begin to race when they read or hear about Israel and the Jews. You may think it is expensive, but if you can bear to wait for it, a paperback version will be available in April 2008.

I have heard that Winston Churchill had a chauffeur who was a Christadelphian and who talked to him about Bible prophecy and the Jews. I would be interested to hear from any reader who can confirm this and give more details.—T.B.

Under the calabash tree

Trevor Maher

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

WE OFTEN HEAR today about the problems of preaching about religious topics to a population that is apathetic and even hostile to such things. It is claimed that people are in the grip of a materialistic mindset, that leisure activities dominate spare time, that the teaching of evolution in the field of education has undermined concepts of God and acceptance of the Word of God.

Ecclesias continually debate the value of Sunday preaching talks, and many have turned from the standard format of a thirty-five-minute first-principle talk supported by a Bible reading, hymns and prayer to a host of alternative activities. Afternoon meetings instead of evening ones, visual aids such as PowerPoint presentations, family services involving children, holding the preaching meeting on a week night and the Bible Class on a Sunday, debates between brethren, encouraging speakers to have more audience participation—these are just some of the suggestions and methods used.

The use of alternative versions of Scripture to that of the AV is promoted as being essential if we are to communicate effectively and the visitor is to have any hope of understanding the subject matter. And the results of all this wonderful activity? Zilch! The halls are not full, baptisms have not dramatically increased, and ecclesias seem no more invigorated than they were a few years ago before we moved down the road of change.

How shall they hear without a preacher?

So, is this the voice of the Luddite crying out in the Brotherhood, 'No change! no change!?' Certainly not; every generation must learn to communicate with those around it in the most effective manner possible. We cannot assume that the methods of our parents and grandparents will strike a chord with our contemporaries and bring them flocking to the doors of our meeting rooms.

However, where I think we can learn from previous generations and from the pages of Scripture is in the attitude of those who preach. It seems today that we are in danger of thinking that the method is more important than the message, or at least as important as the message. This is a fundamental error. We are tasked with taking the Word of God to sinful men and women. In Hebrews the Word is described as "quick, and powerful [living, and active, RV], and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (4:12). In the book of Revelation we read, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come" (22:17).

From this we can see that the work of preaching is a joint effort between the angelic host and the disciples, and that it is the Word itself that will convert people, not the messenger or the method. The use of seminars over the last ten years or so, and their relative success compared with more traditional methods of preaching, supports this. However, even this format has within its method

a worrying consequence, in that only a few within an ecclesia are actively involved.

The reality is, though, that every single disciple, every brother and sister, young and old, married and single, has a responsibility to witness, to preach the gospel. As Peter says: "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). Do we go through life trying to make sure nobody asks us? Is our way of life and speech so integrated with those we live and work amongst that they are not caused to ask us about our hope? Are we never moved by the things we witness or hear in daily life to speak out about the great and precious promises God has in His mercy revealed to us?

Rarely, it seems, is the Word of God in our hearts as a burning fire, shut up in our bones, so that we cannot remain silent, as it was with the prophet Jeremiah (20:9). If we were animated and vocal about our faith in daily life, think what a difference it would make to our Sunday or week night preaching efforts! There would be more people there because they would have seen the effect the Word of God had on our lives. Preaching is not the priority it was in our ecclesias, as can be seen by the falling numbers of brethren and sisters who attend this activity.



An enthusiastic preaching couple.

The calabash tree

Which brings me to the calabash tree. 'What has this to do with preaching?' I hear you ask. Because under a calabash tree, during a CBM visit to the Cameroon, I experienced the value and power of the Word of God and saw the results of individuals expressing the hope that was within them. Brother Vic Aucott and I had arranged to fit in an unscheduled visit to a young brother and sister living in relative isolation between forty and fifty miles north of Duoala, a major city and port. They lived and worked on a rubber plantation, having one room measuring twelve feet by ten as the sum total of their home. They had been at Bible School and asked if we could visit them. It was only a small detour off our route back south as we prepared to meet up with other UK brethren and sisters and return home, and we agreed to a one-hour visit and breaking of bread.

Our arrival was greeted with great enthusiasm, and we found that four benches had been set out under the calabash tree next to their room, and their preaching contacts were coming to talk to us! Three hours later, after we had spent an invigorating time in Bible discussion with six contacts who came with their battered, loose-paged, well-thumbed Bibles, we had a short breaking of bread with our brother and sister and took our departure. This



Preaching the Word under the calabash tree.

(Pictures: Trevor Maher)

young couple, by their enthusiasm and commitment to a life in Christ, drew to themselves those seeking truth. They had none of the facilities we deem so necessary for preaching: pamphlets, varied audio-visual presentations, hired halls or own meeting rooms, advertising through the media, arrangements organised by a preaching committee, etc. They had their Bibles, their faith, prayer and a desire to witness at every opportunity.

Imagine the difference it would make to our public meeting if each individual or family brought one contact to such meetings, let alone six! Do you think there would be any discussion then about the need to find alternative forms of

preaching? When we visited again some fourteen months later a small ecclesia of six brethren and sisters existed, with a Sunday School of four children. A room on the plantation in a disused railway station now bore a sign, 'Christadelphian Meeting', and more contacts were undergoing instruction. The problem for many of our ecclesias is that their own members are often missing from the Sunday night meeting, so is it likely that visitors will be there in abundance? Perhaps the problem with our preaching lies closer to home—our homes! Next time someone says, 'It's a waste of time', 'It's too expensive', 'We've tried it before', 'We need some new ideas', think of the calabash tree.

Echoes of the sixth trumpet in Kosovo

Nigel Bernard

A fourteenth-century victory by the Ottomans against the Serbs has ever since helped to define the identity of Serbia. This defeat relates to the sixth trumpet period, and it is also having ramifications today as Nebuchadnezzar's image continues to form in the last days.

IN REVELATION 9 it is written, "And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men" (vv. 13-15).

The Turks and the Serbs

The "four angels" which are loosed represent the Seljuks, the Mongol hordes led by Ghengis Khan and later Timur, and finally the Ottomans. These came against the Byzantine Empire from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. This prophecy culminates in the overthrow of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453. However, before this date, the Ottomans had already progressed further west, achieving significant victories in battle against those who opposed them. One such battle was the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, in which they defeated the Serbs.

Although the Serbs were defeated, the Battle of Kosovo has attained mythic status amongst Serbs. The Serbs were led by a man called Tsar Lazar,

who refused to surrender, but fought to the death. The journalist Kim Sengupta wrote, "The spirit of Tsar Lazar, a medieval Serb leader who died fighting the Ottoman Turks in the 1389 Battle of Kosovo, is never far from the Serbian psyche. The defeat

has metamorphosed in folklore into a manifestation of the Serbian nation with Kosovo as its cradle".¹ Laura Silber and Allan Little wrote in their account of the break up of Yugoslavia that "on 28 June, 1989, a million Serbs flocked to Kosovo to worship at [the former Serb leader] Milošević's feet, during celebrations to mark the six-hundredth anniversary of Serbia's defeat by the Turks".² At the current time, Serbs continue to draw on the legendary heroics of Tsar Lazar.

Recently, a paramilitary group has been formed by Serbs called the Tsar Lazar Guard. This has the aim of achieving, as they see it, the liberation of Kosovo. Although only a minority group within Serbia, and without official sanction, it is indicative of the Serbian attitude towards Kosovo, and the historical claim it has on its territory.

Kosovo independence?

Kosovo is a province of Serbia. However, ninety per cent of its population is Albanian. At the end

1. Sengupta, K. (2007), "We are defending Europe against Muslim aggression", *Independent*, 7 Dec., p. 2.
2. Silber, L. and Little, A. (1995), *The Death of Yugoslavia*, London, Penguin, p. 75.