

# From the Editor's postbag

## Comments on items received from readers

### Fire on Mount Carmel

My article "Elijah versus Baal" ([Feb. 2004, p. 58](#)) caused a reader to write and refer me to an item in the August 1949 issue of *The Testimony*, entitled "A unique Bible Exhibition" (p. 263), in which Brother Arthur Jones briefly reviews an exhibition of items collected by Professor Arthur Freeman illustrating the Bible. Brother Jones draws attention to one exhibit in particular:

"But the most challenging exhibits are two tiny pieces of transparent blue-green crystals, which the Professor takes out of a safe. One of them came from the fused earth on the site of the test explosion of the atomic bomb; the other came from the top of Mount Carmel, Palestine, where, in the contest of Elijah with the prophets of Baal, fire came down from heaven and consumed even the stones of the altar. The point made at this Bible Exhibition is that these two crystals are identical in their nature".

### The sin of anger

A reader has sent an editorial in *The Times* of 29 December last, entitled, "The beastly sin: best not to assume your anger is righteous indignation". Anger is one of the traditional 'seven deadly sins'—not a Biblical concept, though all the 'seven deadly sins' are condemned as sin in the Bible. The article refers to three new ways in which anger is shown in these days:

- road rage, along with all the other forms of rage which are

increasingly prevalent in today's congested conditions

- the rage of football fans, which makes English football hooligans feared throughout the world
- the anger of terrorists, prepared to wreak widespread death and destruction on ordinary people.

Anger is not always sin; Jesus was angry at the way the Pharisees objected to him healing on the sabbath (Mk. 3:5). This is not the place to discuss when anger might be justified, but most anger results from concentration on self rather than others, and lack of self-control, and it often results in violence. We refer to the fact that Jesus said that the days before his return would be like the days of Noah, and twice the Genesis record refers to violence in the days before the Flood (6:11,13). The *Times* article provides further evidence of the truth of this.

### France and the Bible code

In the previous 'Editor's postbag' ([Jan. 2004, p. 23](#)) I drew attention to the researches of a reader who, using the 'Bible code' computer program, had discovered that it indicated that Bulgaria would, more than nearly all other European countries, be favourable to the Jews. This was in fact the case; the Bulgarian nation strongly resisted Hitler's pressure to get it to give up its Jews to the Nazi concentration camps. Our reader, Brother Lyuben Piperov, has now written a paper drawing attention to links found through the Bible code between the Hebrew name for France

and words like 'Pharaoh', 'Egypt' and 'frog'. As with the previous paper, Brother Piperov is happy to email a copy of this one to readers who are interested. His email address is [piperov@sopharma.bg](mailto:piperov@sopharma.bg).

### Darwin celebrated in Shrewsbury

Charles Darwin was born in Shrewsbury in 1809. Though he left there in 1825 on going to university, and did not live there again, Shrewsbury is very proud of its famous son. A reader has sent me a leaflet, "Darwin in Shrewsbury", which begins: "Over 190 years after his birth, the legacy of Darwin's work continues to grow in relevance and importance. Shrewsbury now honours the town's most famous son and his work by organising an annual broad programme of Darwin-related events and activities taking place during the month of his birth and centred in the very town of his birth".

This Darwin festival was established in 2003 with six events. It broadened in 2004 to include sixteen events and four exhibitions, though some, it has to be said, do not seem to have much connection with Darwin. The leaflet also makes it clear that all this is a buildup to 2009, the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his most well-known work, *The Origin of Species* (the leaflet calls it *Origin of The Species*). If the Lord remains away we can expect enormous attention in 2009 on evolution and Darwin's place in establishing it as the normally accepted explanation of the ori-

gin of life. Perhaps this will provide an opportunity to preach Creation and to draw attention to the enormous harm done by the widespread acceptance of evolution, as well as the lack of evidence for it.

### A religious revival

There can be no doubt that Charles Darwin's ideas have played a large part in destroying people's faith in the Bible and belief in God, resulting in church attendances reducing in much of Western Europe year by year. (This is not the case in America, though we cannot go into this now.) In an article in the *Daily Mail* of 10 April, Peter Stanford, who turns out to be a former editor of the *Catholic Herald*, claims to see signs of a religious revival, after religion in the latter part of the twentieth century has been "crucified by science, skepticism and secularism".

The article suggests that this revival in religion is due to the increasing uncertainty in people's minds brought about by the widespread terrorism of recent years and the seeming inability of our leaders to stop it. However, he says, this revival in religion has not brought increased attendances at the mainstream churches, but rather an "'à la carte' approach to religion—to shop around, and mix and match those religious ideas that appeal to the individual".

If what Stanford says is true, then does this indicate more fertile ground for proclaiming the Truth? Stanford clearly would have no time for Christadelphians, for he condemns "bad religion with . . . its insistence on literal interpretations of holy books". People 'shopping around' and adopting whatever religious beliefs take their fancy

is far removed from our fundamental stance that the Bible is God's message to man and gives us no scope for a 'pick and mix' approach to religion. As the wise man Solomon declares: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

But maybe, as the world's problems get worse and life is perceived to be more uncertain, there will be more prepared to take seriously what God is saying to us in His Word, especially if we can find ways of getting people to accept it as God's Word and to see that it has the only real answer to their spiritual needs.

Another article in the same issue of the *Daily Mail* refers to a different form of religious revival. The writer (his name is missing from the cutting) refers to the fact that Trevor Phillips, head of the Commission for Racial Equality, is calling for an end to multiculturalism, which has led to it being regarded in some quarters as 'politically incorrect' for schools to have anything to do with Church festivals such as Christmas and Easter. The writer says he is an atheist but is clearly also a British patriot and therefore welcomes the fact that it has now become acceptable for schools to have nativity plays and carol services after all, regarding them as part of our traditional culture.

What do we make of this? Beside the fact that Christmas is of pagan, not Biblical, origin, nativity plays do not necessarily follow the Biblical account and many carols are not Scriptural, so if there is indeed a revival of these things in schools it does not seem to be a particularly good thing for our children. The author says: "We, as a people,

and the Government, must make strenuous efforts to promote and defend our culture, and especially the place of Christianity in it and the rights to self-expression by Christians". However, the Christianity he refers to would be traditional Church beliefs, not Biblical truth, and in view of our very different beliefs we might be better served by a society with a widespread tolerance for all religious beliefs rather than one that regards Church beliefs and ceremonies as part of our basic culture.

### The People's Bible

It is a curious feature of our times that, despite the lack of belief in the Bible as the Word of God, and lack of respect for its teachings, new versions of the Bible continue to come from the printing presses. The above is the title of a new translation which has recently appeared, and was reviewed in the *Daily Mail* on 9 April. It is by an individual, Sidney Bricto, rather than a committee, and appears in eight separate volumes. The review begins: "It is a particular pleasure to welcome a new translation of the Bible that is based on sound scholarship; that shows a clear understanding of the purposes for which each book was written; that is fully—but not excessively—annotated; and that is rendered in elegant, lucid prose". Not very handy when you want to take the whole Bible to the meeting, but a useful aid for personal Bible reading, we might perhaps think.

As we read further into the review, however, we get a different insight. Books are grouped together according to authorship, with Luke's Gospel being next to the Acts of the

Apostles, for example. The epistles are in order of writing, beginning with 1 Thessalonians and ending with Philemon. 'Nothing wrong with that', we might say; but then we might wonder, 'What about the epistles to Timothy and Titus? Surely they were the last to be written'. The answer is that Mr. Bricto relegates these to an appendix

because many scholars deny they are the authentic letters of Paul.

It gets worse, however. The author sees fit to make additions to the text, extensive in some cases, like the books of Ruth and Esther, others shorter, like adding "taking advantage of her innocence" to the account of the Fall. It is true that these

additions are indicated as such, but there can be no excuse for adding bits to the text of Scripture. The 'people' deserve better than this, and for those who feel they cannot cope with the 400-year-old language of the AV there are modern versions produced with a genuine respect for the Bible as God's Word.

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