

of Bible prophecy. The then Australian prime minister, Mr. Paul Keating, told the gathered crowd at a ceremony held in the village of Noyers-Bocage in Normandy:

“There is a thread in Australia’s history which has always linked [Australia] to France. What the French called liberty, equality and fraternity Australians were inclined to call ‘mateship’ and the ‘fair go’ for all. Australians had in mind the same ideal of a free and fair society. A better place for all men and women” (*The Australian*, 7 Jun. 1994, p. 2).

Here is evidence (albeit from the leaders of the day) that the three unclean spirits like frogs are “spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14, NIV). God has used many leaders throughout history to bring about His purpose in whichever way He feels fit, and He will continue to do so until all is in readiness for the return of Jesus Christ and his confrontation against the nations of the earth. By presenting his article, Brother Bernard has encouraged us to focus on the way in which God is working through the leaders of our day, because, as he states at the beginning of his article, this is but more evidence that “we are indeed living in the last days”.

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## The Roman persecution of Christians

In his letter under the above heading ([Oct. 2002, p. 376](#)), Brother David Noakes concludes with a query: “Was Paul . . . as a brother with the credentials of a Roman citizen, intent on travelling to Rome to gain from the emperor the formal approval of the State for the gospel? If so, does it mean that his intention had the Master’s approval, yet ultimately failed?”. No reply to his query has been forthcoming and perhaps the following might help.

The Apostle Paul’s path to Rome was dictated by a commission and two incidents. One incident occurred at a crossroads in his later life, but from which there was really only one way possible. The other incident may have provided further motivation for making his appeal to Caesar.

Paul’s commission came from the Lord Jesus via the disciple Ananias: “Go thy way: for he is a

chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). The apostle appeared before the two Roman officers, Felix and Porcius Festus, and also before King Herod Agrippa II. But really there was only one independent king in the Roman Empire and that was the emperor himself.

The first of the two incidents is that of his arrest in Jerusalem and the subsequent events, as detailed in Acts 22–26. Here was a crossroads, for, though Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar” (26:32), Paul would have been conscious of the fact that certain Jews had vowed to murder him (23:21), so he could not have taken that road to freedom. To Rome he must go, for he would have been aware of the law *Lex Julia de ui Publica*, enacted by Augustus Caesar, which ensured that any Roman citizen anywhere in the empire, having made an appeal to Caesar, had to be brought before the emperor unharmed.

The second incident happened earlier, when Paul was at Corinth. Acts 18 records: “And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law” (vv. 12,13). What happened next was quite startling, and must have taken both Paul and his accusers completely by surprise: “And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters” (vv. 14,15).

This is what we would call today a ‘test case’. Gallio’s words, “but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law”, effectively linked the Christian way to Judaism. Since the latter was not a proscribed religion, Christianity, linked to it by the judgement of this Roman governor, would not now be regarded as proscribed, at least for the time being.

We can only surmise what was in Paul’s mind when he made his appeal to Caesar. Was he thinking back to Gallio’s judgement seven to eight years earlier? Now, thanks to his own labours, it was no longer proper to record Christianity as merely an offshoot of Judaism, since it was manifestly more Gentile than Jewish. A

favourable hearing before the Gentile emperor might win recognition for the Christian way.

In connection with this, if it was Paul's intention to act in this way, it would be precarious for us to set limits to his high hopes, however improbable in retrospect they are to us, who know the monster Nero became. *Lempriere's Classical Dictionary* informs us that "The beginning of Nero's reign was marked with acts of greatest kindness and condescension and affability, complaisance and popularity" (p. 437). This possibly was the emperor Paul expected to meet. But Lempriere goes on to say: "These promising virtues were soon discovered to be artificial, and Nero, displaying the flagitious propensities of his nature, soon delivered himself from the sway of his mother and at last ordered her to be assassinated".

Nevertheless, it is the general opinion that at the end of the two years in his own rented house in the care of a soldier, Paul was granted a trial before Nero which resulted in his acquittal, possibly because his accusers had not presented themselves at the time.

A discerning reading of the two letters to Timothy will detect a difference in atmosphere between the first and the second. In the former, Paul was able to make arrangements for travel as a free man: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly" (3:14); "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (4:13).

However, in the second letter, underlying the obvious affection of the great apostle for his son in the faith, there is a note of misgiving and anxiety. We cannot be surprised at this if we think about his situation. Paul, again a prisoner, was not now in a "hired house" (Acts 28:30) but, as some think, in the dark, damp, fetid Tullianum, known as 'the Sepulchre', for many in it were slowly eaten alive by rats. After the great fire of Rome in A.D. 64, which was blamed on our early brethren and sisters, hosts of whom were put to horrible deaths, it was a crime to be a Christian, and such were savagely persecuted. This development must account for Paul being so forsaken (2 Tim. 4:10,11), and for his great gratitude to Onesiphorus for having risked his life to visit him (1:16-18).

It is with great sadness that we view the ignominious end of Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, the power of whose words, charged as they were with feeling, has rarely been equalled. Through his letters, particularly that to Rome, Christian-

ity received an intellectual presentation which gave it a standing in the world for ages to come. Here, in that awful prison, he could write to Timothy, his young son in the faith, and to us also in our day, without a shred of boasting: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (4:7).

Regarding the second part of the question ([see above](#)), if it was Paul's intention to petition the emperor on behalf of the Brotherhood, it was unlikely that he would have gained sympathy for his high hopes from a man like Nero. But can this be labelled as a failure? The fertile minds of brethren and sisters, past and present, have always been seeking new ways to preach the gospel and advance the Truth. Not to have tried would have been a failure.

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### The importance of Aramaic

I read with interest the article of the above title by Brother Dennis M. Elliott (Dec. 2002, p. 459). As Christadelphians reject the existence of 'demons', George Lamsa's translation of Matthew 8:28-34 and Mark 5:1-20 from the Aramaic should be of particular interest, as there is no reference to 'demons' in the Aramaic manuscript from which he translated (the Mortimer McCawley Manuscript).

I am not surprised that Brother Elliott received some opposition to his article, as expressed by Brother Ewan MacLeod in "Hebrew and Greek important, not Aramaic" (Feb. 2003, p. 53). Many Christadelphians, astute Bible students as they may be, seem loathe seriously to consider anything other than the AV. Brother MacLeod presented his concerns quite well, but he is not correct in stating that Josephus' works were written entirely in the Greek language; *The Wars of the Jews* was written in Aramaic. His works that were written in Greek were, according to the experts, a very poor attempt at classical Greek, with Josephus himself stating that he found Greek very difficult, and that Jews would rather feed their children swine's flesh than undertake learning that language.

The question was also raised in the February correspondence regarding the meaning of 'Hebrew', as in "Abram the Hebrew" (Gen. 14:13). It is not necessarily the case that 'Hebrew' here indicates a descendant of Eber, as stated by