



Germany—Gomer, not Magog?

Nigel Bernard

IN REVELATION 17 a great beast is described: “So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (v. 3). This beast represents Catholic Europe, consisting of several countries joined in a way reminiscent of the Holy Roman Empire. These countries include France and Germany. At the time of the end the countries which make up the beast will be united: “These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (v. 13).

In January of this year France and Germany held a joint meeting of their parliaments in Versailles to mark forty years of ‘official’ friendship. Their show of unity, a sign that the conditions prophesied in Revelation 17 are coming to pass, was underpinned with proposals to bring their countries even closer together. As one commentator stated:

“The French President, Jacques Chirac, and the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, announced a series of symbolic and practical measures to allow the two former enemies to act in a range of areas—from economics to diplomacy to sport—as if they were a single state. There was even talk of allowing, at an unspecified time, all French and German people to claim citizenship of the other country”.¹

It might seem far-fetched to expect the citizens of these countries to share joint citizenship. However, whatever may happen in the short-term, for Germany and France, and the other countries which give support to the beast, their ultimate end will be destruction: “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (19:20).

Another way in which insight can be gained about the role of Germany at the time of the end is to discern how it fits into the prophecy of Ezekiel 38. In verse 2 it is written: “Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him”.

Traditionally, many Christadelphians have identified Germany, along with other countries, as being the land of Magog. Magog was one of the sons of Japheth: “The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras” (Gen. 10:2). The first of these sons, Gomer, is also mentioned in Ezekiel 38: “Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee” (v. 6). In this article we will examine how Germany fits into Ezekiel 38. As will be shown, it is more accurate to link Germany with Gomer than with Magog.

Brethren’s views

Amongst Christadelphian writers, even those who share essentially the same views about Bible prophecy, there is a broad approach to identifying which country or countries Magog relates to at the time of the end.

In *Elpis Israel* Brother Thomas said the following: “We have seen that Magogue is the region extending from the Ros, or Russia, to the Rhine, comprehending Wallachia, Transylvania, Hungary, and Germany”.² In 1859 he gave a much broader view of Magog: “The settlements of the Magog extended to the Baltic; and are known in history as the Scythians, Mongols, Tartars,

1. Lichfield, J. (2003), “France and Germany celebrate 40-year axis that drives EU”, *Independent*, 23 Jan., p. 11.
2. Thomas, J. (1924, 11th edition), *Elpis Israel*, Birmingham, p. 429.

Sarmatians, Germans, Scandinavians, and so forth”.³ In *Eureka* he seems to opt primarily for Germany, but ends up including a large number of other countries: “‘Without the City’ there is Germany, in its largest sense, styled by Ezekiel ‘Magog’ . . . This Magog, or land of Gog, will include Prussia, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Russia, and Poland”.⁴

Recent writings in the Brotherhood also suggest a broad spread of countries relating to Magog. For example, one writer states: “. . . the land of Magog includes territory stretching across Russia to the Ukraine, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Hungary and as far as Germany”.⁵ On the other hand, another writer opts for more emphasis on Russia: “We identify the power [Gog] with Russia because she is the modern power which, with her confederate Independent States, occupies today the territories of the ancient Scythians—the Magog known to Ezekiel”.⁶ Given the wide range of countries that appear to be possible candidates for Magog, it is perhaps understandable that Brother H. P. Mansfield opted for the following interpretation: “In Ezekiel 38, Magog is a general name for the northern nations, and Gog is their prince”.⁷

Josephus

A key piece of historical evidence for identifying Gomer and Magog is this passage from Josephus:

“. . . for Gomer founded those whom the Greeks now call Galatians, (Galls,) but were then called Gomerites. Magog founded those that from him were named Magogites, but who are by the Greeks called Scythians”.⁸

In this article it will be assumed that Josephus is correct in identifying the Gomerites with the ‘Galls’ (Gauls), or Celts, and the Magogites with the Scythians. We will now discuss the location of the lands of the Celts and Scythians, with special reference to Germany.

Herodotus

In *Elpis Israel* Brother Thomas uses as his primary source for identifying the Scythians the writings of Herodotus:

“Herodotus, the most ancient Greek writer accessible, acquaints us ‘that the name Scythæ was a name given by the Greeks to an ancient and widely extended people of Europe, who had spread themselves from the river Tanais, or Don, westward along the banks of the Ister, or Danube’”.⁹

This quotation is actually difficult to identify in the writings of Herodotus, even using word searches on computerised copies on the Internet. Quotations such as these were often not properly referenced in the writings of Brother Thomas. It is true that the Scythians reached the Danube, or Ister, as Herodotus called it; however, they did not spread along its banks as far as Germany. Brother Thomas even gives the impression that Herodotus claimed that the Scythians actually originated in Europe but then “turned back upon the European seats of their fathers, and established themselves in Asia”.¹⁰ A consideration of the original text of Herodotus, albeit in translation, in fact provides a slightly different emphasis from what is often assumed by brethren.

Herodotus lists eight rivers from west to east which ran through Scythia. The first is the Ister: “The Ister is of all the rivers with which we are acquainted the mightiest. It never varies in height, but continues at the same level summer and winter. Counting from the west it is the first of the Scythian rivers . . .”.¹¹ The Danube, then, was on the western edge of Scythia. The eastern edge was marked by the eighth river identified by Herodotus: “The eighth river is the Tanais . . .”.¹² The Tanais, as Brother Thomas indicates, is known today as the Don. So far, the quotations made from Herodotus might seem to fit in with what Brother Thomas wrote concerning the Scythians. However, when we consider more of what Herodotus said about the Danube a different picture emerges from that presented by Brother Thomas.

3. Thomas, J. (1859), “Gog of the Land of Magog”, *Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, Vol. 9, No. 8, pp. 184-8.
4. Thomas, J. (1921), *Eureka*, Birmingham, Vol. 3, p. 436.
5. Billington, P. (1996), *United Europe: From the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains of Russia*, Prince George, The Bible Magazine, p. 20.
6. Allfree, J. (1999), *Ezekiel*, Hawthorndene, Christadelphian Scripture Study Service, p. 395.
7. Mansfield, H. P. (1980), *The Book of Revelation*, West Beach, Logos Publications, p. 238.
8. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book I.VI.1, in Whiston, W. (trans.) (1898), *The works of Flavius Josephus*, London, Routledge, p. 33.
9. *Op. cit.*, p. 426.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Herodotus (1996), *Histories*, Ware, Wordsworth Editions Limited, Book Four, 48, p. 321.
12. *Ibid.*, Book Four, 57, p. 324.

Herodotus wrote:

“For the Ister flows through the whole extent of Europe, rising in the country of the Celts (the most westerly of all the nations of Europe, excepting the Cynetians), and thence running across the continent till it reaches Scythia, whereof it washes the flanks”.¹³

Scythia, according to Herodotus, did not extend far along the Danube. The Danube had to run “across the continent” of Europe before it reached Scythia. What is even more significant, however, is that the source of the Danube was in “the country of the Celts”. The source of the Danube is in Germany, the ‘official’ source being a pool in a place called Donaueschingen.¹⁴

The archaeologist Lloyd Laing wrote of how the Celts came from, amongst other places, the area covered by modern Germany: “The first civilized victims of Celtic expansion were the northern Etruscans in Italy who, in the fifth century BC witnessed their towns sacked by Celts from eastern France, Germany and Switzerland”.¹⁵ The *Times Atlas of World History* says the following: “From their heartland on the Rhine and Upper Danube, Celtic groups spread to [modern] France and Czechoslovakia by the 6th century; by the 3rd century they had replaced the Scythians in the Middle Danube . . .”.¹⁶

Notice how this statement acknowledges that Scythian influence did spread to the middle Danube. As Talbot Rice, in her classic book about the Scythians, states: “Scythian influence first made its mark in Hungary round about the year 500 B.C., when the foremost wave of Scythians penetrated to the area”.¹⁷ However, the upper Danube was, if anything, Celtic, not Scythian. This is not to say that Germany is devoid of Scythian influence. As Talbot Rice shows, evidence of Scythian and kindred nomad burials, for example, have been found in Germany at Plohmühlen and Vetersfeld. Nevertheless, there was no significant Scythian influx into what is today modern Germany.

German identity

An anthropologist, Peter Wells, has written a book entitled *Beyond Celts, Germans and Scythians*, which provides a very helpful insight into the relationship between these three peoples. From the outset we need to heed his warning that Herodotus’ use of the term ‘Celt’ is ambiguous. He writes that “archaeologists have used Herodotus’ assertion to link the peoples around

the upper Danube during the fifth century BC with the name Celt”.¹⁸ He goes on to warn, however, that “Herodotus provides no information about his concept of ethnicity, the basis of his ascription or boundaries between Celts and other groups”. However, whilst Herodotus cannot be used to establish precise identities of an area which was far away from where he lived and to which he certainly never travelled, he provides an overall world view from a Greek perspective. Wells takes hold of this world view and seeks to determine how the specific identity of the Germans emerged. He writes:

“From the time of Herodotus, Greek and Roman writers referred to peoples of western and central Europe as Celts or Gauls. Caesar was the first to write extensively about the peoples he called Germans and to distinguish them from Celts . . .

“Germans lived east of the Rhine, while the Celts lived west of it, for the most part. In the prevailing Greek cultural-geographical model of Europe to their north, the Celts occupied the lands to the west, the Scythians to the east. In Caesar’s portrayal, the Germans inhabited a zone between these two”.¹⁹

Applying Wells’ analysis in a Biblical perspective, Gomer (the Celts) is to the west and Magog (Scythia) is in the east. The Germans are seen as being a subset of the Celts, that is, they should be regarded as being one of the countries referred to by the term Gomer.

Wells provides evidence from Strabo and Dio to strengthen this claim:

“The Greek geographer Strabo considered the Germans not as a distinct people, but as part of the larger group known as Celts. And the Greek historian of Rome Cassius Dio, writing around AD 200, used the geographical term *Keltica* to designate the region that Romans called *Germania*”.²⁰

13. *Ibid.*, Book Four, 49, p. 322.

14. Bolwell, L. (1985), *A Journey Down the Danube*, Hove, Wayland.

15. Laing, L. (1981), *Celtic Britain*, London, Paladin, p. 19.

16. Barraclough, G. (editor) (1986), *The Times Atlas of World History*, London, Times Books, p. 84.

17. Talbot Rice, T. (1958), *The Scythians*, London, Thames and Hudson, p. 189.

18. Wells, P. S. (2001), *Beyond Celts, Germans and Scythians*, London, Duckworth, p. 77.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 116-7.

The thesis of Wells is that it was the action of Caesar that led to a distinct German identity emerging from amongst the Celtic people: "In this sense, we can understand Caesar's representing the groups he called Germans, not as a people ethnically distinct from the Gauls, but as groups very like the Gauls whose situation had changed drastically because of his actions".²¹ As he further writes: "Neither the linguistic nor the archaeological evidence supports the distinction that Caesar made between Gauls west of the Rhine and Germans, as a distinct people, east of the river".²²

This interpretation, which plays down the ethnic distinctiveness of the Germans, is in some ways a reaction against the alternative views expressed by nationalistic German historians from the latter half of the nineteenth century through to the Nazi era in the twentieth century, when claims were made that the German race could be traced back many thousands of years.²³ Malcolm Todd, in a book about the early history of the Germans, warns against these two extremes. For his part, he accepts that ancestors of the people who eventually became the Germans can be traced back to roughly the mid-first millennium B.C., when the so-called Jastorf culture existed in the north German plain, but "the Germans were first certainly distinguished from the other peoples of northern Europe in the early first century BC, or possibly late in the fourth century".²⁴ Todd acknowledges that early Germans had contact with Scythians. Talbot Rice also wrote of archaeological evidence showing that "the western Scythians and eastern Celts were in some sort of touch with one another".²⁵ But Todd makes no claim that the land of the Germans was once the land of the Scythians.

There is a passage in Josephus where he mentions both Germans and Scythians: "At the very same time with the fore-mentioned revolt of the Germans did the bold attempt of the Scythians against the Romans occur; for those Scythians who are called Sarmatians, being a very numerous people, transported themselves over the Danube into Mysia . . .".²⁶ This passage is quoted because we see that Josephus regarded the Germans and Scythians as separate peoples. Josephus regarded the Scythians, not the Germans, as Magogites.

Conclusion

It seems to the present writer that the identification of Magog with Germany cannot be sustained.

Scythia, the land of Magog, is what we would call Ukraine and southern Russia. Indeed, some think that the descendants of the Scythians can still be identified in this area today: "Yet, scholars say, a remnant of the Scythians endures in the 700,000 Ossetians, whose homeland today is a two-part enclave straddling the Caucasus Mountains. North Ossetia, the larger part, lies within Russia, while South Ossetia intrudes into Georgia. The Ossetians declare that their ancestors were the Alans, a tribe in which survived the genes of both Scythians and Sarmatians, who came after them from the Asian steppe".²⁷

In Daniel 7 the destruction of the beast at the return of Christ is described, just as it is in Revelation. However, there will be other powers which will not be destroyed:

"I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time" (vv. 11,12).

One of the powers which will not be destroyed is typified in Revelation as the dragon. This represents the Russian power, which invades south and will occupy a position similar to that of the Eastern Roman Empire. This power will be punished with fire: "And I will send a fire on Magog" (Ezek. 39:6); but it will not be destroyed. Instead it will be constrained: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and

21. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

23. The tendency of nationalistic historians to overemphasise the longevity and indigenous nature of their respective peoples finds an interesting parallel in current historical thought in Israel. According to Dr David Rohl, in a public lecture given in Solihull on 5 October 2002, many Israeli historians reject the account of the patriarchs coming to Israel and the account of the Exodus, preferring instead to argue that the Jews were an indigenous people who had been in the land just as long as the Canaanites. This supposedly strengthens the Jewish claim to it being their land!

24. Todd, M. (1995), *The Early Germans*, Oxford, Blackwell, p. 10.

25. *Op. cit.*, p. 189.

26. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book VII.IV.3, *op. cit.*, p. 664.

27. Edwards, M. (1996), "Searching for the Scythians", *National Geographic*, Vol. 190, No. 3, pp. 54-79.

Satan, and bound him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:2; cf. Ps. 2:3). At the end of the thousand years this power will have its constraints removed: “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea” (vv. 7,8). So Gog and Magog are not completely destroyed at the return of Christ. At the end of the thousand years they will be still in existence, the beasts who had

“their dominion taken away” but their lives prolonged. In this regard we see, then, a distinction between Magog and the Germanic European beast, something which is consistent with what has been shown in the rest of this article.

So should we identify Germany with Gomer? There is no doubt that Gomer relates to France. Is it really correct to say that this name relates to both France *and* Germany in Bible prophecy? Are the French and Germans all really Gomerites? Maybe joint citizenship is not such a far-fetched idea after all.



Reviews

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“Hast thou considered My servant Job . . . ?”*

Geoff Henstock

JOB HOLDS a fascination for many Bible readers. The drama of the story, the literary form used and the lofty themes can combine to intimidate, enthrall and intrigue at the same time. There seems to be a myriad of views on a great many questions relating to the book; the identity of Satan, the character of Job’s friends, the role of Elihu in the record have all provided fertile territory for expositors and students.

In our community a number of writers have ventured to expound all or part of the book. Brother C. C. Walker’s pamphlet *Job* was followed in the 1950s by Brother Ralph Lovelock’s more detailed study, also entitled simply *Job*. In more recent times Brother Cyril Tennant’s *The Book of Job* has complemented these works. Brother L. G. Sargent also wrote several chapters on Job which are published in his *Ecclesiastes and Other Studies*. In addition there have been study notes prepared by a number of brethren, including Brother Don Styles, Brother Ted Russell and Brother Klaus Papowski, and articles in several of our magazines. It is not surprising that each of these works differs in its approach to and interpretation of certain key elements of the record. A book like Job is not susceptible to simple answers.

Brother David Baird’s new book *The Education of Job* acknowledges the work of those who have gone before, and builds on it. Clearly the product of many years of study, this book of 312 pages provides a comprehensive analysis of all parts of the book. It does not shy away from difficult questions, nor does it pretend to have all the answers. Even though it is a detailed exposition, it is remarkably readable, the readability enhanced by the limited use of quite appropriate humour. It gives equal attention to all forty-two chapters of the book. Valuable exhortational points are incorporated throughout the book. It is particularly strong in drawing out how the principles discussed in the book relate to the Lord Jesus Christ and his atoning work. Brother Baird’s discussion of leviathan is particularly good in this regard.

* *The Education of Job*, David Baird, published by the Christadelphian Scripture Study Service and available from CSSS agents. In the UK available from Brother Peter Talbot, 6 Ridge Lane, Radcliffe-on-Trent, NG12 1BD, tel./fax 0115-933-3683, email talbotpj@aol.com, price £9.25 per copy plus postage (£2.71 for a single copy).