

at great length about politics but we do not address local political issues, where we could have the most effect, like Jeremiah and the prophets of old.

- 4 The first three chapters of the Bible demonstrate that God's way of dealing with mankind is firstly to give them generous blessings and then curse those blessings if men disobey. This practice has been carried on by the Almighty ever since, as seen in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, and culminating in the last book of the Old Testament: "I will curse your blessings" (Mal. 2:2).
- 5 There should be a great increase in proclaiming the mighty acts of the Lord of hosts, His judgements on the wicked: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11).
- 6 We need to understand the importance of the ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Ex. 20:16), in social life, and preach honesty much more forcibly. Judas has a great number of followers in modern life; he was a devil and so are his followers.
- 7 We must remember that we are not just generic Christians, we are Bible Christians.

8 We pray, "Thy will be done in earth" (Mt. 6:10); let us preach as we pray.

In all these things the principle is, "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [Gentile]" (Rom. 1:16). Big changes are needed in gospel proclamation; we need to be a lot less shy of what some people might think of us, and remember instead, "Thou God seest me" (Gen. 16:13).

Arthur Fletcher
Melbourne, Australia

I take it that under item 3 Brother Fletcher does not mean voting and standing for election, but rather exerting pressure on local leaders for things to be done in conformity with God's principles. However, I think he is on doubtful grounds here. Israel was God's nation, supposedly being ruled under God's laws, and it was right that attempts should have been made to get things done in accordance with God's laws. I see no evidence in the Acts or the epistles that early believers in Gentile lands were expected to do the same, and I cannot therefore see any Biblical precedent for doing what Brother Fletcher advocates, especially as the prophets were men commissioned and inspired by God for their work, which we are not.—T.B.

From the Editor's postbag

Comments on items received from readers

Jonah and Yanush

The article "The story of Jonah and the Yanush legend" ([Jun. 2001, p. 258](#)) has prompted a letter from a reader enclosing a number of items of interest.

The article mentioned two cases where people have been swallowed by whales and emerged alive. These were referred to in correspondence in *The Christadelphian* (Mar. 1988, p. 108; Apr. 1988, p. 153), one letter expressing doubt as to the authenticity of these cases on the basis that the stomachs of large mammals are full of liquid, and no one could therefore survive being swallowed by a whale. (There was of course no doubt expressed about the truth

of the miraculous event recorded in the book of Jonah.)

In August 1928 (p. 352), under the heading "Jonah and the whale", *The Christadelphian* published an article from the *Daily Telegraph* of 17 February 1928 entitled "Jonah's whale. Scientific support for Bible narrative. Some modern parallels". This was by E. G. Boulenger, Director of the Zoological Society's Aquarium. Our correspondent has provided a copy of both *The Christadelphian* article and the original in the *Daily Telegraph*. The articles explained that the sperm whale has a gullet which is easily big enough to swallow a man. Nothing is said about the stomach of a sperm

whale being full of fluid, and the case of James Bartley (incorrectly printed as Barkley in the *Testimony* article) is stated to have been carefully investigated and authenticated by French scientists.

Nevertheless, Mr Boulenger is somewhat sceptical of the ability of humans to survive for long in a whale's stomach due to the heat (106 degrees Fahrenheit) and lack of water, the lack of air, and the effect of the whale's digestive juices. There can be no doubt that the survival of Jonah for three days and nights in the whale's stomach was a miracle.

The *Testimony* article referred to an Assyrian belief in a legen-

dary fish/man divinity called Yanush, which might have helped them to accept Jonah as a Divinely sent messenger. Our correspondent refers to some interesting material in Alexander Hislop's book *The Two Babylons* on this. This legendary fish/man is depicted on Assyrian monuments as wearing a scaly cloak and a two-horned mitre resembling a fish's mouth that bears a remarkable resemblance to the papal two-horned mitre (see illustration, [Jun. 2001](#), p 261). He links this with the coming of pagan beliefs and practices into the Church when Constantine adopted Christianity and corrupted it more than it was already.

As part of the adoption of pagan ideas, he sees the increasingly common practice in those days of representing Christ under the symbol of a fish as being derived from the ancient worship of a fish/man god. This symbol has had a revival in recent years; a metal outline of a fish is sometimes seen affixed to the rear of cars to indicate the owner's Christianity. It is allegedly derived from the fact that the initial letters of 'Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world' in Greek make the Greek word for fish.

Our correspondent also says that he remembers hearing a brother say in an address that the remains of a temple dedicated to a man vomited up by a whale have been found on the coast of the Mediterranean somewhere, but he has not been able to confirm this.

Declining Christianity

The leaders of the two main churches in Britain were in the news in early September when they referred to the severe decline in belief in Christianity in Britain. This was discussed in

an article in the *Daily Mail* for 7 September, sent by a reader. It reports that Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor of the Roman Catholics said: "Christianity as a sort of backdrop to people's lives and moral decisions, and to the Government and the social life of the country, has now almost been vanquished . . . There is indifference to Christian values and to the Church among many young people, and indeed not only the young". He went on to say that many people were caught up in alcohol, drugs, and pornography, and people sought for spiritual values in music, new age movements, occult practices and green issues. His concerns were echoed by Gorge Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, who has previously declared that Britain is now a place where "tacit atheism prevails".

Liberal members of the Church of England were critical of this assessment, claiming that "Christian values" were widely held in society. What they actually meant by Christian values seems, however, to be mere humanism, for among the supposed "Christian values" now widely held is tolerance of what the Bible condemns as sin.

Two other cuttings passed to me by readers illustrate the problem with the established churches, their failure to accept that the Bible is the Word of God and is the only source of enlightenment about God and His purpose. The first is from *The Times* of 23 July, and it reports the fact that a Church of England clergyman, once Canon of Windsor, and now retired and living in Uppingham in Rutland, has been banned from preaching in his local church because of what he said about the Bible.

The following is a quote from what he wrote in the bulletin of the Society of Ordained Scientists: "People talk about the Bible being the Word of God. That can be so misleading. In fact, the elevation of the Bible to close on divine status has done more damage to the Christian message than all the slings and arrows of the sceptics. The Bible helps to point to the Word of God, but it is not the Word of God". (We are not told what he thinks the Word of God actually is.) Most of the Church of England would be happy with this statement. However, it so happens that Uppingham church belongs to the more traditional wing of the Church of England, and so his views are not acceptable there.

The other article was from a newspaper local to the area where I live. A Roman Catholic priest wrote, in his regular column, about Eastern religions, saying: ". . . the Catholic Church has come to understand that all the great religions of the world reveal something of the mystery that is God. There is something eternal to be found in all religions, essential truths that lie behind the dogmas and the rites. It is that which cannot be known through the mind, but only from the heart, the faith centre. It is here where true religion is to be found". There could hardly be a greater contrast between this and the Bible's own teaching that faith is believing what God has said in His Word, and that salvation is only through Jesus Christ. We understand that this same priest has stonewalled attempts by one of his parishioners, who does the daily Bible readings and enjoys considering them with local brethren and sisters, to organise a Bible reading group.

Bible prophecy on the BBC?

A very different attitude is, however, shown by a London-based Roman Catholic priest and *Testimony* reader, who wrote to Alan Bookbinder, the new head of religious programming at the BBC, to urge him to broadcast material on Bible prophecy. The reply, copied to me by our reader, was predictable: "Interesting though it is, and much though I admire your commitment, I am afraid I do not believe that Bible Prophecy is likely to win a place in the BBC's schedules".

Our correspondent makes the following suggestion in a covering letter: "There is a body which, over the past century and a half, has a truly proud record in promoting the particular subject at issue [Bible prophecy]. I refer of course to the body founded by the great Doctor Thomas. It seems to me that it would be very fitting for members of that body to write to Alan Bookbinder, and also perhaps to Greg Dyke, the Director General of the BBC, whose office is at Television Centre, Wood Lane, London, W12 7RJ. It is just possible that good quality, sincere letters may lead to a change of policy by the BBC". Mr Bookbinder is Head of Religion and Ethics, and based at New Broadcasting House, PO Box 27, Oxford Road, Manchester, M60 1SJ; e-mail: Alan.Bookbinder@bbc.co.uk.

Mr Bookbinder's appointment caused some controversy because the job has gone for the first time to someone who admits he has no personal faith, though he has a Jewish father and a Roman Catholic mother. The post was apparently difficult to fill; the previous occupant retired in January, complaining that the BBC had marginalised

religious programmes, and Mr Bookbinder did not take up his appointment till 30 July.

Our correspondent also included some cuttings from the *English Churchman*, including a complaint from the Bishop of Birmingham about the fact that the BBC had reduced religious broadcasts and scheduled them at times when audiences are small. The bishop suggested that the latter was in order to claim lack of interest and make further cuts.

In a comment the journal itself says, regarding the claim that religious broadcasts are boring: "What makes for boring religious programmes is the endless procession of dud speakers who spout politically correct platitudes and think they are being frightfully clever. The way to be original, interesting and provocative is to say what the Bible says. Most religious speakers are invited because they can be trusted not to do just that. They are dry wells and broken cisterns. Hence their boring programmes". Anyone who listens to BBC Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day' at breakfast time will surely echo these comments.

An MP stands up for the Bible and the Jews

From the same source came to me an item about a Conservative MP who gave a quite remarkable testimony to the return of the Jews to Israel being in accordance with what the Bible says. This was not a current MP, but one Sir John Haslam, speaking on 20 July 1939 in a debate on the White Paper about the future of Palestine. This is what he said, according to *Hansard*, the journal which provides a verbatim record of what is said in parliament:

"I propose to take particular notice of the Bible. It has been my guide, philosopher and friend in this world, and I am hoping that it will be until I reach the next. The law of this country insists that the Archbishop of Canterbury, before he puts the crown on the head of the king, shall take the Bible and say: 'These are the oracles of God. This is the most precious thing in the world'.

"Lord Balfour saw the Jews scattered over the countries of the world. He knew that many of them had a hunger. That hunger was then, and is now, centred on Palestine, the Promised Land. Promised to whom? Promised by whom? It was promised by God to the Jewish people. Almost every book in the Old Testament, and many in the New, repeat that promise. I hope that all honourable members know the book of Deuteronomy, one of the greatest books in the greatest series of books ever bound together. I want to quote from the 34th chapter: 'The Lord showed Moses all the land of Gilead unto Dan, unto the utmost sea, and unto Jericho, the city of palm trees. The Lord said to him: this is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto your seed'. I will content myself with one more quotation. It is from Amos, chapter 9, verses 14,15: 'I shall restore My people Israel. They shall build the waste cities. I shall plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be uprooted out of their land'. This is being fulfilled today. This

generation, this nation, and this House, should assist in fulfilling that promise”.

Regrettably, Britain did not assist at that stage in fulfilling the promise, but tended to take the side of the Arabs; yet in the end God ensured that the promise was fulfilled, and the nation of Israel came into existence nine years later. It is unlikely today that any MP would make such comments, quoting from the Bible as Sir John Haslam did. Instead, pressure is being exerted on Israel to give up some of the land promised to them by God. What Sir John did not seem to recognise is that God's promise to Israel cannot really be fulfilled until His Son returns and destroys the enemies who would prevent her from living peacefully in the land.

Osama bin Laden declares his intentions

The terrorist attacks on America on 11 September came as an enormous shock. Yet there was no excuse for not having recognised the threat posed by the man who was rapidly identified as being behind the attacks, Osama bin Laden. The following extracts from a letter in *The Times* of 17 September, sent by a reader, show this to be so:

“In February 1998, Osama bin Laden founded the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders. On February 23, the Arab newspaper *al-Quds al-Arabi* carried the group's founding statement. It listed America's three crimes as the occupation of the lands of Islam in the Arabian peninsula, the devastation inflicted on the Iraqi people by 'the Jewish-Crusader alliance', and its support for the

Jews' 'petty state' and the occupation of Jerusalem.

“The statement said that these crimes amounted to 'a clear declaration of war by the Americans against God, his prophet, and the Muslims'. It then went on to declare, in the form of a fatwa attributed to Osama bin Laden, that 'to kill Americans and their allies, both civilian and military, [is] an individual duty of every Muslim', anywhere and at any time.

“Backing these words with actions, a simultaneous attack was launched on August 7, 1998, on the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, killing more than 260 people and injuring 5,000 others”.

This letter was from Joe de Courcy, chief executive of Asia Intelligence Ltd.

Background to the attack on Afghanistan

At the time of writing this, Afghanistan is still being pounded by American planes, and there is a widespread expectation that this will be followed by a land invasion in order to overthrow the Taliban leadership and install a new régime more favourable to the West. A correspondent from the USA links this with comments made in the previous 'Editor's Postbag' under the heading, "Russia's control of gas supplies" ([Aug. 2001, p. 325](#)), and draws attention to what he heard in a radio broadcast in September.

There are major supplies of oil and natural gas in a number of Central Asian countries once part of the former Soviet Union, and the USA would prefer that as much as possible of these supplies reaches the coast in countries favourable to the USA,

rather than through Russia. Installation of a pro-West régime in Afghanistan would open up a route to Pakistan and the Indian Ocean for oil and gas pipelines from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. There is therefore a long-term strategic objective in the present war. This begs the question of why Russia is supporting the American invasion, but we know not what devious games are being played by world leaders behind the scenes.

Our correspondent encloses some background information gleaned from the Internet about the Khyber Pass, the narrow thirty-three-mile-long passage through the Hindu Kush mountains between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This has long been known as a strategic gateway between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent, and has gained a new prominence in the present crisis. Through here came the forces of the Persian Empire, the ram of Daniel 8, under Darius, then the forces of the Greek he-goat under its "notable horn", Alexander the Great. After the uprise of Islam in the seventh century A.D. a succession of Muslim invaders came through the pass, creating a religious division in the Indian subcontinent that still exists today, and necessitating the establishment of the separate nations of India and Pakistan when Britain withdrew her colonial rule.

The Cardo

In the July issue ([p. XIV](#)) we published a picture of the Cardo, the main street of Roman Jerusalem, and said that the name was thought to be derived from the Latin for 'heart'. A reader has commented: "Hadrian not being a noted philhellene [lover of things Greek] was more likely

to name it from the Latin *cardo*, 'a hinge', rather than the Greek *kardia*, 'heart'".

In fact the Latin *cardiacus* is derived from the Greek *kardia*, so there is no need to suppose that Hadrian had Greek in mind. Also, it was not that Hadrian, on building a Roman city on the site of Jerusalem, decided to call the main street 'the Cardo'; the Romans called the main street of a city 'the Cardo' or 'Cardo Maximus' anyway. I recall, when I first saw the Cardo in 1988, being told that the name was thought to be derived from the Latin for 'heart'. Most of the books I have that mention it do not refer to the origin of the name, but one, *Jerusalem: A Walk Through Time*, says that the name is thought to come from the Latin for 'pivot' (presumably the same word as that given by our correspondent), because it was the street round which city life revolved, though it does refer to the alternative view that it comes from the Latin for 'heart'.

Climate matters again

Items continue to be received on climate issues, but not this time in support of the theory of global warming due to greenhouse gases and the need to radically change the way we live, a common theme today.

An article in the *Daily Mail* for 7 September draws attention to evidence that the Gulf Stream, the ocean current which brings warm water from the Caribbean

area to Britain's shores, has slowed down by twenty per cent over the last fifty years. It is the Gulf Stream which makes Britain and northwest Europe much milder in winter than they would otherwise be. The concern is that there will be a flip in climate, giving us very cold winters and hot summers. Since government plans are based on our climate getting warmer, we shall be unprepared for this if it comes. The continuing debate over climatic issues illustrates how little scientists really know about the forces which the Creator has put to work on our planet.

The second item is from a chemical engineering journal and is by Professor Philip Stott, a professor of biogeography at the University of London. In it he opposes the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, in which the nations of the world agreed on a programme of reducing carbon dioxide emissions in order to reduce global warming. When George Bush became president of the USA at the beginning of this year he attracted widespread condemnation by saying that the USA would not be attempting to implement the Kyoto Protocol because it would cause economic harm to the country.

Philip Stott's article reinforces the point made above that we do not really understand the forces which affect the climate of our planet, and says that the theory of global warming due to carbon dioxide production is far too simple a view. He thus cas-

tigates the idea that there needs to be a drastic reduction in the production of carbon dioxide in order to halt a supposed global warming. He claims that this has been seized upon by an anti-Capitalist anti-American green movement as a means of changing society to what they want. He furthermore claims that scientists who oppose this view do not get a hearing in the media (akin perhaps to the way creation scientists are also ignored).

It should be noted that Stott does not doubt that the climate is changing, but he is sceptical of the idea of a steady trend of global warming caused by the so-called greenhouse gas emissions. From our point of view, as one correspondent points out, "God does not need to break records to fulfil His purpose". Forecasts of major problems for our planet due to global warming fit the teaching of Scripture about troubled times and fearfulness for the future in the last days, but the events of 11 September showed us that this can be brought about by more sudden and dramatic means. What we do know from Scripture and history is that weather in the short term, and climate change in the longer term, have been very important in affecting the affairs of Israel and the nations under God's hand. We may be sure that they will continue to do so as men strive to understand what is happening on our planet.

Tony Benson

The Second Exodus

A 188-page book by Brother Geoff and Sister Ray Walker, subtitled, 'Isaiah's and Zechariah's prophecies of the return from exile—a pattern for today'. There are two parts: 'Isaiah and other prophecies of the return', and 'Haggai and Zechariah', with the greater part of the latter section being a detailed treatment of Zechariah 1–6. Available at £5 per copy plus postage and packing (£1.35 for a single copy in the UK) from the authors at 44 Colindeep Lane, Sprowston, Norwich, NR7 8EQ, UK (Tel. 01603 408738). E-mail addressed to rabenson@globalnet.co.uk will be passed on.