

Your Letters



Churchill and the Jews

At the conclusion of Brother John Nicholl's article "A committed Zionist", reviewing Martin Gilbert's new book *Churchill and the Jews* ([Jan. 2008, p. 451](#)), I asked if any reader could confirm my recollection of having heard that Winston Churchill had a Christadelphian chauffeur. I have been directed to Brother Paul Billington's booklet *Cry of the Prophets* (published by the Bible Magazine in 1998). In the context of writing about the making known to world leaders of God's purpose with the Jews, Brother Billington writes:

"It is not possible for the present writer to comment upon *the extent* to which this testimony may or may not have been delivered to British authorities in the earlier part of this century. . . . Certainly Winston Churchill was aware of Britain's mission with respect to the Jewish Return. This writer's grandfather was employed by Churchill as his private chauffeur just prior to the First World War and discussed Bible prophecy with him at some length during long journeys. On one occasion when Churchill missed the train, they drove to London and on the way discussed passages written by John Thomas in *Elpis Israel*—and especially those concerning Britain, Palestine and the Jews . . . That the knowledge of these things reached those in high places is certain" (pp. 67-8).

The brother concerned was Brother S. W. (Sidney) Butler. There are two pictures accompanying the above statement. One shows Brother Butler in the driving seat of the car and reveals that he was Churchill's chauffeur from 1911 to 1915. The other shows Brother Butler seated outside on a rug, holding in his arms two young children, Randolph and Sarah, Winston's children.

Quite a number of readers have in fact contacted me with information about Brother Butler, and I thank them all for it. It would not be appropriate here to pass on all the details given, but there is one aspect of interest that I will mention. Apparently he was brought up in a Christadelphian home but then went into the navy before being baptized. I was told by one reader that he had not been baptized at the time when he was

Churchill's chauffeur from 1911 to 1915. When I did a computer search of the *Christadelphian*, however, I came across a Sidney Butler baptized at Portsmouth in 1910, and the various later references to him are consistent with other details received, so presumably it is the same brother, and he was in fact already a Christadelphian when employed as Churchill's chauffeur.

In the same issue there appeared the second part of Brother Simon Collard's two-part article "[The Balfour Declaration and the ways of providence](#)" (p. 462). I have been informed that at one time Balfour employed a Christadelphian nanny, a Sister Armstrong. I hope to find more information on this for publication in the next issue.

The following query has been raised regarding the review, by our Australia Editor, Brother Geoff Henstock:

"Brother Nicholl's review of the book about Churchill and the Jews is very interesting. I note the comments about news reaching him in 1944 of the true extent of the Holocaust and his desire thereafter to disrupt the transport of Jews to the death camps. Does Gilbert provide more insights on this issue? It has long been a criticism of the allies that, in spite of clear evidence of what was happening at the camps, there was almost no attempt made to bomb the railway lines used to transport the victims. It is beyond question that the West knew full well the horrific truth well before 1944; Brother Carter makes explicit reference to the wholesale slaughter as early as 1942, if not earlier, in the *Christadelphian*, and we may be sure that the allied governments had access to more detailed information than Brother Carter! Perhaps this is an issue only of interest to me, but I would have liked some hint as to how Sir Martin Gilbert addresses this apparent failure on the part of Britain and her allies".

Brother Nicholls comments in reply: "Gilbert does write of an article by Churchill, published in 1941, about the crimes by Hitler against the Jews, the background being the Babi Yar massacre (p. 187). Apart from this, Gilbert does not say much about Churchill's attitude to the fate of the Jews during the Second World War. It seems that their

fate was not the number one priority for Churchill during the war, but that as early as 1941 he knew that the systematic mass murder of Jews was being carried out. In retrospect, there were so many things going on then, with limited resources to deal with them, that one can understand why he as a politician did not take more action earlier than he did. It would have been interesting to hear more from Gilbert about this”.

Tony Benson