

# The **Christadelphian** Advocate

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

DECEMBER 2008

## *Why We Believe*

### *The Apologetics of Faith*

**Apologetics, n.**, the branch of theology having to do with the defense and proofs of Christianity

**Faith, n.**, unquestioning belief, complete trust, reliance or confidence

*A monthly magazine in defense of the “Things Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ” as embraced in The Hope of Israel with a view to “Taking Out A People For Yahweh’s Name”*

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# The Christadelphian Advocate

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*  
(Hebrews 11:1).

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*Dedicated especially to the coming generation in our ecclesias*

## Introduction

We live at a paradoxical time in the history of civilization. On the one hand, never has the cumulative evidence in favour of the Bible's truth spoken with greater force. On the other hand, never have there been more sources raising doubts about the truth of the word of God.

Most youth today rely heavily on electronic media as their source of information about the world. They are not avid readers of books, newspapers, and newsmagazines, as the ongoing decline in circulation of many iconic publications attests. They rely instead on new information sources like Facebook and Wikipedia that are easily accessible. The traditional learning hierarchy in which wisdom is passed down from one generation to the next is being replaced by peer-based learning. Peer-based learning means that the primary sources of knowledge are peers of one's own generation rather than elders of the previous generation. In passing down the Truth, it is necessary to follow the traditional learning hierarchy counseled in the writings of Solomon: *My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck* (Proverbs 1:8-9). In this issue, a number of the contributors are brethren of retirement age whose wisdom and learning are provided for the benefit of the next generation.

Electronic media enable young people, even as children, to search out many sources of information from which they will be informed about the world. This abundance of choices includes sites that are highly critical of Christadelphians, sites in which other young people openly share their own doubts, and sites which treat skeptically everything which we believe. In addition, the tendency to rely on frequent, short snippets of information, such as those sent by text messaging, leads to highly abbreviated expressions of thought. A full understanding of the precious truths of Scripture cannot be gained from such contemporary methods of instant and condensed communication. Application to the wisdom of the Word requires thoughtful reading, study and prayer.

The upshot is that there is a great battle raging for the hearts and minds of Christadelphian young people. Will the next generation, like Timothy in the apostolic age, take hold of the faith which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois,

and his mother Eunice? Or will drawing misleading and biased information from Internet sources, coupled with life-changing experiences like going to college, where the true principles of the Bible are anything but reinforced both in the lecture hall and in the dormitory, turn the tender hearts of the young away from that which is true? The battlefield on which this war is fought is information-based. We must join the battle. We must not cease to provide compelling reasons for that which we believe. We must provide answers to the challenges brought against our faith. We need not fear what the skeptic may allege because *he that is in us is greater than he which is in the world* (1 John 4:4). Saturation of the coming generation of believers with God's truth must be our goal: *And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

Godly instruction is given today only in the home and the ecclesia. We encourage our subscribers to share this issue and use these articles to open active discussion with their children, grandchildren and young people in the ecclesia. The subjects under discussion are ones that have the ability to enlighten and motivate the coming generation. While this issue is intended to provide information that all ages in our ecclesias can use to combat unbelief and strengthen faith, it has been prepared especially with the needs of our youth in mind. Should it come into the hands of any of those who have drifted from the faith, may it serve for them as a thoughtful call to return to the precious Truth of the living God.

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## About Substance and Evidence

This special issue has been prepared as an *apology*, used in the sense of a defense and proof for God's Truth. In this issue, the subjects that are addressed provide evidence of those things unseen including the authenticity of the scriptures, the sure word of prophecy, the witness of Israel, the witness of archaeology, miracles and undesigned coincidences.

**Where does conviction come from? What is it that has the power to convince and change us, to move us to action on behalf of our Creator? Is it not the absolute conviction that what we believe is truth?** Our Lord said, *Know the truth and the truth shall make you free*; he challenged the Pharisees by asking them why they would not believe him when he had spoken to them the truth. We are told that when the men of Samaria *believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they*

were *baptized, both men and women*. The conviction that these things were true moved them to action, moved them to become new creatures in Christ, born again! God's servants are to be ready to *give an answer to every man that asketh (us) a reason of the hope that is in us*. Who has not been personally strengthened by an earnest study to present or prove a point of scripture? The word of God is a powerful motivator when understood and believed.

**God has not left us without witness.** In every age and circumstance, He provides the witness necessary for the sustenance of active, robust faith. At the same time that many doubts are cast upon the truth of the Scriptures in general and Christadelphian understanding of God's plan in particular, God has provided abundant witness for those who seek for it. The first witness is the Bible itself. Its origin has to be accounted for. It is either a cunning forgery or a declaration of the only true and living God. The more familiar one is with the Bible itself, the more likely one is to come to the conclusion that it could not be a forgery. In a section of his letter in which he addressed the problem of unbelief, the apostle Paul expressed this point when he wrote, *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17). There is no substitute for firsthand, personal, intimate familiarity with what is written. Those who are inclined to disbelieve the Scriptures most are those who are acquainted with it least. The second witness is the correspondence between what is written in the pages of Scriptures with the external world, the latter confirming and testifying to the former. This correspondence may be historical, in the research uncovered by archaeology; it may be contemporary, in explaining the alignment of the nations in accordance with the plan foretold in Scripture; or it may combine elements of both in the witness of fulfilled prophecy, as history marches inexorably forward to the destiny appointed by God. The purpose of this issue is to highlight elements of that abundant witness, both internal and external.

**The world today treats the concept of truth as if it were relative.** As a result, challenges to belief in God abound. Christianity is blamed for many ills. The Bible is denounced, denied and rewritten to reflect the values and attitudes of men. Its authority, as the voice of the living God, is weakened, diluted and compromised in the hands of its supposed friends to the point where it has little relevance. Though humanity is desperate for something to believe in and hold on to, the Bible is for the most part held in contempt and the absolute standards which it defines are set aside. Yet fanciful speculations and books espousing new discoveries or promise seem to find societal acceptance as something to latch on to, something that might give meaning and purpose to life. Though we as believers may observe with pity and sadness those *tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men*, we must guard against human reasoning in our own lives! The commands of our Father do not naturally appeal to the flesh. We live in a society that equates belief in the Bible

with ignorance and shallowness. Paul declares that *not many wise men...are called...for hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* As has been wisely observed, “*The influence of human philosophy must be numbered among the thorns which sometimes choke the Word and prevent our final preparation for the Kingdom of God. It is always difficult to resist fashions, whether in clothes or theology, and when we think we are quite unmoved by the stream, it often only means that we are lagging a little way behind*” (Islip Collyer, *Conviction and Conduct*, Chapter 3). The reward is to those that believe, those that endure to the end and are found patiently watching and waiting with oil in their lamps!

**Truth is not just something we comprehend and declare to be correct.** The intellectual realization must be accompanied by a spiritual and emotional involvement; it has to move and transform us! Paul instructs, *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.* Belief is the basic element in our relationship with our Creator, *for he that cometh to God must believe that he is.* It is our ‘heart’ upon which the law of our God must be written, for it is the heart that *He knows, searches and tries.* Solomon declares *as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.* Therein lies our conscience and our opportunity to know if truly we *love in deed and in truth...for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things...if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God* (1 John 3:18-21).

**One of the great statements of Scripture is *Whatever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23)*.** In a world in which iniquity abounds and the laws of God are flaunted at every turn, it is sometimes helpful to ponder, what is the cause and effect relationship between faith and sin? Are we inclined to sin because our faith is weak? Or are we inclined to weak faith because we sin? Certainly, if we choose to follow the ways of this world and abandon respect for the law of God, it eases our conscience if we can reject the authority of that law and lapse into unbelief. Thus, to keep ourselves from sin is as important a measure in sustaining our faith as it is to know and understand the reasons for our convictions. Many people have abandoned their faith because they resent the idea that there is a higher authority that holds them accountable for what they do. However, this is a philosophical choice rather than the outcome of intense intellectual reflection and investigation. Some surveys indicate that far too many of our young people have succumbed to behaviors of this world that are displeasing to God. What is the reason for this participation in evil? Is it because they did not understand those behaviors were sin, or is it because they lacked the strength of conviction to *abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul?* If the root cause of the problem is the latter, then our most urgent need is to work on strengthening those convictions so that behavioral choices will be made by believers of every age which give glory to God. As one Christadelphian writer expressed it,

“*Righteous conduct is simply right doctrine in practice*” (Islip Collyer, *Conviction and Conduct*, Chapter 2).

The words “belief” and “faith” are frequently used interchangeably although there are distinctions that are apparent in specific contexts. Both words have the meaning of *steadfastness* and *persuasion*. Although we note the word faith is only used in the Old Testament twice, what we find there is not *the doctrine* of faith but *the example* of faith. The writer to the Hebrews describes those Old Testament worthies who *obtained a good report through faith* by an accounting of their works! Our faith must be cared for as a living thing. It can be influenced by others but it is up to each individual to nurture and keep it alive and strong. We accomplish this by a steady diet of the *words of life* and confidence in the *exceeding great and precious promises* made unto the fathers. These promises are but a fantasy to the world, but to the spiritual mind, strengthened with substance and evidence, they constitute *the full assurance of hope*. Our Heavenly Father requires our total commitment to and confidence in those unseen realities as manifested in loving obedience to His will, *For we walk by faith, not by sight*.

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## The Origin Of The Bible

*This article is taken from Thomas Williams' work of the same title and presents selected thoughts and arguments generally in the order they appear in the original. In addition to having skipped over sentences and paragraphs to glean what is presented below, some wording has been left out of some sentences for the sake of brevity and available space. Readers may find the language a little unusual but all the words in this article were penned in 1897 by Bro. Williams. We recommend the original 90 page treatise to readers. It can be found in Selected Works of Thomas Williams.*

**The facts and figures of Christendom cannot be ignored.** Christendom is an open book, upon whose pages figures as well as facts stand out boldly before the eyes of the world, seen of all, known of all and written by all; printed, painted, penciled and chiseled, here, there and everywhere, so that they cannot be ignored or forgotten. This year these figures are for 1897, and they appear upon every letter, newspaper, book and document issued from the pen or the press.

**Everything points to one man.** The word Christendom and everything it represents point backwards from all directions, centering and focalizing in one Man, who stands out in bold relief before the world without an equal, and that man is known by the terms *Jesus* and *Christ*, and his birth and the wonderful work he did and his tragic death marked off one of the centuries of the world's history as a point and pivot around which all others revolve. B. C. and A. D. mean in plain English, Before Christ, and After Christ, and thus this man is the great finger-post of the civilized world and all that is therein.

Now in treating all the natural facts and figures, with which Christendom is full, we are taken to the man, the place and the nations in which the great historic tragedy occurred. We are conveyed through the great highway of history, in which the very stones cry out to witness the fact in question. And when we reach our journey's end, we find the Holy Land a fact; Jerusalem a fact; Calvary a fact – all are facts, and everybody is talking about the tragedy, some cursing the victim, others blessing him; all adding to the irresistible evidence of the fact of Christ's existence, wonderful life and tragic death.

**The testimony of enemies:** Now we find ourselves in possession of facts, such as, on the one hand, the Bible in existence with thousands of zealous friends; and on the other hand many enemies angrily assaulting it. There must be a motive on both sides of this conflict. The motive which prompts the friends of the Bible can be found only by reading the doctrines and precepts which the book contains, and learning of the hopes which it holds out. It is the aim and object of the enemies of the Bible to tear down and to destroy. If they held out any hope to be realized when their work of destruction is accomplished it would reduce the issue to a question of which hope is the better. As it is, hope is only on one side. Really it is safe to say that an enemy of the Bible is utterly incapable of criticizing it. A man who is color blind cannot judge of colors. With the Bible the strongest argument in its favor comes from an understanding of its deepest teachings, and an experience of living its precepts. It follows, therefore, that the two sides of this controversy are unequal. The friend of the Bible has advantage over the enemy which the latter cannot realize...not that we are fearful of the issue when discussed from a purely intellectual basis. Indeed, the tests to which the Bible has been subjected by the heady and heartless have done much to strengthen the evidence that the book is what it claims to be.

**Since the Bible has received so much attention at the hands of such men it will be concluded that it must have been a very popular book;** that popular sentiment was in its favor, and relied upon as a truthful book and as being what it claims to be. It will be seen that it was to loosen the tenacious hold which the Bible had upon the people and the people upon the Bible that these popular writers used their great intellectual powers and employed the best art of the critic. The opposition of the early writers goes to establish the fact that Chris-



tians existed in those times, that they had the New Testament in their hands as an explanation of their existence, and that the books thereof were then admitted by friend and foe to be genuine. The evidence derived from all the enemies of Christianity in the early days proves that the Christians held as sacred the books of the New Testament as we now have them. What a book it must be! they will exclaim, to have wielded such a power over the people of the most enlightened parts of the world and that too, in the days when men ran to and fro and knowledge increased as it never had before! We must conclude that it was launched out into the world as a wonderful thing, and that its miraculous power enabled it to do what it did – revolutionize the civil and religious world, without its faithful friends firing a shot or drawing a sword from a scabbard.

**The Canon Readings and Renderings of the Scriptures: Under this heading it will be profitable to consider first the canon of scripture, that is, how the books we have in our Bible came to be accepted as the only sacred and authentic books of revelation.** Infidels and skeptics have talked much about the chance-work in councils voting on and receiving the books of the New Testament while rejecting others, claiming that the “selection of some and rejection of others” depended upon the motives and votes of fallible men.

To realize how the authenticity of these books would be determined by those in whose hands they were first placed we must go back to the origin of Christianity and see that they did not originate by an author determining to produce a book on a certain subject to be printed and offered for sale upon its merits. It was not a theory, a science or a religion already out and being discussed that originated these books. The fact that things most remarkable were taking place before the eyes of the people in all the land of Judea was the origin...and the fact that churches existed and were coming into existence in towns and cities and that the apostles established and visited these real churches in real places and spoke and wrote to them about real conditions and persons well known. All the books were produced by the facts, coming out simultaneously with the facts in the most natural way, with no possible hope for the writers and all concerned in the movement of any remuneration except the satisfaction the spiritual results might yield and the hope of future life; and this with persecution, torture and death as the only present prospects. All these things go to exclude any thoughts of design in the production of the books, except what was suggested by the daily developing facts and conditions necessary to the performance of a duty to God and man. All told, those who espoused the cause were but few in number, a little flock, and the very nature of the movement brought them all closely together into personal acquaintance.

If the acceptance of these books had been, as the infidels claim, dependent upon votes of councils in the third and following centuries, the question would still be, Where did they come from? How did they get into the supposed piles of

various books from among which they were to be voted as sacred? That the books of the New Testament were in general circulation and from their origin known to be authentic is beyond dispute from the fact that they were so largely and reverently quoted by various writers in those early days. It was never necessary for the Council of Nice nor any other council to vote on them. The reverence for them was not an outgrowth of superstition years after their production, but a direct and immediate result of a knowledge that they came from men who by signs and wonders and by divers miracles had established their credentials beyond the shadow of doubt. Not only do we have proof of the books being received from the beginning, but we have specific catalogues of the inspired and authentic books given by some of the authors writing about them. In these catalogues there is a clear and well defined distinction drawn between the sacred books and those written by friendly but fallible men – fallible in their writings because uninspired.

**Diligent men have very carefully and voluminously given the world the results of their research in this branch of Christian evidence**, but since Dr. Paley has given us a compendium of the facts brought out we quote from his *Evidences*, pp. 171-173:

This species of evidence comes later than the rest; as it was not natural that catalogues of any particular class of books should be put forth until Christian writings became numerous; or until some writings showed themselves, claiming titles which did not belong to them, and thereby rendering it necessary to separate books of authority from others. But, when it does appear, it is extremely satisfactory; the catalogues, though numerous and made in countries from a wide distance from one another, differing very little, differing in nothing which is material, and all containing the four gospels. To this last article there is no exception.

1. In the writings of Origen...there are enumerations of the books of scripture in which the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are distinctly and honorably specified, and in which no books appear beside what are now received. The reader will recollect that the date of Origen's works is A. D. 230.
2. Athanasius, about a century afterwards, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Testament in form, containing our scriptures and no others; of which he says, "In these alone the doctrine of religion is taught; let no man add to them, or take anything away from them."
3. About twenty years after Athanasius, Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, set forth a catalogue of the books of scripture publically read at that time in the church of Jerusalem, exactly the same as ours, except that the

“Revelation” is omitted.

4. Fifteen years after Cyril, the Council of Laodicea delivered an authoritative catalogue on canonical scripture, like Cyril’s, the same as ours, with the omission of the “Revelation.”
5. Within thirty years after the last date, from the year 363 to near the conclusion of the fourth century, we have catalogues...all, as they are sometimes called, clean catalogues (that is they admit no books into the number beside what we now receive), and all, for every purpose of historic evidence, the same as ours.

Lest the dark pall of superstition and apostasy hide from view the corruption of the third and following centuries, let us turn the search light upon the simultaneous birth and growth of Christianity and its books during the first and second centuries, and then it will be seen that our books needed no votes or councils of men to decide whether they were what they claimed to be, and that their competition with other books was never in question.

Thomas Williams

## The Sure Word Of Prophecy

The apostles Peter, James and John were the only witnesses to the transfiguration of Christ. This was a unique event, occurring only once in history and never repeated. We can only read about this event, we can never experience it. Peter cites this event to prove that the early Christians were not following  *cunningly devised fables*, but he added another comment which we find in II Peter 1:19-21.

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

The expression “**more sure word of prophecy**” is translated in various ways in other Bible versions, but the Diaglott word-for-word translation states, “**We have more firm the prophetic word.**” This tends to agree with the sense of the King James Version and suggests that Bible prophecy is a superior witness to that of the transfiguration of Christ, which was limited to the eyes of the three apostles.

We do not doubt the reliability of Peter's witness, but the fulfillment of Bible prophecy we can see with our own eyes, which has to be superior to that of an historical report. While we accept Peter's words by faith, we see the regathering of Israel by sight.

Peter tells us to pay attention to prophecy because it gives us light, divine light, which is Truth. The prophet Amos, who wrote in about 787 BC, stated in Amos 3:7, ***Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.*** Such a statement amounts to an open invitation to search the Scriptures and dig out the hidden treasure of the divine plan. Jesus pleaded with the Jews in the days of his earthly ministry in John 5:39: ***Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*** They not only testify of Jesus' person but also of his earthly ministry, his death, his resurrection, and his invitation to mankind to be partakers of eternal salvation.

King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 25:2, ***It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.*** What greater honor is there for those who have the potential of being kings and priests in Christ's kingdom than to search the Scriptures for the glories that the Lord has concealed therein?

**Every generation from the time of Adam has been blessed by having knowledge of Bible prophecy, and we see prophetic themes repeated to successive generations.** God, speaking to the Serpent in the Garden of Eden said, ***And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel*** (Genesis 3:15). This same prophecy, in essence, was given to Abraham in Genesis 22:17, ***That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of HIS enemies.*** The apostle Paul, utilizing the Adamic form of the prophecy, uses it to comfort the saints of his day, reassuring them in Romans 16:20, ***And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.***

The Lord told Moses, in the face of a rebellious nation, ***But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord*** (Numbers 14:21). The prophet Isaiah, in about 713 BC, having spoken about the coming of Christ and his righteousness, reiterates the eternal intention of the Lord as a condition that will prevail in the Kingdom age, stating in Isaiah 11: 9, ***for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*** Eighty-seven years later, the Prophet Habakkuk, in 626 BC, proclaims to the wicked generation of his day the same prophecy which will come to pass, which **nothing can prevent.** Habakkuk 2:14 states, ***For the earth shall be filled with the knowl-***

*edge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.* This prophecy, repeated three times, is the essence of the purpose of God with the earth. We have the opportunity now to become an element of that glory when our Lord returns. Daniel 12:3 extends the priceless promise to us, *And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*

**The Psalms of David sparkle with divine prophecy.** Psalm 103:10-14 will touch the heart of any sincere person: *He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*

Psalm 83 depicts Israel in peril from her enemies. In the War of Independence in 1948, the Six Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Israel encountered her hostile Arab neighbors, in league against her and committed to her destruction, just as described in this Psalm. Out of all these perils the Lord delivered Israel. This Psalm coupled with the prophecy of Obadiah and other prophets describe Israel's struggles yet to come, but Psalm 2 describes Christ's triumph against the heathen kings of the earth. Verse 8 urges, *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*

Psalm 72 describes the righteous rule of Christ to bring justice, peace, relief to the poor and the suppression of evil generally, thus filling the earth with the glory of the Lord. Verses 18-20 exclaim, *Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.*

**Often, when we think of Bible prophecy, our minds move in the direction of time periods and historic developments.** The zenith of such prophecy is Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image described in Daniel 2. This prophecy, given in 603/604 BC, covers the scope of world history from the time of Nebuchadnezzar until the setting up of the Kingdom of God. Every generation of Bible students who have examined this prophecy could determine in which of the five eras (gold, silver, brass, iron, iron and clay) they were living. We know that we are now living in the period of the feet and toes (iron and clay), which will see the return of Christ. Some of the details of this period we find in Daniel 11 and 12 and in Revelation 16, prophecies dealing with pushing the Turks out of Palestine and the termination of the Turkish Empire (represented figuratively by the drying up of the river Euphrates).

The great Seven Times prophecy of Leviticus 26, when interpreted on the principle of a day for a year, led to the understanding of a period of 2520 years of Israel's down treading. This span of time ties in with Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Beginning with 603/604 BC, "seven times" ended in 1917, the year in which British General Allenby took Jerusalem from the Turks and proceeded in the following year to drive the Turks out of Palestine. These events were visible to the saints during the World War I period; they were eye-witnesses to this remarkable fulfillment of prophecy.

Throughout history many attempts have been made to pinpoint the time of the coming of Christ. These have ended in failure, disappointment and discouragement. Attempts to set dates for the return of Christ are contrary to scripture, unwise in their formulation and liable to cause scorn and even loss of faith. A case in point is that of the followers of William Miller, who in 1831 told his flock that Christ would return in 1843. By 1840 some of his many followers had disposed of their belongings in anticipation of the judgment day. When 1843 passed uneventfully, Miller set a new date of 1844. When this date failed, the movement collapsed. They did not comprehend or could not accept Christ's words contained in Acts 1:7, ***It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power.*** Also in Matthew 25:13, ***Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*** Some fulfillment dates of prophetic events may be determined, but the date of the actual advent may not.

There remains much work yet to be done in the study of Bible prophecy, especially that pertaining to events of the last days and the plight of beleaguered Israel. It is time to renew our interest in this area of Scripture. If the city of Damascus was suddenly obliterated, do you know where to find that in the Bible? Are you aware that present day Edomites are alive and well and are plaguing Israel and are soon to be destroyed? If we profess to be watchmen on the walls of Zion as it were, for what are we watching? Only the sure words of prophecy can give us that information.

Let us take seriously the passionate plea of the translators of the King James Version of the Bible, who in the year 1611, wrote concerning the Scriptures: "They can make us wise unto salvation. If we be ignorant, they will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heaviness, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if cold, inflame us. *Tolle, lege; tolle, lege*; Take up and read, take up and read the Scriptures."

*E. R. Evans, Burlington, ON*

“It is only reasonable to call the Jews as the first witnesses and to enquire whether their history offers any justification of the claim that the end was declared from the beginning in a manner beyond the power of man (Isaiah 43:8-12).” *Islip Collyer, Vox Dei, p. 31*

## Chance, Providence and Modern Israel

If any of us were playing a game involving the throw of dice and we found that each time we rolled in succession, the dice landed with “one” on the upside face of the cube, we would quickly begin to suspect the dice throws were not entirely random. The chances of obtaining one, when throwing a six-sided cube, are one in six. The chances of obtaining one on two successive throws are the product of the chance of obtaining one on each individual throw, that is, one in thirty-six. The chance of obtaining “one” on three successive throws is one in 216, on four, one in 1296, and so on. **The point is that the more non-random a series of events is, the more likely we are to suspect that something other than simply chance is involved in determining the outcome.** If we rolled one on four successive throws, while acknowledging that it could happen randomly, we might begin to suspect the dice cube was weighted or devised in such a way as to make it more likely that “one” would be rolled than one of the other five faces of the cube – that the results of each throw were not random at all.

**The great issue of life on which every one of us is required to make a personal decision** is to determine whether the world into which we were born is a great theatre of random events, events that some suppose began with a gigantic explosion of matter in the Universe billions of years ago; or whether, on the other hand, there is pattern and order in events which indicate that they are not entirely random occurrences. Most of us would grant that some occurrences we observe in life are random. For example, which leaf, on a tree with thousands of leaves in a forest with thousands of trees will fall on a particular day, we would view as random. Where such randomness ends and superintending providence begins is an interesting study to which no definitive answer can be given.<sup>1</sup>



Which way we make this determination – and whether we make it explicitly as a matter of intellectual choice, or implicitly as a matter of practical choice – will

<sup>1</sup> The words of the Lord Jesus would lead us to infer that the degree of randomness is much less and the role of superintending providence much greater than casual observation may suggest: *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered* (Matthew 10:29,30).

have a profound bearing on the kind of life we lead, the kind of person we are, and the kind of person we will become. If the Universe is merely the product of a random chemical explosion, then life ultimately is also bereft of any higher purpose other than that which we make for ourselves. But on the other hand, if there is a superintending Wisdom behind the Universe, by whose will it was called into existence and by whose hand it is sustained, then the possibility of a greater purpose to life is conceivable, as long as that Wisdom has chosen to communicate to man the *logos* (a Greek word translated in 1 Peter 3:15 as [the] *reason*) for its existence.

**Many have been persuaded by their observation and examination of nature** that the Universe is too complex and too ordered to have been the product of mere randomness. But that conclusion, leading to a conviction in Intelligent Design, does not in itself sufficiently define one's own worldview unless it is accompanied by the parallel conviction that the Designer has revealed His purpose to those whom He has created. Our worldview is framed by the conviction that God's purpose has been revealed. **It centers on two principal factors: the message and the medium.**

Many of those who have written against the evidence of design in the world have rested a large part of their case on their perception that there are many flaws in the design. That is, they have not so much disputed the evidence of design per se but have argued that their perception of flaws in the design reflects negatively on the designer. These arguments are often formulated and pressed home with great emotional force as ridicule of the designer and therefore, in the minds of those who make them, justifying their scorn towards the design.

**The message concerns what the revelation of God calls the *gospel***, translated into English from the Greek word *euaggelion* which means the "good message." At the heart of this good message is the idea that God called the world as we observe it into existence for the sake of one man, a special man by whom and through whom He determined to accomplish great things for eternity. So central to this purpose is this man that he is called in Scripture the *Logos*. In English, we might regard that statement as expressing "the Reason" – the reason ultimately for everything that exists. The apostle Paul, in expounding these things, refers to *the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Ephesians 3:11). The reality of this man's life, death, resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into the heavens to the right hand of his Father are the cornerstone facts which defy any view of the world as a purely random outcome. They also, when rightly considered, lay to rest the scorer's complaint. If there were not flaws in the work resulting from the design – if the pottery fashioned by the potter was not marred – then there would have been no need for a message about a plan to rescue humanity from its predicament. The message explains why this predicament has arisen, on account of man's doing and not



God's. Any assessment of the fullness of God's design cannot be considered only on the basis of the created order He has brought into being, without also considering the plan for its redemption. Information about that plan can only be gained from consideration of divine revelation: it is not written in nature.

**The living medium by which God chose to communicate this message to mankind is a particular race or people with a national identity: Israel.** That medium has served, not only as a means to bear the message, but also as a witness to its truth. One way in which the message and the medium are connected is by the fact that the man for whom God wrought the world is a member of that nation, one of the people of Israel. God's plan required the dispersion of Israel throughout all the countries of the earth that, in so doing, they might bear His message across both time and inhabited space. It is on account of that dispersion, for example, that in virtually every city of the Roman Empire to which the apostles carried the message, there were Jewish synagogues established where the scriptures of the law and the prophets were available and reverently studied.

**The message was predicated on the principle that there was a definite purpose,** appointed in advance for realization at a specific time, for bringing an end to human toil under the law of sin and death. One of the key steps in the accomplishment of that consummation, in turn, required that the scattered remnant of Israel be brought back from the Gentile lands where they dwelt to form an independent, sovereign Jewish nation again. That re-gathering process has thus far spanned over 110 years, beginning with the birth of modern Zionism in the late nineteenth century and continuing to the present.



**As we consider the torturous history of the Jewish people** through the long centuries of their dispersion up to their emergence as an independent state, sanctioned by a resolution of the UN General Assembly, it is necessary to render a decision. Is this history purely happenstance – the result of chance, or is there a superintending Providence at work, that first occasioned the dispersion of Israel and then

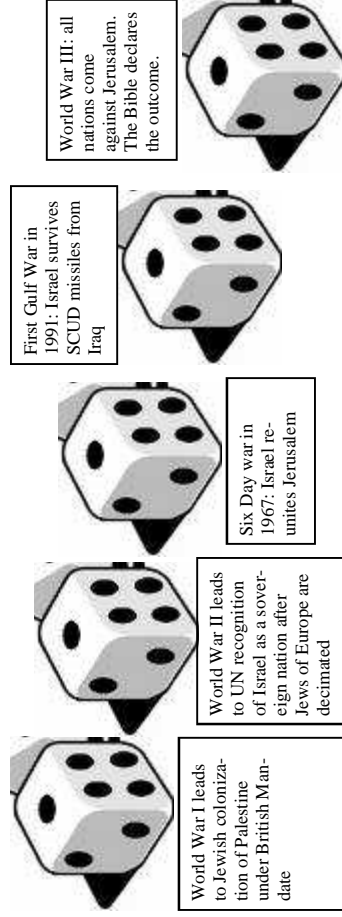
acted to bring it, in measure, to an end? The more familiar we are with the history of Israel, the more likely we are to confess the role of a divine hand in Israel's survival and re-gathering.

**For example, in the twentieth century, the world was involved in two great conflicts** so vast in their extent and duration that they are known to history as the first and second “world” wars. While Israel was not the ostensible cause or reason for either conflict, its destiny was markedly affected by both. In the First

World War, the decision of Turkey to align itself with Germany resulted in Turkey's coming into conflict with Britain, and losing its Middle Eastern territory, including Palestine and Jerusalem, to the British army. This territory's coming under the British flag opened the door for the League of Nations to confer the mandate for governing Palestine to Britain, by which development it was placed in a position to enable Jewish immigration to Palestine and the flourishing of Zionist enterprise there. In the Second World War, Hitler's Germany was consumed with hatred against the Jews so intensely that the Nazi regime was determined to exterminate the Jewish race in Europe. Hitler's diabolical "final solution," which bolstered the effectiveness of the organized killing squads that operated behind the advance of German lines in the east with the construction of gas chambers and crematoria for mass slaughter in Poland, to which Jews from all over occupied Europe were rounded up and shipped by train, decimated European Jewry. Only one-third were left in Europe at war's end, two-thirds having been killed by the Nazis. When these atrocities became widely known to the world, there was sufficient sympathy in the United Nations for the Jewish plight to muster the political support for the emergence of the Jewish state in partitioned Palestine. Like the roll of the dice, each student of history needs to decide if these events were purely random or whether they testify to deliberate pattern and design that bears witness to the hand of a Higher Power at work.

From our standpoint, the issue of design and pattern in the things concerning Israel is beyond all doubt attributable to God's hand and confirms the message He set on record many centuries beforehand in the pages of Scripture. It is a paradigm that makes sense of history and of present events in the world and gives us hope for the future. The oracles of God reveal the message; the nation of Israel is the medium given to be their custodians (Romans 3:1); the *Logos* came in the flesh, seen and handled of witnesses (John 1:14, 1 John 1:1), history bearing witness to the truth revealed; and the future will show that, *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him* (1 Corinthians 2:9).

James Farrar, Grimsby, ON



## Archaeology Discoveries from the Past that Confirm the Bible

The discipline of Biblical Archaeology provides support and understanding for the veracity of the Scriptures, however, its purpose is not to “prove” the Bible. Robert Bradshaw in his 1992 paper on *Archaeology and the Patriarchs* (Biblical Studies. Org.uk) notes, “Yahweh is uniquely the God who acts in history, and inasmuch as archaeology sheds light on that history it is important to Biblical studies.” W.S. Lasor in “Archaeology” in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans’ 1979) points out that “faith does not ask for proof, but archaeology provides a context of reality for the Biblical story and a reasonability for Biblical faith.” It is from this perspective that the following samples of archaeological evidence corroborating the Scriptures are presented.

### ANTIQUITIES & EARLY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries a growing European field interest in the great past civilizations of the Middle East (Sumer, Akkadia, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Egypt), centered principally on the search for large impressive items of “antiquity” to be taken back to museums in London, Paris, Berlin, etc. Notwithstanding the frequent laxity of site-documentation and context-sensitive methods regarding the provenance of items found, this early period yielded some of the most impressive evidence extant today that is supportive of the Old Testament record. Some examples from this Antiquities/Early Archaeology Period are reviewed below.

**First – Unraveling the Languages:** Two unrelated discoveries of trilingual inscriptions in stone during this period led to unraveling the mysteries of Egyptian hieroglyphic symbols and Mesopotamian cuneiform characters.

**The first trilingual record was the “Rosetta Stone” discovered in 1799** by one of Napoleon’s soldiers while digging a trench in Egypt. It contained a message in three languages: Hieroglyphic, Demotic (a hieroglyphic shorthand) and Greek. In 1822 a young French scholar used the Greek to finally unlock the Hieroglyphics and this led to opening up the vast 3000+ year old Egyptian inscriptions of the Nile basin to the world. Two examples are:

**The stone stele of Pharaoh Menepthah (c.1215 B.C.)** was discovered in 1896 at Thebes, Egypt. Its hieroglyphics provide irrefutable confirmation of the presence of Israel as a people in the land of Canaan at the time of the Judges. It is the oldest known extra-Biblical reference to Israel extant today. The text reads... “Canaan is plundered with every evil way. Ashkelon is conquered and brought away captive, Gezer seized, Yanoam made nonexistent, Israel is

wasted, bare of seed..." (emphasis added).

**The record of Pharaoh Shoshenq (Shishak - 944-924 BC)** found on the south wall of the great temple of Amon at Karnak, Egypt is another example. Here Shishak recorded his 10<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. military campaign against Judea and King Rehoboam. In it he lists the cities he sacked including Jerusalem, Gibeon, and Megiddo. The Bible in 1 Kings 14:25-26 and 2 Chronicles 12: 2-4, 9 relates this invasion in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Rehoboam's reign.

**The second trilingual key to ancient languages was found in 1833** by Sir Henry Rawlinson while in Persia to organize the Shah's army. He discovered that the huge ancient inscription carved high on the face of Mt. Behistun was in three different cuneiform systems: Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian. By 1836 he managed to translate the Old Persian and by 1845 the other two languages were deciphered. With this breakthrough, scholars were now able to read the meaning of literally thousands of cuneiform records from all over Mesopotamia. One result, among others, has been the discovery of dramatic evidence corroborating the Old Testament history of Israel and Judah. Some examples are:

**The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III** which was uncovered by Austen Henry Layard in 1845 at Nimrud. This seven foot high black stone prism is inscribed with pictures and cuneiform on all four sides and clearly shows King Jehu of Israel bowing to the ground and paying tribute monies to Shalmaneser III. The cuneiform text identifies the prostrate King as "Jehu the son of Omri" and also mentions Hazael of Aram/Damascus (see 2 Kings 8:7-15 & 10:28-36).

**The Name of Tiglath-Pileser III:** In 1 Chronicles 5:26 the beginning of the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel is described thusly: *And the Lord God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, King of Assyria, and the spirit of Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria and he carried away even the Reubenites and Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them into Halah and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.* At first this seems to be a contradiction by describing two separate kings of Assyria with the names of Pul and Tiglath-Pileser. 2 Kings 15:19-20 tells us that Menahem, King of Israel, paid tribute to Pul, King of Assyria, to save his capital, Samaria, from destruction. Assyrian scholars agree that during the first part of Menahem's 10 year reign, around 746 B.C., a usurper named Tiglath-Pileser seized the Assyrian throne and ruled for some 18 years. Cuneiform records on clay tablets found at Nimrud have silenced the critic's cry that the Bible is false. Two separate tablets give parallel accounts for this Assyrian monarch, the one uses Pul, the other uses Tiglath-Pileser III. The fact is, the usurper, Pul (Pulu) changed his name to Tiglath-Pileser (as the third monarch to choose that title) in order to enhance his authority/legitimacy. Interestingly, the Hebrew idiom in 1 Chronicles 5:26 that bridges the two names with "and" can apparently also be trans-

lated “even,” thus the text can appropriately be understood to read... *the spirit of Pul, King of Assyria, even the spirit of Tiglath-Pileser King of Assyria* (emphasis added). Archaeological cuneiform evidence preserved in nearly 3000 year old clay tablets now corroborates this rendering!

In addition, the record of King Menahem giving tribute to ‘Pul’ in order to buy off the destruction of Samaria as recorded in 2 Kings 15:19-20 is also corroborated by one of the ‘Tiglath-Pileser’ s’ own cuneiform inscriptions that reads: “I received tribute from Menahem of Samaria...Like a bird alone he fled and submitted to me.”

**The Clay Prism of Sargon II** discovered in Khorsabab in 1843 by P. E. Botta tells of a siege of Samaria, the taking away of captives and replacing them with Assyrian captives from other lands. It reads, “I besieged and captured Samaria and carried off 27,290 of its inhabitants as booty... The city I rebuilt better than it was before and settled therein people from countries which I myself had conquered.” This Assyrian practice of replacing captives with foreigners is clearly seen in 2 Kings 17:5-6 and 23-24.

**The Hexagonal Clay Prism of Sennacherib** discovered at Nineveh. This artifact boasts of the victories of Sennacherib but never mentions any defeats. It tells of the siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. during the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and says... “I shut up Hezekiah, the Judahite, like a caged bird within Jerusalem his own royal city.” In three accounts (2 Kings 18:13 - 19:37; 2 Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 36 & 37) the Bible clearly outlines Yahweh’s miraculous defeat of Sennacherib’s mighty army besieging Jerusalem. If Sennacherib had breached the city, conquered Hezekiah and taken captives from Jerusalem, one would expect this ‘boasting’ prism to highlight such a signal event. Undoubtedly, it says nothing of ‘victory’ at Jerusalem just as it says nothing of his defeat there. It is interesting to note, however, that Egyptian sources of the day do mention the Assyrian defeat at Jerusalem. They claimed it was one of their gods who sent field mice into the Assyrian camp at night to eat up all their bowstrings, rendering the soldiers unable to fight, thus forcing Sennacherib to flee back to Nineveh. Such was the propaganda of one great military power against another even in those days!

An amazing event associated with Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem was the urgent work before the siege of Hezekiah’s engineers to secure a vital water source safely within the city defenses. Tunneling under Jerusalem from opposite ends they linked together the Gihon Spring just outside the wall in the Kidron Valley on the east side of Jerusalem to the pool of Siloam 30 feet lower inside the city walls more than 1700 feet to the southwest. They stopped up the external flows of the Gihon and redirected all its waters through this secret tunnel into Jerusalem only. This long twisting ‘S’ shaped tunnel was completed when

the workmen from each end met in the middle. The American Orientalist, Edward Robinson, discovered the tunnel in 1838 and later, in 1880, a young boy accidentally discovered a Hebrew inscription carved into the tunnel wall near the center where the two teams met. This now famous 'Siloam Inscription' describes how the two teams met in the middle by listening for the sound of each other's voices and hammers. This incredible feat, blessed by Yahweh, and rediscovered thousands of years later, dramatically confirms the veracity of 2 Chronicles 32:2-4 and 2 Kings 20:20.

**Many other archaeological finds from the subsequent empires of Babylon and Persia provide similar confirmation of the Scriptures.** Babylonian cuneiform tablets mentioning rations for captive Jehoiachin, King of Judah, and other relatives (cf. 2 Kings 24:10-16) and the Babylonian Chronicle tablets recording the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 2 Kings 25:8-11) are examples. The 'Cyrus Cylinder' written in Babylonian cuneiform after Cyrus II conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. sets out his tolerant views on the treatment of conquered peoples and their right to religious freedom. Its tone and intent correlate strongly with the Bible record of his proclamation allowing the Jewish captives in Babylon to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. (See 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Isaiah 44:28 and Ezra 1 all)

### POST 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The work of Sir Flinders Petrie from 1890 to 1920 and the work of William F. Albright from 1920 to the 1960's had a profound impact on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Palestinian and Biblical Archaeology. As a result of their work it became more scientific and systematic as well as more integrated with historical/cultural geography, Biblical research, and general Near Eastern Studies. Space here allows only a short listing of a few Bible-relevant archaeological findings since 1900. In approximate chronological order they are:

**The Gezer Calendar (D)** dated c. 925-1000 B.C. (?) found at ancient Gezer northwest of Jerusalem in 1908 by R.A. Macalister. It lists annual agricultural tasks by month. It shows clear evidence of literacy in Israel at this time.

**The Lachish Ostraca** found at ancient Lachish south west of Jerusalem in the 1930's by James Starkey. These are pottery shards that were used as 'scrap paper' to send urgent messages about the conditions just before the 1<sup>st</sup> Babylonian invasion. Letter #3 refers to warnings from "the prophet," #4 says Lachish and Azekah are among the last to come under siege (Jeremiah 34:7) and #6 tells of conspiracy in language that echoes Jeremiah 38:4,19.

**Collapsed Walls of Jericho** investigated by Garstang in the 1930's, Kenyon in the 1950's and Wood in the 1980's - 90. Physical evidence (especially from Kenyon's work) shows sudden catastrophic destruction and burning consistent

with Joshua 6:20, 24. Garstang dated it to 1400 B.C. and Kenyon to 1550 B.C. Wood endorses Garstang's dating.

**Dead Sea Scrolls** discovered 60 years ago (1947-56) in caves at Qumran near the Dead Sea. Biblical and non-Biblical manuscripts in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic were found. There are over 800 documents and thousands of fragments dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> - 3rd centuries B.C. The complete scroll of Isaiah is the most spectacular find. When compared to the previous oldest sources for Isaiah (nearly 1000 years younger), this scroll and Masoretic texts are virtually identical. This provides a powerful case for the reliability of the Scriptures over time.

**Temple Mount Studies** have been greatly extended since the 6 Day War of 1967. The initial work of Benjamin Mazar and the work of Leen and Kathleen Ritmeyer uncovered the Second Temple Pre-Herodian walls. This is the most definitive assessment to date of the Temple Mount boundaries and walls from the pre-Herodian period. Work at the southwest corner reveals either Second Temple foundation elements or possibly Solomonic foundation blocks.

**The Ebla Tablets** from Tel Mardikh in northern Syria, excavated by Paolo Matthiae 1964-1975+ reach far back into Bible times. Fifteen thousand clay tablets in cuneiform were found in a library thought to be associated with royalty. Many date to 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. and some even as far back as the time of Abraham. It has been reported that several Bible places, Ur, Sodom, Gomorrah, Haran, Lachish, Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, etc. and names such as Abraham, Israel, Esau, David and Micah were discovered in Ebalite, a Semitic language resembling ancient Hebrew. There is intense archeological dispute over these early claims and the matter is still far from settled. The Syrian government continues to withhold full publication of the texts.

**Tel Dan Stele** (dated 9<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.) discovered in 1994 by Avraham Biran in northern Galilee. This is a broken victory stele of a northern king describing his conquests over Israel. It contains the phrases, 'King of Israel' and 'House of David.' This is the earliest extra-Biblical reference to the royal line of David.

**The Pool of Siloam:** Recently in 2004 deeper excavations at this Jerusalem site uncovered, at a lower elevation, the true ancient pool of Siloam (John 9:11).

**The Gath Ostrakon** (a pottery fragment) was found in 2005 by Aren Masir at Tel es-Safi (Biblical Gath of the Philistines). This shard has nine letters incised into it representing two names. Linguistically they are connected to 'Goliath.'

#### IN SUMMARY

This short article is a brief glance at a much larger body of archaeological evidence that supports the veracity of the Bible. The common thread is that these

long silent testimonies speak to us today with sureness and a constancy unchanged through the ages. They encourage our faith that God's word is true, sure, steadfast, and a lamp to our feet in a darkening age. We do well to remember these enduring words, *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away* (Matthew 24:35).

James Horton, Grimsby, ON



## The Seal of Hagab

In archaeological excavations the Israel Antiquities Authority is carrying out at the behest of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, in the northwestern part of the Western Wall plaza in Jerusalem, a rare and impressive Hebrew seal was discovered that dates to the latter part of the First Temple period. The seal was found in a building that is currently being uncovered, which dates to the seventh century B.C. – to the time when the kings Manasseh and Josiah reigned.

According to the excavation director, archaeologist Shlomit Wexler-Bdolah of the IAA, “The seal, which apparently belonged to a private individual, is made of black stone, is elliptical in shape and measures 1.2 x 1.4 cm. It is adorned with an engraved decoration of an archer shooting a bow and arrow. The name of the archer is engraved in ancient Hebrew script next to him and reads LHGB (meaning: for Hagab). The name Hagab is mentioned in the Bible in Ezra 2:46, as well as in the Lachish Letters, which also date to the time of the First Temple.” Ezra’s Hagab was a temple servant, from a different period in Israel’s history and not, therefore, the same individual. The Hebrew name *Hagab* means *grasshopper*.



The seal is unique since this is the first time that a private seal has been discovered that bears a Hebrew name and is decorated in the Assyrian style. The seal attests to the strong Assyrian influence that existed in Jerusalem in the seventh century B.C.. It is usually assumed that the owner of private seals were individuals who held government positions. The name appears in reverse so that when impressed in clay, it would come out right.

Sources : IMRA, October 30, 2008 and Ritmeyer Archaeological Design’s website. The representation of the seal depicted above was taken from this site: [www.ritmeyer.com](http://www.ritmeyer.com)



## Undesigned Coincidences in the Scriptures The Ring of Truth

**Proposition XXXI of the Christadelphian Statement of Faith states:** *That the Scriptures, composing the book currently known as the Bible, are the only source now extant of knowledge concerning God and His purposes, and that they were given wholly by the unerring inspiration of God in the writers, and that such errors as have since crept in are due to transcription or translation.* Accordingly, we place complete reliance in the authenticity of the Bible with only the foregoing qualification relating to such errors of transcription or translation. Therefore, we unequivocally accept the Bible as being the inspired Word of God with our faith...*the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (Hebrews 11:1), securely anchored in this realization.

God has clearly spoken to the necessity of faith being an essential component of our efforts to both approach and please Him: *But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him* (Hebrews 11:6). However strong our own faith may be in the Word of God – the Bible – we know there are individuals claiming to be Christians who do not realize the Bible’s claim to be inspired: *All scripture is given by inspiration* (God-breathed, NIV) *of God* (2 Timothy 3:16).

Additionally, there are those who do not believe that the Bible is inspired, and thus, how can it be asserted that it is accurate? Unfortunately, we find that many churches have developed certain doctrines independent of the Bible which compromise or deny absolute scriptural declarations of its divine inspiration. Even more reprehensible is that many of these unscriptural doctrines are clearly based upon humanistic concepts at variance with the Word of God. One of the principal thrusts of alleged Christian scholarship has been to develop questionable evidence for dating the Bible later than it is generally ascribed to be, thereby undermining its claims to be authoritative.

**This supposed Christian scholarship regarding a later dating of certain books of the Bible is especially relevant to the so-called higher criticism of the four Gospel accounts,** and mainstream media tends to embrace such ideas and concepts by reporting these opinions that the Bible is not really trustworthy. However, reliable evidence exists that the Gospels were written before A.D. 70 rather than much later: (1) the oldest manuscript fragments of the Gospels are from the early first century and there are complete copies from the late first century; (2) the Gospels must either be read as not referencing the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 or, alluding to it as an event yet future; (3) excepting the

crucifixion of Christ, there do not appear to be any recorded incidents of severe Roman persecution of Jews; and (4) passages such as John 5:2 indicating a normal state of affairs prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. We intend to present evidence in this article that plainly demonstrates that the Bible is trustworthy and truly the Word of God.

**Repetitions and contradictions are quite common and even understandable for a collection of human documents**, but this is not the case for a perfectly constructed revelation of Divine origin, reflecting the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of our Heavenly Father. Accordingly, we can rest assured that although there are indeed repetitions of certain accounts within the Bible, these are not true contradictions. Rather, we intend to show that certain repetitions of the same accounts provide strong evidence of authenticity by the presence of certain unimportant details disclosed in one or more of the accounts. Such revealed instances of these seemingly unimportant details further strengthen our conviction that there was no contrived collaboration between the various writers of the Bible.

It is important to realize that the Bible is truly the Word of God written by several men as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. However, they were mortal men and their viewpoints and styles of writing were shaped and influenced by their individual circumstances and manner of life. Therefore, their individual recollections of incidents and events were certainly depicted in a manner consistent with their own perspectives. Thus, we often find that so-called contradictions or inconsistencies merely reflect the individual characteristics of these men and thereby confirm the validity of their accounts.

**J. J. Blunt published a book, *Undesigned Coincidences*, in 1847.** In this work, Blunt presented an impressive argument for the veracity of the Bible based on comparing Bible accounts. He perceptibly illustrated that a characteristic implicit in any document which is accurate would be the inclusion of insignificant details noted by the writer but which are only incidental to the key message of the specific account being described, i.e., *undesigned coincidences*. These details are often quite noticeable and confirm validity and consistency occurring in parallel though incomplete accounts of the same incident or situation being addressed.

The presence of such *undesigned coincidences* provides compelling support that such accounts have a strong probability of accuracy. Such occurrences thereby strengthen the reliance that can be placed upon early transcriptions as correctly conveyed to the present day. The Bible abounds with too many examples of truly random instances of *undesigned coincidences* to allow for any contrived method of cooperation between the various writers of the books. Such independent occurrences of *undesigned coincidences* can truly impart *a ring of*

*truth* in establishing the veracity of the Scriptures.

**In the Gospel accounts of the feeding of the multitudes**, we note that there were two distinct groups fed: (1) *And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children* (Matthew 14:21), and (2) *And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children* (Matthew 15:38). When the five thousand were being fed, Christ told them to sit down on the grass indicating that this would have been about the time of Passover; later in the year the grass would have been burnt by the sun and earlier in the year the grass would not have begun to grow. In the feeding of the four thousand there is no indication of grass and they were instructed to sit on the ground.

It is also noteworthy that the kind of baskets that were used in feeding the five thousand was different than those used in feeding the four thousand. There were different Greek words used for each type of basket in the two accounts. The Gospel accounts portray the two as being totally and consistently separate. These rather immaterial details, or *undesigned coincidences*, in these two accounts would probably have been lost or vaguely presented if they had been recorded from memory or repetition after a long period of time. However, if they were recorded at the time or shortly after they had transpired, coupled with the acknowledgement that the accounts were divinely inspired, the disclosure of such insignificant information in each of the accounts is much more plausible and provides credible evidence of their authenticity.

**We have an account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in John 20:1-8** which also provides us with more *undesigned coincidences* that convince us of the veracity of this account. Mary Magdalene had gone to the sepulchre where Christ had been buried but when his body was not there, she ran to Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved (John) to inform them of this development (John 20:1-2). Peter and John then ran to the sepulchre with John outrunning Peter which is not surprising since John was the youngest of all the apostles (John 20:3-4). Yet we find that when he arrived at the sepulchre, John looked in first and saw the linen clothes laying there which Christ had been wrapped in at his burial, but he did not enter the tomb. However, when the impetuous Peter came to the scene after John, he did not hesitate to enter the sepulchre where he observed the linen clothes lying and the napkin which had been around Christ's head not lying with the linen clothes, but rather wrapped together in a place by itself. We then find John going into the sepulchre to observe this sight, and he saw and believed (John 20:5-8).

These foregoing disclosures of (1) John arriving at the sepulchre before Peter and (2) that John was reluctant to enter it before Peter appear quite reasonable when we consider the ages of the two men and the personality of Peter. We are not surprised that Peter did not stop to stoop down and look into the tomb as

John did but immediately went into it. Peter was perhaps hoping to meet again his crucified Master to the exclusion of any thing else which would be irrelevant compared to this wonderful hope and desire.

**We do not intend to limit such occurrences of undesigned coincidences only to the foregoing accounts in the New Testament.** There are also numerous accounts of these in the Old Testament scriptures. In the balance of this article, we intend to present three (3) separate accounts having a bearing upon two (2) different incidents in a defense of the veracity of the scriptures relating to some historical events of Yahweh's chosen race:

**In the incident when Moses sent out spies to search the land of Canaan,** all of the spies except Joshua and Caleb gave an evil report upon their return as recorded in Numbers 13:32-33; *And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, ... a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.* Here as testified by Moses, we note that the Anakims were exceptionally tall. Let us now observe that subsequent to this event: *And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities. There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained* (Joshua 11:21-22).

If we were to confine our observations to just these two accounts in Numbers and Joshua, we might logically ask, what is so remarkable about these narratives? However, let us now consider a description of Goliath, David's adversary: *... And there went out a champion... of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span* (1 Samuel 17:4). We will now connect and present a remarkable set of **undesigned coincidences** relating to these scriptures. We note that Goliath was from Gath; *one of the five Philistine city-states.* Let us recall that these *... men of a great stature... the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants...* were seen by the spies (Numbers 13:32-33) and were later destroyed by Joshua except for those that were left in Gaza, **Gath,** and Ashdod (Joshua 11:21-22). This amazing array of insignificant details which are incidental in each of the accounts noted certainly reinforce and validate the collective accuracy of these accounts and provide credible evidence of the home of and physical description of Goliath.

**Another interesting incident illustrating a set of undesigned coincidences involves the betrayal of David by Ahithophel.** This incident and the revolt of Absalom from King David are inseparably intertwined and present some of the

natural consequences of David's sin with Bathsheba even though God had forgiven him of this great transgression. We read in 2 Samuel 15:12 that ... *Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom. Absalom was seeking the counsel of Ahithophel to support him in his rebellion against David because ... the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom* (2 Samuel 16:23). In addition to this respect for Ahithophel, Absalom was aware of circumstances which would probably cause Ahithophel's support to be offered as shown in the following paragraph.

2 Samuel 11:3 informs us that ... *Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?* We also note that in the genealogy of ... *Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, and, ... Uriah the Hittite ...* is disclosed (2 Samuel 23: 34-39). Thus, we conclude that when David caused Uriah to be murdered, that Uriah was Ahithophel's grandson by marriage, and, in his sin with Bathsheba, David had besmirched Ahithophel's granddaughter. Again, do we not see that insignificant details brought out in these accounts, which are only incidental to the accounts, present realistic rationalization for Ahithophel's actions in his betrayal of David?

**We firmly believe that such independent occurrences of undesigned coincidences** as found in the scriptures can and indeed do truly impart **the ring of truth** to the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Such reinforcement and validation of the veracity of God's Word contributes to our faith being firmly anchored therein.

Robert Miller, Sherwood, AR

## No Compromise

It has often been claimed by "unlearned and ignorant men" that there is no possibility of compromise in one's attitude toward the Bible. Either the Book is a revelation from God or it is the greatest imposture the world has ever known.

This harsh statement of the case is resented by many people who would greatly prefer to compromise in the matter. As a writer recently stated, "No one would dispute the supreme position of the Bible in literature if no claim had ever been made that it was a divine revelation." It would suit our convenience much better to regard the Scriptures as inspired only in the manner that all good books can be so described, leaving us at liberty to attach much or little importance to its messages accordingly to the manner in which they appealed to us.

Islip Collyer, *Vox Dei*, p. 27

## Miracles And Faith

**There are a number of ways to build our faith in God and the truth of His Word.** Recent archeological finds, fulfilled prophecy, internal Bible evidence and the ring of truth are all sources that can restore our confidence and provide us with *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (Hebrews 11:1).

Reading about Bible miracles or actually witnessing the powerful hand of the Almighty working in the nations or perhaps in our own lives can be a marvelous faith builder. Miracles provide evidence to support the existence of a Creator and that His word is true. Even beyond the Bible record, there are many documented historical events that testify to the power of God, such as the restoration of His people Israel to the Promised Land and the providence associated with the rise and fall of the kings of the earth - *the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will* (Daniel 4:17).

**Many of these accounts are clearly the ways of divine providence** (using natural methods to manipulate outcomes); others may be **true miracles** – involving divine intervention (events that defy natural laws, such as the resurrection or feeding thousands). Whether we interpret any particular event as divine providence or a miracle really matters very little; the hand of God was involved and His power produced the outcome. Recognizing the providential hand of God can strengthen our faith in this age where true miracles are certainly not as prominent as they were when Christ walked on this earth and healed the blind and the lame.

The interesting thing is that even when Christ performed his miracles, many of those who witnessed the events found ample reason to doubt that this man was using the miraculous power of God; they allowed themselves to be blinded to the truth that was being demonstrated by his *miracles and wonders and signs* (Acts 2:22). In today's sophisticated world men are even more skeptical about the hand of God working both in the world and in our lives. It is often only through the eye of faith that we are able to truly appreciate the miraculous power of God in its many manifestations, and allow the demonstration of His power to fortify our *little faith*.

**The greatest miracle in the latter days** has been the restoration of the Nation of Israel in its own land. Not only are these events a marvelous testimony to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, but there have also been a number of incredible happenings throughout recent history that are surely a demonstration of the hand of God working with this people to fulfill His purpose. Some will recognize this work with the Nation of Israel as a miracle and it will strengthen their faith; others will remain skeptical, either *they willingly are ignorant* (2 Peter

3:5) or *their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed* (Matthew 13:15).

The miraculous nature of the restoration of Israel is evident in the words of Isaiah: *Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children* (Isaiah 66:8). On May 14, 1948, in one day, the modern Nation of Israel was born at once. The providential hand of God was working behind the scenes, persuading President Harry S. Truman, against the advice of some of his counselors, to openly recognize the birth of a nation; and remarkably, on the same day, the Soviet Union also declared their recognition of the State of Israel in the UN. When we consider both the fulfillment of prophecy to the letter and the unlikely events that allowed it to happen, our own eyes would be blind if we could not give the glory to God.

The prophets had all spoken and the credibility of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were all firmly established by this remarkable restoration. God's Word was true and *it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it* (Isaiah 55: 11).

- *Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.* (Jeremiah 30:10-11)
- *And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel (Ezekiel 37:21-22).*

**The miraculous power of God has been manifested many times during this restoration process.** There are numerous accounts of Divine providence (perhaps even miracles) during the sixty years of war that have transpired since the Nation was born in one day in 1948. No servant of God can hear or see these historical events presented without being choked with emotion. These incidents combine to echo praises with Isaiah as he spoke of the time when these things would come to pass: *Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee* (Isaiah 12:5-6).

Isaiah had prophesied: *As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it* (Isaiah 31:4-5). This protection has been manifested in at least these two incidents:

- In 1967 the “birds” of the Israeli air force played a large role in swiftly defeating the nations round about in a six day victory that is considered by many worldly scholars as “miraculous”. The old city of Jerusalem was delivered as prophesied in Zechariah 12:6. Life Magazine reported: “Israel’s victory on five fronts in sixty short hours is absolutely astonishing.”
- In the more recent Gulf War (1991) the “birds” were the Patriot missiles that protected Israel from the many Scud missiles that were fired into their territory. Isaiah had prophesied: *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD* (Isaiah 54:17).

**The hand of God in the restoration and protection of Israel** is testified to in a recent DVD series called “Against all Odds: Israel Survives” They proclaim in their promotional literature: “Modern day Israel is truly a divine wonder of the current age. How has it triumphed through four major wars and survived relentless terrorist attacks? Meet the actual people who lived through what can only be described as miracles of Biblical proportions.... This series dramatizes awe-inspiring incidents that pose the question: Does a divine power continue to uphold the country?” Among the “miracles” that are reported:

- Israeli troops in the Yom Kippur war are saved when a mysterious wind exposes thousands of land mines that imperil their lives.
- An outnumbered Israeli squad is saved when approaching enemy troops inexplicably flee.
- Strange beings wielding flaming swords foil marauding Arabs in their attempt to destroy a Jewish community.
- Battlefield reports of Israeli soldiers being miraculously healed...while the enemy reported being numbed, unable to move or fire a weapon.

Our natural reaction may be to view these accounts and the many more like them as a little far-fetched. But then, how would we have reacted when it was reported that Christ had been raised from the dead?

In the 1967 victory there were a number of recorded factors that seem to be logical miscalculations, accidents, or mistakes, but when we consider them all happening in close proximity we must recognize divine providence. To name a few:



- Egyptian officers at a party while staff fumbled with coded information warning of an air raid.
- Incompetent Israeli chief of staff suffers breakdown and is hospitalized-allowing the acting chief to win the decisive victory.
- Trucks and armored vehicles broke down mysteriously.
- Egyptian radar/communication systems not working.
- “All Clear” signals given while Israeli planes were approaching.
- Arab discipline collapsed in the face of Israeli assaults.

Moshe Dayan is a secular leader who (with his eye patch) appears as a symbol of “blindness in part”. However, after taking the old city in 1967, he quoted from the Psalms at the Western wall in 1967: *This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes* (Psalm 118:23).

**The Hand of God in the Weather:** There is another arena in which the eye of faith will see miracles still happening. History has recorded a number of events where extremes in weather played a major role in the outcome. One classic example was on D Day near the end of World War 2, when the allied troops crossed the English Channel with unusually calm seas to invade Europe and bring about an end to Nazi power.

More recently there have been a number of comparisons drawn between “Major Acts of God” in the US bringing judgment on this nation for their political blunders in lack of support for God’s people. A book entitled God’s *Final Warning to America* suggests that Hurricane Katrina of August 2005 and eight other events starting with the *Perfect Storm* in October of 1991 were all warnings from God closely linked to adverse US actions relating to Israel. Another similar book called *Israel, The Blessing or the Curse* offers the same evidence of divine judgment.

How do we understand these things? Scripture does verify that God uses the weather for such purposes and there may well be a connection in some of these events.

- *Out of the south cometh the whirlwind; and cold out of the north. By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud: And it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy* (Job 37:9-13).

- *Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word (Psalm 148:7-8).*

**God working in our lives:** Perhaps one of the more difficult areas for us to appreciate God and His mighty power is when it comes to our own lives. We read in Philippians 2:13: *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, but we may have trouble understanding how this works. We profess that God has the power to intervene in human events and to change the outcome, but perhaps wonder, who am I that He would actually work in my life?

In spite of our *little faith* in these matters, I would guess that we all have had circumstances relative to our health or welfare that we felt certain that God was involved in. If we can believe in miracles – and that God still works in our lives, our faith will be increased. God may allow *time and chance* to help us grow, or He may intervene according to His will.

Do we believe? It is not difficult for us to identify with the man who wanted his son healed and was told by Christ: *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth*. His reply and ours: *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief* (Mark 9:19-24).

*Jim Millay, Springfield, VT*

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### Professor Richard Dawkins' Recent Admission

On Tuesday evening I attended the debate between Richard Dawkins and John Lennox at Oxford's Natural History Museum. This was the second public encounter between the two men, but it turned out to be very different from the first. Lennox is the Oxford mathematics professor whose book, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* is to my mind an excoriating demolition of Dawkins' overreach from biology into religion as expressed in his book *The God Delusion* -- all the more devastating because Lennox attacks him on the basis of science itself. In the first debate, Dawkins was badly caught off-balance by Lennox's argument precisely because, possibly for the first time, he was being challenged on his own chosen scientific ground.

This week's debate, however, was different because from the start off Dawkins moved it onto safer territory-- and at the very beginning made a most startling admission. He said:

**A serious case could be made for a deistic God.**

This was surely remarkable. Here was the arch-apostle of atheism, whose whole case is based on the assertion that believing in a creator of the universe is no different from believing in fairies at the bottom of the garden, saying that a serious case can be made for the idea that the universe was brought into being by some kind of purposeful force. A creator. True, he was not saying he was now a deist; on the contrary, he still didn't believe in such a purposeful founding intelligence, and he was certainly still saying that belief in the personal God of the Bible was just like believing in fairies. Nevertheless, to acknowledge that 'a serious case could be made for a deistic god' is to undermine his previous categorical assertion that

...all life, all intelligence, all creativity and all 'design' anywhere in the universe is the direct or indirect product of Darwinian natural selection...Design cannot precede evolution and therefore cannot underlie the universe.

In Oxford on Tuesday night, however, virtually the first thing he said was that a serious case could be made for believing that it *could*.

Anthony Flew, the celebrated philosopher and former high priest of atheism, spectacularly changed his mind and concluded -- as set out in his book *There Is A God* -- that life had indeed been created by a governing and purposeful intelligence, a change of mind that occurred *because he followed where the scientific evidence led him*. The conversion of Flew, whose book contains a cutting critique of Dawkins's thinking, has been dismissed with unbridled scorn by Dawkins -- who now says there is a serious case for the position that Flew now adopts!

Afterwards, I asked Dawkins whether he had indeed changed his position and become more open to ideas which lay outside the scientific paradigm. He vehemently denied this and expressed horror that he might have given this impression...Even more jaw-droppingly, Dawkins told me that, rather than believing in God, he was more receptive to the theory that life on earth had indeed been created by a governing intelligence -- but one which had resided on another planet. Leave aside the question of where that extra-terrestrial intelligence had itself come from, is it not remarkable that the arch-apostle of reason finds the concept of God *more* unlikely as an explanation of the universe than the existence and plenipotentiary power of extra-terrestrial little green men...

Truth is indeed the crux of the matter -- but Dawkins seems to understand the word rather differently from the rest of us. The great question, however, is whether his own theory is now in the process of further evolution -- and whether it might even jump the species barrier into what is vulgarly known by lesser mortals as faith.

*Melanie Phillips, The Spectator (.CO.UK), October 23rd, 2008 (Abridged)*

## CHRISTADELPHIAN UNAMENDED STATEMENT OF FAITH

**Clause XXXI** That the scriptures, composing the book currently known as the Bible, are the only source now extant of knowledge concerning God and His purposes, and that they were given wholly by the unerring inspiration of God in the writers, and that such errors as have since crept in are due to transcription or translation. (Nehemiah 9:30; Luke 1:70; John 10:35; 1 Corinthians 2:13, 14:37; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1; 2 Peter 1:21)

**Doctrines To Be Rejected** 1. That the Bible is only partly the work of inspiration – or if wholly so, contains errors which inspiration allowed.

### Christadelphians Believe and Teach the Scriptures are:

**INSPIRED** - the word meaning “God-breathed,” establishing the foundation of scripture - *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet...*(Matthew 1:22)

- “*of the Lord*” states God was the ultimate agent
- “*by the prophet*” implies an intermediate agent of God
- The Bible is in this sense both a human and divine product, but the end product is God’s.

**INFALLIBLE** - the next level up from inspired, meaning the Bible is true in what it teaches

- There is no untruth in its pages regarding matters of faith or practice

**INERRANT** – the highest and most stringent level...a step beyond infallibility

- The Bible is true in its description of historical events and summary of words spoken.