

# The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

*July/August 2000*

## Inspiration of the Bible

### **EDITOR'S JOURNAL**

Last year a reader wrote to suggest the theme "Evidences of Divine Inspiration of the Bible" for a future issue of **THE HERALD**. She said the question of the Bible's inspiration occasionally comes up when she discusses religious topics with others.

The issue you are holding in your hands is a direct result of her letter. With our many Christian friends we share a love for, and a belief in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. It is a joy to discuss the Bible with others who share our enthusiasm for it and believe it is God's word. But what can we say to those who think the Bible is "an old fiddle upon which any tune can be played" or to the one who thinks the Bible is no more interesting than the Koran, say, or the sacred text of any other ancient religion?

In fact much can be said. To begin with, no other book is as old as the oldest sections of the Bible. If a previously unknown book written some thousand years before Christ were to be discovered carefully preserved, it would be heralded as a great find, as a wonderful way to learn more about the people, customs, and beliefs of those who were alive at that time. Perhaps because we have had the Bible as a part of our culture for as long as we can remember, we tend to take it for granted. In fact it is more than interesting—it is inspired. We hope to prove that assertion in the articles that follow.

The first one entitled *The Inspiration of the Bible* points out that a common theme from Genesis to Revelation is one proof that a divine mind must have guided the work of multiple authors over a 1,600-year period. Another proof is that prophecies written more than 2,000 years ago gave details about a coming Messiah. Jesus fulfilled every one of those prophecies. Still another proof is to see the effect the Bible has had on those who follow its teachings.

How can we be sure the Bible we have is what was written originally? *Preservation of the Law of God*, a verse-by-verse study of Nehemiah 8, shows how the Jews prized their writings, how they preserved them, and taught them to one generation after another. That's why what we have today is so close to what was originally written.

Perhaps there is no greater argument for divine inspiration than the writing of detailed history long in advance. Such history was recorded in Daniel 11 and it is described in *Divine Foreknowledge in the Book of Daniel*. Most authorities agree about the realities of what Daniel described, and the evidence is that Daniel wrote it long before the events occurred.

Although the Bible was not given to us to be a science textbook, its statements of how our world was created do agree with what science has learned. *Genesis and Geophysics* explores what happened during the creative processes described in the first chapter of the Bible. Genesis accurately describes what occurred during long eons of time to prepare this earth for man.

One may be tempted to say that archaeology proves the Bible, but in fact that is something it cannot do. *Buried Treasures* correctly observes that archaeological discoveries can only confirm that biblical persons and places actually existed and that events took place where and when the Bible says they did. Archaeology has been confirming the Bible for a long time.

Finally *The Bible and the Spade*, an article which first appeared in the Bible Study Monthly, puts all this information into perspective. We are reminded that the Bible has survived even though its enemies have tried by every possible means to suppress and destroy it. And why has it survived? God intends for us to know about his grand plan of salvation to bless all the world in the coming kingdom. The Bible's history, poetry, visions, prophecies, and ethics all converge irresistibly upon Jesus Christ, the one who will soon reign as the acknowledged Prince of Peace in the kingdom.

May our faith in the Bible and its message of salvation through Jesus Christ be strengthened as we read the evidences of divine inspiration of the Bible.

## A Look at the Evidence

# The Inspiration of the Bible

*All Scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.—2 Timothy 3:16*

David Stein

The Information Age this may be, but it is also an age of cynicism and agnosticism. While the Bible has been attacked through all of the ages, the onslaught in this day and age is particularly savage. How can one, in the age of information and scientific enlightenment, believe in the divine inspiration of a book written between two and three millennia ago? Is it rational? These are questions every believer must ultimately confront.

To be sure, a spirit-begotten Christian has the holy spirit as well as the intellectual accomplishment of learning the teachings of the Bible. The holy spirit moves us in supernatural ways in our relationship and communication with God. But that fact is not generally something one can use to convince others. The starting point must always be Scripture.

Paul believed and taught that there is such a thing as inspired Scripture because he wrote, "All Scripture given by inspiration of God." Inspiration is a claim registered for the Bible.

One of the interesting things about the Bible is that it is the result of the writing of those whose lives spanned nearly 1,600 years. From Moses to the apostle John, the Bible contains historical, poetic, and doctrinal themes from the pens of many. With so many contributors we might expect there would be a diversity, perhaps even contrary opinions within the writings. However, we find a consistency of theme, a thread of continuity from Genesis to Revelation. It is as though there was collusion among the members of the group to produce something cogent and inspiring. Clearly this could not be done over such a long period of time. The conclusion that there must be a single mind and influence behind it is inescapable. That that mind is God's takes a little more faith.

## The Theme of Atonement

One common theme is atonement. In the book of Genesis we are introduced to the idea of sacrificial offerings. Abel sacrificed animals and God approved of them (Hebrews 11:4). The great patriarchs and ancient worthies all conducted such ritual sacrifices. The Law received by Moses stipulated specific sets of animal sacrifices for all occasions and circumstances—all of which had as their result a restoration of some level of acceptability with God. Why would an omniscient and omnipotent God desire such seeming barbarity? What could possibly be accomplished by the shedding of animal blood?

This question is answered by the coming of Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice to restore acceptability before God. The entire object of animal sacrifice was to point to the need of a single and noble human sacrifice to completely and thoroughly offset the effects of sin. The apostle Paul wrote many pages on this topic, all in explanation of atonement. Truly, in the absence of such an explanation, animal sacrifices may indeed seem barbaric. But the main point is that atonement, typified by animal sacrifices and realized in the ransom of Jesus, is a 1,600-year theme, an inspired theme, a consistent theme providing evidence of a single mind behind the writings.

We can go from a big-picture overview to the tiny details to see other things that are hard to explain apart from divine inspiration. Under the Law of Moses a ritual called circumcision was codified. Part of the specification is that the procedure take place on the eighth day after birth (Leviticus 12:3). Why the eighth day? In modern times biochemists have found that a chemical precursor to vitamin K which expedites blood clotting reaches a high of 800% above normal adult levels on the eighth day after birth. After the eighth day the level begins to return again to normal levels. How is it that Moses knew that the survival of the baby is at its highest probability on the eighth day? Moses didn't know; God did.

Many believe that the knowledge the earth is round was not attained until Columbus discovered the New World. That is not historically true. Some ancient scientists had concluded they lived on a globe, but it was not common knowledge. However, the Bible shows evidence of such knowledge in the ancient world. In Isaiah 40:21,22 the Scripture describes something we now take for granted: "Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."

The cynics of our generation might say that a circle is two dimensional and the text simply confirms the false idea that the earth is flat. Thus the text in that detail might be seen simply as ambiguous, not proving a flat earth or one that is a globe. But note also that the prophet describes the heavens as stretched out and spread as a "tent to dwell in." Just as a tent is protective of its occupants against the elements, so is the atmospheric "tent" in which we dwell. It provides a comfortable environment and also protects us against extraterrestrial dangers such as radiation and meteors. The poetic language inspired by God reflects real science!

Job says, "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). This description comes as no surprise to any astronaut. That it should be contained in the Bible is a surprise to some. For many of us it is simply another indicator of the supernatural origin of what we characterize as God's Word.

## Prophecy

One of the most convincing aspects illustrating the inspiration of the Bible is prophecy. However, prophecy is by its very nature interpretive. What is solid and persuasive to one is superficial and conjectural to another. Yet if prophecy can be shown to be true, an unbeliever must explain how the prophet could have gotten it right before the fact if not from the inspiration received from a higher Being.

One text which is very difficult to brush aside is a prophecy concerning King Cyrus some two centuries before he was born. Although not of Israel, the prophecy says this king would appear and would become a great conqueror. We read: "[Thus saith the LORD] of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut" (Isaiah 44:28 through 45:1).

Jewish tradition holds that Cyrus was told by Jewish authorities that his coming was foretold in Scripture, something that is very hard to do when the prophecy was written so long before the fact!

There are many prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures which point to the Messiah. These lead inescapably to Jesus though the Jews in their blindness have failed to acknowledge it (Romans 11:25). The accuracy, precision, and abundance of these prophecies is powerful evidence of the inspiration of the Bible. A few of these prophecies are:

Messiah to be born of the tribe of Judah—Genesis 49:10

Messiah to be born of the family of David—Psalm 132:11; Isaiah 11:1

Messiah to be born in Bethlehem—Micah 5:2

Messiah to be born of a virgin—Isaiah 7:14

Messiah to be called out of Egypt—Hosea 11:1

Messiah to enter Jerusalem on the colt of an ass—Zechariah 9:9

Messiah to be betrayed by a close intimate—Psalm 41:9; 109:8

Messiah to be pierced—Zechariah 12:10

Messiah to be rejected, tortured, and executed—Isaiah 53:3-9

Messiah to have no bones broken—Psalm 34:20 (also in the Passover type—Exodus 12:46)

Messiah to be in the grave parts of three days—Jonah 1:17

All these prophecies found fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth. Even the year of the commencement of his ministry and his execution can be found in the chronological prophecy of the 70 weeks in Daniel chapter nine.\*

One more set of prophecies which have had dramatic fulfillment in the twentieth century concern the nation of Israel and the Jewish people. The regathering of the Jewish people from all nations of the earth and the establishment of the modern nation of Israel after nearly 2,000 years of scattering is unprecedented in human history. These prophecies have been a frequent subject in the pages of this journal. The fact of Israel's renewed existence is evidence of the divine authorship of the prophecies of the Bible.

### **The Bible's Impact on People**

What is convincing evidence of divine origin to one is not necessarily persuasive to another. But there is one more evidence of the divine origin of the Bible that is rarely mentioned: the high and noble principles of behavior outlined in Scripture. Qualities such as love, mercy, sacrifice, compassion, justice, patience, faithfulness, generosity, gratitude, tolerance, and understanding are characteristics which are encouraged and inculcated in the Bible. We see in those who have consecrated themselves to follow the teachings of Jesus evidence of these very qualities. A Christian begins to reflect these traits through a study of God's word and careful attention to its teachings. The Bible claims these are all features of the character of God. Since we are told that "God is love" (1John 4:16), we should expect that people consecrated to becoming "godlike" would manifest this trait and thus give confirmatory evidence of the inspiration of God's word.

Of course skeptics take a contrary view and claim that the Bible has repeatedly produced people who are hateful and violent. They point to the history of the organized church to show the oppression, intolerance, and horrors of religion. Unfortunately such terrible behavior has come from some who name the name of Christ. On the other hand there have also been many individuals whose character is quite different from such bad examples. They have amply manifested the spiritual characteristics and God-like qualities the Bible describes. How can one book produce individuals with such diametrically opposite characteristics? The answer is simple: One group truly represents the fruit of the teachings of the Bible, the other group does not.

The existence of spiritually rich and enriching individuals is powerful evidence of the existence of a loving God. God's consecrated people, the Church of Christ, stand as persuasive proof of the validity of the divine origin of Scripture.

\* For a fuller treatment of this powerful prophecy see "The 70 Weeks of Daniel" in the November-December 1998 Herald.

## God's Word Stands Forever

# Preservation of the Law of God

*And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing.—Deuteronomy 31:10,11*

A verse by verse study of Nehemiah 8

Shortly after Israel left Egypt for the promised land, God gave them a law at Mt. Sinai. At the end of their forty-year wandering in the wilderness, Moses gathered the people together in the plains of Moab and repeated the precepts of the law (Deuteronomy 1:1-3). After seven decades of captivity in Babylon, the Hebrew people once again returned to their homeland, and once again the law was read to them in an open assembly. That is the subject of this study of Nehemiah 8.

As a result of three successive invasions of Jerusalem by the forces of Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps as many as 70,000 Jews were deported to Babylon.\* When Cyrus made his decree permitting their return some seven decades later, some 42,000\*\* took up the challenge and went back to rebuild their beloved capital city (Ezra 2:64).

The years of captivity in Babylon had a profound effect upon the exiles from Israel. As Dr. Foakes-Jackson has noted, "With the captivity the history of Israel ends, and the history of the Jews commences" (Biblical History of the Hebrews, p. 316). Placed in the midst of heathen and idolatrous surroundings, the Israelites recoiled from the abominations of their neighbors and clung to the faith of their fathers in the God of Abraham. Scorned for their beliefs, they cultivated an exclusiveness of faith and beliefs. Deprived of the right to offer their ritual sacrifices, they learned to prize the spiritual lessons from their traditions and history. Another writer observes:

"Within [a] hundred years the teaching of Moses was established as the basis of the national life, the first steps were taken toward the formation of a canon of Scripture. Jewish society was molded into a shape which succeeding centuries modified, but did not essentially change. During this period the Judaea of the days of our Lord came into being. Within this period the forces which opposed Christ, and the forces which rallied to his side, had their origin. This century saw the rise of parties which afterward became sects under the names of Pharisees and Sadducees. It laid the foundation of Rabbinism. It fixed the attitude of the Jews toward the Gentiles."—Dr. P. Hay Hunter, *After the Exile*, I, xvi.

It was just this sense of community that made the returning exiles so enthused about returning. Although the rigors of living in the desert outpost (which Jerusalem had become) and the fears of antagonistic neighbors had diminished their original zeal, Nehemiah met the challenge and gave them fresh vigor. The rebuilding of the walls was

only one of his accomplishments. With the aid of Ezra the returned exiles were purged of their pagan wives and had the vision of a law-abiding nation restored to them. It is of this activity that we find the narrative of the re-reading of the law in Nehemiah 8.

### **At the Water Gate—Nehemiah 8:1-4**

*And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.*

The timing of the event was the "first day of the seventh month." This was the beginning of the civil year at the feast of trumpets, an event we know today as Rosh Hoshanah. It was only one week after Nehemiah had finished the construction of the wall around Jerusalem in 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15). Although our theme text specifies that the annual reading of the law was to be on the feast of tabernacles, it was probably moved forward on this occasion so they would be able to recognize the importance of that feast. Apparently this feast had fallen out of favor during the Babylonian captivity.

The place was at "the street that was before the water gate." This gate lay south of the temple and led eastward to the water supply of the springs of Gihon in the Kidron Valley. The word translated "street" would be better translated "courtyard," and was a wide, open area specifically designed for addressing a large audience. It was actually part of the temple complex and is called "the open square of the house of God" in Ezra 10:9 (NKJV).

The congregation was "all that could hear with understanding." Although men and women were alike present, it is doubtful that small children were encouraged to attend this particular assemblage since the readings would last several hours and the natural demands of children would be distracting in the discussions of the law. It was, however, the responsibility of the parents to fully inform the children of their responsibilities under the law.

The leader of the congregation was Ezra, whose lineage is traced through the high priestly line all the way back to Aaron. It was in his role as scribe and copyist that Ezra is credited with laying the foundation for the canon of the Old Testament. James Orr, in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* notes: "The age of Ezra and Nehemiah, therefore, is not that of the beginning, but, as Jewish tradition rightly held (Josephus; 2 Maccabees 2:13; Talmud) rather that of the completion, systematic delimitation, acknowledgment and formal close of the canon."

The subject was "the book of the law of Moses." It is debatable whether this refers to the entire Pentateuch or merely the book of Deuteronomy which Moses had instructed be kept "in the side of the ark of the covenant" (Deuteronomy 31:26). It is most likely that it included all of the first five books of the Bible, since special information about the use of booths was included in the reading and those instructions are only found in Leviticus 23:42, 43.

The assembly gathered early, for the reading was to begin at dawn. For six hours the willing crowd gave rapt attention. It is not likely that it was a drawn-out monologue, but rather that the thirteen other priests that shared the platform with Ezra took their turns in the reading. The readings of the law may have also been interrupted with translations and explanations.

### **Reading of the Law—Nehemiah8:5-8**

*And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.*

The session opened with prayer and the audience stood with bowed heads and hands lifted in reverence. An example of such an introductory prayer is found in the words of David in 1 Chronicles 29:10-13, "Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name." The double "Amen" of the audience indicated the fervor of the occasion and their willingness to not only hear, but seek to follow the words of the law being read to them.

The activities of that fateful morning were broken into three parts:

1. "They read in the book the law of God distinctly." It was necessary for the reading to be "distinct" and clear so that the assembled people, who had been largely out of touch with pure Hebrew during their Babylonian sojourn, would understand the words.
2. "And gave the sense." Ancient Hebrew rabbis understand this phrase to mean the giving of a paraphrase in the Chaldaic tongue with which the audience was more familiar. As Hebrew after years of use within Germany

degraded into Yiddish, so one result of the years in Babylon was to produce a hybrid language—part Hebrew and part Chaldaic. These translations, preserved in written form, were called "Targums," or "interpretations." (The word *tirgum* is translated "interpreted" in Ezra 4:7.) Original targums are still found in the Chaldaic, Syrian, and Aramaic languages.

3. "And caused them to understand the reading." This was the role of the 13 Levites, in addition to the 13 priests on the podium. They were scattered among the crowd. Their function was to lead discussion groups in order to help the people understand the practical import of the words being read.

It was thus that the integrity of the precepts of the ancient Mosaic law was preserved, even after seven decades of virtual disuse.

### **The Feast of Trumpets—Nehemiah 8:9-13**

*And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them. And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law.*

The origins of the title "Tirshatha" are obscure. However both of the two most prominent explanations are appropriate descriptions of Nehemiah's office. The linguist Lagarde derives it from the Bactrian *antarekshatra* meaning "he who takes the place of the king," a most appropriate designation in the light of the commission given in Nehemiah 2:6-9.

The reading of the law had a profound effect upon the assembled people. Being convicted of their failure to keep the law, they wept profusely. Perhaps they also realized that their recent captivity had been as a direct consequence of their neglect of their religious responsibilities toward God. Both Nehemiah and Ezra remonstrated against such weeping, not because it was improper, but that it was inappropriate on this joyous festival day. The Day of Atonement which was some ten days yet future, was the proper time for such repentant sorrow. Now it was the time not to look back on their past sins, but to rejoice in the future prospects ahead of forgiveness and a renewed opportunity to attempt to keep the law. Even sorrow for sin must not grow so obsessive as to hinder our joy in God and our cheerfulness in his service. This *Rosh Hoshanah* was to be an occasion for true New Year resolutions.

Their rejoicing, however, was not to be self-centered nor in the immediacy of the bounties on the festive table, but it was to be a joy of a renewed relationship with God; it was to be "the joy of the Lord" that would give them strength to carry out the resolutions they had made. Their "mirth" was not to be based on eating, drinking, or making merry; rather, it was the rejoicing of a heart uplifted by "understanding" the laws of God. As the psalmist phrased it, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165).

Nor were they to be unmindful of those not privileged to be at the feast, but were to take some of the bounties and send it to them. These would include not only those too sick to be at this assembly, or those in remote villages who could not come, but undoubtedly included their fellow countrymen back in Babylon. This lesson should not be lost on today's Christians who may, being free from mystic Babylon, forget their less fortunate brethren who may remain behind for one reason or another. Such customs of sharing the bounties of their festivals were not uncommon to the Jewish people (see Esther 9:19-22; Luke 14:13).

As the first day of the New Year was a celebration of the Law for all the people, so the second day was a day of instruction for the leaders of the various tribes, the priests, and the Levites. Ezra became their teacher as he informed them of their unique responsibilities in maintaining the purity of the Jewish religion. It has been just this care over the word of God that has preserved the integrity of the Bible over the many centuries of its existence.

### **Feast of Tabernacles—Nehemiah 8:14-18**

*And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.*

The statement in verse 17 that from the time of Joshua "the children of Israel had not done so," should not be understood as meaning that the nation had not observed the feast of tabernacles. There are references to them having held such observations in 2 Chronicles 8:13 and 1 Kings 12:32. Rather, it indicates that they had not followed the custom of building booths during these occasions although this had been commanded as part of the celebration in Leviticus 23:42,43.

The three main Jewish festivals were all commemorative of historic events related to their exodus from Egypt: Passover celebrating their departure; Pentecost, the giving of the Law at Sinai; and Tabernacles, their safe arrival in the promised land. The antitypes were likewise progressive: Passover, picturing the death of Christ; Pentecost, the giving of the holy spirit to the church; and Tabernacles, showing the entrance of mankind into their eternal inheritance. (Each of these feasts was also a harvest festival: Passover for the barley harvest, Pentecost for the wheat, and Tabernacles for the grape vintage.)

In Nehemiah 8 the feast of tabernacles is stressed mainly because it was the first occasion to observe one of the features of the Law which they had just rehearsed in such great detail. However it is also suggestive that the return of Israel from Babylon may foreshadow the return of the Israelites to their true prophetic position after they return to the Lord at the end of their Diaspora.

The booths were primarily to show how the people had been protected in their temporary dwelling quarters during the wilderness wanderings. The booths were patterned after the temporary shelters for "the watchmen of the vineyards and melons, and maize fields, protecting them against thieves, herds, and wild beasts. . . . [and] only slightly put together" (Keil & Delitzsch). They measured about eight feet square and could go as high as 15 feet.

It is the temporary nature of booths that is stressed in Job 27:18, "He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh." The booths also indicated an isolated condition: "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city" (Isaiah 1:7,8).

All of these lessons were particularly appropriate to Israel in the days of Nehemiah. As the Lord had led them safely from the land of Egypt to the promised land, so now they had been returned to Jerusalem from their captivity in Babylon. It will thus be appropriate in that future reality when they shall have returned from their dispersion throughout the earth, and once again hear and give heed to the Word of the Lord, that Jerusalem becomes the permanent capital of the earth (Isaiah 2:2-4).

And so the people went to work and filled Jerusalem with booths—on the housetops, in the temple square, in the plazas, and even in the streets. As the Wycliffe Commentary notes, "Probably the inhabitants of the city built their booths by their own homes, the priests and Levites built in the temple courts, and non-resident laymen in the open places."

But such activities formed only the setting. Their real activity was seven days of studying and meditating on the law of God. What a beautiful picture we have here of the Messianic kingdom when, for a thousand years, mankind shall read and contemplate the laws of a perfect God so that, keeping them, they may live forever. The Bible, which has

been so faithfully preserved since its inception, will still be the divine standard for all men for ever.

It was on the eighth day that they removed their huts and returned to their dwelling places. So it will be that, after God's 7,000-year plan for mankind shall have wrought its perfect work, all men will receive their eternal inheritance (Matthew 25:34). As the booths fade into the realities of life again in their own possession, may it ever be a reminder that "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40:8).

\* A cursory reading of Jeremiah 28-30 might imply a captivity of only 4,600. However this is in direct conflict with 2 Kings 24:16 where the number of landowners and metal-workers alone was 8,000. The total number including women and children, according to D. George Adam Smith, may have been between 62,000 to 70,000, nearly half the residents of the country, leaving only the poor to tend the land (*Jerusalem*, volume 2, pp. 268-270).

\*\* Although the number of Israelites had undoubtedly swelled to many more than the 70,000 taken captive, many were too old to return, others because of health reasons or other commitments did not feel ready to leave, and some had become assimilated into the Babylonian culture.

## Precise Predictions

# Divine Foreknowledge in the Book of Daniel

*I am God, and there is none like me, declaring . . . from ancient times the things that are not yet done.—Isaiah 46:9,10*

David Rice

One of the strong evidences for divine inspiration in Scripture is the inclusion of prophecies which accurately predicted episodes in history. It indicates a foreknowledge of the future that only divine providence could account for.

The Book of Daniel contains such prophecies, some so specific that Daniel is a focal point of debate on inspiration. So forceful is the witness of these prophecies that critics are obliged to suppose the book was written after the events it claims to predict. After all, what other explanation could suffice?

The first record of this view comes from a pagan writer of the third century named Porphyry, "one of the most sagacious and learned antagonists of Christianity under the Roman empire" (McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, volume 8, page 420). That view lay dormant for centuries until revived by critics in modern times. A well known presentation of this position is *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires* by H. H. Rowley, published in 1935.

### **The Prophetic Foreview**

Daniel was among the captives of Judah taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, whose rule began in the closing years of the seventh century BC. His prophecies mention by name the empires that would succeed Babylon—Medo-Persia and Greece—and that the Grecian empire would be divided into four segments following the death of its first emperor (Daniel 8:20-22).

All this fits the facts so precisely that no one doubts the application. Critics therefore suppose these prophecies were composed after the Grecian empire had split into four parts—in fact, during the second century BC, during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of the Syrian fragment of the Grecian empire, at about the time of the Maccabean Revolt.

Of course this expedient is not adequate to answer the issues. For example, Daniel 7 shows that after the first three empires, a fourth would rise stronger than its predecessors, "a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly" (verse 7). This was fulfilled by the Roman empire, which rose to its zenith some time after the Maccabean

Revolt. This empire would decompose into several fragments (the ten horns), dominated by a powerful system which would "wear out the saints of the most high" for 1,260 years during the dark ages. Just such a system did rule, from Rome, from 539 to 1799 (Studies in the Scriptures, volume 3, chapter 3), and the history of its oppression is renown (Studies in the Scriptures, volume 2, chapter 9).

Also, texts in Daniel 9 predicted the exact years of the baptism and death of Messiah, Jesus, who appeared nearly two centuries after the Maccabean Revolt. Ezekiel testifies of the historical Daniel (Ezekiel 14:14,20), Jesus does the same (Matthew 24:15), and the apostles Paul and John endorse Daniel's prophecies by their reference to them (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 13:2-7).

All of this, however, is on a spiritual level, and does not much impress the critics. But for other reasons intrinsic in the narratives, critics are retreating from their position as regards the first six chapters of Daniel.

"According to nearly every modern commentator, the tales of chapters 1-6 are originally products of a Jewish community in a Gentile environment, whose concerns were rather different from those of Jews who read these tales in Palestine in the Maccabean period" (Philip Davies, cited in *The Skeptical Review*, March/April 1999, page 6).

This implies an abandonment of the several lesser arguments they have traditionally used, which depend on texts in the first six chapters (such as Daniel 1:1; 3:5; 5:31). What, then, are the critics left with to support their view? Simply a disbelief such precision as Daniel contains could actually be of divine origin.

### **A Detailed History**

Though prophetic themes are intertwined throughout Daniel, the prophetic visions of Daniel himself are recorded, sequentially, in the last six chapters. They are four in number, chapters 7, 8, 9 each recounting different visions, and chapters 10, 11, 12 constituting one narrative recording the fourth prophecy. This latter is the most detailed. It was given in the "third year of Cyrus king of Persia" (10:1), and gives a preview of history from that time forward to the establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

In chapter 11, verse 2, Daniel speaks of the three successors after Cyrus—Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius—and a fourth, Xerxes (the Ahasuerus of Esther), who would surpass the others in wealth and advance his kingdom against Greece. Herodotus speaks of this famous campaign (Book 7), and numbers the whole body of Persia's soldiers and their retinue at 5,000,000, a figure so great as to be suspect. Whatever the actual number, it was a stirring of the whole force of the empire against Greece . . . but in vain. The invasion proved abortive, and a turning point in history.

Verse 3 refers to Alexander the Great, the king of Greece who rose a century and a half later and conquered Persia. Verse 4 explains that after his death (323 BC) the kingdom would be divided in four parts, none of which would be given "to his posterity," and none

would rule "according to his dominion." The division was not immediate, but in a few years four segments emerged: Cassander in Macedonia, Lysimachus in Thrace, Seleucus in Syria, and Ptolemy in Egypt.

The narrative which follows traces two parts of this empire, those north and south of Judea, namely Syria and Egypt. (Macedonia was later defeated by the others, then Cassander by Seleucus, leaving the Syrian and Egyptian fragments the most powerful.) The following list of kings, and the length of their reigns, will be useful as we proceed through the narrative. These six generations of rulers are all that are referred to in the prophetic narrative. (The last four entries under Syria are two pairs of brothers.)

<b>Egypt (South), 323 BC</b>	<b>Syria (North), 312 BC</b>
38 Ptolemy Soter	32 Seleucus Nicator
38 Ptolemy Philadelphus	19 Antiochus Soter
25 Ptolemy Eugertes	15 Antiochus Theus
17 Ptolemy Philopator	20 Seleucus Callinicus
24 Ptolemy Epiphanes	3 Seleucus Ceraunus
	36 Antiochus Magnus
35 Ptolemy Philometor	11 Seleucus Philopator
	12 Antiochus Epiphanes

Verse 5—the King of the South is Ptolemy Soter, for a time the strongest of Alexander's successors. By his assistance one of his generals, Seleucus Nicator, received control of Syria. Ultimately his domains extended from Asia Minor to the border of India, and he became the strongest of Alexander's successors—"one of [Ptolemy's] princes . . . shall be strong above him . . . his dominion shall be a great dominion."

Verse 6—"In the end of years," after many disputes, a marriage alliance would be effected between them. "The king's daughter of the south [Berenice, daughter of Philadelphus] shall come to the king of the north [Antiochus Theus] to make an agreement." Antiochus put away his previous wife, Laodice, so he might marry Berenice, but he later had a change of heart (after the passing of Philadelphus?) and recalled Laodice. She made sure she would not be put away again. She poisoned Antiochus, and had Berenice, Berenice's new son by Antiochus, and all Berenice's Egyptian attendants killed.

Verse 7—"Out of a branch of [Berenice's] roots shall one stand up . . . and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north and shall deal against them, and shall prevail." Berenice's brother, Ptolemy Eugertes, recently come to the throne, was outraged. He invaded Syria, occupied the capital Seleucia (which he maintained with garrisons for some years), had Laodice slain, and would have occupied the entire kingdom of the north, had not unrest called him back to Egypt. As he went he took "into Egypt their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold" and refrained "from

attacking the king of the north for some years" (verse 8, NASB). Eugertes took 40,000 talents of silver, and retrieved 2,500 images which Cambyses, Persian monarch, had taken from Egypt centuries earlier.

Verse 9 is translated quite differently in the NASB than the King James. "Then the latter [king of the north] will enter the realm of the king of the south, but will return to his own land." Seleucus Callinicus, son of the deceased Laodice, sought revenge for the vengeance taken by Eugertes. "Justin says that he fitted out a great fleet, which was destroyed by a violent storm; and after this he raised a great army to recover his dominion, but was defeated by Ptolemy, and fled in great terror and trembling to Antioch" (Gill's Commentary).

Verse 10—"But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through." Callinicus' sons Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus Magnus continued the quest for retribution after their father's passing, but Ceraunus was poisoned by two of his generals and Magnus became king. Thus "sons" were stirred up, but only "one," Antiochus Magnus, followed through. Magnus was "stirred up, even to his fortress," retaking Seleucia and other lost portions of his northern kingdom.

Verse 11—Ptolemy Philopator met this challenge with an attack northward, and though "the king of the north . . . shall set forth a great multitude . . . the multitude shall be given into [Philopator's] hand." Philopator returned through Judea where he assayed to see the Holy of Holies at Jerusalem. He was barely restrained by the Jews, but so offended that when he returned to Egypt he caused the death of 40,000 Jews at Alexandria. As verse 12 says, "his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened"—this proud evil served only to weaken his kingdom.

Verses 13, 14—"After certain years"—about 14 years—Magnus assembled yet a greater force to attack Egypt, encouraged by the demise of Philopator and the ascent of the young child Ptolemy Epiphanes in Egypt. Magnus was joined by others: "in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south." Philip, king of Macedonia, conspired with Magnus to divide Egypt's kingdom between them. The Roman Senate entrusted the education of young Epiphanes to Emilius Lepidus, who appointed Aristomenes his guardian. Aristomenes dispatched Scopas, a famous general then in service to the Egyptians, northward. After initial successes he was defeated by forces from Magnus and fled to Sidon where he submitted to a disgraceful surrender.

This is the first intrusion of the Roman power into the chain of events, and it was unsuccessful: "the breakers [literal rendering] of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall" (verse 14). The crushers of Daniel's people would be Rome, and Rome would play the dominant role in this vision, but not yet. In this first appearance, Rome's endeavors would prove abortive.

Verses 15, 16—Thus Magnus took "a well-fortified city" (NASB), opening his way for a southern conquest. As he marched through the "glorious land"—the land of Israel (Zechariah 7:14)—it also would fall to his control.

Verse 17—"He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones [Jewish soldiers, the Hebrew word #3477 is similar to Jeshurun #3484 (see Isaiah 44:2)] with him." But as he approached Egypt, he came upon a plan calculated to claim the kingdom by subtlety rather than force. He married his daughter to Ptolemy Epiphanes, hoping to work through her to effect his influence. However the plan failed because "she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him" —her allegiance shifted away from her father, in favor of her new husband.

Verse 18—"After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many." Magnus "brought into subjection nearly all the maritime ports on the coast of Asia, Thrace and Greece" (R. E. Streeter, *Daniel the Beloved of Jehovah*, 1998 edition, page 190). His name Magnus, "Great," properly denoted the strength of his rule, and conflict with Rome was inevitable. After being repulsed at sea by Livius and Aemilius, Magnus was defeated near Magnesia in Asia Minor by the Roman general Scipio. Thus "a commander will put a stop to his scorn" (NASB).

Verse 19—Magnus never recovered from the blow, and the tribute he was obliged to render Rome under the terms of "peace" was onerous. He was obliged to plunder territories in his own empire. "So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more." As he was plundering the Temple of Jupiter in Elymias, eastward in his realm, he and his attendants were killed by the locals.

Verse 20—His son Seleucus Philopator came to the throne, who exacted taxes to raise the tribute owed Rome. In a famous episode in the history of Israel, he sent his tax collector Heliodorus into Judea, "the glory of the kingdom," to seize the money he heard was deposited in the temple at Jerusalem, but he was beaten by an angel as he began the plunder (2Maccabees 3). Within a few years Philopator would be "shattered, though neither in anger nor in battle." This describes something other than a natural death, yet not on the battlefield, nor by an act of passion. In fact Philopator was killed by Heliodorus in a palace coup.

Verse 21—Heliodorus, however, did not receive the kingdom, which thereafter was taken neither by the conspirators nor by Philopator's heirs, but obtained "peaceably . . . by flatteries" by his brother Antiochus Epiphanes, a "vile person" who received the power, but never the honor, of the kingdom.

### **An Application so Precise**

The foregoing application is so precise, so fitting to the circumstances, that it is acknowledged even by critics. It may seem complex as one wades through the detail, but actually it is reasonably straight-forward. Ptolemy Soter is clearly intended in verse 5,

and his successor Philadelphus clearly intended in verse 6, whose daughter Berenice was married to Antiochus Theus.

Berenice's brother Ptolemy Eugertes is specified in verse 7, and his adversary Seleucus Callinicus in verse 8. Thereafter Callinicus' sons appear in verse 10, and the exploits of the younger son, Magnus, are detailed in verses 11-19. His successor Seleucus Philopator is given but one verse, and his successor Antiochus Epiphanes is introduced in verse 21. Each of the six generations of rulers, from the death of Alexander through to Antiochus Epiphanes, is carefully documented.

### **A Transition . . . and a Challenge**

Since Daniel 12:1,2 take us to the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead, more than 2,000 years after Antiochus Epiphanes, the prophecy cannot continue with a generation by generation narrative. There must be a change of tempo, or a large break, somewhere. So it was with the connection between Persia and Greece. The Scriptures identified five sequential monarchs—Cyrus, Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius, Xerxes—and then jumped in one leap to the Grecian empire at the time of Alexander.

The question facing students of Daniel 11 is where to make the break to Rome, the successor of Greece, and where to identify Papacy, the Man of Sin, shown in Daniel 7 as the successor of Imperial Rome.

The 1,260 years of Papal rule evidently began at the same time as the 1,290 years, and the latter began "from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up" (Daniel 12:7,11). This language is drawn directly from Daniel 11:31, "they . . . shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." Therefore those who recognize Papacy as the Man of Sin recognize Daniel 11:31 as referring to Papacy.

How, then, do we get from Daniel 11:21 (Antiochus Epiphanes) to Daniel 11:31 (Papacy)? This is the task which confronted the Adventists in the 1800s. Uriah Smith, about 20 years senior to Bro. Russell, in *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation* used a method similar to that used by Bro. Russell in *Thy Kingdom Come*.

The exact applications vary, but the method is to skip from highlight to highlight in the Roman empire, for example, touching Julius Caesar (verse 17), Augustus (verse 20), Tiberius (verse 21), Aurelian (verse 25) and Papacy (verse 26). Another option, embraced by Isaac Newton, Thomas Newton, and a broad array of thoughtful Protestant expositors, is found in the book *Daniel, the Beloved of Jehovah* by Bro. R. E. Streeter. It recognizes the career of Antiochus Epiphanes in verses 21-30, and indeed these verses do outline the campaign of this monarch just as closely as we saw verses 10-19 detail Antiochus Magnus. (On verse 22b, compare 2 Maccabees 4:1-38. This murder of righteous Onias, the high priest, may be typical of the death of Messiah.)

In this approach verse 31 becomes the turning point. The text speaks of polluting the temple, removing the daily sacrifice, and placing an abomination, something which on different levels was accomplished by Antiochus and later Rome in the literal temples, and Papacy in the spiritual temple. This approach has two benefits:

1. It is consistent with our Lord's application of Daniel 11:31 in Matthew 24:15, 16, applying it literally to the Roman desecrations in Judea, and figuratively to the Papal desecrations in Christendom.
2. It preserves the continuity of Daniel 11. For example, there is nothing to indicate in verses 16, 17 or 25 a change of monarch such as the other view requires. (Such changes are clearly marked in verses 7, 10, 20, 21 for example.)

### **The Remainder of the Chapter**

The Adventists had a great advantage over earlier expositors in that they lived after the end of the 1,260 years, i.e., after 1799, and could look back upon Napoleon's role in ending Papal power. So much did they recognize his influence, they attributed him more exposure in the prophecy than seems due. Thus they supposed him introduced in verse 36, whereas a natural reading of the passage would imply verse 36 refers to the same power as verse 31.

In support of this observation is Paul's reference to verse 36 in 2 Thessalonians 2:4. There, referring to the Man of Sin (Papacy), Paul says "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." A close comparison of this with Daniel 11 indicates that verse 36 was the source of Paul's comments.

Evidently, therefore, Daniel 11:31-39 all refer to the Papacy. Verse 40 explains its demise as a two-step process, that first a southern power would "push" at him (the Ottoman Empire), then a northern power would "come against him like a whirlwind . . . he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over" (Napoleon, whose career continues through verse 45).

### **A Firm Foundation**

There are some challenging details in Daniel's prophecies. But the main outlines of history are laid down so precisely there can be no doubt about its meaning. Babylon was followed by Medo-Persia, to be defeated by the Greek Empire, which would split into four parts and later be consumed by the most powerful kingdom known to antiquity, Rome. The fragments of that kingdom (the ten horns) would be dominated by a powerful institution which would "wear out the saints of the most high" for centuries during the dark ages. Finally judgment would fall, and subsequently "the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the . . . saints of the most High" (Daniel 7:27). Not only in the

details of history, but in the circumstances attending the breaking of the new day, our faith is deeply confirmed in the prophetic word.

## Rationality vs. Myth

# Genesis and Geophysics

*Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf!—Psalm 66:5, NIV*

Richard Doctor

Science's first halting steps toward understanding planetary processes owe a 3,700-year-old debt to the inspired author of Genesis. When we contrast Genesis with creation accounts from other cultures, it is apparent that the Bible's world view differs in a striking way. The biblical account is rational. The nurturing of this rational thought coupled to experimental investigation—"the scientific method"—has been a dynamo for progress, yet its biblical foundations are generally ignored.

By way of contrast, in the Sumerian creation myths of Abraham's homeland we are thrust into the world of symbolism and psychological archetypes. We meet counsels, thrones, four winds, then seven winds, four horses, judgment storms, seals, enchained demigods, and most importantly, Tiamut, a demonic woman judged to destruction. It is Tiamut's severed body that becomes heaven, earth, and ocean. There are weapons, but no trumpets. This is a groping toward meaning in the cosmos as experienced through symbolism and imagination, rather than through rational reflection linked to empirical learning.

Our current understanding of the creation of time and space opposes another ancient, non-biblical belief which holds that time and space always existed as unorganized "chaos" finally brought into order by God: "All Nature was all Chaos, the rounded body of all things in one."<sup>1</sup> This non-biblical thought of "chaos" still dominates much of our common thinking about creation and creates considerable mischief. In contrast the Bible presents a view of a Creator who stands outside of nature, who creates nature itself.

To aid our understanding the creative process is divided into six great periods called "days." This is an unusual departure for generally the Bible is not authored to serve as a text on science. Its grand theme is directed toward answering the questions of the soul such as "Why are we here?" The question of "why" is a distinctly different question from a second query fundamentally in the province of science: "How did we get here?" Albert Einstein, whose genius opened up the relativistic universe, offered this thought-provoking reflection on the "how" of God's hand in creation: "The Lord is subtle, but he is not malicious."

We should seek the hand of a Creator we can trust to harmonize the testimony of the stars in the heavens and the rocks beneath our feet. At the same time it is distressing to hear it said that God created the heavenly bodies our telescopes view with the appearance of being ancient as a test of our faith in the Bible, while supposedly the creation we view is not ancient at all. Surely presenting one appearance of reality while doing something else

is not what any of us would do to our children when they seek to learn something. Such reasoning is inconsistent with the clear principles laid down by Jesus (Matthew 7:8-12).

We stand in an age where details of solar fusion reactions and neutrino production are being experimentally compared against theory. How different is our day from the world-view of the nineteenth century when the sun was thought to be young because the amount of coal required to give off the observed energy would soon burn it out! Does this increase of knowledge change our view of the world? It absolutely should. Yet how easy is the path that maintains a willing ignorance of challenges to dogma while wrapping itself in the respectable mantle of religious conviction! While all should be respectful of the sincerity and faith of those who embrace Genesis in its simplicity and dismiss as irrelevant any need for corroboration, we also should be respectful of those in the scientific community whose lives, wrapped-up in the inexhaustible intellectual challenge of discovering scientific truth, experience religion only through its hostility. Properly understood, Christianity holds to a narrow course that understands and reconciles estrangement.

### **Remembering the Sabbath**

Direct Scriptural support for the Sabbath system is sometimes presented as proof that the creative days were literal 24-hour periods (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:11). When the observance of the Sabbath is introduced, Israel is told that the blessings of rest and refreshment on the Sabbath day had precedents in God's design. However, the true Sabbath of God is perpetual (Hebrews 4:3-11). For God a "day" constitutes a period of time in which a work is accomplished. It is not limited to a 24-hour day. For this reason the Scriptures elsewhere specifically refer to a 40-year "day of temptation" (Psalm 95:8-10) using the same Hebrew word *yom* translated "day" in Genesis. Peter, writing much later in Greek, refers to a 1,000-year "day" (2 Peter 3:8).

Establishing and managing the cycles by which life, air, land, and oceans interact to sustain each other may well be one of the most complicated and challenging acts of creation. Each "day" of this process had its own special adversities. The seemingly insignificant and often unclear start—at least from the testimony of the geological record—is followed by a triumphant finish. Most appropriately, these are designated "evening" and "morning." This creative week with its Sabbath system serves as an appropriate memorial and celebration of God's great work, though we recognize that great epochs of time much longer than 24-hours constitute these "days."<sup>2</sup>

### **Before the First Day**

"In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). The period before the "beginning" of Genesis 1:1 is unmeasurable. Although it is difficult for us to comprehend, time as we know it did not exist. However, God was active. He carried out his only direct creation bringing into existence his only-begotten son, the "Word," elsewhere called "Wisdom" (John 1:1; Proverbs 8:12-31).

"In the beginning [of our physical universe], God created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1; Job 38:7) In collaboration with this "master-builder" God's plans for creation were framed. The creative work began with the basics: time, space, energy, and matter. The "standard model" is how physicists speak of the great event that created time and space. Less correctly, the name "Big Bang" still persists. The "standard model" starts with an elegant set of equations on a blank sheet of paper and correctly predicts:

1. that galaxies are moving apart from each other;
2. the observed ratios of the elements hydrogen, helium, and lithium that comprise 97% of the visible matter in the universe;
3. the observed ratio of matter to radiation; and
4. the current frigid average temperature of the universe.

So carefully tuned are the constants of physics that even small deviations in their values would fill the cosmos with space, time, energy, and matter, but certainly prohibit life as we know it.<sup>3</sup> At the same time it is unwise to conclude that life might not appear in some other strange and wonderful form; it simply would not be composed of atoms or molecules!

Observations of the universe's most distant reaches by the Hubble space telescope suggest an age of the universe of over 13 billion years. Independently, our radio telescopes can serve as sensitive thermometers to measure temperatures from the frigid and faint echoes of creation. These measurements are consistent with the universe having an age near 14.6 billion years. From yet a third line of independent observations, efforts to explain the order in the subatomic world and the observed ratio of matter to light in the universe lead yet other scientists also to conclude that the age of the universe is 14.6 billion years. In harmony with these observations, we would do well to conclude that this is because the universe is in fact 14.6 billion years old.

In time the matter coalesced into short-lived stars distinctly unlike our long-burning sun. These stars had an important role to play as the factories that formed the remaining 92 elements heavier than lithium. Around five billion years ago the gases and ashes created in the super-novae deaths of these early stars hurled across space where under the influence of gravity they again clumped together forming our own sun and earth. The proto-earth, composed largely of asteroid-type material rich in water, cooled.

It was at this juncture that a statistically rare and critically important event to make earth habitable took place. A planetoid approximately the size of Mars crashed into the earth; our moon was formed from the material that splashed off. Subsequently the violence of the early solar system quieted and asteroid impacts became rare rather than everyday occurrences. Moon rocks, undisturbed until scooped up by the Apollo astronauts, testify of this cataclysm.

"A giant impact such as that which formed the moon would have completely blown off any [early] atmosphere and ocean."<sup>4</sup> A new ocean was needed. About the cooling of the earth for a second time, distinguished geophysicist Professor James C.G. Walker of Yale University writes: "We conclude that nearly all the atmosphere (and the ocean) has been released from the solid earth."<sup>5</sup> This is consistent with the words of Job: "Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb?" (Job 38:8-11) Without inspiration, how did this marvelous detail of geophysics get transmitted to us? With the presence of a sea, the earth "without form and void" was now ready for active creation.

## **The First Day**

"And the earth was without form and void"—Genesis 1:1.

Let us now consider the first creative day. Because Scripture makes no direct demand regarding the length of these time periods, the consensus chronology developed by the geophysics community may well be correct. "Let us not contend for more than scripture demands," is the wise pastoral counsel of Brother Russell regarding the creative process.<sup>6</sup>

"And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). All the geophysical evidence concurs with Genesis that life began in the oceans and was not dependent on light through the pioneering efforts of Archaeobacteria and other "chemoautotrophs" that feed directly off chemicals.<sup>7</sup> The evidence lies in rocks older than the continents themselves discolored by chemical compounds that are produced only in the presence of life. The most dramatic examples from this era include the economically important iron ore deposits of the world including the Mesabi range of Minnesota formed by the action of these bacteria. Without inspiration, how did this marvelous detail, namely, that life could exist without light, get transmitted to us?

"And God said, Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). The sun had long existed, but until now the "swaddling bands" (Job 38:9) of thick clouds shrouded the ocean surface. These "swaddling bands" are predicted in studies of the earth's early atmosphere. As the Archeobacteria continued their monumental work of clearing and forming the atmosphere, soon follows evidence for plants, simple sea-dwelling algae.

The earth occupies a uniquely favored position around the sun. If its orbit were as little as 4% closer to the sun, the oceans never would have condensed and its climate would have moved toward the inhospitable hothouse of Venus. Were the earth as little as 1% further from the sun, earth would become an eternally frozen ice-house like Mars and the outer planets. During the first day the still young sun with 70% of its current luminosity was rapidly increasing its output while the earth's atmosphere—still swaddled with clouds and heavy with greenhouse gases—was slowly being changed by the metabolism of bacteria and algae to become more transparent. One of the greatest crises for life on earth was its narrow escape from a runaway greenhouse that would have boiled off the oceans. By design, life appeared just when it was needed to prevent this catastrophe. A

popular report on the studies of Dr. Michael Hart of NASA identifying this issue dubbed it "a lucky fluke."<sup>8</sup>

### **The Second Day**

"And God said, Let there be a sky."—Genesis 1:6-8

Now there was a crisis for the Archaeobacteria. The atmosphere steadily accumulated oxygen, a highly reactive waste product of photosynthesis deadly to these pioneers. They found themselves choking on the wastes from the ever-prolific algae. Eventually free oxygen made life near the ocean surface impossible for these bacteria. Their essential work in the divine program now finished, they retired from a place of prominence to deep ocean volcanic vents in communities that still constitute nearly half the living matter on earth.

"Let the sky be a means of dividing between waters and waters." Atmospheric changes now cleared the heavy clouds and fog which had enshrouded the earth. With amazing accuracy, the Bible account calls attention to this marked change that was not clearly accounted for by scientists until elucidated by intensive studies of earth's ancient atmosphere during the 1970s. Once again, anticipating science by over three thousand years, the Bible and current scientific study harmonize.

### **The Third Day**

"And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry ground appear."—Genesis 1:9

Continent building by plate tectonics, the slow movement of large rock masses, can be traced in the geological record as far back as the first creative day.<sup>9</sup> However, early tectonics does not exhibit the current well-established cycles of continent subduction and renewal. Here, Scripture marks the first appearance of all the land locked in a "supercontinent" whose plates continue to the present day as our familiar continents, with familiar tectonics. With the combination of land and plant life came the first appearance of our current soil cycles. These cycles, so critical to life, hold and then release essential elements, yet prior to this period soils are characterized by "their rarity and by the difficulty of identifying paleosols [ancient soils] with certainty."<sup>10</sup> Sediments weathered from the continents now formed fossils to preserve an amazing record of the explosion of new life forms called the "Cambrian period." In the nineteenth century the Cambrian was improperly thought to be the beginning of life. Today extensive and well-preserved fossil-bearing ocean muds such as the pre-Cambrian Burgess shales of Canada show this to be incorrect.

"Let the earth bring forth tender shoots." The Bible account speaks of the first plant colonization on the land specifically called "tender grass" or "shoots" because of their appearance. Paleobotanists call these early land plants "cooksonia" and they do indeed look like "tender grass." Despite their appearance they are not our present day grasses.

(Modern grasses prosper as a consequence of a photosynthesis cycle especially adapted to our current low levels of carbon dioxide.) Soon followed the great forests that have left the world its most extensive coal beds.

These plants did not bear the familiar fruits we find at the grocery stores today. Scripture describes the rich and unfamiliar plant life of the coal forests as "herbs" and plants "whose seeds are in themselves," a description appropriate to now-extinct seed-ferns that once dominated the land. Once again, anticipating science, the biblical account accurately points to the beginning of our current continental activity and the appearance of free-standing plants.

### **The Fourth Day**

"And God said, let there be lights . . . to divide the day from the night."—Genesis 1:14

The "heavens and the earth" of Genesis 1:1 including the sun and moon were in existence and influencing life on earth long before they became visible to surface observers. Possibly there was still some partial obscuring of their light by residual clouds much thinner than the "swaddling band" clouds that cleared at the start of the second day. If this is true, concurrence from geophysical modeling may require at least another decade of cloud physics studies because this is one of the most challenging areas to correctly predict. Yet why the focus on the sun and moon?

Our sun appears to be an average star. However, to be capable of having a planet suited to life as we know it, scientists currently believe that the sun could be no more than 17% smaller or 10% larger. In addition, our sun occupies a favored position near the edge of the Milky Way galaxy in an orbit that isolates it from the high intensity radiation and cataclysmic deaths of nearby stars when they turn into supernovas. Not long ago astrophysicist Carl Sagan estimated that there were many thousands of planets in our galaxy capable of sustaining life. More sober estimates have drastically reduced that number. Today Professor Ben Zuckerman at UCLA suggests that the earth is unique in our entire galaxy.<sup>11</sup>

Most remarkable is the unusually large moon the earth holds in orbit. All the other planets in the solar system have systems of moons which are trivial in weight compared to their mother planet. Not so for the earth, and this leads to a significant consequence. The energy of our earth-moon system has very strongly influenced the magnetic field of the earth making it one hundred times larger than it should be. This magnetism wraps the earth in an invisible shield that deflects many of the life-threatening particles streaming from the sun.

The importance of the earth-sun-moon interaction does not end here. This interaction is one of the major forces driving the rapid exchange of mantle material and the gases trapped in the interior of the earth—usually to the benefit of life. The Permian period of the fourth day is an exception. An elegant study just published by Marianne Greff-Lefftz at the Paris Institute of Global Physics directly links "core oscillations induced by lunar-

solar tidal forces" directly to the end of this era. These forces created "a resonance amplification factor of about 10,000 with respect to present values" and drove the extensive volcanism and geological instability that ended the entire Paleozoic, or "old life" era.<sup>12</sup>

In a short period of time this day witnessed the most extensive extinction event ever suffered by the biosphere. A succinct summary is provided by Rachel Woods at the University of Cambridge who is an authority on ancient reef life: "The causes of the end Permian extinction remain elusive, but they certainly were complex and related to a rapid drop of sea level ..... followed by extensive volcanic eruptions ..... and finally by a rise in sea-level which may have caused anoxic [oxygen-poor] waters to flood newly available shallow marine habitats ..... this profound extinction event resulted in the global loss of between 80% and 95% of all species" [emphasis added].<sup>13</sup> These extinctions occurring in an era of unprecedented continental uplift formed the mightiest mountains ever seen on earth.

Though there is evidence of annual seasonal growth rings from the time that the first tree-like plants colonized the land on the third day, from this period forward trees that lose their leaves in the fall and show strong seasonal growth patterns become an important part of the ecosystem.<sup>14</sup> The earth now exhibited a "structure and dynamics ..... not substantially different from those of the present day, even though all the species were different."<sup>15</sup> This new seasonal growth cycle may now have shown a special advantage during this era of seasonal extremes that regularly found ferocious winds sweeping the desert interior and pounding the huge continental landmass of the south with severe winter storms and hurricanes.

The sun does indeed "rule the day" and continually powers life on earth while the silent partner in nurturing the life on earth is our highly unusual moon which "rules the night." Incredibly at this juncture the Bible specifically calls out these two powerful forces that were so critical to the course of life on earth.

### **The Fifth Day**

"And God created great sea-monsters, and every living creature that creepeth . . . and every winged fowl."—Genesis 1:21

Dinosaurs fascinate us as they did the inspired writer of Genesis. In almost everyone's imagination mentioning them spawns vivid images of these dread-inspiring beasts who once ruled earth. Dinosaurs belong to the fifth creative epoch and the original Hebrew employs awestruck language to describe them: "great monsters," "swarming sea creatures," and "winged creatures." The word "whales" in the Authorized Version is simply incorrect.<sup>16</sup>

Other changes of consequence were taking place in the cycle of life. Flowers, from which all our fruits come, and modern grasses adapted to new low-levels of carbon dioxide now spread throughout the earth. From these grasses come all our grains. For the first time the

earth could grow a food resource capable of meeting the incredibly high energy demands of mammals and birds. With these critically important works accomplished, the world of the dinosaurs abruptly ended from world-wide devastation caused by asteroid impacts.

Such catastrophism is so startling that it took the scientific community some time to accept the idea when it was put forward by Nobel-prize-winning scientist Luis Alvarez.

### **The Sixth Day**

"Let the earth bring forth the living soul after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast." —Genesis 1:24

The fertile work of the first five epochs of creation successfully brought into existence many interwoven life cycles. These cycles now maintained the atmosphere, temperature, and movement of chemicals essential to life. Microorganisms and insects, which generally escape our attention except as nuisances, are integral to these cycles and continue to constitute the bulk of earth's life. And yet we cannot feel the sense of kinship with these creatures that we do with mammals. It is to the sixth day that the familiar mammals now come to prominence on the earth.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image." The earth was now ready for the creation of a life with sufficient intelligence, sentience, and moral capacity to appreciate the Creator. Here the claims of science and the authority of Scripture come into conflict, for the concept of man's evolution from the lower primates can not be reconciled with the Bible. We rest on the simple statement of Scripture that man was created perfect and sinless by God to exercise a benevolent dominion over the earth. Sadly this bliss was not to endure. The rest of this story is contained in the remaining chapters of the Bible.

### **God's Footstool Made Glorious --Isaiah 66:1**

What is to become of planet earth upon which our Creator God has devoted so much loving effort? The Scriptures are not silent on this question. They speak of a yet future time of restoration, or restitution of "all things" (Acts 3:19-21), when "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad" (Isaiah 35:1), when the Lord will "make a covenant . . . with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of the heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground . . . and will make them to lie down safely" (Hosea 2:18). Most thrilling is Revelation 21 where the apostle John writes about a new heaven and a new earth—an earth with man restored and under the happy dominion of the kingdom of Christ Jesus and his church. John dwells on a description of this happy state in loving allegorical detail, but we know he is describing the literal planet earth because he tells us, "and there shall be no more curse" (Revelation 22:3). We are further assured of this promise when three verses later we read, "these sayings are faithful and true." Let us not judge our God by his yet unfinished work.

God's testimony of his creation has provided us with a faithful record of all his power on behalf of his creatures. It is a record of progressive creative work culminating in man.

Amazingly, this record matches line-for-line with our best understanding of geology. God is the author of both the Bible and the book of nature. We should find delight and wonder as we learn to read more from each of these books. We should greet the developments of scientific understanding with enthusiasm, not with fear, hiding, or ignorance. As always the challenge to the church is to "hold fast to that which is true" in a changing world. May we all grow as God would have us grow.

---

## NOTES

I appreciate and acknowledge the thoughtful comments on this article by Dr. Thomas Moore, Argonne National Laboratory, who is a geologist currently specializing in paleoclimate studies.

1. Gregory, Horace (translator), *Ovid—The Metamorphoses*, Mentor, NY, 1958, Book 1
2. Russell, Charles T., *Reprints*, p. 1731
3. Davies, P.C.W., *The Accidental Universe*, Cambridge (1982). The treatment of Prof. Davies work is admirably done from a Christian perspective by Ross, H., *The Creator and the Cosmos*, NavPress, Colorado Springs, 1993
4. Schubert, Gerald, "The Lost Continents," *Nature*, Vol. 354, 5 Dec. 1991, p. 358
5. Walker, James C.G., *Evolution of the Atmosphere*, Macmillan, NY, 1977, p. 182
6. Russell, Charles T., *The New Creation*, p. 35
7. Schlesinger, W., *Biogeochemistry* [second ed.], Academic Press, 1997, pp. 32-34
8. Hindley, K., "Earth's Atmosphere—A Lucky Fluke," *New Scientist*, 8 June 1978, p. 671
9. Zimmer, C., "Ancient Continent Opens Window on the Early Earth," *Science*, Vol. 286, Number 5448, 17 Dec 1999, pp. 2254-2256
10. Holland, H., *The Chemical Evolution of the Atmosphere and Oceans*, Princeton, 1984, p. 277
11. Achenbach, J., "Life Beyond Earth," *National Geographic*, Jan. 2000, p. 29
12. Greff-Lefftz, M. and H. Legros, "Core Rotational Dynamics and Geological Events," *Science*, Vol. 286, 26 November 1999, p. 1707
13. Woods, R., *Reef Evolution*, Oxford, 1999, p. 99
14. Klein, G. D. (Ed.), *Pangea; Paleoclimate, Tectonics, and Sedimentation, During Accretion, Zenith, and Breakup of a Supercontinent*, Special Paper 288, Geological Society of America, 1994; p. 154
15. Behrensmeyer, A.K., et al., *Terrestrial Ecosystems through Time*, University of Chicago, 1992, p. 205
16. Wilson, W., *Old Testament Word Studies*, MacDonald Publishing, McLean, Virginia, 1991

## The Earth Yields Her Secrets

# Buried Treasures

*[God] hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day.—Jeremiah 32:20*

Carl Hagensick

Archaeology, like forensics, is an interpretative science. Evidence is gathered, collected, analyzed, and tentative conclusions are drawn. Because the conclusions are tentative, archaeology cannot be used to prove the Bible, although it does furnish evidence to corroborate the accuracy of biblical persons, places, and cultural backgrounds. Ephraim Speiser of the University of Pennsylvania phrased it thus: "We can tell that the Assyrians conquered Israel, but we have no way of knowing if it was God who sent them."

Archaeological discoveries can be divided into three categories: 1) permanent fixtures, such as towns, houses, public buildings and roadways; 2) artifacts, including pottery, coins, and skeletons; and 3) written records, such as parchments, papyri, and inscriptions. Biblical archaeology, a specialized field beginning with the discovery of the Rosetta Stone during Napoleon's Egyptian campaign in 1799, uses all three of these kinds of evidence.

### **Biblical Cities**

The Holy Land has proved to be a rich trove for the searchers of the past. Sifting through the silent dust of centuries, the spades of the archaeologists have turned up scores of ancient cities. Sites for prospective ruins have been relatively easy; the lumpier the landscape, the larger the potential city. Urban areas were usually located on higher plots of ground, so approaching enemies could be easily spotted. The height advantage enabled the city defenders to shoot their arrows from the strategic high ground. A convenient water supply was essential. Plotting caravan routes was yet another means for finding the best places to dig. But the most productive tool in locating promising areas for excavation has been the Bible itself. Geographic clues from the Scriptures have often pointed to productive locations.

The period of the Old Testament times was one wrought with warfare as various tribes fought for ethnic superiority, or to loot, or to bring other groups into a tributary relationship where they could reap a percentage of the crops or of the flocks and herds. Since ideal town locations were rather few, the attackers would merely level the area and build a new city upon the one they had just destroyed. Sometimes as many as twenty or more levels of habitation have been located, one on top of the other. These large mounds are known as "tells" and are easily spotted by the trained archaeological eye in search of an area to investigate.

Once located, the archaeological team lays out a "grid," marking the area to be researched. A different team is assigned to each area of the grid and the painstaking work of excavating begins, peeling off one layer of earth at a time, seeking for evidences of past habitation. Each shard of pottery, each uncovered stele, idol, or other artifact, is carefully preserved, its location noted within the grid, and also by the depth of the find. Then it is dated and preserved.

The interpreted results give a general background to the culture and life style of the period. In addition to giving credence to the existence of specific cities named in the biblical narrative, they often hint at some of the specifics mentioned in the Bible's account. This article will cover only a few of such cities.

**Arad:** When the Israelites left Egypt for the Promised Land, they enlisted the aid of Hobab, the Kenite, to guide them, and they promised him a portion of their inheritance (Numbers 10:29-32). The fulfillment of this promise is recorded in Judges 1:16 where the Kenites were allowed to dwell in Arad. Excavations there in the latter part of the twentieth century have unearthed a sizeable settlement at Tel Arad, just west of the current city bearing the same name. Among the findings was the remains of a temple structure bearing a marked similarity to Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. Such structures were forbidden by God for he had placed his name in Jerusalem and desired his worship to be centered there (1 Kings 9:3; 11:36; 2 Kings 21:4-7). When God promised Abraham the land of Canaan, he instructed him to drive the Kenites from the land (Genesis 15:18-21). Instead, Israel gave them a portion of the inheritance and thus introduced a competing religion. Perhaps this is why Heber, the faithful Kenite whose wife Jael slew the enemy general Sisera, "severed himself from the Kenites" (Judges 4:11).

**Caesarea:** The mighty seaport of Caesarea was one of the building projects of Herod the Great. Both Cornelius and Phillip the evangelist lived there. The city was not only a thriving maritime and commercial center, it also served as the administrative headquarters for the Roman occupation of Judea. Explorations of this location were conducted by the Israeli Department of Antiquities and their findings included a Crusader castle, the theater, the amphitheater, the hippodrome, and the pavement of a Jewish synagogue—possibly the very one visited by Phillip, Peter, and Paul. Also discovered was the base of a column bearing the inscription of Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea.

**Capernaum:** Situated on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum (Kfar Naum, or the city of Nahum) was the main commercial and social center of life in Galilee during the days of Jesus. (The present larger city of Tiberias, on the southwest coast of the sea, was only a small garrison for Roman soldiers at that time.) Extensive excavations have been centered on the large synagogue, a two-story, gable-roof structure measuring 60 by 80 feet. Built of white limestone, the interior columns and porticoed porch made balconies for women worshippers possible on the second floor. Although there is debate as to whether the building dated to New Testament times or shortly thereafter, an Aramaic inscription on one of the columns gives weight to the earlier dating. This inscription reads: "HLPW, the son of Zebidah, the son of Johanan, made this column. May blessing

be his." The archaeologist Dr. Nelson Glueck notes that "these names correspond roughly to the New Testament Alphaeus, Zebedee, and John, mentioned . . . in the list of Jesus' disciples and their families" (Mark 3:17,18). Among the elaborate ornamentation unearthed were such typical Jewish symbols as the seven-branched candlestick, the six-pointed Star of David, and the Ark of the Covenant. While there is some evidence that another structure may be the house of Peter's mother-in-law, often visited by Jesus, the evidence for this is more conjectural.

**Ezion-geber.** This naval port of King Solomon was located near the north end of the Gulf of Akaba, an arm of the Red Sea. These ships were manned by experienced Phoenician sailors of Hiram, king of Tyre (1 Kings 9:26, 27). The cargo shipped from this port was largely metals—both precious metals, as gold from Ophir, and copper, a popular metal for both ornamental and utilitarian uses. Excavations by Nelson Glueck in 1938 found not only vast slag heaps of iron and copper ore, but blast furnaces so aligned as to gain the maximum wind to fan the flames to the necessary heat for refining the metal. Dr. Glueck wrote of the site: "The whole town of Ezion-geber, taking into consideration place and time, was a phenomenal industrial site, without anything to compare with it in the entire history of the ancient Orient. Ezion-geber was the Pittsburgh of Old Palestine, and at the same time its most important seaport."

**Gezer.** A city on the Shephelah plateau overlooking the Mediterranean plains, Gezer was originally designated to be a Levitical city (Joshua 21:21), but the Canaanites who dwelt there proved to be too entrenched to be dislodged (Judges 1:29). Years later the city was burned to the ground by the Egyptians and then rebuilt and given by the Pharaoh to his daughter, a wife of Solomon, who, in turn, fortified it as one of his garrison cities (1 Kings 9:15-17). Two series of excavations were carried out at Gezer. The first was by R.A.S. Macalister in 1902-5 and then by A. Rowe in 1934. They found that the earliest inhabitants of the city were non-Semites whose cave dwellings showed their way of life as a farming people. From about 2500 BC (a date estimated by pottery shards) a Canaanite tribe lived there until about 1000 BC. One of their "high places" to Baal and Astarte revealed a row of chiseled stone pillars nearly eleven feet high and some polished stones worn smooth by the kisses of devotees. Plaques with rude exaggerations of sexual organs evidenced the sensual nature of their worship. At a higher level of the tell, a Hebrew altar was uncovered with the name "Jehovah" in its inscriptions. A rare insight to the agricultural cycle of Old Testament life was found on a schoolboy's plaque in classical Hebrew, outlining the calendar of agricultural operations. It read:

His two months are olive harvest;  
His two months are grain planting;  
His two months are late planting;  
His month is hoeing up flax;  
His month is barley harvest;  
His month is harvest in festivity;  
His two months are wine-tending;  
His month is summer fruit.

**Jericho:** Jericho is perhaps the most excavated city in the holy land. Four major expeditions have probed its remains: those of Charles Warren (1868), Ernst Sellin (1907-11), John Garstang (1929-36), and Kathleen Kenyon (1952-58). The last two hold the most interest to Bible Students. It was Garstang's expedition that located the fallen walls with pottery shards dating it to the time of Joshua. He also found, at the same level, charred remains that still give their testimony to the accuracy of Joshua 6:24, "And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD." Scarabs at the same level contained the names of such Egyptian rulers as Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, and Queen Hat-shep-sut, further confirming a date in the fifteen century BC. Miss Kenyon's excavations were for the purpose of proving Garstang wrong, but she was finally driven to admit: "All the canons of historical criticism demand that we accept the main facts of the story as authentic. . . . As concerns the date of the destruction of Jericho by the Israelites, all that can be said is that the latest Bronze Age occupation should, in my view, be dated to the third quarter of the fourteenth century BC. Ultimately archaeology will be the decisive criterion, but only when the archaeological time-scale has been firmly fixed, which is not yet the case."

**Sodom:** The Australian archaeologist, Dr. Alexander Beasley, in his *Amazing Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah*, demonstrated the unique geological strata of oil, bitumen, salt, and sulfur, which make the biblical account of the destruction of these cities credible (Genesis 19:15-28). The further tracing of two parallel fault lines in the earth's crust, extending from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akaba, show how an earthquake could have dropped the land between the faults several feet, forcing the oil through the fissures at such a speed as to ignite the sulfur and bitumen and create a rain of descending salt. In 1924, a joint expedition of the Pittsburgh Xenia Theological Seminary and the American School of Oriental Research, led by Drs. William Foxwell Albright and Kyle, sought to find the remains of these cities at the south end of the Dead Sea. Although they were unsuccessful, they did unearth the remains of the nearby town of Zoar, to which Lot fled with his daughters (Genesis 19:22,23,30). Respecting the earlier account of the battle of Abraham with the confederacy of kings that had sacked Sodom and taken Lot captive (Genesis 14:1-17), archaeology has uncovered documentation bearing the names of some of these kings. The German archaeologist Jeremias writes, "the confederacy has appeared in Babylonia and also the Babylonian suzerainty over Palestine in the age called for by the narrative, and, indeed, the whole historical setting into which the narrative fits has a perfect naturalness" (*Das alte Testament im Lichte des alten Orients*; Hommel, *Hebrew Tradition*, chapter v). Moreover, Amraphel king of Sumer, conquered the west, and fourteen years later returned and was slain by Abraham and his allies. Archaeology records that Ur-Nammu, King of Sumer, claims victory over the west in his fourth year, while in his eighteenth year he died in battle, "abandoned on the battlefield like a crushed vessel." (That end came in BC 2036 according to the Low Chronology of Sumer.)

## Landmarks

The shovel of the archaeologist has sought out not only entire cities, but specific landmarks mentioned in the Bible have also been focal points of its quest. Being smaller than towns, landmarks have often been more elusive. However such probes have brought forth more evidence confirming the biblical narratives.

**Golgotha:** When the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD, he did it so thoroughly that all attempts to locate the specific spot of Calvary, or Golgotha, have remained debatable. Modern scholars give maximum credence to two sites: one located at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the other to the north of the city at what is denoted Gordon's Calvary with its Garden Tomb. Though most archaeologists today favor the first of these sites, it is the latter that most captures the atmosphere of the crucifixion. The authenticity of the date of the Garden Tomb lends support to its claims, as does its proximity to a logical site for the crucifixion, on a well-traveled road, making it easily visible to passers-by and thus a likely place for Roman crucifixions which were meant as much as an object lesson to future criminals as they were a punishment. The fact that the Garden Tomb lies at the apex of Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered his son and Solomon built his Temple on a lower plateau, lends to the appeal of this site. The somewhat face-like appearance of the adjacent "Golgotha" hill is less powerful evidence, since most likely the site was named "the place of the skull," not so much for its outward appearance, as for the fact that many skulls were found at that location, hardly unusual for a place of crucifixion. Furthermore, the unique features of today's "Golgotha's Hill" are cisterns, whose face had probably not eroded away in biblical times. However, as one guide at the Garden Tomb has well phrased it, "it matters little whether the correct site be here or across the road [in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre]; what matters most is that both tombs are empty."

**Hezekiah's Tunnel:** In preparation for an expected attack against Jerusalem by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, Hezekiah ordered the construction of a tunnel connecting the Gihon springs, the city's main source of water in the Kidron valley, with the pool of Siloam in the Tyropean valley. This is the conduit referred to in 2 Chronicles 32:30, "This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works." An expedition of the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1896-97 found the steps leading to the pool, and later archaeologists uncovered the tunnel itself. It has been cleaned of debris and thousands of tourists trek through it today. However, it was earlier, in 1880, that a boy wading in the still debris-filled pool first saw the famous Siloam inscription which reads: "The boring through is completed. Now this is the story of the boring through. While the workmen were still lifting pick to pick each toward his neighbor and while three cubits remained to be cut through, each heard the voice of the other who called his neighbor, since there was a crevice in the rock on the right side. And on the day of the boring through the stone cutters struck, each to meet his fellow pick to pick; and there flowed the waters to the pool for 1200 cubits and 100 cubits was the height of the rock above the heads of the stone cutters." The building of this tunnel may have well been the occasion for the writing of Psalm 46.

**Masada:** Few sites in Israel are more famous than that of Masada, the last Jewish fortress to fall in the war against Rome in 73 AD. The most important findings were the pottery shards left by the defenders as they cast lots as to who would be the slayers of their brothers, so that the Romans could not boast of ever having captured them alive. This famous fortress of Herod the Great has not only been reconstructed, it has become the motto of modern Israeli defenses: "Masada shall not fall again."

## **Artifacts**

Not only are the major cities and biblical landmarks important, every small object that is unearthed furnishes another piece of the jigsaw puzzle which reveals the background of the manners and customs of the times during which the Bible's accounts were lived.

Pottery design is so precise that a skilled archaeologist can date the level on which it is found to within perhaps 50 years of its origin. As time progressed there was a steady and marked change in both the quality of material, the manner of workmanship, and especially in the design that is peculiar to each half century or so. Coins, likewise, furnish chronological clues and are also indicators as to which country was in control of a certain city at a certain time. An extensive collection of coins dating to biblical times is currently maintained at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, which chronicles this significance. Idols and steles (small pillars erected as monuments) have also served to verify the biblical record of the specific idolatries which drew ancient Israel away from the worship of Jehovah. Finally, skeletons have given fresh insights into the average age to which people lived and, where large numbers of males of middle age are discovered buried together at the same level, have been living testimony to the mass killings in the warfare recorded in the Old Testament.

## **Written Records**

Of all the discoveries of archaeology, however, none is perhaps as important as the written records of ancient times. Their testimony echoes down over the years bearing witness to the accuracy of the Bible itself. These records are not only replete with names of biblical characters, but often bear evidence of actual events recorded in Scripture.

**Rosetta Stone:** Biblical archaeologists date the beginning of their specialized field to the discovery of the Rosetta Stone during Napoleon's Egyptian campaign. The same events are recorded in three languages, each in parallel columns—Greek, and both written and hieroglyphic Egyptian. This enabled scientists to decipher the dead Egyptian languages and give us translations of the records from early Egyptian times.

**Behistun Inscription:** This outdoor carving sits 350 feet up on a cliff in the Zagros mountains of today's Iran. Measuring 25 by 50 feet, it is also written in three languages. An English military officer, Henry Rawlinson, scaled the mountain in a suspended cage and subsequently spent four years painstakingly copying and deciphering the inscriptions. Research proved the three languages here to be the Old Persian cuneiform, Elamite (Susian), and Babylonian cuneiform. The monument was a memorial to the victories of

the Median king Darius and is a strong verification of the record of the post-exilic prophets, referring to Ahasuerus by name (as the Uvakhshatara of the Persian inscription). Many of the details of the transfer from Babylon to Medo-Persia can be deduced from the valuable information on this inscription.

**El-Amarna Letters :** The royal archives of Pharaohs Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV (Ahkenaton) were accidentally discovered by an Egyptian peasant woman digging in her garden in 1887. Amarna was the capital city of Egypt during part of the eighteenth dynasty. More than 350 cuneiform tablets were unearthed shedding valuable light on the biblical record of the time of Israel's conquest of the promised land. References are made to the "Khabiri or Habiru," a designation which many attribute to the Hebrews (although for varied reasons). In one letter from the commander at Gezer to the Pharaoh, he writes: "Let the lord my king, the sun in heaven, take heed unto this land, for the Khabiri are mighty against us; and let the king, my Lord, stretch out his hand unto me and let him deliver me from their hands so that they not make an end of us." As in many diplomatic archives, frequent references are made to the geographic areas alluded to in the Old Testament, particularly those mentioned in Joshua and Judges. An interesting insight on Melchizedek has been noted from these letters by Professor Wallace Budge in his *History of Egypt*, IV, 231-35: "The frequently recurring title of the king of Jerusalem, 'It was not my father, it was not my mother, who established me in this position.'"

**Moabite Stone :** This stone was a monument erected by Mesha, a Moabite king who rebelled against Israel and built his capitol in Dibon, southwest of today's Amman in the biblical area of the tribe of Gad. Although he had been successful against the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, God later fought against him when he attacked the two-tribe kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 3). Part of the inscription reads: "Omri was king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land. His son (Ahab) followed him and he also said: I will oppress Moab. In my days (Chemosh) said: I will see (my desire) on him and his house, and Israel surely shall perish for ever. Omri took the land of Medeba, and (Israel) dwelt in it during his days and half the days of his son, altogether 40 years. But Chemosh (gave) it back in my days." This is in direct confirmation of the biblical account in 2Kings 3:4,5, "And Mesha king of Moab was a sheep-master, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool. But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel."

**Dead Sea Scrolls :** The remarkable discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in a cave near the Essene community of Qumran has pushed back the history of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament by a thousand years. Before the discovery of this text, the oldest Hebrew manuscript of any length dated to the ninth century AD. There is a remarkable agreement (approximately 95%) between our extant translations of the Old Testament and these scrolls. Since many of the biblical texts found in the scrolls date back to the middle of the second century BC, they refute modern critical thought of dating Daniel to the late second century and Ecclesiastes to the first century. The finding of Isaiah as one unit conflicts with the higher critical concept of two authors for Isaiah. They also demonstrate that the background of John's gospel is Hebrew in origin, rather than Hellenistic as

claimed by some recent critics. In addition to thus confirming the biblical record as written, greater insights have been gained by the scrolls and the excavations in Qumran on the origin of the concept of baptism and on the hostile relationship between the Essene community and those of the Sadducees and Pharisees.

**Ebla Tablets:** In 1964 two Italian archaeologists, Drs. Paolo Matthiae and Giovanni Petinato of the University of Rome, led an expedition that unearthed the ancient city of Ebla in northern Syria. The 140-acre site proved to contain the ruins of a metropolis of some 260,000 inhabitants during the time of the kings of Akkad. In its primacy, it controlled all of northern Syria and much of Mesopotamia. The dig uncovered the "scribe's room," with nearly 15,000 clay tablets. Many of these were trade records, mentioning such biblical cities as Ur, Damascus, Hazor, Lachish, Megiddo, Joppa, and Salim (the earlier name of Jerusalem). Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned as being part of the "cities of the plain." As Prof. David Freedman points out, "this record precedes the great catastrophe [of the destruction of those cities] which many scholars have regarded as entirely fictional." The finding of binary word lists only in Eblaite (a Semitic language) and Sumerian suggests that Ebla preceded the time of Moses when 70 languages are found (Genesis 10:5,20,31). Other texts in the library include Canaanite versions of creation and of the flood, and a Canaanite code of law.

**Archives of Mari:** Mari, an important city on the middle Euphrates, was excavated in 1933 by a team led by Prof. Andre Parrot. In unearthing the king's palace, the royal archives were discovered. It contained scores of diplomatic letters from all parts of the middle east. Frequent references were made to cities having such Old Testament names as Harran, Nahor, Serug, Peleg, and the "mound of Terah," along with the personal names of Reu, Terah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Benjamin, and David. (Charran and Surui, or Serug, still exist in Turkey). Dr. William Foxwell Albright remarks, "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob no longer seem isolated figures, much less reflection of later Israelite history; they now appear as true children of their age, bearing the same names, moving about over the same territory, visiting the same towns (especially Harran and Nahor), practicing the same customs as their contemporaries."

**Lachish Letters:** In Sennacherib's invasion of Israel, he conquered 46 cities before being defeated at Jerusalem. Of all these conquests, he seems to rejoice most in overcoming the city of Lachish, some 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. In the excavations of 1850 (supplemented by a more thorough dig from 1932-38) a pack of 21 letters written by one of the Assyrian military commanders was unearthed. These were written during the time of Jeremiah the prophet and give depthful insight into his prophecies. One example is found in Letter VI where it is written, "And let my lord know that we are watching for the signals of Lachish according to all the indications which my lord hath given, for we cannot see Azekah." These signals from Lachish explain the "sign of fire" in Jeremiah 6:1 as a call to arms for an approaching army. All in all, the significance of these letters lies largely in their reflection of the tense political and social situation of the later times when Jeremiah prophesied and was imprisoned.

The observations above noted, largely culled from the *Archaeological Supplement to Thompson's Chain Reference Bible* by G. Frederick Owen, D.D., Ed.D., and from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia are only a few of many to show that, while archaeology does not prove the Bible (that remains a matter of faith), it certainly puts the stamp of authenticity on its historical context.

God's Word Speaks Clearly

## The Bible and the Spade

From the March/April 1983 Bible Study Monthly

The earth is continually yielding fresh treasures to the excavator and the investigator and with every such discovery the Bible stands illumined in brighter hue.

The days are long since past when the rash allegation that the Bible had no independent testimony to support its claim to be true history must needs be endured in dignified silence. Today there is a host of witnesses; solid evidences of the handiwork of men living in Bible times, testifying to the accuracy of that which had already been recorded in Holy Writ. And if the preservation of these clay tablets and rocks and stones through the centuries and the millenniums, and their subsequent discovery long after the very nations in whose languages they were inscribed had passed away, is a matter of astonishment and wonder, what must be said of the Bible itself? That record has been preserved, not on enduring stone hidden away in the depths of the ground, safe from interfering and malicious hands, until its secrets could be revealed to the sober inquiry of this latter age, but in the world of men and among men.

The precious manuscripts have at all times since their writing circulated in the world, been read and re-read, copied and re-copied, while the great established powers among men have sought by every means at their disposal to root them out and exterminate them. No other book ever written has had such a checkered and hazardous career as has the Bible. No other book has been the object of such determined and relentless efforts to suppress and exterminate it. And no other book has survived so long and so triumphantly. Neither the burning fires of persecution nor the chilling winds of indifference have prevailed to wither and destroy its message and its influence in the world. Even today, when the religious apathy of the Western nations has become a byword and a proverb, the Bible remains a "best seller." Not for nothing is it described by the apostle Peter as the "word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1Peter 1:23). In all this world of change and decay, of tumult and unrest, of indifference and hostility, the Bible stands, serene, dignified, confident, an inflexible witness to God and to his concern and care for mankind.

That is its central truth. The historical features of the Bible are not there as an end in themselves; they are a means to an end. Its history is not myth. Men and women did live and work and write as the Bible says they did. Their hopes and fears, loves and hates, strengths and weaknesses, were all as the Bible relates of them. Even its greatest heroes have their faults and failings, their mistakes and their sins, recorded as faithfully as their triumphs of faith and the things wherein they pleased God.

But all of this is but to point to one great truth—that man, created perfect and sinless at the first, fell from that high estate into sin, and so death passed upon all men; that God is

working ceaselessly to recover man from the effects of that sin and to achieve his final goal of a sinless creation in which "all that hath breath shall praise the Lord"; that to achieve that end—by the only way in which that end can be achieved—the Lord Jesus Christ came from above and moved among men, teaching the true principles by which men must live, suffering himself to be put to death rather than betray those principles; that eventually all men may be brought face to face with the alternative of accepting Christ and his ways and so inheriting eternal life, or rejecting them and suffering eternal death.

That is the message and the power of the Bible. It will by no means renounce or whittle down its claim to be the authoritative expression of God's Will and exposition of God's Plan in respect to man, his origin, his present state, and his destiny. It takes us back to earliest times and shows us man as he was—pure, upright, sinless, perfectly adapted to his environment, and capable of everlasting life while remaining in harmony with Divine Law. It passes on into history and leads us up to the present, showing us the dark and terrible results of human selfishness, depravity and sin, in a world that has largely rejected God and is increasingly so doing. It takes us forward into the future and shows us a world at peace, sin banished, war a thing of the past, love and good fellowship replacing hate and rancor and jealousy. It shows us the will of God done on earth as it is done in heaven, and God dwelling as it were with men and all creation at peace.

Then it comes back into the present, the time of this world, and shows us the means by which that glorious consummation is to be brought about, in the person and work of Christ, and tells us in unmistakable terms that only by full acceptance of Christ and consecration of life to him can men and women be recovered from their state of imperfection and weakness and sin, and be translated into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

The Bible has a lot to say about the philosophy of the atonement. It does not demand that all its readers understand that philosophy in detail. What it does demand, and demands because compliance with the demand is the only possible way of escape from sin and death, is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!"—John 3:16

That verse is the crowning glory of the Bible and the expression of its deepest truth. All else leads up to it. The object of the Bible in this world is to lead men to Christ and to instruct them in his ways after they have accepted him. Its history, its poetry, its visions, its ethics, all converge irresistibly upon one transcendent figure, the one who is rightful King of the earth and King of all men, the one who, in the power and glory of his second advent, will reign as Prince of Peace over a transformed and transfigured world of men, teaching them to pursue the arts of peace and eschew the evils of war, until in enlightenment and true reverence they come before him in voluntary yielding of all life's powers in a dedication of heart and mind that will endure to all eternity.

In their own humble way, the tablets and the inscriptions on the rocks are agents in the execution of the Divine Plan. They have played, and still play, their part in establishing faith in God. It is said of him that he hath "left not himself without witness" (Acts 14:17) and this at least is one respect in which the statement is true. Jesus spoke of the very stones crying out to testify to his Messiahship (Luke 19:40); the voice of the monuments has made itself heard to declare, indirectly, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## Pastoral Bible Institute News

### Financial Statement of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc.

#### Statement of Net Worth – April 30, 2000 [unaudited]

Current Assets:

Cash and Investments \$127,191

Fixed Assets:

None

Liabilities

None

NET WORTH, APRIL 30, 2000 \$127,191

---

#### Analysis of Net Worth

INCOME

Contributions \$13,741

Sale of Material 11,916

Herald Subscriptions 5,185

Interest 5,059

Memberships 35

Miscellaneous Income 305

**Total Income** \$36,241

EXPENSES

Disposal of assets \$800

Purchase of Material for Resale 9,282

Printing and Reproduction 8,862

Postage and Delivery 4,929

Advertising 280

Administrative and General 365

**Total Operating Expense** \$24,518

Net Gain for Fiscal Year \$11,723

Net Worth, May 1, 1999 \$115,468

Net Worth, April 30, 2000 \$127,191

Respectfully Submitted by Len Griehs, Treasurer

## *PBI Annual Report for 1999-2000*

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

These words from the apostle Paul in Romans 14:19 have continued to be the goal of the Pastoral Bible Institute in its ministry to the Bible Student fellowship. The publication of The Herald magazine remains the focal point of our work. During the past twelve months circulation has slowly started to increase and is now about 10% higher than one year ago. The comments we receive from time to time encourage us to keep producing this journal.

The Herald is available as a printed magazine, on audio cassette, and electronically on the Bible Students Library CD ROM. We have begun the work to convert all the issues from 1918 to the present into electronic format. When complete next year, we will offer a new CD containing only The Herald. Like the Bible Students Library, this database will be in the popular Adobe Acrobat format and be electronically searchable. Versions will be available for either Macintosh or Windows computers.

In the last issue we did what had been done some years ago when we devoted the entire issue to topics providing spiritual guidance for the personal application of biblical principles. We hope to continue doing this once a year. The other issues will continue to be devoted to doctrinal, prophetic, biographic, historic, and Memorial subjects.

We continue to select Bible Student literature we think will be of interest to our readers and inform them of its availability through order forms inserted in The Herald. We will continue this practice as well as occasionally include copies of some new booklets that are being printed for the Bible Student community. Since advertised items are available for only a short period of time, we encourage our readers to not delay in making their requests.

One ecclesia has requested 500 extra copies of The Herald for display in shopping malls and flea markets. We will watch with interest to see how effective this is in promoting the message of the truth. We would be happy to hear from individuals and/or ecclesias who are interested in using The Herald for similar purposes.

This was the first year the PBI has ventured into foreign languages. At the request of brethren from India we paid for the printing of two of our booklets and some articles from The Herald in the Tamil language. These will of course be distributed in India.

The Board of Directors and the Editors thank the readership for their loyal support and ask for a continued interest in your prayers that we may both promote peace and edify one another in love.

*The Directors, Pastoral Bible Institute*

## *Temporary Closing of the PBI Office*

Our California office will be closed for three weeks beginning July 30. Orders received during this time will be filled after August 20. We regret any inconvenience this may cause.

## Around the World

Ministers and top officials from around the world met to review efforts to check the global spread of atomic arms. The 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) specified a meeting every five years to review progress. The treaty organization has 188 members, and only four states are not signatories—India and Pakistan, Israel and Cuba. Jayantha Dhanapala, undersecretary-general of the U. N., said there are growing complaints by non-weapons states at the nuclear powers' failure to cut their arsenals more, suspicion that North Korea and Iraq have cheated on their commitment not to try to acquire nuclear weapons, and Arab anger at Israel's refusal to join the NPT.

—Financial Times, 4/24/2000

Countries as varied as China, Papua New Guinea and Russia adopted an action plan to combat trafficking in women and children, in a first coordinated Asian effort to stamp out what delegates at a conference in Manila called "pernicious modern-day slavery." An estimated one million women and children are bought and sold worldwide every year for various reasons according to officials from the U.S. Ralph Boycke, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state, said: "Trafficking is one of the fastest growing and most lucrative criminal enterprises in the world. After drugs and guns it is considered the third largest source of profits for organized crime." Trafficking can end in injury, abuse, and even death. Women from Thailand, tempted to go to Japan as entertainers, end up as prostitutes; Asian children shipped to the U.S. by Chinese and Japanese criminal gangs are used in sweatshops; and Filipino women sent to Europe as mail-order brides find their husbands turning violent.

—Financial Times 4/1/2000

## Israel

The future of Jerusalem was at the center of a cabinet meeting, with Prime Minister Ehud Barak stressing that anyone who as much as hints that the government intends to divide the city is "gravely misleading the public." "The government's position is clear," Barak said. "Jerusalem will forever remain the undivided capital of Israel." Barak indicated that words spoken by his chief of staff, Danny Yatom, last week to the effect that certain lands in the Jerusalem vicinity would eventually be transferred to the Palestinians as part of a permanent agreement had been misconstrued. He went on to criticize those "both in the opposition and in the coalition" who speak of handing over Jerusalem territory to the Palestinians. "I call on everyone to show a sense of national responsibility and stop putting question marks around the subject of Jerusalem," he said.

—Jerusalem Post 3/13/2000

2,300 Israel-allied Southern Lebanese Army soldiers will be seeking asylum of some type or arrangement which will permit them safe haven in Israel, fearing for their future safety in southern Lebanon following an Israeli troop withdrawal scheduled to take place no later than July 2000. Together with their families, the total number of persons expected to be included in the request will reach 10,000. Avi Yehezkel (One Israel), who chairs the Knesset Security Committee, has announced that hundreds of millions of Israeli shekels are being allocated for the "moral responsibility" of protecting the long-term allies in southern Lebanon. The MK stated he does not wish to operate within the framework of the High Court of Justice ruling, which released Israel of legal responsibilities to grant citizenship and/or asylum to SLA soldiers.

—Israel Wire, 3/20/2000

## Islam

Sectarian tensions in Indonesia's Molucca Islands are escalating according to church leaders who report the details of recent atrocities by radical Muslim groups and Indonesian military troops. About 3,000 people, most of them Christians, have died in the past 14 months in religious violence in the Moluccas, a chain of 17 islands about 250 miles west of New Guinea, news reports say. The islands were once mostly Christian, but the Muslim population has increased in recent years with a "radical minority" causing unrest, news reports said. Clergy in North Maluku province and the island of Buru claim that 'jihad troops' determined to expunge Christians from the areas have slaughtered many believers and burned down churches and homes.

—Religion Today, 4/6/2000

King Abdullah II of Jordan made his first official visit to Israel on April 23, since ascending the throne. He met with Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and discussed the ongoing peace initiatives in the region. He told Israel TV that he envisions a political solution for Jerusalem that has "two levels." One is a division of the city into two political domains, and the other a declaration of Jerusalem as an open city to all three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and he declared that Jordan is the guardian of the city's holy places for Islam.

—Israel Wire, 4/24/2000

## Christendom

Christianity is growing faster in Africa than anywhere else on earth. At current growth rates, in the next decade the number of African Christians will exceed the number of European believers: perhaps 520 million, in contrast to 470 million. This would leave African Christians second only to Christians in Latin America, who number around 700 million. Most of the tremendous growth is coming not in such historic mainstream

denominations as Anglican and Roman Catholic but in newer, livelier, indigenous churches. The new churches use local languages and mix traditional African spiritual beliefs with Pentecostal-style worship, including the use of drums, guitars and charismatic preachers.

—Time, 4/3/2000

After decades of near obscurity, [hell] has taken on anew image: more of a deep funk than a pit of fire. While the traditional infernal imagery still attracts a following, modern visions of eternal perdition as a particularly unpleasant solitary confinement are beginning to emerge, suggesting that hell may not be so hot after all. . . . Pope John Paul II told an audience at the Vatican that "rather than a place, hell indicates the state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God." To describe this Godforsaken condition, the pontiff said, the Bible "uses a symbolical language" that "figuratively portrays in a 'pool of fire' those who exclude themselves from the book of life, thus meeting with a 'second death.'" . . . The threat of post-mortem punishment of the impenitent in an eternal lake of fire all but disappeared from the religious mainstream by the 1960s. Theological discourse on the subject at the nation's divinity schools almost evaporated. And while polls showed that the majority of Americans professed to believe in hell's existence, almost no one thought he would go there. Observing the dearth of fire-and-brimstone rhetoric, a University of Chicago [professor] was moved to remark a few years back that "hell has disappeared and no one noticed." . . . A small but growing number of conservative theologians contend that those who ultimately reject God will simply be put out of existence in the "consuming fire" of hell.

—Excerpts from U.S. News & World Report cover story on hell, 1/31/2000

In a landmark public confession, Pope John Paul II begged God's forgiveness Sunday for sins committed or condoned by Roman Catholics over the last 2,000 years, including sexism, racism, hatred of Jews and violence in defense of the Catholic faith. The pope listed or alluded to a wide range of victims of Catholic hostility, prejudice and indifference as he asked his church to enter its third millennium with a purified conscience. These victims included heretics, Protestants, Jews and other non-Christians, immigrants, ethnic minorities, women, abused children and the unborn. It was the first call by any pope for such a sweeping pardon for past and present wrongs. John Paul faulted no Catholic leader, past or present. He mentioned no sinner by name, explaining that only God can judge individual responsibility. Cardinal Roger Etchegaray [said] John Paul's sweeping confession must not be read "as a form of spectacular self-flagellation." John Paul is apologizing for sins committed by the church's "sons and daughters," not by the church itself, which is "holy and immaculate."

—Los Angeles Times, 3/13/2000

## Economics

Nearly half the world's six billion people live on less than \$2 a day and about 1.2 billion, or 22 percent of the world's population barely survive on \$1 a day. Ineffective governance and flawed initiatives have led to negligible progress in efforts to end poverty, a United Nations report says. The report says that both rich and poor countries have failed to live up to their commitments made at the 1995 Social Summit in Copenhagen. "The major problem with most poverty programs is that they are too narrow, confined to a set of targeted interventions. One reason: many were constructed as a social safety net during a major national breakdown," the report states. Many of the poorest countries lack achievable targets to secure aid amid reduced contributions by donor countries. Total global development aid fell to \$51.9 billion in 1998 from \$59.2 billion in 1994, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The report asks wealthy nations to remove trade barriers that hinder poorer countries from entering their markets and relieve poor countries' debts without adding economic conditions.

—Financial Times, 4/5/2000

## Science

Israeli researchers in discovering a life-saving cure for the "killing virus" have achieved what amounts to a medical breakthrough, which also may serve as an effective protection against biological weapons. The scientific monthly Nature reports that the protein developed in the labs of the Medical School at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem comes in the form of a small molecule which blocks the operation of the toxic "super-antigens" which cause the fatal shock. This deadly virus immediately collapses all the body systems, and induces vomiting, diarrhea, and in extreme cases loss of control, loss of consciousness and death. The Israeli researchers, financed by the U.S. Defense Department were working on a defense against biological weapons, of the type possessed by Iraq and various terrorist groups. The new drug may also help overcome complications from surgical infections, cancer, and AIDS.

—Nature, Israel Wire, 4/24/2000

Another iceberg has broken off Antarctica and is bumping into a huge floe that broke off the Ross Ice Shelf last week. The new iceberg is 80 miles by 12 miles, and the larger one is 183 miles by 23 miles, about the size of Jamaica. While it isn't clear whether the two icebergs would pose a threat to shipping, some researchers say large chunks are breaking off Antarctica due to global warming. In August 1999, an iceberg measuring 24 miles by 48 miles floated toward South America from Antarctica, surrounded by 100 to 200 smaller icebergs.

—Reuters 3/31/2000

## Book Review

***A New Look at an Old Earth*, Don Stoner, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Ore., 1997 ed., 256 pages**

How do we know what is true? Don Stoner believes there are two ways: what we are told in God's word, the Bible, and what we are told in God's creation. Both must be harmonious because God is the author of both. When those who study God's word differ from those who study God's creation, one or the other must be wrong. Sometimes both are wrong. When Galileo began to teach that the earth orbited the sun, he was condemned by both the scientists and the theologians of his day. The theologians said Galileo had to be wrong because the Bible said the sun's "going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it" (Psalm 19:6).

The question of which body orbits which has since been settled. But how old is the earth? How long are the creative days of Genesis chapter 1? Stoner believes Christians have greatly harmed their credibility by claiming that the days of Genesis are 24 hours long. He summarizes the scientific evidence for an age of the earth measured in the billions of years and finds it so strong that it is essentially irrefutable.

Stoner carefully puts forth eight arguments for viewing the creative days as being 24-hours. Some are obvious (e.g., giving the Hebrew word "day" its literal meaning is probably the correct meaning, otherwise a different Hebrew word would have been used), and some are not (e.g., modifying the Hebrew word "day" with a number forces its meaning to be 24-hours, not a period of time). Then he carefully rebuts each argument using Scripture.

Of course those who believe the earth is only a few thousand years old have a number of problems they must answer. The apparent old age of the universe, including the distance of stars and galaxies is one; the date of artifacts from carbon-14 and potassium-argon tests is another. Answers from those who think the earth is young are shown to have fatal flaws.

Ellen G. White had visions of the creation event taking place in 24-hour days. Her teachings and visions were taken by her followers, known today as Seventh-Day Adventists, as being equal in authority with the Bible. Although in 1980 the Adventists dropped White's writings as a source of doctrinal authority, Stone claims she has greatly influenced them and others on this question.

The book ends with a verse-by-verse examination of Genesis chapter one and matches the events of each "day" with the latest scientific knowledge about creation. Stoner sees no disharmony between Genesis and the observed universe if long periods of time are assumed for each creative "day."

Both the biblical and the scientific arguments for a young earth and an old earth are presented in understandable language for non-scientists and those with little or no knowledge of Genesis. I found Stoner's "old earth" thesis extremely compelling.

—Michael Nekora

## Short Features

# Poems and Prose

## Ode from the 19th Psalm

The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue ethereal sky,  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
Their great Original proclaim.  
The unwearied sun, from day to day,  
Does his Creator's power display;  
And publishes to every land  
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,  
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,  
And, nightly, to the listening earth,  
Repeats the story of her birth;  
While all the stars that round her burn,  
And all the planets in their turn,  
Confirm the tidings as they roll,  
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence, all  
Move round the dark terrestrial ball;  
What though no real voice nor sound  
Amid these radiant orbs be found;  
In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice,  
Forever singing, as they shine,  
"The Hand that made us is divine."

—From McGuffey's Eclectic Third Reader

## IN THE BEGINNING

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." In these few words is enshrined the story of countless ages. Long before man came into being, long before the infinite variety of animal and vegetable life which now inhabits this planet was brought forth, the work of God was going steadily forward. In the mighty crucible of nature he was molding and fashioning a fitting home for humanity, compelling the tremendous forces of the universe to work together in slow but ceaseless motion until, after the lapse of ages upon ages, the angels looked down upon the solar system of ours with the parent sun majestic in its family of circling worlds.

The earth was one of those worlds. Long epochs had yet to pass before even the humblest form of life could appear on its troubled surface. Great eruptions of nature from within, avalanches and floods from above, all combined to keep this new world in a state of perpetual unrest. But eventually there came a time when it was stilled, when the boiling seas subsided and the land had some measure of peace from warring elements. And in that eventful day life was born on earth. No man saw it come, no human history can go back to those first beginnings when lowly creatures of the seashores were lords of material creation. Long years afterward, the chronicler wrote: "And God said, let the waters bring the moving creature that hath life ... and it was so."

So passed the centuries, the millenniums, the epochs during which God worked silently in that orderly development which characterizes all his works, preparing a home for a new creation which he purposed. At length the watching angels saw a new wonder at which they shouted aloud for joy: beings—intelligent, perfect, capable of love and gratitude, worship and service, made to be the crowning glory of that creation which had taken so long a time to bring to this climax. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). With what serene pleasure must the Father have gazed upon the first material beings and foreseen the wonders of a future age when the earth shall be fully perfected and when mankind shall have achieved the Divine ideal and attained to the image and likeness of God.

—Songs of the Nightingale, pp. 12,13

## Nature's Testimony

"By their numberless multitude, their orderly grouping in various constellations. Their continual yet never conflicting movements, their perfect harmony, their magnitude and their mutual benign influence, to the shining hosts of heaven declare the glory of God, by day and by night. He who meditates on these things will scarcely be 'the fool' who saith 'in his heartm There is no God,' for all nature testifies to the Creator's glory and power."

Reprints, page 1391.

## The Bible

The Bible is the torch of civilization and liberty. Its influence for good in society has been recognized by the greatest statesmen, even though they for the most part have looked at it through the various glasses of conflicting creeds, which, while upholding the Bible, grievously misrepresent its teachings. The grand old book is unintentionally but woefully misrepresented by its friends, many of whom would lay down life on its behalf; and yet they do it more vital injury than its foes, by claiming its support to their long-revered misconceptions of its truth, received through the traditions of their fathers. Would that such would awake, re-examine their oracle, and put to confusion its enemies by disarming them of their weapons! . . . The Bible is the oldest book in existence; it has outlived the storms of thirty centuries. Men have endeavored by every means possible to banish it from the face of the earth: they have hidden it, burned it, made it a crime punishable with death to have it in possession, and the most bitter and relentless persecutions have been waged against those who had faith in it; but still the book lives. Today, while many of its foes slumber in death, and hundreds of volumes written to discredit it and to overthrow its influence, are long since forgotten, the Bible has found its way into every nation and language of earth, over two hundred different translations of it having been made. The fact that this book has survived so many centuries, notwithstanding such unparalleled efforts to banish and destroy it, is at least strong circumstantial evidence that the great Being whom it claims as its Author has also been its Preserver.

—The Divine Plan of the Ages, pp. 37, 38

## The Bible—The Sure Word of God

Why do we study the Bible—  
Esteem it as no other book?  
Why would we willingly die for its truths?  
At some reasons let's now take a look.

Forty or more penned its contents;  
It features one theme: God's great plan.  
Written as sixteen long centuries passed,  
It was authored by God, not by man.

First come the "days" of creation.  
The Bible account stands the test:  
Rational statements that science confirms  
Help establish our faith in the rest.

Adam and Eve are created;  
They soon break the law God decreed.  
Sentenced to death, there's a glimmer of hope  
In God's promise concerning the "seed."

Heroes of faith had their failings:  
The Bible's report tells it all.  
Rich in details of God's patience and love,  
It's a record of man since the "fall."

Can we believe what is written?  
The evidence mounts: scrolls are found;  
Tablets confirming the Bible accounts  
Archeologists dig from the ground.

Biblical cities long buried,  
When studied with care, now provide  
Close correlations with dates and events  
That the critics for years had denied.

Israel's people are special:  
Through blessings and woes, God is guide.  
Scattered for thousands of years, yet today

In their land, as foretold, they reside.

No one but God knows the future  
And He has declared from of old  
Many events—some in greatest detail—  
That reveal how His plan will unfold.

Jesus comes forth as Messiah.  
The place of his birth had been named;  
How he would die, and the work he would do,  
Long ago had the prophets proclaimed.

Next is the grand culmination:  
Mankind will come forth from the tomb.  
Oh, what rejoicing when Jesus' glad reign  
Brings an end to earth's sorrow and gloom.

Banished and burned through the ages,  
The Bible endures! Still it lives!  
Faith has much evidence firmly to trust  
God's sure Word and the message it gives!

—Elaine L. Redeker