

Issue 2/2006
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Inside Life



The Bible:

HOLY or *Holey*?

In this issue:



Are You a Can Do Person?



Is Anyone Helping?



Yes, Give it a Go!

Inside Life

A magazine of understanding

Volume 1, Number 2, April 2006



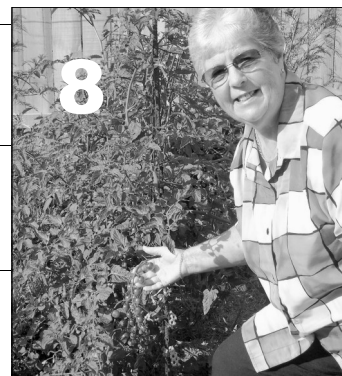
CONTENTS

4 Cover story: The Bible — Holy or Holey?

8 Yes, Give it a Go! *Relieving stress by growing a garden*

10 Is Anyone Helping? *Voluntary organisations making a difference*

12 Are you a “Can Do” Person? *Making the most of your potential*



Inside Life

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Inside Life is a magazine of understanding. Rather than just reporting on life, ***Inside Life*** seeks to delve *inside* the marvellous mystery that is *life*, to discover what it is all about. What does life mean? Where did it come from? How can we make the most of it?

Inside Life seeks insight and answers to life's deep questions and challenges, and aims to provide articles of lasting hope, help and encouragement for successful living in today's fast-moving world.

Inside Life is published four times a year, free of charge as a community service.

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Our Cover: The Bible is revered by Christians as being divinely inspired, sacred, or holy. But many sceptics feel it is full of contradictions, errors, myths and legends, and rather than being “holy”, it would be better described as “holey”. Who is right? Our lead article examines this contentious but important issue.

A note from the editor...



Ten thousand copies of the first issue of "Inside Life" were distributed to households around New Zealand at the beginning of the year. We've had a pleasing response, with coupons, letters and phone calls coming in from addresses ranging from Whangarei to Invercargill expressing appreciation and requesting a regular free subscription to the new magazine.

A recipient in Wellington said that the magazine was "very interesting and easily readable". A Whangarei reader wrote: "What a wonderful paper! Things I learned as a child and adult came alive. Please continue to send it to me and after I have read it I will pass it on to someone else". Another reader noted: "The content is very interesting, photos and graphics eye appealing..."

We will try to maintain a pleasing appearance, but to the publishers of "Inside Life", the *content* is the most important part of the magazine. We intend this publication to have a unique approach.

Other magazines report on the news, on the events, activities and interests of people. They generally provide *information* rather than *insight*. "Inside Life", on the other hand, aims to be a magazine of *understanding*. Rather than just reporting on life, "Inside Life" seeks to delve *inside* the marvellous

mystery that is *life*, and to examine what it is all about. What is the purpose of life? Why are human beings on the earth? Is there some plan behind it? Is there a God? What happens after we die? "Inside Life" plans to tackle the deep questions of life, in a simple, understandable way.

Mankind's knowledge has increased phenomenally in recent years! But so also have our troubles! We don't seem to be able to solve the problems of war, marriage breakdown, suicide, depression, crime, poverty – these conditions are still rampant, despite our much vaunted technological advances.

"Inside Life" intends to dig deep and look at the issues right at the heart, or the *"inside"*, of *life*, asking and answering the important questions of our existence. We also plan to include articles offering practical help and encouragement in living a happier and more meaningful life.

How can we do this? The publishers of "Inside Life" believe there is a *spiritual* dimension to life, and this spiritual area holds the key to understanding the deep issues of our existence. We will seek to explore this spiritual element of life by considering the Bible, which we believe is a handbook given by God to answer the deep questions and challenges of life. But we have no intention of being "Bible bashers" with a "holier than thou" attitude! And we don't see any value in

blindly believing the Bible without *proving* it.

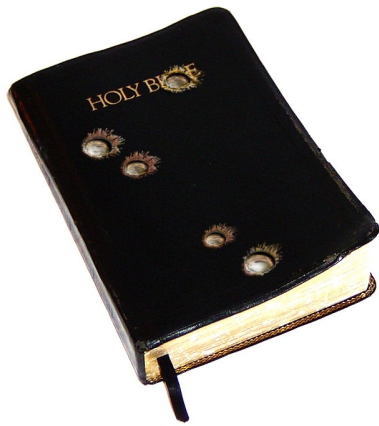
Our last issue tackled the baffling question of "What happened before the Big Bang?", concluding that the existence of the intricate creation around us is powerful evidence of the existence of a Creator God. (If you missed this issue and would like a copy, please contact us at PO Box 2709, Auckland.)

In this issue, we confront the question of whether the Bible can be believed or not. Have a look at the evidence provided in our lead article, and see what you think.

We hope you will find "Inside Life" adds a fresh new perspective to life that will cause you to pause for reflection, and will be of practical help to you. We welcome feedback – positive or negative. Please feel free to write to us using the addresses on page 2.

— Rex Morgan





The Bible — Holy or Holey?

By Rex Morgan

The Bible is the world's best selling book – by far. It has been translated into over 2,000 languages, and is easily the most widely read and distributed book in history, with hundreds of millions of copies sold every year.

But can the Bible be trusted? Is it really the word of God, as it claims to be? Or is it just a collection of ancient folk tales, fables and superstitions? Is it just like any other book, written by men, containing some good ideas and some bad? Or was it divinely inspired by God? Is the Bible holy, or is it *holey* – riddled with mistakes, legends and contradictions?

Let's take a look at some interesting facts about the Bible; some of the reasons people believe it is true.

1. The Unity of the Bible

The Bible isn't really just one book, but a library of 66 different volumes, written by more than 40 authors who lived over a span of 1500 years. These writers lived in 10 countries on 3 continents, and represented 20 different occupations, from farmers and fishermen to statesmen and kings. They wrote in a variety of styles, from history and law to poetry and romance. The subject matter contains many controversial topics capable of strongly opposing opinions. Yet the book has a remarkable consistency and unity throughout. It is bound together as

one whole, with intricate themes interwoven all the way through it.

Imagine taking say half a dozen authors from just one country, New Zealand, and giving them just one controversial subject, such as whether GE or abortions should be allowed. How much harmony and agreement would result? But take any subject you like, including difficult questions of morality and ethics, and the Bible contains comments all through it that add up to a harmonious picture. It has one consistent central message, and even the minor details are all in

Can the Bible be trusted? Is it really the word of God, as it claims to be? Or is it just a collection of ancient folk tales, fables and superstitions?

alignment. It begins with a garden, a river, a tree of life and an invitation, and ends, many hundreds of pages (and years) later, with exactly the same themes.



Abundance of Bibles: In 2004 members of the United Bible Societies alone distributed more than 390 million scripture portions, including 25 million complete Bibles. Additional millions of Bible "aids" and reference books are printed every year. But is the Bible worth studying? From where does it get its remarkable pulling power, and its staying-power through centuries of opposition to its message? The accompanying article points out reasons Christians find the Bible worthy of study.

2. Historical Reliability

Thousands (not just hundreds!) of archaeological discoveries have verified things written in the Bible. Many of these finds have been catalogued in books such as *The Bible as History*, by Werner Keller. *Halley's Bible Handbook* includes a chapter listing discovery after discovery that corroborates the Bible writings. Websites such as *christiananswers.net* list many examples. Some of these instances have confounded the critics. For example, it used to be claimed that the Hittites mentioned in the Bible never existed -- until the archaeologists found their capital and records at Bogazkoy, in Turkey.

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It was also claimed there was no Assyrian king named Sargon as recorded in the biblical book of Isaiah, because this name was not known in any other record. Then, Sargon's palace was discovered in Khorsabad, Iraq.

Another king who was in doubt was Belshazzar, king of Babylon, named in the book of Daniel. The last king of Babylon was Nabonidus, according to recorded history. But then tablets were found showing that Belshazzar was Nabonidus's son who served as coregent in Babylon.

One of the greatest archaeologists of all time, Sir William Ramsay, set out to prove the books of Luke and Acts were unreliable, but after 30 years of study he concluded that "Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy ... this author should be

placed along with the very greatest of historians."

Another great archaeologist, William Albright, said: "Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history."

Nelson Glueck, a renowned Jewish archaeologist, wrote: "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever contradicted a biblical reference."

Not only archaeology, but also the writing of many historians, backs up what was written in the Bible. For instance, the famous Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, who was born in 37AD, wrote about "Jesus, a wise man, a doer of wonderful works", and recorded his crucifixion and resurrection.

A number of other non-Christian writers of the first and second centuries also wrote about Christ and the Christians, including Cornelius Tacitus, Plinius Secundus, Suetonius, and Marcus Aurelius. Thousands of eyewitnesses of Jesus' life were still alive when the New Testament was circulated, but we have no knowledge of anyone refuting the writings as "fairy tales".

If someone wrote a book today saying that New Zealand's wartime Prime Minister, Peter Fraser had been resurrected after his death, there would be lots of people around to deny it! The Christians were hated and brutally persecuted by both the Jews and the Roman government. If the New Testament writings were false, surely these two groups would have produced a great deal of evidence to stop the growth of this "sect", yet there is none.

3. Scientific Accuracy

Amazingly, the Bible made reference to many facts hundreds or even thousands of years before scientists recorded them. For example, the Old Testament writings, dating from at least 2000 years ago, describe the circulation of

the atmosphere and the hydrologic water cycles of the weather, the suspension of the earth in space, the spherical shape of the earth, the countless numbers of stars, the importance of blood circulation, and many groundbreaking principles of good health.

Do you have too many grey hairs? Would you like to do something about it? How about this for a recipe: "To prevent the hair from turning grey, anoint it with the blood of a black calf which has been boiled in oil, or with the fat of a rattlesnake." This recipe comes from the famous *Papyrus Ebers*, an Egyptian medical book written in about 1552 B.C. Other remedies found in the *Papyrus Ebers* include lizards' blood, swine's teeth, putrid meat, stinking fat, moisture from pigs' ears and human excreta.

Do you have too many grey hairs? How about this for a recipe: "To prevent the hair from turning grey, anoint it with the blood of a black calf which has been boiled in oil, or with the fat of a rattlesnake."

The biblical writer Moses lived in Egypt at about the time the *Papyrus Ebers* was written, but the principles of health and hygiene he stated in the Bible have proved to be far ahead of their time, principles that are still valid today!

For example, Moses' writings provide for the careful disposal of human waste underground. But in 18th century Europe human excrement was regularly cast into the streets of cities, giving rise to epidemics of typhoid, cholera and dysentery. One instruction recorded thousands of years earlier in the Bible pointed the way to deliverance from those scourges! The implementation of other principles of quarantine and sanitation outlined in

the Bible also led to the control of the dreaded diseases of leprosy and bubonic plague, which over hundreds of years had killed millions of people in Europe.

In the 1840's Dr Ignaz Semmelweis began instructing those in the Vienna hospital where he worked to wash their hands thoroughly after patient examinations. There was a storm of protest at this "nuisance", but the mortality rate at the hospital started reducing immediately. Opponents of his ideas attacked him fiercely, and it was only after his death that it became recognised that he was right! But thousands of years earlier, God had given Moses instructions about cleansing the

Leviticus (3:17) against the eating of fat.

The very first sentence of the Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". It is instructive to compare this enlightened statement with the writings of other ancient cultures. According to the teachings of the Egyptians, the earth hatched from a winged egg, and men originally hatched from worms found in the slime of the Nile after the annual rains. When the Bible was written the Hindus are said to have taught that the world was flat and rested on the back of an elephant. The elephant stood on the back of a great tortoise, and what that rested on they didn't venture to suggest!

thunder by throwing a hammer at his enemies, Maui pulled up the fish of the North Island when he

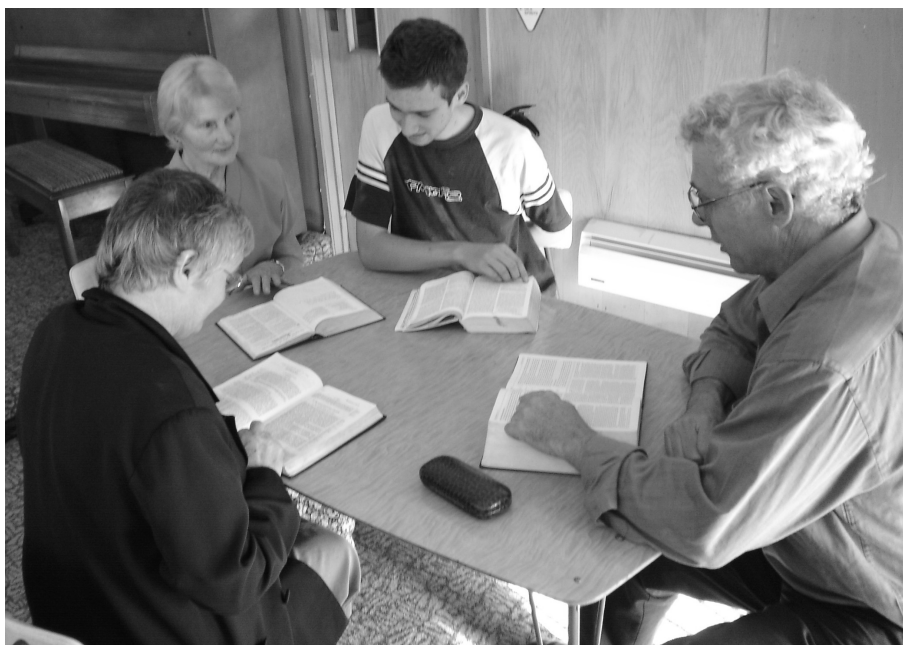
The Bible was transmitted down through the generations in a unique way, and has been preserved much more accurately than any other ancient document.

was in a boat, which became the South Island. The Bible doesn't contain any legends like this. Yet many people have called the Bible "mythology"!

4. Preservation and Survival

The Bible was written on perishable material such as papyrus and animal skins. It was copied and recopied hundreds of times to preserve it throughout history, because there weren't any printing presses or computer discs in Old Testament times! But it was transmitted down through the generations in a unique way, and has been preserved much more accurately than any other ancient document.

It was very important to the Jews -- it was in effect their national law and constitution -- so they really looked after it. They had special classes of men whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity, and who kept tabs on every letter, syllable and word. The Talmudists who preserved the text from AD 100 to AD 500 had rules including the following: "A synagogue roll must be written on the skins of clean animals, the length of each column must not extend less than 48 or more than 80 lines, the breadth must consist of 30 letters. No word or letter must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him... Between every consonant the



Diligent study: In 2005, more than 70,000 new Bibles and 40,000 copies of the New Testament were distributed in New Zealand by the Bible Society alone. Thousands of Christians purchase different versions of the Bible and study the Bible and other reference books diligently on a daily basis, in personal and even group situations. Is the Bible really worthy of such attention?

hands under running water after handling the dead, or infected living patients.

What should we do to avoid a heart attack? In relatively recent years the medical profession has warned against the build up of cholesterol in our veins since it may cause clogging and a heart attack. A major source of cholesterol is animal fat. Centuries ago, Moses spoke in the Old Testament book of

Later, among the Greek philosophers, it was taught that Atlas, one of the giants, or Titans, who warred with Zeus, was condemned to support the heavens, bearing the world on his neck and shoulders.

It's fascinating to look up "Mythology" in an encyclopaedia, and read about the way the ancients of all civilisations believed in gods of the sun, moon and stars, the sea god, the forest god, the god of war, and so on. Thor made

space of a hair or thread must intervene. Should a king address him while writing he must take no notice of him." (*Davidson, Hebrew Text of the Old Testament*, p89).

The Massoretes, who copied the text from AD 500 to AD 900, treated it with great reverence, and devised a complicated system of safeguards against scribal slips. For instance, they counted the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurs in each book, numbered the verses, words and letters of every book, calculated the middle word and middle letter of each, and so on.

There are about 25,000 manuscript copies of the New Testament or portions of it extant today. It is fascinating to compare this with other ancient documents. Herodotus, known as "the father of history", wrote in about 450 BC, but only 8 manuscripts of his work have survived, the earliest dated 900 AD, about 1350 years after he wrote. Aristophanes, a Greek playwright, wrote 45 plays in about 400 BC, but only 11 of these have survived, the earliest dating from 900 AD. Caesar's *Gallic Wars* was written about 50 BC and only 10 manuscripts have survived, the oldest some 900 years later than Caesar's day. So it is with all of the ancient writers; only a handful of copies of their work have survived. An exception is Homer's *Iliad*, of which an amazing 643 manuscripts still survive. However, many people don't think Homer wrote it, and there are many differences between the copies. But there are 25,000 manuscript copies of the NT, the oldest dating from around 125 AD, only 50 years after it was written!

William Shakespeare wrote 37 plays in the 17th century. Not even one original manuscript has survived, and so the missing gaps in the copies of his works were filled in with "educated guesses" of textual scholars. There are differing documents of each of Shakespeare's plays, with items in dispute that materially affect the meanings of the passages involved. But the Bible only has a few

Continued on page 14 ...

What famous people have said about the Bible...

Abraham Lincoln: "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this book."

George Washington: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

Queen Victoria: "That book is the secret of England's greatness."

Patrick Henry: "The Bible is worth all the other books which have ever been printed."

Charles Dickens: "The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world."

Woodrow Wilson: "When you have read the Bible, you will know it is the word of God."

Theodore Roosevelt: "A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education."

William Gladstone: "I have known ninety-five of the world's great men in my time, and of these, eighty-seven were followers of the Bible. The Bible is stamped with a Specialty of Origin, and an immeasurable distance separates it from all competitors."

Napoleon Bonaparte: "The Bible is far more than a book to me; it speaks to me as if it were a person. This book surpasses all others. I never omit to read it, and every day with some pleasure. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires... upon force. Jesus alone founded his empire upon love. None else is like him; Jesus was more than man."

Sir Isaac Newton: "There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatsoever."

Sir William Herschel: "All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more and more the truths contained in the Sacred Scriptures."

Jean Jacques Rousseau: "Jewish authors would never have invented either that style nor that morality; and the Gospel has marks of truth so great, so striking, so utterly inimitable, that the invention of it would be more astonishing than the hero."

Lord Tennyson: "Bible reading is an education in itself."

Immanuel Kant: "I believe that the existence of the Bible is the greatest benefit to the human race. Any attempt to belittle it, I believe, is a crime against humanity."

Robert E. Lee: "In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength."

Victor Hugo: "England has two books; the Bible and Shakespeare. England made Shakespeare, but the Bible made England."

Yes, Give it a go!

By Gael McInnes, RGON. RM.
BHLth Sc.(Nsg)

Have you ever grown anything? Yes, of the plant variety, flowers or vegetables?

In my last *Inside Life* article, "Getting a Handle on Stress" (Issue 1/06), I outlined eight tips on handling tension and stress. This time, I want to elaborate on number 5, "Learn how to relax and relieve tension." I suggested various exercises you could do, and one was "a bit of gardening".

I know this might sound rather foreign, or even boring 'old world' stuff, or just hard work or impractical. Especially to those of you who work long hours and who must fit in all of your tomorrows today! You don't know what you are missing, and gardening just might open up a hidden talent, together with a by-product of fascination and relaxation.

It doesn't matter if you have a decent patch of dirt, or live in an

I guarantee you'll get excited as you see seeds beginning to poke through the soil and grow into edible fruit.

apartment. You don't need much space to grow a few flowers or vegetables, or even a strawberry plant. Yum – strawberries!

I love growing vegetables. I have a small raised vege patch – in fact it's only 2.7 by 1.7

metres, and as I write this, it's growing dwarf beans, snow peas, 4 tomato plants, silver-beet, radishes, parsley, capsicums and lots of lettuces – various colours, and all at varying stages of maturity. I try to have lettuces growing all through the summer and that means planting 6 every month. Tucked in between the tomato plants is basil, which not only complements tomatoes, but also is a companion plant and helps keep away the white fly (a pest). Another companion plant is the dwarf marigold flower. It not only keeps away pests, but also

adds colour.

Did you know that you can grow a tomato plant in a bucket-sized planter? It'll need staking as it grows. Lettuces, radishes, parsley, mint, basil or whatever are your favourite vegetables can be grown in tubs or trough type planters. Yes, I have done it, and with success too. It's really exciting.

The plants will need a little nurturing too, so they don't get stressed! Yes, same as us. Like watering every day, perhaps a plant food occasion-



Fruits of her labour: Gael McInnes, writer of the accompanying article, admires

ally and sunlight. Put them on the patio – even in high-rise buildings – just make sure they don't blow away!

I guarantee you'll get excited as you see seeds beginning to poke through the soil and grow into edible fruit. You will see creation at its best.

You were born with five physical senses; each one essential to your wellbeing, and a great way to experience them in another realm is through gardening.

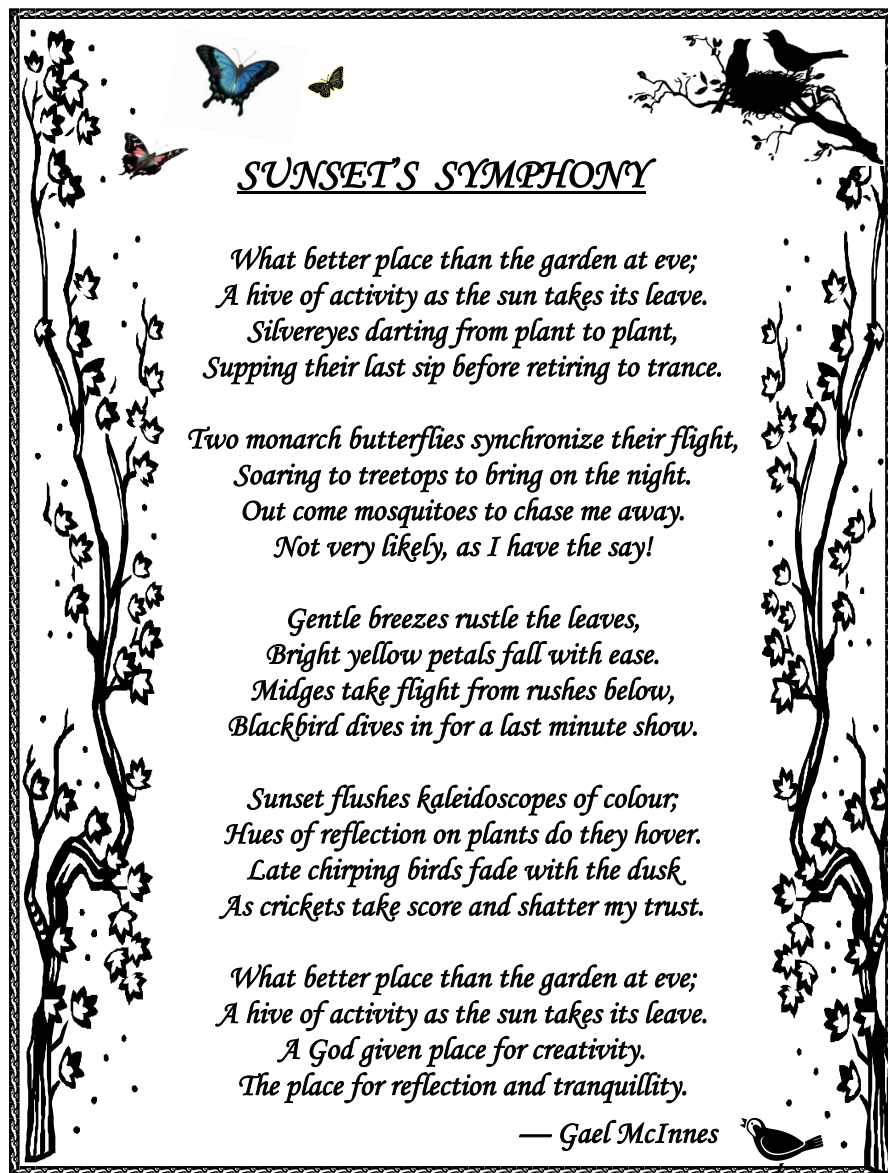
1. Seeing – What a thrill to see a tiny seed grow into a healthy plant! All those tiny leaves and fruit expanding before your eyes, every day. The colours, shapes – all individual. You'll even see butterflies, bees and possibly some pests – they come to seek, pollinate and maraud.

2. Smelling – Even vegetables have different smells, and certainly flowers do. Some pleasant, some not so pleasant.

3. Feeling – Shape, texture, sensations – all different – some furry, prickly or smooth.

4. Hearing – I haven't heard a plant cry out yet, but some 'weep' from the ends of their leaves, and I have heard that plants thrive on being talked to. Yes, I talk to mine, encouraging them and telling them how great they are! My small courtyard is alive with many a bird and insect and they get their feed too – mainly pests.

5. Tasting – This is the best part. What a delight to taste the fruit of your labours. Oh, so fresh, and the taste divine. No insecticides or pesticides sprayed all over them. Bought vegetables will never taste the



SUNSET'S SYMPHONY

*What better place than the garden at eve;
A hive of activity as the sun takes its leave.
Silvereyes darting from plant to plant,
Supping their last sip before retiring to trance.*

*Two monarch butterflies synchronize their flight,
Soaring to treetops to bring on the night.
Out come mosquitoes to chase me away.
Not very likely, as I have the say!*

*Gentle breezes rustle the leaves,
Bright yellow petals fall with ease.
Midges take flight from rushes below,
Blackbird dives in for a last minute show.*

*Sunset flushes kaleidoscopes of colour;
Hues of reflection on plants do they hover.
Late chirping birds fade with the dusk
As crickets take score and shatter my trust.*

*What better place than the garden at eve;
A hive of activity as the sun takes its leave.
A God given place for creativity.
The place for reflection and tranquillity.*

— Gael McInnes

same again. Will save you a dollar or two as well.

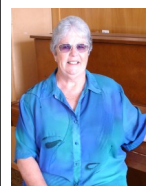
All too often we take our five senses for granted. Gardening is a great way to experience these senses in a different domain, and with daily nurturing of your plants you are actually de-stressing your body as well. You take your mind away from the stresses of the day – tend to “another’s” (your plants’) needs and get to see and taste the end product. How good is that?

The biblical book of Isaiah (58:11) states “The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy you with all good things ...and you will be like a well watered garden, like an ever-

flowing spring.” (*The Living Bible* version.)

Perhaps a “bit of gardening” on the side is what you need.

Yes, give it a go!



Gael McInnes, who lives in South Auckland, is a recently retired nurse and midwife, experienced in holistic care. Gael worked in diverse health arenas and taught at tertiary level.

Is Anyone Helping?

By James Smith

It seems an almost daily occurrence in our neighbourhoods. Someone is either bashed, beaten, attacked, assaulted, raped, robbed, stabbed, shot or killed. Often the driving force is drugs or alcohol, and it is worse if expressed from behind the wheel of a lethal modified racer. Road rage is a name that has taken the media's fancy. Neighbours argue and hassle over minor issues so that we have "Neighbours from Hell" on our TV screens. Was life ever so complicated?

Families are under threat. The government seems confused over what a family is... what was that about Arthur and Martha? Sometimes one is inclined to wonder whatever happened to marriage (between a man and a woman). The internet is ready to invade innocent unsupervised brain space with brain dulling games and pornography. Schools are pressured to hand out condoms to teens prior to the end of the school ball. Why do parents (even solo parents or caregivers) not know where their children are so much of the time? Families are pressured by advertising, into unmanageable debt.

Work takes an increasing slice of our time. It is no longer 9.00 am to 5.00 pm — when you add in travel time, it is often 7.30 am to 6.00 pm, ten and a half hours of work every day, if not more.

Some churches even seem confused about right and wrong.

In this article I want to pay tribute to individuals and organisations who are trying to make a difference for good in our New Zealand communities. It will not be an exclusive list so please do not feel bad if your friend or organisation is not mentioned.

Ian and Mary Grant have been running *Parents Inc* (formerly *Parenting with Confidence*) for some years. Their work includes holding seminars for struggling parents with information about bringing up girls and boys successfully. They also speak to High Schools about the evils of drugs, pre-marital sex, and encourage a positive attitude to life. Reading material is produced to back up what they say. The whole focus of their work tends to counteract the evils described at the beginning of this article. In addition they do answer people's questions. Ian has written a book on

Neighbours argue and hassle over minor issues so that we have "Neighbours from Hell" on our TV screens.



A helping hand: Teams of trained Drug-Arm staff go out into the city streets of NZ's largest cities until the small hours of the morning in street vans, offering whatever care or practical help they can.

teens, *The White Water Rafting Years*, and they appeared on *Close Up* with Susan Wood last year. They often speak on *Radio Rhema* and are quoted in other media outlets.

The *Churches Education Commission* sounds like an edifice of an organisation, but it works away in the background helping in two major areas of children's lives. The first is training and placing volunteer teachers in schools to impart values and ethics to our primary school children -- a programme known as *Bible in Schools*. The second involves training and placing chaplains in schools, who will listen to children's problems and help them figure out what they should do. In a world where it seems nobody has time to spend with children this service is a great benefit. It is also available to everyone in the school community.

Another non-profit organisation doing its bit for the community is *Children's Bible Ministries*. CBM provides training and equipping for helpers working with children, and runs fun camps for youth at its Raglan site, where values are taught as well as the provision of eye-opening activities.

Drug-Arm is a voluntary organisation that works on our city streets, doing all it can to help individuals and the community deal with problems caused by drug and alcohol abuse. These diligent and compassion-

ate volunteers provide community based educational programmes and support for the families of those caught up with drug and alcohol abuse. Teams of trained Drug-Arm staff go out into the city streets until the small hours of the morning in street vans, offering whatever care or practical help they can. It may be as simple as a hot cup of coffee or it might involve an ambulance alert. The vans are stocked with food, drinks, clothes, blankets, first aid and mobile phones.

Prison Fellowship contributes to a better world by reaching the spiritual needs of prisoners and their families and helping prisoners determine not to re-offend on release.

The Salvation Army is well known for its contribution to social service needs in the community. Other Church organisations have

There's just no way of measuring how much good Christians have contributed and continue to contribute daily to our society!

government contracts to provide specific needs in their communities.

Stepping Stone Trust, a mental health services provider run by the Spreydon Baptist Church has doubled its staff to 120 in the past year, and the number of client beds has risen by 60% in just 12 months! Spreydon Baptist Church is now one of the largest non-government providers of social services in Christchurch.

Budgeting services under various



Happy Family: A family rejoices outside their brand new home in Clendon, Auckland, one of five homes built during a 7-day "blitz build" by 200 Habitat for Humanity volunteers in March 2005. Habitat for Humanity has built 261 houses for needy NZ families in the past 12 years. Photo by John Cowan.

names offer help to people who find their income does not meet their expenditure. How often this happens! And how often the pressures of advertising, and the offers of 'easy' credit make it easier to get into financial trouble! With the help of trained voluntary budgeting counsellors, people are able to find hope, and a balanced budget.

Focus on the Family provides much information and help for families. *Habitat for Humanity* partners with families to house them decently. And who has not heard of *World Vision*? One final mention for Michael Jones who helps youth find purpose in New Lynn, in West Auckland.

These organisations are Christian or heavily staffed by Christians. There's just no way of measuring how much good Christians have contributed and continue to contribute daily to our society!

Maybe it seems like all the bases are covered, but the newspapers tell us every day that there is lots to do.

Is anyone helping? Yes, never forget all the people making a difference in these and other organisations. But when there is so much bad news every day there is always a need for more helpers.

What could you do?

If you would like more information on volunteering in your area, visit www.volunteernow.org.nz.

James Smith lives in West Auckland with his wife Jennie and 2 sons Jonathan (17) and Robert (14). He helps at Auckland Central Budgeting, Bible in Schools, and has worked with Drug Arm. He is qualified in banking and accounting, and can be contacted at



Are you a “Can Do” person?

Many Kiwi teenagers dream of being in the All Blacks one day. Obviously we can't all be All Blacks! But we can all be good at something! This article is written especially for teenage readers.

By Dexter H. Faulkner

Andy came home from school, mumbled a greeting, and immediately went into his room. Instantly his mother knew something was wrong. As she knocked on his door, the muffled sniffing from inside stopped. “What’s the matter, son?” “Nothing.” Opening the door, “Really? ...But I think you’re not happy about something.” “I’m not good enough! All the other guys are so much better than me.”

As they continued to talk, Andy revealed how deeply disappointed he was in not making the school rugby team. He had even dreamt of one day making it to NPC level. Gently, his mother pointed out that even if he wasn’t the best footy player, he was good at other things - chess and music, for a start. Also, he was good at managing time, and especially good at diffusing an explosive situation among friends, without anyone feeling embarrassed or hurt. He was good at lots of other things, she reminded him.

So many times we - like Andy - only think about those things that we don’t or can’t do well, and forget the things we can do.

Sounds familiar? Have you ever had one of those days when you had



Photo courtesy Nelson Bays RFU.

about as much confidence as a cat in a room full of rocking chairs?

Many times we lack confidence because we see others who seem to do better at something than we do.

So, how can you develop more confidence in your abilities? Well, the first step in developing the right kind of confidence is to stop comparing yourself with others.

Rather than looking at what others can do, focus on your strong points - those things you do well or like doing the most. The second step, then, is to focus on your abilities.

As Andy’s mother pointed out, he was good at many things. Okay, Andy doesn’t play rugby as well as other guys. Perhaps he needs to practice more or maybe he isn’t as talented in that area of sport. There are books (like *Choosing a Vocation*

and *What Colour is Your Parachute?*) that can help us analyze our likes and dislikes, and point out our strong points. By capitalizing on these strong points, we can be more able to enjoy success in our career or vocation. We can avoid becoming the proverbial square peg in a round hole. We can avoid the frustration of believing “everyone is better than I am”.

Andy may not be the best loose forward around, but he can play a few decent pieces from Richard Clayderman’s latest album and win some chess games with his friends.

Step three in nurturing your confidence is to set goals for those aptitudes you have.

Maybe Andy aspires to be a performing pianist, playing in a world famous concert hall. If so, he needs to work toward that goal step by

step.

Oddly enough, as you practice and develop your abilities, whatever they are, you'll find that there is an important side benefit: confidence.

Confidence allows you to play rugby and not be upset because you don't play as well as someone else. Confidence allows you to try new things realizing that you may not be the best, yet knowing that there are other things you do well.

Confidence can turn a negative "I can't" person into a "can do" positive individual.

Remember, you can build that confidence by:

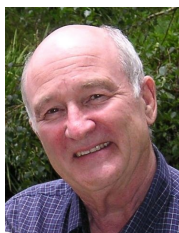
1. Not comparing yourself with others,
2. Focusing on your abilities and
3. Setting goals for your aptitudes.

So what if you can't spike a volleyball? You might play a pretty mean game of chess. And your friends always know they can count on you for a listening ear.

King Solomon, said to be the wisest man that ever lived, made this point, recorded in the Bible nearly 3,000 years ago, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

You may not do as well as someone else at one thing, but at something else you may really excel. Each of us is unique, and each of us has some important strengths. Concentrate on making the most of your potential, not somebody else's. Go on, you can do it!

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Be yourself!

What type of person would you really like to be?

An outgoing, extraverted "party animal"? A thoughtful, reflective "intellectual"? A real "go-getter"? A stable, cautious, detail-minded, reliable, "behind-the-scenes" worker? A reassuring friend and confidant? A networker? A promoter? A thinker? A source of wise counsel?

The person we each really ought to be most like is... *ourselves*.

There's every chance you're something like one of the above descriptions already. So why not enjoy being that person to the full? Life would be pretty dull if we were all the same. And it gets pretty dull, and fraught with frustration, when we try to fit ourselves into some mould-of-the-moment or someone else's idea of who we ought to be.

God made you to be the person you are, not someone you're not. Think about the things you enjoy, are good at, and naturally tend towards. These are the ways we experience, understand and share life. You don't need to be like someone else, any more than they need to be like you. Sure, we can learn from others' examples and strengths, but we can't be them. Enjoy who God made you to be. Celebrate the good things about yourself.



A "Can Do" person: Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln suffered a business failure in 1831. He was defeated in an attempt to be elected to the legislature in 1832. The next year, he suffered a second failure in business. He went through a nervous breakdown in 1836. He

was defeated for Speaker in 1838, defeated for Elector in 1840, defeated for Congress in 1843, and again in 1848. In 1855 and again in 1858 he was defeated for Senate, and in 1856 he was defeated for Vice President. In 1860 he was elected the sixteenth President of the USA.

"Whether you think you can or think you can't, you are right."

— Henry Ford

Another way of saying "Can't":

Can
After
Numerous
Tries

The Bible — Holy or Holey?

... Continued from page 7

But the Bible only has a few disputed textual readings, none of them affecting any doctrines or important details.

No other book has withstood more vicious efforts to stamp it out than the Bible. In AD 303 the Emperor Diocletian issued an edict to stop Christians from worshipping and to destroy their scriptures. All meeting places were destroyed, the property of Christians confiscated, and Bibles burned. Anyone found with a copy or even portions of the Bible received a death sentence. Ironically, 25 years later the new Emperor, Constantine, instructed that 50 copies of the scriptures should be prepared at the expense of the Government!

The French literary genius Voltaire, who died in 1778, said that 100 years after his time Christianity would have been swept from existence and the Bible would only exist in museums. Ironically, only 50 years after his death the Geneva

Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of Bibles!

The greatest indication of how accurately the Bible has been preserved came in 1947 with the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in a cave near Jericho. These scrolls of the Old Testament had been hidden there for nearly 1900 years. Matching them up with the manuscripts that had already been found, they were almost exactly the same, with just minor spelling differences. The Dead Sea scrolls are dramatic evidence that the Bible has been accurately preserved down through the centuries, in a truly amazing way.

5. Honesty and Character

The Bible is remarkably candid in describing the lives of its heroes and heroines. It doesn't try to cover up their problems. King David of Israel is recorded as being a murderer, adulterer and liar. Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples and

a leader of the Church, is famous for publicly denying his Lord three times. Discord and troubles in the churches are openly confronted.

2000 years ago the Bible made prophecies that are stunningly accurate predictions of trends and events now occurring worldwide.

If the Bible writers were trying to encourage people to believe and follow something they had invented, it is very unlikely they would be so open about the problems. And it is difficult to believe so many of them would have died, often in excruciating agony, for what was just an invention!

The quality and character of the Bible's moral and ethical teaching is another strong evidence of divine inspiration. The Bible has formed the basis for much of our western world's legal system. Whether we read the Ten Commandments, the wisdom of the Proverbs, or Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, there is a clear and confident standard of moral conduct presented that is timeless in its principles.

6. Fulfilled Prophecies

If you were asked what you think world conditions will be like 2000 years from now, around the year 4000, how would you answer? Do you feel you could make a pretty good guess? Will a nuclear war have destroyed everything by then, or will we be living on other planets? Who has a hope of knowing what will be happening at that time? It's hard enough to predict tomorrow's weather, let alone conditions 2000 years ahead!

Yet 2000 years ago the Bible made prophecies that are stunningly accurate predictions of trends and events now occurring worldwide. At a time when the most powerful weapon was a two edged sword or a battering ram, Jesus Christ predicted that mankind would



Pondering the future: What will Auckland be like a thousand years from now? So many things might happen in the course of a decade, let alone several hundred years, how would it be possible to know? Yet it is a fact that prophecies written in the Bible accurately predicted the rise and fall of many cities and empires hundreds of years before they happened.

develop the capability to destroy all human life. He prophesied wars and rumours of wars, famines and earthquakes in different places. He predicted that the Christian gospel would be published all over the world. He said that many people would be hated, persecuted and killed because of him, and that is exactly what has happened and happening in many places around the world right now. If Jesus was an ordinary human being, that would be a pretty egotistical thing to say!

Think of it for a moment. Is there anybody alive today who would have the gall to say that people in the year 4000 will be dying because of him or her?

But Jesus didn't only *make*

At a time when the most powerful weapon was a two edged sword or a battering ram, Jesus Christ predicted that mankind would develop the capability to destroy all human life.

prophecies – He *fulfilled* them too! And not just one prophecy, but literally *hundreds* of them!

A prophecy by Micah in about 700 BC predicted a Saviour would be born in Bethlehem. Isaiah's prophecy of 650-750 BC said he would be born of a virgin. A prophecy made in the book of Genesis (49:8) almost 2000 years before Christ was born, saying he would come from the tribe of Judah, was right on the button!

Other prophecies said he would enter Jerusalem riding on a colt, he would be sold for 30 pieces of silver, which would be used to buy a potter's field, lots would be cast for his garments, his hands and feet would be pierced, and he would be raised from the dead.

In all, there are 332 Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by this one

person, Jesus. How likely is it that it was just by chance that Jesus fulfilled all of these predictions? Peter Stoner, in the book *Science Speaks* used the science of probability to find that the chance any person could fulfil a particular 8 of the prophecies was 1 in 10 to the power of 17, and the chance of one man fulfilling 48 of the prophecies was calculated at 1 in 10 to the power of 157, an almost infinite number!

It was clearly impossible for Jesus to deliberately go about fulfilling all of these prophecies. Firstly, he would have had to ensure he was born of a virgin. As if that wasn't hard enough, he would have to be sure it happened in Bethlehem, and of the line of David. Then, somehow he would need to engineer his crucifixion and burial in a rich man's tomb!

There are lots of other Bible prophecies we haven't considered yet. A number of prophets predicted the destruction of various cities and the rise and fall of empires. Imagine the difficulty of taking a city such as Wellington and predicting that it will be destroyed, and outlining exactly how and when? This is what a number of Bible prophets did, in the case of ancient cities such as Tyre, Sidon, Samaria, Petra, Nineveh, and Babylon, and it can be shown that the prophecies were fulfilled in amazing detail.

7. Personal Experience

Perhaps the most important reason Christians believe the Bible is true is that they have practiced what it says, and have found that it works!

The Bible presents a code of challenging spiritual laws requiring love, purity, peace, honesty and faith. Millions of Christians have tried to live by these principles, and although no one is able to keep them perfectly, the Bible promises help for those who try to keep them, and people report that

Millions of lives have been changed for the better because of the teachings of the Bible.

this really does happen. Millions of lives have been changed for the better because of the teachings of the Bible. And they have all been changed in very similar ways. Christians who believe in and try to follow the Bible all report that their lives are happier and more meaningful as a result! Thousands of criminals have reformed, drug addicts have been cured, selfish people have become generous – lives have been transformed by the scriptures! The Bible talks about benefits, such as deep inner joy and peace of mind, that arise from a personal relationship with God, and for those who have experienced this, no further proof of the Bible is needed!

So these are some of the reasons Christians believe the Bible is true. Any one of these can stand on its own as a strong argument, but when you add all seven of them together, it makes a very powerful case!

If you would like to learn more about the Bible and how to make sense of it in today's world, why not make a visit to a local Church and meet some of the people who believe in it? If you'd like to read more first, please feel free to write for our article "Why would anyone believe Christianity?"

Rex Morgan, the editor of "Inside Life", and his wife Marilyn live on Auckland's North Shore. Rex produced 264 issues of a family newspaper from the age of 12 through 19, and has contributed articles to a number of publications since. Rex can be contacted at : rex@wcg.org.nz



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- *Coping with Change*
- *Is there a Purpose for Life?*
- *Steps to Financial Security*
- *Making the Most of your Time*
- *Valuing Teen Age*
- *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*
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Time Management



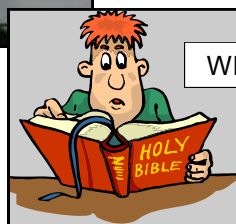
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