

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity  
as it was in the beginning.*

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## TROJAN HORSES

According to Greek legend the war which destroyed the might and power of the Trojans and laid the city of Troy in ruins began with a simple quarrel between three goddesses: Hera, Athena and Aphrodite as to which was the 'fairest of all'. Paris, the son of the king of Troy was called upon to make a judgement between the three and he chose Aphrodite because she promised, in turn, to give him the love of the most beautiful woman in the world. True to her promise, Aphrodite arranged for Paris to win the love of the then most beautiful woman in the world - Helen, the wife of King Menelaus of Sparta, Greece. Paris carried Helen off to Troy and King Menelaus, taking a rather dim view of the proceedings, called upon all the kings and princes of Greece to help him avenge this great wrong. After two years preparation the Greek fleet set sail for Troy but the Trojans were well prepared for the ensuing conflict. They had laid up much in the way of provisions and the city was protected by mighty walls. For more than nine years the Greeks besieged Troy with varying fortune but eventually began to despair. It was then that Odysseus (also known as Ulysses) advised that as they could not take the city by force, they should take it by craft. Odysseus got a Greek sculptor to build the famous wooden horse, large enough to contain a hundred armed warriors. Into it crept Odysseus, Menelaus, and others of the Greek heroes. The opening underneath was closed with strong bolts. Then the rest of the Greeks broke up their camp and set sail, leaving the horse.

There was great rejoicing among the Trojans when they saw the ships disappear into the sea mists for they thought that the Greeks had given up and gone home. Most thought that the horse was a peace-offering to the god Athena. Some, however, were suspicious. "Put no trust in the horse, men of Troy" cried the priest Laocoon. "Whatever it is, I fear the Greeks, especially Greeks bearing gifts" he cried, but he was howled down by the majority. He was especially howled down when a Greek prisoner (left behind for the purpose) confided to the Trojans that the wooden horse was built as a peace-offering to the offended god Athena but was built of such immense size to prevent the Trojans from pushing it into Troy - for then the favour of Athena would be transferred from the Greeks to the Trojans. Thus, in spite of the warning of the priest Laocoon, and notwithstanding the hollow sound made by the horse when a spear was thrown at it, the Trojans dragged the horse into their impregnable city. During the night the Greek soldiers emerged from their hiding place in the horse and opened the city gates to the shiploads of Greek troops who had all returned during darkness. Troy was thus sacked and the Trojans slaughtered.



When God made the world He saw that 'it was very good' and I suppose He thought the same when the church came into being. God does all things well and we can be sure that when God produced the Kingdom of Heaven (or the church of Jesus Christ) it was incapable of being improved upon. Thus when man seeks to improve upon the Divine Order he is being presumptuous (again) and is issuing an insult to God. Was not the church built upon the foundation of Christ's apostles and prophets, Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building is fitly framed together and groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord... a habitation of God? (Eph2:20). Can one envisage a better foundation? The church brought with it a better covenant with God than man had ever had, and it was not exclusive but open to all nations - to whosoever will. The Hebrew letter says that it brought to man a 'better hope' and was a 'better covenant' established upon 'better promises' open to people who would be seeking a 'better country'. The promises in the kingdom of heaven are gloriously sublime and culminate in life eternal with God in heaven - in the many mansions being prepared now by the Lord of Glory. Jesus is the Mediator of this better covenant and He is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. (Col. 1:18). Can one envisage a better Head? No one can possibly point a critical finger at Jesus. No member of the church need ever be ashamed of their Leader and Founder. The same obviously can't be said for the founders of all other religions. Jesus was God's only Son, lived a sinless life and received no response to the challenge 'Which of you convicteth Me of sin?' He proved His deity by His miracles and received God's own testimony and approval in the words from heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him". Followers of other religions embellish and adorn the burial-places of their founders but followers of Christ can but point to the empty tomb. The church, therefore, being a product of God, was perfect when it came from the Divine drawing-board. When Jesus said that the 'Gates of Hell would not prevail against it' He did not mean that the Gates of Hell would not *attract* it - just that they would not *prevail* against it. Satan faced with the difficulty of attacking an organisation of such perfection, based upon such a sure foundation, offering such blessings and sublime promises, and with a Head of such unassailable pedigree and authority, came to the conclusion that such an impregnable fortress was vulnerable only - through its members. Satan, like the Greeks trying to capture Troy, came to the conclusion that more can be accomplished by craft, than by force. Satan did'nt follow the modern adage "If you can't beat them, join them". His stratagem was "to beat them by joining them". Force against the church merely strengthens it. When the church was persecuted it became strong. When the persecution is withdrawn the church becomes indolent and lethargic. When the church in Jerusalem was persecuted it went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4).

The church at Laodicea by contrast was lukewarm and prided itself in being rich, and increased with goods, and having need of nothing but knew not that in reality it was wretched, and blind, and miserable, and naked (Rev. 3:14). The devil is nothing if not subtle and is not, therefore, going to encourage the persecution of the church, or attack it by force, but is going to come in by the back door and take it by craft. "Better still, to allow it destroy itself, by its own hand", thinks the devil, and so, over the centuries, Satan has left 'Trojan Horses' all over the place and there has been no shortage of church members willing to drag them in to the church. The Trojan Horses have taken many forms and shapes, but the end has been the same - the ruin of the church of God. There have, of course, been men like Laocoon, who have raised the dissenting voice but who have by a 'large majority' been shouted down and classified as 'Old fogies' or 'stick in the mud' characters who do not want the church

'to move with the times'. The Trojan Horse in the case of the church at Laodicea was, as we saw, prosperity and materialism but many other congregations have succumbed, and are succumbing, to the same beguileful pitfalls. Satan also seems to have convinced most church members that if 'the majority' want something, then that makes it right. It is a good mental and spiritual exercise to think of the church down the corridors of time and to identify all the Trojan Horses brought into the Lord's church (to its great disadvantage). Apart from prosperity there have been schisms; divisions on doctrinal points; professionalism; false prophets; the great apostacy; modernism; innovations in the worship and vast alterations in church government. We are in the fortunate position of being able to look back with hindsight over the history of the church, stretching back a period of about two thousand years, and there is little excuse for us from failing to learn from the sad experience of others. The apostle Paul and apostle Peter could but predict what would happen. Paul predicted that 'after his departure' from this life '*grievous wolves*' would enter the church not sparing the flock, and that from the ranks of leadership in the church men would arise 'speaking perverse things' to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:29). The apostle Peter also predicted that, after his death, there would be 'false teachers' in the church who would 'privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them.' Not only the but, "*Many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*" (II Peter 2:1). These false teachers would '*bring in*' (just like bringing in the Trojan Horse) these damnable heresies (schisms and divisions by false teachings) into the church. It would be done 'privily' and those responsible would not be likely to announce to the church, "Dear brethren I am about to propose being in to the church a few damnable heresies" - no, the innovations would be introduced cleverly, by a 'highly esteemed' member in a very attractive package and with a very plausible (and even a scriptural) justification for them. Thus the cunning and artful Satan has by manipulating and deploying members of the Lord's church, been able to sidetrack and bring to nought a very large part of the church of our Lord and Saviour. Satan has not been able to destroy the church but he has divided it, setting brother against brother, and led it astray in so many ways, by encouraging the false teachers about whom Peter made his prediction. Thus the church, the 'Pillar and Ground of the truth' has been made to reflect all kinds of religious opinion and 'The Christian Church' of today succeeds only in leading souls astray.

Fortunately each congregation, (or community), of the church is fully autonomous and need not follow 'the majority' to probable destruction but can examine itself and put itself on a proper footing with God. A new congregation can spring up suddenly on any spot on the globe and seek to model itself upon all the information at its disposal in the New Testament. Each member should closely examine all that is done and taught in their own congregation and continually be on guard against 'damnable heresies' being brought in, as the horse was brought into Troy. Let us give heed to the exhortation Paul gave to the church members at Corinth when he said, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man *take heed how he buildeth thereupon*. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The foundation of the church is laid for all time and we each must build thereon. May we heed the cautionary note in Paul's words that, as we build on that foundation, every man takes heed as to *HOW he buildeth thereon*. Beware also of Trojan horses being dragged into the congregation, and keep both eyes on Greeks bearing gifts.

## THERE'S A DIFFERENCE

NOT long ago I visited an old abandoned meetinghouse in a rural area. It was a dilapidated frame building. The siding was truly "drop siding" in some places and the paint had long ago flaked from the surface. The interior was both dusty and musty. A bird flew through a broken window as we entered. Wasps and "dirt daubers" buzzed about, angry at our unwarranted intrusion upon the domain to which they had filed claim. The seats were all gone and now occupied places on the back porches or under the shade trees of homes in the community. But the old speaker's platform was still there with its faded carpet tacked upon it - a carpet from which the pattern had been worn away just behind the sapspeaker's stand. The brackets were still upon the walls indicating where the kerosene lamps had once hung to give forth a pitiable little yellow light falling upon the pages of hymn books held high to catch their dim glow.

The couple who took me to this site then drove to town to diaplay the new brick structure in which the congregation was meeting. This was the second house which had been built since the old rural location was abandoned. The air conditioned interior provided welcome relief from the heat. The cushioned pews offered comfort to a fatigued body. My host broke the silence. "Quite a difference, isn't there?" he said. I agreed but as we talked further it became obvious that there were differences which were not merely material. The more I thought about them the more I wondered if the congregation had gained or lost.

The baptistery with its clever lighting arrangement, its heating element, and its gaudy depiction of the Jordan River for a backdrop, was certainly more convenient than the pool under the big sycamore down at the creek. But those who stood on the bank above the clear water filled with darting minnows and sang, "Shall we gather at the River?" often found themselves unable to continue the song because of their unashamed weeping that a precious life had been born anew. And as they crowded forward to extend the hand of fellowship to the blanket-shrouded dripping figures there was a warmth of sincerity that all too often is lacking today among those who do not even trouble to catch the name of the one bing immersed.

Granted that there are much larger audiences that there used to be, except at the "big meeting" but try to get them to visit the sick and you will be amazed at how many are really concerned. Gone are the days when the wife baked an extra loaf of bread or an apple pie, and the husband came in from the field for an "early supper" so they could have time to visit and sit with a sick neighbour and carry food to help the worried wife of the patient. Gone, too, are the days when friends gathered in to share the grief of those who sat huddled around a casket in the parlour - the room opened only when death or the preacher visited the home. Certainly we feel a sense of relief at a time of sorrow when a smoothly-functioning organisation commanded by a suave mortician grabs our dead and whisks them out of sight, not to be seen again until time to debate solemnly whether to leave the glasses on the sightless eyes of the corpse or remove them. But I am not so sure that our well-chosen expressions of sympathy are not as shallow as an old-fashioned coffin.

I admit there is a difference in the amount of the offering as show on the polished walnut board hanging on the front wall to the left of the pulpit and that formerly scrawled in uneven figures on the cracked blackboard with a piece of white chalk in the county church building. There has to be if you are going to hire someone to do the things that were formerly accepted as a part of life and done freely without pay. Did one of the members become sick during the summer? All of the members suffered with him. On a chosen day they met to plough his fields, or to gather in his

harvest and transport it to market, while the women cooked dinner for the whole group. Not luncheon - but dinner! You would have grossly insulted these people if you had offered them money. They didn't think of it as manifesting their religion or serving Jesus. They simply thought of helping a needy neighbour, and that's why it was really helping Jesus!

They had their troubles in the old days because they were human but they also forgot them in times of stress and need. They couldn't take time out to have a nervous breakdown and they didn't have the money to do it anyhow. It costs a lot to do things like that. So they didn't get the "jumping jitters" when a baby cried at home or in meeting. I think sometimes that cushioned pews have softened one end of our anatomy and cushioned preaching has softened the other end. It seems that the larger our buildings grow the smaller our hearts become. We have cooled both our buildings and our spirits. Maybe we have sacrificed concern for comfort!

"Mission Messenger" (April, 1964)

## GLEANINGS

"Let her glean even among the sheaves." Ruth 2:15

### Poor, deluded souls!

"There are those who call themselves Christians who, instead of feeding on the pure milk or strong meat of the Word, are devouring the chaff or imbibing the poison of an unsatisfying, godless science of sceptical philosophy, or who pay a modern antichrist to retail the blasphemies and sneers of Voltaire and his age, in their ears; and yet they wonder at their own doubts.

Nothing seems certain. They question whether the Bible be not, after all the work of man, and whether Jesus be not at best only a myth or a mystery; whether death be not a leap in the dark, and heaven a dream of excited fancy. Poor, deluded souls!

Arthur T. Pierson.

### God's Manna, every morning fresh

"As though a disciple could grow strong and walk erect in the conscious confidence of an unshakable faith, who breathes only the stritifling atmosphere of a prayerless life, and feeds on husks fit only for swine, while God's manna, every morning fresh, may be gathered in the fields of the Word. The sovereign cure for all doubting disciples is to immerse themselves in the Word of God, as a vessel is dipped in the sea till it is filled and overflows. Nothing but God's own truth can displace the uncertainty of scepticism."

Arthur T. Pierson.

### We quote Phillips Brooks

"Do not pray for easy lives! Pray to be stronger men. Don not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle. But you shall be a miracle. Every day you shall wonder at yourself, at the richness of life which has come to you by the grace of God."

### Renewed day by day

"The sharp agonies of our earthly life liberate the diviner life which is given us in Christ. It is in the extremity of mortal weakness that we become conscious of immortal strength. When the "outward man is decaying" - strength sinking all earthly springs of delight running dry, human ties dissolving, darkness falling on our homes, friends failing us or passing into the unseen world, and leaving leaving us lonely when most we need their support, - it is when the "outward man is

decaying," through the loss of all the natural supplies of power and joy, that the "inward man" becomes vividly conscious that it is being "renewed day by day."

R. W. Dale.

### Christ - Sufficiency is all-sufficiency

"When we are living the self-sufficient life, we are weakest where we are strongest, for there we are most unsuspectingly liable to surprise attack; but when we are living by the principle of sufficiency through the imparted strength of Christ, then we are strongest where we are weakest, for at our weakest point the strength of Christ has its most perfect opportunity. Edinburgh Castle has been captured only once in its history. The height and steepness of the great rock on which it is built were thought to make it quite impregnable on one side; and so no sentries were put there. In the mist of the early morning a party of attackers clambered up the rugged slopes, and surprised the garrison into surrender. The castle was taken at its strongest point. The same thing happened in 1759, when Wolfe and his men, under cover of night, climbed the Heights of Abraham on the north bank of the St. Lawrence, surprised the French at the unexpected point and captured Quebec. The same thing has happened again and again in military history: and it happens, the world over, in individual human experience. Christian, mark well this double paradox of the spiritual life: in ourselves we are weak even where we are strong; in Christ we are strong even where we are weak. Self-sufficiency is insufficiency. Christ - sufficiency is all-sufficiency."

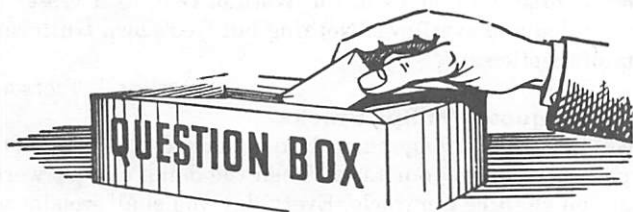
### The Living Word is a Living Word

"The living God still lives, and the living Word is a living word, and we may depend upon it; we may hang upon any word that God ever spoke, or ever caused by His Holy Spirit to be written..."

"If the Bible were not true, the sooner we found it out and threw it aside the better; but if it is true, the sooner we live up to it and act up to it the better. If any of you were offered a Bank of England note, whether for five pounds or five thousand pounds, you would never doubt the value of it. You would take the words printed on it as sure. And are not the words printed in this Book as sure? No part of the Book is unworthy of our credit. It is either God's word, or it is not what it is represented to be."

Hudson Taylor.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"In view of the gifts dispensed by Christ as recorded in EPH.4:11-16 why is it that the Church does not seem to have grown as much as people think it ought to have?"**

There are many people who try to equate the christian religion with the Church of Christ, but as we know, the christian religion can and does embrace many different doctrines and creeds and these are not necessarily consistent with the teaching as found in the New Testament regarding the Church of Christ. I am sure that the questioner is referring to the Church which started on the first Pentecost



after the resurrection of Christ, when Peter and the other Apostles gave the clarion call of the Gospel, "Repent, and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:37-39). It is to members of *that* Church to whom Paul addresses his Ephesian letter, and I think it is fair to say that false teaching fragmented the Church of the First Century so that it needed restoration, and the question is rightly put, 'Why is *that* Church not growing at the pace which it did in the past.

### The Victor.

The context in Ephesians 4 gives us a vivid picture of the victorious Christ who has scattered and conquered the forces of sin and evil, and out of the munificence of His ascended glory He now dispenses gifts unto men. The quotation comes from Psalm 68:18, a Messianic psalm of victory, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them". Paul takes this psalm and interprets it in the context of Christ's victory over sin and death.

The context also indicates in whom these gifts should be resident; apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastors and teachers. He also indicates the purpose; 'for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ', so it seems fairly evident that the Lord intended that the Church should prosper and grow.

### Apostolic Authority.

It is true to say that under the authority and guidance of the Apostles the Church of Christ *did* flourish. Paul refers to them and he as 'ambassadors of Christ'; "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). When the Apostles died, however, the particular gift of Apostleship died with them. Since then, men have always been very keen to claim apostolic *authority*, but they have been somewhat less keen to follow the apostolic *injunctions* contained in the Word of God, the Bible. Therein lies the reason and the tragedy of the fragmentation of the Church of the New Testament. So-called leaders of Christian thought have taken the apostolic teaching concerning the immersion of believers into Christ and have turned it into the sprinkling of innocent babies; they have so perverted the New Testament teaching regarding Bishops in the Church so that it is now the subject of political appointment and consequent controversy; they have taken it upon themselves to disregard and in some cases discard sections of God's Word, some of which contain apostolic teaching and guidance; they have given people what they *want* to hear rather than what they *should* hear. Is it any wonder that the glorious Church of the New Testament is seen by many people as a meaningless irrelevance? The offices of Apostle and Prophet were given of God for the benefit of the Church. Those offices have long since ceased to exist, but their teaching, which led the Church out of its infancy, is still vitally relevant today for its growth.

### Evangelists.

This office still remains though, I am persuaded, not as it was in N.T. times. I admire men who, along with their families, have gone into primitive and, in many cases, potentially dangerous situations in order to preach the Gospel. But surely in many other instances we seem to have missed the way somewhat. I have never seen any particular merit in an evangelist being permanently with an assembly of Christians who could, if properly organised, deploy quite adequately their own

resources. (They would be organised, of course, after the scriptural pattern.) The only merit of such a situation would be if the evangelist were working with the Oversight in order to break new ground *near to the parent assembly*.

Furthermore, the time, effort, and money spent on the country-wide interchange of evangelists and preachers. I am quite sure that if these resources were put to use in each assembly in, say, advertising, tract distribution, etc., then people around us might begin to see the local assembly in action. I know it is nice to hear fresh voices and see new faces, but sometimes the preacher is remembered when Christ has been forgotten, and this is surely the wrong way round. I have also heard the complaint that there is no one to organise and teach a programme of Bible study; well all I would say to that would be that if there are intelligent men in the assembly who can hold down a secular job which demands that intelligence, then it is a standing indictment on the assembly if they are not sufficiently developed in order to perform that function. We are speaking about the Body being compacted by that which 'every joint supplieth', and we shall only see real growth when every joint *begins* to supply. This will not happen if we leave all the preaching and teaching to a select group of saints. It will not happen unless and until there is one hundred per cent commitment from every Christian.

#### Pastors (Elders).

It is obviously God's intention that there should be Elders in every church. (See Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5 Eph 4:11, 12). If that is so then we can rest assured that this office is absolutely vital to the growth and prosperity of the church. Yet so many churches are without them, and I suppose that one can question the effectiveness of those that do have them.

I am convinced that many members see the validity and the scriptural necessity of the *office*; what I am not so convinced about is the willingness of some to have someone else overseeing them. I have seen churches run by men's business meetings when every male member, regardless of spiritual maturity, can have just as much say as anyone else; the end result in many cases has been chaos. Furthermore, the Elder is sometimes the last person to know if some members of the flock are experiencing particular problems, and by the time that he (or they) get to know the problem has become so damaging that it is almost insoluble. Such things are not in the nature of what God intended. He expects churches, under the influence of their individual leaders, to grow unto spiritual maturity. He wants to see the Church as a whole 'built up' and not fragmented. He wants Christians to achieve the stature of Christ. I we are not seeing this, then it is not because of the futility of God's dispensation but rather because we are not fully utilising what we have been given. God grant that we may put aside all personal aspirations and concentrate solely on doing His Will.

(All questions, please to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Hayfield, Wigan, Lancs).

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

OCTOBER 1982

3 Ezek. 34: 1-16	Titus 3
10 Gen 21: 1-21	Luke 1: 1-25
17 Ex 1:15 to 2:10	Luke 1:26-38
24 1 Sam 1:1-18	Luke 1:39-56
31 1 Sam 1:19-28	Luke 1:57-80

#### Luke and his Gospel record

Luke is unique in the Bible. He was the only known non-Jew who contributed to the sacred canon. His two treatises are the gospel record which bears his name and the book entitled "The Acts of the Apostles."

This Greek Christian is specifically mentioned on three occasions in Paul's epistles. (Philemon 24) "Marcus,



Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers;" (2 Timothy 4:11) "Only Luke is with me;" (Colossians 4:14) "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you." These verses should be carefully noted together with the "we" passages in Acts chapters 16, 20, 21, 27 and 28. (I would suggest that the reader encircles the personal pronouns "we" and "us" each time he/she meets them in these chapters.) So we learn that Luke was a companion, a traveller and a fellow - worker with the great apostle of the Gentiles.

We do not know the birthplace of Luke, the time of his conversion, nor the precise date of the composition of the gospel. However, one thing we do know is that he had a special reason for writing. Both of his books are addressed to Theophilus (loved of God), the ruler of a Greek city - state, if we may judge from the specialised form of address, and the purpose was to give this high imperial official authentic knowledge about the matters of which he had been informed.

We should examine and re-examine the introduction and salutation (Luke 1:1-4). William Barclay has said, "His Greek is notably good. The first four verses are well-nigh the best in the New Testament. In them he claims that his work is the product of the most careful research. His opportunities were ample and his sources must have been good". I tend to agree with him and a number of other commentators who argue that Luke in his research and in the classification of events personally interviewed many of the key figures. Certainly, he had time to do this. For two years, for instance, he was Paul's companion in imprisonment in Caesarea and "this" as Hally has written, "afforded him abundant opportunity to get first-hand, from original companions of Jesus, and first founders of the church, accurate information concerning all details. Caesarea was only a few miles from Jerusalem. Jesus' mother may still have been alive, at John's home in Jerusalem. Luke may have spent

many precious hours with her, listening to her reminiscences of her wondrous Son, and James, bishop of Jerusalem (?), Jesus' own brother, could have supplied Luke with full details of the whole story of Jesus' life".

Luke, as we have discovered was a physician. A question often asked is, "Do his writings give any indication of this?" The answer, in short, is "Yes". Two years' ago, I read a fascinating article which dealt with this very question. I was so impressed by it, that I wrote to the author, Werner G. Marx of Pasadena, California, for the additional footnotes and Bibliography of the article. In them, he lists a few examples of the medical terminology that Luke substitutes for Mark's everyday words, I was led to further studies and later learned that there are, in all, seventy six medical terms in the book of Luke not found anywhere else in the New Testament. A good single example is the word Luke uses for "eyewitnesses" (verse 2 chapter 1). It is the Greek word *Autoptes* from which we get "autopsy".

That means "seeing for oneself". When a doctor performs an autopsy he literally looks into things. That is what Luke affirms about the eyewitnesses. They dissected the evidence and the facts were established beyond denial. To return to Marx, he concluded his article with these words." The faith of a modern Christian in the inspiration of the Bible can be strengthened by reflecting on Luke, the only Gentile writer in the scriptures. Superbly gifted, admirably trained, this doctor who in these many ways showed himself to be authentic, was so consecrated and so sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that he gave to the world two documents that unflinchingly point men and women to the Saviour." He indeed is a physician that leads us to The Great Physician.

There are notable characteristics of this gospel. *It is the Gospel for the Gentiles.* Luke the Gentile wrote mainly for the Gentiles. There is nothing in the

record that a Gentile could not understand. *IT IS THE GOSPEL OF WOMEN*. We should remember that in those days a woman's place in Palestine was a lowly one. In the Jewish morning prayer a man thanks God that he has not made him "a Gentile, a slave or a woman". (See Galatians 3:28). Luke gives a very special place to women. It is in his gospel that we read of Elizabeth, of Anna, of the widow at Nain, of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Of course, Jesus' mother Mary, the sisters Martha and Mary, and Mary Magdalene are also important to the narrative. *IT IS THE GOSPEL OF THE UNDERDOG*. For example, Luke alone tells of the parable of the Good Samaritan, the story of the beggar Lazarus and the Rich Man, and the immortal tale of the Prodigal Son and the Loving Father.

### Chapter 1

Chapter 1 can be divided into the following headings: The Prologue to the Gospel (1-4); The Promise of the Baptist's Birth (5-25); The Annunciation to Mary (26-38); Mary's Visit to Elizabeth (39-56); and the Birth of John the Baptist (57-80).

*THE PROLOGUE*. Luke is concerned with facts. By facts we always mean something said or done. Alexander Campbell has written, "The works of God and the words of God, or the things done or spoken by God, are those facts which are laid down and exhibited in the Bible as the foundation of all faith, hope, love, piety and humanity." Robert Burns said, "But facts are chieftains that winna ding, An' downa be disputed." In other words, "Facts are things that cannot be enhanced or diminished and can never be successfully disputed." Such are the facts of the gospel.

*THE PROMISE OF THE BAPTIST'S BIRTH*. Zacharias (whom Jehovah remembers), the priest, is the central character in this scene. He belonged to the section of Abijah which was one of the twenty four sections of the priesthood (1 Chronicles 24). Elizabeth

(the oath of God) and he were childless - a thing of great reproach at that time (verse 25). The day Zacharias offered incense was one of the greatest days of his life because many a priest would never get that privilege. The angel Gabriel made the day even more memorable. The son of their old age was to be called John (grace of God). He was an answer to prayer. Alfred Lord Tennyson once wrote, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

### *THE ANNUNCIATION TO MARY.*

Mary was espoused to Joseph. That was as binding as marriage. In this passage we are faced with the Virgin Birth which many declare is a problem to them. Of course, the problem is not the virgin birth at all, but the virgin conception. But why is this doctrine so controversial today when the word of God is so clear on the matter? It teaches that the conception was miraculous. The begetting was by the Holy Spirit (verse 35). If it were not so Jesus would not have been the Son of God in a unique way. W. Carl Ketcherside has said, "There is no embarrassment of me to accept the fact of the virgin birth. The problem of the virgin birth is not the problem at all for those who profess to stumble at it. Their actual hangup is with reference to God and His power. If you worship the same God whom I revere you know that nothing is impossible for Him" (verse 37). The son was to be called Jesus (Saviour). "Precious name, O how sweet! Hope of earth and joy of heaven." "O name of might and favour All other names above!"

### *MARY'S VISIT TO ELIZABETH*

Mary was indeed "blessed among women." No other woman has received such a high honour as was conferred upon her in that she was chosen to be the mother of the Saviour of the world. She was truly a woman of virtue and extraordinary faith. In Roman Catholicism Mary is venerated. "But", as one non-catholic writer has put it,

"we do not deify her, nor worship her, nor pray to her, and we are bound to protest strongly when Christ is dethroned and Mary is elevated to that place which belongs to Him alone." We are reminded of the words of Jesus himself, "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:50). The hymn of Mary (verses 46-55) is known to many as the Magnificat because in the Vulgate it begins "Magnificat anima mea Dominum". It has been described as a revolutionary document. Study it and see why.

*THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.* The naming of the child and his father's prophecy filled the people with expectancy. The song of Zacharias should also be carefully studied. John was destined to become a great prophet of God. This was a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. (See Malachi 4:5-6).

Ian S. Davidson,  
Motherwell.

### SCRIPTURE READINGS.

This month's "SCRIPTURE READINGS" have been kindly contributed by brother Ian Davidson, 21 Glen Lyon, St Leonards, East Kilbride, Scotland, and, God willing, brother Davidson will contribute to this feature each alternative month with brother Scott. This has been arranged between brother Scott and brother Davidson and is intended to reduce somewhat the present burden placed upon brother Scott in contributing an article each month, particularly with regard to sister Scott's current illhealth and need of constant attention. I am happy to concur with the arrangement.

Editor.

### WHATEVER BECAME OF SIN?

Our country is barely two hundred years old but it is dying before our eyes, not intellectually nor scientifically, but

morally with cancer of the soul. Grandiose schemes for social reform and trips to the moon divert our attention from the malignancy that no miracle drugs or panaceas from legislative bodies can touch. Politicians make passing reference to things of the spirit and give God a courteous nod of recognition, but what dignitary would dare mention sin or Jesus Christ? We are deceived into thinking that we are on the verge of a new era with poverty and ignorance abolished and the brotherhood of man brought in by government decree. What we do not know is that we are at the bedside of a dying America.

What president ever said in his speeches that our real trouble is sin? All other ailments are suggested, and countless remedies are proposed, but what national leader ever names the basic malady? We try to mop the floor while we leave the faucet running. Anybody with his eyes half open and a Bible in hand ought to be able to diagnose our disease. This is not the exclusive prerogative of theologians. All other trouble is due to heart trouble. We are sinners and something must be done about sin. Something has been done by God in Christ, but men will not accept the diagnosis and take the treatment. We must do something about sin and the Saviour, for the two supreme issues are the sin question and the Son question.

Nowadays, preachers encourage the flock to mix with the wolves. No one wants to hear of cross-bearing and the costs of discipleship. They just want to "join" the church. When we water our preaching down to make it more acceptable to this age, we cheapen both it and ourselves, and insult God in the process. What our Lord said about crossbearing and obedience is not in fine type. It is in bold print on the face of the contract. We have put the demands of discipleship in fine print for fear we will scare away "prospects." If the rich young ruler were to apply for membership in the average church today, he would be received instantly and perhaps

made treasurer, with no questions asked. But our Lord was not in a hurry; he was after disciples, not mere joiners. Joiners are a dime a dozen today. Americans would die if they couldn't join something. Give them a button and a certificate and they'll join anything.

Our Lord's attitude toward prospective disciples was exactly the opposite of our approach today. We dare not mention the cost of discipleship for fear we shall scare away prospects. He did not encourage cheap dedication. He seemed to dash cold water on the enthusiasm of would-be disciples (Luke 9:56-62). He gave the rich young ruler a shock treatment, not a massage. Alexander McLaren says, "The best way to deepen and confirm good resolutions too swiftly formed is to state very plainly the difficulty in keeping them." This is utterly different from our psychology, but it is Scriptural to challenge cheap consecration. Let us never forget our Lord's description of those who hear the Word and receive it with joy but have no root in themselves, and the son who said, "I go, sir," but went not.

The fact that the gospel is not popular is all the more reason for preaching it. The very fact that men cannot endure sound doctrine is all the more reason for seeing that they get it. It is not our responsibility to make it acceptable; it is our duty to make it available. Long ago a man said to me, "I don't like sermons on hell. Tell me more about the meek and lowly Jesus." It is the meek and lowly Jesus who gave us most of our information about hell. He took the last verse of Isaiah and the Valley of Hinnom and compounded them into the most fearful picture of future punishment to be found in the Bible.

—Vance Havner  
Adapted

*Use everything as if it belongs to God  
—it does! You are His steward.*

The world's call is - Indulge yourself!

Christ's summons is - Sacrifice yourself.

## CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO WIDOWS

Recently we were asked to distinguish between the widows of James 1:27; the widows of Acts 6:1 and the widows indeed of 1 Tim. 5:16. We believe the following is a scriptural answer to this question.

James 1:26,27

*If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father to this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world".*

**Whose responsibility?** This is individual Christian responsibility. Observe the words "man", "his", "his own", "this man's", "himself". These verses do not apply to congregational action.

**Widows to be helped?** The widows of this passage are not limited in any way by the context. An individual Christian has a responsibility to any widow, saint or sinner, who is in need.

Acts 6:1

*"And in those days, when the number of disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."*

**Whose responsibility?** This is congregational responsibility. Money was being collected for distribution (Acts 4:34,35). In solving the problem mentioned in the verse, seven men were appointed within the congregation to be over the work (Acts 6:2-6). The work, then, of caring for these Grecian widows was done through contributions and organization on the congregational level.

**Widows to be helped?** The widows of this passage are limited by the context. They are Christian widows. The money was contributed for any "among them" (Acts 4:34,35). The problem of neglect arose because the number of the



disciples was multiplied, creating a greater number to be cared for. Congregations, therefore have a financial responsibility to Christian widows, as well as to all "among them", who are in need.

First Timothy 5:16

*If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed."*

**Whose responsibility?** Two parties have responsibilities according to this verse. (1) The individual Christian has a responsibility toward his own relatives. (2) The church has a responsibility towards widows indeed. This responsibility in contrast with that of Acts 6 involves a permanent responsibility. These widows are "taken into the number" (verse 9) or "enrolled" (ASV) for support, these terms suggesting permanency of support. The physical conditions of these widows, their age, etc.) would make it highly unlikely that they would ever be able to provide for themselves.

**Widows to be helped?** These widows indeed are not only Christian widows (verse 5), but they have no near relatives who can care for them (verses 4, 8, 16), are at least sixty years of age (verse 9), and are known for their good works (verse 10).

How do we distinguish between the widows of these three passages? The widows of James 1:27 are all widows, saints and sinners, to be cared for by individual Christians; those of Acts 6:1 are Christian widows to be temporarily cared for by the church; those of 1 Tim. 5:16 are Christian widows who meet further qualifications, and are to be permanently cared for by the church.

Bill Hall.

## MAN IS WONDERFULLY MADE

In the human body are 206 bones, about 600 muscles. The alimentary canal is 12 feet long. The amount of blood in an adult is about 30 pounds.

The heart is 6 inches long, 4 inches wide, beats 70 times to the minute, 4,200 times in an hour, 36,792,000 times a year, and each beat pumps 2½ oz. of blood through the body — 7 tons a day. All the blood passes through the heart every three minutes.

We breathe 1,200 times an hour, inhaling about 100 gallons of air, 2,400 gallons a day. The surface of the air cells in the lung is more than 20,000 square inches — equal to a room 12 feet square.

The average man's brain is 3lb. 2oz; a woman's 2lb 12oz. The nerves exceed 12,000,000 in number. Atmospheric pressure is 14lb. to the square inch; a medium-sized person is thus subjected to pressure of 40,000lb. Each square inch of skin contains 3,500 sweat glands, each a drainpipe ¼in. long, aggregating 201,166 feet, or almost 40 miles.

## GOD IS FAITHFUL

God has not promised skies always blue; flower-strewn pathways all our lives through.

God has not promised sun without rain; joy without sorrows, peace without pain.

But He has promised, strength for the day; rest for the labourer, light on the way.

Grace for the trial, help from above; unflinching sympathy, undying love.

Some people throw away a bushel of truth because it contains a grain of error; others swallow a bushel of error because it contains a grain of truth.

—*Firm Foundation*

## BELIEF (2)

### What does "belief" mean?

THE original word meaning "I believe" in the Greek language in which the New Testament was written is "*pisteuo*." This is the word used in Mark 9:24, where Jesus says to the father of the deaf and dumb son, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." In reply, the father "cried out and said with tears, I believe

(*pisteuo*), help thou mine unbelief."

*Pisteuo*, "I believe," is the verbal form of the noun "*pistis*," meaning *belief* in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, the passage with which these articles were begun.

### Belief and Faith

But *pistis* with its derivatives is the *same* Greek word translated *faith* when-ever that word occurs in the New Testament! To take one example of many where the word "faith" appears: "Faith (*pistis*) cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). The translators could quite easily have used the word *belief* instead of *faith*, and so we see that both "belief" and "faith" mean exactly the same thing.

Not only so, but this passage sheds light on the statement of Jesus, "He that is of God *heareth* God's words" for it only by hearing God's words, as revealed by Jesus and his apostles that we *can* believe, and enjoy the important results which follow therefrom. But more about this later.

### Dictionary Meaning of Belief

In the various English Dictionaries, "belief" means "to be firmly persuaded of," "to trust." The word "faith" has the same meanings attached to it as has "belief," thereby proving that "belief" and "faith" are synonymous terms. It does not, therefore, have sense to say, "If only I had faith," implying that faith is something *given* to us from outside ourselves. In fact, faith or belief is a God-given faculty of the mind, in each one of us is the power to exercise it.

Consequently, when Jesus sometimes censured his hearers, and also his disciples, in the words, "Oh ye of little faith (*oligo-pisto*, meaning "of little belief") he simply meant that in face of the facts, or the evidence available to them, there was no excuse for the smallness of their belief — or, as we might put it, their irresponsible attitude, their doubt, their *disbelief*.

### Beginnings of Belief

If you have followed the reasoning so far, and have studied the New Testa-

ment passages mentioned, you will have perhaps come to the conclusion that the hearing of God's words, as revealed by our Lord and his apostles, and their acceptance by our minds and hearts, so that we are firmly persuaded of their truth, constitutes belief. This is indeed so, but notice that this persuasion only touches, as it were, the *beginnings* of belief, important though these beginnings are. There are further aspects of belief to consider, before we can understand fully what belief means.

### More Involved

Much more is involved in belief than the mere acceptance of statements. We have to get at the back of what these statements mean. Then, having ascertained their full significance, we must ask ourselves whether they will involve any change in the direction of our future actions, behaviour and lives. This is true not only from a religious point of view; it is also true in secular life. There, almost without exception, people's behaviour is dependent upon their beliefs.

This leads us to our second leading question which also involves further aspects of the meaning of the word "belief".

### What Truth are we Required to Believe In?

This is the second of four questions dealing with the four important subjects, Belief, Truth, Sanctification and Salvation. There are many truths contained in the Bible (which is also called the Scriptures or Writings of truth) and which we believe to be the inspired Word of God. All Scripture, however, leads up to, or involves *once central truth* beside which all other truths are merely incidental. That does not imply that these other truths are not important. Indeed, they have their own peculiar degrees of shades of importance, in the various circumstances and contexts in which they appear. But *all* fade into insignificance before the great central truth to which all Scripture points:

**that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.** Indeed, there are more than three hundred and thirty prophecies in the Old Testament, foretelling the coming of Jesus as the Messiah and

### The Son of God

John, in his gospel, writes concerning Jesus. Many truths had been presented by John in that wonderful record of our Lord's sojourn upon earth. He records many great miracles which Jesus performed. Then he writes, "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31).

### Exercises in Belief

Study the following passages:-

Genesis 3:15; Romans 16:20; Hebrews 2:14; Isaiah 9:6; Genesis 49:24; Psalm 118; 22-23; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 21:32; Romans 9:33; Acts 8:26-40.

W. BROWN.

(to be continued)

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**KENTISH TOWN:** We rejoice to record the baptisms of Jeremy Hudson; Margaret Egyiri; Helen Hodgkinson on Lord's Day, June 27th.

R.B. Scott.

**MANCHESTER:** We again have reason to praise God because of fruit born by the gospel in the Manchester area. On Saturday the 26th. of June, five people from Oldham were baptised at Argyle St. Hindley. They were Ahmed Yaqoob, Yaqub Masih, his son Najem and his two daughters, Nazet and Sameena.

Ahmed Yaqoob was a Muslim. Two and a half years ago he had a stroke and underwent a serious operation. He is gradually recovering the use of the affected limbs and is able to walk with

difficulty. Brother Rahim Ulah learned of his disability and began visiting him regularly to help him. Mr. Ullah introduced brother Masih to him and from then he learnt about Jesus. Putting his faith in Jesus he decided to obey the gospel.

Yaqub Masih a former Roman Catholic who having learned about baptism realised that Catholics do not teach the correct way, so he decided to be baptised at the same time, together with his children who also believed in Jesus.

There is now a good nucleus for intensive work amongst Muslims in Oldham.

We request you to pray for these new brothers and sisters in Christ.

A. Ashurst.

(The editor regrets the delay in this news item being printed).

**ZAIRE:** At the latest count there are 95 congregations of the churches of Christ in Zaire. This represents progress indeed in this French-speaking land since the first conversions in 1979. There is, however, a problem between our desire for congregational autonomy and the Zaire Government's apparent preference for church centralisation and, hence, easier governmental control. The evangelist whose wife disappeared during the Zambia-Zaire border disturbances has since found her again.

Chester Woodhall.

## OBITUARY

**Kirkcaldy;** On 17th July 1982 the Lord called to rest his faithful and hard-working servant, our beloved sister Jean Mills, aged 81 years. She served her Lord faithfully for many years and could be counted on to be in her place when health permitted. While saddened at the parting we rejoice that she has finished her journey faithful to Him who gave His life for the sins of us all.

R. Hughes



**COMING EVENTS.**

Annual Social of church at Newtongrange, will take place, God willing, on Sat. 23rd October, 1982 at 4 pm.

Speakers will be T. Nisbet, Tranent. W. Black, Dalmellington. A warm welcome given to All.

A.P. Sharp

**COMING EVENTS  
KENTISH TOWN**

The 111th Anniversary of the opening of Hope Chapel to be held on Saturday, 2nd October. Afternoon session 3 p.m. Tea at 5 o'clock. Evening meeting 6.30 p.m. with Brother Morgan speaking, and on Sunday. Visitors warmly welcome.

**THANKS**

In the March issue of the S.S. I appealed to the brotherhood for help to repair our heating system, severely damaged by the winter freeze. Our need was for £900. for urgent and essential repairs. Individuals and churches responded to our need - we are a small, struggling congregation and we received a total of £700.

On behalf of the church here, I thank sincerely all who helped us. Truly we are members of a wonderful family.

Please note the appeal is now closed. On behalf of the church meeting in Burn's Street, Ilkeston.

W.S. BRADLEY.

**HELP FOR INDIA**

Some of the brethren in Britain, poor though they may be, are very rich compared with most of our brethren in India. Some of the church members in Haddington hope to send, on a very modest scale, financial help to some of our Indian brothers and sisters. The sole purpose of this note is to say that if any other brethren wish to join us, by sending the occasional £1, we shall be happy to receive it and pass it on to a worthy cause and to good use.

Editor.

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A fool always finds some greater fool to admire him.

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True eloquence consists in saying all that is proper, and nothing more.

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The world appeals to the worst in you.  
Christ appeals to the best in you.

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**EDITOR:** JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead Midlothian, Scotland. EH37 5PT Telephone Ford 320 527