

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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YET ONCE MORE

Perhaps it's just imagination, but there does seem to have been an increase in reported earthquakes recently. Within a matter of months there have been very serious earthquakes in America, Russia, China, India, Iran, Turkey, etc.: even in Australia. The most recent earthquake, of a few weeks ago, in the Phillipines was truly dreadful and illustrated the awesome power of 'Nature.' Massive seven-storey buildings collapsed like a pack of cards and huge hotels were tossed aside like playthings. What could be more terrifying than to be awakened during the night with buildings crashing down on top of us, fires breaking-out everywhere, the ground heaving and lurching under our feet and a real possibility of us disappearing, without trace, down a fissure opening up on the pavement?

We like to think that nothing is more solid than the ground below our feet, (*terra firma*), and when that begins to buckle and heave it must be frightening in the extreme. None of this is new, of course, and earthquakes go back as far as Exodus 19:18, and Mount Sinai. Nearly every country from Egypt to Switzerland has experienced earthquakes some obviously more than others, and even Scotland has had about 800 or so. Probably the greatest earthquake in recent times was the one which ruined Lisbon, in 1755, the wide ranging effects of which agitated even the still and deep waters of Loch Ness, here in Scotland, some 1320 miles away. Indeed the water level in Loch Lomond rose by 2 feet 4 inches, and continued to rise and fall every 10 minutes, for an hour and a half. Cruden (on Earthquakes) in his Concordance says, "The Scripture speaks of several earthquakes. One of the most remarkable occurred in the 27th year of Uzziah, King of Judah (Zech. 14:5). Another very memorable earthquake was at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion (Matt. 27:51). Great alterations and changes are expressed in scripture by a shaking of the earth (Heb. 12:26). The delivering of the Israelites out of Egypt is called a moving, or shaking, of the earth (Ps. 68:8). And an extraordinary and unexpected alteration in the state of affairs, civil or ecclesiastical, is represented by a great earthquake (Rev. 6:12; 16:18)." Cruden thus acknowledges the figurative use of earthquakes.

Bearing in mind the staggering subterranean force required to bring about one small, minor, earthquake we can, appreciate the consummate power and skill required to produce one 'to order', as God did on many occasions, and to bring it to bear on a small geographical spot on the map. Surely this ranks with the very greatest of miracles. For instance, to use an earthquake to open the doors of a prison at Phillipipi (Acts 16:26), allowing the release of Paul and Silas, may seem to some a case of using a sledgehammer to crack a nut, but it was a truly remarkable thing. Many times God mobilised **an earthquake** to accomplish His purpose.

DOMESDAY SCENARIO

During a telephone conversation, a few days ago, a good sister suggested that these frequent earthquakes might be presaging the end of the world, in keeping (as she put it) with the words of Jesus (Matt. 24) viz. **“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars . . . for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and pestilence AND EARTHQUAKES in divers places . . .”** (v. 6,7).

In actual fact, if we make a serious study of Matt. 24 (Mark 13: Luke 21) we shall find that the events predicted (wars, rumours of wars, famines, earthquakes etc.) were to precede **not** the end of the world, but **the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple**. Not only did Jesus say that **all manner** of signs and portents would be given prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (wars, rumours of wars, false Christs, famines, pestilences, earthquakes etc.) but these would be just **“the beginning of sorrow”**, to be followed by personal privations, persecutions, hatred, betrayal: even death itself. This is a far cry from an “end of the world” scenario. All these things would increase in intensity during the lifetime of those to whom Jesus spoke, culminating in the arrival of Titus with his Roman Legions (in 70 AD), intent upon the sacking the Holy City. **“When”**, said Jesus, **“Ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the desolation is nigh.”** These events, therefore, the wars, famines, earthquakes, etc. were all precursors of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and had nothing whatsoever to do with the end of the world. When the end of the world comes, the event will be **completely unannounced**, will happen very quickly (in the twinkling of an eye) and will come as suddenly as **“a thief in the night.”** The burglar does not send postcards or give any other indication that he intends to call professionally upon us. So will the end of the world be: **no prior notice will be given**, no hints, no signs, no heralds, no omens, no portents.

Thus, the increased frequency, or otherwise, of earthquakes has **no bearing whatsoever** upon the end of the world, but they do illustrate, I think, just how readily and easily the destruction of the earth will be accomplished. Obviously **the destruction of the earth** calls for just as big a miracle as did the **creation of the earth**, and some tell us that the world is so solid and massive, (with enormous mountain ranges, vast oceans, sprawling deserts and tropical forests) that it could never be destroyed. Yet scientists tell us that the earth contains a cocktail of chemicals, presently kept apart but which, were these elements to come together, would blow the world to smithereens: in short the earth is really a large keg of gunpowder. Regardless of how true this might be, it is certainly true that earthquakes demonstrate that the earth has latent power enough to destroy itself. All that is required is for the power to be unleashed. This may well be what the apostle Peter describes regarding the demise of the globe, when he says that its **“elements shall melt with a fervent heat”** (II Peter 3:10) and **“the earth and all the works therein shall be burned up”**. In simple terms, earthquakes are caused by molten earth finding a weak spot on the earth’s crust and, under tremendous pressure, forcing its way through (volcanoes), or, alternatively by what geologists call ‘faulting’ where rock formations at a great depth break, and the parts on opposite sides ‘slip’. A ‘slip’ of only a few inches can cause great destruction: classified in 12 degrees on the Richter Scale from ‘imperceptible’ to ‘very strong’. We are apt to think that the molten white-hot core of the earth is at a vast depth but this, it seems is not so. Scientists tell us that, generally speaking, although the earth is some 8,000 miles across (diam.) the crust is only about 20 miles thick and the earth under the crust is either red-hot or white-hot (like the molten lava we often see). Comparatively speaking, the earth’s crust in thickness is rather akin to the skin on an apple, or better still, to the surface of a very large soap bubble. Thus, relatively, we are not very far away from red-hot

and molten earth, and this apparently, accounts for why it is so warm down a deep coal mine. And so, while the world is so beautiful on the surface it is nevertheless ever-ready for imminent and total destruction, alike in all respects to the doomsday portrayal by Peter: “elements melting with a fervent heat?” Peter warns, “**But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.**” (II Peter 3:11). In v.7 of the same chapter Peter adds that “**the heavens and the earth, which are now, ARE KEPT IN STORE, reserved unto fire . . .**” When we see the horrendous devastation of even a fairly small earthquake, which after all, is but a pin-prick on the earth’s surface, we perhaps get some idea of the colossal subterranean forces yet held back and in reserve (“**in store**”) pending the earth’s final destruction.

METAPHORICAL EARTHQUAKES

As Cruden rightly commented in his remarks (already quoted) the term ‘earthquake’ in the Bible is sometimes used figuratively to imply “**a shaking of the earth**”, and the powers that be, to denote great alterations and changes. The Psalmist, for instance, in referring to **Israel’s escape from Egypt**, says, “**O God, Thou wentest forth before Thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness. The earth shook: the heavens also dropped at Thy presence: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God: the God of Israel.**” (Ps. 68:7). This was, of course, partly figurative and partly literal; but the three references in the Book of Revelation must surely be entirely symbolical of great upheaval (Rev. 8:5; 11:9 & 16:18). In the last reference mentioned (16:18) we read that when the Seventh Angel poured out his vial, “**There came a great voice out of the Temple of Heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a GREAT EARTHQUAKE, such as was not since man were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great.**” And so we are not quite finished with these special earthquakes of God’s own making. There were many such tremors in N.T. times: there have been many since; and there are many yet to come. I make so bold to suggest this, by virtue of what the writer to the Hebrews says when he warns, “**See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven. Whose voice then shook the earth; but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word ‘Yet once more’ signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved . . .**” (Hebrews 12:25-28).

Unfortunately space does not permit a pursuit of all the marvellous thoughts expressed in that passage and we can only generalise. Obviously the writer refers to the fact that just as calamity befell those who rejected Moses who spoke (for God) on earth, so, to a much greater extent, would tribulation descend on those who turn away from He who speaks (for God) from heaven — even Christ. The writer also refers to the time when God **shook the earth** (Ex. 19) an event whereby the people were absolutely terrified at the awesome sound of God’s voice. Mount Sinai convulsed, shook and shuddered and it “**was so terrible that Moses said, I do exceedingly fear and quake**” (Heb. 12:21). The recorded outcome was, of course, that God acquiesced to the plea of the people that He would never again speak **directly** to mankind but only through a representative, i.e. Moses at that time. The writer to the Hebrews in recalling that particular shaking of the earth declares that “**YET ONCE MORE, I shall**

shake not the earth only, but also heaven.” This is, in fact, a quotation from a remarkable prophecy in the O.T. made by Haggai (2:6,7) who predicted, **“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this House with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.”** The initial and immediate meaning of Haggai’s words had reference to the rebuilding of the Temple, or second Temple, by Zerubbabel. It was obvious to all that the new Temple was not a patch on the glorious edifice originally made by Solomon, now destroyed, and God’s people were understandably, very depressed. Haggai was moved to assure everyone, however, that, despite its evident inferiority to Solomon’s Temple, the new building was acceptable to God and that God **“would fill this House with His glory.”**

Interestingly, Paul (If indeed he was the writer to the Hebrews) plucks this prophecy of Haggai from the relative obscurity of the O.T., and recharges it with all its original force and meaning; applying it to his own age and day: showing that were elements of it yet to be fulfilled. **“YET ONCE MORE,”** God says, **“I will shake not the earth only but also heaven”**.

YET ONCE MORE

Our puzzlement over the meaning of **how**, **why** and **when** God would shake the earth and heaven, would be great indeed had Paul not hinted at its meaning and what it signified. He says the phrase (“Yet once more”) **“signifieth the removing of those things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”** In the wake of an earthquake, survivors are often quite surprised at the unlikely buildings which have remained standing. Very often the solid and strong-looking edifices are the ones with the poor foundations and first to collapse, whereas the flimsy-looking buildings are quite often the ones which survive. This seems to be what is meant by the prophecy — God would shake the nations: most institutions would collapse: some would remain. Paul in making a re-application of Haggai’s words, and referring them to N.T. times shows that **“the Desire of all the nations”** (Christ) had come, and that His institutions would survive and prevail. In the shaking of earth and heavens, only the **eternal and God-ordained** things would remain. Indeed the shaking will continue until all perishable things be removed: until Judaism and all false systems of religion and philosophy are taken out of the way; until all the kingdoms of the world shall be swallowed up by the Kingdom of Heaven, and until the dawning of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. For Jesus came not only to fulfil the Mosaic Law and bring the Old Economy to a close: but also to destroy Satan and his works and establish His own everlasting kingdom. Consequently He must reign, and sift, and shake the nations until His fully comprehensive mission has been brought to completion (I Cor. 15:24,25). It is true that other analogies, (such as the refiner’s fire, and fuller’s soap) are used to indicate the improvement and purification of **individuals**: but clearly the analogy of the earthquake applies to God’s purging and sifting of **the nations**, (kingdoms and religious institutions).

THINGS THAT REMAIN

Diminished space allows only a brief summary. At varying degrees on the spiritual Richter Scale God shakes the nations. Already some things are recognised as permanent. Paul himself said, **“Wherefore we having a kingdom which cannot be moved . . .”** and shows that Christ’s kingdom will survive all forms of shaking. Jesus said, **“Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away”** thus indicating another imperishable. The ‘eternal’ things of the N.T. include an eternal purpose; eternal glory; eternal redemption; an eternal inheritance and eternal life. **“I go to prepare a place for you”**, said Jesus, and to the disciples he said, **“Be of good cheer,**

for great is your reward in heaven." All these eternal promises and institutions will survive. As Paul said, "Yet once more" signifies "the removing of those things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain," And so, as the Psalmist said a long time ago. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." (Ps. 127:1).

Editor

GLEANINGS

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

SOUND DOCTRINE

The Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to "speak the things which become sound doctrine." No where in the Scriptures are preachers urged to be eloquent or to give learned discourses, but rather are men encouraged to preach and teach truth and righteousness. Peter says "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Paul urges Titus to "Hold fast the faithful Word." Timothy is instructed to "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." These and many other Scriptures clearly show the importance of teaching "sound doctrine." Not only are disciples to teach sound doctrine, but they are encouraged to instruct others in order that truth may be disseminated. The Church is declared to be the pillar and support or custodian of the truth. The Church here can only refer to the Church of Jesus Christ, composed of men walking in the truth and abiding in the doctrine of Christ. The Apostle Paul emphasises and upholds this principle in writing to Timothy, "Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." How striking this counsel — "Commit the truth to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

FELLOWSHIP

An older and younger man were sitting together in the back of a little chapel. The service was not over, but the younger man started to leave. "Don't go yet," whispered the older man, "After its over, they all shake hands — and that's the best part."

OUR NEED OF PARDON

"We cannot remain unchanged. In our sins we are lost. God and sin cannot dwell together. The soul that sinneth it shall die. If I would live, I must be rid of my sin. God has determined to banish all sin from His domain. If I cling to my sin, I must be destroyed with it. If I would have life, then I must be separated from my sin. Praise His name! Jesus can do this for me and no one else can. 'Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15). Peter says (Acts 4:10-12): 'Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in Him doth this man stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men wherein we must be saved.'

Fred C. Day.

THE TESTIMONY OF A GREAT MAN

Mr. Gladstone once said, "Whatever I may think of the pursuits of industry and science, and of the triumphs and glories of art, I do not mention any one of these things as the specific for alleviating the sorrows of human life, and encountering the evils which deface the world. If I am asked what is the remedy for the deeper sorrows of the human heart, what a man should chiefly look to, in his progress through life, as the power that is to sustain him under trials, and enable him manfully to confront his afflictions, I must point to something very different — to something which, in a well-known Hymn, is called *The Old, Old Story*, told of in an old, old Book, and taught with an old, old teaching which is the greatest gift ever given to mankind"

WALK WITH THY GOD

A story is told of Abraham Lincoln that in one of the darkest hours of his administration, when he was in conference with some of his advisers as to which of the policies would better be followed and they had at last come to a decision, one of the advisers said: "Well Mr. President, I hope the Lord is on our side." "The thing that troubles me," said Lincoln, is whether we are on the Lord's side."

DEFENDING A LION

"C.H. Spurgeon was once asked if he could defend the Bible. "Defend it! I would as soon defend a lion. Let it out; it can defend itself!"

Selected by Leonard Morgan

EXCEPT

ONE word can have tremendous significance. This is true of the word 'Except.' Shall we observe some of the great truths suggested by it in the New Testament.

BE CONVERTED

Jesus said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). To convert is to 'turn around.' It implies a turning from one direction to another. There is a great need today for changing from destructive ways to ways that will lead to joy and happiness. This can only be achieved by turning to Jesus. He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh to the Father but by Me." (John 14:6). The Christian life is a busy life yet it is a life of usefulness and service, with great rewards both in this life and in the life which is to come. 'Conversion' is illustrated by the apostle Paul's words to the Christians at Thessalonica, 'Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.' (1 Thess. 1:9-10). To be a member of Christ's kingdom there must be a change of life-style, i.e. from serving Satan and his ways, old habits, old associations, and sins must finish, and we must look to Jesus who died for our salvation. **Except ye be converted.**

A NEW CREATION

Jesus said, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee Except a man be born again, of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.' (John 3:5). This kingdom is the kingdom prophesied by Daniel (2:44) that "God would set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." Other kingdoms have come and gone but the kingdom of Jesus Christ is still in existence. To be citizens of this kingdom we must listen to, and obey, Jesus. We must be "born again" — of water and the Spirit. After Jesus had been crucified and risen again His apostles began preaching the words given to them by Jesus when He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Luke who

wrote the 'Acts of the Apostles' confirms that they faithfully carried out the Lord's instructions and preached, **"Repent and be immersed every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins."** (Acts 2:38). The people responded and we read that **"They that gladly received"** their words were immediately immersed (Acts 2:41). It was a question of being buried with Christ, and rising to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). *Except* a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

FELLOWSHIP

Jesus also said, **"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."** (John 6:53). Having turned to God, and having been born again of water and the Spirit we need to meet with the Assembly of Christ. This is a fellowship shared, with fellow Christians and with the Lord. Jesus recognised our need for Spiritual food and instituted the 'Lord's Supper' saying, **"This do in remembrance of me."** (1 Cor. 11:24). Faithful Christians today do this, and endeavour to do just exactly what the early Christians did — meet on the first day of the week to 'Break Bread' (Acts 20:7). Christians must remember their blessed Lord in this way and thereby feed on Jesus and gain great strength. This wonderful privilege is just one of the many blessings to be enjoyed in the kingdom of God. If we 'have no life in us' it is because we eat not of the flesh of the Son of man, or drink not of His blood. *Except* ye eat. . . .

Dear reader, do you truly believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Son of God, the Lord that died for you, that He rose from the dead to give Life and Hope? Then repent of your past way of life and be converted, be immersed in the name of Jesus for the remission of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and your name will be added to the Lamb's Book of Life. Continue faithful to Him, and in fellowship of men with like faith, and at the end you will receive those gladdening words from the lips of the Saviour, **"Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."** (Matt. 25:34).

J. E. Breakell, Wigan.

CHRISTIAN LIVING

The characteristics of Christian living can be summed up in the following statements of Jesus. He said, **"Come unto me"; "Follow me"; "Abide in me" and "Go ye."** Simple words indeed. Today we tend to worry over the things we must not do, to the neglect of the things we should be doing

The requests that the Lord makes of us are so simple, so straight forward, so unmistakable in meaning that even a child can understand. It would appear the difficulty does not lie in trying to decipher *the meaning* of Christ's commands, but in believing *with a sincere heart*: that seems to be the trouble. I am sure we pray often: but do we pray believing, not just hoping; expecting, awaiting the force of the Holy Spirit. It seems not brethren. We fail in this, taking things for granted. God relates to those who are mighty in prayer; they will be used and blessed of Him.

"COME UNTO ME"

To hear and respond to the call of Jesus, creates a new Christian, and praise the Lord, that's good. The more we go to Jesus, the closer our fellowship with Him will be. Our experience in the Lord will reach new heights. We must realise that Jesus says **"Come unto me"** not once but often.

“FOLLOW ME”

When we come to Jesus we find a friend with power, influence and wisdom: such as no earthly friend can ever hope to have. Earthly friends can, at times, let us down: but Jesus, never. In Him all things are possible. We need to believe this. Many of us tend to falter. We need to follow on in the footsteps of Jesus, in close company. Failure results in sorrow.

“ABIDE IN ME”

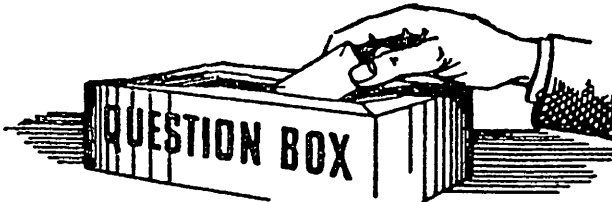
To be in union with Christ is of the most importance. We must be in fellowship with Him, we must be working with Him. Jesus says, “I am the vine ye are the branches.” Christian take note; no branch, no fruit. It is through the church the good news is to be preached, in all its facets. Through the Christian the good news is to be made known. For this we need to abide in Christ, for strength, for guidance, for help and for success. We must ever be aware of the possibility of failing in this by, standing on past laurels. To “abide in the Lord” means success in all things; that is the promise of God.

“GO YE”

To answer Christ’s call of “GO”, one needs courage, honesty and a stout heart. If truly abiding in Christ, these things can be ours. The Spirit will help you, guide us, direct us and care for us. A possible failing of the Christian may be that strict adherence to the first three commands create a neglect of the fourth “Go ye”, to the hurt of the soul. “Go ye”, Christ says, but we stand static! “Go and preach the gospel,” but we respond, “I can’t do that, it’s not very convenient.” Attend meetings; go to the soul that needs comfort; go to the brother that needs help; go to the person that is house-bound. In this dear reader, you are helping to preach the gospel. It may be hard to understand this, but a static Christian is of no consequence. A Christian on fire for the Lord, can soon set alight a flame somewhere else, to the glory of God. We have to share the faith. If you really can’t go then send a card, a note, an invitation, a tract, advice, help. We can all go, brethren, in some way or another. If not, help others to go. Be about the Lord’s business in your own small way.

May the Lord bless us all, in the work He has set before us.

A. P Sharpe, Newtongrange.



Conducted by
Aif Marsden

“Why is the Central London Church of Christ under such heavy media attack, and what are the prospects for other well-established churches of Christ in the British Isles?”

In the March 1989 issue of S.S. I made a comment, and I quote, “If ‘city churches’ should spread to our major cities then my belief is that we should not draw battle lines but that we should continue to do Christ’s work where we have always done it. The Church in conflict is not a pretty sight.” Unquote. I was, of course, referring to warring factions within the Body of Christ. However, media attacks on the Central London church of Christ have escalated over the last few months to such a degree that we need to safeguard **our own** position so that the backlash of popular disapproval does not cause irreparable harm. The last media investigation was the ‘The Cook

Report,' which was screened on Granada T.V. on Monday evening, 6/8/90. The serious charges of 'cultism', brainwashing, and the destruction of family relationships, were brought against the Central London church. It is very probable that many of our brethren are uninformed about this group, so a few facts may be of some assistance.

THE M.M.B.C.C.

Originally known as the Boston Movement (Massachusetts, U.S.A.), and part of the Crossroads Movement, this organisation has now evolved into the Multiplying Ministries of the Boston Church of Christ; it is also known as the Dynamic Multiplying Ministries. The strategy for world evangelisation starts from the Mother Church in Boston. The next phase is to set up 'Pillar Churches' in large-population world centres (e.g. New York, Chicago, L.A., London, Paris, Toronto, etc.). Upon these 'pillar' churches the world brotherhood is to be built. From there, 'City Churches' are to be established (e.g. Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Edinburgh are targeted), which will then lead on to Small City Churches, Country-side Churches, and congregations in House Churches. The H.Q. will be in Boston.

The hierarchy, according to the Boston Plan, is comprised of Evangelists, Lead Evangelists, Co-Evangelists, Zone Leaders, House Church Leaders, Interns, Disciplers, Disciples, Cost Counters. There are also High-powered Women's Ministries, Women's Counsellors, Interns, Disciplers, Disciples, Cost Counters. The Evangelists are Boston appointed.

Converts are taught to be totally submissive and not to have an independent spirit. They are instructed to have a daily 'quiet time', and they have to contact their Discippler daily. They also have 'prayer Partners', and they indulge in 'soul talks'. Commitment is total, and the master-disciple relationship is vital. Spirituality means that a convert must count and meet the cost of being a disciple. They must do what they are told to do.

THE CHARGES

The charges brought by the people through the media are three: first, that the Central London church is a 'cult'; second that potential converts are brainwashed; third, that converts are being separated from their nuclear families, in some cases separated from widowed mothers. We should look at these charges in more detail.

By definition a cult is a 'system of religious worship; devotion, homage, to person or thing; fad, passing fancy, for some particular thing' (Oxford Dict.). In the sense of the question, a system may be further defined as "comprehensive body of doctrines, beliefs, theories, practices, etc., forming a particular religion." There is a sense in which a system can become more important than the subject which the system is designed to uphold. There might be some justification for the organisational structure of the M.M.B.C.C. if that structure were scripturally based, but it is not. It seems to me that there is no scriptural warrant for the oversight of the Boston church determining how other communities of Christians should operate; this destroys the autonomy of other communities. Is Jesus the Head of the Body, the Church, or has Boston usurped that authority? Furthermore, most of the hierarchial titles are nowhere found in the Bible, nor is there authorisation for the tasks they are supposed to carry out. So on the above count the system may be described as cultish.

Devotion and homage to Christ should be the objective of every Christian without exception. To people who have no time for God, Christ, or the Bible, such devotion may seem to be irrational and misplaced. However, it is reasonable to think that those who purport to follow the Lord would grant Him due honour, but the dedications in such books as 'How Christianity Grows in the City,' and 'Shining Like Stars,' could give the impression that some in the higher echelons of the Boston Movement are thought of more highly than Jesus. That, of Course, is totally unacceptable.

'Brainwashing' is defined as, "the systematic elimination from a person's mind of established ideas." Its application might be more usual in political spheres, but it can be, nonetheless, applied in respect of religious dogma. It is a serious charge and ought not to be applied religiously, especially in the Christian religion. Why? Because it nullifies the person's **right of choice**. It has long been a fundamental principle of preaching and teaching in the Church of Christ that the teacher has a right to teach and the listener has the right to learn, but the right to choose must not be interfered with by the teacher. There is no need for brainwashing. The correct appropriation of Christ in the heart and mind of a person will bring about whatever change is necessary. The systematic approach of the group under consideration would, in my opinion, substantiate the charge of brainwashing. I have come to that conclusion rather sadly.

The most serious charge is that of the disruption of family life. I know that Jesus Himself said that He must be foremost in the Christian's affections, and that a Christian's enemies might be those of his own household, but a Christian's love for his family should not be less — and in my opinion should be considerably greater — than his love for his enemies. In the ultimate, because of pressure and persecution within the family, a Christian may have to exercise his love for Christ by **leaving** the family, but he should not be bludgeoned into that choice when there is no need for it.

What we many times fail to come to terms with is that our adherence to the Bible is mind-bending to those who, quite simply, do not believe it. God, Christ, and the Bible, are anathema to most people. When the proposition is put to them that a person's love for Jesus could make that person renounce his family, then we are indeed walking the quicksands so far as they are concerned. It is not the slightest use quoting the Book to them; they don't believe it. Some way we have to make them understand, but we compound the difficulty by our own attitude to society in general. If the Central London church, by its targetting of university students, deliberately keeps those students from the parents and families, then they are guilty of the charge laid against them. Surely we have more confidence in the power of Christ to hold them than we have in the rigidity of any system.

WHAT ARE OUR PROSPECTS?

Even though the Gospel and doctrine of the Church are vital, I believe the impact we make as Christians has much to do with attitude; **our** attitude. People will be more interested in how Christ works **through** us than they are in what we say to them. The road to their salvation may be more circuitous than direct. The vehicle may be our response to the social problems which afflict them. Self-righteous and textual certainty may not help a lot when a person has to be convinced of eternal verities in an uncertain and confusing world. Let me give you an example of what I mean.

Over the last few months on T.V. the world has seen some harrowing pictures of Polish Children living in deplorable conditions, and without proper medical facilities. The hearts of many Christians have been touched, and they have decided to do something about it. Consequently, they have organised events in order to raise money to alleviate some of the distress of such children, Has their effort been applauded by their fellow-Christians? On the contrary, some of the textual purists have criticised the exercise, saying that this is not the work that the Church should engage itself in. I wonder if the Lord would pass by on the other side if He were here now? But I am sure of one thing; the people of the world whom we are trying to convert to Christ would never understand our reluctance to help. If they knew nothing else about Jesus, they know that He was compassionate, good, and kind; they learned **that** much at

school. In any case, would someone please tell me why it is wrong; nothing goes into church funds for use in the day to day running of the church. Are Christians so far above charitable work? God help us if that is true. Furthermore, what use is a community of Christians in any locality if the greater community of people are alienated from them. Why in the Church does the head always have to over rule the heart? Do we, like the Central London Church, want to be branded as uncaring?

If we want to have reasonable prospects then we must

- (a) resolve not to be drawn into the orbit of the Central London church
- (b) put our own point of view forward whenever and wherever we can
- (c) be seen as a community of caring Christians by the people around us, trying to live out our lives as they believe Jesus might have done. We do not have to compromise our teaching in order to do this, but we **do** need to give the teaching its practical implications with respect to the problems which surround us. God grant us the courage to live useful lives.

(All questions to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,
Winstanley, Wigan. WN3 6ES.)

REJOICE EVERMORE

The exhortation of first Thessalonians 5:16 is to “**rejoice evermore.**” A common thread running throughout the scriptures is for God’s people to be happy, thankful and glad. The Greek word used here is *chairo* and is used 74 times from Matthew to Revelation.

The word is found in Matthew 2:10 when the wise men saw the star over Bethlehem. It is said they *rejoiced* with exceeding great joy. When the prodigal son returned home the father told his elder son “**it was meet that we should make merry, and be glad**” (Luke 15:32). In Phillipians 2:17,18 the word is translated *joy*. When Gabriel came to Mary he said, “**Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women**” (Luke 1:28). The word “hail” here is the same as rejoice. James sent *greeting* to the twelve tribes scattered abroad (James 1:1). The word is translated *God speed* in 2 John 10,11. At his resurrection, Jesus met his disciples, saying, “**all hail and they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him**” (Matt. 28:9). As Jesus talked with Zacchaeus, he came down out of the tree “**and received him joyfully**” (Luke 19:6). It is also translated *farewell* in 2 Corinthians 13:11.

Our rejoicing should be continual. Let us note some things about which we should rejoice. Just as many rejoiced at the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:14), even so should we rejoice at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:10,20); for without it, he could have never walked this earth to give us a perfect example. We should rejoice at Christ’s triumph over death and the grave, for it was not possible that he could be held by it (Acts 2:24). We should rejoice in the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28). We certainly rejoice in salvation as did the Ethiopian in Acts 8:39. We rejoice evermore because our names are written in heaven in God’s book of life (Luke 10:20). We ought to be as the apostles who *rejoiced* “**that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name**” (Acts 5:41). “**Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution**” (2 Tim. 3:12). We are to rejoice in spite of meanness and persecution. “**Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you**” (Matt. 5:10,12). We rejoice when fruit comes forth from our labours (John 4:36). We rejoice evermore because of the hope of eternal life (Rom. 12:12). We are happy and glad because of the obedience of people whether they be alien sinners or children of God (Rom. 16:19). We are glad when we enjoy the fellowship of brethren of like precious faith (1 Cor. 16:17; Phil. 2:18).

In the "Pulpit Commentary" we read: "Joy is that feeling of delight which arises from the possession of present good, or from the anticipation of future happiness; and in both respects the believer has abundant reason for constant joy. He possesses the blessedness of forgiveness and the sure prospect of eternal life, and he has the consciousness that all things work together for good to them that love God. (Rom. 8:28). God wishes his people to be happy, and does not suffer them to be indifferent to their own peace. He commands them to rejoice, yea, to rejoice evermore" (Vol. 21, page 105).

Christians are not remorseful. Christians have more over which to be happy than others in the world. The happiness of the world is only temporary and earthly. We seek that happiness to be found in Christ Jesus both in this life and the one to come hereafter. In believing of Christ's return to this earth to claim his own, "**we rejoice with joy unspeakable**" (1 Pet. 1:8). "**Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice.**" "**Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.**" (Phil. 4:4; 3:1).

G. Robinson.

HUMAN SUFFERING

Why do God's people experience hardship, pain, and suffering? Should God's people be exempt from all difficulties, for if we were excluded from all trials, we would artificially "**serve God**" out of selfishness. The Lord allows the rain and the sun to fall and shine on the just and the unjust (Matt.5:45).

The Christian can allow adversity to help him / her to grow spiritually and give glory to God. Paul prayed 3 times that this thorn might be removed, but God answered **No "for my power is made perfect in your weakness"** (2 Cor. 12:9). God can do abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us (Eph. 3:20). God can make good out of bad. God is still active in the affairs of this life.

Paul promises the Christian that the Lord will not put anything on us that we cannot bear or endure (1 Cor. 10:13). As we yield to Christ, pray in faith according to God's will, and trust Christ instead of ourselves, we have the assurance that "**all things work together for good to them that love the Lord to them who are called according to his purpose**" (Romans 8:28).

We find in the Book of Job one of the greatest dramas in all history — Satan claiming that Job would not serve God if it were not for gain. God allowed Job to lose his livestock, his children, his home, and his health to prove to the devil and all his forces that Job would serve God regardless of his circumstances in life. God allowed Job to suffer that he might grow spiritually. Job saw that the problem of suffering is like the mystery of origins and many other things of this world — they cannot be completely understood by the mind of man (Job 42:2-6). As we read this latter text, we feel that even though God did not explain to Job why he suffered the loss of so many things, he was satisfied that God had done right, for the Lord had given and the Lord had taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord in all circumstances and experiences of our lives.

P. Seaton.

The 'God is Dead' Issue: It's a case of mistaken identity, God isn't dead, some of the theologians are (Byron S. Lamson) . . . It's another example of a premature obituary (attributed to Emerson W. Shideler) . . . Without a hold on Christ there is no hold on God at all (Thomas Chalmers) . . . The difference between the unbelieving fool described by the Psalmist (Psalm 14:1) and the God-is-dead theologian is that the Old Testament fool said in his heart there was no God; the modern fool brays it all over the countryside . . . Sartre speaks of the silence of God, Heidegger of the absence of God, Jaspers of the concealment of God, Bultmann of the hiddenness of God, Biber of the eclipse of God, Tillich of the nonbeing of God, Altizer of the death of God. And the New Testament? It speaks of the love of God (Richard Wolff).

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Oct. 7	Ezek. 34:1-16	Titus 3:
Oct. 14	Gen. 21:1-21	Luke 1:1-25
Oct. 21	Ex. 1:15-2:10	Luke 1:26-38
Oct. 28	1 Sam. 1:1-19	Luke 1:39-56

LUKE

The name Luke (Greek **Loukas**) is probably an abbreviation of the Latin **Lucius**. He is specifically mentioned on three occasions in Paul's epistles - Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 24. Kenneth S. Wuest has written: "Luke was a Greek, educated in the Greek schools, prepared for the medical practice which was held in high regard as a profession, and among the Greeks had attained to a place of eminence among the nations of the world. Greek doctors of medicine were in attendance upon many of the royal families of other nations."

Luke was responsible for two of the most important documents of the New Testament — the Third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. The medical element in each of these works is proof-positive that the author was a physician. (Many books are available on this subject.) Both books were addressed to one Theophilus (loved of God) and from the specialised form of address it appears he was a ruler of a Greek city-state.

That Luke was a companion and fellow-traveller of the apostle Paul is clearly seen in the "we-passages" of Acts (chapters 16,20,21,27 and 28). He recorded much of what he heard and saw

and his research, especially into the events of Jesus' life, was extremely thorough. Permit me to quote Wuest again: "Luke had the historian's mind, a thing native to the educated Greek . . . "Sir William Ramsey said, 'I regard Luke as the greatest historian who has ever lived, save only Thucydides'. Thus we have no doubt but that Luke made a personal investigation of all the facts he had recorded. He interviewed every witness, visited every locality. If Mary was still alive, he, a doctor of medicine, investigated the story of the virgin birth by hearing it from Mary's own lips. And as Professor John A. Scott, a great Greek scholar, has said, 'You could not fool Doctor Luke.' "

Luke's gospel has a number of unique subjects. F.F. Bruce has commented: "While the first part of his record of Christian origins is largely paralleled in the other Gospels, he has preserved valuable material not found in them. In the early part of the Gospel we have the annunciation of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, the Canticles of Mary, Zechariah and Simeon, the overcrowded inn at Bethlehem, the angelic appearance to the shepherds, the shepherds visit to the infant Saviour, his presentation in the temple, and his presence in the temple twelve years later at Passover tide. In the passion and resurrection narrative at the end of the Gospel we have the Lord's hearing before Herod Antipas, his prayer for the forgiveness of his executioners, his words of assurance to the penitent robber, his appearance alive from the dead to the

two disciples on the Emmaus road. In the body of work we have the parables of the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, the Pharisee and the tax collector. For all the debt we owe to the other evangelists, we should have been much the poorer had Luke not given us his account."

JOHN THE BAPTIST

All four gospels preface their narrative of the ministry of Jesus with a brief summary of the ministry of John. He is an important figure in New Testament history. Jesus later said of His forerunner: **"Verily I say unto you (the multitudes), among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"** (Matthew 11:11).

John was, in fact, born to Elizabeth and Zechariah, who at the time were a priestly couple in their old age. Elizabeth was a cousin or a kinswoman of Mary, Jesus' mother. An angel had appeared to Zechariah and said: ". . . many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink (See Numbers 6:3); and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just: to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (1:14-17). The last statement is a key one. Isaiah said of John: **"The voice of him that cries in the wilderness. Prepare you the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God"** (40:3).

Gabriel is mentioned in this portion of scripture. He is one of the two angels whom the Bible names: the other is Michael. Gabriel is also found in the book of Daniel (8:16; 9:21). I like how

Gabriel began his answer to Zechariah: **"I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I am sent to speak unto you and to show you these glad tidings"** (1:19). Later, of course, he also spoke to Mary (1:28-38).

JESUS

The annunciation to Mary is a wonderful incident in Luke's historical record. Throughout O.T. history the Messiah had been promised. Now he was to be born of a young peasant girl then living in Nazareth of Galilee. I was in Nazareth recently and I on my visit thought about Gabriel's appearance to Mary. I believe the encounter with all my heart.

The conception of Jesus was by the Holy Spirit. **"The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God"** (1:35). In other words, Mary's first born would have been of Joseph, but God intervened and the ovum was fertilized by the Holy Spirit. That made Jesus uniquely the Son of the Living God. Personally, I find nothing difficult about this, and endorse W. Carl Ketcherside's words on the subject: "There is no embarrassment for me to accept the fact of a virgin birth. The problem of the virgin birth is not 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" (1:37).

"You shall call His name Jesus" (1:31). Jesus is the Greek name for Joshua, which means Jehovah is salvation. Jesus is all about salvation. Paul later wrote of Him: **"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save (heal) sinners, of whom I am Chief"** (1 Timothy 1:15). Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

MARY

God chose Mary to bear a child who would save the world. In Isaiah we read: "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (7:14). Paul later wrote to the Galatians: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (4:4). Walter Scott, the evangelist, once wrote: "If the greatest truth in the Old Testament is that man was made in the likeness of God, the greatest in the New Testament is that God was made in the likeness of man."

Why did God single out Mary to fulfil His plans and purposes? We shall never really know this side of heaven, but we can be certain He made the right choice. Her song of thanksgiving (called the Magnificat) within its context is well worth meditating upon (1:46-55). One writer has commented: "There is loveliness in the Magnificat, but in that loveliness there is dynamite." Study it and see why.

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

COMING EVENTS

Motherwell: Saturday Evening Meetings at Motherwell Meeting House, August 18th and 25th, September 1st all at 6.30 p.m. Subject: "The Old Testament Scriptures and Their Background." Speaker: Ian S. Davidson. Plan to Attend

ANNUAL SOCIAL

Newtongrange: Saturday 6th October, 1990 at 4.00 p.m. Speakers: Bro. J. B. Wilson, (Livingstone), Bro. S. Farrow, (Manchester) Chairman: John Wilson
A rich time of fellowship awaits all.

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Kentish Town, London: Saturday, 6th October, 1990. Meeting: 3.00 p.m. Tea at 4.45 p.m. Evening Meeting 6.30 p.m. Speaker: Philip Partington.

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Newtongrange Church: Due to a change of Secretary, all correspondence and other communications should be sent to:

Bro. J. H. Currie,
13 Pendreich Grove,
Bonnyrigg,
Midlothian. EH192EH.
A. P. Sharp.

GHANA REPORT

In the past month (July) £360 was collected for the work in Ghana. On the 7th of August £200 was sent to Ghana for the school fees of Lawrence (target achieved), £100 was sent for Medical Aid and £50 for the purchase of Bibles for distribution in the churches (printed in Ghana). 8kg. of clothes were also sent out.

Once again may I express on behalf of the Brethren in Ghana, thanks, for all the love and concern shown in this project in the gifts received to date.

Thank you I.M.B for gift of £10 for Lawrence received on 31/7/90 (receipt No. 129 not sent, still in the book, no address).

Graeme Pearson,
13 Fairways, Dunfermline,
Fife. KY12 0DU.
0383 728624.

GHANA APPEAL

In the past 14 months the Ghana Appeal has attracted many letters from Brethren in need in Ghana. As far as possible I have been firm in turning down such letters, as this Ghana Account, like any other fund, is limited to its resources. As we know from history, money is not the answer to many problems, in fact it often multiplies the problems.

The church in Ghana is aware of these problems and in an effort to curb the number of Brethren writing for assistance, have set up a small Benevolent Fund where Brethren who, for one reason or another, need financial help, can receive an interest free loan from the church.

This month I thought it would be a good idea to collect for this fund to avoid the church using the small amount of finance that they presently have.

This will reduce the number of letters written individually to me and avoid the need to write to Ghana to have the case in concern verified, as has happened in the past.

Brethren who receive the opportunity to start up a business will be able to put their case before the church and save a great deal of time, also receiving the understanding of the problem, which we are not capable of giving.

This fund is already up and running under the watchful eye of David Arku-Mensah.

Gifts for this appeal should be made out to:- Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal) and sent to:-
Graeme Pearson,
13 Fairways, Dunfermline,
Fife. KY12 0DU.
0383 728624.

APPEAL FROM NIGERIA

Dear Brethren,

The appeal for Bibles for Nigeria has raised over 300 pounds to date. Our first priority is to send Bibles to those who have requested them. The Church in America who distributed the tracts to Nigeria in the first place has offered to send further copies to those who need them in their outreach to Muslims.

One of the other requests is for Christian literature and books either for private study or for teaching. We wondered if anyone would like to send a monthly copy of the "Scripture Standard" to one of these brethren.

Two people have also asked if we can provide or if they can be put in touch with a correspondence course, one advanced.

If you can help with any of these requests we will be very grateful and will forward a name and address to you. The current price of a letter to Nigeria is 34p. so it need not be too expensive.

We will keep you advised of our progress.

Margery Purcell,
3 Dale Avenue,
Bramhall, Stockport,
Cheshire. SK7 2JP.

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