

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

Vol. 72 No. 3

MARCH, 2005

***"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith"***

## *Editorial* **Could Jesus have walked away?**

Over the years I have heard a number of statements made about Jesus that cause me tremendous concern, and which, within the current scope of my understanding, I have difficulty in accepting. Some refer to the circumstances surrounding the anguish of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and I have heard it variously said that **'Jesus could have walked away'** or **'it was touch and go'** or **'God took a risk'**. These statements could perhaps be summarized as indicating that Jesus could have exercised a choice

about whether to proceed with his 'mission'. More emotively it could be said that they indicate that the salvation of mankind was hanging by a thread.

A more commonly used expression is that **'Jesus was a man just like we are'**. I've little doubt that most readers will have heard that said on a number of occasions though it's a statement that I believe demands considerable caveats before it has any credibility whatsoever. I fully accept that when we consider the nature of Jesus we are entering areas that have been the subject of fierce debate since the dawn of Christianity and that in a relatively short article it is possible only to give a flavour of the issues involved. However there are also matters of fundamental importance at stake.

### ***Jesus was a man just like we are.***

Debates about the nature of Jesus are as old as Christianity itself. The Gnostic philosophy, prevalent in the early years of Christianity can briefly be summarized as believing that as all flesh is intrinsically evil and as Jesus is intrinsically good, Jesus could not have come in the flesh, as that would have rendered him evil. There's nothing wrong with the logic, and in some respects it could be argued that the philosophy, with the belief on which it was based (however erroneous), at least had the merit of seeking to preserve the purity of Jesus. There are many other shades of opinion.

However it is patently wrong, with all the evidence that exists, to argue that Jesus was not manifested in the flesh. He was born of woman, miraculously conceived but naturally born. He grew up, matured physically, had siblings and worked. He wept, was hungry, displayed

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emotions, grew tired, felt pain and bled. He suffered physical death. In that sense he was man, flesh and blood, as we are. However to make the above statement about Jesus and leave it there does scant justice to the true nature of Jesus and the casual hearer of that expression, without the benefit of scriptural knowledge would surely go away with the wrong impression. Because Jesus was not a man just like we are. Indeed at one point he said to the Jews, **"You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world."**

Most fundamentally, **Jesus was God in the flesh.** We are man in the flesh. Both are certainly flesh, but the essential nature is different. He is divine by nature; we are man by nature. Jesus is the begotten of God; we are children by adoption. Jesus did not stop being God the Son during his physical incarnation. Reference is often made to Paul's comments recorded in Phillipians 2:7 where, speaking of the incarnation, Paul writes **"he (Jesus) emptied himself"**. Whatever Jesus emptied himself of, it most certainly was not his Godhood. WE Vine states, *"Christ did not empty himself of Godhood. He did not cease to be what he essentially and eternally was."* During his ministry he claimed to be God and it was that claim which brought Jesus into such hostile conflict with the Jews. C S Lewis in his book 'Mere Christianity', writing about the impact of Jesus' claims on the Jews states, "Then comes the real shock. Among these Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says He has always existed. He says He is coming to judge the world at the end of time... God in their (the Jews) language, meant the Being outside the world, who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips."

We need to remember that man was made in the image of God. The incarnate God, Jesus, was the image of God, reflected the glory of God and bore "the very stamp of his nature". God wasn't made in the image of man; He came, as Christians almost universally agree, not to show us how good a man could be, but to reveal God to us in a way that we could understand and acknowledge. John 1:18 states "No one has ever seen God; the only Son (better translated according to some commentators as 'the only begotten God'), who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known." From his birth, Jesus was called 'Emmanuel, God with us'.

### ***Jesus could have walked away/God took a risk***

This is possibly an area of far greater contention than the matters discussed above and I freely admit that there is not one fibre of my being that believes that Jesus could have walked away. I equally find it incredible to believe that God took a risk with the salvation of mankind. There is no doubt that the description of the anguish of Jesus in the Garden and the supplication that he three times prayed to the Father hold some important questions and reference will be made to these in due course. However -appeal needs to be made to the consistency and integrity of the revealed Word in establishing the context of Jesus in the Garden.

After Adam and Eve had succumbed to the lies and deceit of Satan and eaten of the forbidden fruit and been banished from the Garden of Eden, God entered his judgement on their disobedience. But it is almost universally accepted that God immediately made the promise of a Redeemer, a Redeemer who would overcome Satan and offer the opportunity for the restoration of man's relationship with God. It would be a capricious God who at the very outset of that restorative process, made a promise that had any seeds of doubt attached to it. If God was indeed taking a risk, he was playing for extremely high stakes. Yet there are other areas of Scripture to which we can appeal.

### ***The Prophets***

Some 33? Prophecies have been identified that refer to the trial, death, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. This telling forth of these events is quite rightly considered to be compelling evidence of the truth of them and has supported the faith of many Christians

down the centuries. However if Jesus could have walked away then these prophecies surely become uncertain or conditional at the time that they were made. Had Jesus walked away then these prophecies would have become the utterances of fools and the whole plan of salvation would be a ruin. In any event the prophecies were not intended as statements to look back on to check their veracity, but as God-inspired revelations about the future course of God's plan of salvation. They shouted forth the truth of a Saviour for mankind and described in detail how that salvation was to be won.

(These charges are often set aside by the statement that whilst it was possible that Jesus could have walked away, God in his foreknowledge knew that he wouldn't, which has always seemed to be an unworthy attempt to rationalize events.)

### ***The People***

When Jesus was first taken to the temple in Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord, a righteous and devout man, **Simeon**, was moved by the Spirit to recognize him as the promised Saviour, and he took the infant Jesus in his arms. The promise of the Spirit had been that Simeon would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ, and that promise was now fulfilled. His response is still moving, **"Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel."** Perhaps the significance of Jesus' birth only gradually dawned on his parents as they 'marvelled' at what Simeon said. But his joy also carried the sting of future pain as he told Mary, **"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."**

The prophetess **Anna** was another to be present at, and a witness to, these events and she **"gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."**

**John the Baptist** also witnessed publicly to the nature of Jesus and foretold of his mission, **"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"** In fact John went further and told his own disciples, **"He who believes in the Son has eternal life."**

The Disciples too, even in their relative innocence and, at that time, relative ignorance of the nature and purposes of Jesus, affirmed the great truth about Jesus. Simon Peter said, **"Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God."**

The great problem that I have is that if I accept that Jesus could have walked away, then I have to conclude that, at the time these great affirmations were made and these eternal truths were spoken, they were no more than expressions of hope, because they have to be conditional upon Jesus not walking away. Many of these statements were made under the influence of the Spirit, a member of the Godhead of which Jesus was a part, and it would seem to me that both the unity of the Godhead and the unity of Scripture demands that we take these statements as expressing truth. But we can appeal to another authority –

### ***Jesus himself.***

Briefly let us reprise a sample of the sayings of Jesus, contained in the gospel of John:

- To the woman of Samaria, Jesus said, **"The water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling to eternal life."**
- To the Jews, **"Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life."** He went on to say **"... and the bread which I shall give for the life**

**of the world is my flesh.”**

- To the Pharisees in answer to the charge that he bore witness to himself: **“Even if I bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know whence I have come and whither I am going.”** And later, **“When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he....”**
- To Martha in that most moving scene at the house of Lazarus, **“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”**
- Jesus to his disciples: **“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name.”**
- During his farewell discourse to his disciples: **“I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”** And further, **“Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”**

In these and in many other statements, Jesus implies with absolute clarity and certainty that he has come to complete the work given to him by the Father. It is a ‘given’ in the statements of Jesus. If it is to be contended that Jesus could have walked away at Gethsemane, then we must also conclude that Jesus, God in the flesh, made these statements in the full knowledge that his claims could ultimately prove to be false.

For Jesus to have walked away would have been a denial of everything that he is. Many men and women have suffered deaths as painful, prolonged and brutal as that meted out to Jesus, though that is no way intended to minimize the physical horror of Jesus’ trial and torture. But surely it wasn’t the physical nature of his death that caused such agony. His anguish was caused not because Jesus’ manhood was prevalent, it was the very fact of his Godhood, and that Godhood was about to carry the burden of sin.

Dare we suggest then, when Jesus asked for the cup to pass and cried “nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt” that what he was really saying was that he didn’t want to go through with the salvation of mankind? That it was touch and go as to whether God (and I believe in the absolute unity of the Godhead) denied himself? And would it not also suggest that Jesus ultimately performed an act of duty and obligation rather than an act of overwhelming love? Throughout his time on earth, Jesus had told those around him that he had come not to do his own will but the will of the Father. But that is not to be construed as meaning that Jesus was doing something that he didn’t want to do. And here in the Garden too, I think we are on dangerous ground to consider that Jesus had reached the point where he was asking God to be released from the fulfillment of the eternal plan of salvation, a “plan for the fullness of time”.

This contention is speculative but I can’t conceive of God sitting with equanimity in heaven whilst Jesus suffered and I suspect that the Father and the Spirit cried back to Jesus as they unitedly confronted the unthinkable. Does it minimize Christ’s suffering to believe that he couldn’t walk away or mean that Jesus engaged in a purely mechanical process. Not a bit! For I can think of no greater sacrifice, no greater love, nothing that would cause more grief, anguish, agony and pain than the spotless Lamb of God willingly taking upon himself the burden of human sin.

(I have discussed the nature of Jesus often enough to know that this article will not satisfy each reader’s view of the matters discussed and the thoughts that I have put down here are admittedly deeply personal. Some will say that they fail to make enough concession to the humanity of Jesus, though I would refute that. I have already been asked whether there is a right of reply and of course that is the ongoing tradition of this magazine).

(Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell)

The word "fundamentalism" is a word with an interesting history, although it is not found in the Scriptures. I think it is worthy of an article in our *Word Study* pages.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* informs us that the word first came to light in 1923. It did so following a series of tracts or booklets (sixty-five in all), which dealt with the fundamentals of Christian doctrine. These appeared between 1909 and 1915. They were financed by two well-to-do brothers named Lyman and Milton Stewart and were entitled *The Fundamentals*. "They covered such fundamental themes as Biblical inspiration and authority (the first twenty booklets), the deity of Christ, His virgin birth and bodily resurrection, the Holy Spirit, sin, judgement and atonement, justification and regeneration, preaching, evangelism, the church, and the return of Christ. The authors were drawn from North America and Britain, and included B.B. Warfield, R.A. Torrey, A. T. Pierson, Dyson Hague, Robert E. Speer, James Orr, W.H.Griffith Thomas, Campbell Morgan and Bishops J.C. Ryle and Handley Moule." (John R. W. Stott) To these writers, the fundamentals of the faith were at stake in their day and they felt they had to act, and act together. They knew their publications would cause controversy, but they took courage that Christ Himself was a controversialist.

## DICTIONARY DEFINITION

The O.E.D. defines *fundamentalism* as "strict adherence to traditional orthodox tenets (e.g. the literal inerrancy of Scripture) held to be fundamental to the Christian faith: opposed to *liberalism* and *modernism*," The term originally had no overtones. But today it is often used as an ecclesiastical smear word. Now critics equate fundamentalists with extremists, fanatics, cranks, Biblical literalists, rightists, etc. They cannot stand them, or what they stand for. The tragedy is that so-called fundamentalists rarely enjoy the opportunity of a right of reply to unjustified and unreasonable attacks in the media. Many fundamentalists simply want to talk about loyalty to what is "fundamental" in Biblical Christianity. If only they could get the hearing they deserve.

## BOOKS ON THE FUNDAMENTALS

I have before me, as I write this article, four of the books in question. They are headed: *The Fundamentals – A Testimony – Compliments of Two Christian Laymen*. Each volume quotes Isaiah 8:20: "To the Law and to the Testimony". The subjects are wide and varied. They include: " *Is There a God?*"; " *The Atonement*"; " *The Hope of the Church*"; " *The Biblical Conception of Sin*"; " *The Grace of God*"; " *The Coming of Christ*"; " *Is Romanism Christianity?*"; " *The Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch*"; " *The Wisdom of this World*"; " *Divine Efficacy of Prayer*"; " *What Christ Teaches Concerning Future Retribution*"; " *Eddyism: Commonly called Christian Science*"; " *Evolutionism in the Pulpit*"; " *Decadence of Darwinism*"; " *The Knowledge of God*" and " *Mormonism: Its Origin, Characteristics and Doctrines*". The writers were from the United States, Canada, England and Scotland. The articles give a strong flavour as

to what the original fundamentalists were all about. They (of the Conservative Protestant Churches) saw themselves as defending God's word against liberalism, modernism, Roman Catholicism, cultism, evolutionism, communism, agnosticism, atheism, etc.

## THE HISTORY OF FUNDAMENTALISM

It is interesting to read about the history of fundamentalism and its effect upon denominations, especially in the United States. Fundamentalists did not get it all their own way in the Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterianism denominations. Serious controversies erupted, which inevitably caused splits. Some fundamentalists broke away to form new churches or joined one of the many independent Bible churches or tabernacles spread throughout the country. Fundamentalist churches are now described as Evangelical churches and their numbers are growing in the States. They sponsor many colleges, publish conservative periodicals and finance mission work throughout the world. Their voting power was clearly seen in the last presidential election. George W. Bush, a fellow Evangelical, was happy to receive their support.

The fundamentalists or Evangelicals cannot be ignored. They have been at the forefront in debates on abortion, homosexuality, public prayers and creation science in schools. They have access to the media that Evangelicals in other countries can only dream about. Many fundamentalists hold today not only to the doctrines of the inerrant inspiration of the Bible, the virgin birth, the atonement and the resurrection, but also to the miracle-working power of Christ and the pre-millennial view on the second coming.

The last two doctrines, together with baptism and instrumental music, are seen as stumbling-blocks to closer ties with, for example, Churches of Christ. Sadly, fundamentalism has not escaped division among its numbers. It has, undoubtedly, weakened its cause.

## FUNDAMENTALISM AND ISLAM

At one time "fundamentalism" was exclusive to Christianity. But now we hear of Islamic fundamentalism. This is equated with extremism, fanaticism and terror. How the meaning of words changes! I believe we are going to hear more and more about "fundamentalism" in the years to come, if the Lord tarries. An understanding of the origin of the term will help us in our future conversations and debates.

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*(Editor's note: Bro Ian has been conducting the Word Study feature for around two years now and it has been decided to suspend this feature for the time being. There are of course still many studies that can be conducted relating to New Testament words and we may return to them at some point in the future. On your behalf I would like to thank Ian for his invaluable insights and commentary. Ian will continue to contribute to the SS and, starting with next month's edition, will be submitting a series of articles on the '**Historical and cultural context of the New Testament.**' If we are to gain the best possible understanding of New testament teaching it is important that we know something of the context in which teaching was given and I hope the series will prove beneficial to reader's ongoing study.)*

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# WHEN CHURCH BUILDINGS CLOSE

Elsewhere in this issue you will find an announcement about the new meeting arrangements for the Church in Cleveleys, near Blackpool. There are now only 5 faithful Christians worshipping with the assembly there and, as the Bridge Club where they have met for the last several years is closing, they have decided that in future they will meet in the home of Sis Pat Layland rather than try to find other premises.

Eric and Rosaline Winter and Colin (until his death in 2000) and Pat Layland have been the cornerstones of the assembly there for the past several years. It is of course always disappointing when assemblies diminish and, sometimes, disappear altogether and I have heard it said that Eric regards himself to have 'failed' in his efforts to sustain a thriving assembly in the town. I think little could be further from the truth.

It is interesting to note that the reason the assembly is changing its arrangements is because the Bridge Club is closing 'due to a drastic fall in membership'. It's a sign of the times – people don't go to Bridge Clubs any more. For several years at our Church building in Wigan we had a Labour Club and a Social Club for neighbours. One is now a Wynsors Shoes Store and the other is a vacant plot of land with the Club demolished several years ago. I assume numbers fell there too.

Of course the Church can't be compared to Social Clubs and Bridge Clubs, but it does illustrate the point that patterns change. Populations evolve; some communities grow and others decline; we live in a dynamic, not a static world. Often these changes are totally outside the ability of individuals or groups to control them and they do affect Churches in many locations.

When I received Eric's note I turned to the history of the Fylde Coast Churches that he had written as a contribution to the Church history series. He writes that in the 1930's Blackpool was a holiday 'Mecca' for the Lancashire mill workers and that there would be as many as 300 visitors during the summer months to worship with the local brethren. That helps sustain a Church. For Blackpool read Spain and beyond today. In 1936 and 1950 the Blackpool assembly was strong enough to host the Annual 'Old Paths' Conference.

An assembly was started in Fleetwood and it also hosted the Conference. Eventually the Blackpool and Fleetwood assemblies merged to form the Cleveley's congregation.

What struck me when reading the history is that these were highly active and involved Christian communities. Full-time evangelists worked in the Churches; correspondence courses were distributed; Julie L Miller filmstrips were shown; regular meetings for Gospel proclamation were held. Eric recalls that in connection with gospel meetings at Fleetwood with Bro. Walter Crosthwaite 'much advertising was done' but sadly there was little response. Bro David Dougall worked with the Church for 3 months and again despite widespread advertising, 'there was little apparent response'. Bro. Ken Chumbley and his wife 'worked hard with the Church' but with little success. Bro. Philip Partington worked full-time there but the story was the same. Even when the congregation first moved into the Bridge Club accommodation and advertised regular gospel meetings, and despite good support from the Lancashire churches, 'very few local people came in response to invitations'.

There is only so much that a group can do to engender a response to the gospel, a truism that Jesus himself acknowledged. Are we to regard the efforts of the Cleveley's brethren (and other Churches in similar situations) as a failure because numbers are now small. In truth, many souls were won for the Lord. A Christian community has promoted Christian principles in the Fylde coast towns for almost a century, and continues to do so. Thousands of people have been given the invitation and opportunity to learn more of Jesus.

I write this neither to eulogise the efforts of the brethren, nor to write the obituary of the Cleveleys Church. I just think that we should acknowledge that sometimes, despite the best prayerful efforts of all concerned, even Christian communities can't withstand demographic and social changes and the disinterest and apathy of the public towards the gospel of redeeming love, despite prolonged and repeated invitations to hear it. I don't mean this to sound complacent, but the reality is that at any one time, and for a whole variety of reasons, some communities will be thriving whilst others decline.

To all those who are devoting their lives to God and maintaining a Christian witness in the communities in which they live, and particularly those in small congregations, we encourage you to, "Keep the faith." (Editor)





First, allow me to say that I am pleased to be able to tell you that, in response to the Editor's timely announcement in last month's issue, I now have enough questions in the 'Box' to keep me busy for several months. However, providing you are prepared to exercise a little patience, there is still room in the 'Box', if there are subjects you care to raise.

And let me add, that I appreciate the words of encouragement I have received from brothers and sisters who wish this feature to continue.

This month's question reminds us, firstly, that we should never assume that old controversies which we thought had been settled, cannot rise again. And secondly, that, as has so often been said, if we neglect constantly to reiterate and re-emphasise biblical doctrine, it takes only one generation for false teaching to creep in and the church to be led into error.

Here is the essence of the question, that has been send to me by a sister whose family-members have been faithful defenders and servants of the Truth for very many years.

"Is singing in our Lord's Day worship a divinely authorized practice or is it merely a 'tradition'?"



I do not think that it will be necessary for you to think about this question for more than a couple of minutes before you recognized that someone, somewhere, is trying to devise an argument to justify the introduction of instrumental music into the worship of the Church.

I hear, for instance, that there are certain institutions of Christian education in the United States from which graduates are emerging who are making this very claim, and experience has taught us that religious controversies originating in the U.S.A. very quickly find their way over here!

"*Singing in worship is only a tradition*", is the modern mantra, which, apparently some are repeating, and they continue to repeat it until they actually convince themselves that it is true. Then, by the use of this and similar statements, they seek to represent congregational singing as something that, at best, is relatively unimportant, and, at worst, non-essential. But, as is often the case with new arguments – (and, make no mistake, this *is* a new argument on this subject) – neither those who advance it nor those who are fooled by it, can have thought much about what they are claiming.

Now, I hope you will appreciate that this is not the place for an examination of the entire 'Instrumental Music' issue, and that I must limit myself to dealing with the question as it stands. But I have no hesitation in stating that I have no problem whatsoever in accepting that our singing *is* a 'tradition' – to use the word used at the end of the question. The issue is, however: - What is the meaning of the word '*tradition*'?

The definition in modern English.

I suspect that those who label congregational singing without the use of musical instruments as a 'tradition', would probably cite as their authority, one of the definitions given by a modern English Dictionary, which states that a tradition *is*: - "A



*particular doctrine, etc, claimed to be of divine authority without documentary evidence. An opinion or custom handed down to posterity”.*

But, remember! This is the *modern English* definition of the word and it reflects the way in which modern society views ‘tradition’. Indeed, it may well describe many of the practices and doctrines found in modern denominationalism - as those things that have grown and developed over the years, so that they have become accepted without question or argument, as ‘customary’ or ‘traditional’.

## The New Testament definition of ‘tradition’

However, as people who, in our faith, accept the authority of the Word of God, we do not go to the ‘English Dictionary’ for our authority or guidance. We are guided by Scripture, and it is clear to me that those who advance this modern argument have not made the effort to learn what the New Testament scriptures have to say about the ‘*traditions*’ of the early Christians.

The *English* word ‘*tradition*’ comes to us from the Latin ‘*tradere*’, and simply means ‘*to hand down*’, and signifies that which is handed down orally; that is, by word of mouth. But, we must understand that the word merely describes the method of transmission; that is, *how* a matter is ‘handed down’. ‘*Tradere*’ does not tell us what *authority* lies behind what is ‘handed down’, or how authoritative that which is handed down may be. In fact, ‘*what is handed down*’ may be true or false, important or trivial. It may be something that once was a *fact*, but which, in the course of time, has, for one reason or another, become so greatly changed that it is *no longer* a fact!

In contrast, with this, the word ‘*tradition*’, as found in the Greek New Testament, *does* involve authority. The word is ‘*paradosis*’, and, according to Thayer’s lexicon, it means ‘*that which is delivered; the substance of the teaching*’. Therefore, the critical question we must ask is, ‘*from whom, and by whom, was the teaching delivered to the Church? Does it come with an authority that is binding on the Church today?*’

I suggest, then, that you consider the following verses and then ask yourself these questions:

- **How authoritative were the ‘traditions’ of the early Church?**
- **And, whose authority stands behind them?**

2nd Thess. 2:15. ***“Stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter”.***

2nd Thess. 3:6. ***“I command you, brothers, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness, and not in accordance with the tradition that they received from us”.***

1st Cor. 11:2. ***“I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you”.***

“Just Paul’s opinion.”

Now, those who wish to introduce instrumental music into the church’s worship, try to destroy the force of these verses by questioning the authority of the Lord’s apostle who wrote them, even though this is something they cannot do without undermining, and effectively denying, the authority of the entire New Testament. I do not doubt that some are prepared to do just that. For them, the scriptures have no binding authority, because they do not regard them as having been written under the

inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and this opens the door to allow in any modern innovation that takes their fancy. (As you know, one of the very latest has been the 'ordination' of 'women priests', some of whom will almost certainly be appointed 'Bishops', in defiance of what the scriptures teach about qualifications.)

What matters, then, when 'traditions' are under consideration, is the answer to the question, '*By whose authority?*' There are 'traditions' that should be rejected because they are of human *origin*; the authority behind them is merely human *authority*. Jesus described them as '*the doctrines and commandments of men*' (Matt.15: 9). In Matt.15:3 we read that He accused the Pharisees of breaking the commandment of God for the sake of their '*own tradition*'. In a similar vein, in Mark 7:9, He declared that they, '*abandoned*' the commandment of God '*to keep your own tradition*'. And, in Col.2: 8, Paul also pours scorn on '*human traditions*'.

But, if we examine the three passages quoted earlier this is what we find:

1. Certain '*traditions*' were delivered to the early Church by those men whom the Lord Jesus Himself had appointed for the purpose of guiding it into the Truth.
2. The early Church *received the traditions* as coming from God, when they were taught by Paul's words and letters.
3. The early Christians were urged to stand fast and *hold to the traditions* as they had been delivered to them.
4. They were commanded to '*keep away*' from those who refused to live according to the '*tradition*' delivered to them by Paul.

I urge, therefore, that we should not feel uncomfortable – much less be afraid - when those who use the word 'tradition' do so without understanding its use in the scriptures. Just bear in mind that:

- *Baptism is a 'tradition'*. Matt. 28: 18-20. It was appointed, delivered by Christ to the apostles. *We keep this tradition, because it is a divine command.*
- *The Lord's Supper is a 'tradition'*. In 1st Cor. 11:2, Paul commends the Corinthians because they '*maintained the traditions*' just as he had handed them on to them. In verse 23, he tells us from whom he had obtained the 'traditions'. "*I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you*". *We keep this tradition, because it is a divine command.*
- *Singing in Worship is a 'tradition'*. It was certainly observed by the Lord Jesus when He celebrated the Passover for the last time, because the singing of Psalms 113-118 was part of the Passover ritual. And He also sang after instituting 'the Lord's Supper', as Matt. 26: 30 proves.

Col: 3:16, also reveals that the singing of praise to God, is a 'tradition' commanded by the Holy Spirit. *And we keep this tradition also, because it is a divine command.*

**Now let those who wish to introduce musical instruments into the Church's worship, produce the New Testament authority to show that this practice also, is an early Church '*tradition*'.**

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# Foundations of the Faith

*A series of studies into the foundational truths  
of the Christian Faith*

## THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (Ernest Makin, Wigan)

The resurrection of the Christ both secures and illustrates the resurrection of His disciples. There will be a simultaneous resurrection of the just and the unjust, **"A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."** John 5; 28,29.

I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. The resurrection of the Christ in the theology of the New Testament is represented as a guarantee of the resurrection of all the righteous/just and of the unjust. **"But the Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a Man. For as in Adam all die, so in the Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: the Christ the first fruits; then, when He comes, those who belong to Him."** 1 Cor. 15: 20-23.

### Just and Unjust to be resurrected

The foundational doctrine of the resurrection of the 'just and the unjust' is asserted in the Old Testament. (see Isa. 26; 19 and Dan. 12;2) It is clear that when Jesus was engaged in His Judean ministry that it was only the Sadducees who denied this foundational doctrine. **"The Sadducees say there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit."** Acts 23: 8. They assumed that at death the whole body, soul and spirit perishes. Those who deny this doctrine of resurrection were assailed by Jesus: **"You do err NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES, NOR THE POWER OF GOD."** (See Matt. 22; 31/32; and also Mark 12; 26/27). It seems obvious to me that a God with the wisdom, love and power to create the universe, to effect the resurrection of the Christ and to consummate His redemptive power and plan in the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of His "only **begotten Son**" will, **with ease, be able to clothe our surviving souls with a new and glorified body. "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."** (1 Cor 15:42,43)

This foundational truth contains the revelation that believers are federally united, because of their faith, with the Christ – **"He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together WITH HIM."** This union and the fact that Jesus is 'the resurrection and the life', is revealed in scripture as a source of immense encouragement to all who believe. That splendid passage recorded in 1 Thess. 4: 13-18 speaks of the coming of the Lord. The passage lays great stress firstly on the fact that those who 'are asleep in Jesus' will experience glory 'with Him', the 'Lord will come down from heaven' and those asleep in the Christ will rise first; and, secondly, that believing surviving disciples will be 'caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet our Lord and Saviour in the air', – a blessed revelation to encourage us in this life.

### Sanctification ~ a present, spiritual resurrection

In Col 3:3 where Paul writes of a behavioural pattern for holy and righteous living, he writes:

**“For you died and your life is now hidden with the Christ in God. When the Christ, who is your life, appears then you will also appear with Him in glory.”** There is an irrefutable indication here that for the Christian there is a present resurrection and a future of resurrected glory. In the sixth chapter of the letter to the Roman Christians it is clearly stated that believers ‘DIED TO SIN’ too. There then follows a beautiful description of the believer’s identification through immersion in water with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. This is a spiritual death to the previous life of sin and a resurrected life of sanctification that is ongoing and rising from one degree of glory to the next until we shed this ‘mortal coil’ or until Jesus appears again. Please read Romans 6; 1-14.

God’s wonderful redemptive policy has provided all that is necessary for the sanctified and resurrected life. Ephesians 4: 11–13 indicates a sequential development in the early church which provides for what one may describe as the spiritual resurrection or the sanctified life - the provision of specific functionaries, with qualifications:

- FOR THE PURPOSE OF PERFECTING (making mature) THE SAINTS;
- WITH THE VIEW OF DOING THE WORK OF MINISTRY, and
- EDIFYING THE CHURCH.

Please read Ephesians 4; 11/12. Such specific provision for His people illustrates well the general principle that from ‘the commencement of the ages’, there has been in existence a redemptive process which biblical theology reveals runs through into eternity and that our current spiritually resurrected and sanctified life will be extended into a glorified eternal existence.

## A Divine Pledge

Speculation prompts the thought that an all-wise, all-loving and all-powerful God, who permits His ‘children’ to address Him as ‘Abba,’ would reveal as much information about the future glorified and resurrected state as is encouraging to His family, and that is just the case. The scriptures seem to teach that for the believer there is a smooth elision from the sanctified spiritual resurrection of this present life to the eternal ‘incorruptible inheritance’, which is undefiled, fades not away and is reserved in heaven. It is as if the sanctified believer is in this life preparing for a greater immeasurable glory.

- Read Phil. 3:1-11 and look forward to ‘the high calling of God’; see also 2 Cor. 5; 1-8;
- Read Col 3: 1-4 and look forward with unconcealed joyous anticipation to the glory that awaits you;
- Read 1 Cor. 15:42-58 and worship a loving God and Father who, before the commencement of the ages, foreordained that the resurrected bodies of His people would be incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual, immortal and like the body of the glorified Christ.

The resurrection of the Christ is a pledge that those who believe He is both ‘Lord and Saviour’, united with Him in faith, will be raised eternally just as, united with His death, burial and resurrection in immersion (see Romans 6:1-12) they have been raised to a sanctified life. When Jesus told Martha that he is ‘the resurrection and the life’ He was saying that it is impossible for death to claim Him and that He gives resurrection and triumph over them. **“God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus the Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.”** 1 Thess 5:9,10. Those who ‘sleep in Jesus’ will experience glory with Him and because He lives they too will live. Read 1 Thess 4: 13-17.

Within the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead there is a dreadful warning. **“The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF DAMNATION.”** John 5:28,29. The latter will experience shame and everlasting contempt. (see Daniel 12:2) The warning to the ‘unjust’ is clearly stated in Romans 2:6-16 and 2 Thess. 1:6-10. A final word then of encouragement to

all believers and a plea to the 'unjust':

**"IF YOU THEN BE RISEN WITH THE CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE THE CHRIST SITS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS ABOVE, AND ON THINGS ON THE EARTH, FOR YOU ARE DEAD, AND YOUR LIFE IS HID WITH THE CHRIST IN GOD, WHEN THE CHRIST, WHO IS OUR LIFE, SHALL APPEAR, THEN SHALL YOU ALSO APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY."**

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# WONDERFUL WOMANHOOD

## Women of the Bible 2

Last time we looked at the story of Eve, and at certain themes that emerged from the study. This time we will take a look at the next woman "in line" so to speak – Noah's wife. Obviously there were other women after Eve. The Bible speaks of Cain's wife (**Gen 14:17**), but not much is said about her; Cain "disappears" from the scene, so we are not told much about his life.

Noah's wife, on the other hand, is quite interesting in that we have to "read between the lines". Her "story" appears in **Genesis 6 and 7**. We are not told her name, but the fact that she is the wife of a good man (**Genesis 6:9**) shows us that she must have had good qualities of her own. "Not so fast", some might say, "that isn't always true." Quite right, but the fact that she accompanies Noah on the Ark with their sons and their wives shows what God thought of her. He wanted to destroy all the wicked people (**Genesis 6:11 – 13**), but would save Noah and his family (**Genesis 6:18**). For the rest, we have to piece together for ourselves. Any woman who has looked after someone else, be it family or not, knows what a lot of planning goes into the care and well-being of other people. It is hard to imagine what life was like on the Ark – 40 days of uncertainty in the flood, and most certainly a lot of stress and hard work to keep everyone fed and happy (especially the animals). In the end, they had spent a total of 1 year and 10 days in the Ark (**Genesis 8:18**), before they started a "normal" life again. As I said, not much to read about; but certainly lots to ponder on.

The next woman we read about is Sarai (later Sarah), Abraham's wife. As there is so much to study about Sarah, I will do this in the next issue of SS, and we can move on to Lot's wife.

We know the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and how God destroyed them, but spared Lot and his family. Again, not much is told about his wife, but, as in the case of Noah's wife, we can learn a lesson from the story. I said in the first of this series that a very strong theme would be Obedience. As always, with a positive comes a negative, and this is the case with Lot's wife. They were told to leave Sodom and not look back (**Genesis 19:17**) It was an express order, with a consequence for disobedience ☐ **lest you be consumed**. We know that Lot's wife did look back, and was turned into a pillar of salt for her disobedience.

How often do we wonder what we would have done in certain situations, e.g. if we could have been with Jesus, or other people in the Bible? Would we have resisted temptation? I don't know, and perhaps it wouldn't be wise to put it to the test. For whatever reason, Lot's wife looked back, and paid the price for her disobedience, as did Adam and Eve in the very Beginning. Again, lots to think about ☐ are we obeying or disobeying; can our names be connected with that of a good man, family or life?

Remember: **1 Corinthians 10:13**

**"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (New International Version)**

# TSUNAMI AFTERMATH IN ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA.

Kind help from brothers and sisters enabled me to travel to Andhra Pradesh and accompany Brother Tony Tyson from Skelmersdale. I was able to stay on after he returned for the whole of February during which time I stayed with the family of Brother Paul Nehru in Pithapuram. From there, with the help of brethren, I was able to visit several coastal fishing villages. Brethren from churches in the vicinity of Pithapuram were already doing excellent work in providing much food and clothing. The concern now is their ongoing needs.

Why did we visit Andhra Pradesh when the worst of the disaster was in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka? Understandably most of the relief efforts are concentrated in the worst affected areas to the south of Chennia (Madras). So needs of victims further north could have been overlooked. So the main purpose of this visit was to see first hand what kind of help is needed by Tsunami victims in Andhra Pradesh to enable them to get back to normal living.

We visited fishing villages near Machilipatnam in Krishna District, Maipadu in Nellore District and the coast to the north of Kakinada in East Godovari. North of Kakinada life appears to be back to normal. From the Godavari Estuary southwards, though thankfully there have been few deaths, there is very little fishing taking place and the people are dependant on food parcels. Many had their boats, nets and engines, and their dwellings destroyed or damaged, some beyond repair. Many are living in makeshift dwellings, however the major need is to enable them to get back to fishing. So the brethren there are quantifying needs in selected areas where their resources can be most effective. They are also obtaining details of grants available from the Indian government and looking into how the work can be administered and monitored. This work is being supervised by local congregations. They are considering fishing villages that have 30 or more families.

Below is a preliminary estimate of costs for fishing equipment and what we have learned verbally about the Government grants towards fishing equipment, housing and infrastructure. Enquiries are in progress with the Fisheries Development Officer of the Government of India Fisheries Department. The concern is to learn the exact nature of these grants and how they can be obtained. You will note that an approximate amount of 20% is to be found by the victims. Most of the victims have no money. This is where we can help.

We strongly recommend that money sent to India is directed to bona fide Church funds rather than sent to individuals. If you wish to send money to us for this purpose please make the cheque payable to "Church of Christ (Stretford)" and include a covering letter earmarking it for Post-Tsunami Relief Work. The hospitality and assistance so kindly extended to me by brother Paul Nehru, his family and nephews Joel and Vijaya is deeply appreciated. If you would like a free Video CD of areas visited, please write to me with your full postal address.

Yours in the Lord, Allan Ashurst, Stretford.

LIST OF ESTIMATED COSTS: February 2005. Current rate of exchange is 80 R's:£1.

	Rupees	£
Engines	45,000	563
<b><u>Boats (may be shared by 2 or 3 families in shifts)</u></b>		
New – wood	60,000	750
Repairs – wood	20,000 (est)	250
New – fibre	80,000	1000
<b><u>Nets</u></b>		
Small	15,000	186
Medium (from)	23,000	288
Medium (to)	30,000	375
Large (for fishing from shore)	80,000	1000

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE: for boats, engines, nets and housing - 40% grant  
20% free subsidy  
above are conditional on taking out a 20% loan

Outstanding balance of 20% to be found by Tsunami victims.

**NB all the above information was provided verbally and is subject to confirmation with tradesman and Government authorities.**

## News and Information

### *Ghana Appeal*

We thank brethren for their support over previous years and appeal that this work, which has been so helpful to the Lord's Church, will continue. Much has been achieved through your donations and many brethren are alive and well today who would not have survived without the medical treatment you helped provide.

The need for medical aid continues as always, with ailments we in our more temperate climate do not experience. Present cases include one of the Church's most prominent leaders with typhoid.

Although our Ghanaian brethren experience trials and tribulations which we do not, they are an excellent example to us. They continue strongly in the faith, holding fast to the Scriptures and sharing that faith with as many as they can. The result can be seen in the continued extension of there of the Lord's kingdom.

We include in this months appeal a personal message from Bro. William Oko Weldon for Bro. James Abbey, formerly of Tarkwa, to contact him as he wishes to receive further Bible study and teaching from Bro Abbey.

Our brethren's zeal for evangelizing continues and the Church in Ghana continues to grow. You have helped brethren to travel to further the gospel and this has resulted in many new churches being established. These infant Churches need Bibles, hymnbooks and study literature. One such Church has rapidly grown to 25 members.

Those wishing to help please make cheques payable to: **Dennyloanhead Church of Christ Ghana Fund** and send to the treasurer:

**Mrs Janet McDonald,  
12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk,  
Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB.  
Tel: 01324 562480**

(The above is an amalgam of the last two reports as lack of space meant that last month's report was omitted).

## Obituary Bro Bill Stanton

### Longshoot, Wigan

The assembly here has been saddened by the tragic death of our dearly loved brother, Bill Stanton, at the age of 90. Despite his advanced age, Bill had remained remarkably fit and active but, unfortunately, on the evening of 28th December 2004, he was knocked down by a car as he was crossing the road on one of his regular trips to Asda. His right leg was shattered and his left leg also had a double fracture. He also received a head injury. He was taken to hospital and despite his serious injuries, he showed some signs of recovering for a while, but his condition later began to deteriorate, and, on Saturday 19th February, he went to be with his Lord and Saviour.

A Christian for almost 70 years, Bill was for a long time a stalwart of the Albert Street assembly. During World War 2 he was one of a number of brethren who registered a conscientious objection to war, being imprisoned and sent to work on the land. He served the Church as a Deacon, Sunday School Superintendent and teacher, and with his late wife Nellie, gave accommodation to many visiting preachers and their families (this in the days when 'missions' could last for several weeks). Their home was always open to all.

Shortly after the War, Bill made a number of visits to Churches in Europe in the company of brothers such as Len Channing, Leonard Morgan and Albert Winstanley, reaching Italy, Germany, Holland and Belgium.

In his working life Bill was a shopkeeper and baker of the finest crumpets, potato cakes etc you could buy. He was a keen sports fan, but his abiding passion and priority was always the Church and our



abiding memory of him will be of him leaning forward with his hand cupped behind his ear to catch every word of an address or discussion. He was an avid reader and listener rather than a speaker in public, but all who knew him recognized his devotion to the Lord.

Please pray for his two sons, David and John, and their families. Since Nellie's death 2 years ago, David and Lynne and family have been a tower strength and support to Bill right up to his death. It is a comfort to know that Bill has now achieved his life's ambition; to be with his Lord.

**Andrew Marsden.**

## **Peterhead Annual Social**

Saturday 1st and  
Sunday 2nd October 2005.

### **Saturday**

3.00pm start followed by refreshments  
6.00pm Evening Service

### **Sunday**

10.00 am Bible Class  
11.00 am Breaking of Bread  
6.00 pm Gospel meeting

*Speakers:* Frank Worgan (Corby)  
and Mitch Vick (Stirling)

*A warm welcome awaits all.*

## **Coming Events**

**Peterhead, Scotland.  
Special Weekend Meetings  
on 2nd & 3rd April 2005.**

**Saturday 2nd April at 7.00pm**  
*Speaker:* David Murray (Aberdeen)

### **Sunday 3rd April**

10.00 am Bible Study  
11.00 am Breaking of Bread  
6.00 pm Gospel meeting

*Speaker:* David Murray  
*A warm welcome awaits all.*

## **Stretford, Manchester**

The Church meeting in Stretford invites you to 3 special Saturday Meetings in the Green Hut, 538 Kings Road, Stretford, Manchester.

Each meeting at 7.00pm.

The talks will be followed by light refreshments and discussion.

### **September 17th –**

*Speaker:* Robert Marsden, Wigan

### **October 22nd –**

*Speaker:* John Morgan, Hindley.

### **November 19th –**

*Speaker:* Mark Hill, Loughborough.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER COPY – POST PAID FOR ONE YEAR

UNITED KINGDOM. . . . . £10.00

OVERSEAS BY SURFACE MAIL. . . . . £10.00 (\$16.00US or \$20.00Can)

OVERSEAS BY AIR MAIL. . . . . £14.00 (\$22.00US or \$28.00Can)

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