

No Trick Questions!

WHEN PEOPLE STRUGGLE to find an answer to the questions on Chris Tarrant's television programme, 'Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?', he often says, 'If you think you know the answer, then that will be the right one - for there are **no trick questions** in this programme!' That brings reassurance to many contestants.

I believe the Bible is like that. There are no trick questions - and there are 'No trick answers' in the Bible! God is not trying to catch us out by making His Word more complicated than it appears on the surface. There are no hidden, deeper meanings in the plain words of Scripture than the common meaning of the words used. There is no special interpretation of the words or a special applied theology to understand its meaning.

Once we start applying our 'own theology' to Scripture terms and phrases, we are guilty of destroying the whole purpose of Scripture - which is to make it easy for us to find the way of salvation and the way of life.

God's Word is the most precious gift He has given us (apart from His dear Son). And God gave it to us to **help** us, rather than to confuse us. *"All Scripture is given*

(as a gift) by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" [2 Tim 3:16].

God gave us His Word out of His love for us and out of a genuine desire to help us find salvation and the way of life. It was not meant to be difficult for us to understand.

The Bible asks and answers life's most important questions. When the question is asked *"What must I do to be saved?"*, it gives the answer *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"* [Acts 16:31]. That is the correct answer. God is conveying to us that simple faith in Jesus Christ is the one criterion for salvation. That is it. No more, no less. We can be assured there are no hidden, alternative meanings which underlie this answer.

When the Ethiopian eunuch wanted to be baptised, the one qualification he was asked was *"If you believe with all your heart, you may'."* He answered and said *"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God'...and he was baptised."* [Acts 8:37]. That was it. No more questions were asked.

It is amazing how down

through the years the Church has 'added' so many additional qualifications to such questions. For example, regarding baptism and Church membership some Churches require much more than a simple faith - there are additional beliefs and convictions that must be believed and adhered to.

Such demands seems to go beyond the Scriptures and although made in the name of faithfulness, is really unfaithfulness. It rather reminds us of the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day, who travelled sea and land to make one convert. (A convert to their own particular 'shibboleths'). The Church can be guilty of shutting up the kingdom of God against men and of forbidding those who are entering in, to get in, by their insistence on certain criteria for membership additional to the Biblical requirements [see Mat 23:13].

We can also learn from Christ's rebuke in [Mat 18:3]. Unless we become as little children we will, not enter the kingdom. We need to remember that adults have to become more like children in understanding, than children have to become more like adults. Faith, it seems from Scripture is not a complicated thing. *"Unless you (disciples of Jesus!) are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven"* [Mat 18:3].

In giving us the Scriptures, God has made some of the most important things about salvation and the Church, more easy for us to

understanding and decide - not more difficult. That was always His intention in giving us the Scriptures. There are no trick questions and no trick answers.

Once we start adding our own theological preferences as conditions, we are adding to the Word of God - which, according to the Apostle John is as heretical as deducting from the Word of God. *"If anyone shall add to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book"* [Rev 22:18]. This was always a principle with the covenant people of God. In the Old Testament Moses was instructed not to add to God's law [see Deu 4:2 and 12:32].

The Bible is our guide for life - life here on earth. It was not meant to be only a philosophical study to entertain the minds of theologians down through the ages, but rather to be a real help to the anxious soul who seeks to find the purpose of his life.

Yes, the Bible has deep truths that only eternity can unfold. But the simple truths are not to be made difficult or complicated. Solomon put it well *"of making many books (on this subject of studying the meaning of life) there is no end and much study (of this subject) is wearisome to the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man"* [Ecc 12:12].

The gospel is clear *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"* [Acts 16:31].

DON'T FORGET FORNACI!

Revd John Tallach, Cromarty

MY WIFE AND I returned at the end of June from a brief visit to the small group in Fornaci di Barga, Tuscany, Italy, to whom we have been going now for 32 years. Some of the readers of the APC News have prayed for this group in the past, and I thought that this report would encourage them to continue to do so.

During the visit I had other services: but the main point in this visit was, to take a kind of mini service in connection with the wedding of the younger daughter of Emelia Campani (in whose home the meetings in Fornaci are held).

Nicoletta, who is now 22, has been friendly with Bledi for some time. Bledi is from Albania. He and a number of his family are part of a significant Albanian presence in Italy.

Nicoletta and Bledi were married in a civil ceremony, by the mayor of Barga, two or three miles from Fornaci. After the civil ceremony, about 60 guests went off to the hotel for a sumptuous meal, held in a beautiful setting.

However, before the meal, Nicoletta's sister Simonetta got up to make an announcement. She said that, as the guests were aware, the family of the bride did not belong to the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, they were evangelical

believers. Because of this, they had asked a minister over to speak at the wedding.

I began by reading a brief statement on marriage and the gospel, then asked the brother of the bride, Dario, to read the passage from John chapter 2 which tells about the marriage at Cana in Galilee. After that I made some points based on the passage, and finished with a prayer.

Whatever effect this may or may not have had, I think it is significant that the family wanted someone there to present the gospel, in however basic a way, on this occasion when friends and relatives of the family were present. The fact is that the group which meets in Fornaci are often misunderstood, sometimes regarded as belonging to a cult like the Jehovah's Witnesses. They wanted to take this opportunity to make clear their commitment to the gospel.

Isobel and I felt it particularly moving, the day after the wedding, to hear Simonetta go over what she wished she had said to these people who had come to the wedding, as she was introducing me. She said that she would have liked to say to these people something along these lines:

The most important point is not whether we belong to this or that

church. Every church has its defects, its weaknesses. The most important thing is that God is building his church. He knows who belongs to his church, knowing the heart of each one. There never was any perfect church. In the Old Testament, the church was sometimes far away from God. But even then, when Balak hired Balaam to curse the church, Balaam had to say that God saw no sin in his people [Numbers 23:21].

Simonetta expressed this with deep feeling, showing in a natural way her detailed knowledge of Scripture and her grasp of the

gospel. It made us feel that she could be used for communicating the gospel to others, even though she feels that she is a very ineffective witness.

Please continue to pray for this group, in their difficulties and opportunities. Pray about the bridge which has now been created between the group and some of the Albanians living in Italy.

And pray for the different people who minister to this group from time to time. The Rev Angus Morrison, Stornoway, hopes to visit Fornaci in October or November of this year.

You Have Been Warned!

ON MAY 17, 1987, A US NAVY FRIGATE in the Persian Gulf was hit by missiles fired from an Iraqi aircraft, killing thirty-seven seamen. The ship was equipped with two types of warnings against such attacks: an audible alarm and a visual radar warning. An investigation revealed that the audible alarm was turned off, and that the operator had been momentarily distracted causing him to miss the visual warning on the radar screen.

Warnings only serve their purpose when they are heard or seen. If we fail to have "ears to hear," or are so distracted that we don't see approaching danger, we could easily find ourselves under deadly attack by the enemy. The Christian's first line of defense is the Holy Spirit. He can send warnings to us through the Word of God, through a friend or counselor, or through a circumstance. But the prerequisites for our taking advantage of His warnings against danger are that we have eyes to see and ears to hear what He is doing to protect us. A good prayer every morning is, "Holy Spirit, lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil. I am looking and listening for Your protection."

A warning not received is the same as a warning never given.

(Turning Point Daily Devotional, 7-19-04)

“Do Not be Conformed to This World”

The Indigenous and Pilgrim Principle of Christian Living

By Dr John Piper

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” [Romans 12:1-2]

Oh, how many questions this verse — Romans 12:2 — raises that need thoughtful, biblical answers. For example, How does the command not to be conformed to this world relate to Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 9:22, *“I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some”*? How is becoming all things to all people not conforming to the world?

Or how does the command not to conform to the world, that is, to be counter-cultural, relate to Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 10:32-33? *“Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.”*

How does not being conformed to the world fit with not giving offense to the world? You can’t always do both. How does not being conformed to the world fit with pleasing everyone for the sake of salvation? You can’t always please people if you refuse to conform to some of their thoughts and ways.

So the questions are many, and we will tackle some of them. My aim today is to give you a way to think about these questions. To give you some categories that I pray will be part of the renewing of your mind so that you can prove and embrace the will of God.

The reason there are questions like these is not because Paul slipped up and got confused about what it means to follow Christ in a fallen world. Paul was not confused.

He was holding two Christian impulses — two principles — in balance. When Christ came into the world, and lived and died and rose from the dead, and set the redeeming kingdom of God in motion, and unleashed the mighty gospel on the world — two powerful impulses, or forces, spread everywhere the gospel spread.

The Indigenous Principle and the Pilgrim Principle

These two impulses are always in tension with each other. At times they push in opposite directions, and the great challenge is to find the biblical balance. Andrew Walls, in his book, 'The Missionary Movement In Christian History', calls these two impulses the Indigenous Principle and the Pilgrim Principle (Mary Knoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001, pp. 7-9). In other words, the gospel can and must become indigenous in every (fallen!) culture in the world. It can and must find a home in the culture. It must fit in. That's the indigenous impulse.

But at the same time, and just as powerful, the gospel produces a pilgrim mindset. It loosens people from their culture. It criticizes and corrects culture. It turns people into pilgrims and aliens and exiles in their own culture. When Paul says, *"Do not conformed to this world,"* and *"I became all things to all people,"* he is not confused; he is calling for a critical balance of two crucial biblical impulses.

In, But Not Of

There are many ways to describe this tension. We say, Christians are in the world but not of the world. Jesus prays, *"I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world"* [John 17:15-16]. They are in the world — that's the indigenous principle. They are not of the world — that's the pilgrim

principle.

Separation and Participation

Or we say Christians should be separate from the world and yet participate in the world. 2 Corinthians 6:17, *"Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing."* That's the pilgrim principle. But in another place Paul limits the meaning of separation and says, *"I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people — not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world . . . since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality . . ."* [1 Corinthians 5:9]. That's the indigenous principle. Don't go out of the world. One impulse is separation, and one impulse is participation. Both are crucial.

Adaptation and Confrontation

Or we can speak of the impulse of adaptation and the impulse of confrontation. For example, on the one hand, Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, *"Aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands . . . so that you may live properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one."* In other words, adapt and don't make waves; do what's fitting and seemly — live properly (euschemonos). So Paul prays in 1 Timothy 2:2 *"that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly*

and dignified in every way." Quiet, peaceful. That's adaptation.

But on the other hand, Paul has a very different word to say in Ephesians 5:6-11, namely, confrontation. *"The wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them. . . . Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."* Expose them! This is not going to go down well. Which is why Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12, *"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."* That happens when you are *"not conformed"* to the world.

Adaptation and confrontation; participation and separation; in the world but not of the world; do not be conformed to this world, yet become all things to all people that you might save some; be indigenous yet be a pilgrim.

I think what will help us navigate our way through these waters between excessive adaptation and excessive confrontation — overemphasis on the indigenous or the pilgrim principle — will be to understand the biblical roots of this tension. I see at least four: the uniquely Christian views of 1) Creation, 2) Christ, 3) Conversion, and 4) Kingdom. Let's take those one at a time and see how they are the root of the indigenous/pilgrim tension in Christianity.

1. The Indigenous/Pilgrim Tension Is Rooted in the Christian View of Creation

For example, when Paul is dealing with how a Christian adapts to a culture where meat sold in the market may have been sacrificed to idols, he says this in 1 Corinthians 10:25-26, *"Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. For 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.'"* In other words, creation belongs to God and to his children for their use. Physical things like meat and drink cannot be religiously co-opted or morally contaminated by non-Christians. God's ownership of all creation, including meat offered to idols, supports the indigenous impulse. You belong here. It's all God's; eat what you wish.

But that's not the only truth about creation — that God owns it. There are other truths. One is Romans 8:20-22, *"The creation was subjected to futility. . . . The whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now."* In other words, creation is fallen. It's God's. It's for our use. But it has gone wrong. So another truth about creation is that it needs redemption and the present form of it is passing away. 1 Corinthians 7:31, *"The present form of this world is passing away."*

When Paul applies this to food, he quotes the overly indigenous in Corinth who say, *"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"* [1 Corinthians 6:13]. True enough. But not the whole truth. So Paul adds, *"And God will destroy both one and the other."*

In other words, food and stomach are not absolutes. Creation is fallen. Its present form will pass away. It must be redeemed. Therefore, we are pilgrims.

God made it: we are at home (indigenous principle). It is fallen, and someday God will redeem it (pilgrim principle). So we are both at home and not at home. We must always use the world as though it belonged to our Father; but also with a view to God's purposes in redemption, not just creation.

2. The Indigenous/Pilgrim Tension Is Rooted in the Christian View of Christ

Very simply Christ became a human being. That's the indigenous principle. He was one of us. Oh, how like us He was! *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us"* [John 1:14]. He shared our same nature [Hebrews 2:14]. He was tempted the way we are [Hebrews 4:15].

But he came to his own, and his own did not receive him [John 1:11]. We killed him. He knew we would, and he came anyway. And so He unleashed the pilgrim principle. He was at home, He became like us. But Oh, how different He was. And the difference got him killed. This is the way Christianity has spread incarnationally for 2,000 years. Missionaries are human, they learn the language, they learn the culture. They fit in. Indigenous. And then they suffer, and sometimes get killed. They follow their Lord. They are pilgrims. Indigenous and pilgrims. Incarnation and

crucifixion. Become all things; do not be conformed.

3. The Indigenous/Pilgrim Tension Is Rooted in the Christian View of Conversion

Romans 3:28, *"We hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law."* God counts you righteous in Christ the moment you put your faith in Christ alone as your Savior from sin and the Lord of your life and your supreme Treasure. In the twinkling of an eye you are counted righteous in God's eyes by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. Justification unleashed the indigenous principle. You are counted indigenous to heaven before you are morally fit for heaven. Christ is your fitness by faith alone.

But now that you are accepted in the beloved — justified by faith alone — the Holy Spirit goes to work on you, and you start to become in practice what you are in Christ. And thus the pilgrim principle is unleashed: You must change. You cannot be at home in your present condition. *"If then you have been raised with Christ [if you have become indigenous to heaven!] . . . Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth [become a pilgrim!]"* [Colossians 3:1-2].

Justification and sanctification — in that order — are the root of the indigenous/pilgrim tension. We are righteous in Christ — indigenous, at home. Now we must become what we are — the

pilgrim must make progress.

4. The Indigenous/Pilgrim Tension Is Rooted in the Christian View of the Kingdom

The glorious kingdom of God has already come in Jesus Christ. The age to come has arrived. So Jesus says in Luke 11:20, *"If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."* And he says in Luke 17:21: *"The kingdom of God is in the midst of you."* Therefore, subjects of the kingdom — the children of God — are at home here and now in the kingdom of their Father. And the indigenous impulse is unleashed.

But on the other hand, the kingdom of God is not yet fully here. Promise has arrived, but consummation remains future. At the Last Supper Jesus says, *"I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes"* [Luke 22:18]. It's not here yet. And therefore there is a strong pilgrim impulse. We are waiting. Yearning. Longing. Aliens. Exiles. Sojourners. We are at home, yet Oh, so not at home!

Conclusion

In conclusion then, when Paul says in Romans 12:2, *"Do not be conformed to this world,"* he is pushing on one side of this balance. My aim has simply been to give the bigger picture of his thought, and keep us in balance. Yes, confrontation of the world! But also missionary adaptation. Yes, separation! But also

cultural participation. No, not of the world! But yes, in the world. No, not conformed to this world! But yes, becoming all things to all people that we might save some. Yes, we are indigenous! But we are also strangers, pilgrims! Because

Creation is the Lord's, yet fallen and in need of redemption. Christ is incarnate, yet crucified. Conversion is justification by faith alone, yet followed by the disciple of sanctification. The kingdom has already come, but not its consummation. How shall we know the balance? The answer is coming: *"be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."* My prayer is that this message is part of that mind-renewal that will help you prove what is the will of God.

What I aim to do when I come back from vacation is illustrate, by linking chapters 1 and 12, how this works in relation to homosexuality and the cultural issue of the marriage amendment to the constitution. Until then, in every issue and every action, ask the Lord for wisdom, immerse your mind in the Scriptures, and look steadfastly at Jesus Christ, and you will be transformed in to his image.

*By John Piper. June 27, 2004
©Desiring God. Website:
www.desiringGOD.org. Email:
mail@desiringGOD.org.
Toll Free: 888-346-4700.*

Showers of Blessings

By Maureen Ross

THE FEARN AND TAIN congregation held their family dinner on Saturday 10th July. Before I even drew the curtains back I could hear the rain and once I drew them back it was evident that it had been raining most of the night. - what a damper I began to think.

How are we going to enjoy a BBQ in this? How are the kids going to be able to have a run around without getting absolutely soaking? Is it really worth going to the bother of making that cheesecake (which will probably not set anyway).

Now I would like to think that I was the only negative person that morning but knowing human nature there is a fair chance I was not.. Thankfully the weather did not dampen the spirits of our hosts, Roderick and Flora, who set to preparing their house for an invasion from toddler to, say those who are not so young!

Just before the whole event was due to start the rain stopped, in fact it became quite pleasant, the gardens looked beautiful, the kids were busy playing football, rugby and frisbees - Geanies House was open to one and all. Trays of tempting goodies kept on arriving, and a big thanks to all the ladies who provided so much.

The chefs for the day were busy creating burgers and sausages

in the corner - only joking boys - the food was cooked to perfection. In the kitchen there was a flurry of activity, in the dining room there were some folk enjoying some deep discussion.

Others catching up with one another, some kids were in the sitting room watching a video and then there were those who decided to take advantage of the good weather and take a stroll down by the cliffs to work up an appetite for the feast that was in store - the whole scene reminded me of the song 'Once there was a house, a busy little house'.

At one point I sat back eating a rather generous piece of pavlova (it would have been very rude of me not to have partaken) and viewed the room, the joy and harmony was wonderful.

In one corner I saw this little boy, he was only five years old and he sat himself in the middle of two 'older ladies' - why I cannot imagine, it was not as though he knew them well - but you could see him listening to what they were talking about. Every now and again he would put in his pennies worth - it was lovely to see them acknowledge his presence and take time to listen to what he also had to say - how important it is to listen.

Then after John's address to us, something of a tear jerking

nature happened - both Dr Runcie (92 years young) and Flora had been of the same mind, that we all sung 'Jesus Loves Me' - once we had all finished singing Dr Runcie wished that his photograph be taken with the youngest person present (Ellie 2 years old), and not stopping there he wished to have the opportunity of singing the first verse of 'Jesus Loves Me' with the youngsters alone - so that all crowded around him on the

couch and Dr Runcie began with the children in to - oh boy - like the saying goes 'ther was not a dry eye in the house'.

What a wonderful day, the hosts, the home, the sumptuous provision, the fellowship, the praise and the blessing of unity - for a little while it was all there - God was revealing a little bit of heaven. To God be the glory and praise for such a wonderful day.

Teaching the Young

THE KEY TO EFFECTIVE youth work is people - people in whose lives Christ is alive, and who will open themselves to young people, not to talk down to them, nor to dominate them with attractive and charismatic personalities, but to show them how to love one another as Christ commanded us. 'Personal work' is fundamental to youth work We have to build personal relationships. We have to maximise opportunities to for life-to-life discipling, where we can live alongside young people and they can absorb the Christian faith from the atmosphere around them.

That is why house-parties, camps and weekends away with the youth club provide such a powerful opportunity to Christian youth work. It may be that the normal pattern of our programme is too dull, too celebral, too culturally conditioned and too unbiblical in its methods, and time spent away camping, youth hostelling or on a Christian holiday provides a more total spiritual experience.

For example, the female youth leader, whom a girl hears explaining the doctrine of the cross at the morning meeting, may have a game of tennis with her before lunch, talk to her about her parents divorce over lunch, walk down the shops with her in the afternoon, study the Bible and pray with her in the evening and sleep in the next bed, or next room, at night. There is a real exposure of life to life. In a weekend's camping most of our pretences have been stripped away by the second morning, particularly if its raining.

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" [John 13:35]. Not love for the world, but love for one another. It is our love for one another that is our greatest evangelistic weapons. When a young person encounters a group of his or her contemporaries with an open, welcoming and supportive attitude, it contrasts sharply with other groups at school or in the neighbourhood.

Mark Ashton in 'Christian Youth Work' ISBN 0-86065 428-1

Congregational News

DUNDEE

The congregation have had a busy summer with a Holiday Club being run for the children and a Weekend Away for the Community (children of the Sunday Club, their parents and others). Seventeen children came to the holiday club and Andy orientated the theme to the Olympics 'Going for Gold'. A special video was shown featuring Paul and Barnabas' missionary journey and imprisonment.

The Barbecue was held on the Saturday of the Weekend Away when we had 40 people attend. There was a double booking for the Saturday at the camp resort which meant that we had to forfeit the kitchen - but thankfully the weather was excellent and we all enjoyed the sun shining down on our chicken, burgers and sausages!

The Weekend finished with a service in the Church at Dens Road and we were delighted that every parent came to this service which seemed to be appreciated by both children and adults. The community children were particularly interested as the subject was 'The Day After Tomorrow' (the title of a recent film). The text was *"Do not boast about tomorrow"* and *"you do not know what will happen tomorrow."*

"What is your life?" in Proverbs and James. Application was made about the uncertainty of life and the certainty of an eternal tomorrow. Contrast was made between the film-makers version of the future and the significance of death with the Biblical teaching on eternal realities and judgment.

Numbers are keeping well up in the congregation and we pray that God will work in the hearts of all those who hear the word. Please pray that funding will be found for the regular running expenses in the congregation.

STORNOWAY

On Thursday 22 July the Stornoway congregation were encouraged when an additional two elders and three Deacons were Ordained and Inducted. The new elders were Messrs Calum Maclean and Murdo Smith and the new deacons were Messrs Craig Parkes, Angus Morrison and Sandy Gillies. A photograph of the new office-bearers appears on the front cover of this issue of the APC News.

The congregational barbecue this year is to be held at the home of one of the new deacons Sandy Gillies on Friday 20th August,

at 9 Keith Street.

The congregation were saddened by the death of its oldest member Miss Lillian MacKenzie. She was a sister of David MacKenzie the congregation's precursor who also passed away last February.

As noted elsewhere in this magazine, the congregation's elder Malcolm MacLeod was licensed to preach by the presbytery. The congregation look forward to having Revd A N McPhail, Oban at their Communion at the end of August.

HARRIS

Our sympathy goes out to Mr Sam Morrison whose wife died in July. As most already know, Sam Morrison is very unwell himself and has been in the Western Isles Hospital for several months now. The Harris Communion will be held on the last Lord's Day in September. Revd A Murray, Lairg and Revd Angus John Macdonald from Lewis is expected to officiate at the Communion.

Why Does the Church Exist?

EVERY CHURCH IS DRIVEN by something. There is a guiding force, a controlling assumption, a directing conviction behind everything that happens. It may be unspoken. It may be unknown to many. Most likely it is never been officially voted on. But it is there, influencing every aspect of the church's life. What is the driving force behind your church?

Some churches are driven by finances. Some by personalities. Some by traditions. Some by programmes. Some by buildings. Some by events. Some by denominational pride.

The starting point for every church should be the question 'Why do we exist?' Until you know what your church exists for, you have no foundation, no motivation, and no direction for your ministry. If you are helping a new church get started, your first task is to define your purpose. Its far easier to set the right foundation at the start of a new church than it is to reset it after a church has existed for years.

There are two great truths that every church should build on. They are (1) The Great Commandment [Mat 22:37-40] and (2) The Great Commission [Mat 28:19-20]. From these two great truths there are five important purposes for every church.

One: Love the Lord with all your heart. Two: Love your neighbour as yourself. Three: Go and make disciples. Four: Baptize disciples. Five: Teach them to obey. As the church we are called not only to reach people but to teach them. It is the church's responsibility to develop people to spiritual maturity. "...so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach the unity in the faith" [Eph 4:12,13].

Rest

JESUS SAID *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*
[Mat.11:28-30]

Sweet words. Heavenly words. Wonderful words. Calming words. No doubt millions have had a soul refreshing drink at this never failing spring. So let us come and drink from them again.

An Intimate Invitation.

Normally we like when someone personally invites us into their company. This is especially so if it is a person we admire and respect. Here we have the Lord of Glory personally inviting us to come to Him. That is we are invited to come close, to be friends, to have a relationship and to completely rely and trust in Him forevermore.

A Desperate Situation.

"Weary and burdened" describes the human condition. We are, sinners in a sinful world. Weary and burdened with the struggles of life, with what we find in ourselves, because we are not the people we should be and would like to be. Weary because of our sin, because of broken resolutions, because of broken relationships, because we seem

unable to conquer certain sins.

Perhaps you feel the burden of your sin is greater than the burden that anyone else has. It is so shameful, despicable, ugly, selfish, unnatural and horrible what is in your life. To you as much as to anyone else Jesus is saying, these sweet, tender, loving, welcoming, forgiving and genuine words, "Come to me." As though he were standing on your doorstep and saying, may I come in. Or was speaking down the telephone line and saying please come and meet me, I want you to get to know me because I can do more to help you than you could ever imagine and if you come I will do just that.

An Absolute Promise. "I will give you rest." This is a guarantee from heaven, from the most powerful one that ever walked this earth, from the one who is "the truth." However troubled, burdened, restless, despondent, depressed, hopeless, forsaken, abandoned, rejected, hated, hurting, cheated, despised, downtrodden or whatever - just come as you are and there is rest in Jesus and all heaven says, Amen.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast!"

I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And he has made me glad."

Horatius Bonar, 1808-89

The Ultimate Challenge.

"Take my yoke upon you." To take his yoke means that we are bound to Him in service and submission and on His terms. He is our master as well as our Saviour. We could not have a more loving, gracious, or helpful master. He most certainly deserves to be loved, obeyed and honoured. Whatever other challenges we take on in life we miss the whole point of life if this challenge of Jesus does not over arch everything else.

A Perfect Opportunity .

"Learn of me." Jesus can teach everyone from the sharpest to the dullest, from the keenest to the most careless, from the most upright to the most degenerate. He is able and willing to teach us. Are we willing to be taught by Jesus.

A Perfect Teacher. "I am gentle and humble in heart." Gentleness and humility are very desirable qualities in a teacher especially if they are dealing with those who are slow to learn. Jesus knows all our weaknesses, failings, faults and slowness yet comes to us with a gentle and humble heart. A perfect teacher and one whose attitude of heart we should desire for ourselves every day.

Complete Rest. "You will find rest for your souls." Physical rest is not enough and even rest of mind is

not all that we need. We need spiritual rest. In Christ we find all our spiritual needs met. Security, forgiveness, restoration, direction, eternal life, motivation, empowering and much more are ours when we come to Christ.

A Perfect Yoke. "My yoke is easy." Jesus' yoke is perfectly suited for you whoever you are and whatever your history. He knows every detail of your life, every aspect of your personality and everything that lies ahead of you. His yoke is tailor-made for you and it is tailor-made for everyone who will ever come. You will say with all the others that ever came, taking the yoke of Jesus is the best thing that I ever did.

The Most Worthwhile Burden. "My burden is light." The burdens the Pharisees put on the people were impossible and certainly did not bring eternal life. If we take up our cross daily and follow Jesus we will discover the all sufficiency of His grace and strength and we most certainly will have everlasting life.

"Come to the Saviour now,
You who have wandered far;
Renew your solemn vow,
For His by right you are.
Come like poor wandering sheep
Returning to His fold;
His arm will safely keep,
His love will ne'er grow cold.
Come, come, come!"

John Murch Wigner, 1844-1911

We publish below a chapter from the book '**Sounds from Heaven**', (The Revival on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, 1949-1952)

Published by Christian Focus Publications, ISBN 1-85792-953-5.

The book is written by Colin and Mary Peckham

Incidents in the Revival

MUCH HAS BEEN said of the two old ladies and their praying. Peggy and Christine Smith lived in a small cottage next to the garage on the Stornoway side of Barvas. Their home has been demolished. Duncan Campbell highlighted them on several occasions in his messages.

Although both were over eighty years of age, infirm and arthritic, they were effective prayer warriors and knew God in a special way. (In fact Christina was still attending church in 1949, but Peggy was blind.) But they were not the only ones. 'It was a community at prayer,' said Margaret MacLeod. What a statement! Others agree; the Christians were praying.

In 1949 everyone who was truly longing for God was seeking the Lord for an outpouring of the Holy Ghost. The Christians were praying! When Duncan Campbell found it impossible to come to Barvas, the two old ladies declared that God would bring him, but many other people who were walking with the Lord and who had that same burden for revival on their hearts said the same thing.

There was huge expectancy in the air and people were not going to take 'no' for an answer. Prayer was spontaneous. As people visited one another in their homes, they would pray and then continue on until they felt that they had got through to God.

The community was already seeing God at work in the salvation of souls before Mr. Campbell set foot on Lewis. That he declined the invitation to Barvas, saying that his programme was full, only added fuel to the fire and they prayed all the more fervently that God would overrule and bring this man to them. A huge volume of prayer ascended from Christian folk all over the Barvas area for revival.

The place was soaked in prayer. It became a way of life – to seek the Lord for His mercy. God gave promises; to the aged sisters: *"I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground"* [Isa. 44:3]; to others He gave many other promises as they sought the Lord.

Some of the church officers met, on occasions, in the thatched cottage of Kenneth MacDonald (Coinneach Beag). There were only a

few of these thatched cottages or 'black houses' left. People had built attractive homes and were using these cottages for storage until they succumbed to the weather. To make a distinction between the normal homes and the old style, low, thick-walled thatched cottages, Duncan Campbell described the place where they met as a barn, perhaps thinking that it was actually used as a barn.

Kenneth MacDonald, John Smith the blacksmith, Ruiridh (Roderick) Alex MacLeod and Donald Saunders Snr., were some of the great prayer warriors at that time and they, together with others of the church council, were at the heart of those burdened for revival. They were converted or were deeply blessed in the 1939 revival, so they knew what they were asking for and they continued to plead the promises of God.

They normally prayed twice a week into the night while the Smith sisters prayed at the same time in their cottage on the south side of the village, and others prayed in their homes as well. This continued for months.

One must not forget that many were burdened and were also praying and seeking God for a move of the Spirit just as earnestly as the sisters and the elders and deacons. The Spirit of supplication was being poured upon the community.

One night when they were waiting on God in the 'barn', Kenneth MacDonald rose, opened his Bible to Psalm 24 and read, *"Who shall ascend into the hill of the*

Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." He then said, 'It seems to be worthless to be gathered here night after night seeking God as we are doing, if our hands are not clean and our hearts are not pure. O God, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure?'

At that moment the presence of God flooded the place and several of the men fainted or fell into a trance, with the overwhelming awareness of the Eternal. God had come to them in this wonderful and humbling manifestation. John Smith said that at that moment they all became aware that the holiness of God and revival were inextricably linked. God came, and when He came it was in a revelation of His holiness.

While Mr. Campbell highlighted this story, it is interesting to note that no-one to whom we spoke knew anything about that meeting, for so many mighty prayer meetings were being held at that time.

God came to meeting after meeting in the district. As Duncan himself said, 'Revival was already there before I came to Lewis.' The fact that some of the men in that meeting fell into a trance was not particularly significant as that was the case in other prayer meetings as well.

The people still had vivid memories of the 1939 revival when this phenomenon was widespread. Donald Saunders Snr. often fell into a trance in prayer. So while that

meeting was significant, it was one of many other meetings which were equally significant as the praying people of the community of Barvas sought God in importunate prayer.

Others were getting through to God in other homes and they were soon to see what God could do as this community waited before Him.

The House that Shook

It happened in Arnol, just two miles south of Barvas. The meetings were hard at the beginning, so increased prayer was required and the praying men of the district rallied round. They gathered in a large home in Arnol for an extended period of prayer.

It was the home of Donald and Bella Smith (No. 10A Arnol). The meeting was making heavy weather and prayers were not flowing freely. It was a hard battle as one after another attempted to break through in prayer.

Some time after midnight, Duncan Campbell asked John Smith, the blacksmith, to pray. He had not prayed all night. He rose and prayed for some time and then said: 'Lord, I do not know how Mr Campbell or any of these other men stand with You, but if I know my own heart, I know that I am thirsty. You have promised to pour water on him that is thirsty. If You don't do it, how can I ever believe You again. Your honour is at stake. You are a covenant—keeping God. Fulfil Your covenant engagement.'

It was a prayer from a man who was walking with God. At that moment the house shook. Someone next to Mr. Campbell said to him, 'Mr. Campbell, an earthquake.' The next day they were to discover that no other house shook. It was a mighty moment that Donald MacPhail remembers, for he was sitting on the crowded stairs beside two unsaved neighbours, Christina Campbell (No.33) and Donald MacLeod (No.31). They had been dozing, but in a moment they were wide awake under deep conviction of sin. They began to cry for mercy. In fact Christina wept and cried aloud for help.

Both were saved that very night. Campbell pronounced the benediction, and they left the house to discover that at that hour the people were moving to the meeting hall. Some were carrying chairs wondering if there would be enough room for them. Torch lights shone in the darkness as the folk moved towards the hall. God had stepped in to a scene that seemed so hard and difficult. The move of the Spirit in Arnol had begun.

Berneray, Harris

Mr. Campbell had on many occasions received invitations to minister on the small island of Berneray with its population of about 500, but had been booked elsewhere on each occasion and was unable to go. This Berneray is called Berneray, Harris, but is closer to North Uist and was normally

approached by a ferry from there, or by ferry from Harris. Today there is a splendid causeway connecting North Uist and Berneray.

Duncan Campbell was one of the speakers at the large Faith Mission Easter Convention in Bangor, N.Ireland. On the platform at Bangor, he felt an overwhelming urge to go immediately to Berneray, Harris, and told the chairman of the convention that he must leave immediately despite the fact that he was to speak the next night. He felt that he had no choice but to obey God.

Leaving Bangor he undertook the wearisome journey over land and sea and eventually stepped off the boat on to the island of Berneray. He saw a small boy and asked him to tell the minister that 'Duncan Campbell was on the island'. The boy replied that there was no minister on the island, and Duncan asked him to tell the leading elder the news. The boy soon returned with the news that he was expected and that he was to stay with the elder's brother.

Later it transpired that the elder, Hector MacKinnon, the postman, had been wrestling with the Lord in the barn the previous day, saying, 'Lord, I don't know where he is, but, Lord, You know. Please send him to us.' That was the time in Bangor that Duncan sensed that he had to go to Berneray.

During the meetings which followed, the Holy Spirit was poured out in a similar way to that which

they had experienced in Lewis, and numbers of people were saved. The central fact again was the sense of the presence of God. Hector wrote many spiritual songs and hymns, some of which, Mary has sung on the BBC Gaelic Radio programmes.

The Dance at Carloway

This is a wonderful story which has been told many times. It concerns Rev Murdo MacLennan who, in the small hours of the morning, walked onto the dance floor in Carloway. It was the night that the pipers were saved and when Alan Ian Mac-Arthur, the Master of Ceremonies at the dance, also came to the Lord.

This story has been told by Alan Ian's brother, Jack, in his testimony elsewhere in the book, so will not be repeated here.

Praying at the Roadside

Sitting on the platform of the YMCA in Bayhead, Stornoway, at the Annual Faith Mission Convention in Lewis in 1964, Duncan Campbell leant over to Colin and said, 'See that lady coming in the door? She's the one who prayed at the road side.'

He was referring to an incident during the revival when he was driving along a road on his motor bike at 5.00 am. He saw a young woman seemingly in distress of soul near the road. He went to her, told her who he was and asked whether he could be of any help.

She told him that she was greatly burdened for the nearby

village in which she lived and that she was looking to the Lord to send revival to them. She and others had been praying for the village for some months, but they had not yet seen anything which would encourage them.

Although it was not exactly the done thing for a Presbyterian minister to be praying with a young lady at the road side, he felt that they should do so. They knelt at the road side and poured out their hearts to the Lord for a couple of hours crying to Him to come and visit them.

Fourteen young men in the village were deciding how much drink to bring in for the weekend. One said, 'I think that we had better

bring in more than normal for this may well be the last time that we bring drink into the village.' Another said, 'You don't mean that the revival will come here, do you?' In a little while those men were under deep conviction and they were converted — every one of them.

There was no preacher to enlighten them, no special gospel event, no charged atmosphere; just the power of God working by the Spirit in their hearts. Led by the Spirit they trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Years later they were still following the Lord and many of them became elders and deacons. God works in amazing ways His wonders to perform.

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What's Your Purpose in Life?

Josh McDowell tells about the time he was visiting with a "head-hunter" — an executive recruiter who seeks new corporate executives for other firms. The man told him, "When I get an executive that I'm trying to hire for someone else, I like to disarm him. I offer him a drink, take my coat off, then my vest, undo my tie, throw up my feet and talk about baseball, football, family, whatever, until he's all relaxed. Then, when I think I've got him relaxed, I lean over, look him square in the eye and say, 'What's your purpose in life?' It's amazing how top executives fall apart at that question.

"Well, I was interviewing this fellow the other day, had him all disarmed, with my feet up on his desk, talking about football. Then I leaned up and said, 'What's your purpose in life, Bob?' And he said, without blinking an eye, 'To go to heaven and take as many people with me as I can.' For the first time in my career I was speechless." (eSermons, 6-29-04)

The Hymn below was written by John Peter Bodner, and was affectionately dedicated to the members of the Victoria Park APC in North York, Toronto, Ontario. Mr Bodner has supplied our congregation there regularly.

Lord Jesus Christ! What Treasures in that Blest Name I Find

Lord Jesus Christ! What treasures
In that blest Name I find [Col 2, Phil 4]
From Thy right hand its pleasures [Psa 16]
Fill heart, and soul, and mind. [Deu 6]
None have, none desire
In heaven or in earth,
Beside Thee, God my Saviour - [Psa 73, Tit 2]
O Lamb of matchless worth! [Rev 5]

Jesus! Name of salvation, [Mat 1]
That ravishes my ear, [1 Cor 2]
Let every tribe and nation [Rev 5]
Its joyful sound now hear! [Psa 89]
Above all names in glory [Eph 1, Phil 2]
It speaks of peace with God,
For sinners once far from Thee
Brought nigh now by Thy blood! [Eph 2]

What rich and sweet communion
Is mine, Thou Son of God,
To feed in mystic union
Upon Thy flesh and blood! [John 6]
I taste and see Thy goodness, [Psa 34, 1 Pet 2]
In all words of Thy mouth, [Pss, Cant]
Exceeding honey's sweetness [Pss 19, 119]
So full of grace and truth! [Jn 1, Lk 4]

Thou camest Lord, in weakness
My sins and griefs to bear:
In lowliness and meekness
Thou dost my burdens share. [Mat 11]
I touch the nail-prints driven [Jn 20]
When on me Thou dost place
Thy hands, all pierced and riven
And in Thy love embrace! [Mk 1, Mt 17, Cant]

How fragrant is the savour
The knowledge of Thy grace
Sheds forth, my faithful Saviour,
Abroad in every place! [1 Cor 2]
With pungent myrrh and aloes, [Psa 45]
Spikenard and cassia rare, [Jn 2]
As spice that from a tree flows, [Cant]
Thy garments do I wear. [Isa 62, Psa 45]

What glowing light and beauty
Which once from out Thee shone
Transfigured, now adorns Thee [Lk 9, Mk 9]
The Lamb upon the Throne!
When Thou shalt come and gather,
From every clime and race,
Thy Bride before Thy Father,
I'll see Thee face to face! [1 Cor 13, 1 Jn 3]

Awakened, in Thy likeness
Shall I be satisfied
To see Thee in Thy brightness,
Lord Jesus glorified! [Psa 17, Ro 8]
With Christ I all inherit: [Ro 8]
Mine eyes shall look upon [Jb 19, Is 25, Mt 5]
The Father, Son and Spirit -
My God, the Three in One!

REJOICE ALWAYS

"Now in the Lord rejoice always" says Paul, "again rejoice",
But only by the **grace of God** can we obey **His voice**,
So what does it mean to rejoice, it can't be world joy,
A **Holy God** wants purity, **He** won't accept alloy.

'J' stand for **Jesus** and 'Y' for you, and nothing in between,
Joy is the simple answer as it clearly can be seen,
All praise and thanks be to the **One who** died on Calvary,
A sinner saved by **saving grace** will readily agree,
"Look unto **Me** and be ye saved and I will give you rest,
No man can take away that **Joy**, from North, South, East or West.

[By the late Alistair Grewar, Inverness, 1 November 1989]

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Mr D M Fraser,
Publications Treasurer,
'Stratharris',
Daviot, by Inverness, IV2 5XQ
Telephone 01463-772253
Email:
donald@stratharris.freeserve.co.uk

Name.....

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Editor:
Revd Donald C Macaskill
238 Arbroath Road, Dundee DD4 7SB
Tel 01382 451798
E-mail:
dcmacaskill@apchurches.org.uk