

The Great Object of Life

WHAT IS THE GREAT object of life on earth? It is the same as it was in the beginning - to walk with God. In the garden of Eden, the highlight of the day was when God came down to walk with Adam and Eve. Sin has not changed that grand object of the creation of man.

We were created to have fellowship and communion with God. Before the flood came, we are told that Enoch walked with God for 300 years and God took him. Then there was Noah, an upright man who walked with God also.

In making the covenant with Abram, God instructed him saying "*I am Almighty God, walk before Me...and I will make My covenant between Me and you*" [Gen 17:1]. God's promise to Israel at Sinai was that He would walk among them and be their God.

In the New Testament the same term is used. Paul in quoting from Leviticus 26:12 in [2 Cor 6:16], assures us of the unity of the two testaments in regard to man's ultimate objective to walk with God.

The example of Zacharias and Elizabeth walking blameless in all the commandments of the Lord confirms not only that they were "*righteous before God*" but also that walking with God was fulfilling the

purpose of their creation.

Even revivals in Scripture are defined in the term of walking with God when we read in [Acts 9:31] that "*the churches were edified...walking in the fear of the Lord and...were multiplied*".

Finally, our destiny in glory and our activity in heaven is envisaged in the promise "*they shall walk with Me in white*" [Rev 3:4]. So it is important that our lives here on earth must be a walk with God.

It is not sufficient to be able to articulate an experience we may have had - the important thing is, did it bring me into fellowship with God? Has it led me to walk with God each day? It is wonderful to be able to look back to a time when God spoke to us and we began to believe in God. The vital thing is the end result - are we living in the presence of God and is He real to us each day so that we can have fellowship with Him.

What is it to walk with God? It means we must be in complete agreement with God. "*Can two walk together unless they are agreed?*" [Amos 3:3]. Two people cannot be agreed, or even have dialogue, unless there is first a relationship of some kind. We do not go for a walk with strangers, only with those we know. Walking together presupposes

a unity and understanding of like minds.

When two people are out for a walk they usually do so because they are relaxed, or because they wish to relax. They want to unwind. If we do not feel like a 'walk with God', and have no desire to relax in His company, then we are not in a good spiritual condition. There is something wrong if we are not interested in communion with God. A husband and wife in good relationship look forward to such times. In fact it is the best time of the day. To be 'free' to confide, to express innermost thoughts and fears and to entrust one's soul to someone is a wonderful releasing experience.

We are challenged when we think of this harmony and understanding and have to ask ourselves are we relaxed when we come to God in prayer and confession or are we afraid of God? Having the fear of God does not mean we are afraid of Him. There is no person more in the whole world that we can come to for a better and fairer outcome than coming to God through the Mediator Jesus Christ. It is the Christian's greatest privilege to be able to come without fear to unload his burdens onto a willing Burden-bearer.

We also need to ask ourselves do we know God well enough to spend our leisure time with Him? How do we spend our 'free' time? Do we ever decide to give the next half hour to God in meditation and reflection? Does the

thought repel us or delight us? Even for those who have backslid, God's desire to have fellowship with His children is compelling in His invitation to come and 'sup' with Him [Rev 3:20].

To 'walk with God' is to have the same way of thinking as the Lord. *"But we have the mind of Christ"* said Paul when comparing men of the world with men of God in [1 Cor 2:16]. In writing to the Ephesians he said *"you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk in the futility of their mind"* [Eph 4:17].

Our thinking and understanding of sin and righteousness coincide and synchronise with God's mind and view on these subjects. However much we may fail to maintain the standards of His Word in the way of obedience, there is complete agreement about God's law. It is because they have experienced the *"renewing of their minds"* that Christians can discern *"what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* [Rom 12:2]. Do we have the mind of Christ?

Our first parents, because of their guilt, removed themselves *"from the presence of the Lord"* [Gen 3:8]. They did not know the way to God through a Mediator. They were afraid of being in the presence of God.

We now know that perfect love casts out fear. God's love for us has found a way whereby we can once again 'walk with God'. Are you walking with God?

God With Us

Cute enough to bring them to church - but how to bring them to Jesus?

PERHAPS AS CUSTODIAN of the European sock mountain, you dread the approach of another Christmas Day...Perhaps you are already telling yourself: 'Its the thought that counts'! Indeed it is. We could also say: 'its the **thinking** that counts', for the thought of the **receiver** surely determines how the gift is received, enjoyed, shared - or even discarded...

"God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son..." [1 John 5:11]. In a matter of weeks, unusually full church buildings will ring with 'Love Came Down at Christmas', yet our generous Giver must watch with tears as many - after decades of carols and crackers - still fumble with the wrapping paper, oblivious to the Precious Gift.

Of course, it is the thought that counts. Satan knows this: *"The god of this age had blinded the **minds** of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God"* [2 Cor 4:4]. Clearly if people are to enjoy God's gift, something powerful has to happen in their **minds**.

If the evil one keeps people from the truth by his influence on their minds, his worst nightmare is that those he has blinded should

start to **think!** To ensure that they don't, he has encouraged the growth of a feelings-driven society where the pace of life is impetuous and fast, thinking is easily avoided, and the truth is always kept just out of sight. The question is, since we Christians share the same space, do we also share the distraction - or are we learning to think?

Of course, we could be excused for assuming that the real battle is not for the mind, but for the tongue. Freedom of speech is under sustained attack on many fronts, but we must remember that whatever controls the mind controls the tongue - and the life.

Western governments of all shades are increasing their efforts to police both what their citizens think - and what they are permitted to say. We retain the outward appearance of democracy, but accountability we ditch with indecent haste. The truth is, democracy is only safe in the hands of God-fearing leaders accountable to a God-fearing people.

TESTING

'**Prophecy Today's** primary ministry is to help strengthen disciples to maintain a bold prophetic witness as days of severe testing approach fast. I speak here of

the western world. In most other parts of the world, believers have been hard pressed for years - but storm clouds continue to gather in the west:

In the weeks before this edition was produced, the strongly evangelistic Hull Christian Union was voted out of University Union membership because of a quite proper 'Christians only' leadership policy - don't mention that only Labour Party members may serve on the Labour Society executive and Muslim Society leadership is, of course, Muslim! Although we thank God that this vote was overturned, we note the flagrant disregard *for* freedom of religion and speech paralleled in *our* government's draft 'religious hatred' legislation.

In the USA, California's Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law on September 22 a 'hate speech' Bill that would include quoting the Bible on homosexuality. In the ensuing seven-day period, seismologists recorded over 1100 earthquakes in the California-Nevada area.

But it is not only the secular power that challenges what may be believed and spoken by Bible-believing Christians:

The United Church of Canada believes it is possible to "affirm the 'prophetic witness' of Muhammad", and recognises the implication that "...it is necessary, in affirming this, to also invite the possibility within the Christian community of a recognition of the Qu'ran as an inspired word from God..."

However, we are not called to be storm watchers, but to "*fix our eyes on Jesus*". In this respect too, 'it's the thought that counts'. How we think of Him affects how we think of ourselves. Have we grasped the full wonder of God's gift to us? "*Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment.*" [Rom 12:3].

If we have often overvalued our importance in the scheme of things (and thereby undervalued others), the state of the churches today (and not just the 'dead' ones) reveals that we have greatly overvalued ourselves in relation to Jesus. The great missing virtue in our estimation of Jesus is acceptance of our own vulnerability.

Let's face it, many of us in leadership are not content, as was Paul, to be jars of clay. We would not have gone among the wild Corinthians "*in weakness and fear and with much trembling*" [1 Cor 2:3]. We would have made them wait 2,000 years for the invention of Microsoft PowerPoint, or at least the overhead projector, so that our presentation would seem "*wise and persuasive and we could demonstrate the power of our preaching...*"! [1 Cor 2:4].

'Come to Jesus?'

All over the UK this Christmas, churches will 'leaflet' whole neighbourhoods to encourage people to 'come to church'. There will be full details of all the special services,

creche facilities, coffee and mince pies, a truly festive atmosphere with all the favourite carols, an assured warm welcome - but the message in many of those leaflets will be 'come to church', not 'come to Jesus'.

Indeed, I am confident that many of these invitations will not even mention the name of Jesus 'because we first need to get them through the door'. Well intentioned as this may be, I believe this reveals seriously wrong thinking about Jesus and a seriously inflated estimate of ourselves. Did He not say: *"I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself"* [John 12:32]? Matthew Henry's advice on this text is much needed today: "Observe here how Christ himself is all in all in the conversion of a soul".

Do we really believe Christ can populate His Church? Or must we shoulder the great burden of finding that 'right approach', that 'evangelistic model' that worked elsewhere, and 'just might work in our situation? Not only does self-reliance seem to be a problem, but we seem to think that the salvation of many will wait until our long-term strategies woo them to give us a hearing.

Now I have no quarrel with 'friendship evangelism'. I should be worried if all evangelism were not an expression of friendship - there for the long haul too. I do sigh when this long-term approach is adopted as a 'style' or a 'strategy', as if conversion depends on our creating the right conditions - much like wooing might

rely on soft music, soft lighting - the right 'ambience' !

There's a phrase I hear too much of today: 'we need to earn the right to speak'. Again, I don't doubt the good intention. It does seem a humble approach. And of course our preaching can lack credibility if it lacks practical compassion. But there's that word again: 'approach'.

Had Peter already proved his friendship to the 3000 people who were *"cut to the heart"* by his message? His sermon clearly caused them distress. Had they benefited from his consistent acts of kindness? He accused them of killing the Son of God 'with the help of wicked men' - a strange way to earn the right to speak! The crowd could have turned on him. That he forgot his own welfare long enough to lead them to repentance and salvation was because he got his authority from the compelling love of Christ not from his personal credentials.

It's the thought - and the thinking - that counts in all our service for the Lord. What are our assumptions doing to the Lord? Do we agree that apart from Him we can do nothing? Or are all our 'approaches' an unwitting humanism that substitutes our cleverness for His greatness?

God is with us -let's not make Him a spectator. Think about it!

This article was first published in the November/December issue 2004 of 'Prophecy Today', by the editor David Andrew and is reprinted by kind permission.

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Mistakes and Risks

IN HIS 'Ministry Toolbox' Issue No 175, Rick Warren tells ministers that it is all right to make mistakes, provided we don't make the same mistakes over and over again and we need to take more risks for Christ.

He says "I don't want the leaders at Saddleback (his church) to fall into sloppy habits, but I do want them to feel free to fail because that means they'll also feel free to take risks! My point is that if you are not making mistakes, then you are probably not trying anything new. And, if you are not trying anything new, then you're not learning, and if you are not learning, then you and your ministry will quickly be out-of-date, perhaps even irrelevant."

Mr Warren is concerned that the church today is not discerning how God is working by His Spirit in the world. He says in one of his books "Our job as church leaders, like experienced surfers, is to recognise a wave of God's Spirit and ride it. It is not our responsibility to **make** waves but to **recognise** how God is working in the world and join him in the endeavour". He maintains "church growth cannot be maintained by man. Only God makes the church grow". He therefore encourages ministers to seek new ways of contacting people and communicating the gospel to them.

He feels the church has lost its passion and its responsibility in going out into the world with the gospel and our inactivity is reprehensible.

Pride plays a larger part in our ecclesiastical inactivity than we may be prepared to admit. Some people do not wish to try something new in the way of getting the gospel across to our generation in case they will fail and then they may receive criticism from respected friends.

Concern for the lost, however, will eat into the true pastor's heart and he will submit from time to time to the pressure to reach lost souls for Christ.

The fear of failing in some initiative should never prevent us from persevering in doing good. If we are consistent in our claim that something which does not work should be abandoned immediately, it would mean that many of us should cease preaching! How many converts or awakenings has our preaching resulted in? Most ministers preach at least 150 sermons a year. Would we ever think of stopping preaching because it had no results? We ought therefore to be just as diligent and persistent in other areas of reaching the lost.

Mr Warren reminds us of Thomas Edison, the inventor of the electric light bulb. Edison saw mistakes in a positive light, saying

they taught us the things that won't work and drove us to proceed and discover what does succeed.

The Apostle Peter tells us to **add** to our faith. Indeed if we do not add to our faith he says, we will certainly fall. Adding to our faith will mean we will need to attempt things we have not attempted before. For example, we may be convicted of fasting, but after some attempts we may feel that our energies would be better used in some other spiritual discipline.

In the same way as the limbs of a child need exercise in order for them to grow, so the 'muscles' of our faith needs 'exercise' in order for it to grow. The Bible talks of exercising ourselves toward godliness [1 Tim 4:7]. As any discipline requires practice and training, so do the spiritual disciplines. A converted drunkard or drug-addict needs to get down to the hard fact of withdrawal pains and how best to overcome it. There is no other way.

The Bible gives us much encouragement to attempt great things for God by reminding us that *"all things are possible with God"*. The great heroes of the faith were blessed through the principle 'expect great things from God, attempt great things for God'.

The Bible encourages faithful risk-taking. The parable in [Mat 25] has this in mind. In that parable Jesus told about the three servants who were given different amounts of talents to trade with. One was given 1 talent, another two and the third ten talents. Each was

expected to gain from their use. 'The two men who doubled the talents their master gave them were called *"good and faithful servants"*. In other words they proved their faithfulness by taking risks that produced fruit'.

On the other hand 'the passive, fearful servant who did nothing with the talent he was given produced no results for the master because he would not take a risk. He was called *"wicked and lazy"* in contrast to the two men called *"faithful"* for producing results. The point of the story is clear: God expects results. Our faithfulness is demonstrated by our fruit'.

Mr Warren then says 'Success is not being larger than some other church; it is bearing as much fruit as possible given your gifts, opportunities, and potential'.

The Lord called the prophet Malachi to ask the people of his day to *"prove Me now in this"* (regarding what must have been for some at least a big risk) in offering tithes! God asks us to trust His promises.

Gideon was a man of weak faith - it took four 'signs' for faith to be strong enough for him to go forward to fight the Midianites. He was frightened to take risks - but he did it in the end [see Judges 6 & 7].

The proverb goes 'The man that never made a mistake, never made anything'. As Christians we must believe the promises of God and are called to exercise faith in God's Word and commanded to preach the word in season and out of season whatever the risks.

Addict-speak

Reflections on Living in a Land Under Judgment

ADDICTIONS ARE strange things. One of the strangest parts is that addicts tell themselves, and others, all kinds of lies to persuade themselves they're anything **but** addicted. Speak to any alcoholic and he'll tell you he just likes the taste, or is actually drinking much less than he was, or more desperately that he's tried and failed to stop so he may as well get on with it. The mind games get more and more pathetic the deeper the addiction gets.

There's a good case for saying that all sin has the character of addiction - dependence on something other than God for satisfaction, when only He can satisfy. So its worrying to think how immersed in self-deception each of us, as a sinner, must be.

Listen to an addict justify his addiction, and then look in the mirror to see how we use the same arguments about our sin! The best mirror to look in, is of course the Word of God. The Bible cuts through addict-speak like a sword through marrow, which is why it is hated so much.

One of the biggest dangers for Christians is to take on board the besetting lies of our society, and so share in its judgment. Perhaps the Bible's main purpose is to enable us

to stay free in a world full of addicts. Take society's addiction to sex, for example.

Teenage pregnancy increases along with the abortion rate and epidemic sexually transmitted disease. The answer is to be more sex education. Yet at the same time children's novelists justify explicit sexuality on the reasonable basis that kids know more about that stuff than adults. Both can't be true - its addict-speak.

Experience in places as diverse as Uganda and the USA shows that these problems decrease if abstinence is taught. Yet media 'experts' have only to say that abstinence 'doesn't work' and the debate is closed - addict-speak.

Dramatic pictures show that a 14 week foetus is every bit as human as we are. Any outsider would expect society to be saying, 'Hey, maybe we've had this abortion thing completely wrong!'. Instead there are half-hearted moves to limit abortion after 13 weeks (no ultrasounds available yet, you see), whilst rushing to increase vivisection of human embryos. It's a pro-sex issue as much as a pro-choice one: 'We need the sex, so don't bother us with the results'. Addict-speak once more.

Until less than a generation

ago homosexuality was biologically perverse, medically harmful and in most societies traditionally immoral. It is one of the wonders of the modern world that, without any significant new evidence, it has become perverse, harmful and immoral even to discuss the matter in these terms. How does wrong become right and right wrong overnight? Only through addict-speak.

Every now and then, by the grace of God an addict will wake up

and say 'I'm living a lie - and I'm dying because of it. This addiction must go, whatever the cost'. Truth is the only antidote to addict-speak, and its a rare bird. Since we have it in the Word of God, lets champion it, proclaim it - and most of all, let it transform us so that people can see what it is like to live as free men.

This article appeared in a 'Letter from Babylon' by 'Mishael' in the November/December 2004 issue of 'Prophecy Today'. www.prophecytoday.co.uk

What Sin Did to Mankind

" **A**LL OF THE COMMON THEMES of sin grow out of the desire-oriented life. A look at Genesis 3 discloses some of the basic themes and shows that:

Adam and Eve sinned because they rejected the Word of God. Whether the rejection stemmed from blatant rebellion or disbelief is unimportant. All rejection of God's Word, whatever the motive, is in the last resort a rejection of God Himself.

This rejection led to serious consequences, both from without and from within. Outwardly, the **judgment** of God, the **expulsion** from the Garden, the **curse** of the ground, and the **souring of interpersonal relationships** between the man and his wife resulted. Within, man's **nature was corrupted** - with all of the baneful consequences that flow therefrom - and a **bad conscience** was felt in the painful emotional responses that it triggered. All of these results themselves became occasions for more sin. The **intertwining complexities of tangled living** began to be experienced. Sin brought complications to life.

Man began to **run**, to **hide** and **avoid**, to **cover up**. The wicked flees when no man pursues. IN a thousand ways counsellors still do the same. The materials from which they weave their garments may be more sophisticated, but the Christian counsellor knows to **look for the fig leaves**. He also sees innumerable **patterns of avoidance**. He may hide behind intellectualism rather than trees; but unless smitten by repentance he hides. Christian counsellors must know how to **ferret the sons of Adam out of the forests**. Men are still running from God".

Jay E Adams

Forgiving Our Enemies

Pearl Harbour, Hiroshima - and Calvary

SIXTY-THREE YEARS ago today, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor—an action that dramatically altered the course of history. Jacob DeShazer was on KP duty in California when he first heard the news. Furious at what the Japanese had done, he resolved to retaliate personally. And in April 1942, he got his chance — as a B-25 bombardier when Doolittle’s Raiders attacked Tokyo.

During that fateful run, DeShazer’s plane ran out of fuel, and the crew bailed out over enemy territory. DeShazer was captured and spent the next forty months as a POW — including thirty-four months in solitary confinement. Three of his buddies were executed, and another died of slow starvation.

With plenty of time to think, Jake wondered: What makes people hate each other? And he also wondered: Doesn’t the Bible say something about loving our enemies?

He asked his jailers for a Bible and eventually got one. He read it with fascination, re-reading some parts six or more times. Then, ten days into his study, he asked Christ to forgive his sins. He remembers, “suddenly . . . when I looked at the enemy officers and guards . . . , I realized that . . . if Christ is not in a heart, it is natural

to be cruel. . . . [M]y bitter hatred . . . changed to loving pity.”

Remembering Christ’s words from the cross— *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”* — he asked God to forgive those who tortured him, as well.

Fourteen months later, in August 1945, paratroopers liberated DeShazer from his prison cell. After the war, a chaplain on General MacArthur’s staff wanted something to help heal the animosity between the United States and Japan. He approached Don Falkenberg of Bible Literature International, who had read DeShazer’s testimony shortly after his release. And soon the story was being circulated as a booklet called, “I Was a Prisoner of Japan.”

But here’s where the story gets interesting. Japanese Navy pilot Mitsuo Fuchida was Chief Commander of the historic December 7 raid on Pearl Harbor . He had advised against attacking the American base, but when given orders to proceed, Fuchida led the assault.

Eventually Fuchida logged more than ten thousand combat hours. But his closest brush with death was on the ground in Japan. He was in Hiroshima the day before the atom bomb was dropped. His life was spared because orders had come to go to Tokyo.

When the war ended, Captain Fuchida returned to his family farm near Osaka. Later, stepping off a train in Tokyo, he was given a copy of Jacob DeShazer's booklet. Intrigued, he began reading the Bible. And despite his Shinto heritage, he accepted Christ as his Savior.

How marvelous are God's ways? An American airman is taken prisoner, is converted, and his testimony leads his captors' ace pilot to Christ. Over a thirty-year span, Captain Fuchida and Sergeant DeShazer traveled together throughout Japan. Together and

separately, they saw tens of thousands of Japanese converted.

Learning to love our enemies is so important, something every Christian must strive for. But when we're fighting deadly enemies, as our nation is today at war, doing so is a miracle — a miracle of restoration and healing that can come only through faith in Christ.

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Total Forgiveness

"WHAT IS TOTAL FORGIVENESS? There are five principles, all of which come out in this story [Joseph and his brothers]. First, total forgiveness is demonstrated to you when someone shows that he doesn't want anybody else to know what you have done to him. Why did Joseph send out the Egyptians when he made himself known? He didn't want the Egyptians to know what his ten brothers had done to him.

Second, total forgiveness wants to make a person completely at ease. Joseph said to them 'Come near to me, I pray you'. He wanted them to be at ease in his presence.

Third, total forgiveness will not even allow the person to feel bad or angry with himself. Joseph said '...be not angry with yourselves'. He's saying in effect, 'I don't want you to feel angry with yourselves'. Sometimes we say 'Well, I forgive you, but I hope you realise what you've done!'

Fourth, you make it easy for that person to forgive himself. 'Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves...for God did send me before you to preserve life...It was not you who sent me but God!'

Finally, total forgiveness is demonstrated when you keep someone's sin hidden from the person who means most to him. Now what do you suppose the ten brothers feared most...that Jacob their father would hear the truth. Joseph might have said Go back to your father...come clean and tell him all that you've done' But he didn't do that. Total forgiveness is when we don't want the sin to be revealed where it would hurt most of all."

R T Kendall in 'God Meant it for Good'

TORONTO

ORDINATION and INDUCTION

The Canadian Presbytery met in the Victoria Park Church on Friday 15 October 2004, for the Ordination and Induction of Revd Malcolm MacLeod to the pastoral charge of the congregation.

The Moderator of Presbytery, Revd Malcolm MacInnes, welcomed the good number of people who had gathered for the occasion, some from local churches, and some from as far afield as Scotland. The Revd Donald Macaskill preached the sermon from Joshua, chapter 1. Rev Malcolm MacLeod, having satisfactorily answered the questions and signed the Formula, as is required on these occasions, was inducted to the pastoral charge of the congregation. After prayer, he was given the Right Hand of Fellowship from members of Presbytery and other ministers and elders present.

Revd Malcolm MacInnes addressed the new minister on what should be the focus of his ministry, namely the Word of God and prayer. The congregation was then addressed by Revd G Hamstra, who had been the minister of the

congregation before Revd Malcolm MacInnes went there as minister.

Appreciation was expressed for the faithful ministry of Revd John Bodner who had conducted the services and carried on so many pastoral responsibilities during the vacancy prior to this induction. The ladies of the congregation had prepared a rich spread of food which was enjoyed by all after the formal business of the evening was completed.

Rev Malcolm MacLeod has been called by the congregation and felt called by God to this work. There have been some remarkable providences and encouragements around the family's move to Toronto. The congregation has a long and interesting history to parts of which Mr Hugh Fraser, Clerk of Presbytery made reference in the Narrative.

While he was Professor in Westminster. John Murray was a frequent preacher to the congregation, and he arranged to send student preachers there from time to time. The MacLeods would value your prayers that the Lord will use them greatly in the work of the Gospel in that needy city.

Malcolm MacInnes

INVERNESS

The Congregation has been encouraged recently by the addition of another name to the Communion Roll. Every soul is precious in the Lord's sight, and may he hasten the day when many will profess the name of Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

The Book Reading Club has resumed, and the reading of the book about George Muller, 'Delighted in God', was a refreshing and challenging exercise. I would recommend not only that book, but also the forming of a Reading Group for mutual encouragement. Both the Ladies and the Men's Meetings have also started up again for the winter months, and are useful times for friendship.

The Orphanage Club, which collects items for children mainly in Romania, continues in its good work. At the Harvest Thanksgiving Services a large number of food items were donated by both parts of the congregation, and these were given to four local charities for distribution to the people whom they serve.

The other outreach activities of the congregation continue, such as The King's View magazine, King's Kids on Friday, Mothers & Toddlers on Tuesday, and After-School Club on Tuesday. For all of these we ask your prayers for God's blessing.

DUNDEE

Several events have taken place in our desire to reach our community.

On Saturday 30th October we had a Hallelujah Party for the children and were happy that 16 children from the community attended. They were given good instruction about right and wrong particularly in connection with Halloween! Andy Burns our evangelistic worker gave an excellent address to the children who were of course given a good feed afterwards.

On Friday the 5th November we had a Bonfire Buffet for the community. Over 40 people came, who first attended the bonfire in the neighbouring Baxter Park run by the corporation and then returned to the church for a lovely buffet. Good conversations took place with individuals who took the opportunity to open their hearts to us about their various difficulties and circumstances. It was nice to meet several who had been with us in the summer months at camp.

We are very encouraged with the Sunday Club which can have up to 28 children in it! We ask for special prayer that Eileen's work would be blessed. It is very difficult to keep the attention of children ranging from 4 years to 15 years for an hour! Eileen gets help from various members of the congregation each week, the work is very hard, but is also rewarding when you discover that many of the children do remember what they have been taught!

We are getting good attendances at the present time and feel encouraged but we do need a mighty work of God's Spirit.

Running for God

By Malcolm MacInnes

IN THE MOVIE “Chariots of Fire”, Eric Liddell justified his passion for running, even while his sister feared that it interfered with God’s call on his life. He claimed that he ran for God. All he was in everything could bring glory to God. If he could run fast, it was because God made him fast.

That conviction helped him win the gold medal in the Paris Olympics. The Apostle Paul was familiar with the challenges of contest and prize-winning, and although he likely never took part in the Olympics of his day, he knew God’s call on his life to run in the race to Heaven. He knew that to win the Olympic prize the athlete must be disciplined in lifestyle and committed to winning. These were the principles Paul saw as essential to Christian living.

The Olympics were tournaments of honour, and even to qualify for the contest was no small achievement. Thankfully the ‘entrance’ requirements for running the Christian life-race are not like that. God just calls us to repentance and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and we are on our way in the race when we obey him in that. The race is on, and we need to evaluate our progress.

The threefold test for the Olympic race concerned citizenship, health and reputation. The town-crier went through the streets of the city calling for anyone to come forward who objected to the contestant. How would we fare on that score if the test is applied to the race of life to win heaven? Does your Christianity show that you are a citizen of heaven, that you are in good spiritual health, and that your reputation is consistent with the pattern of Christian character in the Bible?

What about your citizenship? Our natural citizenship is ‘the kingdom of darkness’ in which we do not know God, nor do we love Him. Only when we confess our sin and trust in Jesus for salvation do we get ‘new citizenship’. God acknowledges us as His children by adoption and citizens of heaven.

What about your health? The other day I went into the little store at the filling station to pay for car fuel. What an impressive display there was on the shelves behind the staff! It was difficult to make out the name of the cigarette brands because the Government health warnings were so conspicuous. Health is a big thing, but many

people are careless about it. To speak about moral and true spiritual health will seem almost like a foreign language to many.

In an age of 'do as you please', any call to restraint will sound absurd, but the history of nations and the life story of many send out the same message, what you sow you will reap. If your moral and spiritual health is neglected, you are in danger of not winning the race to heaven. Call in Jesus the Doctor for advice.

What about your reputation? The macho thing to say

is 'I don't care what people think'. How absurd! We all care what people think about us – we only want them to think well.

What does God think of you? That is more important. A safe way to discover that is to ask yourself what do YOU think about Jesus Christ. If you do not think highly of him, it will be obvious what God thinks of you. You are rejecting his offer of forgiveness and salvation as long as you reject his Son. To run for God and to win the race, you need Jesus Christ. With him you will be certain to win.

False Emotion

I AM NOT AGAINST EMOTION IN preaching, but I am against emotionalism. I am not against earnest persuasion, but I am against using tricks to make people change their minds. Paul pleaded with men and women, weeping as he pleaded. This is magnificent. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not a cold, intellectual proposition any more than the plight of a Christless man or woman is a matter of mere academic interest.

So let us have tears but not 'tear-jerkers'; and pleading but not persuasion techniques. (You plead when you are concerned; you use a persuasive technique when you've read a manual on methodology and learn how to get people to make decisions.) I'd far sooner have a weeping preacher and a dry-eyed congregation, than the reverse. Preachers have something to weep about. They see, or should see, things as they are, and it is their job to communicate what they see. They may not be able to control their emotions.

Part of our trouble arises from our desperation for results. 'Full-time' workers have to prove they are labourers worthy of their hire. They have to get results and are as desperate to do so as a salesman. Christian students prove their Christian maturity (like braves prove their physical prowess) by taking a few scalps.

Now results are admirable. I dare not say we should not be bothered when people around us do not get saved. We should be **very** bothered. But results have to be genuine to be any good. It is regeneration that fits people for heaven, not going through the motions of a psychological conversion.

John White

The Church

One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

by Richard D Phillips, Philip G Ryken, Mark E Dever

Published by P & R Publishing

ISBN 0-87552-614-4

Preface:

The preface begins by saying: "The idea of the church did not fare very well in twentieth-century evangelism. People frequently said that they liked Jesus, but did not think too highly of the church. The church represented religion, a pejorative term, when what they wanted was Christianity.

"To many people, Christianity did not require the church; to some, the church was even considered a hindrance to a vibrant relationship with Christ himself. As one surveyed the evangelical press, it seemed that the most notable and most useful Christian institutions were the para-church ministries.

"Therefore, many concluded, if you want to get serious about evangelism or missions or discipleship, you had to go around the church instead of through it. But people are starting again to think differently about her place in the Christian life. . . According to the Bible, the church of Jesus Christ is the pre-eminent institution in all the world".

The preface points out that this book started life as addresses given at the 2003 Philadelphia Conference on Reformation Theology, entitled: "Christ and His Church" organised by the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.

The Prologue:

The Prologue is written by Richard D Phillips and is based on Christ's words: "*I will build My Church*".

Phillips emphasises that to understand something properly we must go back to its origin and it therefore points us to [Matt 16:13-25] when Christ says: "*I will build my Church*". It points out that Christ, after his rejection, intentionally led the disciples out to Caesarea Philippi, a place identified with secular philosophy and idolatry and pagan religion.

Significantly, the prologue points out that the proto-church was challenged to make its profession, not in seclusion, but facing false idols, in the very midst of the world. The church must not turn to an exclusive past but face the future in light of Christ's promise to the

Gentiles for their inclusion in his saving plan.

The first thing Jesus insists upon, at the very moment of the church's origination, is the claim that he alone is Lord.

Concentrating on the church's origin the Prologue goes on to speak of four vital aspects of the church's foundation.

1. **A Great Profession**

where the key to Peter's confession in [Matt 16:16] is said to be on the word 'revealed' highlighting that the revelation of the Father is through the Son himself.

2. **A Great Promise**

where it is claimed that there really is no such thing as 'apostolic succession' as the apostle's work terminated with the laying of the foundation. Peter is said to be what Jesus will build his church upon - but only in his capacity as professing Christ to be the Messiah! The promise to build his church is not a promise to make a minister famous or to construct great buildings but simply to produce true people of God upon such a confession.

3. **A Great Prophecy**

where the truthfulness of Christ's prediction when he said: *"...the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it"* is shown to have been true throughout history and will be true to all eternity.

4. **A Great Principle**

which Jesus set forth to his disciples is that the great profession, the great promise, the great prophecy are all inseparably connected to Christ's death and suffering. This principle

must also govern the church in its work. This is what Jesus meant when he said; *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me"* [Matt 16:24]. The Kingdom can only advance through suffering. This is the 'power' which Paul had this in mind when he said: *"that I might know the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings"*.

One Church:

The next chapter, entitled: "One Church" is also written by Richard D Phillips and is based on [Eph 4:1-6] particularly the words: *"one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Lord and Father of all"*.

In this chapter Phillips discusses the dilemma of division in the church and how it should be handled, pointing out that there is no problem of unity in Christ's church, for it is already one. He makes an excellent job of defining the boundaries of doctrinal inclusion. Phillips is obviously concerned about the present day attacks on the traditional understanding of 'justification by faith' and shows how it is a fundamental part of the gospel and the real core of the Christian Faith.

A Holy Church:

This chapter is written by Philip G Ryken and is based on [1 Cor 6:9-11] *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God?"* and begins with

definitions of 'Holiness' and shows how the church - even the Corinthian church - is called 'holy' in the Bible. Much is rightly made about how the Corinthian church were washed, were sanctified and were justified at their conversion before concentrating on the church's 'call' to holiness.

The holiness of the church is defined as 'a gospel holiness' quoting the Puritan John Owen when he says: "Holiness is nothing but the implanting, writing and realising of the gospel in our souls."

As a church, we are not holy in ourselves but we are holy to God in Christ. It is propositioned that possibly the great weakness of the church today is the absence of a radical godliness that would set us apart from the world.

We need to be distinct from the world, not simply lost in it. What motivates the truly righteous to live holy lives, is not a desperate desire to make ourselves 'good enough' but a profound gratitude for what God has done for us in Christ.

A Catholic Church:

Chapter 4 is by Mark E Dever and is based on the well-known verse: "... *all one in Christ Jesus.*" It begins by explaining the way in which the word 'catholic' developed its meaning throughout the Christian era, referring to Protestant and Roman Catholic understandings of the term. Dever would argue that Paul's argument in Galatians is the primary focus of 'catholic' by saying

that true orthodoxy and apostolic teaching is based on the one faith in Christ Jesus.

He points out well how Paul shows in this epistle that we are justified solely by faith in Christ; we are sanctified solely by faith in Christ and we are adopted solely by faith in Christ, before ending with the implications of this truth for the church today.

An Apostolic Church:

Philip Ryken writes chapter 5 on the apostolicity of the church based on [Eph 2:19-22] "...*you are fellow citizens with the saints...*". This chapter identifies what true Biblical 'Apostolicity' means as opposed to other traditional and contemporary definitions.

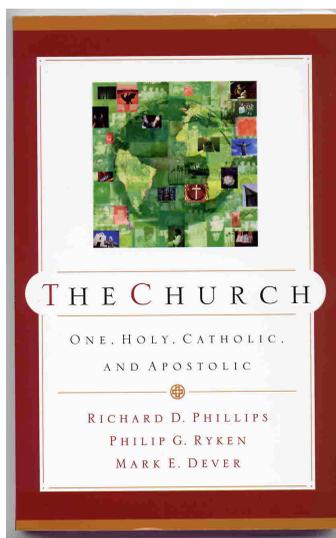
Ryken makes an excellent job of demonstrating that an apostolic church is Christ-centred in its preaching, Bible based in its teaching, grace-dependent in its ministry, faith-promoting in its evangelism, and God-glorifying in its vision, pointing out how Luther and Calvin did not try to start something new in reforming the church, but simply tried to make the church return to its original foundation.

The Epilogue:

Richard D Phillips in the epilogue, entitled: "Christ and His Church" concentrates on the exaltation of Christ from [Eph 1:20-23] "...*God seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule*

and authority..." He introduces his theme by saying: "...the church without Christ is at best an exercise in play-acting and at worst a fraud" and goes on to point out how the exalted Christ is actually 'given' to the church and that means the church has assurance of salvation; divine power available to it; and a guarantee of perpetual pre-eminence throughout all ages, including eternity.

This book helps us understand the Biblical concept of the church and should encourage many true 'labourers in the harvest' who are becoming 'weary in well-doing'.



The Church - Walk by Faith

WE CONCLUDE WHERE we began, with the need for churches in the western world to undergo a profound reorientation, turning around from survival mode to a mission mode. The church will need to be turned inside out in order to bring those outside in. It will not suffice simply to invite the seeker to come to us to hear the gospel on our turf. Instead, the church will have to be the church in the world - gathering for worship in order to go out in mission.

The gospel does not provide instant answers to everything. In mission the church will have to learn to walk by faith, trusting God to be there by his Spirit to guide us along the way. There is no schedule prepared ahead of time. There is no step-by-step guide to instruct us how to handle every eventuality. Precisely because the world is in a fallen and broken state, we have to learn to live with diversity, ambiguity and paradox. There is no mission without mess. As Eugene Petersen has noted, much of life consists of 'mucking out'.

The uncertainty that plagues so many church leaders today is evidenced by their frustrating search for clear answers and step-by-step, fail-safe plans. This mindset represents our succumbing to the temptation to walk by sight and not by faith. It signifies our dependence on our own ability to produce answers and fix things. We must learn to admit that when we have done all that we know how to do, it will be inadequate to solve all the problems.

Eddie Gibbs & Ian Coffey in 'Church Next'

The Trinity

Answers to Questions from Richard Bewes (Used with permission)

As a student, I get so frustrated when talking with non-Christian groups at my campus, about the Trinity. Your help, please.

I salute you for the attempt! Don't bother with philosophical arguments, analogies or abstract definitions; they don't help [Isaiah 40:18]. The Bible is your authority.

Remember – to most religions – Jesus didn't exist until the middle of history! But if Christ is not present from the beginning, then He can hardly be a universal world Saviour. So start with the Old Testament as you present the one living, Trinitarian God who is, in essence, three Persons throughout the Bible. Genesis 1:1 has Elohim for 'God', a plural noun – but with a singular verb – 'Let us make man in our image' [Genesis 1:26].

More specifically, focus on Exodus 33. This is the advice of theologian, Paul Blackham. Tell your friends the story of Exodus, and of the 'Angel of the Lord' (who is the preincarnate Christ – see chapter 23), who accompanies his redeemed people in the pillar of cloud and of fire to Mount Sinai. Moses is summoned up the mountain to meet with someone who is called 'the Lord', but he is also said regularly to meet in a tent at the foot of the

mountain with someone equally called 'the Lord', who speaks to him *"face to face, as a man speaks to his friend"* [Exodus 33:11].

Note that, when Moses is up the mountain, and there asks that the Lord, who is hidden in thick darkness, will show him his glory, he receives the reply, *"You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live"* [Exodus 33:20]. There is no contradiction. Moses has no problem with the God who is one, and yet who is presented as these two Persons. Nor is there a problem with the fact of the Holy Spirit, who – only two chapters on – is said to equip the people of God, and who is also stated to be *"the Lord"* [Exodus 35:30,31; compare chapter 36:1]. Other helpful references are Nehemiah 9:20 and Isaiah 63:9–14.

It is a pattern throughout Scripture; there is the Father who has never been seen – who lives in the heavens above his people; there is the Son who has been seen – and who makes him known [John 1:18] and comes among his people; there is the Spirit, who is unseen, yet lives within and equips his people.

The Trinity is basic to our salvation – for these three Persons in the one Godhead have combined to save us from our sins; in the will of the Father, the saving work of the

Son, and the indwelling witness of the Holy Spirit [John 14:16, 23–26; Romans 8:16,17]. Try that as a start with your friends.

FURTHER STUDY: This material can be filled out further by Dr Paul Blackham's excellent audio cassette (WS5) on 'Explaining the Trinity', from Billy Graham's Amsterdam 2000, P.O. Box 462, Minneapolis, MN 55440, USA. Also obtainable through the All Souls Tape Library at Langham Place, London, vestry@allsouls.org

THANKFULNESS

The well-known Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, was once assaulted by thieves and robbed of his purse. He wrote these words in his diary: "Let me be thankful first, because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."

KM

From January next year (2005) the

APC NEWS

Will become a
bi-monthly magazine
The issues will appear in

January/February
March/April
May/June
July/August
September/October
November/December

The World is Not Enough

HOW MUCH ARE you worth? What value would you place on your soul? What would you consider being so valuable that you would be willing to ask for that in return for your soul?

Surely there is nothing - the world is not enough. There is nothing you can give which will measure up to your eternal worth. You cannot buy back your life from sin and the judgment that come in its wake, and neither can I. But the good news is that God can.

When from all eternity, the true and living God looked at you, the creature he had so lovingly made, and saw how you set your heart on everything and anything but himself; when he saw the mess you and I have made, he knew that a price had to be paid for our souls to be set free and he knew the world was not enough. That is why he sent his son Jesus into the world.

Jesus tells us about it earlier on: *"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life"* [Mat 16:21]. There is a divine **must** about it all. That is what he is going to give in exchange for your soul: **his** soul, pure and sinless.

There on that cross, covered

in spittle, pierced with nails, naked and bleeding, Jesus pays the price for our rebellion against his Father. The cry *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* is the cry of the soul abandoned to hell, bearing our punishment in our place, so that what we deserve he receives and what we don't deserve he freely gives - the cleansing of our souls and the gift of eternal life - when the God-shaped gap is filled as the risen Lord Jesus comes in to our hearts by his Spirit.

That is what it is all about. That is how much you matter to God. God loves you so much that the world was not enough for you, a million worlds would never be enough to pay the price for your rebellion and mine: he had to give himself. And amazingly he did.

But you ask: how does it become real for me? We are told in [Mat 16:24] *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up the cross and follow me"*. First Jesus talks of *"coming after me"*. Second Jesus says *"deny yourself"*. Thirdly Jesus talks about taking up your cross and following him.

Jesus leaves us with no choice. Follow him and you have eternal life, reject him and he will reject you, though he does not want to do so.

Melvin Tinker in 'Road to Reality'

KESWICK CONVENTION 2005

GRANTS ARE AVAILABLE FROM the Campbell Trust to enable ministers and full time Christian workers from Scotland to attend the Keswick Convention in 2005. The Convention lasts three weeks, with the second two weeks being especially for families, with alternatives programmes for children and young people. The theme for next year is 'The Glory of the Gospel' and the dates are 16-22 and 23-29 and 30 July to 5 August. Each week is self-contained. The grant assists towards travel and accommodation for any week. The only stipulation is that those applying should not have been registered members of the Convention on any previous occasion. There is no charge for actually attending the Convention. Early application is advised as only a small number of grants are available Full details are available from the Revd John M F Butler, 2 Southview, Dalmuir, Clydebank, G81 3LA. Email: jmfb@icscotland.net

THE PASTOR STOOD to preach his sermon and had a large plaster on his chin. He explained that while he was shaving that morning, he had concentrated on his sermon and cut his chin.

After the service, a deacon met him at the door and said, "What a pity you didn't concentrate on your chin and cut your sermon."

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The APC News is published 6 times per year, beginning with the January/February issue. The cost is **£10** per year including postage

Note for Congregations

Each congregation must contribute a minimum of £240 per annum towards the APC News Fund as arranged with the treasurer Mr Donald M Fraser. This is to be considered as a donation towards the sustaining of the magazine.

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Cheques should be made out to 'APC News'

and sent to the address below.

Please state if acknowledgement of donation is required.

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Publication Details

'The APC News'
is published 6 times per year
in the months of

January/February
March/April
May/June
July/August
September/October
November/December

All the views expressed in this magazine are not necessary those of the editor or the denomination.

The articles are meant to stimulate and provoke a serious study of Holy Scripture. All articles not attributed to an author are by the editor.

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