

Christian Behaviour

Supplementing the talk by Professor David Frost

‘And I will show you a still more excellent way ...
So now faith, hope, love abide, these three; and the
greatest of these is love.’

1 Corinthians 12:31, 13:13



Icon of Moses and the Burning Bush
Coptic, modern, source unknown

The God-implanted impulse
to holiness

- A The presence of God calls out in us a longing for holiness

- B God’s presence can be felt, even by unbelievers:
 - in the beauty of the natural world
 - in the mystery of the creatures he has made
 - the miracle of new human life.

The false idea of God –
Blake’s ‘Nobodaddy’

- A The world has a mistaken image of the Jewish and Christian God as:
 - ‘Nobody’s Daddy’
 - a tyrant who is the enemy of love, freedom and spontaneity
 - an imposer of rules, who delights to punish us for breaking them, a kill-joy.



‘Nobodaddy’ presides over the Court of Death
William Blake (1795), Tate Gallery, London

- B We Christians often have a corner in our minds for this image
 - which is a betrayal of all that Jesus taught us
 - and an image that reflects badly on Christians and the Christian faith.

The true image of God, and of Christians

- A Christ came to give us abundant life
- B God wants us to be joyful
- C With all God's gifts, the problem is not use but misuse
- D God's plan for us is to live unselfishly.

The old Law: its weaknesses and strengths

- 1 It tends to direct us to concentrate on ourselves
- 2 It cannot tell us which moral claim to put first
- 3 It is inflexible and absolute
- 4 It is mixed – some laws are divine and some human
- 5 It does not work as a means to make us holy
- 6 But it marks out right from wrong and convinces us we are sinners.

A more excellent way: Christ in us, by the power of the Spirit

How can that be done?

- by inviting Christ in with humility
- by studying his words and actions
- by communicating with Christ and his Church at the Liturgy, taking into ourselves Christ's Body and Blood.

What does 'Christ in us' mean for our behaviour?

- 1 It means loving our neighbour *as ourself*.
- 2 It does not mean we make for ourselves a new 'law'.



Anastasis or The Harrowing of Hell
(Chora Church, Constantinople (Istanbul), c.1340)

- 3 It does mean not judging others
- 4 *In sexual matters*, it means looking to the purposes of sexual love as taught in scripture
- 5 It means always looking to Christ to lift our fallen state
- 6 It means applying the principle of '*economia*': imitating God's love and putting people before rules
- 7 *On euthanasia and abortion*, it means respecting the sanctity of human life as God-given
- 8 *As regards our work*, it means acting as God's people in a world still enslaved to evil
- 9 *As regards our possessions*, it means accepting that everything we have and everything we are belongs to Christ.

Recommended Reading

- i. The words of Christ in the Gospel according to St Matthew, Chapters 5, 6 and 7.
- ii. The First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians, in a good modern English version (e.g. The New International Version, or J.B. Phillips, *Letters to Young Churches*).
- iii. Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns* (St Vladimir’s Seminary Press: Crestwood, New York, 2003) ISBN 0-88141-246-5

‘The whole purpose of life is to acquire the Holy Spirit.’

St Seraphim of Sarov

‘The aim of the Christian religion is to reach the fullness of communion with God, where we become united to Him.’

Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev

Your notes:
