

LIFE WAS NOT MEANT TO BE EASY

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"THE CHRISTIAN FAITH"

As a great man once said - and I suppose he is sorry he ever mentioned it - 'Life was not meant to be easy'. Now when you think of all the thousands and thousands of words that politicians have to say, it's marvellous isn't it, that this one remark should have so captured the public imagination. I dare say it is the only thing said by this Great One which everybody remembers - or even anybody remembers.

Why? You could hardly call it a witty remark; it is not profound; it is not beautiful. When Churchill spoke of 'blood, sweat and tears' it was unforgettably gripping; when Kennedy referred to the 'new frontier' men took him seriously; when Martin Luther King dreamed his dream his audience saw visions with him. But 'Life was not meant to be easy' hardly falls into that category. Why has it seized the popular imagination?

The obvious answer - and doubtless the one that contains most truth - is that it made an immediate appeal to the sense of irony which is one of the chief aspects of the Australian sense of humour. We love to mock the pretensions of those who try to lead us. After all, here is a man for whom life has always been easy, at a financial and material level at least, deigning to tell us that for the majority of men life is not like that. As he is driven about in his luxurious motor car, orders his aides to do his will, dwells in large and comfortable houses, has money in the bank and a butler to open the door, he sees fit to assure us that life was not meant to be easy. As we endeavour to buy a house and pay off the mortgage, we feel that we are in a better position to know than the Great Man is.

Yet I don't think that is the only reason for our instinctive reaction to this fatuous observation.

Some years ago in Canberra we had another Great Man who used to pretend that he could walk on water. At least he was joking (- I think -), but to say something like 'life was not meant to be easy' is to put yourself into the same divine class. For this saying assumes that life has a meaning, and, further, that **you know** what that meaning **is**. You are able to tell the rest of mankind about the purpose of life, and you have decided that it was not meant to be easy'. It really is the sort of remark you might suppose would emerge from a mountain and be accompanied by smoke and fire and thunder claps.

No, this Great One, however we may admire him has not got the trappings of divinity about him, and we need not suppose that he knows the purpose of life. But he has done us a service, nonetheless - and here the laugh is on us, not him. Most Australians have no purpose in life; and we are the worse for not having one. For those without purpose are those without meaning - and a life without meaning may have its rewards but they will be shallow and superficial - a precise description of Australian culture.

Is there a meaning in life? Not a bad question for the end of a year. God alone knows - since he has created life. And when God is consulted, which he should be at once, he tells us that the purpose of our life is that we should live to his glory, and not for our own selfish ends. Actually, you see, and I hate to admit this life was not meant to be easy; but it was meant to be filled with love for God and love for others, and it was meant to be infinitely fulfilling.

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