



ROAD TO REALITY

FINDING MEANING IN A
MEANINGLESS WORLD





Melvin Tinker analyses our modern society with great insight. In this book he provides thoughtful answers to those thinking about the great questions. Unerringly he points the reader to Jesus Christ, the ultimate answer to all the questions.

*Rt Revd Frank Retief,
Presiding Bishop of the Church of England in South Africa.*

Play a game with this book; stop reading it when you don't read something striking on the next page—I just kept going and going.

*Rico Tice
All Souls Church, Langham Place,
Author of Christianity Explored*





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MELVIN TINKER



CHRISTIAN FOCUS





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For Roy and Judith—
their inspiration and kindness.





Preface

One of my most vivid childhood memories comes from when I was about 5 years old. I was in a busy open market on a day out with my Grandfather, which was always a delight. But that delight soon turned sour as, when we momentarily stopped at a stall to peruse the wares, I let go of my Grandfather's hand and turned only to discover that he had gone. It is not that easy for a small boy to make his way through a large crowd of grown ups. Panic and fear gripped my little heart. All sorts of thoughts ran through my mind. 'Would I ever see my family again?' 'Would I be placed in an orphanage?' The story did end happily. I made my way to a nearby shop, was wonderfully fussed over by the women who worked there, only to be retrieved by my Grandfather and a relieved looking policeman, who saw me through the shop window. If being lost is a terrifying experience, being found is one of the most exhilarating.

However, it is possible to be lost in ways, which though not physical, are just as real. We have all had the experience of following a reasoned argument, or the workings of a mathematical formula, only to exclaim part





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of the way through: 'Stop, you have lost me.' But more poignant, is the sense of lostness permeating the lives of many people living in the post-modern West. Listen to these words of a fourteen year old: 'Why am I here? What have I done? Why was I born? Who cares about me? I am me. I must suffer because I am me. Why do I live? For love, for happiness? Why should I not commit suicide? I hate this world. I hate my parents and my home—though why, I do not know. I searched for truth but I only found uncertainty. I was thwarted in my search for love. Where can I find happiness? I do not know. Perhaps I shall never know.' Before we dismiss such thoughts as the musings of a disturbed adolescent, the newscaster Anna Ford, now in her mid fifties, said this: 'Life is terribly short and a bit of a joke at our expense. You wonder what it's all about. Getting older has enormous compensations. But I do wonder how I will live. Will I continue working? Will I be lonely when the children leave? I know that if I haven't discovered what I am good at and done it, when I lie on my death bed nothing will compensate for not being fulfilled. I will feel empty.' It appears that the sense that life is some sort of journey is a universal phenomenon, but along with it is the deeper sense of disorientation and lostness. Plutarch wrote: 'The soul is in exile and a wanderer.'

In order to orientate ourselves aright, gain direction and purpose, a map is required. Of course, many today would dismiss the notion of any 'big-picture', which makes sense of life, as being in itself a hopeless wish. But that would be to prejudge the issue. What if our shared instinct is right, that life is a journey with a definite purpose in view—a purpose that comes to us from outside



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rather than being dreamt up by ourselves? Most of the major world philosophies and religions have claimed this to be the case and have sought to supply such a map.

The Christian faith is no different in this matter. That is the claim made by its founder Jesus Christ and its foundation documents, the Bible. As with any map, the acid test comes in its usefulness as a guide. Does it actually 'fit' with our experience and can it be shared with others? Does the map make sense of itself (with all the different parts hanging together) and with the 'real world', including the experience of previous generations? This does not mean that the ultimate authority is 'experience' in a subjective sense, but rather that what experience intimates, what the Christian message explains, and what the Christian message teaches, experience corroborates.

This book is an attempt to sketch out the Christian 'road map to reality'. It invites the reader to look at the claims of the Bible and how it engages with some of the deep issues of life. It calls the reader to examine his or her own journey so far, and to consider whether a change in direction using another map is called for.

There is no substitute for reading God's road map for yourself—the Bible—to weigh up its trustworthiness (which, may I add, has been well attested to by millions of people from around the world and throughout the ages). But as they say, (to change the picture): 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating'. A map, left on the shelf, gathering dust, is of no functional use. It has to be taken down, opened, and followed. That is the challenge of this little book: Look at Christianity for yourself and to see if it 'rings true.' One thing I can guarantee—you will be surprised.