

## Putting the Essence of the Church into Focus

1. Secondary things can only be rightly placed when **primary** things are established. With such widespread confusion over what is 'essential' for the Church, finding its essence is particularly important. [It is surprising how many things we regard as 'essential' for the Church's survival are not of its essence at all, but are part of God's enrichment!]

2. The essence of an omelette is simply **egg & heat**.

If one of those is removed it cannot be an omelette. Tomatoes, ham, mushrooms, salt, pepper, water, etc., are for its enrichment, but are not essential. The same two principles are true of the Church.

3. The essence of the **Church** lies in six things:

i) **God's Act of Revelation in Jesus** (John 3:16).

ii) **Personal recognition** of i) and **confession of Jesus as Lord** (Acts 16:31)

iii) **God's Calling-out** (Gk. *ek-klesia*) of such believers in **Fellowship** (1 Peter 1:2)

iv) **Jesus's Promised Presence** within this fellowship (Matthew 18:21)

v) **Jesus's Commissioning & Spirit-empowering for Evangelism** ((John 20:21-22).

vi) **The Obedience of the Faithful to this commission & Spirit-empowering and their proclamation of i) above** (Acts 2:38-47).

4. Remove any one of these and the Church ceases to be the Church. Anything in addition is an **enrichment** – but is not actually 'essential', i.e. of *essence* of the Church.

5. **The proclamation of vi) is the message of i)!** So it is like a loop of tape or film, except that instead of simply repeating itself, the process acts as an inbuilt dynamic and guarantee of growth.

6. The true Church is, therefore, self-propagating. Evangelism is part of the essence of the true Church. Today's Church exists because it heard the Gospel in the past; the future Church can only exist if the Gospel is proclaimed **today!**