

Spearhead April/May 1991

From the Rector, Christopher Frith

Christians are **RESURRECTION PEOPLE**, forgiven because of the death of Jesus, convinced that He really did rise from the dead, and caught up in His resurrection.

Resurrection people are secure people. Death, the worst enemy of all, has been defeated. Eternity is an inviting prospect. This life's problems and joys are put into perspective.

While we wait for heaven, we are bound together by the living Jesus Christ. Our common experience of Him makes us into a people, resurrection people. I want to encourage our three Churches to concentrate on being just that.

On the six Sundays after Easter the theme of our morning services will be 'WHAT ON EARTH IS THE CHURCH?' The sermons will explore different Bible pictures of the Church: a people, a bride, a temple, an army, a body, a family. It is the prayer of my fellow clergy and myself that all of us will approach these services with the sincere prayer in our hearts that our risen Lord will speak directly to us and make us more like resurrection people.

Our much heralded AIM AND VISION should be much more of a reality.

The body growing and moving forward with all members

- Playing their part
- Using their gifts
- and properly co-ordinated

It involves every one of us.

St Thomas' Gives Birth to a New Religious Paperback

Godfrey Holmes, a Chesterfield Social Worker who lives on Yew Tree Estate has written a book which will appeal to all young people aged 14 to 21.

It is called **BEGINNING WHERE I AM**: Meditations for Young People, Published by S.P.C.K. Triangle March 1991, price £2.99p.

At the Youth Service on March 3rd., Godfrey talked to Christopher Frith about his writing, this book especially, and a prayer- was said to dedicate **BEGINNING WHERE I AM** as it begins its travels to bookshops and bookstalls in Britain and overseas.

A review follows.

Beginning Where I Am

By Godfrey Holmes

"Beginning where teenagers are Godfrey Holmes explores the issues they are facing now "

This how the review begins on the back cover of the book and I do agree with that to a certain extent. The author certainly can relate to teenagers, which is apparent with his easy to read style.

The book is set out with a chapter based around prayer and meditation, and then follows with typical questions youngsters might ask on the subject of meditation. Out of the 113 pages of "Beginning where I am", 96 are devoted to meditations Godfrey has written. These are then to be used by the readers, if so desired. This proportion seemed quite high to me as I thought the readers should be encouraged to write their own prayers. However, the author does include some topical subjects; for example:

- i) I've started smoking
- ii) I don't want to die
- iii) I don't want to look for work

or iv) Why was I born?

These are I'm sure issues adults could echo never mind the children. Other topics covered are bullying, friendships, arguments within families, addictions and beliefs. Quite a lot for you to get your teeth into! This is a book to be chewed over, (not literally) consumed and hopefully put into practice when issues arise. It might even be good for parents to read, so that they can understand the problems facing young people in today's society.

So people, part with your hard earned cash and buy a copy. Teenagers, be encouraged to read it because it will hopefully guide you to the One who truly understands (not just pretends to!). I'm talking of course about the Big Guy GOD.

Review by Naomi Redhead

Christ the Controversialist –His Attitude to Tradition

Synopsis of a sermon preached by Robin Dawson at St Peter's

Our gospel reading would indicate Jesus' attitude to tradition was not favourable.

'You have let go of the commandments of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.' Mark 7:8

'You nullify the word of God by your traditions.' Mark 7:13

The other readings were no more favourable.

Paul - 'Don't become captive to a hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition....not Christ Col 2:8

Hosea - 'God desires mercy not sacrifice ... acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.' Hosea 6:6

Did Jesus' attitude cause controversy? You bet it did.

Jesus saw the "traditions of the elders" as nullifying the law of God and being a burden. 'And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.' Luke 11:46. People would have been livid. Strict observance of the traditions was the foundation of their society, the only way to God. Jesus would say that the traditions had become their God. Does this mean that we must get rid of traditions? Jesus didn't say that; it was the ones that get between us and God that he criticised.

Lets look at traditions. Countries have traditions, like the British with our queuing, Regiments and industries have their initiation ceremonies, Churches have traditions.

Traditions have good aspects: They give people an identity; they call things to remembrance as with the Passover - "When your children ask you 'What do these ceremonies mean?...' Exodus 12 v 26); they give us security and continuity. Traditions have bad aspects: They are used as an excuse for not thinking; ("We've always done it this way.") their meaning can be obscured; people can be judged by their adherence to them; they can be used to exclude people. The greatest danger of all is that they can cause splits. These disputes sometimes became irreconcilable because one group is upset if a particular tradition is observed and another if it is ignored.

Let's look at the problem as it affects St. Peter's. One particular example is our communion service. This is all that is best of tradition. A tradition set up by our Lord himself. It reminds us of the very basis of our faith, Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. But there are problems with the details. The way we receive communion has been changed, to emphasise better the corporate nature of our worship. Some people like it, others see it as getting in the way of our personal communion with God. There is a split, bad feeling.

What is to be done?

1. Try to agree. Paul, writes to the disputatious Corinthians, (1 Cor 1:10) pleading with them to agree with one another. To agree means first to discuss. Anglican congregations are generally very bad at discussing things that really matter to them. They would rather be told and then sulk. The continued influence of the Act of Uniformity?!

2. Having learnt to discuss, look at our traditions and see if they nullify the Word of God. How many of us are confident we know what the Word of God is? How much study have we done? For example, do we know all the scriptural teaching on the communion service; or on the body of Christ?

In an ideal world having done 1 and 2 above we would all be in agreement. But this is not an ideal world. We know that even having done 1 and 2 thoroughly sometimes we cannot agree. For example, the Church of England cannot agree about the ordination of women priests. What can we do?

The first verse of our epistle has the answer. 'So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.'

We must live with our disagreements by remembering what Christ has done for us and together overflow with thankfulness. Thinking of what we have in common and being thankful, won't make the problems go away, but it will put them in their proper place.

To summarise. Traditions are bad when they get between us and God. Traditions are good when they unite us and teach us. When traditions split us we must try to agree, we must discuss and study, and whether we agree or not we can put things in their proper place by living lives overflowing with thankfulness to Christ.

A final thought. If Jesus walked through the door of this Church in person now, which would worry him more, the way we run our service or our relationships with each other? The latter, of course. You may say it would be easy if Jesus were here in person. But he is, isn't he?

Robin Dawson

Mission to Oxford University, January 27-February 3 1991

THE UNIVERSITY

Oxford University is famous throughout the world as a place of learning. However, many students search for meaning and purpose in life, and time and again are left dissatisfied with the answers that philosophy, science, politics, drink and social life all attempt to give.

THE MISSION

Once every three years the OICCU has a major mission to the university. The aim is to give as many as possible of the 15,000 students the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel. This year the mission was led by J. John, an experienced evangelist who has led over 100 university missions. He was backed by a team of "Assistant Missionaries", usually a man and a woman in each of the 30 colleges.

THE PROGRAM

The pattern of each day was fairly consistent. The Christians in Brasenose, my old college, met to pray each morning, and to check the day's events. After breakfast all the assistant Missionaries", met with J. John for a time of news, worship, teaching and prayer. Then it was back to the college for a series of small meetings: most of the Christians invited friends to a lunch or tea at which I would say something provocative to stimulate discussion about Jesus. Particularly good were the physicists' lunch, the tea for mathematicians (my old subject!) and the football team's beer evening. In the evening there was a central meeting in the university at which J. John explained the gospel clearly and powerfully. There were between 700 and 850 people at these main meetings, the most people coming on the evening when the theme was "Suffering and a God of Love?"

NEW CHRISTIANS

Inevitably there was a mixed response, as Jesus told us would happen in the parable of the sower. It was sad to see people rejecting God after weighing up the cost of commitment. However, across the university some 120 people confessed faith in Christ for the first time, as well as 30 who re-committed their lives to Christ. In Brasenose about 8 people became Christians. Please pray for them as they learn about their faith and join churches. Pray also for the hundreds (literally) of people in enquirers groups in the different colleges. The important thing is for all these people to keep going in the face of the inevitable opposition.

PERSONALLY

It was good to be back in Oxford for a while and see old friends. It was even better to have the privilege of helping people to faith in Jesus, and discovering in Him that fulness of life he promised. It was invariably the case that those people who became Christians had been prayed for by friends and had been talking with those friends about

Christianity for some time. That is the same way as our friends here in Chesterfield will discover Christ: prayer, discussion and invitation.

Jonathan Jee