

SUNDAY DECEMBER 16TH

AFTER DOUBTS INITIALLY THE UNITARIAN SERVICE IS THE BEST YET

UNITARIAN SERVICE

MATHS PROG (PART 2!) & MEDIOLOGY

I suppose the thing is at the moment that I don't want to dive in to something else which I might want to leave, and the religious situation as such is unstable. At the last minute a few more came in to give a congregation of 10. However there was a good reason for this, there's a card practice in the afternoon so the Quaker bloke told me. He said people would be back alright next week, though in the notices Ernest Penn said he's invited the Quakers to that and wants a big Unitarian attendance too. However sat there at the beginning and being honest or destructive to myself I thought oh no, the same old thing again - the same voice dominates the service, in fact I cannot understand why a non-dogmatic service has an old fashioned style based on dogmatism. I know the Unitarian position means they must say alot but it should be more discussive. So it sat as the thing began but it had a good theme but weird content. He announced the service was based on the approach to Christmas & "are you ready" - And then, it seemed, Christmas disappeared. Here was I expecting carols or something & that didn't happen and even when he said we've moved to the Christmas carol section that wasn't a carol either. Now there are carols in there, and there's no doubt that next week there'll be a sing song. In a sense it was about the run up to Christmas which the sermon, and by hell it is long, explained well. But the thing got interesting when he read out from Milton where it says about the muddy waters of traditionalism, and be prepared to go by the truth etc. Hmm, looked interesting and it was getting bolshy in its own way. Still don't know what this had to do with Christmas but in a way, it did because he referred to it in the sermon saying such freedom is spiritual maturity, and spiritual maturity is seeing the need to change, and seeing the need to change is what repentance means, and repentance is for Unitarians part of advent which prepares them/us for all the year in spiritual development and John the Baptist called to repent because the kingdom of God was at hand. New approach to Christmas - John the Baptist. Something happened to Jesus' birth, but it was mentioned. Church concentrate on external things like the virgin birth Betulehem & one other.

⊗ I said Rog

Pitching it into ecumenism, Jewish like, & Bahai's but that's my doing

* He ^{mentioned} a Unitarian

church in Aberdeen which he was comparing this with - 2009

but the important thing is internal, spiritual growth. And then, later on, just to show his bias he said "this man from Nazareth". Yes, very interesting there was an affirmation here without bothering to deny, an affirmation to my satisfaction (especially after Swine last Tuesday) although a cautious attitude to dismissal or arguing against. Anyway it seemed that I had little to pick up on for the talk-back which I fancied using. But then I felt there was an omission, not that it was strictly relevant except perhaps that he was assuming Jesus was the Messiah for Israel. He said John the Baptist expected a Messiah Judge, the Pharisees expected one like them and strict to the law but when Jesus came he confounded all expectations, a man so close to the people he served. Well it seemed to me that Jesus himself expected a particular Messiah - though one based on himself if not himself transformed. However there was no talk-back presumably because of the numbers, or he forgot. But I asked about it afterwards. I said to the minister that Jesus himself expected this supernatural messiah out of the clouds. Yes, and he was wrong he said. He said of a Unitarian bloke at Essex made up in features looking like an old Testament prophet, and he'd be preaching as this when he leaned over the pulpit with a pause and looked at everyone "and it didn't happen" he said. And he got away with it said Ernest Penn. This was explained to me when I said to him that at Swine vicarage we could talk about it, but not in the service. He said "we can". "I know we can" I said, as if I'd been a member for 20 years - in fact though even here there is a lack of being too bolshy or agnō it, traditionally speaking. The virgin birth, Christmas legends, Jesus as Messiah were mentioned without great critical comment. Anyway the chat afterwards was all round rather good. The Rev. asked if it's Barry Thompson at Swine. I said no, he's gone to St Mary's although I was unclear of this, certainly he was curate there and is based at University as a part time lecturer. Ernest Penn said Barry once had a Unitarian minister preach at Swine, he said he doesn't know what the Bishop would think if he knew, he doubt if he told him and this was worth a laugh. Here though the Quaker bloke said the trouble with us in Hull is we're 200 years behind the times, the Bishop is alright.*

well I said I left the Church of England and I justified it to answer his point whilst making an initial comment that Hull is a "funny place" anyway with Primitive Methodism. The Quaker said the bloke next to me - ~~Mike?~~ ^{Mike?} I'll call him - came from Primitive Methodism, oh sorry I said, but Mike? said "let him have his say" so I said the second thing is that on the one hand there is on the one hand liberal theology & then on the other they try to stick to the creeds. Yes, this bloke agreed with this, and I said too about the religious scene is changing now. Ernest Penn said that Unitarianism is now a convert religion and I said Anglicanism is going that way, a max 20-25 congregation at Swine and in Sutton with 31000 in a council estate they get 45 from there to an evensong - so Mike? said about his use of cider with Rosie in some services he does - when the minister never hears cos he's never there Mike? said - where in the morning all the nobs and people are at the service, at night when its voluntary few go - so he wonders whether that many have ever wanted to go to church - on earlier about my point on the creeds - which connected me to the changing religious scene - he said that the book The Myth of God Incarnate came out and then ah you can believe what you like but no, the creeds again. He also told us that he was intact in the C of E himself, left it for Roman Catholicism "the wrong way" - after I said Fundamentals & there are 3 ways - but then came to Unitarianism. He also told me about in 2 weeks his 8 month son by second marriage is being "welcomed" "not baptised" I said, he repeated & then he said it would be an experience for my - "quest" I said, he repeated. Meanwhile there standing was Diane, called so by someone else, probably approaching 20 and slightly shy asked to join in our chats by the Quaker, and treating her a bit sentimentally Ernest Penn said he'd see her after Christmas. Well I have one answer for the slightly shy - talk direct & involve. I asked if she is a convert or grown up in it. She's been with the Unitarians since she was 10. She used to go with Brownies to a C of E service once a month but it was always the same, and she prefers this style. She was a Methodist but prefers this. Of the C of E I said they say God listens but I guess he would have got a bit bored by now. But I asked her as someone grown up

in it does the liberality of this church actually make any difference or wouldn't it matter. She said that it relates more to her everyday experience. So although grown up in it, she is as if a convert. However I still felt that I, Mike?, the Quaker and Ernest Penn were 'heavies' whilst she only had half an interest. I imagined there being less conflict with her than Noelle on religious matters, but then again - as a heavy I might come across as over concerned. The woman driving her home & others asked where I was going to, so I said Sutton & by bike.

The other thing was the images were no longer strange. When I first went there the cross had disappeared and replaced by this cup & light. Certain things were just unfamiliar. Now however, other than the re-orientation of the organ, there was no strangeness - even all that about the spiritual - which in fact is linked to the human with others - was not 'threatening' to my non-spiritual (anti-Bahai) bias when I emphasised realism. I thought about this later, seeing I'm changing my mind rather easily, but the important thing is to not think about a soul & to think about 'encounters' which should be spiritually observant. But this is crucially different from trying to be angelic which is bound to end in failure.

Next week for 9.30 I think I'll squeeze in Swine - without communion - as a kind of act of reconciliation & a ring along with carols. Give a comparison between the two. They have a carol thing on Sunday later but it clashes with the Unitarian. It's funny but I'd like to wear a Unitarian badge. Am I going barmy?