

*“I was forced to go to Chapel so much when I was at school that...” so the old line goes. Perhaps there is somewhere a valid point in the assumption which suggests that compulsory education puts people off learning, that compulsory physical education puts people off sport, and that compulsory Chapel attendance puts people off worship. But I believe that it is in the general context of the education of the whole person that our worship and Divinity (sic) classes here at College must be placed.*

*When we look at what has happened in the classroom and on the sports field over the past 15, 50 or 125 years, and see the tremendous developments that have taken place in both method and attitude, then I think we have to be prepared to look with the same eyes at Christian education and worship. It's not all change. Rugby is still rugby (despite minor alterations to the rules), but now there's soccer, basketball, venture group, and the rest. Don't ask me for the worship equivalent of basketball, but, obviously, sung Evensong has and will continue to have an important part to play in the worship life of school. It's perhaps unwise to push the comparison too far but just as Upper is not a suitable place for all sports to be played, so, too, the Chapel may not be the most suitable place for all acts of worship.*

*The increase of choice for the boy, be it in sport or academic subject, and the lack of diversity within our presentation of the Christian life is just a small part of it all. If we do question anything at College, then it is the whole direction and life of the school we should examine. Does anyone ask, apart from the Chaplain, what a church school is in 1975? In 1850 they didn't need to ask, because the answer seemed so obvious. Yet it's in this area of the whole life of the school that real questions must be asked and answers sought, or all the other questions about Chapel attendance and Divinity and the role of the Chaplain, and the answers that are supplied to them, are just so much decoration on an empty cardboard Easter egg.*

*The fashionable murmurings about declining standards and the tut-tutting about drink, drugs, and sex are just so much hot air, unless we are prepared to face up to the implications of the questions that lie at the*

*heart of THE question – “What is life all about?” For this surely lies at the heart if we are engaged in education for living for life. And, for us, there at the centre is the figure of Jesus. At least that’s how I read life, too. Now we can accept this proposition or we can reject it, but I don’t see how we can get anywhere if we try to go halfway with it. If we do accept it, then we must base our thinking, our decisions, and our teaching, unequivocally and unashamedly, on the Christian Gospel.*

*In that setting, love of God and love of neighbour, worship, and involvement in, and commitment to the community held prior place. Of course we can and must argue about the best ways of presenting these commandments, but as in any Christian community, they hold first place. I suppose I’m only asking, ‘Are we a Christian school or not?’*

*We exist in a society no longer labelling itself ‘Christian’; we, like other independent schools, justify our continuing existence on the claim that we believe in the worth of the Christian life and the teaching that is a necessary part of it. In recognising this we have a choice. Either we give substance to our claim, or we find and proclaim some other basis on which to justify our existence. And as for the statement, “I was forced to go to Chapel so much...”? It will either continue to be made, or it will cease to exist.*

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