WHERE THE RUBBER HITS THE ROAD

Posted on January 17, 2009 by Eddie

Category: Mission

A few days ago, I wrote expressing my disagreement with Christian Voice for trying to stop the atheist advertising on the sides of buses in the UK.

> *I thought that the posters on the buses were great: they got the question of faith and religion out into the public arena, which is extremely difficult to acheive in the UK. (read more)*

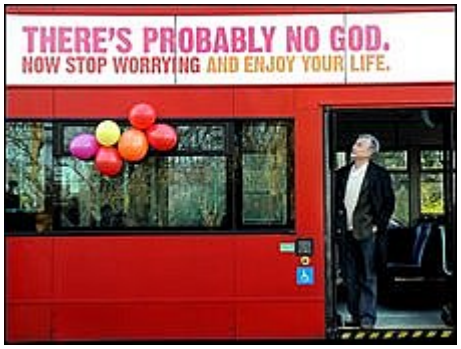
It was with some interest, then, that I read about the Christian bus driver in Southampton who is refusing to drive one of the buses carrying the advert.Â The BBC reports that:

> *Ron Heather, from Southampton, Hampshire, responded with "shock" and "horror" at the message and walked out of his shift on Saturday in protest. (from the BBC)*

The Daily Telegraph applauds Mr Heather for standing up for his beliefs and also pointing out that Christians have a long history of suffering for their faith. The Telegraph also, rather predictably, wonders what would have happened if the message on the sides of the buses was aimed at the Muslim name for the deity, rather than the Christian one.

So, what do I make of this? At first, I felt a little disappointed, as I wrote in my earlier post on this subject:

> *In a post Christian society like ours, we should welcome any opportunity to provoke dialogue about the claims of Christianity...Â Having people talk about atheism is a great way to allow us to talk about Christ. If we force the atheists to shut up, then we should not be surprised if we find our voice goes unheard too.*



But then I began to think a little bit more. Yes, I still believe in the free flow of ideas and I strongly believe that we need to engage in public debate with people who disagree with us - which means we allow them to air their opinions. But, and this is what it boils down to, how would I feel if I had to drive around all day advertising that there is no God? Answer; I wouldn't like it and I hope I would have Ron Heather's boldness in objecting. Yes, atheists should be allowed to get their message across, but I'm not sure that Christians should be expected to help them to (and *vice-versa*). What do you think? Leave a comment if you have any ideas.

This is a salutary reminder that mission happens where Christians are in contact with the real world. It is fine for people like me to have opinions in the blogsphere and to come out with wise sounding words. But it is blokes like Ron Heather who have to drive the buses with the adverts on them and

who have to witness to Christ in that context who are the ones who have to 'do mission'. As I found out recently, it is all very well being eloquent amongst Christians, but it is another world when you are in dialogue with people who disagree with you (read more).

Update: As you will see from the comments, Doug has written a longish post taking a different view from mine.Â I very much appreciate his points and and in a rather schizophrenic fashion I both agree and disagree with his conclusions. Make sure you read what he has to say here.