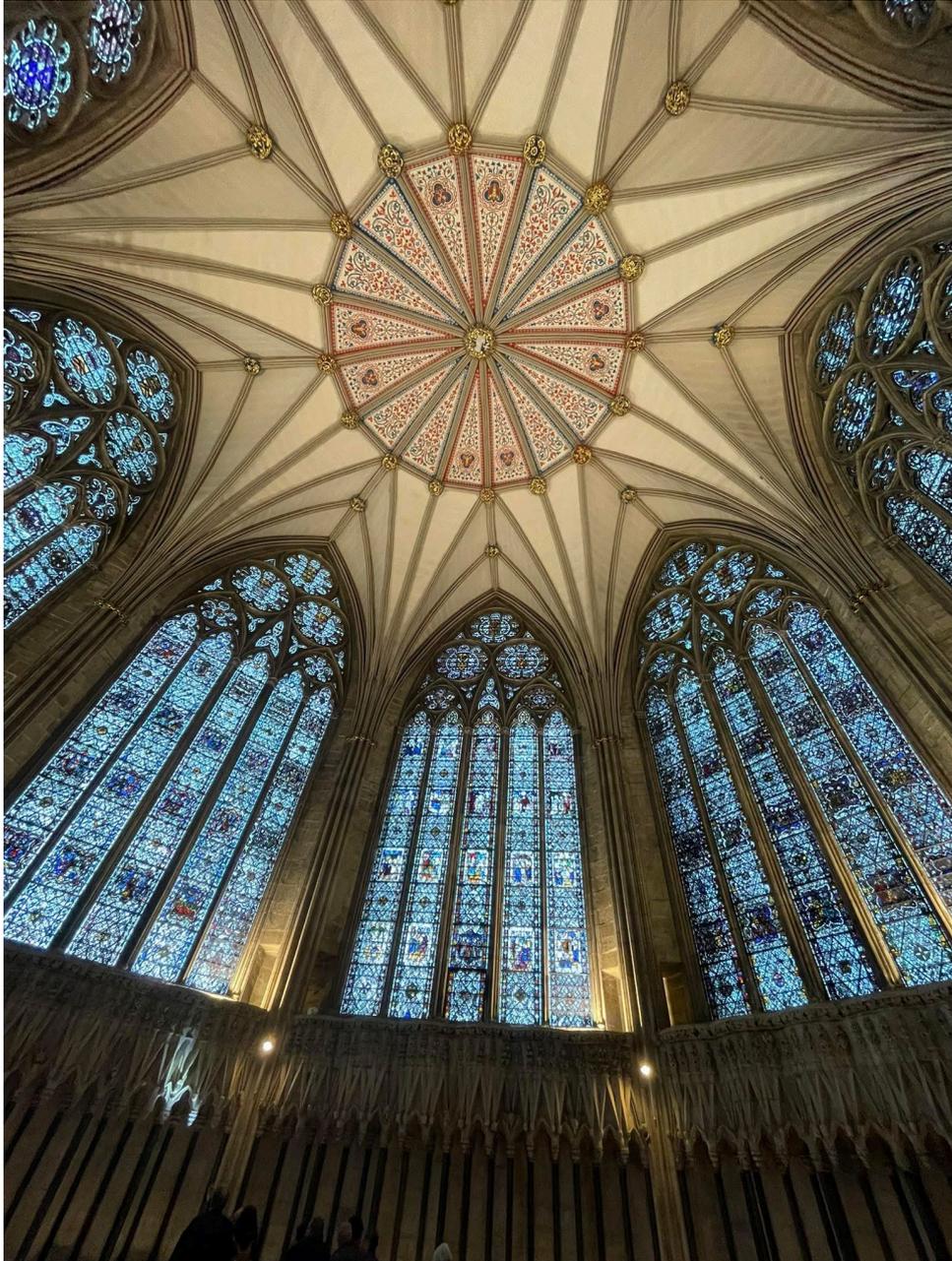# Speaking to the soul

Rules

Don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new

moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. Colossians 2:16-17

Throughout history, religious people have been famous for their rules and regulations. We see it particularly clearly with the Pharisees of Jesus' time. They lived meticulously according not only to the law of Moses but also to layers of other regulations which had been introduced by the rabbis. It isn't surprising that in the early Church, one of the greatest challenges came from those who wanted to impose complicated regulations upon the new Christians. These came from many places, particularly from the Gnostics, whose religion was built upon complicated rules about eating and drinking and the observance of special days.

Paul was not saying that all rules were bad. A well-ordered family, church or society will only work smoothly if there are rules. Paul's concern was that people would never find forgiveness and salvation through them. The message of so many religions is that you will achieve liberty and harmony by following a certain number of regulations, but Paul decisively rejected this. Rules are not necessarily bad, but at their best they will only ever be shadows of reality. They will never set us free, because only Jesus can do that.

We all live our lives according to certain rules. They may have come from other people, or we may have devised them because they work well for us. But we must never believe our rules and the way in which we live will earn favour with God. The rules may be helpful but they cannot save us. Only Christ can do that, so we need to keep our eyes fixed on him.

QUESTION

In what ways have you found rules helpful in your Christian life, and in what ways have they been a problem?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I thank you that life is found in you and in you alone. Amen