

## Ploughshare February/March 1993 (Scanned version from the original)

### From the Rector

Anonymous letters are not usually to be included in Ploughshare, unless the Editor knows who they are from. There follows, however, an exception to prove the rule. It raises an important issue and many readers will have views about it.

'To the Editor of Ploughshare

In Pause for Thought and Thought for the Day on the radio, the speakers get their message across in five minutes. Why does it take our clergy approximately twenty minutes to do the same? Do they feel we have not had our money's worth? I believe if a sermon is short and to the point, it is more memorable.'

Several years ago, short sharp sermons were fashionable. Ten minutes was the maximum and services were over in an hour. Gradually it dawned on people in many different places that something important was being lost.

**Sermonettes**, it was being said, were producing **Christianettes**.

We preachers can easily be boring. May God forgive us for it is a dreadful sin to make the vibrant Word of God boring. We are often ill prepared and clumsy in expression. We sometimes confuse the Bible's message with our own prejudices. In short, we do not preach well.

The answer however is not to preach short sermons but better ones. The task of sermon is to explain God's Word, as found in the Bible, and to seek to apply it relevantly. Preaching is a way in which God has chosen to make himself and his way known, to bring about faith and authentic Christian discipleship. This cannot be done by relying on 'Thoughts for the Day, however good and thought provoking they may be.

Our age is TV conditioned. We are not used to concentrating for long. The prevalent mood is one of challenging authority. The odds seem to be stacked against the preacher - and the listener. Despite this, however, God is still calling people to preach; there are few higher callings. When preaching his Word is taken seriously, supported with prayer and addressing the contemporary scene, people gladly come to hear and respond.

I can assure you that in our parish the ministry team of clergy and readers is seeking to preach better. We all, listeners and speakers, need to pray to be able to hear, learn and follow God's Word. It is vital if we really are **Going for Growth in Christ**.

*(Read David Smith's comment in the April/May 1993 issue of the magazine)*

### Our Vision Statement **Going for Growth in Christ**

We aim under God to grow as we respond, individually and together, to the teaching of Jesus in holiness, worship, prayer, service and witness and as we reach out with the Good News of Jesus.

**Christopher Frith**

## The Apostles - who were they?

Who were the twelve men Jesus chose to be his closest friends and companions? What happened to them after the Pentecost?

### James, Son of Alphaeus

We know very little about this James, whose name appears in all the lists of the apostles (Mt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13). He was known as 'James the Younger' (Mk. 15:40), perhaps to distinguish him from James the brother of John. His father was Alphaeus and his mother Mary, one of the women who stood by the cross (Mt. 27:56; Mk. 15:40) and visited the tomb (Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:10). James had a brother Joses, who was also a believer (Mk. 15:40; 16:1).

It is unlikely that James and Matthew were brothers, even though their fathers had the same name, because they are never linked together as are James and John, Simon and Andrew; nor is Matthew linked with James.

There is a tradition that James was crucified in Egypt.

### **Simon the Zealot**

Simon is mentioned in all the lists of the apostles (Mt. 3:18; Mk. 10:3; Lk. 6:15). The only information that we have about Simon is that he was called 'the Zealot', perhaps because of his zealous temperament. Paul spoke of himself as having been a religious zealot (Acts 22:3; Gal. 1:14) and the members of the church in Jerusalem are described as zealous for the law' (Acts 21:20).

It is more likely that Simon was a member of a group of nationalists known as Zealots, which was founded in AD 6 when Judas of Galilee led a revolt against the Romans. They opposed the payment of tribute by Israel to a pagan emperor on the ground that it was treason against God, who alone was King. Zealots were active throughout the war of AD 66-73 and the last Zealot stronghold, Masada, fell in May AD 73, but even then the Zealot spirit was not completely quenched.

After Simon became a disciple of Jesus Christ he was still known as 'the Zealot', perhaps, in part, because he carried his enthusiasm into his Christian life and was, in a different way, a zealot for God.

It is quite remarkable to find a tax-collector (Matthew) and a Zealot in such a small company. Normally the Zealot would look for the first opportunity to thrust a knife into the back of the tax-collector, considered a traitor by most Jews. There seems to have been no enmity between Matthew and Simon, which would be living proof of the power of Jesus to change men's hearts and minds. They were even together in the prayer meeting in the upper room before the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:13).

We know nothing of Simon's work, and the tradition that he was crucified has little support.

### **Blue Peter Appeal**

We would like to thank all the people who came to our Bring and Buy Sale. Several dozen members of St. Thomas' took part in competitions, gave to and bought from stalls and indulged in coffee and delicious cakes. As a result of all this activity, a sum of £155.00 has been sent to Blue Peter's appeal for medical help to prevent river blindness in Africa.

Ian and Gemma Hoare.

### **Christian Healing**

An Ascension Day service in Chartres Cathedral, France, is devoted to prayer for people who are ill. The healing of the sick has received renewed emphasis among Christians in recent years.

Healing was a central part of Jesus' ministry. The name 'Jesus' means one who saves'; and the word 'to save' includes the idea of 'making well'. When Jesus healed people, it was a sign that the world was to be remade, and suffering and death would be done away. But Jesus did more than heal sick bodies: he put right the many things that spoil and divide communities, as he changed relationships, lifted up the downtrodden - forgave sins.

When Jesus died he made it possible for all rifts to be healed. On the cross he won the victory over sin and death and the powers that work to destroy our lives, and in his rising again he opened up the way to a new life of wholeness and peace.

Should the healing work of Jesus be taken up by his followers? Certainly he commissioned his followers to heal as well as to preach; certainly the apostles were given power to heal in the days of the Acts. For a long time it was thought that such gifts had died out with the apostles, but few believe this now. Many churches have a healing ministry

today. The details and emphasis vary: some practice laying on of hands as Jesus did; some anoint with oil as in apostolic times. And many people are healed, to their own great joy.

This kind of activity gives a cranky impression to some people. It has received a bad name through so-called 'spiritual healing' or 'faith healing' - depending on the faith' or willpower of the individual, not on the power of Christ to heal. This can sometimes be effective. A strong, positive attitude can help healing. But this is different from Christian healing. The signs of a truly Christian approach to healing include:

- **Seeing the medical profession as an ally.** Modern medicine has its faults, but any approach to healing that ignores it is wrong. At the very least it is part of God's general grace; its origins were much influenced by Christianity; and its practice, especially in the developing world, still involves many Christians. Ideally, doctors and Christian ministers should be involved together in healing.
- **Working through the Christian community.** There is a healing power in worship and fellowship that is missed in any private ministry. Jesus is present with his church.
- **Extending the idea of healing beyond the physical.** As with the healing of Jesus, healing is for the whole person; relationships, attitudes and emotions are involved as well as physical ills.

\* A continuing care for those not healed. Any approach which suggests that everyone who has faith will be healed is plainly wrong. We cannot fully understand why sometimes prayer is answered and sometimes not, but a truly Christian ministry will be just as full of love and grace whatever the outcome.

- **Seeing healing as a 'sign of the kingdom'.** We cannot halt the inevitable results of a sinful world suffering and death. So even people who have been healed may become ill again, and will eventually die. Healings are a sign here and now that Jesus can and will remake the world so sin, suffering, illness and death will be no more. We see a glimpse now of his power, glory and love.

## Link Missionaries, Andy and Mandy Lines

Andrew, Mandy and the children will now be enjoying their summer holiday in Chile, and let us hope and pray that they will return refreshed and ready for the New Year. Andrew has a new CALEB course to plan and run, and Mandy will be concerned for Alex who 'begins life at the "big school", as well as being fully occupied with Zoe, and helping in many varied ways in the local church and community.

Let us thank God for the dedication of Andrew and Mandy, trusting that He will surround them with His love and keep them strong in their faith to overcome the many difficulties which they may encounter.

**Richard and Dorothy Banks**

## Book Review

### The Global Consumer

**Best Buys to Help the Third World by Phil Wells and Mandy Jeller**

"Famine, ecological disaster. We are all aware of the global crisis but few of us realise the power we have to help bring about permanent change. Many of the things we buy daily have a direct effect on the Third World: some fuel the cycle of poverty and environmental destruction, others can help to break it ...."

So goes the introduction to the "Global Consumer".

Have you ever felt guilty for instance, about drinking tea and coffee, or eating oranges and bananas grown and picked by poorly paid labourers; or buying clothes made abroad by workers in squalid conditions, when multi-national

companies cream off profits. I know that I have - or felt powerless to do anything except frustratingly and guiltily going along with the masses.

Although this is not specifically a Christian book, it sets out to inform and to help us to understand the effects of our purchases - and to choose wisely what to buy and what to avoid. It covers such diverse subjects as tea, coffee, chocolate, fruit, sugar, clothes and furniture to name but a few.

Its style is easily readable and well set out. One word of warning though. This book can make you feel frustrated and angry at the lack of concern that most multi-national companies have for God's world, and those who work for them, especially in the Third World. There is an absence of a lot of information but as you read you will realise the complexity of your seemingly cost-conscious decision to buy X or Y jar of coffee - and much more!

If you read this book, please don't be overawed by the vast range of issues it covers in a relatively short space but be determined to use it prayerfully to heighten your awareness and exercise your rights as a consumer.