

DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO FOLLOW JESUS?

The second lecture in the series arranged by the Hampton and Sunbury Council of Churches attracted a large and interested audience on February 9. The lecturer was Leslie Houlden, Principal of Cuddesdon Theological College, and these are some of the thoughts which he set before us:

Before we can discuss whether it makes sense or not, we have to consider what we mean by following Jesus. We have as it were to begin by being cold about our faith before getting warm again, because we tend to identify the truth with our own way of seeing things at the moment. There is always more to see of the truth of God, and this involves standing back from our opinions and taking a steady look at our faith. After this we can return to the warmth of our faith in God and our witness to him enlightened and strengthened.

It is important to keep in mind the shape of our faith in its fullness. The following of Jesus is only part of our faith, not the whole, and we need to look at it in the light of that whole. Our business as Christians is to serve, trust and love God along the path laid down by Jesus, made plain by Jesus, in the light of the present situation. Our faith doesn't just look back to the past, but it challenges us to get on with the job of loving and serving God in our own circumstances and our own world, which in many ways is very different from the world in which Jesus himself lived. Christians often fail to keep the balance - for example, by constantly looking back and trying to imitate Jesus in ways out of keeping with the modern world. They forget that God is in and behind the world today just as he was in the days of Jesus. Again, some Christians are so concerned with social conditions and the need of reform that they lose sight of the path of Jesus. So - keep the balance! Our over-arching belief is in God, not Jesus.

Within this richness and balance, then - what part is played by the following of Jesus? To some extent this is determined by the view which you take of Jesus. Some see him primarily as a teacher, who laid down principles which it is our business to follow, as Buddhists follow the teachings of their Enlightened One. But of course this is far from being the whole truth. Others think of him as one whom they are called to imitate - but the difficulty here is that Jesus's role was unique - he had a vocation from God which we have not, to open up a new way of relationship between God and men. A third way is to see Jesus as inspirer, but this is somewhat nebulous and naive. A fourth way - to see him as judge and critic. There has always been a tendency among Christians to mould Jesus according to their own ideas and ideals. So Bruce Barton set him before us as the ideal American business-man, and modern revolutionaries see him as the great liberator from injustice and oppression. But Jesus is not a rubber-stamp for our aspirations, however noble. We must see Jesus as he was, and the contrast between himself and ourselves. Jesus the critic who faces us and challenges us - 'sell all...'

Then, fifthly, Jesus as Lord. There is a sense in which we feel that we are meant to live our lives off the resources of God, participating in the strength and energy of God in the way which Jesus opened up for us. This is a much more all-embracing way of thinking of him.

So we have to consider carefully the part which Jesus plays within the full and rich balance of our faith. Having done this, we see that Jesus did not leave us a set of rules and regulations, but that rather he injected into the human blood-stream a directive impulse in accordance with which man should move: a direction of thought and life man should follow through to come to a right relationship with God and a right understanding of himself

and his world. What Jesus says to us in effect is: 'Here is a way of going on, of approaching life, of relating to God, of understanding yourself If you pursue this way, holding my hand, you will discover what it is really like to live with God in God's world. If you neglect this way, then you will experience a darkness and a sadness which you need not have'. We do not believe in a God who said in Jesus all that was to be said or needed to be said for all time, but a God who in Jesus started something off.

So we are given no stock answers to difficult problems : we have to get together with other Christians to think out what we have to do here and now about this and that. It will not always be the same as it was in the days of Jesus and the Early Church. The way of following the path of Jesus today may be quite different from what it was then. Also there are entirely new problems, such as those concerning the environment, medical ethics, industrial relationships - 'how do I love my neighbour or my enemy in today's competitive business world?' - of which there are no immediate counterparts in the past: what is needed is more Christian groups working in the thick of today's circumstances under the guidance of the Spirit along the Jesus path.

The way in which the love of God can be best expressed in comparative situations may be different from what it was in the first century - the question of poverty and riches is a case in point. The teaching which was adequate for a simple non-industrial society is far from such for us in our complicated modern world. What is at stake is the supremacy of God and the totality of my adherence to him: how in my sophisticated and perhaps affluent middle-class life can this be witnessed to?

There were many more challenging and thought-provoking ideas presented to us by our lecturer - and especially we remember a moving exposition of the way in which Jesus helps us to handle the unpleasant facts of suffering, disappointment and death - and we had a very fruitful follow-up discussion about them on February 22. It is important that Christians should meet in groups to explore together the path of Jesus in our modern world. To help us further in our thinking there are two very stimulating books by our lecturer now available: 'Ethics and the New Testament' (Mowbrays £1.75) and 'Patterns of Faith' (SCM Press 90p). Don't miss the next lecture on March 9!

SEED THOUGHTS

(Under this heading, we intend from time to time, when there is space to spare in this magazine, to include thoughts and quotations and ideas which people have found helpful, inspiring or challenging in their times of reflections and meditation. We should be glad to receive contributions, but we cannot guarantee that there will necessarily be room for them to be printed. - Ed.)

The Lord says : 'I am the Way'. If we regard Jesus as the broad river leading to God, we must be the little streams leading to this river. We must try to tell others when he teaches us something about himself. (A thought which impressed itself on one of our parishioners after a time of meditation.)

The Christian of tomorrow, everything seems to suggest, will usually be, in effect, a convert. That is to say, it is becoming in practice less and less normal even for people brought up in a Christian atmosphere to embrace Christianity by a deliberate personal act without having first passed through a period in which everything goes into the melting-pot. And Christian atmospheres are going to be a good deal less common in the immediate future than they have been in our society. The sociological backing which they once enjoyed is rapidly disappearing. It is not going to be possible to take Christianity for granted, and the Church of Christ will undergo a

necessary refining process. To become or remain a Christian is going to make greater demands on people than it did in the recent past. Nominal or conventional Christianity, it seems, will be a shorter and shorter supply in the foreseeable future. And to meet the demands that will be made, personal, persevering prayer will be absolutely necessary. The development of prayer is therefore a topic which is not only of the greatest importance in itself but one which has a peculiar relevance to the present situation. There are plenty of signs that the mentality of modern man, despite its many maladies or rather perhaps in consequence of them, is more and more experiencing the need for what one can only call 'mysticism'. (A passage from the book 'Mysticism and Theology' by Iltyd Trethowan, Monk of Downside, one of our country's leading philosophers and theologians)

THE JUBILEE CONCERT - SATURDAY 19 FEBRUARY, 1977

The St James's Jubilee Concert was indeed a most jubilant occasion. The exuberance and enthusiasm with which everyone threw themselves into the evening's entertainment was most infectious.

The Church Hall can have seldom been so full - a vast audience, many of whom were performing themselves during the course of the evening. And what a wealth of talent the parish possesses; far too much for me to single out any individual performance.

The Y.P.F. started the evening off with a swing, and got everyone in the right mood with a most lively rendition of some old-time favourites, in which the audience joined with gusto.

The children of the parish delighted everyone with their contribution. The Infants' Sunday School acted out a typical Sunday School lesson for us with great charm. The Cub-Scouts made a marvellous dragon, worthy of any Chinese New Year celebration, for their very appropriate version of 'St George and the Dragon'. The Junior Sunday School read a selection of their own poems; there must be a budding poet laureate amongst them, the standard was so impressive - although as a "grown-up" I was just a little perturbed at the bad impression one or two of them seem to have of us!

I have failed to mention up till now that most of the material used was written by the performers themselves, and one of the most impressive contributions was made by one of the parish's young ladies, who wrote the music and lyrics for a delightful performance by the Junior Choir - "Toy Box" - in which the toys in the nursery come to life. It was a beautifully dressed piece and quite enchanting in every way.

The ladies too excelled - the Ladies' Choir, as we would expect of them, sang a well-balanced choice of songs which well displayed their versatility. Talking of versatility, four members of the Church Choir proved that they are at home whether singing for a funereal occasion or having a knees-up with G. & S. in Venice.

I found myself in complete sympathy with the "militant" views expressed by the Mothers' Union in their very amusing and well-written number. For those mums not present, a few of the excellent suggestions put forward were to 'Ban Night Work' and 'Match of the Day', whoopee! As for the ladies of the Tuesday Club, they were marvellous sports performing their ballet 'Les Silly-fides'.... definitely a 'resounding' success with the audience.

The evening's dramatic items were provided by the Sidesmen & Readers in a 'Victorian Verse', which included an incredible Victorian melodrama, with a marvellous evil villain, ingenious ingenue and an unbelievable baby-boy; the Staff and Servers in a merry little item revealing what goes on 'In the Vestry' (including a pair of shocking pink bloomers) and which gave us one of the

most exuberant performances of the evening and caused immense jocularity; the Drama Group, excelling themselves in a sketch entitled 'Literal English' (life would certainly never be dull if we followed their example); and finally the Editorial Board, who gave us a very enlightening insight into 'How the magazine is compiled'... a true example of 'out of chaos comes order'.

Last but by no means least, a big thank-you is due from us all to the marvellous pianist, who worked so hard all evening. She did a most professional job and I know, only too well, that a good accompanist is worth her weight in gold - treasure her St James's.

The Social Committee wound up an evening's entertainment of which they could be justifiably proud. I think I can speak for all present when I say it was a most enjoyable evening which I hope we won't have to wait a further 25 years to see repeated.

G. Kendon

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN MAURITIUS

It was with great sorrow that on February 16 we heard that the Bishop of Mauritius had died early that morning. Only a few weeks ago we returned from a month's holiday in this beautiful island in the Indian Ocean. The Bishop had been there at the airport to welcome us and to see us leave and we had stayed in his house for much of the month.

Our visit was planned so that we could be present at the Consecration of Ghislain Emmanuel as twelfth Bishop and at his Installation in St. James's Cathedral. The Consecration took place on December 5 in the grounds of St. Paul's Church, Vacoas, in the presence of the Prime Minister, the Chief Judge, the Roman Catholic Bishop and the Pasteur de l'Eglise Réformée. Bishops had flown in from Madagascar and Seychelles, and of course from England for my brother-in-law, Alan Rogers, had been invited to preach and to take part in the Laying-on-of-Hands. This was a truly historic occasion - the Consecration of the first Mauritian-born priest to the episcopate. It was indeed a wonderful service. All those present, so many that no church could hold them, were so happy and full of joy in their new Bishop. To us, on this hot summer day, the service seemed particularly colourful in the great variety of the people there, for the Mauritians are a mixed people descended from Africans, Indians, French, British and Chinese.

There are, of course, many religions on the island. The Hindu faith has the largest following and there is a sizeable number of Moslems. Of the Christian Churches the majority is Roman Catholic. The Anglican Church is therefore only a minority but it has an influence out of all proportion to its numbers. It forms part of the Province of the Indian Ocean which comprises Madagascar (an island larger than France), Mauritius (with Rodrigues) and Seychelles (1,000 miles north of Mauritius).

It seemed that with its own native-born Bishop the future for the Church looked bright for Bishop Emmanuel was only forty-eight years of age and he was admirably qualified, academically and theologically; he had wide experience of the Church in many parts of the world and was a man of vision. He knew England well for he had studied at Cambridge, London and Canterbury. On his last visit here in 1974 he was collecting material for his book (published in 1975) on the History of the Diocese of Mauritius from its beginning in 1810 to the inauguration of the Province of the Indian Ocean in 1973. It was on this visit that he joined in our worship in St. James's Church. In Mauritius he had been Principal of the Theological College and for the last

three years was Archdeacon and Vicar-General. So in all ways he was well prepared for his new work. Then without any warning, only ten weeks after his Consecration, Bishop Emmanuel died of a thrombosis and the whole island was stricken with grief.

Now the future of the Church in Mauritius looks different. The number of full-time priests is small and now there is one less. There are a number of worker-priests who are an invaluable part of the ministry. On the whole these are the younger members of the Clergy and were trained by Bishop Emmanuel. Financially there are problems, for the Church has not many resources. The people are generous in their giving but Mauritius (about the size of Surrey) is not a rich island. It is economically still very dependent on the sugar crop which can so easily be ruined in cyclones, and although the standard of living has improved since Independence in 1968 there is still much to do. The additional expense of another Consecration which involves bringing Bishops from the other parts of the Province will be an extra problem. But most of all the difference is in the loss of such a leader and Father-in-God as Bishop Ghislain Emmanuel.

The new Archdeacon and Vicar-General Gerald Ernest and his Clergy and people are faced with a difficult task. It is fortunate that Mauritians are a resilient people but they will greatly need the prayerful support of the Church throughout the world in the days that lie ahead.

Sylvia Boarder

HOW THEY DO THINGS IN GERMANY

Church finances are in the news these days. I was therefore very interested to be given a glimpse into the financial arrangements of the German parish in Wuppertal which we visited before Christmas.

The parish contains three churches and has 15,000 members. Paid-up church members that is. Whereas the German Lutheran church is not an established church in that the parliament has no legislative power over it, it has a long-standing arrangement with the state by which the latter collects its church-tax, together with state income-tax. Anybody who does not actively leave the church is automatically being charged a sum equalling 10% of his income-tax. More and more people do take the step to "resign" from the church. Nevertheless to be a paying member does not necessarily mean to be a committed member. I believe overall church finances are organised on a "Länder"-basis. In the federal state the separate Länder (counties) look after their own cultural, educational and church affairs. Each Land is headed by a bishop. Ministers' salaries are paid by the Länder.

I must admit that I did not take in any more precise information about financial arrangements in general; but I do remember some details which I thought were very interesting. The above mentioned parish of 15,000 members has a budget of £250,000 approx. (DM 1,000,000). One fifth of that figure is spent on nursery schools. The bulk of German nursery education is in fact provided by the church. As the nursery schools also cater for non-church members, they are financed equally by the church, state and parents. The nursery schools take children up to the age of six and are open all day with lunchtime meals and afternoon sleep. - The church also runs a lot of old people's homes.

If a church council decides on a major project it has to apply to the Land for approval and consequent finance.

H.B.

(This system, of course, relieves the church of all financial anxiety, and makes it possible for all ministers to be adequately laid. Many people still seem to think that the Church of England is state-supported in the same way, but this is very far from being the case. Up till 1868 the vestry did have the power to exact a church-rate, and indeed it can still make and assess one-but payment is purely voluntary, so it is on a different footing from the rate levied by the local Council! - Ed.)

THINKING DAY 1977.

Sunday, February 20, was observed as the 50th anniversary of Girl Guides' Thinking Day, and St. James's Church was packed on the afternoon of that day with Brownies, Guides, Ranger Guides, Officers, parents and friends.

There had been a rehearsal on the Thursday evening, and the whole event went most smoothly on the Sunday in consequence. The Guides' and Brownies' colours were brought up and presented at the altar in very good order, and the representatives of the foreign Guides followed in their national costumes and carrying their national flags. The Guide movement all over the world was referred to in the hymns and prayers: and we knew that in countless other places Guides and Brownies were meeting on this day, at this time, and were singing about their sisters far away, and were remembering them in their prayers.

Our hands waved to others in greeting, and in imagination we clasped their hands. "Hands" was the theme of the address: useful, helpful, clever, gifted, artistic hands, and we thought together of the responsibility which it is to have two good useful hands. The Brownies' motto, "Lend a Hand", and the Guides' "Be Prepared" mean that hands are of prime importance. Hands are always ready to help, and the readings, one read by a Brownie of the 1st Hampton Hill Pack and the other by a 3rd Hampton Hill Brownie, both reminded us of hands: the first from Mark 8 was of the healing hands of Jesus on the eyes of the blind man, the second, Psalm 121, reminded us of God ever-present on man's right hand, ready with hand out-stretched to support, guide and strengthen. His hand is ready for us to hold on to in faith.

And for the older members of the congregation there was the quotation from the famous broadcast by King George VI at Christmas 1939, when the country was indeed in need of a call to faith and hope.

"And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown'. And he replied: 'Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be better to you than light and safer than a known way'."

H.M.S.

ST. JAMES'S PARISH MAGAZINE

ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING

This Magazine is delivered to 700 homes.

Less than 100 people attend the

Annual Church Meeting

On April 27 1977 it is important YOU attend.

NEVER HAS SO MUCH BEEN DONE FOR SO MANY BY SO FEW!

With less than 214 members on the Electoral Role we are trying to service the needs of a population of over 7000 in the Parish.

We cannot ask people to do more.

Perhaps we should consider our commitments - and reallocate our resources. Please come, listen to what has been done so far and consider what needs to be done in the future.

Of course, there is this little matter of the Electoral Roll referred to above ('Electrical' we have often heard people call it, and would that it were so!) You are not eligible to take part in the meeting unless your name is there, and no one can put it there unless you apply - which you ought to do if you are baptised, over 17, and a sharer in our work and worship. Forms will be available in church throughout March.

Y.P.F.

Friday night activities have enjoyed great success recently with the additional attendance of members' friends, who have all said how much they have enjoyed their evening's entertainment and many have showed an interest in joining. We hope that our future events, including a barbeque and folk evening, will be equally well supported.

Flourishing as well at the moment are our badminton afternoons on Sundays at St. James's Hall, where we also have the facilities to play table-tennis. Sunday evenings continue in the same vein under the guidance of a one-year plan, the aim of which is to evolve a greater understanding of Christianity.

I.F.

ERRATA

It was the height of irony that on the very page explaining the mistake in the previous issue, there should in the February magazine be a worse mix-up than ever! Why it happened is not quite clear: The printer thought that one reason was that the proofs went back late, and so the final stages had to be rushed through by his team. But in fact the proofs were received and returned corrected a week earlier than usual, so they must have got mislaid in some dark corner. Also it was noted with surprise that (most unusually) they were submitted on pieces of paper of various sizes and shapes, so it is easy to see how a hasty putting of them together in page-size might have caused them to get out of their proper order, which they well and truly did. Were you able to solve the puzzle? You can make sense of it if you realise the six paragraphs concerned are arranged in the following order: 1, 6, 3, 2, 5, 4. Again, no prizes!

(It is not the Editorial Board's intention to make a great issue out of this rare occurrence, but so often we are blamed for anything that goes amiss that we thought it necessary on this occasion to put the record straight - but at the same time to emphasise the cooperation and helpfulness of all those concerned with the production of our magazine, and the pains which they take always to get it out on time. - Ed.)

I AM THE GREAT SUN (from a Norman crucifix of 1632)

I am the great sun, but you do not see me,
I am your husband, but you turn away,
I am the captive, but you do not free me,
I am the captain, but you will not obey.

I am the truth, but you will not believe me,
I am the city where you will not stay,
I am your wife, your child, but you will leave me,
I am the God to whom you will not pray.

I am your counsel, but you do not hear me,
I am the lover whom you will betray,
I am the victor, but you do not cheer me,
I am the holy dove whom you will slay.

I am your life, but if you will not name me,
Seal up your soul with tears, and never blame me.

AROUND THE SPIRE

We send our congratulations to Raymond and Gillian Draper on the birth of their second daughter, Alison Mary, in January and look forward to seeing them and Catherine, now aged two years, in the not too distant future.

Many of us will have noticed Catherine Jones with her arm in a sling. We were very sorry to learn that she had had a fall and chipped a bone but she tells me that it is improving slowly. We hope to see her fully mended very soon.

We have no more news for you this month, the information is not filtering through! So please do keep us, the Editorial Board, informed so that we can inform the parish of what is going on Around the Spire.

YOUNG FAMILIES' GROUP

Another title! We are referred to as many things - "Bib and Sucker," and "St. James's Baby Mornings" amongst others. But we are one and the same group nevertheless.

Our recent talk by the Borough Safety Officer on aspects of home safety was really interesting and accompanied by slides some of which were disturbing and rather horrifying, but brought the point home very clearly. I,

for one, rushed about the house when I returned home and remedied some of my potentially dangerous situations. It has made me a lot more aware of the many hazards that are not always realised as such.

The speaker brought with him a pile of leaflets on home safety, and there are still a number of these available from Hilde for anyone who is interested.

Please come and support our future speakers - they should be most interesting, and it is an ideal opportunity to meet other mothers and young children.

H.B.

DO You have a date?

Some people are optimists, some are not. It appears that you have to be born one way or the other. I am the born, incorrigible optimist. In spite of years of disappointment I am still hopeful that secretaries and others concerned with parish events will **look** at the year-planner that I have pinned up in the South porch and will enter their fixtures on it.

C.H.B.

MOTHERS' UNION

As with every other organisation, I should think, we are more than ever this year in need of extra funds; funds for local, national and overseas commitments. If you can, please support our Jumble Sale at the Hall on Saturday, March 12. We don't usually advertise in this magazine, but this time wanted to draw your attention to the fact that we are opening earlier - at 12 Midday and will be serving light lunch in the Hall kitchen between 12.30 and 2.0 pm. We should be pleased to have your custom, your goods for sale, your help in serving. Goods can be received at the Hall from 10.0 a.m. or we could collect, if you will contact 979 3529 before that.

C.H.B.

FORTY DAYS

We had become so used to the beautiful-lighted Christmas tree - generously supplied as always by Mr. and Mrs. Thompson - that it was quite a wrench to come on the Sunday after Candlemas and find it no longer there. But, alas, the forty days of the Christmas season were now ended, and the violet coverings everywhere reminded us that we must now begin to prepare ourselves for the discipline of the forty days of Lent - to be followed by the GREAT FORTY DAYS OF EASTER. Before we leave Christmastide, we must record with gratitude that the offerings given for Christian Aid reached an all-time high - over £115.

The arrangements for Lent have already been made known, and those for Holy Week and Easter will as usual be listed on the cards to be delivered to every home in the parish. Those already decided are included under 'Dates'. This year Mothering Sunday, March 20, occurs when there is neither Welcome nor Family Service, and the theme is now the Transfiguration instead of the old theme which also gave it the name of Refreshment Sunday.

This is to give its right place to this great event which meant so much to our Lord as he approached his Passion. But a number of young mothers have told us that they intend to be in church at 9.30 on that day with their prams and babies, and they invite others to join them, and then breakfast will follow in the south aisle so that there will be plenty of opportunity to meet and chat.

OLIVET TO CALVARY.

A feature this year in the observance of Holy Week will be the presentation of Maunder's "Olivet to Calvary" on Tuesday evening, 5th April at 8.15 p.m.

This well known musical setting depicts the events associated with Christ's entry into Jerusalem mounted on a humble donkey, His disgust and anger at the sight of the commercial activities taking place within the Temple and ending with the tragic cross on the hill.

At St. James's Church we endeavour to present music which is well known and loved and Olivet to Calvary will appeal to those who enjoy hearing again that with which they are familiar.

One of the reasons for presenting this work on a weekday evening instead of Palm Sunday as in the past, is to make it possible for members of other churches to attend if they so wish, and to all who may decide to do so, we extend a cordial welcome.

R.J.C.D.

DEANERY INTERCESSIONS

- March 20 School and Colleges within the Deanery 27 Homes and Day Centres for old people
April 3 Diocesan Staff in Bedford Square
10 St. James, Hampton Hill
17 The Chapel Royal, Hampton Court.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

- March 12 12.00 - 15.00 Mothers' Union : Jumble Sale (Hall)
14 10.30 Editorial Board (21, St. James's Road); 19.45 Wayside Monday Centre Management Group (19, St. James's Road)
20 MOTHERING SUNDAY; 17.15 St. James's lead service at Laurel Dene; Preacher from Bible Society at Evensong.
23 20.15 Parochial Church Council (Vestry)
25 THE ANNUNCIATION : Holy Communion at 07.30 and 10.30
27 PASSION SUNDAY: 17.15 Members of YPF lead service at Laurel Dene.
20.00 Properties Committee (19, St. James's Road); Stewardship Committee (106, Park Road); Tuesday Club : 'The Holy Land (W)
- April 3 PALM SUNDAY : African palm-crosses will be distributed at all services. Meeting for Wayside Monday Centre helpers after Evensong.
4 14.30 Mothers' Union Enrolment Service in church.
5 20.15 Cantata 'Olivet to Calvary'
6 12.00 14.00 Austerity Lunch (W): proceeds for Christian Aid.
- SPECIAL SERVICES : Holy Communion every Wednesday 19.15 & every Friday 07.30 in Lent; in HOLY WEEK Holy Communion daily Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 19.15; MAUNDY THURSDAY 20.00 Parish Communion;
GOOD FRIDAY : Children's Service 10.00; The Three Hours' Devotion 12.00 - 15.00.; HOLY SATURDAY; 20.00 An hour of Meditation in preparation for Easter; EASTER DAY, Holy Communion at 08.00 & 12.10; Parish Communion 09.30 ;
Welcome Service 16.30.