

# Another Day

Biblical reflections for busy teachers



## Minds and hearts

***"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."*** Romans 12:2

It is one of the dilemmas of moral education that right thinking does not seem to lead automatically to right living. We may know what the good and right thing to do is, but we may nevertheless do what is bad and wrong. Graphic films about the effects of smoking do not lead teenagers (or some of their teachers!) to kick the habit.

In Romans 7, Paul writes (and we all know the feeling, do we not?), *"I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing."* However in chapter 12, verse 2, he seems to be saying that all we need is a change of mind as he urges us to be transformed by having our minds renewed!

So, if we think rightly, we will do rightly – right? Wrong! The problem here is that we read back into this verse a contemporary understanding of 'mind' as the reasoning part of our being, the rational rather than the emotional or wilful. This probably owes more to Greek philosophy than to the Judaeo-Christian scriptures.

The Old Testament speaks of the heart as being the core of the being and this usage is followed in the New Testament. The heart is therefore not just the centre or source of the emotions as in modern usage – it is the 'I' that feels and thinks and wills. And when the New Testament uses 'mind' as here in Romans 12, it is not marking it off as a separate compartment of the person, a rational part that doesn't feel or will. The renewal that leads to transformation is therefore not simply a change of mind but a making anew of the whole person from the core of their being.

Our thoughts and our feelings, our longings and our willing, are all in it together. We are to love God with everything that we are – heart, soul, mind, strength – and not all of these appear in every version of the Great Commandment in Deuteronomy 6, Matthew 22 and Mark 12, thereby showing that our precise psychological distinctions cannot be read back into scripture.

*Holy Lord, please go on changing me as a whole person so that those I teach may see that there is a way to be made new in our hearts and minds and all that we are. Amen.*