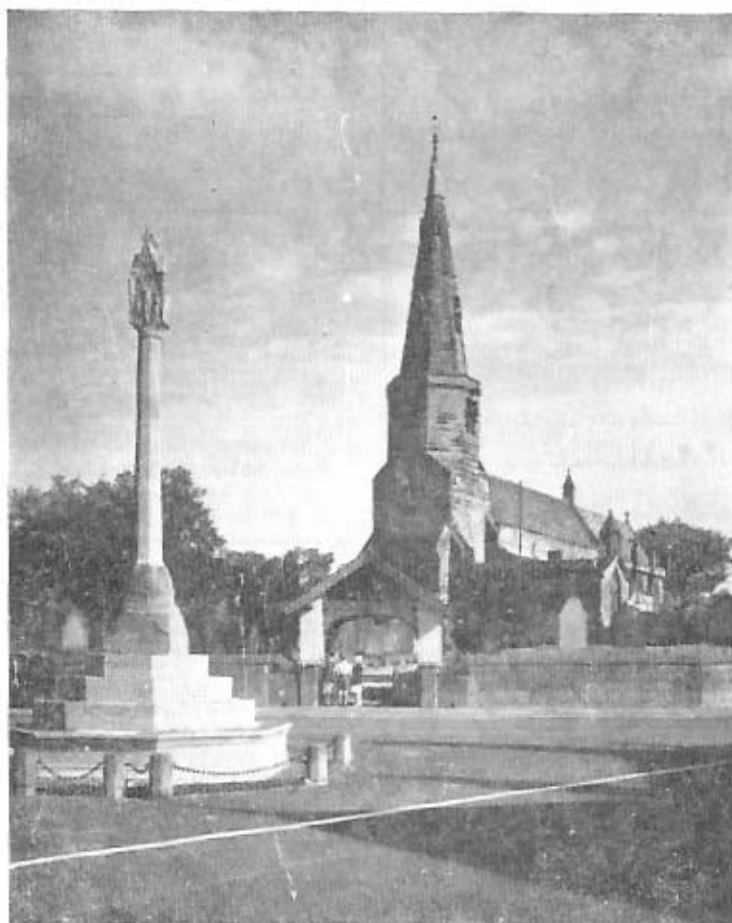


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The Rectory,
Halsall.
13th January, 1965

My dear Friends,

Included this month is an article specially written by one of our missionaries working in Southern Rhodesia. It is rather lengthy and necessitates a reduction in my own letter.

We are approaching the season of Lent, a theme dealt with in a subsequent article. Here may I appeal to all our readers to use the season in the right spirit? Let us make a difference! Above all, maintain church attendances, and if you have become a little irregular in this matter, try to come at least once a Sunday.

Each Lent I have noticed that some members of our congregation make a point of attending 8 o'clock Holy Communion every Sunday, as well as one of the other services. May there be more who adopt this practice this year.

Make a good start. Celebrations of Holy Communion on Ash Wednesday are at 7 a.m. and 10 a.m.

God bless you all.

Your sincere friend,

HERBERT BULLOUGH

FOR THE CHILDREN

Dear children,

Thank you very much for helping with the gift envelopes for the children at Quarry Mount, Ormskirk. You will be pleased to know that over £10 was sent in and we are very grateful to you for all you did to help.

This month I am going to talk to you about the most wonderful prayer in the world. The Lord's Prayer. Our Father.

Jesus used to pray to God, His Father, very often. Sometimes He made long prayers, and at other times they were very short ones: like suddenly thinking about God or saying "Please God, help me now this minute."

Now, Peter and James and John, and the other friends of the Lord Jesus who went everywhere with Him, eating their meals with Him and sleeping with Him—sometimes out of doors which must have been fun in summer—saw that Jesus talked with our Father God. That made them want to do it, too, but when Peter and John said their prayers, they didn't quite know what to say to God.

So, one day, they waited till Jesus had finished His prayers and when He got up they said: "Please, Lord Jesus, teach us how to say our prayers. What shall we say?"

"First of all," said Jesus, "think of God your Heavenly Father." (We can think of Jesus Himself, too.) There is God, with all His holy angels near Him, praising Him and saying: 'Holy, holy, holy!' "Then," said Jesus, "say: 'OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME,'

"Next," said Jesus, "we must ask God to help us to do all the things that please Him—the good kind things—so that Heaven will come in our homes. Say: 'THY KINGDOM COME THY WILL BE DONE, IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.'"

"Shall we ask God, now, to give us our food?" said Jesus. "God knows how much we need dinner every day and so we ought to ask Him to help people to make food for us and say: 'GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.'"

"Another thing we want to ask God," said Jesus, "is that He will forgive all His children when they have been naughty and are sorry. So we must forgive people if they are naughty to us and say they are sorry."

"So," said Jesus, "Say: 'FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US.'"

"Now," said Jesus, "we want God our Father to take care of us. He wants to take care of us because He loves us. He wants to keep us safe near Him, for He will protect all His little children in danger if we ask Him, so we will say: 'LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.'"

Now ask Mum to read you this story from the Bible. She will find it in St. Matthew, Chapter 6, verses 9-16, St. Mark, chapter 2, verses 25-27 and St. Luke, chapter 2, verses 1-5.

God bless you all.

Love from

THE RECTOR

THE IMPORTANCE OF LENT

The word itself is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning to lengthen or to grow. It is the custom of the church to set aside this period of time before Easter in order to help her members to grow in the knowledge and in the love of God.

There is nothing mournful or doleful about a properly observed Lent. The old fashioned idea of having dismal hymns at this time of year is quite unnecessary and out of place. When a boy is in love it is not a hardship for him to be in the company of his beloved. If you really and truly love God coming to worship Him would be a delight and not just a duty.

Friendship can only develop when two persons develop one another's acquaintance. In the same way friendship with God can only be fostered and strengthened by being with God and by learning more about Him. Therefore, the more time we devote to the duties of prayer and worship, the stronger our friendship with God is likely to become. Lent is therefore, a time when we try and do this.

I urge you to try and attend the Holy Communion on Ash Wednesday. Almost everyone could come to either of the celebrations.

Practical suggestions:

1. YOUR DAILY PRAYERS. These are vital yet so many of us often forget them.
2. REGULAR WORSHIP. One attendance at Church on Sunday is necessary to fulfil the minimum requirements of normal Christian duty. Try not to be too fixed in your habits.

3. FREQUENT RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION. Try to come to the Lord's own service at least once a week. Attendance at a quiet weekday morning service can be very helpful. In the stillness of the morning you can often feel Our Lord very close to you.

AT THIS SEASON—CREATION AND GENESIS

On the three Sundays before Lent we hear read at the morning and evening services some part of the Creation story from the opening chapters of Genesis.

What perplexity and doubt these opening chapters in the Bible still cause!

What are we to make of them? If we are going to understand we need to ask what was the aim of the writer. The clue is given in the title—Genesis, which means beginnings, origins. In this book there is the story of many beginnings—the beginning of the world, the beginning of nature, the beginning of man and woman, the beginning of wickedness in man, the beginning of languages—but above all the beginning of the Israelite people.

If we observe carefully, we find the first eleven chapters contain the story of the creation of the world, of nature, of sun and moon, of man and woman, of the beginning of wickedness, why agriculture is such hard work, why women suffer in childbirth, why the rainbow, why diverse languages.

All this is packed into eleven short chapters! It then takes 39 chapters to narrate the story of four persons—the founders of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph! When one appreciates this fact one has come to some understanding of the book. The writer is chiefly concerned with the early history of Israel, not with prehistoric times.

Over the last 100 years there has been immense research into this book. We know now that these early books of the Bible were compiled by putting together ancient writings and records about the year 400 B.C. and were most certainly not written by Moses in their present form.

Their chief concern, however, was to record the history of the Israelites, beginning with Abraham (Genesis, Chapter 12) and continuing the story in the four successive books, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—to their coming to the Promised Land.

No doubt there were old records and legends of what was before Abraham, that is, remember, of what took place more than 2,000 years before they wrote. And these are put together in these eleven chapters to form a prologue and to seek to take the story back to the very beginning.

In these early chapters there is a second purpose—to state the belief that God was there in the beginning and that all creation was dependent on Him; that disobedience and evil brought disaster—e.g. Adam and Eve, Cain and Lot, the Flood, and that obedience and trust brought strength and blessing—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

These are the tremendous truths Genesis seeks to teach. And these, and not the childish belief of the universe made in six days, are foundations of religious belief.

THE FARMERS' MEETING

We are all looking forward very much indeed to having Dr. R. Kay Gresswell, lecturer in the Dept. of Geography in the University of Liverpool. His subject should be of great interest to us all. I hope that many friends will attend on this important occasion. We are very fortunate to have such an opportunity as this. The date is Thursday, 18th February.

SOUTHERN RHODESIA — A CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT

(Specially written from Southern Rhodesia)

You can drive along the country roads of Rhodesia, and as you pass, groups of Africans—men, women and children, wave cheerfully. Yet the news is of tension and strife, intimidation and Communist-inspired violence. What is the truth?

The truth, as usual, is many-sided. There is tension and discord, there is violence; there is also, particularly among the African population, a cheerful acceptance of life, and a good humour without which this would be an even more unhappy country.

The Issues

What are the points at issue? The White population is fearful, and determined. They have seen, in countries to the north of them, bloodshed and rioting, the rise of autocratic Black governments and the loss by Whites of their property and prospects. Many of them have lived in Rhodesia for many years, and have nowhere else to go. They fear African competition, and even more an African government which at worst might dispossess them, and at best would, they are sure, be inefficient and would ruin the country economically. They are resolved on a last-ditch stand to maintain their position.

The Africans have also seen things happening in countries to the north of them. They have seen the disappearance of the indignities which they suffer here; they have seen the rise of responsible African governments. They have heard of greater educational and economic opportunities—although they do not usually know that the African in Rhodesia has on the average a higher standard of living than an inhabitant of the newly-emerged African states. If they did realise it, they would probably regard that one fact as relatively unimportant beside the greater goal of freedom and responsibility. Many Europeans think that the possession of these ideas is confined to the small minority of educated Africans and of "nationalists"; in fact it is widely spread throughout the African population.

The Conflict

The stage is therefore set for a conflict. It has been prepared for by a sad rule of weak leadership over the past few years. Africans have been led to believe that if they compromise they will get nothing; and have suffered much through factions, hooliganism and intimidation which their leadership, often divided, has done little to control. Europeans have given grudgingly and little, have been slow to recognise African rights and aspirations and to remove discriminatory practices; and have responded to the violence of frustration by the violence of repression.

This is the situation which we face today. As these words are being written, troops are scattered in little groups throughout the length and breadth of this land. The African chiefs, a group of men largely discredited and regarded by their people as tools of the Government, are being "consulted" in strict secrecy as to their views on the country's independence. The "nationalist" leaders of the African people are in gaol or a detention area—most of them held without trial for what could be an indefinite period. News is hard to come by, as the Press, with one daily paper already banned, is afraid of being further restricted on the ground of "causing alarm and despondency."

The White Government, determined to keep control at all costs, and to get the "independence" which it regards as essential for such control, becomes ever more oppressive, and its many extremist supporters cry for a unilateral declaration of independence if negotiations with Britain are not speedily concluded to their satisfaction—which is virtually out of the question without splitting the Commonwealth. And the ordinary White citizen, fearful and uncertain, either puts his faith in the Government or keeps quiet because he does not see how the progress of events is going to be halted. And many of us are struck by the similarity of those events to the history of parts of Europe in the 1930s . . .

The Challenge

It is probably the young who are most seriously affected. Half the African population of 3½ million people is under 17 years of age; and those who have had any degree of education tend to feel that they are hitting their heads against a brick wall, and are tempted to turn to Communism and violence as the only answer. The young European, who has been brought up to believe that economic prosperity is his innate right, and that qualifications do not matter very much, now finds this belief challenged; and he will be Smith's man to the bitter end, in order to "keep the Kaffirs in their place." It is here that the explosive potential is greatest, and least noticed or heeded by the powers that be—or indeed by the Church, which has no very secure hold on the young, either White or Black, although thousands go through its hands in their early years.

The Dilemma

The Church is in a dilemma—The Anglican Church perhaps more so than others. It is officially non-racial, though still, by force of circumstances, White-led, and therefore the more naturally regarded, by both Africans and Europeans, as a "White Church". A true theology necessitates a protest against both repression and violence, so that it pleases neither extreme.

By tradition pietistic, its White members are suspicious of, if not actively hostile to "politics in the pulpit", and are quite capable of withdrawing their financial support if Church leaders speak out about the situation—and this, in the case of the Anglican Church, 82% self-supporting, can be disastrous in its effect on our missionary work. If Church leaders remain silent, they lose the respect of their African

members, for whom religion must touch every department of life, and they allow their White members to remain complacent about the increasing evil of repression and bitterness. Paternalism, too, is deeply rooted—and has done much good. But it must now give way to self-reliance and the transitional period is not going to be easy. And just at this critical moment we are plunged into the uncertainties and dangers of political upheaval.

The Future?

What is to be the future? The gates of hell, we are assured, cannot prevail against the Church of Christ. Christian Truth must be proclaimed, and Christ's little ones preserved from occasions of stumbling. But all must be done with love: it is so easy to denounce and by doing so to destroy one's opportunities of leading those who have only a partial understanding of the Christian Faith—and they are to be found in each community in the sick Society of Rhodesia today.

THE HYMNS WE SING (5) GRATITUDE

379. Now Thank we all our God.

Gratitude has been described by Dr. Eric Routley as the brightest of Christian graces, and there is no doubt that, where gratitude abounds, life is made brighter, and human relationships warmer.

The hymn we are considering this month is one which focuses our attention on this Christian grace. Many no doubt will be surprised to learn of the connection between "Now thank we all our God" and Ecclesiasticus. Ecclesiasticus is not numbered amongst the canonical books but is found in that section of the Bible known as Apocrypha. In this book lies a rich store of wisdom and some of the passages are very well known. I venture to think that most readers would immediately recognise the reading from the 44th Chapter which begins "Let us now praise famous men . . ." This chapter is the one which begins the final section of the book and is a great pageant of history. It closes on the 50th Chapter with the following words:

"And now bless ye the God of all,
Which everywhere doeth great things,
Which exalteth our days from the womb,
And dealeth with us according to his mercy.
May he grant us joyfulness of heart,
And that peace may be in our days in
Israel for the days of eternity.
To intrust his mercy with us
And let him deliver us in his time.

And there we have the original of the hymn "Now thank we all our God".

Although originally written in German it is a universal hymn. No serious attempt is made to sing it to any tune but "Nun Danket" which has been associated with it almost from the beginning. (The one exception being Fr. Beaumont's tune which he uses in his Folk Mass.) Primarily used in this country

on Special Occasions of Thanksgiving, such as Harvest Festival or time of deliverance. The true message of the hymn however is not precisely that.

In fact, the original intention of the hymn was almost a direct contradiction to our usage. It was designed to be sung as a Thanksgiving to God for past mercies throughout history. Not for some immediate blessing received, as we shall see in a moment. Gratitude is always due to God for what he has done through history's heroes; through faithful parents and pastors, through saints, preachers and doctors. These achievements of God through history stand as history, but time does not reduce the debt of gratitude. Far above all this, the Christian man or woman should be able to feel a great sense of gratitude to God for Jesus Christ, for His birth and life, and for His Passion, Death and Resurrection—and for the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

One essential point is made quite clear in this matter. There is a great difference between gratitude of Man to Man, and gratitude between Man and God. Gratitude at the human level can be a burden but there is nothing servile about Man's gratitude to God, because the love of God is not smeared or tainted with patronage and pride. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, yea a JOYFUL and PLEASANT thing it is to be thankful" wrote the psalmist. That is literally true. Far better to have too much gratitude in life than caution and calculation.

The hymn's author, Rinkhart, was a pastor in the small town of Eilenberg, Saxony, situated in the middle of a great battlefield. The Thirty Years War had brought pestilence and hunger to the town. One of the pastor's duties had been conducting 4,480 funerals. On top of this came a demand from the Swedish army of occupation for a tribute of 30,000 thalers, a lot of money in any language! It was in the midst of this situation, at a time when men and women 20 years old had never known a time without war, that their faithful pastor wrote these words of implicit trust and thankfulness:

Who from our mothers' arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love
AND STILL IS OURS TODAY.

Pastor Rinkhart, like Isaiah, could look over the heads of the exiles and see, on the far horizon, the coming deliverance. He knew because the Gospel said so. Thanksgiving in the midst of darkness, far removed from the "pretty pretty" of the Harvest Festival. Thanksgiving every day. These are the worship and joy of Christian people everywhere.

Next month: 322. There is a green hill far away.
D.T.

SIDSMEN'S ROTA

- Feb. 7—a.m. E. Grimshaw, E. Gawne
p.m. W. Leadbetter, N. Britnall
" 14—a.m. H. Huyton, A. Grimshaw
p.m. Jas. Sergeant, J. Banks
" 21—a.m. E. Serjeant, J. D. Grimshaw
p.m. R. A. Gaskell, R. Hunt

- " 28—a.m. T. Swift, T. Hunter
p.m. H. Baldwin, W. White
Mar. 7—a.m. E. Serjeant, D. Swift
p.m. C. Shacklady, Jos. Balmer

SERVERS' ROTA

- Feb. 7— 8-00 John Davies
" 14— 8-00 Jim Heaton
10-30 Harold Grimshaw, Malcolm Serjeant
" 21— 8-00 John Pounds
" 28— 8-00 Peter Balmer
10-30 Harold Grimshaw, Colin Huyton
Mar. 7— 8-00 Roger Dutton

SANCTUARY FLOWERS

- Feb. 7—Mrs. H. Dickenson
" 14—Mrs. W. Barwiss
" 21—Mrs. J. Morris
" 28—Mrs. H. Dean

We shall be grateful for contributions towards the cost of flowers for the decoration of the church at Easter.

HOLY BAPTISM

"Entered into the family of Christ's Church"

- Jan. 3—Stephen Henry, son of Dennis and Betty Knowles, 300 Wharf Road, Crowle, Scunthorpe.
" 10—Jonathan Mark, son of John Stephen Wilkinson and Olive Ord, 1 Rutland Crescent, Ormskirk.
" 10—Julie, daughter of Brian and Nora Davies, Green Kettle Farm, Halsall.

HOLY MATRIMONY

"Those whom God hath joined together"

- Jan. 9—Leonard Sephton, White House Farm, Barton, and Barbara Anne Hesketh, 46 New Street, Halsall.

BURIAL OF THE DEAD

"In sure and certain hope"

- Dec. 24—William George Holmes, age 87 years, 1a Summerwood Lane, Halsall.
1965
Jan. 6—George Walter Patrick Page, age 70 years, 46 Sandbrook Road, Southport.

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