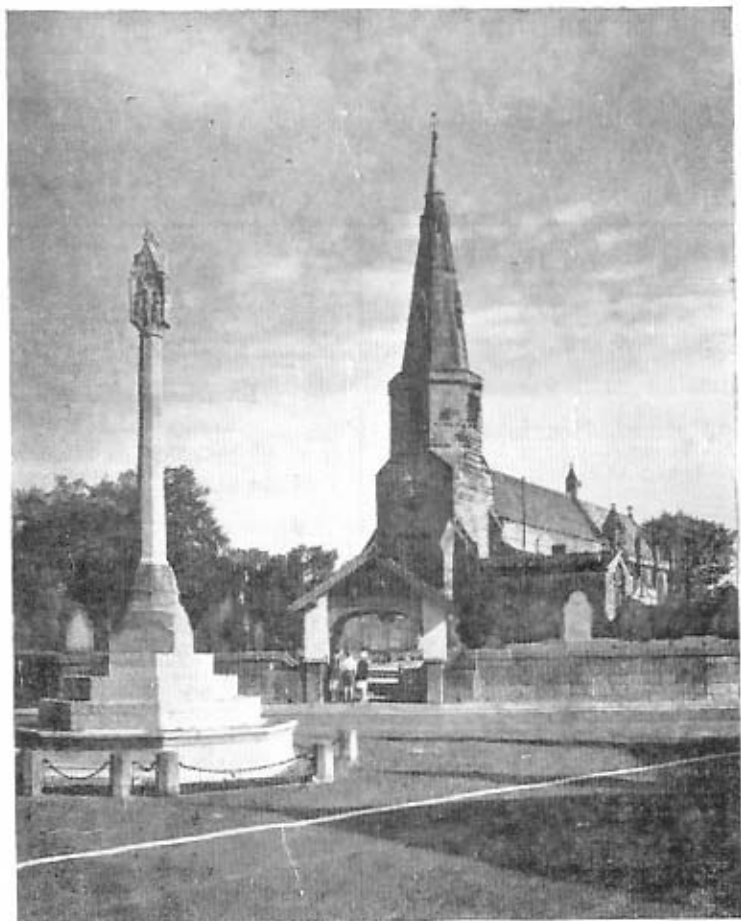


DECEMBER, 1965

HALSALL PARISH MAGAZINE



Rector: The Rev. W. H. BULLOUGH A.K.C. (Surrogate)
"The Rectory," Halsall. Tel. 321.
Licensed Reader: Mr. H. NELSON, 90 County Rd., Ormskirk
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CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

SUNDAY, 19th DECEMBER—

The Nativity Play, "The Christmas Tree" at 2.30 p.m. in Church.

SUNDAY, 19th DECEMBER—

The Parish Carol Service at 6.30 p.m.

FRIDAY, 24th DECEMBER—

Christmas Eucharist at the Parish Church 11.30 p.m.

CHRISTMAS DAY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion—Parish Church.

9.00 a.m. Holy Communion—Shirdley Hill.

10.30 a.m. Short Christmas Morning Service.

11.15 a.m. Holy Communion—Parish Church.

SUNDAY, 26th DECEMBER—The Parish Gift Day

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

10.30 a.m. Sung Eucharist

6.30 p.m. Evensong

The Rector will sit in Church from 8.30 a.m. to 8 p.m. to receive the Christmas Gifts from parishioners.

The Rectory,
Halsall.

14th November, 1965

My Dear Friends,

There is a story of a mother, tired and weary, who was on Christmas shopping with her son. The boy, heedless of his mother's mood and her weariness had stopped and was staring at a manger scene in a store window, while his mother was anxious to get on with the shopping. So the mother went back to him, grabbed his hand and pulled him away, and said, "Come now, we don't have any time for that."

This impatient remark of the mother seems to suggest that there are three roads to Bethlehem. First is the King's Highway: a road of travail and of pain; which Mary the mother of Jesus took. Second is the desert trail of wonder and of hope; which the Magi or the three wise men took. And third is the path across a field along which the shepherds journeyed after listening to the heavenly choir as they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

And so, when the woman of our story said to her son, "Come now; we don't have any time for that", it is a kind of parable of the person who takes the road to Christmas, but who doesn't take the road to Bethlehem.

It was indeed a busy time of the year when Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to pay their taxes. The ordinary journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem would have been tedious, even under the best circumstances. For Mary and Joseph at that time, it was even more so tedious, as it required frequent periods of rest and slow progress, on account of Mary who was heavy with a child. As the different groups of people passed them on the road, Mary must have begun to wonder if there would be places for her and her husband to sleep. Maybe they had never been to Bethlehem before.

Naturally at last, the crowded condition of Bethlehem would be forgotten for the time being, in the exultation of spirit which was theirs as they entered the city Bethlehem, the home of David—and the birthplace-to-be of the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

Coming then to the inn, their high spirits were dashed to the ground, for they were immediately informed that the crowd was so great that there was no room, not even a small space in the one humble hostel found in the village.

But there was an empty stable, not far away, which would give shelter for the night.

And there, in that lowly dwelling, was brought to pass the wonder of the ages—the birth of Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, born to be the Saviour of the world.

It was there the shepherds "found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger."

Ever since that time, one of the most familiar sights of the Christmas season has been a manger scene—such as we have in front of the lectern in St. Cuthbert's. Manger scenes range in size: from lovely miniatures that can be put on the mantelpiece, to the life-size displays which many cities and towns, especially in temperate climate, now erect out of doors.

Every manger scene contains the same people. In the centre are Joseph, Mary, and the baby in the manger; at one side stand the shepherds; at the other side are the wise men; and in the background can be seen the animals. But a manger scene tells us something special about the Christmas story, which we should all know.

First of all, we have there, the parents of Jesus Christ. They link Him at once with Israel's royalty and peasantry. Joseph the carpenter brings Him among the working men and then disappears, having rendered this service. Mary brings womanhood to the cradle; thus pointing to the fact that purity and love are to be found wherever Jesus is.

Then there are the shepherds. Whenever we think of shepherds, it is well to recall that the shepherd marks the first great step upward in the history of civilisation. At that point, the human race awoke to a new conception of God, and men began to see God as a Shepherd who takes care of His people the way a human shepherd cares for his sheep. This lovely thought runs all through the Old Testament. "The Lord is my shepherd," says the Psalmist. And later on, Jesus Himself described God's love by telling of a shepherd who discovered at night that only ninety-nine out of his flock of a hundred sheep were safe in the fold; and he went out and searched until he had found the one that was lost. It was shepherds who saw God as a shepherd. Therefore, shepherds came to the stable where Jesus was born.

And then, there were the wise men. They appeared out of the mysterious shadows of the East, walked in the light of history for a few moments, and then turned around and disappeared again for ever.

There is a legend which says that one of the three wise men was young, one was middle-aged, and the third was aged. It is said that the young man went in first to see the King by himself; and he was surprised to find a young prophet. Then the middle-aged man went in; and he saw a man in the middle of life. Then the old visitor went in; and he saw an aged teacher. Lastly, they all went in together, and they saw the Babe. This shows how Jesus Christ can meet and satisfy the needs of all classes of people whatever their age-group and background.

These wise men were the great scientists of the day; and they too came to the manger where Jesus lay. But what does their coming mean?

Like Socrates and Newton, the wise men were wise enough to know that they did not have all the answers. They were not afraid to give God a place in the universe, and they were not ashamed to look in at a stable in the hope that there they might find the end of man's quest for the truth of God. Shepherds and scientists—that is to say, the simplest people imaginable and the wisest men the world produces—these are the people we find at the manger of Jesus.

And so it is, that, around the manger of Bethlehem, all the world meets, bringing the manifold interests of humanity to Jesus Christ, so that He may interpret and command them.

But what has Christmas or the festival of the Birth of Christ come to mean in many countries today? Just another holiday, or another season for money making. For some, it is a time of worry about gifts to friends.

Such things as these oftentimes obscure the real meaning of Christmas. My Christian friends, the real meaning of Christmas is this. To God the Father it means giving His Son. To God the Son it means leaving heaven's glory to become a servant obedient unto death. To the world it means that God has provided a Saviour, that God wants man to enjoy peace of heart and goodwill among men.

And to YOU it means that God offers eternal life as a gift, that salvation from sin is within reach of everyone.

Hence Christmas is not just a reminder of Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace and His way of life, but it is a spirit. It is an attitude to life. It is a window from which we view every experience; and looking out of this window, life takes on new significance and enlarged meaning. This spirit of Christmas is the glorious, available privilege of all.

Therefore, accept Jesus Christ anew into your heart this day as your Saviour.

If the Bethlehem innkeeper had known the importance of the persons who were crowded out, he would have rejected the other guests and prepared his best room for the Saviour's birth.

We, on Christmas Day, would find room for Christ in our crowded lives, if we fully realised His importance to us and to our world.

"Let us all go even unto Bethlehem." Will you go this Christmas?

May God bless you all and may you know His peace and joy this Christmastide.

Your sincere friend,

HERBERT BULLOUGH

THE WISE MEN

The wise men, travelling from far countries to Bethlehem, have always appealed to the imagination. Legend has been woven around them. Three kings they were, endowed with occult powers by which they read portents in the stars. There is magic in the very words of the Authorised Version. "In the days of Herod the king, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem saying: 'Where is He that is born king of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him'."

In generations of carols the theme has been sung, and its magic enshrined in verse. Here is an example from Saxon days:

"They gave Him gifts of far brought things;
Of Recells, Myrr, and gold of Kings,
And setten there in strawy tent
Their mystic signs of Orient."

The story has special significance for western races. It is the fulfilment of the prophecy that the Messiah should be "A light to lighten the Gentiles" as well as to be the glory of Israel. Hence, the Epiphany holds a high place in the festivals of the Church. In these days much of its meaning is incorporated in our Christmas festivities. The fact that we do not make so much of January 6th as we do of December 25th does not mean that we lose sight of the significance of the Epiphany, but that we tend to merge the two, at least in our festivities.

The Epiphany is the day of lights in the Church. In the early Eastern Church, churches were brilliantly illuminated to symbolise that the Light of the Gentiles was come into the world. Whether ceremonial be elaborate or simple the same story is the basis of all our worship on this day—wise men from far countries guided by a star to the Source of all wisdom.

TWELFTH NIGHT

Epiphany ends the Twelve Days of Christmas, and until the middle of the last century was observed as a festival for public rejoicing and merriment. Kings, lights, spices, were the emblems of the season. Here is Laurence Whistler's description of Twelfth Night in London during the reign of George IV:

"As daylight faded, certain windows were seen to be shining with unusual brilliance. They were pastry-cooks' windows, and closer inspection revealed that the brilliance emanated from an immense number of candles. Embowered in holly and ivy, these lights were doubled and redoubled, thrown back and forth by sheets of looking-glass, set one way and another and festooned in flowers . . . Each shop was entirely filled with Twelfth Cakes garnished with stars, castles, kings, palaces and churches."

The cakes were richly spiced and covered with snow-white icing, "dark with citron and plums, and heavy as gold; studded all over with glittering stars, and red and green knots of sweetmeat, and hollow yellow-crusts crowns, and kings and queens"—so the description reads in "The Everyday Book" by Hone.

It was, and still might be, a night for children's parties. In time past the first business of the evening at a children's party was to choose a king and queen, sometimes an entire court or government was chosen.

The method of choosing was usually by lot. Improved regalia was provided for each character—king, queen, archbishop, prince and princess, chamberlain and all the rest, with their ladies.

There would be a great Epiphany or Twelfth Cake, and varieties of smaller ones, all iced and gaily decorated. The king, with his queen, would govern the evening's jollification.

This is a custom worth reviving. Children's parties are many and varied during the Christmas holidays. Why not hold one on Twelfth Night, using all the traditional emblems to commemorate the visit of the three kings to Bethlehem, led by the star in the east, and bearing their gifts? Here is your party idea for 1966!

A TRUE STORY FOR THE CHILDREN CHRISTIANS AWAKE

The year is 1749. The date is December the twenty-fifth—Christmas Day.

On schooldays we are often very reluctant to get out of bed. It always seems so very cold outside. Yet on Christmas morning it is different. It is never cold, no matter what the thermometer says! It is never too early to get up no matter what the stuffy old alarm-clock says! There is magic in the air, and they tell me that the spell is cast by stockings filled with presents.

Dolly Byrom was certainly awake and dressed very early on that Christmas morning more than two hundred years ago. I am sure she found many wonderful presents in her stocking, but because this is a true story I cannot tell you what they were, because nobody knows. But Dolly quickly went downstairs because she was looking for another present which her father had promised to give her.

A few days before Christmas her father had asked her what she would like, and she asked him to write a poem. So, on Christmas morning she went downstairs to see if it was there. Sure enough, she saw a piece of paper on the breakfast table with her name inscribed upon it. This piece of paper is still preserved in Manchester. At the top of the paper her father had written these words:

Christmas Day — For Dolly

And it was followed by these lines:

Christians Awake! Salute the happy morn,
Whereon the Saviour of the world was born;
Rise to adore the mystery of love,
Which hosts of angels chanted from above;
With them the joyful tidings first begun
Of God Incarnate and the Virgin's Son.

These words are now sung in thousands of churches throughout England on Christmas morning. But neither Dolly nor her father realised that would come about at that time. Do you know what happened? Why, when Christmas was over they put the piece of paper on one side and forgot all about it. Somehow or other the paper managed to get into the hands of a man called John Wainwright, who was an organist in Manchester. He liked it so much that he wrote a tune for it—the tune with which we are all so familiar today. He called the tune 'Stockport', because he was born there. Later the name of the tune was changed to 'Yorkshire.'

Mr. Wainwright then taught this hymn to his choirboys at St. Ann's Church, and on Christmas Eve, one year later, he took the boys to Dr. Byrom's house, which is called 'Kersal Cell.' It is at Lower Kersal, near Agecroft and Prestwich. The choirboys gathered round the door and at a sign from the choir-master they sang this carol for Dolly and Dr. Byrom. Imagine the surprise inside the house! They did not recognise the tune, so they listened to the words very closely. Then Dolly suddenly cried out in wonder and delight.

"Why, Daddy! It's the poem you wrote for me last year, set to music!"

What mince pies were set before those boys! What jugs of boiling hot coffee were brought from the kitchen by Dolly's mother! What laughter and singing there was, and how many times those boys had to sing Dolly's hymn before they were allowed to go back to Manchester!

Love to you all and a very happy Christmas,
from THE RECTOR

U.D.I.

THE SITUATION

The unilateral declaration of independence has created a new set of problems for the peoples of Rhodesia. Many will be painful and difficult for them, both among themselves, and in their relations with other countries.

We pray for the Rhodesian government, that it may make wise decisions and avert bloodshed. We pray for the 4 million African and 230,000 white men and women of Rhodesia. We pray for our kith and kin — the Christians of both races—that they may be effective in working for peace and reconciliation.

ACTION BY BRITAIN

The other nations in Africa are watching us in Britain to see how we treat the Rhodesian crisis. By our faithfulness to our principles now they will judge Britain—and the Church which the British did so much to plant in Africa. The basic principle we must uphold is justice for the people of Rhodesia, both black and white.

For our own nation we pray that no considerations of party loyalty or private interest may draw us away from our principles.

FOR RHODESIANS

Many Rhodesians are now uncertain about the future of their country and their families. Many are under restriction. There is the danger of increasing racial tension.

Pray for all in Rhodesia, both as individuals and as a nation.

FOR OTHERS WHO ARE AFFECTED

Both the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity will be involved in special planning. The economy of Zambia (till lately Northern Rhodesia) still depends largely on Rhodesia's coal, power, and rail facilities.

Pray for all outside Rhodesia who find themselves caught up in the consequences of her declaration of independence, and specially those to whom it brings extra burdens.

EDUCATION

Though there has been widespread primary education in Rhodesia—much of it the responsibility of the Church—secondary facilities have been poor. Hitherto the

Rhodesian Government has been unwilling to accept British help in expanding secondary education to meet the needs, and they have recently announced a reduction of almost 25% in the teacher training programme for 1966.

We pray for those engaged in education in Rhodesia, and specially for the expansion of secondary schools and teacher training. We pray for the Church's schools like those at Bulawayo, Penhalonga, Cyrene, Bonda, and Hunyani. Pray for all pupils and students preparing to play their part in the multi-racial society of Rhodesia.

EVANGELISM

The European Christians of Rhodesia have done much in the past to support missionary work among Africans. But many Europeans left the country when the Federation broke up, and this support decreased. There will be even less now, and unless we in Britain are ready to give more and make up the shortfall, Christianity will to many Africans seem to be just another aspect of western 'colonialism'.

Thank God for the ways in which already African and European Christians have been learning to work and worship together. Pray that they may continue to do so, and that we in Britain may see what part we can best play in their life.

THE CHURCH

The crisis in Rhodesia summons Christians of every group to a single united witness to Christ. Besides the two Anglican dioceses in Rhodesia, Mashonaland and Matabeleland, there are those Churches which belong to the Christian Council of Rhodesia, and those like the Roman Catholics who do not. The All Africa Conference of Churches will be called to offer advice.

We pray that God will give his people power to act with wisdom and love, and that he will direct all Christian leaders in Rhodesia, especially Cecil Alderson, Bishop of Mashonaland, and Kenneth Skelton, Bishop of Matabeleland. (Formerly Rector of Walton).

GOD SPEAKS

"When in former times God spoke to our forefathers, he spoke in fragmentary and varied fashion through the prophets. But in this final age he has spoken to us in the Son whom he has made heir to the whole universe, and through whom he created all orders of existence."

Hebrews 1:1, 2.—New English Bible
Lord Jesus, when I miss my road
And seek some other sort of God,
And search in complicated places,
Or gaze in intellectual faces,
Or try to puzzle, puzzle through,
Send me an angel who once flew

And spoke at Bethlehem.
For thou hast spoken in thy Son
A greater message has not been known,
Let me see in Jesus' face
The love that is thine for the human race
And let me kneel and humbly pray—
"Enter my heart, my Lord, this day
And with my life abide."

CHRISTMAS PRAYERS

O GOD, whose presence stirs the hearts of men to worship; we thank thee that thou has not left us without knowledge of thy nature, but hast shewn

thyself to us in thy Son. Let the light that is in Him illumine our hearts and minds, that we may ever rejoice in thee; through the same thy son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

O FATHER, who has declared thy love to men by the birth of the holy child at Bethlehem; help us to welcome Him with gladness and to make room for Him in our daily life; so that we may live at peace with one another, and in goodwill with all thy family; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE MOTHERS' UNION

Our meeting on November 2nd was a most enjoyable one. There was an interesting discussion after an excellent talk by Mr. Croston on the Probation Service. This month we have a change from a speaker. On Tuesday, 7th December, at 7.30 p.m. in school, Mrs. Henry Serjeant will give a demonstration—icing cakes—bring your Christmas cake with you and an apron and ice your cake under supervision.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thank you to all who supported the Coffee Evening at Wharton's Farm. The amount raised was £40.

SERVERS' ROTA

- Dec. 5—8 a.m. Tony Gaskell.
12—8 a.m. Jim Heaton.
10.30 a.m. Harold Grimshaw, Malcolm Serjeant.
19—8 a.m. John Gaskell.
24—11.30 p.m. Harold Grimshaw, Peter Balmer
25—8 a.m. John Davies.
11.30 a.m. Raymon Juba.
26—8 a.m. Brian Heaton.
10.30 a.m. Harold Grimshaw, John Pounds

SIDESMEN'S ROTA

- Dec. 5—W. Robinson, E. Blackhurst, H. Baldwin, W. White.
12—J. D. Grimshaw, G. Midgley, R. Heaton, J. Colley.
19—J. Cheetham, H. Gaskell, R. Lewis, H. Rimmer.
26—W. Leadbetter, N. Britnall, G. Porter, S. Park.
1966
Jan. 2—J. Serjeant, J. Banks, E. Grimshaw, E. Gawne.

SANCTUARY FLOWERS

- Dec. 5—Mr. L. Huyton.
12—The Guides.
19—The Sunday School.
25—The Congregation.
Jan. 2—Mrs. R. Heaton.

BURIAL OF THE DEAD

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- Nov. 3—William Richard Pilkington, age 64 years, Plex Lane, Halsall.
4—Thomas Longton, age 67 years, Hall Road, Scarisbrick.
16—Thomas Sutton, age 71 years, 1 Summerwood Lane, Halsall.

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