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HALSALL PARISH MAGAZINE



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My dear Friends,

There can be no doubt what my first duty must be in this letter, it is to congratulate you all on a magnificent effort at the Christmas Bazaar. The fact that we achieved the grand total of £640 so soon after the Gift Day, which raised £700 (in gifts) clearly indicates the will of the Parish to get our debt on the new organ cleared off as quickly as we possibly can. Apart from the financial success of the Bazaar there was a fine spirit of fellowship and service and willingness to help, which is even more important. Well done, Halsall! It is a great inspiration to me to feel that you are all behind me in the effort to restore our beautiful church to its former glory. The year 1964 must go down as one of the best years in the life and work of our Church. During the year we have seen the completion of the restoration of the whole of the fabric, the conversion of the heating system to oilfiring, the eradication of death watch beetle in the chancel roof and other parts of the Church, the signing of the organ contract for £5,500, alongside which we have played our part as a loyal member of the family in the Diocese by taking our fair share in all its activities. What is the reason for all this? Surely there can only be one answer—because we love God and His Church. What a joy it is to work together for Him and to endeavour to give Him only of the best that we can offer.

Now we must turn our thoughts to 1965. What shall we say to ourselves as the New Year dawns? What is it going to mean for us as church men and women, as members of St. Cuthbert's Church, Halsall. Is it going to mean a deepening of our loyalty to the Church, a greater frequency in attending worship and in particular the Holy Communion? Is it going to mean the regular, costly giving of a substantial part of our weekly wages or monthly salary? Or is it merely going to mean that we drift along, a benevolent, neutral and timid, lazy camp-follower?

The answer can only be given by you. You alone can say that you are prepared to follow Christ into the depth of full, disciplined, obedient, active church membership. We cannot make or maintain this decisive answer in our own strength: we need and can obtain the grace of God, provided we are prepared to pay the price.

When I read and hear of the countless hosts of Christian folk who live in parts of the world where

freedom is now a thing of the past—forgotten—where the secret police, the tapped telephones, the spying on your friends, the horrors of the labour camp, are everyday things, I am grieved by the fact that most of us do not realise the privilege, the immense privilege of being free. We are free to criticise, free to think for ourselves, free to worship. At the back of all this we TAKE FOR GRANTED the Faith which has done more than anything else to guard and preserve that freedom—the Christian Faith.

In many parts of the world despite endless persecution and ceaseless interference, the Christian Church is emerging and growing, churches are packed so full, says one correspondent, that there isn't room even to make the sign of the Cross. Compare this with so many of our churches in this land of freedom—pitifully small congregations, querulous Christians who complain because they have to walk a quarter of a mile for a service. I wonder if things are not too easy in this country. We do not have to raise much money to support our Church: we are living on past generosity.

We do not have to suffer for our Faith: people are too well mannered to do anything but an occasional sneer. We do not lose our job because of our Christian profession. It is comparatively easy to be a churchman or churchwoman in this country. It does not cost us much. And so we do not give much. We tend just to drift along, going to church when we feel like it—all rather gentlemanly and a little ineffective. We tend to take it all for granted—"There'll always be an England: there'll always be a Church of England." We may drift, sleepily, to our destruction.

A new year is on top of us—a new year, with all its infinite potentialities for good or ill. We must ask again—what is it going to mean for us as churchmen and women?

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. The price of preserving our spiritual heritage is the willingness of this generation to give itself wholeheartedly to Christ as its Lord and Saviour.

God bless you, one and all, members of St. Cuthbert's Church, Halsall, as you launch out into the depth of full membership in another year of service.

A very happy New Year to you all.

Your sincere friend,

HERBERT BULLOUGH

THOUGHTS FOR NEW YEAR

I

As we enter a New Year perhaps many of us think about New Year resolutions. Personally, I never make much ado about them myself. If a good resolution is called for I fail to see any close connection between it and the fact that the earth is setting out on another journey around the sun. On the other hand, perhaps one must admit that the passing of a year, and the opening of a new one, by forcing upon our awareness the passage of time, does indeed tend to make us examine our use of time, and to take stock of our position. Amongst the many thoughts and questions which arise, perhaps the most interesting is the question: "What sort of a person am I?" Blessed is the man or woman who has the imagination and clear-sightedness to gain only a dim perception of the true answer! It is a complicated question. If it is true that some aspects of myself are best known by myself alone, it is equally true that other vital aspects of myself are better known by other people. We need that power or gift of which Robert Burns speaks, the gift "to see ourselves as others see us." But others cannot as a rule see into our hearts and read our motives. This is principally our own concern. Others judge largely by our words and actions, but these do not always reveal the whole truth of what is in our hearts. We alone can know that, and by the knowledge of what we find in our inmost heart (plus what we may know of how others see us) are we able to gain some idea of the answer to that question: "What sort of a person am I?" It is necessary to think out how we wish "others to see us"—what impression we wish to make on other people! Do we wish to be known to others as selfish or unselfish; kind or unkind; reliable or unreliable; helpful or unhelpful? The contrasts are probably more subtle than this however. For example, am I more concerned to be known as unselfish or smart? Kind or athletic, or pretty? Reliable or gay? Helpful or independent? Venturesome or fearful? The list could be continued at great length, and the contrasting characteristics changed and interchanged. But for each of us the question remains—"What is my concern? What sort of person am I, and what sort of a person do I want to be?"

Perhaps as we begin a New Year it may be useful to give some consideration to this question. In finding the best answer our religion is in the end necessary. We need a standard, or a broad enough incentive. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God." That is, amongst other things, we must aim at the perfect in work, in sport, in art, in love, in social life. "Do unto others as you would have them do to you." This is the final test of all our motives in our relationships with other people. With these two commandments in our hearts we can taste with freedom, and without fear, all that life offers of service, of opportunity, of worship, of pleasure.

II

The dying of an old year often enhances our awareness of the passage of time. Each year has its own particular associations, and recedes into the past with its memories of irretrievable days. There are incidents in this old year which you will never forget,

and which I shall never forget—new friendships sealed, old friendships retained; new experiences of good and evil; new insight into our own natures and into the natures of our acquaintances! Above all, this year will be remembered by those for whom it has brought new understanding of the Gospel of Christ, for therein lies the key to the knowledge of ourselves, of other people, and of the world. At this season other years, too, come back to mind—years long since departed, and with them come memories of much that was beautiful in men and women and children of other times. All of us, especially older people, find pleasure, even if at times it is tinged with melancholy, in contemplation of these bygone fields of experience—"Where the Enchanted Long Ago murmurs and smiles anew."

But a new year is beginning, in which we have to meet the continued challenge of life, and of our faith. We must learn not to put ourselves first, but rather to live for others. If we live to give and not to get we shall not be disappointed nor disillusioned. To live in this spirit we need the inspiration of Christ. It is not the life of the "natural man," but the life of the man who has been born again—who has entered into the new life of the spirit, and fulfils the loyalties of citizenship in a spiritual kingdom. This is the life which Christ lived. It is this life we must accept from Him, and use in our turn to transform the world. We can only do this by putting religion in the only place it can be put, that is, *first*. And religion is the worship of God—the knowledge which comes only through that worship, and the knowledge of life which only comes through knowledge of God. Not one of us can say we need to progress no further. There is no time when the Christian can rest, and say: "I've done enough, I understand enough about God." It is far easier to find many men converted to good, than find one man passing from good to better. In this new year let it be our aim individually, and as a parish, to be more seriously concerned with our religion, and to pass from good to better in our understanding of God and in our fellowship with Him.

FOR THE CHILDREN

Dear children,

A happy New Year to you all. I hope you all had a Happy Christmas and that Santa brought you some of the gifts you asked for. Thank you all very much for the way you have helped me during 1964. For your Bazaar effort, for helping with the magazines, and envelopes and so many other things.

Now I will tell you a short story about Saint Macarius. His special day is January 2nd. Saint Macarius went to live in the desert near a marsh where shepherds used to bring their sheep to graze. There he made himself a tiny house, or cell as it was called. One day as he was sitting in his cell, he heard a knock at the door.

"That is one of my friends come to visit me," he thought, and he opened the door. But what was his surprise to see there, not a man, but a hyena with a baby hyena in her mouth. She seemed to hold it out to the old saint.

"What do you want?" he asked. He took the little creature in his hands, and felt it all over to see what was wrong with it. But he could find nothing till he looked at its eyes, and then saw that it was blind and could not see.

So he took it and cared for it, moistening its eyes and making the sign of the Cross over them; and after a time it could see. It could run after its mother now, and away they went together to the marsh where they lived.

The next day, as Saint Macarius was sitting in his cell, he again heard a knock at the door, and there was the hyena again; but this time she had over her shoulders the skin of a freshly killed sheep. She had brought it to show that she was grateful to him for curing her baby. It would make him a warm rug to sleep on.

But St. Macarius did not want to take the sheepskin.

"You must have killed a sheep to get it," he said. "I will not take it unless you promise me not to kill any more sheep. You must only eat what is already dead; and if you cannot find any food, come to me and I will feed you. Do you promise this?"

And it is said that the hyena dropped on her knees and bent her head to the ground, moving it up and down and looking as if she promised. And after that, from time to time, when she had not been able to find any food she would come to the cell and Saint Macarius would throw her a loaf. And the old man slept on the soft sheepskin till he died.

God bless you, children.

Love from

THE RECTOR

THE FARMERS' MEETING

I have received excellent reports of the last meeting when there was a very good attendance to hear Mr. Barnes speak about his experiences in America among the farming community there. Our next meeting is on Thursday, 21st January, when we shall welcome Mr. J. R. A. Neild, Crop Husbandry Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who will speak on Modern Farming Systems. Mr. Neild is an excellent speaker and is well known in this area. I hope there will be a good attendance. H.B.

REFLECTIONS

The season of Epiphany which begins on January 6th commemorates the visit of the Wise Men to Bethlehem. The word Epiphany is derived from the Greek and means "the showing forth of divinity." It is the season of light. Light in the very widest meaning of the word. Applied to ourselves in everyday life it means diffuse light rather than darkness, or dullness. Think for a moment of the behaviour which brings light, darkness, or dullness into life.

Darkness is introduced by the quarrelsome, touchy, selfish, jealous person; by temper, and spite. It is produced by the thoughtless, who indulge in rash speech, who are swayed by prejudice; who have little regard for exactitude; who are content to express opinions very forcibly without recognising any obligation to seek for truth.

Dullness is something not so definite as darkness, yet it dims the light. Dullness is produced by the sort of person whom we call the "wet blanket," who pours cold water on everything; for whom nothing is ever right. He is the know-all, and the bore, because he is really very ignorant.

If we accept the judgment of Christ, the person who is nearest the image of the Creator is the one who brings light; who is cheerful, generous, tolerant, kind—who would rather forget his own prejudices, and preferences, and try to make other people happy—who is always ready to believe the other person may be right.

Christ said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Here lies the secret, I think. So many people are only half alive. They do not realise the possibilities of their own nature, nor the wonders of the world in which they live. (And many of them would be terrified if they did!)

What a blind, narrow puny mind is that of the quarrelsome, touchy, criticising, spiteful person! What a slow, muddy, perverted mind is that of the "wet blanket" and the bore!

R. L. Stevenson said that desire and curiosity are the two eyes through which we see the world in its most enchanting colours. To be deeply interested in the affairs of life; to enjoy keenly the varied experiences which the world offers; to enter into life trying to understand, to discover, to appreciate more and more the inexhaustible riches that it holds—this is to be truly alive, to possess light, and to be in a position to give it out. "Vast is the stretch of earth, and wide the territory of one's life should be." Why dwell a mere rabbit of a man in one field and one burrow, when the whole wide world, and the wonderful variety of experience is at one's disposal? "Alack for the years that are forfeit if we fail to perform one great task of happiness, and truly live while alive."

Stevenson epitomised the bore, and the bringer of darkness, in the following passage—and this is before the days of television!

"The air of the fireside withers all the fine wildings of a man's heart. He is so comfortable that he begins to prefer comfort to everything else on earth. Twenty years ago he was equally capable of crime or heroism; now he is fit for neither. His soul is asleep and you may speak without constraint: you will not wake him." . . . But this is the man who is a perfect menace when he does leave the fireside, and mixes for a brief hour with others. He is selfish, self-centred, touchy, self opinionated, utterly intolerant—as a rule. He has lost the ability to live. He has become a mere cabbage of a man, and he cannot understand those who still can live.

The Epiphany message is to show forth divinity. The fundamental quality of divinity is light. With all our imperfections we can give light rather than darkness. The ordinary man can bring good cheer and brightness, humour and generosity into the circles in which he moves—and to conclude with, yet another quotation from Stevenson:

"Every heart that has beat strong and cheerfully, has left a hopeful influence behind it, and bettered the traditions of mankind."

SIDESMEN'S ROTA

- Jan. 3—a.m. R. A. Gaskell, R. Hunt
p.m. T. Swift, T. Hunter
„ 10—a.m. H. Baldwin, W. White
p.m. C. Shacklady, Jos. Balmer
„ 17—a.m. E. Serjeant, D. Swift
p.m. R. Dutton, T. Grimshaw
„ 24—a.m. R. Heaton, W. Robinson
p.m. R. Lewis, H. Rimmer
„ 31—a.m. G. Porter, S. Park
p.m. J. Cheetham, H. Gaskell
Feb. 7—a.m. E. Grimshaw, E. Gawne
p.m. W. Leadbetter, N. Britnall

SANCTUARY FLOWERS

- Jan. 3—Mrs. R. Heaton
„ 10—Mrs. K. Edwardson
„ 17—Mrs. H. Gaskell
„ 24—Mrs. T. Sutton and Mrs. R. Lewis
„ 31—Mrs. Sumner, Mrs. D. and M. Dickenson
Feb. 7—Mrs. H. Dickenson

SERVERS' ROTA

- Jan. 3— 8-00 a.m. Jim Heaton
„ 10— 8-00 a.m. John Gaskell
10-30 a.m. Harold Grimshaw, Raymond Juba
„ 17— 8-00 a.m. Peter Balmer
„ 24— 8-00 a.m. Tony Gaskell
10-30 a.m. Harold Grimshaw, Roger Dutton
„ 30— 8-00 a.m. Colin Huyton
Feb. 7— 8-00 a.m. John Davies

HOLY BAPTISM

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- Dec. 6—David Philip, son of Thomas Leslie James and Angela Sheila Marshall, 4 Rimmer Green, Scarisbrick, near Southport.
„ 6—Shirley, daughter of James William and Phyllis Simpson, 6 Rosemary Lane, Haskayne.

THE HYMNS WE SING (4) WORK

Hymn No. 4—New every morning is the love

When I was at school this hymn used to come round very often in relation to others of a more militant type which I sang with greater gusto! One of the things which mitigated against it was the

tune by Webbe which I thought very wishy washy, moreover, I didn't understand the words and nobody bothered to explain them. The assembly just sang it parrot like, and sang it so often that we didn't need the hymn book. If we didn't want to sing we just opened our mouths and pretended!

The real thought for this hymn comes from Revelations 21 v. 5, where we read “And he that sat upon the throne said “Behold, I make all things new.” We also find a secondary thought in Zechariah 4 v. 10, “Who hath despised the day of small things.”

If we are honest with ourselves we will admit that work, to most of us, is the means whereby we are able to provide for our human needs. Some are fortunate in having congenial jobs which they have always wanted to do, but for most of us at one time or another work becomes humdrum, boring, and a mere means to an end.

In this hymn by John Keble this problem is tackled in an admirable way. It first of all reminds us that the love of God is offered to us new, every day. This encourages to a new start as the day begins.

New every morning is the love,
Our wakening and uprising prove,
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought.

It was Jeremiah who wrote “His compassions fail not, they are new every morning.” We must seek to find God in all we do. The very limitations of our daily work should provide a means whereby we can make it a “cheerful sacrifice” to Him. This thought is expressed in the third verse:

If on our daily course, our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

In our Family Eucharist the Offertory Procession of the Bread and Wine is Symbolic of the offering of our work and leisure. It is this symbolic act which we have to equate to daily living. If more of the Light of God shone through us in our daily work much of the apathy and disinterest in the Church would disappear. We should show that we have something that other people wanted. The prime factor is to be conscious of the presence of God. In doing this much of the pettiness of living would be swept away. We discovered in a previous hymn that prayer was the technique of drawing near to God. The last verse of the hymn puts it like this:

Only, O Lord, in Thy dear love,
Fit us for perfect rest above.
And help us this and every day
To live more nearly as we pray.

Next month: Hymn 379, Now thank we all our God.

D.T.

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