

The Magazine of St. Nicholas Church Old Marston

No. 70

DECEMBER, 1963

4d.



Christmas Services 1963

CANDLELIGHT CAROL SERVICES :

Sunday, December 22nd, 6.30 p.m.

Christmas Eve 7.30 p.m.

(Admission by free ticket only. Tickets available after Sunday services, and from B. G. Oliver, Chemist).

CHRISTMAS EVE : 11.30 p.m. Midnight Communion
(with carols and address).

CHRISTMAS DAY : 7 a.m., 8 a.m., and noon, Holy Communion.
11 a.m. Family Matins. Paul N. Rimmer, Vicar.

“ O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord ! ”

A Message from your Vicar :

Marston Vicarage,
Oxford.
Christmas 1963

My Dear Friends,

A Happy Christmas to you all !
May God bless you and all with whom
you will be sharing your Christmas this
year.

Here are three simple thoughts for
Christmas :

1. Christmas is the Festival of Christ's Birth. Make time for God this Christmas-time.
2. Christmas is the Home Festival. Remember the homeless and hungry at this time.
3. Christmas is the Festival of Joy. The true happiness of Christmas will depend not on what we spend in money, but what we give of ourselves to others.

My wife and I join with our family in
wishing you and yours every happiness.
Your sincere friend and Vicar,

Paul S. Kenning

CHRISTMAS IS COMING !

How wonderful the shop-windows are looking ! If only one could afford everything ! Dad needs slippers. You've forgotten to order the "Eagle" Annual for John and they've probably sold out. Mary's written a list a foot long, and you've left it at home. The beds have got to be made up for Pop and Granma. I hope Joe brings us the tree he promised.

No wonder some folk say : " I dread Christmas ! " There's so much to think about. Others dread it for a different reason. They can only think back to happy Christmasses of the past when the family circle was a full one.

Some people say resignedly : " Well, I wouldn't bother, but you've got to do something for the children's sake."

Look forward to Christmas ! Whoever you are determine that this Christmas is going to be the most meaningful of any Christmasses that you've ever had. Despite all the rush and bustle, let the simplicity of the Christmas message make a fresh impact on you. Let it penetrate deep into your soul. It has something special to say to both the tired housewife and the shop steward. The children grasp the truth of Christmas, but the message is for the sick, the sad, the aged, and the lonely too.

The rich may rejoice in their banquets, but it is we the " poor in spirit " to whom the true joy of Christmas will be specially given.

" We shall be grievously impoverished if our ears cannot tune to the angels song or our eyes are blind to the wise men's star," wrote the Bishop of Woolwich in " Honest to God."

How true this is ! It is not primarily what we do that will make this Christmas a happy one for us and our families. It is what we allow Christ to do in us, that will make the difference.

" O Holy Child of Bethlehem descend to us we pray,
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today."

CHRISTMAS is for YOU ! Look forward to it. Welcome Christ in silence and in sacrament. Rejoice with your fellow Christians wherever you are, whoever you are.

UNITED ACTION :

Since October we have seen two united efforts amongst denominations. The first was a collection for Oxfam which raised over £130, under the able treasurership of Mrs. Aherne. This is a splendid result.

By the time this magazine is published some of you will have been visited by members of a number of denominations who are co-operating in assessing the needs and resources for a Good Neighbour Scheme of emergency help in Old Marston.

The letter commending this scheme has been signed by the Vicar, the Rev. Fr. Brown, the Rev. C. Attridge, Dr. M. Cowan, and Mr. L. C. Jennings. Whilst the scheme is being launched by the Christians of various denominations help is invited from all, whether they are Christians or not.

Members of the parish will hear in the near future if such a scheme is practicable, and what resources are available. In the meantime, do see that there are no lonely people near to you, who, may have to spend their Christmas on their own, unless you remember them.

BIBLE WEEK 1964

PLEASE REGISTER FOR BIBLE WEEK 1964—a four day Conference (Evenings only) in which all the denominations on the Oxford Council of Churches will be taking part. Its leader will be the Rev. Edwin Robertson, frequent broadcaster on the " ten to eight " B.B.C. programme, who has led Bible Weeks in many towns all over the country. The cost will be 2/6

for each membership card, which includes the Bible notes. Registration forms will be available from Bible Sunday (December 8th) onwards. **THIS WEEK IS TOP PRIORITY FOR ALL CHURCH MEMBERS. PLEASE DO YOUR LEVEL BEST TO KEEP THIS WEEK FREE AND ATTEND ON THESE FOUR NIGHTS.** We ask all adult organisations to keep these nights free as far as possible so that as many members of the parish can attend. More details of this on Sunday, December 8th.

IN MEMORIAM: MRS. AUDREY DAY, AND NIGEL

The parish was stunned when it heard the news of the death of Audrey Day, and Nigel, in a tragic car accident at Princess Risborough.

Our thoughts went out immediately to John, Audrey's husband, and to Martin, not yet two years old, who were detained for just over 24 hours in the hospital at Aylesbury. The service at the crematorium was a private one, but a great number of friends attended the memorial service in Church on Saturday, November 9th. Although our hearts were full at this service, there was a note of Christian triumph as we sang "Praise my soul the King of Heaven," and (for Nigel's sake) "All things bright and beautiful." The Vicar spoke of the personal faith of this happy united family, who had always been so enthusiastic about the Family Communion. We just knew that for Audrey, with all her wonderful talents as a singer, amateur actress, and artist, as well as for Nigel with his love of all things created, the flowers and all living things, Death was not the end, but the beginning of Life in a new dimension: in the closer presence of God.

John has asked for a special word of thanks to be expressed through these pages for the kindness of so many people at this time of need, for their letters of sympathy, and for their encouragement.

We shall continue to remember him and little Martin in our prayers, and give thanks to God for the inspiration of their tremendous courage at this tragic time.

GIVING TO GOD

"The Church is always asking for money!" And so it must always do so—if only to remind us that as Christians it is our privilege to give back to God a token of what he has given to us. And whilst we think of it, lets take note that this dear old Church of England of ours is the only branch of the Anglican Communion that receives 15 million from its endowments..... i.e. without having to raise it **directly**. If this didn't happen Church members in England would have to provide a great deal more cash than they do at present.

Members of the Fellowship of St. Nicholas' have all agreed to give a regular amount each week for Christ's work. But you can still give whether you come to Church or not. You can still have a set of envelopes whether you're a member of the Fellowship of St. Nicholas' or not.

Remember, the widow who gives her weekly shilling every Sunday, does far more to extend the Kingdom of God than the man who donates pound note at a baptism—and stays away until the next baby is born! We are thankful for everything but let us get things into perspective and ask ourselves just how much we spend on cigarettes, sweets, and tobacco **each week**—and how much do we give back to God?

N.B. Will all those who would like a set of weekly envelopes please let Mr. Oliver know as soon as possible so that they can have a set at the beginning of the year. Present envelope users are asked to use only the envelopes of the current year, in order to help in keeping the records straight. Thank you.

SCOUTS NEWS

Our G.S.M. was recently presented his Wood Badge by the Commissioner, and Skip Carson McCartney reports that he has welcomed eight Cubs and two new recruits into Scouting.

He sends his congratulations to two Senior Scouts who took over traffic control after an accident in Oxford recently.

A popular event recently was a midnight hike which the G.S.M. and A.C.M. attended. In congratulating two juniors, Stephen Furber and Keith Hosmer, on lasting out the fifteen miles, Skip promises to arrange a similar hike in about three years time when he himself has recovered!

BELLRINGERS NOTES

In this month's Tower Notes, our Captain of Bells, Mr. Foy Jones, welcomes to the tower Mr. Paul Cattermole, whose home tower is St. Peter's, Droitwich, and who is at present studying in Oxford.

David Oliver distinguished himself by ringing his first peal of Doubles at Old Marston, and was congratulated at Berrick Salome by Miss Cross, the Guild Secretary, on his ringing.

A quarter peal was rung as a farewell to Mr. and Mrs. Bellingham to whom the ringers extend their warm wishes for the future.

Mr. Jones extends a welcome to all who would like to learn how to ring, both the bells in the tower and the handbells. Practice nights: Fridays 7.45 p.m.

MARSTON VILLAGE HALL

Boxing Night Gala Dance with "The Electrons."

Specialities. Refreshments. Novelties. 8 p.m.—1 p.m. Tickets, price 5/6 from 43 Eden Drive; 118 Oxford Road; and at Dances.

CHILDREN'S GIFT SERVICE

The St. Nicholas-tide Gift Service will be on Sunday, 8th December and the children and young people of the Catechism will be asked to bring their gifts to the 11 a.m. Service on that day. These will be offered and later distributed among those in need. Gifts for the young adolescent and older children will be particularly welcome as this age is so often forgotten at such times.

THE CHURCH invites her children of the Sunday School to a Christmas Party on SATURDAY, 4th JANUARY, 1964. Please make a note of this date, so as not to clash with family parties.

KINDERGARTEN and NURSERY 3 p.m. to 5.15 p.m.

Tea at 3.45 p.m.

JUNIORS 5.15 p.m. to 7 p.m. Tea at 5.30 p.m.

Arrangements will be made for the Senior Catechism and Crossbearers later.

OVER 60's.

We are pleased to announce that the final amount as a result of the Coffee morning came to 47s. 10d.

Grateful thanks go to all who helped to make this such a happy and successful occasion.

COLLECTION AND COMMUNICANTS

	£	s.	d.	Communicants
October 20th	56
October 27th	36
November 3rd	80
November 10th	40
Total Number of week-day communicants				— 48

PARISH CALENDAR : DECEMBER

- Dec. 1. **ADVENT SUNDAY**
 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion.
 10.30 a.m. Matins (said).
 11.0 a.m. **PARISH COMMUNION.** Thanksgiving and Re-dedication of St. Nicholas Fellowship Members.
 6.30 p.m. Evensong.
- " 4. Wednesday. 7.15 a.m. Holy Communion.
- " 6. Friday. **ST. NICHOLAS' DAY. PATRONAL FESTIVAL**
 7.15 a.m. Holy Communion.
 10.30 a.m. Holy Communion.
 7.45 p.m. **PARISH PARTY** in St. Nicholas' County Primary School by kind permission of the Headmaster.
 Tickets 2/- including refreshments.
- " 8. 2nd **SUNDAY IN ADVENT. BIBLE SUNDAY**
 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (Corporate Communion for Youth Fellowship followed by breakfast).
 11.0 a.m. Matins. Children will bring gifts for distribution at Christmas time.
 3.00 p.m. Holy Baptism.
 6.30 p.m. Evensong.
- " 11. Wednesday. 7.15 a.m. Holy Communion.
- " 15. 3rd **SUNDAY IN ADVENT**
 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion.
 9.30 a.m. **FAMILY COMMUNION.**
 11.0 a.m. Matins.
 6.30 p.m. Evensong. Church Parade for all Scouts, Guides, Cubs & Brownies. All young people especially invited
- " 17. Tuesday. Over 60's Party in New Village Hall.
- " 18. Wednesday. 7.15 a.m. Holy Communion.
 7.45 p.m. Christmas Anthology in the Church Hall.
- " 21. Saturday. Festival of St. Thomas, Apos. and Martyr.
 7.15 a.m. Holy Communion.
- " 22. 4th **SUNDAY IN ADVENT**
 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion.
 11.0 a.m. Matins.
 3.00 p.m. Holy Baptism.
 6.30 p.m. **CAROL AND CANDLE SERVICE**
 (See notice on cover regarding tickets).
- " 24. **EVE OF CHRISTMAS**
 7.30 p.m. **CAROL AND CANDLE SERVICE**
 (See notice on cover regarding tickets).
- " 25. 11.30 p.m. **HOLY COMMUNION** (Carols and address).
CHRISTMAS DAY
 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion.
 11.0 a.m. Family Matins.
 5.30 p.m. Evensong (said).
- " 26. Thursday. Festival of St. Stephen, 1st Martyr.
 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion.
- " 27. Friday. Festival of St. John, Apos. and Evang.
 7.15 a.m. Holy Communion.
- " 28. Saturday. Holy Innocents' Day.
- " 29. 1st **SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS**
 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion.
 11.0 a.m. Matins.
 6.30 p.m. Evensong.

STOP PRESS : Top marks Brownies, for raising £10 for Oxfam! — the proceeds from a sale of home-made articles.

ALTAR FLOWER ROTA : DECEMBER

- 1st December and Patronal Festival — Mrs. Harlow.
8th December — Mrs. Barnsley.
15th December — Mrs. Silk
22nd December and Christmas Day — Mrs. Haynes.

HOLY BAPTISM

- Oct. 13. Kathryn Louise Simpson, 50 Cherwell Drive.
Nicola Dorothy Holcombe, 66 Cherwell Drive.
Helen Rosemary Clack, 15 Beechey Avenue.
Clive Anthony Woodhouse, 26 Beechey Avenue.
Anne Mary Duthie, 41 Exeter Road, Kidlington.
- „ 27. Martin Richard Bulpitt, 16 Gordon Close.
- Nov. 3. Harvey Stephen Whittam, 46 Davenant Road, Oxford.
Katherine Margaret Jean Jenkins (by adoption), 8 Cotswold Crescent.

IN MEMORIAM

- Oct. 26. Audrey Elizabeth Day, aged 35.
Nigel John Day, aged 6.
- Nov. 16. James Edward Quiggin, aged 56.



Do YOU belong to the Fellowship of St. Nicholas?

Details gladly supplied on request by our
Fellowship Secretary—Miss Eileen Warburton,
Cross Cottage, Old Marston, Oxford.

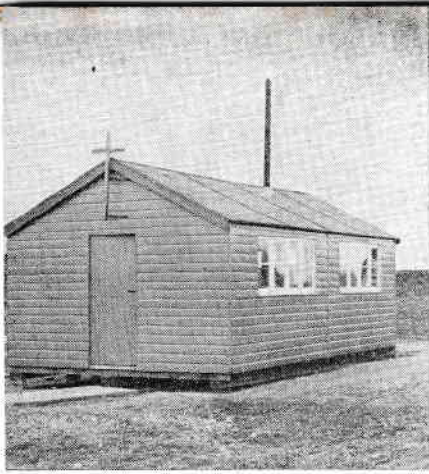
'Phone : 47339



*Our Bishop talks to us
about his own appeal
for new Churches*

Diocese of Oxford

December 1963



BRITWELL 1958

My dear friends,

At the recent Archdeaconry meetings about 2,000 clergy and lay people heard from me and others an account of my Appeal for New Churches since it was launched in March 1958, and also of what we foresee to lie before us in the coming 5 years. On the next page is printed a summary of the factual position — past, present and future — presented by Brigadier Hill at the meetings.

The Spiritual Implications.

I want to give you now my own summing up of the call as it comes to us today, in order that you shall all understand the deep spiritual implications of this task, to which we are clearly called by God. I want to emphasize that we can only succeed in answering this call by great effort and sacrifice on the part of every parish and every individual member of our Church.

Our population in this Diocese is increasing by leaps and bounds. Experience shows that a new housing area of about 3,000 or more people needs its own centre of worship if

church life is to be established. Otherwise the mission of the Church will simply not reach it with any effect.

Who is Responsible?

Who indeed is responsible for seeing that the mission of the Church does reach these people? The mother parish? Yes. Certainly. And each mother parish is expected to make its own very special effort and contribution for the provision of its own new church buildings. But few parishes can shoulder the whole burden. It must be shared by the whole Diocese. These new communities are a mission field in our midst! They are our own and no one else's. The responsibility for them rests upon us all.

What I am asking.

In the next five years we shall need on a sober estimate £500,000. The greater part of this must come from the parishes. And so **I ask each parish to contribute to my Appeal annually during the next five years a sum equal to half its Diocesan Quota.** Anything less than this will hold back the work and make it harder to accomplish in the end.

It is very much a matter of priorities which only you can decide. It will involve sustained unselfishness which I have no hesitation in calling for confidently, because the vision I seek to share with you all is the spread of the Gospel.

I do not ask for promises as I asked before. I simply ask you all to consider what I say and act on it with good heart, like the good ground on which the seed fell and brought forth fruit abundantly.

Your sincere friend and Bishop,

Harry Oxon

The picture on the front page shows the Bishop at the dedication of Berinsfield's new church, with the Vicar of Dorchester. Photograph by courtesy of the Oxford Mail and Times.

Secretary's Review of the Bishop's Appeal presented at the Archdeaconry Meetings at Reading, Aylesbury and Oxford

Brigadier Hill reported that the Appeal Fund had already helped to build 9 new churches, 11 halls and 2 clergy houses, all in use.

Since 1958, £390,000 had become available for new church buildings. £120,000 of this had been provided by parishes receiving help; £100,000 by the rest of the Diocese; and £170,000 by the Church Commissioners. The £100,000 from the rest of the Diocese was the total of contributions received and credited to the Appeal Fund. Two-thirds of this had come from parishes. Not one single penny given to the Appeal had been spent on administration because interest received had more than paid for that.

Twenty parishes had completed new buildings at a total cost of £300,000. £150,000 of this had been met by grants, £40,000 by interest-free loans from the Appeal Fund to parishes (£10,000 had already been repaid), and £120,000 had been provided by the twenty parishes themselves. When the loans were all repaid these parishes would have provided £150,000 — just half the cost. As Brigadier Hill said; "they have done a great deal for themselves".

In addition to the £300,000 spent on these completed buildings, a further £100,000 had been promised for projects on the way. This made a total of £400,000 on the spending side, as against the £390,000 available. The missing £10,000 would have to come from future contributions.

The Future.

Brigadier Hill then set himself the difficult task of assessing the



BRITWELL 1963

position over the next 5 years. The population of the Diocese had increased by a quarter of a million between 1951 and 1961. The rate of increase had since risen, and the 1971 census would undoubtedly show much more than a quarter of a million increase for the current decade. Such forecasts as were obtainable included at least six places likely to add between 10,000 and 20,000 to their population. Furthermore a number of temporary churches put up 30 or 40 years ago were overdue for replacement.

"At this very moment", he said, "there are needs which exist but cannot even be the subject of serious planning yet for lack of means. To get these present projects moving would involve provision of help in the region of £200,000. **Beyond them** lie the future housing estates and new districts inherent in the population forecasts. For these we think a further £300,000 will be required, without including anything for two more very large New Towns which are still hypothetical."

"Thus", he concluded, "the best assessment we can make today, based on experience and such foreknowledge as we do possess, is that the need over the next five years cannot well be less than £500,000".

ANONYMOUS £100 CHALLENGE

A lady who was at our Reading meeting and insists on remaining anonymous has offered £100 to the Bishop's Appeal Fund, provided 100 other people will do the same before the end of this year.

This lady is by no means well off. The sacrifice which she is prepared to make is in the nature of a personal thank-offering. She says she will be content to count two individual gifts of £50 as one of £100, as long as a total sum of £10,000 is given to the Appeal in this way additional to parish contributions.

The immediate response has been encouraging, but there are still plenty of vacancies on this lady's list.

Donations should please be sent to the Appeal Secretary, Diocesan Church House, North Hinksey, Oxford, payable to the Bishop's Appeal Fund.

Forms of covenant will very gladly be supplied if desired. Tax recovered on existing covenants has so far provided over £5,000 for the Appeal Fund.

A Message of Gratitude

"We ask your help in thanking those who actually gave the money which made possible the building of our church. We believe they will be with us in spirit in the new work they have helped us to begin".

Some Contributions of Special Significance.

The Mothers Union of the Diocese has given £100 as a thank-offering for Christian Family Year and the increase in family worship. Abingdon and Deddington Deanery M.U. have also sent donations.

The Children of the Diocese by their Whitsun Gifts have contributed no less than £2,240 over the past 3 years. Several schools and colleges have made the Appeal their own. Pangbourne Nautical College contributes every term, and Wycombe Abbey repeatedly.

A contributor writes: "This is a capital venture, so I am capitalising my £4.4.0. subscription and enclose a cheque for £120 to score one towards the £100 challenge."

Another sending £1,000 says: I had left this in my will to the Appeal but have now decided to give it at once".

A Visit to a New Church

The visitor (from Headington) writes:—"The visit was a great success for the 50 of us who went. The combined choirs sounded splendid in that resonant building. We had a very warm welcome."

The host (St. George's, Britwell) writes:—"A tremendous success. I have never known two congregations get on so well together. After evensong our people guided the coaches on a tour of the estate. One of the happiest events in our history."

Published by authority of the Bishop of Oxford. Contributions and inquiries to the Bishop's Appeal Secretary, Church House, North Hinksey, Oxford. Printed at the Abbey Press, Abingdon, Berkshire.



Mengs

CHRISTMAS

*One time there is alone of all the year
When life is yielded to the loving thought
Of making others glad—one time when naught
But happy word and helpful deed are dear
To us—one time, and that the time when here
On earth a great and joyous thing was wrought,
When God sent him by whom the world was taught
That he is love—glad message of good cheer.*

*One time alone; yet can it be his will
That one time should be set apart for this?
Nay; but his hope we surely best fulfil
When Christmas is the culminating bliss
That crowns a kindly year—as two may fill
A day with love, and then at ev'ning kiss.*

Roderic Dunkerley

The voice of the prophets

by William Neil

12

THE LEGACY OF THE PROPHETS

MONTH by month this year we have sat at the feet of those magnificent Old Testament spokesmen of God—marvelling once again at their unshakable certainty as they uttered their words of admonition, encouragement, judgement and hope: 'Thus saith the Lord.' Strange men most of them, saying what they felt they must say in a setting now completely unfamiliar to us and in a bygone age. Much indeed of what they said is therefore no longer relevant.

Yet behind this ancient façade we should be very blind not to see eternal truth. God's revelation of himself and his purpose has intentionally been given in particular places and at particular times, in the Judaeen hills, by the lakeside of Galilee, through unexpected human channels, shepherds and fishermen, poets and priests—and a Carpenter. The Bible is no theoretical handbook about religion, but the record of how God taught men to know him through things that happened and through men who could see their meaning.

The Origin of our Faith

The prophets provided an almost unbroken chain of witness to the truth about God for a thousand years. What have they to say to us to-day? The fact that the answer to this question must be something of an anticlimax is in itself a proof of how much we owe them. When we confess our faith in 'One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible'

we are saying something that we take as a matter of fact. But there is nothing matter of fact about it. We can only say this because it has come into the Christian faith as a legacy from the prophets.

When the rest of the ancient world prostrated itself in fear before nameless demons and the powers of darkness, Israel was given from Moses onwards a growing understanding of the nature of the universe and of our place in it. When other nations thought of their gods as capricious potentates and sought to placate them with gifts, often of human lives, Israel was being taught to see through Amos, Isaiah and the rest that the supreme Power behind everything is rational, consistent and just, full of goodwill towards all his creation.

Religion and Morals

We have seen how it was given to each prophet to recognize one or other aspect of the nature of God—Amos saw that he is just, Hosea that he is merciful, Isaiah that he is morally holy and so on. It is this total picture of a Being who is Lord of the universe, Controller of the destinies of nations and men, yet ever ready to respond to simple folk with humble and contrite hearts, which has become the faith of Christendom, handed down from the prophets of Israel.

The weakness of all religions has always been the tendency to divorce belief from behaviour, to say the proper words with the appropriate ceremonies, but to feel that this has

nothing whatever to do with our private lives. The death knell of this separation of religion from morality was sounded by the Hebrew prophets. They were the first to see that what we do is inextricably bound up with what we believe. Ceremonial and credal correctness are a caricature of worship if they are not accompanied by moral responsibility, obedience to the commandments of God and charity to our neighbours.

Religion and Society

All this we accept as part of our Christian faith and practice—however loyally we may observe it is another story—but its origin lies far further back than the apostles. The New Testament Church is built foursquare on the heritage of the prophets which our Lord and his disciples were reared on and which they handed on to us. St. Paul's theology and ethics alike are but the faith and obedience of a Jewish rabbi, modified and restated in the light of his conviction of the significance of Christ after his conversion on the Damascus road.

In an age when we have come more and more to see that the Church is involved in the world and its affairs and cannot stand aloof in the pretence that she must not interfere in what does not concern her, we may thank the Hebrew prophets for their precept and example. For them the scope of religion was the whole life of society, politics, economics and the social order. A Hebrew prophet would have stood aghast at the nineteenth-century fallacy that the Church's business is merely to preach the gospel. In their view God was as much concerned with injustice, poverty, international affairs and the nation's health as with personal piety and public worship.

One aspect of the prophets' legacy which cannot be far from the forefront of our minds as Christmastide

THE SIGN

Not ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified

DECEMBER 1963 No. 708

- S. 1 **First in Advent.**
 W. 4 Clement of Alexandria, D., c. 210.
 F. 6 Nicolas, B., 4th century.
 S. 8 **Second in Advent.**
 Conception of the B.V.M.
 F. 13 Lucy, V.M., 303.
 S. 15 **Third in Advent.**
 M. 16 *O Sapientia.*
 Tu. 17 Ignatius, B.M., c. 110.
 S. 21 **St. Thomas, A.M.**
 S. 22 **Fourth in Advent.**
 W. 25 **Christmas Day.**
 Th. 26 **St. Stephen, M.**
 F. 27 **St. John, A.E.**
 S. 28 **Innocents' Day.**
 S. 29 **First after Christmas.**
 Tu. 31 Silvester, B., 335.

Days of fasting, or abstinence:

Fridays, 6, 13, 20, 27; Tuesday, 24.
 Ember Days, 18, 20, 21.

approaches is the unanimity with which they proclaimed the coming of a Messiah. They may not always have agreed on what kind of a Messiah he would be, but clearly they were at one in recognizing that nothing less than a God-sent Saviour could put the world to rights.

The Nativity

Men might be given divine guidance and be moved by the authentic voice of a genuine spokesman of God, but in the last resort there would have to be a direct intervention of God in human affairs before the world would begin to recognize the measure of its failure and its need of his power to put itself right. When the first Apostles went out into the streets of Jerusalem after Pentecost their first claim was that what the prophets had hoped for had now come true—Messiah had come.



TEACHING CHILDREN THE FAITH

By the Rev. C. Buckmaster

TRADITIONAL ways of teaching the Christian faith to children are under fire. 'We teach them wrong,' declares Richard Acland in the title of his recent book. *Teenage Religion*, a penetrating survey drawn up under the editorship of Harold Loukes, said much the same thing. Most of this fire is directed at the schools.

Our society has delegated to the school almost absolute authority in teaching matters. Few parents would consider themselves equipped to help with their children's English homework, let alone maths, or a foreign language. Thus the school is the place

where all 'subjects' are taught, and one such 'subject' is Divinity.

At its best it is taught by a teacher who is a committed Christian in a school where the daily worship is a reflection of the Christian standards by which the school is run. The worship becomes a genuine act of acknowledgement of our dependence upon a gracious and loving God. At its worst Divinity is taught by a member of staff whose only qualification is that he has a lighter timetable than everybody else, and the so-called act of worship is reduced to a routine prelude for a daily admonition and headmasterly harangue.

The continued provision of Christian teachers, who are people of genuine conviction, competent to teach by personal conviction, as well as by a thorough grounding in modern scholarship, must remain one of the Church's primary charges. Even today the Church is offering proof of this conviction, not only by enlarging many of its teachers' training colleges, but by building two new ones, one at Canterbury, where the second year of training started last September, and one at Lancaster, where the first students will be accepted next year.

But the Christian faith is far more than a 'subject' to be learnt in school, and however good the school, however excellent the teacher, the greatest example of what the faith really is must come from the home. The child spends about thirty-five hours each week in school. He spends over twice this time in his home, excluding the time when he is asleep or on holidays. The place of the home can never be over-emphasized.

Parents' Role

It is inevitable that father and mother sometimes should feel that as teachers they are inadequate. Their task, however, is not to unravel the complications of the synoptic problem, but to communicate the living of the Christian faith in a way in which it becomes a natural part of life. Their role in this is absolutely essential.

Parental example, day by day, of Christian understanding and love, their trust and faith in God, taken perhaps almost for granted, but always evident in times of stress or crisis, their compassion and honesty—all these can teach more to a child than all the classroom text-books.

Education means nurturing, allowing to grow, and this is the parents' point of departure. A willingness to allow children to grow up as persons,

by example, by suggestion, by persuasion, and never by dragooning or compulsion—moral or physical. In fact, the awareness that the relationship between a parent and a child is a dynamic, moving thing, which changes almost from day to day, and which can be built up into a relationship of mutual trust and loyalty; this is the Christian parent's insight, this is the Christian parent's most powerful instrument of instruction.

Such a relationship between parent and child can be backed up by the provision of the right kind of books, the giving of new books of prayer and devotion from time to time, that the child's spiritual life may grow and develop; by regular and utterly loyal Church membership; by honest example in all matters of morality. These are all within the competence and duty of Christian parents.

Family Worship

Going to church must be a family affair, even when the children prefer to meet with and sit with their friends in the youth club. Fellowship is something that we learn about through our friends, seeing through the companionship that we have with them something of the greater fellowship that we have with God. The meeting together of the Body of Christ, with genuine pleasure at each other's company, should be part of the worship of the church. This meeting extends not only to one's contemporaries, but to the three or four other generations who share the work of Christ in the world. The church is one of the very few places left in life where tolerance and understanding of one generation for another can come. The very broadness of this fellowship has its problems, but these can be in large measure resolved if differing age groups receive specific instruction to

To page 187

THE PILLAR OF FIRE

12

NORTHWARDS then from Sinai Moses led the people, and still as they went they murmured against his inflexible leadership. Now it was this wrong that he was alleged to have done; now that. The complaints were the usual murmurings of a people still frightened, still inadequate to the tasks that laid upon them, still faced with the hardships of the desert and with only the will of their leader to keep them going. And always, as token of the over-arching power of their God, the Ark was carried with them.

From out of the far past stories have come down of what happened to the people in this wilderness, little incidents no doubt typical of many. Thus when lightning struck the camp when the people were at a place called Taberah, setting fire to some of the tents and spreading terror all around, it was remembered how the bolt of lightning had followed the murmurings of the people and how Moses had led the efforts to put out the consequent fire. And always as the people moved slowly north, a ragged multitude overspreading the desert plain, confined, as all nomads, to the speeds of their flocks, Moses communed with God.

The Lord's People

It was as a result of one of these communings that God told Moses to gather together seventy of the elders of the people, and to bring them to the tent of meeting, so that he could then give to them some of that confidence which, through his Spirit, he had given to Moses. It was about this time, too,

182

*The story of Moses
retold by John Lastingham*

that Eldad and Medad, two men who were apart from the seventy, took it upon themselves to speak with the same authority without, it seemed, the divine permission. To Joshua, he who ministered in the tent of meeting, this seemed a clear transgression of divine law. But Moses was a man of longer sight and greater wisdom. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets," he said when Joshua brought the tidings to him, "that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!"

The northward trek of the people of Israel ended on the borders of the Wilderness of Zin. Nearby were the oases of Kadesh and there they settled down to years of sojourn. And as the years passed, and Moses grew older, so his fiery and imperious nature merged into the maturity of age. He knew full well that much preparation, much forging of their collective character, was needed before ever his people would be able to break in to the land of Canaan which lay to the north.

Meanwhile, the process of welding his wandering people into a nation could not be accomplished without



The Oases of Kadesh

stress and strain. Ever and anon there were rebellions in one form or another against his authority. Even Aaron and his wife Miriam turned against Moses when he took for a wife a Cushite woman. Yet even though this clearly contravened the very laws which God had laid upon them, yet God made it plain that Moses had his favour and protection. So Miriam was stricken with leprosy, as it seemed in a judgement against her presumption, and was not healed until Moses had interceded for her. Yet in this very incident there was an evidence of the change which had come over Moses. For

when Aaron and Miriam had first objected to his wife he had not reacted as once upon a time he would have done—with fury and passion. He took it meekly. It was only the anger of the Lord which brought the judgement upon Miriam.

But infinitely more serious was the major threat to his authority which arose in the rebellion of the two Reubenites, Dathan and Abiram. This was a straight fight for power, beginning with a refusal on the part of the two men, who had gathered a strong faction about them, to obey the customary summons of Moses to

appear before him. And their refusal was combined with a raking up of old complaints—complaints of the hardships which they alleged Moses had inflicted on them in all the time since he had led them out from Egypt in a past which now seemed infinitely remote. So remote, indeed, that now they were able to refer to Egypt itself—that land where they had sweated in forced labour—as a place of milk and honey! Thus do men deceive themselves, looking upon the past as a kindly time and the present as harsh. The whole thing sickened Moses to his soul. He was growing weary of his task. And yet he knew he had to go on with it. So, as ever, he called upon God, and again as ever, God heard him, and the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram ended in their deaths, the ground even opening under them and swallowing them up as they stood.

And so also it was with the revolt of Korah, except that this time it was based not so much on a naked claim for power, as upon the demand that he and his people should share the honours of the priesthood with Moses and Aaron. Once again Moses knew that it was the will of God that his authority should prevail. And this time the rebels perished in the flames from the very altar itself which they sought to serve.

The Death of Moses

Yet these internal matters were small compared to the trials which came upon Moses during these years from outside. There was the constant strain of the warfare which, in order to survive, he knew his people had to wage against the tribes around them. And then, too, there was the constant danger of infiltration through inter-marriage with them, since such mixed marriages invariably led to the women bringing with them the pagan religions of their own people. In these

years the exclusiveness of the people of Israel was forged under the iron hand of Moses, he knew that, to survive, they had to be one.

And then at last the time came for he himself to go. He was never to enter the promised land; was never to cross Jordan. He was in the plains above Moab when the summons came. And from those plains, in a final act of communion with God, he was led to climb up the high mountain and from it to look out across rolling hills to that land into sight of which he had at long last brought his people but which himself he was never to tread. And it was then that God said to him: 'This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.' And so Moses died in the land of Moab, at a great age, and there was not to be another like him in all the history of his race.

Seeds of the Kingdom

This achievement was so vast as almost to exceed imagination. For out of the small-scale, localized events beginning with the liberation in Egypt and his leading his people forth into the wilderness, he had founded not only a nation but also the religion of Israel. From out of that religion have sprung measureless consequences for the development of mankind. Out of that religion, indeed, has come Christianity itself. The heart of the matter is surely this: that Moses was an instrument of God, that God worked in and through him always so that he was for that reason of a stature sufficient to make him unique among men. For had not God said to him long ago: 'Lo, I come to thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may believe thee for ever'?

The End

Question Page

Evasive?

I do think some of your replies are unsatisfactory and evasive. For example, in June you stated that 'Man's present state, including the existence of mental sickness and deformity, is due to sin.' But what about the sufferings of animals? No one suggests that animals can sin, seeing they have no moral nature. Surely the honest answer would be that Christians simply do not know why mongols and cretins are born.

The words to which you take exception are based on St. Paul's teaching in Romans 8, in which he says that 'the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now.' Christians assert, although they cannot explain how, that sickness and death were no part of God's plan for the universe but are the result of its distortion by sin; that is to say, of its separation from God. 4301

Honest to God

Is it possible to reconcile what Dr. Robinson says in his book with the simple faith based on the Gospels which is held by so many Christians?

No image of God presented in human terms can ever be adequate, because God is infinitely great. The essence of the Gospel story is that God, being infinitely great, laid aside his glory and became man so that even the simple can understand. The simple faith based on the Gospels is the true faith about God. Yet it is not the whole truth about God, which is beyond the grasp of any man. And because man does not remain a child,

but develops from generation to generation in the understanding of the world and of himself, he cannot avoid the struggle to develop his faith also. Those who are troubled by Dr. Robinson's book should read the Archbishop of Canterbury's own booklet, *Images Old and New*. 4302

Defender of the Faith

What is the official position of the Queen, if any, in the Anglican Communion?

While the Queen has an official position within the Church of England she has no such position in Churches which belong to the Anglican Communion but are outside the Commonwealth. The most notable example is the Episcopal Church of the United States. It would, of course, be unthinkable for the Queen to have any say in the appointment of American bishops by Americans, or for the United States' citizens to pray for 'our Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth.' In America bishops are elected, and the State Prayers refer to 'the President of the United States.' 4303

Red-Letter Days

Could you please tell me if all Christians should observe and keep all saints' days and receive Holy Communion on them?

At the time of the Reformation it was the common custom of English people to receive Holy Communion only once a year, on Easter Day. One of the objects of the Reformation was to encourage more frequent Communion, and our Prayer Book lays down a minimum of three times a year, of which Easter shall be one. But this is a minimum, and it is an excellent practice for those who can do so to receive Holy Communion on at least all the red-letter days, namely those for which the Prayer Book provides a Collect, Epistle, and Gospel. 4304

Readers' letters regarding the faith and practice of the Church of England reach Question Page from all parts of the country. Only a few of the questions can be printed, but all are answered by post when a stamped addressed envelope is enclosed. Our address is: Question Page, THE SIGN, 28 Margaret Street, London, W.1.

Have you read . . . ?

By Canon H. G. G. Herklots

I FIRST realized what sufferings Hitler and the Nazis were likely to bring upon some Christians in the Germany of those days when I attended a conference at Oxford—it was on Church, Community and State—in 1937. Christians from many lands and Churches were grappling with urgent questions. Yet the deepest impression was made upon the conference by those who were not there. The Evangelical Church in Germany had agreed upon a delegation but many were refused passports; and the delegation stayed away. A message sent to the Church in Germany noted the gravity of the struggle in which not your Church alone but the Roman Catholic Church as well is engaged against distortion and suppression of Christian

witness, and for the training of the young in a living faith in Jesus Christ as Son of God, and King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

These memories stirred as I read *Christians against Hitler* by E. H. Robertson (S.C.M. Press, 6s. 6d.). The writer insists that 'for the sake of good healthy relations between Britain and Germany, we dare not forget the Nazi period. . . . The important thing is to have our facts right.' A moving story is epitomized in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose; but I cannot make that choice in security.' This book deserves a wide circulation; not least because many of its printed sources are now out of print.

Fibres of Faith

Henry Scott Holland was a pioneer of an earlier day. When he died in

Quo Vadis?—a story of ancient Rome

AFTER THE DEATH OF PETER AND PAUL, VINICIUS WENT WITH LYGIA AND URSUS TO LIVE IN SICILY, WHERE THEY REMAINED IN PEACE AND HAPPINESS.

THE UNEASINESS AND DISCONTENT OF ROME CONTINUED, AND REVOLTS BROKE OUT IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE EMPIRE. NERO TOOK LITTLE NOTICE, BUT CONTINUED TO LIVE FOR THE THEATRE AND MUSIC, UNTIL ONE NIGHT



1918, Bishop Gore wrote: 'There was in him nothing secondhand or borrowed or conventional—less than any man I know.' He wrote no large books. His published sermons hardly fit the taste of to-day. He gave his best in religious journalism; and we may be glad that the S.P.C.K. has issued in a Seraph Book at five shillings his *Fibres of Faith*, first issued as articles in *The Commonwealth*. This gives a very good idea of his teaching. As the editor of this reprint, B. M. G. Reardon, puts it, 'Scott Holland was in the best sense a humanist, a humanist such as only a Christian can be.' And he knew better than most what it meant to be a Christian.

A Future for the Free Churches? (S.C.M. Press, 7s. 6d.) is by Christopher Driver, a journalist on the staff of the *Guardian*. It should be read by many who are not Nonconformists; for its concern is to use 'dissenting attitudes, insights, social and intellectual capital to help Christianity to keep pace with a period of rapid social change.' This book should be in the hands of groups which are discussing the possibility of Christian reunion.

Will they agree that 'We have got to the stage in this country where, if it were left to the theologians, the reunion of the Church would be considerably farther forward than it is'?

Three books which, in their different ways, are concerned with the understanding and expression of Christianity in days of risk and change:

Christians against Hitler by E. H. Robertson (S.C.M. Press, 6s. 6d.).

Fibres of Faith by Henry Scott Holland (S.P.C.K., 5s.).

A Future for the Free Churches? by Christopher Driver (S.C.M. Press, 7s. 6d.).

Teaching Children the Faith

from page 181

meet their special needs, at some stage in the course of the service.

Such worship can give a child or young person a vision of the greatness and the wonder of the love of God, a point of spiritual awareness fixed and secure, in a world where the material values shift and change from day to day with the uncertainty of the sands of the desert.



My Garden in December

BY W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER

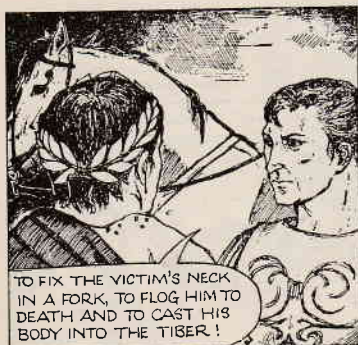
THOUGH you may read this early in December—please let it not be too early to wish you a very blessed Christmastide. We love Christmas in our home because not only is it the birthday of our Lord and Saviour—but also we have from our own garden such lovely fruits and vegetables to eat. There is often a nice Aylesbury duck as well.

There is no doubt also that fruits and vegetables taste far, far better when grown on land fed as God meant it to be. So please be a compost-heap maker and rot down all the vegetable refuse you can collect. My wife saves all the tea leaves, coffee grounds, old newspapers, banana peel—and little, in

fact, goes into the dustbin. I save the tops of the potatoes, the haulm of the peas and beans and, of course, all the lawn mowings. For every 6-inch thickness of refuse I collect, the layer is sprinkled with 3 ounces of special fish manure. This is an activator and is very important. (If you want to know more, read my book, *The A.B.C. of Soils*, published by the English Universities Press—it would make a good Christmas present incidentally.)

Tar Oil

It is tremendously important to give all the fruit trees and bushes a spray with a tar oil wash such as Mortegg this month. December is always a dry month and if you delay winter spraying until January, there's bound to be rain and you will find it difficult to get the work done. The object of this tar oil spraying is to kill the insect eggs which are laid on the trunks and branches of the trees. If you kill them now then you won't have a bad attack of aphids and caterpillars in the spring and early summer. (The aphids, by the way, are the greenfly, bluefly and that wicked rosy fly that curls the leaves.)





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QUO VADIS, DOMINE?

Vegetable Recipe: Sweet Potato Pudding

My folk are very fond of potato dishes in December because they say that these keep them warm. We have, for instance, Potato Cakes, and these are easily made with the following:

1 lb. mashed potatoes, 4 oz. flour, 3 oz. dripping or margarine, 2 'pinches' of baking powder and a pinch of salt.

First mix the potatoes and the flour well together, then add the dripping or margarine and work well in. Lastly add the salt and baking powder. Now add sufficient water to make the whole into a stiff dough which should be rolled out to a quarter of an inch thick. Cut this into rounds or squares and bake quickly in a really hot oven until golden brown. They are at their best when served very hot with 'sufficient' butter.

We also make a Sweet Potato Pudding. For this you need 2 lb. boiled potatoes, 2 eggs, 3 oz. butter or margarine, a small cupful of hot milk, the juice and rind of one lemon, a pinch of salt and 2 dessertspoonfuls of granulated sugar.

Mash the potatoes, mix in the hot milk, sugar and butter, and then add the juice and rind of the lemon and salt. Separate the yolks from the whites, beat the egg yolks and add these, and finally whisk the whites thoroughly and add them. Put the whole into a greased baking dish and bake for 40 minutes. It is best served very hot with the addition of treacle. If you hate treacle use jam!

Irene P. Shewell-Cooper

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A Prayer for Christmastime :

O Father, who hast 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 common days ; 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. Amen.

