



The
magazine
of the
parish
of

St. Thomas
Brampton

Vol. 5. No. 1 December - January 1981

Kids' Stuff



The decorations which were being hung in the streets of Sheffield during October were a reminder that we had begun the run-up to the great folk-festival of the English. In the early days of the church, the Christians took the old pagan festivals and baptized them: thus the revelries of the Saturnalia became the Christian feast of the incarnation. Modern England has reversed the process. The Christian feast of the Nativity of Christ has become the great secular folk festival, Christmas.

Certainly the Christian symbols are made use of, even exploited - where would the window dressers be without their star of Bethlehem? But what residual religious content remains in the folk-festival of Christmas is not concerned with the Christian doctrine of the incarnation, god-in-men, with all its revolutionary implications for humanity. It is concerned with the stories connected with the birth of Jesus: the stable and the manger, the angels and the shepherds, the star and the wise men.

The nativity narratives in the gospels are matchless stories of incomparable beauty. But they were not intended to be read as biography. They were inserted by the gospel writers to teach some important lessons which, they judged, could be done best by telling a story which appealed to the imagination and could be understood by the simplest mind. For example, the prophets of the old testament had proclaimed that when Messiah came he would be the Saviour not only of Israel but of the whole world. So when Matthew wants to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, he begins his gospel with a story, built up with bricks from the old testament narrative, which speaks of the wisest men in the pagan world coming to do him homage. If these stories are read superficially without regard to their underlying meaning (and that is how they are popularly understood) they assume the quality of fairy tales¹. And a religion based on a fairy-tale is kids' stuff - a sentimental thing, immature, undemanding, and irrelevant to life.

The only religion which remains to many adults today is the religion of the infants' school. Once a year, they are happy to regress to childhood and to rejoice in the fantasies of Christmas. As adults, however, they rightly reject this childish thing, which they wrongly assume to be Christianity. It's as if a man were to reject astronomy because he wasn't satisfied with the scientific assumptions of 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star'.



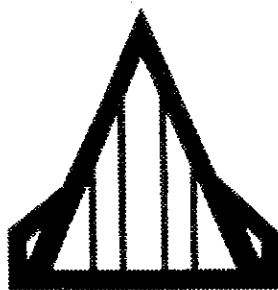
'Religion is kids' stuff and not for grown men' - that is a 'tape' playing strongly in the unconscious mind of many English adults today. And what effect may this be expected to have on the children as they grow up? We have known for a long time that youngsters have lapsed from church during teenage. The usual explanation offered is that the adolescents are expressing that rebellion against the constraints of authority which is a necessary part of discovering their adult selfhood. Now some research has been published which is both puzzling and disturbing. Dr. Leslie Francis, an Anglican priest who is trained as a psychologist and as a teacher has shown that religious belief in children, which at the age of 8 is at its peak, drops steadily and evenly until the age of 15. And nothing that can be done (such as religious education) appears to be able to control this trend. There are no sudden drops, as would be expected if this decline in interest were a normal part of growing up. Between 15 and 16 interest plummets still further. It is just after that point (remarks Francis) that Christianity loses contact with the general population, when school leavers move into the secular world.

It is too early to draw firm conclusions. More research needs to be done, in different cultures and religions (one wonders if the result would be the same in Muslim countries). To some of us these findings come as no surprise. Much of the adult population of this country knows only the religion of the infants' school, which it has quite rightly rejected. As children grow up, they must inevitably and unconsciously absorb the attitude of the society in which they live. The few adventurous souls start searching for themselves, and some come to Christian faith. The many become part of the sea of religious nothingness which is England today.

And so things are likely to remain until by divine providence a revival of religion occurs so that the undemanding, immature, and irrelevant religion brought out once a year with the fairy lights and plastic Xmas tree is superceded by a much more costly religion, centred on the cross and resurrection, which requires a full response from the whole personality - mind, emotions and will; and which involves the whole of a person's life - at work, in social relationships, in the family. When adult people once again adopt an adult religion, we may expect Dr. Francis' graph to level out. But not until then.



Dare you challenge your Life Style ?



That was the gauntlet flung down by the two speakers at the weekend conference at Scargill attended by eight members of St. Thomas'.

Did you know that 80% of the world live below the poverty line; that an urban inner city community like Brooklyn, New York, has only 5% population who can by any stretch of the imagination be called reasonably well-off?

A story we were told by Jim Punton, one of the two speakers made us all feel very well - satisfied? Like the rich man as opposed to Lazarus. Jim Punton had visited Thailand on a conference about hunger a short while ago, and during the visit was sitting at dinner with an elderly Indian gentleman who was also attending the conference. They were enjoying a good meal, if not exceptional by western standards, when half-way through the meal the Indian broke into heart rending sobs, which wracked his body. When Jim was able to ask "why", the man explained that he would never be able to return to his village and tell his family and friends about this meal, as they would never be able to comprehend it, as the evening before the Indian had spent 3 hours praying with his wife and then dividing out the grains of rice into equal amounts for the meals whilst he was away.



In the light of stories like this we were challenged to think very critically in terms of our own life style, to study the bible where there are over 300 references, specifically to the poor, and to do something to give the Church here a realistic approach to the world's poor, rather than sit in our rich land doing nothing.

We came back a much sobered group determined to rise to the challenge we had experienced.

Hilary Ratcliffe

books

MINKA & MARGARET

by Phyllis Thompson

Price 80p Church Bookstall.

Publishers : Hodder & Stoughton and
Overseas Missionary
Fellowship.

This is the story of two women missionaries in Thailand, of their work in the leprosy clinics, of their kidnapping by bandits and subsequent murder in 1974.

First there is an account of the early years, the one spent in a quiet Welsh village, and training in London, and the other's very different story of internment in a Japanese camp after a childhood in Java and Indonesia. Following the arduous training in the college of the China Inland Mission and the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, these two women met and worked together, sharing life and ultimate death.

It is a moving record of the work done in the field of leprosy and of Christian life.

The Alternative Service Book 1980



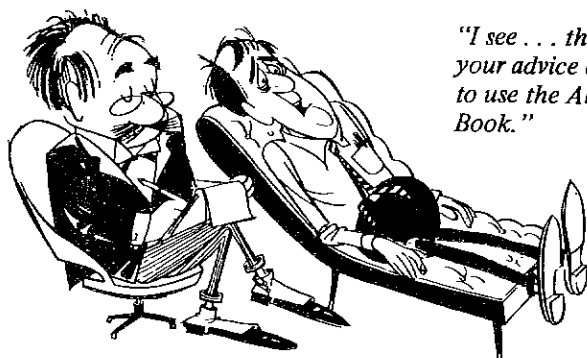
by the Bishop of Derby

"The period of experiment with new forms of service has been inconvenient in many churches, particularly at Holy Communion, Mattins and Evensong, because it has been necessary for members of the congregation to have several books of different sizes in their hands. The result has been disturbing not only for hands and eyes but also for the spirit of worship. There have been far too many instructions and announcements of page numbers. This fussiness needs to be brought to an end. So also does the period of experiment itself so that we can assess at leisure over a period of years what are the permanent values of the new services and how much of them should be discarded in the same way as parts of the 1928 Prayer Book passed out of use.

We shall find things much more convenient, we shall be helped in our assessment of all services and we shall have a chance of recovering a truer spirit of worship when the Alternative Service Book is published on 10th November this year. It is not a new Prayer Book. We shall still have the one Book of Common Prayer as the standard of our doctrine and worship. Its services will still be used if parson and P.C.C. agree to have them, but it is important to recognise the large extent to which the new services preserve in the old language or in new, the familiar material of the Prayer Book. It will also still be possible for particular versions of certain texts, e.g. the Canticles as well as the Lord's Prayer to be used with their exact Prayer Book words.

One thing that many people have missed in recent years has been the ability to follow the Collect, Epistle and Gospel of the day when the Series 3 readings have been used. People have also found it difficult to read them through on Saturday as part of their preparation for the Sunday Communion. Any service book should be a book of devotion as well as a collection of services. For this reason the A.S.B. will contain in a special section not only the Series 3 Collect, Epistle and Gospel, but also the Old Testament Lesson and the sentences which may be used at the beginning of the service and after the Communion. All the Scripture texts will be printed in full. The A.S.B. will be published in two versions, one with the Psalter and the other without it. The General Synod decided after long debates that the version printed should be the new Liturgical Psalter. It will, of course, still be possible for parishes to use the Prayer Book Psalter with any of the services in the A.S.B.

In due time all the services in the A.S.B. will be printed also in separate booklets. A most important part of the arrangement is that the page numbering in those will be precisely the same as in the A.S.B. itself. This will have the result that parishes will not need to go to the expense of buying a large number of copies of the A.S.B. Those who have copies will, of course, be able to follow a particular service in them, but other people will be able to do so in the appropriate booklet. The A.S.B. will contain all the Series 3 services, which have had different degrees of amendment, and also Holy Communion Series 1 and 2 Revised, which is in Thou and Thee language. In addition, all these services have also been authorised in their present forms until 31st December 1985. These arrangements together provide convenience, flexibility and a more settled period of testing. We should use it with patience and sympathy.



"I see . . . then the vicar asked your advice on whether or not to use the Alternative Service Book."



FARE WELL

The days of the horse drawn bus are over, similarly the open top bus; now, sadly, the days of the bus conductor are limited, indeed on many routes already finished.

Who now will offer a steadying hand to the aged or infirm, the disabled, the blind, the young mother with shopping, buggy, toddler, baby and all! Gone is the kindly chap in uniform who was there, on the spot, to help. Now there is the unenviable situation where the needy must look (and hope) for help from the public.

Recently in the town centre, a young woman with all the appendages listed above, was helped on to a No. 19 bus by a pensioner not really in a position to offer this small service. Obviously, the driver/Fare collector is not able to offer assistance. So, as the bus conductor joins the ghostly company of another age, let the public mourn his passing. Obviously some economies in public service are necessary, in this time of recession, obviously there are some fare evaders who now are forced to pay their due, obviously those in the greatest need of a conductor's help will suffer. Will the public follow the Conductor's good example?



The Rector's page

The HEART of JESUS

The door-bell rang - at an inconvenient time, as usual: but that is an occupational hazard for the clergyman, who has to school himself to accept such interruptions and to regard them as a God-given opportunity. The 'Good Samaritan' must have found that unscheduled delay on the Jericho road highly inconvenient; but his initial irritation was quickly overcome by his love for the injured man, and he was able to act constructively - to the benefit not only of the victim, but also of all who have heard and heeded Jesus' best-known story.

But I digress: I opened the door and waiting on the doorstep were a man and a woman. Did I know, they asked, about any Brampton pottery monuments in the churchyard? Hadn't there been some pictures of them in the papers? Could I show them where they were?

I hope that it is no disrespect to the enquirers (who were, no doubt, honest people) to say that I was immediately put on my guard. Every alarm bell in me started to ring. Those pottery monuments, made in the 19th century with loving care by the poor potter who could not afford the cost of a headstone for his dead child, could be regarded as interesting collectors' items; and since they are easily removed it is almost a forgone conclusion that sooner or later they will be stolen. Long before this time I had resolved to remove these items to a place of safety. Now I was cursing myself for not having done so. I made a mental note to make a check that very day.

That afternoon I went to the place where I knew there was a pottery monument, and what I saw made me angry. The piece was still there. Smashed to bits. It had been stood on a kerbstone and used as a coconut shy. In fantasy, I saw myself catching the vandals, thinking of a suitable punishment to fit the crime. I thought of those irresponsible hooligans who had thrown stones through the church windows, with incredible danger to anybody who might have been inside, and I fumed. I thought about the distraught girl whose father had been killed and who wanted to get into the church to pray but could not because it is kept locked as a result of past vandalism.

My anger seethed against these people who appreciate no beauty, who respect to property which is not theirs, whose only pleasure is destruction, Even the stained - glass east windows of the church have not escaped their attention. Whether through deliberate intention coupled with accurate shooting, or by an ironic accident, their missile could not have struck at a more significant point. It went straight through the heart of Jesus.

The heart of Jesus. That made me think. For these people are indeed near to his heart, and the Christian must be one who feels towards them as he does. It's amazing what a difference it makes to start to look at people with the eyes of Jesus. As my anger dissolved, I began to see not a pack of delinquents but a group of ordinary, fun-loving youngsters (the probability is that they are young) who had time on their hands but nothing absorbing to do, and had got up to mischief as any lively children can. Perhaps their homes were not all that could be desired and the parents had little sense of responsibility and were content enough if the youngsters were out of the way.

Jesus cared for people, and was content to suffer for doing so. The church must care - and must not expect to escape the cost. If there are youngsters whose whole lives are empty, this is our concern; if there are homes where the climate of love or the framework of discipline are lacking, so that the children lack the sense of security they need, this too is our care; if there are people in distress who need the church building, this is our care, and the building should be available for them. And if through being available, the building suffers damage, then that is the cost of caring.

Church authorities have a responsibility for the safety of their buildings; and they are advised by the police and by insurance companies to keep churches locked when not in general use. But a locked church really represents a Christian community that is reluctant to accept the cost of caring and has taken the easy way out. Let us get our values right. To lock out the parishioners for whose welfare the church exists is surely too high a price to pay for security.

A final thought: Perhaps we should leave unrepaired that east window as a sermon in glass - the figure of Jesus, with his broken heart.

Gill and I wish all readers every joy at Christmas and much blessing in the new year.

Vyvyân Watts-Jones



I must start my notes this month with an apology to those of my gardening readers who took exception to my remarks about the small leeks, compared with those from the North East, exhibited at the local Gala. I now know that there is more than one technique of growing Allium Porrum, and that Derbyshire growers don't want to grow either the obese type so loved by gardeners from Northumberland and Durham, nor the excessively long ones, which look like Max Boyce's companion, produced by Welsh growers. The leek grown in Derbyshire has, they say, more flavour and is THE BEST! I will take their word for it, bow my head in shame, and grovel.

The month of memorials has gone. As All Saints day this year was on Saturday, St. Peter's, like St. Thomas' used the Sunday following as a combined All Saints and Commemoration of the faithful Departed (All Souls), and the following Sunday was Remembrance Sunday when Bill Stillwell of the Methodist Church and I shared the Village Remembrance Service at the War Memorial. We had a good congregation in spite of the rain and cold.

When these notes are published Advent will be upon us and we shall be looking forward to Christmas. Probably due to the fact that I am getting old I feel that the majority of people arrive at Christmas without the due preparation which Advent gives - in fact the season, apart from regular churchgoers seems to have dropped out, probably because commercial pressures are against it. There is no trading advantage in a season which is a preparation for something else. A new slogan, or series of slogans is needed! "Buy your child a bible for the second Sunday in Advent!" "John the B for Advent 3!" - neither has any 'customer attraction', I suppose. As it is, no sooner have we finished buying fireworks for Guy Fawkes (who was he?) than we are buying the presents, tinsel, food and drink for the festive season.

Holy moorside



Notes.

As you may imagine from the way I've been rabbiting on there is little doing in the Village at the moment, we are getting our breath back after the Gala. All organisations have their winter programmes in full swing - outdoor activities have been curtailed of course by the wretched weather, but the Womens' Institute, Choral Society, History Society etc. all are going strong. All organisations fill a need, but there are two which I feel need special mention. Both are for people who feel themselves isolated, both exist to provide companionship, but there the similarity ends. The 'Good Companions' meet on Thursday afternoons and is a club for pensioners. They play bingo, drink tea, have a natter, play cards or dominoes run outings in the summer and parties in the winter, and in general provide a warm, loving companionship. The Mother and Baby Club on the other hand meet on Tuesday afternoons where the Mothers sit and talk while the babies create chaos and havoc with paint, toys, plastacene, or whatever comes to hand. There is one other similarity between the two organisations - neither, so far as I know has any formal constitution, all that is necessary in one case is that you are a mother of a young child, or will be in the near future; and in the other that you are a pensioner. Just go along and you will be greeted with open arms.

A happy and blessed Christmas to you all.

K.M.S.



The night we asked the Mormons in.....



On Sunday the 'Thought and Talk' group met some representatives of the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) to learn something of their way of life and their beliefs.

We seemed to learn more about their way of life than their actual faith but from what we did learn we realised that there are as many principles which we share, as differences which separate us.

Their beliefs are based on the life and teachings of the O.T. prophets, of Jesus, and of the apostles, just as ours are. Added to that they also follow the teachings revealed through their 19th century prophet, Joseph Smith.

Their life is one of discipline and rigid structure, within which they feel remarkably free. Tea, coffee, alcohol and tobacco are forbidden, as are certain types of dancing and "revelry". They meet regularly for worship and, throughout the week, meet together for various purposes. The men administrate and maintain church property, while the women organize relief for their poorer fellows and others in need. They also have educational sessions where they study the social sciences, the scriptures and home-craft.

The boys help the men, all of whom become priests, while the girls follow the pattern of their mothers. One tended to feel that equality for women was not one of their principles. Both the women who spoke to us felt "fulfilled" and happy to concentrate on the art of "wivery" and motherhood.

Smart appearance is of great importance (the body being the 'temple' of the spirit), and a high moral standard is expected.

Life seems to centre around the church and there seems to be little involvement with secular society, despite the fact that all young men (and 1 in 10 young women) go out on 2 year missions.

Insufficient was said about the doctrines developed last century, which are the primary barrier between ourselves and them. However, time was short, and we look forward to another opportunity to meet with them and to share our beliefs further.

Judith Sadler



A HAPPY OLD AGE

*A little more tired at the close of day
A little less anxious to have our own way.
A little less care for gain or gold;
A little more zest for the days of old.
A broader view and a saner mind;
A little more love for all mankind.
A little more love for the friends of youth
A little more zeal for established truth.
A little more charity in our views,
A little less thirst for the latest news.
A little more leisure to sit and dream
A little more real the things unseen.*

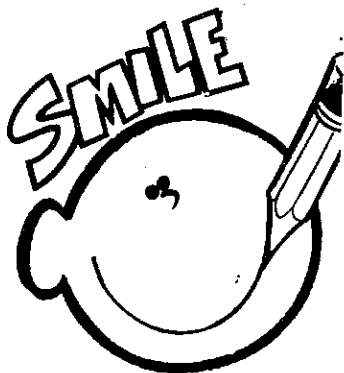
— From Bible Study Monthly





Without Christmas pagans must have felt awful

— *Stephen Gibson (9)*



Jazz musician attended church one day and after the service, complimented the minister.

“You really flipped me out, man,” said the musician. “That was a groovy sermon.”

“I’m happy the sermon pleased you,” the dignified pastor said, but could not resist adding, “I would appreciate it, though, if you could express your approval in less vulgar terms.”

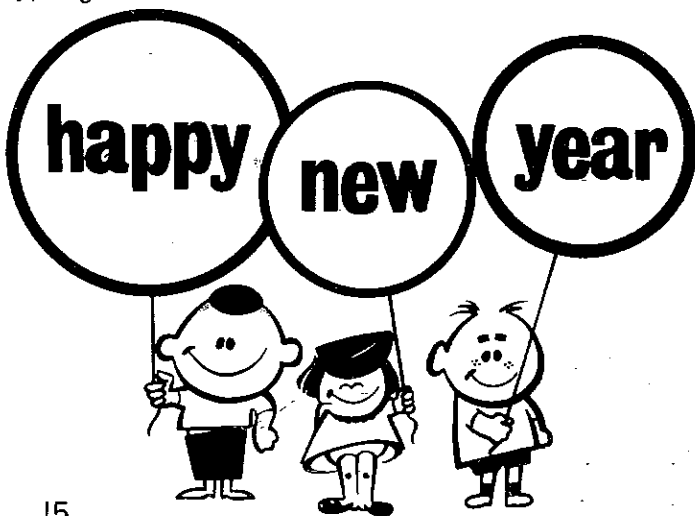
“Sorry, daddy,” said the jazzman, “but that’s just my way. I just want you to know that I dug your sermon so much I flipped a C-note into the money pot.”

“Cool, man,” said the minister.



“I like Christmas because it is Jesus’s birthday. He has the birthday, we get the presents.”

— *Joanne Hayes (6)*



IN YOUR GARDEN



Successful gardening necessitates looking and planning ahead so, although Christmas would not appear to be the time when one thinks about rhubarb (or is it?), for those who like it forced, now is the time for action. Place boxes or buckets over the selected crowns and cover with a heap of manure or a soil and manure mixture. This will give the required conditions, darkness and warmth. Remember that crowns are usually regarded as having finished their useful life after having been forced.

Roses can be grown in pots in the greenhouse. Young plants (you may have raised some from your own cuttings) should be used. Plant them firmly in ten or twelve inch pots using John Innes No. 3 compost. They will not of course produce a forest of growth and must be kept within bounds but you should get some early blooms. A friend of mine whose birthday is on the 23rd April always has a red rose to wear in his buttonhole on St. George's day by this means.

The limited experiment which I conducted this season in "cluster seed" growing of onions indicated that the "cluster" seeds yielded a slightly heavier crop than the individually planted onions. In both cases the seeds were sown under glass in early February. An advantage of growing onions this way is that as they do not achieve the size of the individually grown plants they will store in good condition for a longer period.

With reference to the query in the last issue of Spearhead as to why Derbyshire grown leeks are "miserable" I can only suggest that it is a matter of human biology. If a Derbyshire gardener really put his (her) back into it she (he) could grow leeks to challenge those produced anywhere. Gardeners (this includes allotmenters, the allotments of Northumberland and Durham often being referred to as gardens) in the North-East have in the past been acknowledged as the producers of champion leeks but are now being challenged, as one would hope, by the Welsh. It just happens that the urge to grow monster leeks in other parts of the country seems to be luke warm. This sort of thing runs in counties. Lancashire is where enormous gooseberries are grown. Football sized onions however seem to be in the blood of every true-born Briton. A word of consolation, Derbyshire produces most of the top quality chrysanthemums. Within its borders are several of the firms which raise the new varieties with which dedicated growers everywhere win prizes at local, district and National shows. And never better than within the county boundaries. There is a certain mystique about these things but knowhow can be acquired and experience developed. The "secrets" so often referred to are simply the lack of knowledge of the uninitiated.

