

VICAR STERNI

SELFISHNESS IN THE HOME DENOUNCED

OUTSPOKEN SERMON AT WHITESHILL

Church Work In Growing District

SPECIAL BY "WANDERING WORSHIPPER"

JOINING a moderate sized congregation at St. Paul's Church, Whiteshill, on Sunday evening, I listened to a vigorous sermon which contained a stern condemnation of idleness. The denouncement was, it is true, directed more particularly at idleness in regard to Christian work, but the remarks made might be applied with equal force to all forms of idleness.

Whiteshill Church is comparatively modern, having been built only 90 years ago, and although it cannot therefore boast of a long history, it can look with pride on a record of useful service in a rapidly growing district.

Continuing his tour of the churches and chapels of Gloucestershire, "Wandering Worshipper" visited Whiteshill Parish Church on Sunday evening.

Next Sunday morning he will attend Eastington Wesleyan Chapel.

AS I mentioned last week in connection with my visit to St. James', Gloucester, Whiteshill Church was one of three churches in the Gloucester Archdeaconry consecrated in one week in 1841, the other, in addition to St. James, being St. Luke's, Gloucester. Like St. James', Whiteshill Church is

about them. That was the teaching of Jesus Christ as contrasted with the cold creed of the Deist, who believed God created the world, peopled it with mankind and then left it to itself. Christ told them, however, that God looked upon them with a gaze as keen as it was merciful; a God who knew what they were, and by what precise steps of ascent or descent they had reached their present standing place.

"God has a work going on everywhere and for everybody," declared the Vicar. "The work for which He employs man is that of his own moral culture. Each individual soul is a vineyard of which each soul had charge. Each vineyard has to be cleaned of the noisome and deadly seeds in it and planted with the choicest vines. Life itself is a vineyard, in which God bids us work, but in which many in God's sight, stand all the day idle."

Selfishness in the Home

With considerable emphasis the Vicar continued: "I think that the lazy selfishness of many young men or young women in their homelife, through the

in the Gloucester Archdeaconry consecrated in one week in 1841, the other, in addition to St. James, being St. Luke's, Gloucester. Like St. James', Whiteshill Church is spacious, but beyond that there is little similarity. St. James' cannot boast of architectural merit, but Whiteshill Church can.

Decorations That Please

Sitting in the church waiting for the service to begin, I could not help contrasting the interior with those of some of the others in which I have been. The perfect balance of the building, the beautiful chancel, the richly coloured stained glass windows, and the good lighting, among other things combined with pleasing effect to impress the visitors. In this church some fine mural decorations, particularly in the chancel and over the chancel arch, greatly add to the beauty. In some places—and I think particularly of the wonderful little Norman church at Rudford in this connection—the decorations made here, in my humble opinion, had a detrimental effect on the appearance. In a more modern church, like Whiteshill, however, there is no early historic work to be covered over, and actually the decorations are in pleasing contrast to the more sombre coloured walls.

Bright and Musical

The service was of a simple character, but bright and musical. Like so many other Cotswold churches, the singing at Whiteshill is of the type that shows it is enjoyed. The spacious church echoed with some of the hymns, although strict attention was paid to light and shade. The church possesses a choir of which it can well be proud particularly as regards adults. The singing of the boys struck me as being lusty rather than pure, but notwithstanding I should think there are a great many village churches who would envy Whiteshill for its choir. The church is fortunate in having an organist whose heart is completely in his work. He is Mr. Jones, of Cashes Green, and he has officiated in this capacity together with that of choirmaster for the best part of a dozen years.

The service was taken by the Vicar, the Rev. W. T. Brien, and he gave a vigorous, helpful sermon. Coming from an Irish family, the Vicar is true to type. An outspoken man when occasion demands it, he is not sloth to condemn when necessary. A keen sense of humour is betrayed by his twinkling grey eyes, and his quick smile confirms the impression thus given. Educated at Christ College, Brecon, and afterwards at St. David's College, Lampeter, he was ordained in the Llandaff Diocese for St. David's in 1902. He became curate of Llanelly (Brecon) and in 1910 was appointed curate-in-charge of St. Mark's, Manselton, Swansea, holding this until 1916. From the latter year until 1918 he took the place of the Rev. R. P. Waugh as Vicar of Stonehouse, and, until 1922, when he became Vicar of Whiteshill, he was Rector of Staunton, Forest of Dean. At Whiteshill, he succeeded the Rev. H. Temple Forward, who had followed the Rev. F. C. de Beauvais.

Contract With Djeism

Mr. Brien gave a characteristically outspoken sermon, and a moral distinct from the more obvious lesson could be deduced from it which many inside and outside the sphere of the church might profitably take to heart. The discourse was based on a fragment of the text taken from Matthew xx.—6-7, namely the words: "No man hath hired us." The text, said the Vicar, indicated to them that there was a God who concerned Himself

work, but in which many in God's sight, stand all the day idle."

Selfishness in the Home

With considerable emphasis the Vicar continued: "I think that the lazy selfishness of many young men or young women in their homelife—though they are active enough in their games and sports—is neither creditable to themselves nor to the Christian names which they bear. There must of necessity be a great variety in the work to be done by each in the vineyard, but amidst all the variety, there is unity. Go where you may, you must accept the call to be God's workers. God bids the clergyman and ministers to go into the vineyard, but the call to everyone else is not substantially different. He calls the doctor to be His workman, the lawyer, the artisan, the business man, the woman in the home and everyone else. God bids us set before ourselves in youth as in age, this one object—so to live as to make others better, and to make God know. Are we doing that? What answer are we making? Are we really working in God's vineyard, or are we standing idle? You and I have to answer that question alone.

God's Question to Man

"The selfish life is an idle life," emphasised the Vicar. "It is for each one of us to answer God's question," he continued. The parable embracing the text, speaks of the heat and burden of the day. That burden is not avoided either by standing idle or otherwise. It is not lightened, but rather multiplied by living to ourselves. We have to decide, however, whether we will have a friend—constant in life and changeless in eternity—or shall we live and die by ourselves. God forbid that any of us should die by ourselves. Even to the longest life there come an evening which is both a sunset and a dawn; it means leaving this life and starting a new one.

"We are not sent into this world to stand idle all the days of our life, but to work and labour until the evening. We ought not to leave the work until the evening of our life comes; we must be serving God through our youth and not wait until our years fail us. The end is the proof of the matter. The evening will be the trial. When the wild fever and noise of the noontime are over, the light fades, and the shades lengthen, for what then shall we ask? May God give us lodging and His peace at the last."

Mild Criticism

Only one word of mild criticism would I venture to make about my visit to the church, and that is in respect to the heating. It was by no means warm in the church, and I really think that, however, devout one might be, one would find difficulty in thoroughly appreciating a service with cold feet.

As I have mentioned, the church was built in the year 1841, and it is a handsome building of stone in the Norman style, consisting of apsidal chancel, nave, transepts (added to the church in 1884), and an embattled western tower containing one bell.

Work By Academy Painters

There are numerous stained glass windows, and the apse is adorned with paintings of the Twelve Apostles, executed by the late Misses Stanton, of Upfield, who were both Academy painters. The same ladies painted other mural decorations and also the chancel arch, their work greatly beautifying the church interior. The parish owed much to them, for, among other things, they were responsible for the building of a Village Institute.

The church was restored in the year 1882 at a cost of £916, the scheme incorporating the addition of the transepts. It was further restored six years later at a cost of £20, and again during 1906-7 at a cost of about £600. It affords some 600 sittings. The most recent alterations in the church consisted of the removal of the organ and the addition of some stops; and the substitution of new oak choir stalls two or three years ago. The cost of the first-named work

ONLY CONDEMNS IDLENESS



St. Paul's Church, Whiteshill.

was met by subscriptions, but the cost of the provision of new stalls and the enlargement of the chancel, carried out about the same time, was defrayed by the three sisters of the late Mr. Edward S. Godsell, of Salmons House—Miss Kate Godsell, the late Miss M. Hannah Godsell, and Mrs. Evelyn E. Taylor. Mr. Godsell was churchwarden of the church for about 16 years, and the work his sisters had done was in memory of him.

Staunch Supporters

The Godsell family have been staunch supporters of the church for very many years. A member of the family, Miss Kate Godsell, is a most regular attendant at the church services. Among other prominent

supporters are Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Stanton, of Field Place, and Mr. and Mrs. G. A. Matthews, of Farnhill. Mr. Stanton, who is prospective Liberal candidate for the Stroud Parliamentary Division, has been people's warden for a number of years. The other churchwarden is Mr. Frank Hill, a member of a well-known Gloucestershire family. He succeeded the late Mr. Richard Hill, of Callowell, a number of years ago. He is also the chairman of the local school managers.

A family which was formerly closely associated with the church was that of the Allens, of Farnhill Park. The late Major C. P. Allen and Mrs. Allen, when in residence at the Park, showed their interest in the church in a very practical way, and their departure to London about 16 years

ago was a distinct loss to the church and parish, and the parishioners deplored as deeply as anyone his death last year.

Strong Auxiliaries

Probably few parish churches can boast of stronger auxiliaries pro rata with population than Whiteshill. For instance, its branch of the Church of England Men's Society was the strongest body in the Stroud Federation when it was inaugurated in October last. It has 32 members, and its gatherings (three each month) are always well-attended. The Vicar is the President, Mr. Cecil E. Miller is the chairman, Mr. F. Hancock the vice-chairman, and Mr. N. U. Smith is the hon. secretary and treasurer.

The branch of the Mothers' Union can boast of between 70 and 80 members—a remarkable number for a village organisation. Mrs. A. W. Stanton is the Enrolling Member, and she has been able to get some remarkably good speakers, whose addresses have been greatly appreciated. The body is under the general charge of Mrs. Brien, and meets fortnightly in the Village Institute. Miss Ratcliffe, who was formerly head mistress of Whiteshill Girls' School for many years, is the able hon. secretary. Recently Mrs. Brien started two sections—senior and junior—of the Girls' Friendly Society, and every promise of useful development is shown.

In the work of the parent Sunday School, the Vicar is assisted by Mr. F. Hancock, Mr. Harry Keene, and Miss Jessie Hancock.

Mr. C. E. Miller is another who lends valued support to the Church. He is vice-chairman of the Parochial Church Council, the Secretary of which is Mrs. Stanton.

Mission Room at Paganhill

Connected with Whiteshill Church is a Mission-room at Paganhill. This is constructed of corrugated iron. The lay reader here is Mr. J. W. Rowbotham, the headmaster of Eastington School. It has a well-attended Sunday School, which is under the charge of Mrs. Brien, the other teachers Harry Keene, and Miss Jessie Hancock.

Miss Brien & Miss Keene