

CAUTION AGAINST NEED FOR REVERENCE IN PRAYER

STRESSED BY RECTOR OF RODBOROUGH

SPECIAL BY "WANDERING WORSHIPPER"

FROM a pulpit hallowed by over 300 years of use, and on a site where public worship has been conducted from pre-Reformation times, a stern warning against irreverence was given on Sunday morning.

It was at Rodborough Parish Church, which I visited, and the Rector particularly dealt with the failing of wandering thoughts during prayer. While making allowances for physical infirmity, he stressed the fact that there was something very wrong in the inability to realise the presence of God.



St. Mary Magdalen, Rodborough. Inset, the Rev. W. Waring, Rector.



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"God is a spirit. Him must do something to realise the presence of Him as we show inattention would. Of course some for physical infirmity. matter. It is one that we can overcome."

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Rector

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After 34 years Waring is now 71 and I suppose anyone to think without, at the University of London by Queen's College took his M.A. He ordained a priest of Holy Trinity and wards he went to from there to Stonon-Thames

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I HAVE little doubt that there are but few who would disagree with the Rector, whose long years in the Christian ministry fully entitle him to speak in a very decided manner. It seemed somewhat ironical to me, however, that this subject should have been dealt with on Sunday, because I suppose that day was one of the coldest of the year, and I, for one, had difficulty to keep from shivering during the time I was in Church.

Possibly the Rector would agree that even the most reverent worshipper would find it difficult to follow the prayers, made so familiar with repetition, if he or she were cold. The fact that a big church takes quite a long time to become thoroughly warm, and also that the weather without was so wintry on Sunday, would explain why the church was not as warm as it might have been desired. I reiterate, there were good reasons for this, but I must confess that it caused my attention to be divided between the service and my personal feelings, although I listened attentively to the Rector's views.

Needing Attention

Five minutes to five was the time registered by the clock in the church tower when I arrived for the morning service. I rubbed my eyes. While realising there is such a time as five in the morning, I was certain I had not make a mistake. The truth transpired to be that the old clock needs repairing, or rather that two of the faces, which refuse to record the time, need attention. I understand the clock belongs to the parish, and, as I imagine responsibility for repairing it would devolve on that body, I cannot blame the church people for the momentary shock I suffered by the early (or late) hour registered.

Passing into the church, I noted with satisfaction that there were many children present. As the service progressed, I thought it was quite a pity that there was

not a part in it set aside exclusively for them—either a children's address or a hymn to be sung by them alone, or something else to give them the feeling that they are not forgotten. In the case of the adults it was different, for they were given something to ponder over.

Repentance—a Gift

The Rector (Rev. Walter Waring), who took the service, dealt with matters in his sermon which probably concern most people at some time or other. At the outset of his remarks he said repentance and faith were necessary in the human being if sin were not to have dominion over them. Repentance was essentially one of God's gifts, and it was well for us that it should be so.

"I am quite sure," proceeded Mr. Waring, "that we should never repent unless God put that feeling into our hearts. The trouble is that we are so prone to form the most favourable estimate of ourselves, and if left to ourselves we should never repent. You often come across the man who says, 'I hope I have repented, but I am not sure; I am not easy in my mind about it; I seem so often to repeat my actions.' What reply do we give to such an inquiry? It touches the comfort and peace of mind of many men. There is one thing we may be clear about, and that is whenever there is repentance there is a sharp change.

A Decided Turning

"There are people who try to break themselves from wrong-doing by gradual processes. A thief, for example, may decide to take less of other people's goods, or a liar to tell less lies. They have been setting sins, but, wishing to drop them by degrees, express the hope that by and by they will be set free altogether from the tyranny of their bad habits. No sensible person can look upon that as true repentance. There must be a clear and decided turning away from all that is opposite to right."

Continuing, the Rector remarked that there was another problem not so easy to solve. "There are," he said, "certain offences into which human nature enters sometimes very largely. For instance, there was wandering thought in prayer in church. There is a serious side to this, because it suggests irreverence. If you were entering the presence of an earthly monarch in the hope of obtaining a boon, your attention would not easily be diverted from what was happening; you would not cease to listen when he spoke. But when we are in the

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For a great was a Chapel of It was in 1844— ley, and Brims parishes—that th Rectory. It w present Rectory Rev. T. Glasco old one, and w weaver's cottage and converted in house, and wher he again greatly When he died he his own property.

Relic

The church relics of the past is the black oak given to the chu courts, and bea effect, as well a

JUST WANDERING THOUGHTS



The Church Choir.

presence of the King of Kings, what trivial things sometimes distract our attention away from His presence.

Something Wrong

"God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must do so in spirit and truth. There is something wrong in this inability to realise the presence of God. If we loved Him as we should, this irreverence and inattention would be an impossible thing. Of course some allowance has to be made for physical infirmity in regard to this matter. It is only by the grace of God that we can overcome these failings.

"The answer to the question as to whether a man is truly repentant is one of faith—faith in Christ's power. Repentance and faith must go together. If we are not kept from falling into sin, the fault is our own; for not having faith in Christ. We are bound to fail unless we trust Him. The marvel is that some people imagine they must fall into sin; that there is no help for it. Why is there so much failure, especially in these days? One reason is we have not been watchful enough. People do not neglect their health, but they neglect their spiritual life. Our fault lies in the fact that we fail to make full use of the power of Christ."

Rector For 34 Years

Mr. Waring, who has been at Rodborough for practically 34 years, possesses a style of delivery when preaching which is rather unusual. This is probably not noticed by those who hear him regularly, but I could not help observing it. I am afraid I formed a false impression of Mr. Waring during the service, for in the somewhat uncertain light in the church I thought he was a trifle austere. It was only when I had a chat with him afterwards I realised how erroneous was the impression. I suppose his tall figure and style of speaking had been deceiving. His courteous bearing and patience when I applied him with questions about the church entirely altered my view.

After 34 years' work in the place, Mr. Waring is now really a part of Rodborough, and I suppose it would be difficult for anyone to think of the Parish Church without, at the same time, thinking of him. A Londoner by birth, Mr. Waring is a Queen's College, Cambridge, man, and he took his M.A. degree in 1891. He was ordained a priest in 1890, and became curate of Holy Trinity, Lee (Blackheath). Afterwards he went to Holy Trinity, Penge, and from there to St. Peter's, Norbiton, Kingston-on-Thames.



Mr. S. Hobson and Mr. J. R. Gardiner (Churchwardens) and Mr. A. L. Warner (Organist).

Estcourt family. The sanctuary chairs are also believed to have been the gift of the Estcourt family, and one of them bears the date 1657. About the same age is the silver chalice.

The most notable addition to the church in recent times was the insertion of a fine stained glass east window. This was put in just before the War by the late Sir Alfred Apperley in memory of his parents. The window is dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene—to whom the church is dedicated—(it was anciently called Holy Trinity)—and bears the Resurrection words, "Touch me not." Sir Alfred was a generous supporter of the church, and he gave considerable financial assistance when the new organ was put in. Towards the cost of this improvement, Mr. Carnegie, the great philanthropist, gave £600. The original organ was a queer

single manual construction with only four stops.

Loyal Work

Reference to the loyal work of the principal officers connected with the church must be made before I finish. The church is fortunate in its choice of churchwardens. The Rector's warden is Mr. S. Hobson, and he has held office for seven or eight years. Mr. J. R. Gardiner is the people's warden, and he succeeded Mr. R. Eaton two or three years ago. The Parochial Church Council has Mr. J. Stockbridge as its hon. secretary, while the Girls' Club is under the direction of Miss Waring. The church has a strong Sunday School with about 200 scholars. Mr. Clutterbuck is the superintendent of the boys' section, and Miss Bramley of the girls' section. They are supported by a strong staff of teachers.

The Choral Side

To return to the service, tribute must be paid to the choral side. The church has an able organist in Mr. A. L. Warner, and the choir respond well to the lead he gives. Strengthened by the addition of lady choristers, they sang heartily, and it was pleasing to note that the congregation took their proper share in the service. Mr. Warner, who succeeded Mr. H. Roberts, has been organist and choirmaster for about ten years, and he receives loyal and capable assistance from Mr. H. Clutterbuck.

The Early Church

The present Parish Church at Rodborough is the third building to be erected on the site. The original pre-Reformation church was a rather low squat building, and probably the only portion that remains is the lower part of the tower, which bears evidence that it belongs to the Tudor period. It is believed that in the inner wall of the tower is a pre-Reformation staircase, and that this could be seen if the plaster were stripped away. The second church, erected probably some 400 or 500 years later, had a roof which was much higher, and the building generally was more symmetrical. In 1842 it was again rebuilt, chiefly in the Decorated and Perpendicular styles, and consisted of a chancel, nave of four bays, aisles, and south and west porches. In Kelly's directory the embattled tower is said to be of Norman date.

In 1895-6 the church was restored, a new chancel, a south aisle, vestry, and organ chamber built. At this time the building was entirely re-seated, the old-fashioned pews then being abolished. The cost of the work was £2,200, and when the present Rector went to Rodborough there was still a debt of £600 or £700 existing. Within eighteen months the whole of this sum had been cleared off.

Chapel of Ease

For a great many years, Rodborough was a Chapel of Ease to Minchinhampton. It was in 1844—when Rodborough, Amberley, and Brimscombe all became separate parishes—that the first-named was made a Rectory. It was in that year that the present Rectory House was bought by the Rev. T. Glascott. The building is a very old one, and was built on the site of a weaver's cottage. In 1805 it was rebuilt and converted into a gentleman's dwelling-house, and when Mr. Glascott acquired it, he again greatly altered and improved it. When he died he left the house, which was his own property, to the church as a Rectory.

Relics of the Past

The church contains some interesting relics of the past. One of the most notable is the black oak Jacobean pulpit. This was given to the church in 1624 by Jasper Estcourt, and bears an inscription to that effect, as well as the coat of arms of the