

ALL SAINTS CHURCH  
TURVEY.

CENTENARY OF REDEDICATION

after Restoration

10 October, 1954.

Evensong.  
10/x/'54.  
Worship.

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All Saints Church,  
Turvey. 10.x.'54.

"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

This evening "our feet again stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem." and we recall the rejoicing of 100 years ago, when the Christian family in Turvey first saw their church with its 'New Look'.

You will perhaps have seen the sketches, near the font over there, made in watercolour by John Higgins years before that, ~~which~~ give us an idea, albeit a puzzling one, of the 'Old Look'. It is a little difficult to work out just what the church was like, but it can be done. The church was not only dilapidated, fusty, ~~and~~ rotted in its timbers and rocky as to its pillars, but it had got into a proper muddle. An arch had gone to accommodate the biggest of the monuments, East of some pews with their back to the ~~E~~.window was the font. The lowly communion table, in front of the pews I have just mentioned was overshadowed by the enormous pulpit. Look at Dean Burgon's charming sketch near our porch, and you will see the effect was to make the church almost square; ~~and~~ the western arch was filled up with a gallery, with the small sweet organ topping it. There were benches ( I think ) down the centre, and the tall box pews were ranged on either side. The families could move into them, sit all round, and disappear from view, except when the tops of the grownups appeared for the standing up parts of the service. (Elements of all this arrangement can still be found in churches up and down the country.)

The explanation of this setup is that things had got out of proportion in those days. Preaching was nearly everything Rowlandson and Hogarth give us illuminating pictures of the scene in many a parish church. *I have a preacher's bow glass in my study at home*

Now, from his boyhood, Charles Longuet Higgins had resolved that he was going to repair this unworthy state of

affairs, and as we saw this morning, there was a stirring of churchfolks' consciences taking place throughout the land; and restorations of decayed churches were going on everywhere. Why should God's happy house remain a colourless box? For you will see <sup>in the sketches</sup> that the only spot of colour here was in the E. window, way behind the pulpit, and the red covering of the communion table at its foot. Calvinism and the Levellers, and the "No Popery" obsession, so strong for historical reasons, had blotted it nearly all out. Puritanism, condemning "steeple-houses" and "Kists of whustles" was a mighty force, not yet spent from here to East Anglia, where the core of the parliamentary forces were raised. The Church was quite submerged during the Commonwealth, and <sup>her</sup> ministers were driven from their livings ~~xxxxxxx~~. <sup>the P.B. was outlawed.</sup> (Presbyterianism is still the established religion in Scotland.)

So C.L.H. brought in Gilbert Scott to restore the rather sad place; ~~and~~ <sup>A</sup> wonderful job they made of it. I have been studying his account of the work they accomplished. It is one of the treasures kept at the Rectory.

This was what they did. They restored the tower, where the oaken floors were rotted. The rest of the church, except for the outside walls, they took entirely to pieces. The gallery went. They underpinned the ~~shaky~~ pillars, for burials inside ~~the~~ church literally play the devil with foundations. They narrowed the two pillars that marked the old junction of nave and chancel. They found the two saxon windowheads that prove that this church is the same church through all its changes as the one which was here before the conquest in Edward the Confessor's time. There they are for us to see and to help us to picture that first stone church. (Perhaps those funny little heads belong to that age.) They took the norman font back to its proper place near the entrance, providing space for the seemly celebration of Holy Baptism. The glorious angel roof, sadly decayed was entirely renewed, and covered with new lead. Let us hope that the

lead-thieves, who pillaged Brasted and many more churches in Kent will not be able to get at it). They set the fine monuments in nearly the same places as before. I think their only mistake was to put that noble knight and his lady with their foes almost touching the E.Wall of S.Mary's Chapel, which has since been made so lovely. The restorers added grace, and space. The church was extended eastwards by the beautiful new chancel beyond this perfect arch, the fine roof in coloured and happy contrast to the nave. The noble new organ, probably incorporating the old, filled the N.E chapel -- and it took two men to blow it. (Wallinger story)

The art of making stained glass windows was reviving in this land. It was still in rather a crude stage, as you may see in the contemporary windows in Ely cathedral. But after the long colour famine, the restorers "fell for them in a big way," as hundreds of churches witness. And here the windows -- and the organ pipes -- were joyous with colour. Gt-uncle Charles gives many pages of his record to describing his windows and their symbolic designs.

Now let us study the motive which prompted all this artistic enterprise. What were they about, & the leaders of this movement?

The evangelical insistence on personal religion, on "getting right with God", on the direct encounter between Man and his maker, has not been disparaged, far less extinguished. But it needed to be supplemented and balanced by corporate fellowship, and enriched with beauty. Not only can the congregation see one another in the new pews, but eye and ear have been enlisted to help the man in the pew to engage his full personality in the activity of worship. No longer is the spoken word the only medium of approach to God. Prayer can also be expressed in action, in little gestures like bowings and crossings, in large movements like processions, standing up together and so on. You see, worship is not something SAID: it is something DONE. A service is a drama, an arrangement of happenings. God is in action, and so are His children. Consider, for instance, how dramatic a wedding is. There are entrances and exits. The characters concerned, bride, groom, minister, congregation, play their parts and speak the lines that fit the action of the moment. Yes, God is in action too; His will is declared, and His blessing goes out on the marriage brought to be hallowed in His house.

This agrees with the Bible. Consider the way the New Testament speaks. Here is no mention of "attending" a service, or "hearing" a mass. The apostles speak of DOING the Thanksgiving, DOING the Eucharist. Here indeed is drama, action, Christ speaks in the Gospel. The apostles of old in the Epistle.

Spirit not only acts to give us the living saviour in the bread and wine, but uses the sermon to speak to our consciences. The choir move, and sing; the congregation move and do their part as do the sacred ministers; the church officers, wardens and sidesmen ( and perhaps servers ) as they give out books, take the plate round, bring up the bread and wine at the offertory, and so forth, are playing their part in the ordered pattern of worship. Their action <sup>makes</sup> ~~is part~~ of the service.

Do I hear some one say, "But the Quakers meet God in still silence".? Well, I think that a church service is mis-managed, "badly directed" as the dramatic critic would say, if there are no pauses, no intervals of stillness in which the soul can hear the still small voice of the Comforter, speaking perhaps interiorly, perhaps through the eye fixed on the cross, or in the echo of a verse of psalm or hymn. or prayer .

We see therefore, that when the people of Turvey came into their church 100 years ago, and saw the font in its place, the orderly pews, this soaring arch leading to the fair chancel and sanctuary, the colour in the windows, the singing angels in the roof, found all decay, frowstiness, and insecurity banished, they were entering into a revival, a recovery, an enriched inheritance, which, please God, may continue and increase. Today our church, with S.Mary's chapel recovered for use, is even more lovely than it was then, and I am brave enough to expect that a spiritual revival in our land is on its way. Billy Graham is one of the signs of the times . A lesson of his is that if we put ourselves into God's hands, He can do anything with us. "The Lord hath done great things for us already, whereof we rejoice". We have indeed "sown in tears". we "shall reap in joy". Let us fill this, our home and our Father's place, chosen by Him to put His name there, with holy gaiety, and happy worship. Only YOU can contribute Your share to the life of fellowship in the household of God. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness !