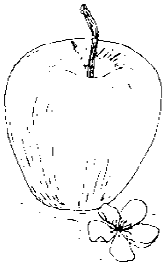


Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton			
4 th August Trinity 7		9.30 Family Communion	Ecclesiastes 1 vv 1-14 p668 Ecclesiastes 2 vv 17-23 p669 Colossians 3 vv 1-11 p1184 Luke 12 vv 13-21 p1045
11 th August Trinity 8		9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Genesis 15 vv 1-6 p15 Hebrews 11 vv 1-16 p1209 Luke 12 vv 32-40 p1045
18 th August Trinity 9 Jackie Lyon – Christians Against Poverty - speaking		8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Trinity 9
		9.30 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 23 vv 23-29 p783 Hebrews 11 v29 – 12 v2 p1210 Luke 12 vv 49-56 p1046
25 th August Trinity 10		9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 58 vv 9b-14 p745 Hebrews 12 vv 18-29 p1211 Luke 13 vv 10-17 p1046
1 st September Trinity 11		9.30 Family Communion	Proverbs 25 vv 6&7 p660 Hebrews 13 vv 1-16 p1211 Luke 14 vv 1-14 p1047
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
4 th August Trinity 7		8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Romans 6 vv 19-23 p1133 Mark 8 vv 1-9 p1011
		11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Ecclesiastes 1 vv 1-14 p668 Ecclesiastes 2 vv 17-23 p669 Colossians 3 vv 1-11 p1184 Luke 12 vv 13-21 p1045
11 th August Trinity 8		11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 15 vv 1-6 p15 Hebrews 11 vv 1-16 p1209 Luke 12 vv 32-40 p1045
		5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	II Chronicles 1 vv 1-17 p436 Matthew 22 vv 15-40 p990
18 th August Trinity 9		11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Jeremiah 23 vv 23-29 p783 Hebrews 11 v29 – 12 v2 p1210 Luke 12 vv 49-56 p1046
25 th August Trinity 10		11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 58 vv 9b-14 p745 Hebrews 12 vv 18-29 p1211 Luke 13 vv 10-17 p1046
1 st September Trinity 11		8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I Corinthians 15 vv 1-11 p1155 Luke 18 vv 9-14 p1052
		11.00 Holy Communion	Proverbs 25 vv 6&7 p660 Hebrews 13 vv 1-16 p1211 Luke 14 vv 1-14 p1047
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
31 st July	Exodus 34 vv 29-35 Matthew 13 vv 44-46	1 st August Lammas	Exodus 40 vv 16-38 Matthew 13 vv 47-53
7 th August	Numbers 13 vv 1-35 Matthew 15 vv 21-28	8 th August	Numbers 20 vv 1-13 Matthew 16 vv 13-23
14 th August	Deuteronomy 34 vv 1-12 Matthew 18 vv 15-20	15 th August	Romans 8 vv 12-17 Matthew 7 vv 15-21
21 st August	Judges 9 vv 6-15 Matthew 20 vv 1-16	22 nd August	Judges 11 vv 29-40 Matthew 22 vv 1-14
28 th August S Augustine of Hippo	I Thessalonians 2 vv 9-13 Matthew 23 vv 27-32	29 th August Beheading of S John the Baptist	I Thessalonians 3 vv 7-13 Matthew 24 vv 42-51

A man went to have his haircut and the barber asked him where he was going on holiday. "Rome," the man replied. "Why go there?" the barber said. "You don't like the heat. You don't like crowds. You don't like Italian food!" "I'm hoping to see the pope," he replied. "You won't get to see the pope," the barber said, "except as one of the crowd when he comes out on the balcony." Some weeks later, the man had his hair cut again. "I did see the pope," he said. "He invited me up onto his balcony and told me to kneel. He leant right over me and asked me a question." "What did the pope ask you?" said the barber. The man responded, "The pope asked me where I got this terrible haircut!"



Esther

Esther is the book in the Bible which doesn't specifically mention God! *Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)* That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace... Ahasuerus was King of Persia, a mighty emperor or shah. Shushan was an amazingly wealthy and large city, probably the site of his winter palace. Persia dominated the East at that time and there were many Jews living in the Persian empire.

Ahasuerus decided to show off! *In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:* The exhibition went on for 180 days and then there was a great feast which lasted a whole week. The hall was decked with beautiful hangings, white, green and blue. They drank the royal wine out of golden goblets in abundance, it says, but that no-one was forced to drink more than he wanted. Sometimes, even today, people are pressured into drinking more than they want, which is not good.

This was for the men. Meanwhile, the Queen, whose name was Vashti, made a feast for the the women in the royal house. On the seventh day, things started to go wrong. Ahasuerus, having feasted and drunk with his mates for a week, demanded that Vashti come in for them to see her. This sounds a bit like that charity do a little while ago when posh blokes in the city were waited on by young women chosen more for their beauty and provocative clothing than for their skill with a tray of food and drink. This demeaning of women still goes on today, which is not good.

Vashti refused to come in. "Good for her," you might say, but Ahasuerus wouldn't agree with you. *Therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.* The top men in Persia decided that Vashti's example might encourage other women to stand up to their husbands. So they decided that Ahasuerus should divorce her and they published a decree throughout the empire

to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people." Marriage vows are for life and selfishly to turn away from the person you made them to is not a good thing. Neither is tyrannising over the one whom St Peter calls *the weaker vessel*.

They hold a beauty contest to choose a new wife for Ahasuerus. One entrant is Esther. Esther is a Jew, but is advised by her relative Mordecai not to say so. There was anti-Semitism then. There is anti-Semitism nowadays. Prejudice against any race, people or religion is not a good thing. Esther is chosen to be the new Queen. She was, by far, the most beautiful (and with fewer cosmetics than the other candidates, recalling my comments last month!).

Meanwhile, there is an assassination attempt against Ahasuerus. *In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name. And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.*

So Esther and Mordecai have saved the situation, but the King, for some reason, decides to promote a guy called Haman. Haman really was a nasty, arrogant piece of work. He expected everybody to bow down to him. Mordecai refused, perhaps because, although God is not mentioned in the Book of Esther, Mordecai knew that it is always wrong to worship mere human beings – be they potentates, oligarchs or celebrities. Only God is worthy of our worship. Haman decides to take out his pique not only on Mordecai, but on all the Jewish people. Haman is an Amalekite and Jews and Amalekites had already hated one another for centuries. There are communities in the world today carrying on feuds which have lasted for ever, refighting old battles, and still seeking revenge for what happened aeons ago. This is not a good thing. Neither is it a good thing within

families or between neighbours or within or between churches.

Haman decides to prey on the King's fears of an alien people, a general prejudice against those who are different, a suspicion of immigrants. *And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries.* It isn't too difficult today to think of people who live among us but have their own culture and laws, a very small number of whom are dangerous to us. We have to ask questions about how far, in a multi-cultural society, different cultures should be able to preserve their own customs and way of life distinct from everybody else and how much pressure we should put on one another to conform to the same rules. What Haman did and what Hitler did is a fearful warning of what can happen when, from fear or jealousy or whatever, we cultivate prejudice against other races and peoples. This is not a good thing.

Mordecai was mortified for himself and all the Jewish people. Esther possibly thought she was safe in the palace and may not have fully understood what was going on. Mordecai sent her a message to go and talk to the King and get him to intervene in order to save her people. But, it's not as simple as that. You couldn't just walk in on a Persian emperor. If he didn't want to be interrupted, you'd be executed and the King hadn't invited her in to see him for a month. Maybe he was avoiding her, considering what he had allowed Haman to do to her people. So Esther told Mordecai that she couldn't do it.

Mordecai's reply: *Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the*

kingdom for such a time as this? This, I think, is the key to the religious message of Esther. God may not be mentioned in the Book, but He is working His purpose out. God is saving His people, working in their lives to achieve His ends. This is what we mean by Providence. *He's got the whole world in His Hands.* We can trust God for our lives and, indeed, for the final outcome of literally everything.

Esther accepts that she is the one who will have to speak to the King and try to save the Jews. She asks everybody to fast for her, which probably also means pray, although it doesn't say so. Esther butters up the king by inviting him and his mate Haman to a banquet she has prepared. She does the same thing two days running. Haman is delighted to be, as he thinks, so honoured, but it galls him that Mordecai still sits at the King's gate. *Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.* Zeresh wasn't a nice person either. 50 cubits is 75 feet. I don't know what it is in metric, but I don't suppose it would matter to the one being strung up.

That night, Ahasuerus is unable to sleep and he decides to have a look through the records. He remembers that he's done nothing to reward Mordecai for thwarting the plot against him. In the morning, Haman comes to court with the intention of asking the King's permission to hang Mordecai. Before he opens his mouth, however, Ahasuerus asks his advice on how to reward the man whom the King delights to honour. Haman thinks that Ahasuerus means himself and responds extravagantly. *Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.* Haman is not pleased when he discovers that it is Mordecai who is to be honoured and that he is the

one who's got to lead his horse through the city while Mordecai's glory is proclaimed. He goes home in a foul mood, where he doesn't get much comfort! *Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.*

Now it's time for Haman to attend Esther's banquet with the king. At the feast, Ahasuerus asks Esther what her petition is. She tells him how her own people throughout the empire are being put to the sword. The king is angry and asks her who is responsible. When she tells him that it is *this wicked Haman*, the king is so beside himself with wrath that he marches out into the garden. Haman then begs Esther to save him, throwing himself down on the divan on which she is lying to beg her to protect him. When the king comes back in, he thinks that Haman is trying to rape Esther and orders him to be hanged on the gallows on which Haman had intended to hang

Mordecai. He got what he deserved, but it's a long way from Jesus' words on the Cross, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Justice or mercy? They aren't opposites. Justice and mercy are aspects of love – the apparent contradiction resolved on the Cross. We read both the Old and New Testaments in the light of Jesus.

The upshot of all this was that Mordecai was made second in command to Ahasuerus and the persecution of the Jews was stopped. Good news. Less good news is that, once they had the upper hand, the Jews killed the people who had been plotting against them. *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*, says the Jew St Paul, however. This raises so many questions about how much force we should use against our enemies, what kinds of punishments might be appropriate. Far too much to go into here. So I'll finish by mentioning that, in order to mark these events, the Jews instituted the Feast of Purim which is still kept today. Roger.



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Just to let you know that the Christian Aid envelope collection, mainly through envelopes inserted into the parish magazines, this year raised the sum of £437 (Compared with £464 last year). Our contribution to the Christian Aid walk amounted to £210. Thanks to all who contributed. We're looking forward to hosting the Christian Aid deanery quiz in the church hall on 21st September.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mr Head (2), Mrs Chidwick (18) & Mrs Waghorn (156) – drawn by Mrs Hayward.
St Michael's Draw: £10 to Mrs Fenton-Scott (38), £5 each to Mr Silverthorn (1) & Mrs Beaney (5)

Whom Should I Thank? Who is the Mystery Donor?

The other night, I took Tommy down the garden just as it was getting dark at around 10.00. This is our normal pre-basket excursion. Hanging on my back gate, there was a carrier bag. Inside, there were seven model buses, all in their original packaging, but no indication of who had given them. It must be someone who knows that I like buses and maybe there had been a note which had blown away or perhaps the donation was meant to be anonymous. Anyway, if you are reading this, thanks very much. I'll add them to my collection. Roger.

MU Visit to Kenward trust — Yalding

Following a most interesting talk from Allison Summers last year, the Mothers Union had a June summer outing to the lovely Kenward Manor House, set in beautiful grounds. We were made most welcome. While half of the party were shopping, looking at books and generally enjoying the surroundings over a cup of coffee, the other half were each given an alpaca to walk. The alpacas were very gentle and friendly creatures.

After this experience we all sat down to enjoy a light lunch with ample cups of tea! Afterwards we were given a most moving talk by a previous resident who told his story of being on drugs from the age of 13 years and how this caused serious problems. He described how, on his release from prison, the Kenward Trust enabled him to change his life around. They are such a dedicated and caring community.

Roger was unable to attend this meeting but his excuse caused a smile on our faces. "Sorry I shan't be able to come. I have something else I must do. I can't alpaca any more into my day and it might be a llama ing if I had to try. I might camel over exhausted. Roger"

The August Mother Union Meeting is on Wednesday, 21st August, when we will be organising a **Teddy Bear's Picnic** for babies and toddlers but open for all ages and to everybody who wants to come. This will be in the grounds of the Rectory starting at 2.00 p.m. Everyone is welcome. See you there! Jenny.

Forthcoming Attractions

21st August 2.00pm: Teddy Bears' Picnic Rectory gardens.

21st September 7.30 pm: Christian Aid Quiz in church hall.

29th September Cuxton Patronal Festival: 9.30 am Eucharist (Preacher Canon Alan Vousden), stalls and activities all day around church, hall & Rectory, buffet lunch from noon.

4th October 7.45 pm: Peninsula Big Band concert @ Cuxton Social Club in support of organ fund.

19th October 7.30 pm: Tideway Folk Group concert in church hall in support of organ fund.

9th November 7.30 pm: Quiz in church hall for church funds.

Why Do We Go To Church?

That's a good question and I think that this one of the best answers. It's one I read several times a week and it brings me back to what my life is all about – not just because I'm a priest, but because I'm a Christian. Worship is the foundation of Christian life. We assemble and meet together to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy Word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul. Think about it. It seems to encompass everything. It's what life is all about, living our lives in the context of our relationship with God. There are, however, a few other points. The passage I've quoted speaks of the face of Almighty God our heavenly Father. This is Whom we are talking to, the One Who created everything that is and yet He is my Father and yours. It also opens with the words **DEARLY** beloved brethren. If we know that God is our Father, we ought to know that all we Christians are brothers and sisters and that we are expected to love one another as Christ loves us. And finally, that in order to enter that holy Presence in the light of our sins, we must be ready to confess them as we approach with a pure heart, and humble voice, unto the throne of the heavenly grace. Roger.



Mereworth to West Peckham

My walk starts at the village of Mereworth which is a 20 minute drive from Cuxton. The village of Mereworth is mentioned in the Domesday Book 1086 when it consisted of 28 villagers, a

church and two mills. A descendant of the Nevill family, John Fane, 7th Earl of Westmorland, rebuilt Mereworth Castle and St Lawrence's Church in the 18th Century. St Lawrence's Church is quite magnificent with its tall spire and is described as a Palladian-Style stone structure with Grade 1 listed status due

to its architectural and historical importance. Starting at St Lawrence's Church, I walk down the street to a narrow lane, on the right, at the side of Torrington House leading to a motorbike shop and an enclosed pathway. The footpath forks to the right and passes a field of barley on the way up towards a white house. The footpath leads out onto a driveway before emerging onto a lane. I walk up the lane and bear left at a road junction with Horns Lane and then stroll along this quiet lane which affords lovely views back towards Mereworth. There is another junction (New Pound Lane) and a few houses along this lane but there is very little traffic until I reach the main road (B 2016). Cautiously I cross the road and go straight ahead to follow a farm track with poplars to my left sheltering fields of fruits. There are poly-tunnels full of strawberries which fill the air with their distinct scent. I follow down the track passing more crops and into a narrow lane turning left and then right after a pond. The pond is very full of water after the recent rains and has some beautiful water lilies in bloom. On closer inspection there are large fish swimming near the surface, carp, I presume. This track leads passed a picturesque cottage and a footpath through the



meadow in a valley. The bees are busy flying amongst a riot of wild flowers whilst butterflies fly around me. I can no longer hear traffic or people. It is so peaceful yet noisy due to the insects. I walk into the woods. The footpath is now lined with Giant Redwoods with their distinctive bark reaching to a high canopy.

The footpath through the woods is well signed and I move on to an intersection and join the Weald Way. This winds its way down to a road intersection and a farm selling local fruits. I buy a large punnet of raspberries, freshly picked that day and proceed to eat the lot on my way. Delicious! The Weald Way travels downhill towards Oxen Heath then branches left and heads towards West Peckham. The footpath overlooks beautiful green fields and orchards

before crossing another lane and following a path to Pear Tree Cottage and a final tree lined pathway onto the beautiful village green at West Peckham. There is a large village green with a cricket square in the centre. Today is West Peckham village fete so no cricket but a



large number of stalls selling teas, produce, bric-a-brac, fund-raising activities and displays for vintage/classic motors and birds of prey. A

hive of activity and merriment. At one end of the green is a pub, The Swan on the Green. This is a popular hostelry and I purchase my lunch. I was lucky enough to find outside seating for my



meal so that I could watch the various activities around me.

After my lunch I explore West Peckham. At the corner of the green stands

St Dunstan's Church. This is quite a contrast to the church in Mereworth as it is much older but is quite beautiful with an air of tranquility.

I have seen a great deal on this walk. I enjoy the farms, woods and quiet footpaths but I enjoy seeing the unusual also. I rarely go to village fetes but this one is delightful and to be recommended. Another lovely day spent walking in our fantastic county of Kent.



We are so lucky. Holly Croft .

From the Registers

Baptisms:

2 nd June	Ashton James Rees Martin Malt	Walderslade
14 th June	Matilda Rose Dickinson	Kent Road
14 th June	Reggie Paul Ashton	Snodland

Wedding:

29 th June	Steven Brown & Sarah Reynolds	Cuxton
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Funerals:

14 th June	Christine Stella Murray	Stanford Way
18 th June	Jennifer Eileen Jones	formerly of Cuxton

Thoughts About Grace

Meister Eckhart: The most important prayer in the world is just two words long. "Thank you."

Karl Barth:: Joy is really the simplest form of gratitude.

Soren Kierkegaard: To stand on one's legs and prove God's existence is a very different thing from going on one's knees and thanking Him.

John Henry Jowett: Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin and an antiseptic.

Dorothy L Sayers: The people who hanged Christ never, to do them justice, accused Him of being a bore - on the contrary; they thought Him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left for later generations to muffle up that shattering personality and surround Him with an atmosphere of tedium.

Will They Ever Gateau Over It?

A cake decorator in New Zealand was asked to inscribe on a wedding cake 1 John 4:18: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear". The decorator misread the verse, and when the cake arrived at the wedding reception, it was discovered that John 4:18 was inscribed on the cake: "For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly."

This Made Me Smile

From the "Times" 11th July: **NAKED TRUTH OF LOST VICAR**

Fresh scandal in the CofE! A nude priest was seen skulking in a hotel corridor at 3am during a clerical conference last week. It was not sin that put him there but befuddlement. Andrew Downes, vicar of St Mary's, Sunbury-on-Thames, had got up to answer a call of nature but mistook his hotel door for the bathroom, an error he realised only as it shut behind him. He should have taken the advice in *Revelation*: "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." Alas, word then got around and at a Lambeth Palace event on Tuesday people kept telling Downes: "How nice to see you with your clothes on for a change."

St Bartholomew's Day 2012 24th August

Acts 5 vv 12-16, Luke 22vv 24-30

St Bartholomew the Apostle. What do we know about him? There isn't very much in the Bible about Bartholomew, except for the fact that he was one of the original twelve apostles. Generally he is thought to have been the same person as Nathanael, who at first sat under a fig tree and, despite Philip's testimony, refused to believe that the Messiah could be someone Who came from lowly Nazareth, but who, when He met Jesus, acknowledged him as the Son of God and King of Israel – of which more later. Bartholomew was a witness of the Ascension and tradition has it that he was a missionary in Armenia and India and possibly Ethiopia and Mesopotamia. Under the provisions of the Act of Uniformity which received royal assent on 16th May 1662, the Book of Common Prayer was required to be introduced into all parishes by St Bartholomew's Day 1662 – the event the 350th anniversary of which we commemorated on 24th August 2012 with the 1662 Holy Communion service sung to Merbecke at St Michael's (a combination of which I

am very fond and find profoundly moving). This year, the 24th August is a Saturday and I expect our 8.00 am celebration will be somewhat more modest. Anyway St Bartholomew's Day, a festival, then, of the early Church, of the English Reformation and of the Church today.

First of all, the early Church. Our Acts reading is about the dynamism of the early Church. Forty Days after Easter, Jesus ascended into Heaven, having commissioned His Church to complete the work which God the Father had given Him to do. The Good News of salvation must be proclaimed to the whole world. This work would be accomplished by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the Risen Christ, the third person of the Blessed Trinity, Who would fill the Church and inspire Christian people to recognise God as Father and Jesus as Lord and to take up their cross and follow Him as conduits of God's Love in a fallen world. On the Day of Pentecost, ten days after the Ascension, the Holy Ghost came upon the apostles as a rushing mighty wind and in tongues of fire. The apostles proclaimed the Good News to the multitude and that very day three thousand people repented of their sins and were baptised and received the Holy Spirit. So the Church was born, the Body of Christ, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. They were filled with the Spirit, filled with the love of God. They shared their possessions. They lapped up the apostles' teaching and preaching. They met together every day to worship in the Temple and broke bread in one another's houses. Their communal life and their individual witness were such that men and women were drawn to them and the Church grew rapidly in numbers, but their sheer dynamism inspired such awe, fear even, that others were afraid to approach them. In this fellowship of love and the Spirit, miracles of healing took place at the apostles' hands. Such was the early Church.

Our Gospel reading describes events a few weeks before the phenomenon I have just described. The scene is the Last Supper, the night before the Crucifixion, the oblation of Himself once offered to be a full, perfect and sufficient, sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, the Atonement which would rend the veil between Creator and Creation, opening the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers, and making it possible for the Comforter to come, the Paraclete, our Advocate, the Holy Spirit, the life and soul of the Church. But all that was still to come when Jesus shared the final Passover meal with His apostles. Bartholomew and the others were confused, probably frightened, sensing great things, yet not knowing what to expect. If the Kingdom of God was imminent, where would they stand? Who was going to be chancellor? Who was going to be head of the armed forces? Who was going to be Home Secretary? Which of the apostles was going to be Archbishop of Jerusalem? Jesus had to tell them that leadership means service. To be a Christian means to be like Christ, to love like Christ, to sacrifice self on the altar of service to God and to humanity. To be a Christian leader – an apostle or bishop or priest, or king or prime minister, or parent or teacher - to have any position of authority or influence, means all the more to be like Christ, to walk in the footsteps of Him Who *came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many*.

The early Church. It didn't last. Christian kings, princes and governors, yes, and bishops and priests, came to enjoy exercising lordship and being called benefactors, just like the kings of the Gentiles. They got used to being ministered unto, rather than ministering to the needs of others. The intense fellowship of those early days didn't last. By the time the Roman Empire was calling itself Christian, being a Christian was just ordinary. There was nothing special about it anymore. When the Empire became Christian, the danger of martyrdom disappeared, but so did the challenge. What was special about being a Christian? People had their babies baptised. They attended Communion every Sunday. But did they love one another as Christ loved them? Did they feel an imperative to share their faith with an unbelieving world? Were they more honest than other people in their business dealings? Were they less ruthless in their politics? More faithful to their families? More generous to the poor? More peaceful in their dealings with other nations? What difference did it make for an individual to be a Christian or for a country to claim to be part of Christendom?

My answer would be that it made a big difference, but not a big enough difference. Mediaeval Europe was a very much better place than it might have been without the influence of the Catholic Church, but it was nothing like as good as it should have been if we measure it by the standards Jesus set. By the end of the

Middle Ages, the Catholic Church had gone badly wrong. A division had been created between ordinary Christians (the laity) and the clergy and members of religious orders. Less was expected from the laity and more from the clergy, but the clergy often fell far short of the standards of piety and education that ought to have been expected. The Church wasn't turning the world upside down; it was reinforcing its structures. Money had become far too important. Spiritual power was in the hands of the few, the few who could read the Bible and the service books in Latin. The simple message of salvation in Christ alone had been confused by a complex Theology which seemed to imply that a place in Heaven had to be earned or even that it could be bought by judicious donations to the Church and to charities. The Church needed to be reformed. Indeed the Church always needs to be reformed. *Semper reformanda*, always to be reformed, because Christian people are human. The flesh lusts against the spirit and we continually fall short of being what God calls us to be. The Church on earth is never perfect and is therefore in constant need of reformation.

The Protestant Reformation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries recovered three great insights: *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *sola scriptura*; by God's grace alone, through faith alone, by Scripture alone. It is by God's grace that we are saved. Our salvation, our relationship with God depends on God alone. There is nothing we can do to earn His love. There is nothing we have to do to earn His love. He just loves us. We apprehend this truth through faith alone. We don't have to do anything else. Only believe. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. St Paul puts it this way. *For by grace are ye saved through faith*. So all believers stand before God on equal terms. There is no distinction between ordinary Christians (the laity) and the clergy or the religious. Priests, monks and nuns are no closer to God than any other Christian and nothing less is required of any Christian than is required of the greatest saint – to follow Jesus. All Christians are in fact saints, because it is Christ Who sanctifies us.

Sola scriptura means that the Bible tells you everything you need to know about God. You don't need a priest or a bishop or the pope to tell you what to believe. You can read the Bible for yourself. You will be wise to be guided by biblical scholars and by the faith of the Church, but, ultimately it is between you and the Bible and God. So Protestantism was a great influence on the development of concepts of individual freedom and therefore of democracy. The only ultimate authority is God and every individual believer has access to God in Jesus Christ. Conscience, therefore, must be respected and it isn't much of a jump to believe that everybody has the right to express an opinion and that everyone has a right to a say in the way things are done – freedom of speech and democracy. The protestant religion had a tremendous influence on the constitution of the United States of America and the development of similar ideas in Europe and the rest of the world. Because the individual needs to be able to read the Bible for himself, the protestant religion has played an enormous part in the promotion of literacy, which, in turn, has underpinned the development of a more general universal education.

The English Prayer Book is a product of the English Reformation. The services themselves are in English (not Latin). The underlying doctrine is the reformation doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. The book promotes the reading of Scripture by clergy and laity alike. It contains a great deal of teaching material, intended to produce an educated laity who would understand the Christian faith and be transformed by their personal knowledge of Jesus into Christ-like people inspired by the Holy Spirit to complete His work of love in the world. As today's Collect puts it, that we should love the Word which Bartholomew believed and that we should both preach and receive the same. The original intention was that clergy and laity would meet daily for Morning and Evening Prayer (reading together most of the Old Testament once and all of the New Testament [except Revelation] three times in the course of a year) and that they should also come together on Sundays and other holy days to share in Holy Communion. That is a consummation still devoutly to be desired, but I hope we do our best! Common Worship, which is the book we mostly use in this parish (authorised from 2,000), is in the tradition of Common Prayer, with similar objectives. As to whether it is better or worse at achieving those objectives, opinions will differ.

Finally I want to return to Nathanael, who is probably Bartholomew by another name. Philip was all excited about Jesus and tried to get his friend Nathanael to come and meet Him. For reasons of pure prejudice, Nathanael was unwilling to go, but, when he met Jesus and realised that Jesus knew his innermost being, he confessed *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel*. And Jesus told Nathanael he hadn't seen half of it yet. *Hereafter you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man*. The reference is back to Jacob's ladder, when the patriarch Jacob had a vision of heaven open and a ladder reaching up to God. He said, *how dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven*. Jesus connects heaven and earth. He opens for us the way to God. Jesus is the Way. It is in worship that we are at one with God. It is through worship that we are transformed. *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*. What we are celebrating in this sermon is certainly not specifically the Book of Common Prayer but the privilege of worshipping God from which everything else follows. It is in knowing God that we have eternal life. It is through worship that the Church becomes what she is. It is in worship that Christians become what we are. It is through worship that the world will be saved.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

O ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who didst give to thine Apostle Bartholomew grace truly to believe and to preach thy Word; Grant, we beseech thee, unto thy Church, to love that Word which he believed, and both to preach and receive the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Tommy's Talking Points



We have a wasps' nest in the extractor fan. What a good thing it isn't an intractor fan! That would create an intractable problem! Actually, it's never switched on. What would be the point when the windows are always open? Actually it was an early example of Master's contentions with ecclesiastical bureaucracy. When he moved into the Rectory, the front gate was broken down badly. He needed a new front gate because he lives on a busy main road, he had a dog and, at that time, his nieces who visit him, were still very young, as their children are now, and, of course, we hold events for children in the Rectory grounds. No, he couldn't have a front gate, they said, but they would install an extractor fan, even though he said that he could never imagine using it. He paid for the gate himself!

Back to the wasps, what should he do about them? It occurred to him that, if he did turn on the fan, it might extract them for him. Well, he tried it and the fan wouldn't work. Maybe it's gummed up with wasps' nesting materials. (They make paper by chewing wood.) Or perhaps it's just seized up from disuse. He quickly turned it off when the first wasp headed into the kitchen, taking advantage of the open inner grill.

He thought of trying to cover the vent with cling film, but the wasps would probably attack him if he did. If he closed the external aperture, they might come into the house. Anyway, if they can chew wood into paper, they might soon get through cling film and they might not be in a very good mood when they did. He considered spraying insecticide into the nest. Again, they'd probably sting him while he was doing this and the insecticide would possibly come right through into the kitchen and poison us. He doesn't like distributing chemicals around the environment and he doesn't like killing things. The best time to do it would be at night when the wasps are much less active, but, if any insecticide made it into the kitchen, well that's where I sleep!

So he's reconsidered. Let sleeping wasps lie! They are a small variety of wasp. They are not terribly aggressive and they don't take any notice of people unless they linger around the entrance to the nest. In

fact, they could be bees. Master isn't so good on identifying the Hymenoptera! Master thinks that, on previous occasions, when insects like these have made nests in the garden, they haven't lasted long. They raise the next generation and move out. He's fairly sure that wasps don't normally return to the same nesting site. So he's leaving the wasps be(e) for now, but, if he's wrong, we may witness some more drastic action on his part! Or theirs!

There are lots of insects about. We were up the woods early one morning and there were hosts of a nasty biting black fly about half an inch long. When I say *biting*, I mean they bit Master. They leave me well alone. When Master tried googling them, one match was *Satan flies to earth*. Well, they aren't that bad. They probably have their own place within the web of nature.

Not insects, because they have eight legs like spiders, are ticks. They do persecute me – horrible things. After an infestation, Master had to get some stuff from the vet to repel them, even though he doesn't like using chemicals (or spending money). Fleas I don't get, however, and, so far, neither does he.

There are different kinds of ladybirds, yellow as well as red (like tomatoes), with different numbers of spots. Master says that he can only remember one kind of ladybird in the prehistoric era in which he was brought up. The others have come to this country more recently. He does, however, remember the Summer of 1976 when it was very hot and there was a drought for weeks. There were swarms of ladybirds and they would land on people to drink their sweat. Sometimes, for good measure, they would also nip their unfortunate hosts. They perished in their millions – the bugs, not the people – and the paths in the parks at Eastbourne where he was on holiday at the time were carpeted with their corpses.

The ladybird population had exploded because so had that of the aphids, their favourite food. Master has been caught in a cloud of greenfly in our garden already this year. So maybe we shall see some more ladybirds! Looking very like ladybirds, there used to be lily beetles in the Rectory garden, but now, that they have eaten all the lilies, they seem to have left.

Other insects are more obviously attractive to human beings. We see butterflies and moths, different varieties in the garden, fields and woods – white ones, blue ones, and brown ones. He's a bit better on his Lepidoptera than his Hymenoptera. We've seen at least one damsel fly in Dean Valley and expect to see more as well as dragon flies as the season advances. Some years, there is a good number in the Rectory garden and they will rest on a human being in a deckchair and they don't bite or sting!

Spiders like insects and there are plenty of webs about outside and (until the cleaners get to them) in the house and churches as well. There are so many around our path, that Master has to comb his hair when he comes in to get rid of them. Another predator of insects is bats. On these warm, long, light evenings, we sometimes sit for a bit just as it's getting dark on our patio seat. Occasionally, we see a bat flit through the apple tree, along with the birds preparing to roost for the night. The bats might account for the tremendous decline in the mosquito population in the Rectory grounds, for which Master is very grateful. While he is enjoying a peaceful quarter of an hour in the darkling garden, I'm on the alert for the frequent opportunity to chase the foxes which come out at about that time.

So long as he keeps the birdbath topped up, we see pigeons, various kinds of finch and tit, the odd jay, sparrows and other kinds of bird, though he no longer sees the wren or the woodpeckers he used to see. All in all, it's a good life with much to be thankful for. Tommy, the Rectory Spaniel.

Fundraising.

The vicar said to the congregation that it was such a good cause that he was going to ask the organist to play a piece of music during which anyone willing to give £100 or more would have the opportunity to stand up and make a pledge. The organist struck up *God save the Queen!*