

THE ADDRESS

given by the Rector

at the

DEDICATION

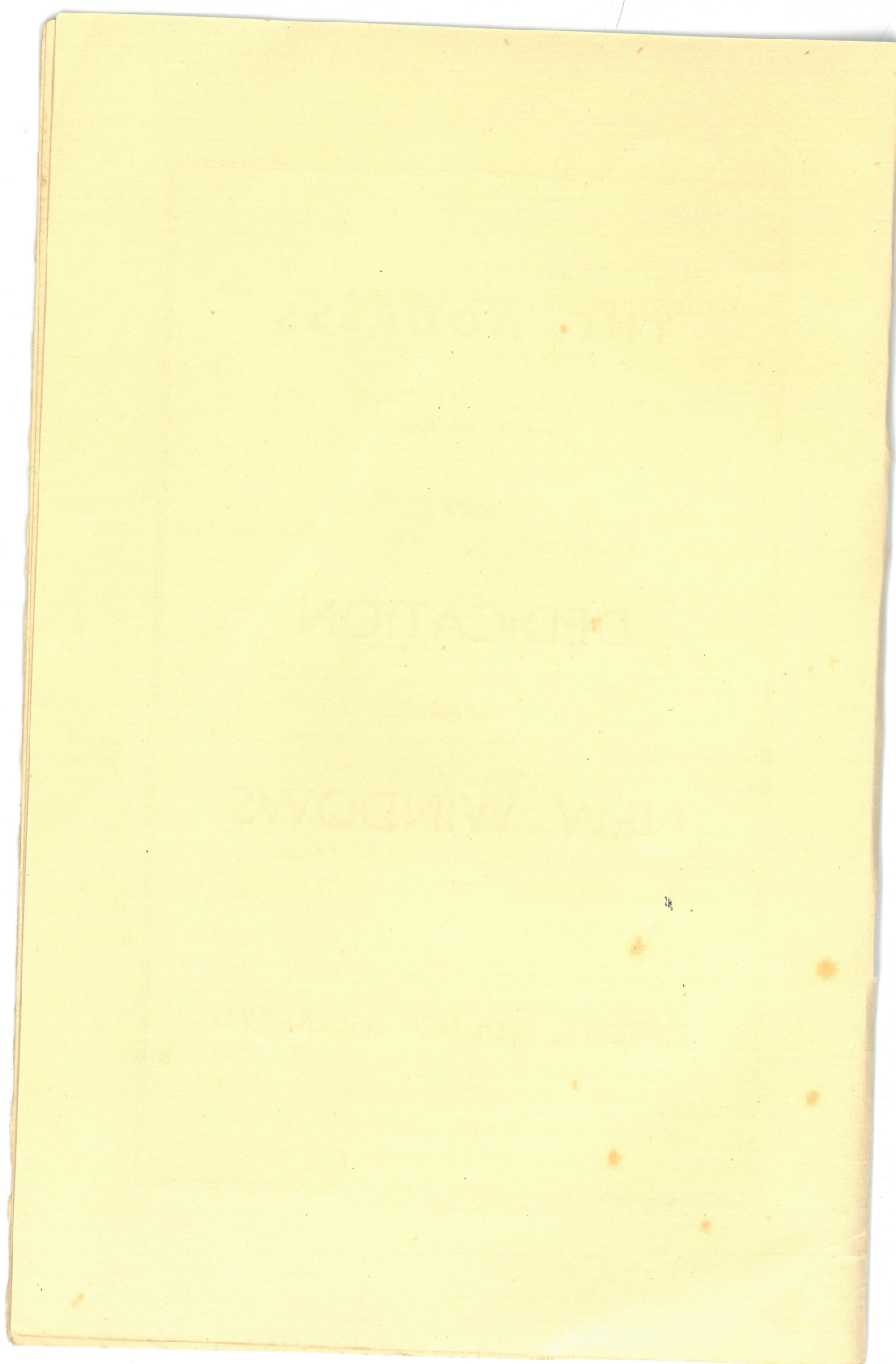
of the

NEW WINDOWS

on

SUNDAY, 20th NOVEMBER, 1949

THE BENHILL PRESS, RUGELEY.



DEDICATION OF THE LINCOLN WINDOW

and accompanying Windows on

SUNDAY, 20th NOVEMBER, 1949

The windows are the gift of

ERNEST H. BLANKLEY, Esq., of The Briars, Chesham Bois.

THIS is a memorable red-letter day in the history of our little church. We have just dedicated a most generous gift to it. I have tried personally to thank the donor. The Church Council will do so at its next meeting. But I am sure the congregation would desire to do so through me this morning. We are all deeply grateful.

The purpose behind this most generous gift is twofold. First, to adorn and beautify this House of God and make it worthy of its high calling. Secondly, it is a mark of appreciation of the work it is doing in this place.

This gift to the church will be known as "The Lincoln Gift." The heart of it is the window in the N.W. corner which is "The Lincoln Window." When this parish of St. Leonard's was founded in 1215, it was in the Lincoln Diocese, which extended in those days from the Humber to the Thames. So a bit more of our history is added to the church. The donor, also, has very close connections with Lincolnshire and

its Cathedral. This Lincoln Window is the main part of the gift.

Seeing that we had had new windows in the Chancel put in, the donor felt it was a pity that the two remaining ones in the South wall were not treated also, and that the unattractive glass in the windows of the North Aisle could not be replaced by some better plain glass. He offered to face the cost of this work also, to complete the improvement. So stained glass figures of the Four Evangelists have been put in the South wall windows, and new antique glass put in those in the North Aisle. In the tracery above the North Aisle windows have been placed the symbols of the Passion.

In the main Lincoln Window are to be seen St. Hugh of Lincoln, and St. Leonard, and above them the Arms of the Lincoln Diocese. St. Hugh is holding a model of Lincoln Cathedral and at his feet is the Swan that is always associated with him. St. Leonard, the Friend of Prisoners, is seen with their chains hanging on his arm, and at his feet a quaint little group of prisoners. At the present I shall not say anything about St. Leonard, as I referred to him fully this time last year, when we kept St. Leonard's Day. His day in the calendar is November 6th and St. Hugh's day is November 17th.

We are glad to have St. Hugh before us. He was one of the heroes of the English Church. He came from St. Bernard's Monastery in the great Chartreuse, at the invitation of Henry II. to be Prior of the Carthusian Monastery in Witham, Somerset, which Henry had built as part of the penance he was paying for his share in the martyrdom of Archbishop Becket of Canterbury. In 1186 Hugh was promoted to be Bishop of Lincoln. The Diocese had been vacant

for 17 years. Everything was in chaos. But Hugh proved a great administrator. He reorganised things and made Lincoln a model diocese. He began the cathedral which was in time to become the third largest in the country. It was in process of building for over one hundred years.

Saintliness marked Hugh's life, and fearlessness his conduct. Henry II. and Richard I. were not easy kings to get on with. Their demands on the people for money to carry on their many wars were excessive. It gave rise to corrupt practice, injustice, a heavy burden on the people. Hugh fearlessly stood up to kings and princes and courtiers, and took up the cause of the peasants. At his own consecration as Bishop, the secular powers made unjust demands on him for money for his enthronement. He boldly faced them with the reply that he would pay "as much for his throne as he had paid for his mitre," which was nothing. At another time the king demanded that a certain prebend stall in the Cathedral should be given to one of his courtiers. Hugh sent back word—"Tell the king that benefices are for ecclesiastics. The occupants should serve the altar not the palace, or the treasury, or the exchequer. The king has plenty of secular honours with which he can reward secular service." Hugh became known as "The Hammer of Kings."

Fearless uprightness stamped his actions. Also there was great saintliness of life, a sweetness and simplicity, that gave him a charm that won him great respect even from his opponents.

He is usually pictured with a swan. When he was Prior of Witham he had a pet goose. When translated to Lincoln he came into touch with a swan. This became a pet, fed at

his hand, was constantly about with him when he was at home. The connection between saints and birds and animals is interesting. Doubtless there is much exaggeration in the stories, but there is a residuum of truth. St. Benedict had a raven that came readily to him. St. Francis and his feathered creatures is another instance. A hermit, named Guthrac, put it thus:—"He who is united to God by purity of heart, finds all these sinless creatures united to himself."

In the two windows in the South wall have been placed representations of The Four Evangelists. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church. Here we preach Jesus Christ, crucified, and risen again. The Living Christ is the secret of the existence and life of the Church. It seemed fitting to remember those who gave us the story of His life. There is One Gospel, but four narratives of it. There is a unity with a variety. Matthew and Luke are pictured as men of mature years; Mark and John as younger men. Luke is holding a picture showing the Mother and Child. It was to him we owe the narratives of the early years of Jesus.

Over the heads of the evangelists are the symbolic figures associated with them. Over Matthew the face of a man—emblematic of intelligence and understanding. Over Mark the face of a lion—the symbol of strength and power. Over Luke is the face of an ox, suggesting patience, diligence, close attention. Over John the face of an eagle, the bird of vision and high flight; John seemed to see deeper into the personality of Jesus, and saw through present tragedy to future triumph. The arms of the Oxford Diocese, and of Buckingham, appear in the tracery above.

The windows give forth a message. They are sermons in glass.

Those in the North Aisle have been filled with new and better plain glass. In the tracery at the top have been placed The Symbols of The Passion—the hammer and pincers—the nails—the scourge—the crown of thorns—the spear and sponge. They are reminders of a service for man that went all the way, even to the sacrifice of life itself. Whatever has been won for the welfare of mankind, has meant discipline and sacrifice by someone. Those passion symbols are a constant reminder of a service ready to go to utmost lengths, that man may find the life that is life indeed.

The cry to-day, nationally and religiously, is for whole-hearted unsparing service. There are some great beneficial movements afoot, but there is something wrong with the spirit needed to carry them through. Self-discipline, a readiness to think a little less of one's personal benefit, and a little more of the benefit of all—a willingness to put in that bit extra—an inward constraint to go all out and all the way, are called for at this moment in our history. There will be no recovery either nationally or religiously, until the spirit of service suggested by those symbols grips us all.

To those with eyes to see and minds to understand, these windows speak. This is the House of God where the Word of God is heard. Thanks to those who have desired to see this church made more worthy, it now speaks through the Eye as well as through the Ear.

To God be the Glory.

