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CHRISTMAS NUMBER

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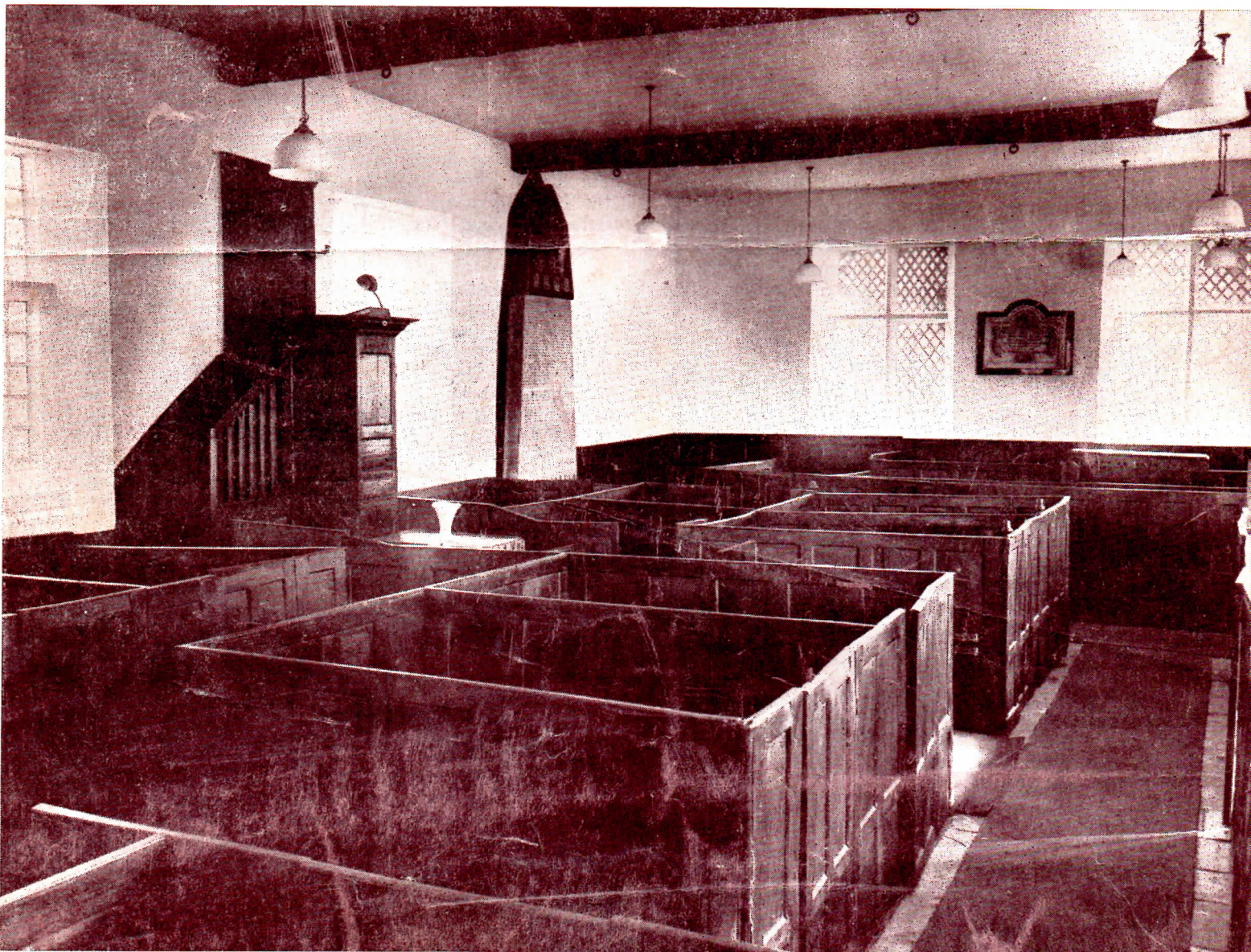
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PIETY, DIGNITY, TRUTH



By courtesy of the HORWICH AND WEST HOUGHTON JOURNAL

This ancient Unitarian meeting place bears within its walls all the struggles of the past. All that it represents stands in challenge to the present. The ancient life of the spirit is to be transmuted into the new.

THE CHALLENGE

OUR cover picture is of the interior of Rivington Unitarian Chapel, Lancashire. The little village of Rivington in which the chapel stands lies between Bolton and Chorley. The building, although it has been in regular use by a small congregation, has for some years been in urgent need of repair and renovation. This has been done and a re-opening and a rededication service was held on September 13.

It was built in 1703, although its origin goes back to the stormy years of the mid-seventeenth century. It was built by men who held liberty precious and who, rather than give assent to what their consciences believed to be untrue, had worshipped—or their ancestors had—in an open amphitheatre on the slopes of Rivington Pike, a well-known land-mark that stands near-by.

It is an old story, an old story of liberty, but the precious things of the human spirit have been made by it.

This ancient but renovated building is symbolic of the kind of challenge that is presented to this generation. That is partly why the photograph is on the cover.

The task of this generation is to transform the past into the present. Those who speak of blotting out the past do not understand the language they use. It would be as well to speak of blotting out everything they live by. The past, for instance, by suffering, daring and self-sacrifice, handed on to the present the precious spirit of liberty. It is easy enough to kill that, but in doing so men kill themselves.

This ancient chapel, for many years neglected except by the faithful few, is likely to enter upon a new life. The new chairman of an active group of Trustees is a young man, a direct descendant of one of the original families that built the chapel. One of his ancestors lit the fire on Rivington Pike that told the people of Lancashire the Armada was coming.

The past is transforming itself into the present ; the great alchemy of human life is taking place.

Can the same be accomplished elsewhere ? That is the challenge. It belongs not only to the life of the churches but to every kind of life that has to do with the spirit. This age has to construct a bridge from the past to the future. If we fail much will be in ruins.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS to all our readers. And special thanks, on this occasion, to all those Friends of the Inquirer who, in so many ways, help to maintain and spread its circulation. Our paper is produced by a religious movement. There is a certain inner meaning about its pages that springs from the life given to them by those who shape its ideals and try to speak the truth as they see it.

We are confident that in the coming twelve months we shall be able to add to its quality, readability, and the services it attempts to perform for our readers. Certain plans are in hand that will establish it more firmly in their needs.

Our thanks are deep towards those ministers of congregations who have taken special care of us ; to all secretaries and correspondents who have sent us news ; to the contributors who week by week have made our paper ; to the loyal friends who have seen to our distribution. The Inquirer thanks you all.

We are looking to the future with complete confidence. Our circulation is higher than any figure before the war. It can be higher. We shall try to make it so.

GLORY AND GOODWILL

By Charles Easton

Glory to God in the highest.
And on earth, peace,
Good-will among men.

THE Angel Song for ever rings through the spirit that is Christmas. Across the centuries our hearts leap to catch the glad notes which together joyously proclaim the coming of the Prince of Peace. But mark the order. It is significant. From glory to good-will is a spiritual progression. It is a pilgrimage which all who long for peace among men must learn to make. The shepherds, in their simplicity of heart, dwelt in the assurance of the absolute sovereignty of God. And it was only when the very intensity of their faith had bowed them to the ground in the humility of worship that they were able to hear the promise that leads from glory to good-will.

It is always so. The spiritual truths of this legend are as potent now as when men first elaborated this Christmas story in the dim recesses of their hearts to express what they experienced of life and God through Christian fellowship. We know it true in our own experience. The thought of Life Divine cradled in a manger kindles our spiritual imagination and our good-will is born for yet another Christmas season. We prepare our gifts with a touch of glory for joy of the Life that was for the healing of the nations. On the still cold night, when the carol singers lift our spirits into realms of Divine awareness, our hearts are wonderfully inclined to well-doing. Like the Italian painters of old, we feel impelled to use our richest reds and blues and golds for the illumination of the Christmas glory.

If this Christmastide, men and women would learn once more to acknowledge the reality of God, the problems of good-feeling among men would be solved. Neither higher wages nor more just profits will create industrial good-will. It needs only that men and women shall look up to see the light of God shining around and within their common working life. When they realise that they are called in their common toil to minister to divine life, good-will will irradiate the service that they offer to the Life Divine. We plan for peace, but there is no peace without God. There is no international good-will without eyes that recognise the spiritual kinship of all the many coloured faces of the earth.

Truly this spiritual progression is the ever-living inspiration of Christmas. We must think more and speak more of the Divine Life which we each bear within us. We must rejoice more openly to behold God incarnate in the being of every man and woman upon earth. The Angel Song must be no longer merely the delightful background of a legend. It must become the very harmony of everyday human life. So Christmas will not end when festivity is over. Exaltation will not fade as the bells fall silent. Every day we shall see the heavens open and the world shine radiantly in the light of God. Every day we shall present our gifts, our talents, our toil and our time—offerings for the service of Life incarnate in human need. Every day we shall salute the Godhead in every man and woman upon the earth. The world's salvation waits upon those who in their thinking and in their speaking, in their understanding and in their doing, will echo and re-echo the bells of Christmastide :

Glory to God,
Good-will to men.
Good-will to men,
To the glory of God.