

From The Harrogate Herald and List of Visitors – Wednesday 11th June 1873

OPENING OF ST. ROBERT'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, HARROGATE, BY ARCHBISHOP MANNING.

On Thursday last (*5th June*), the new and elegant Church erected by the Roman Catholics of Harrogate, and dedicated to St. Robert, was solemnly opened by Pontifical high mass and a sermon by the Most Rev. Dr. Manning, Archbishop of Westminster. Two other Catholic prelates were announced to part(*icipate*) in the solemnities of the day, viz., Dr. Cornthwaite, Bishop of Beverley, and Dr. Vaughan, Bishop of Salford. The presence of these dignitaries, coupled with the completion of the handsome and commodious church and the full musical services by competent *artistes*, combined to attract one of the largest and most respectable assemblages that we have seen in Harrogate for a long period. Unfortunately, however, on Wednesday evening a telegram was received from the Bishop of Salford, conveying the intelligence that he had been attacked by illness and could not fulfil his engagement. Under these circumstances Archbishop Manning undertook to preach both morning and evening.

Besides the Archbishop of Westminster and the Bishop of Beverley, there were present taking part in the ceremonies : the Very Revds. Canons Browne (Leeds), Thompson, Harrison, Walker, Walshaw, Nutter ; the Very Revds. Priors of Douai and Ampleforth Colleges, Very Revds. Deans W. Walker, Vavasour, Burke, Gordon, Scruton; the Revds. Moltus, O.S.D., Gillett, O.S.B., Watmough, O.S.B., Strickland, St. Clifford, S.J, Wells, Watson, Brunner, Longman, Pope, Maxwell, Kelly, Atkins, Pyke, Goldie, &c.

The opening service was appointed to commence at half-past eleven; but long before that time a very large number of those who had secured tickets had taken their places within the sacred edifice ; and few, indeed, could have entered without being struck with its beauty and fair proportions, which more than realised the favourable anticipations of those who were present at the blessing of the altar-stone in July last.

The new church, as is pretty well known to the residents and visitors of Harrogate, adjoins St. Robert's Presbytery and School room (the latter of which has for some time been used as a place of worship), and with them forms an ornament to that part of the town. The peculiarity which distinguishes St. Robert's Church from the other religious edifices of the town is, that the construction is of brick, with that judicious admixture of stone, where construction or the emphasising of particular features requires, which has been so successfully employed by Mr. Gilbert Scott in the magnificent hotel and station at St. Pancras, London, and in the Leeds Infirmary. The style observed is that which prevailed in the 13th century, at once dignified and simple, and of which Yorkshire boasts such exquisite specimens in Byland and Whitby Abbeys, Beverley Minster, and the transepts of York Minster.

The configuration of the ground has placed the principal front in St. Robert's Street. A deeply recessed doorway, with a circular window in the pediment displaying an ornamented cross, is surmounted by a group of four lancets, with shafts of red Rainton stone. From amidst these, from a sculptured corbel, rises an enhanced shaft terminating some feet below the apex of the gable, in a bracket to support a statue, which in its turn is surmounted by a canopy lifted considerably above the roof. The picturesqueness of the composition is enhanced by the projection of the semi-octagonal baptistery on the one side, and of the bell-turret, containing the stairs to the organ loft on the other, - additional breadth and importance are thus given to the facade. Passing into the interior, the visitor is at once struck by its impressive character, the combined result of admirable proportions, exquisite simplicity of form, and well-balanced distribution of form and colour. The church, as is at once seen on entering, consists of a wide nave, flanked by aisles, and a chancel of the same height and width as the nave.

The columns of the nave are of light red sand stone, and carry spacious and lofty arches, finished in brick. Above these, and connecting the corbels of the roof, runs a continuous string-course of brick and stone, and a clerestory of unadorned lancets, placed two in each bay, which perfectly light the

entire structure. A charming combination of colour, the result of the contrasted stone and brickwork, renders the interior similarly pleasing. The chancel, though not separated from the nave, as is often the case, by an arch, is distinguished from it by greater richness of treatment. Thus the large arches at either side are subdivided into two smaller ones by a slender shaft, carrying on its capital a pedestal, with a corresponding canopy above, projecting from skilfully-arranged brickwork in the spandrel. The treatment of the altar end is as pleasing and harmonious as it is novel. Under deeply retiring arches resting on pilasters with carved capitals, are two windows, each of two lights, the heads pierced with quatrefoils, while above and between them is a circular window of rich design ; all three being symmetrically united under a trefoil-headed arch. The capital of the central pilaster supports a cross of large dimensions, its arms extended in front of the rose window, which thus encircles the conspicuous figure of Christ crucified. The plain corbels of the nave give place in the chancel to others of ornamental design, from which spring shafts of Rainton stone to meet the principals of the roof, which throughout are arched and coupled with tie-beams. After mentioning that the aisles are lit with lancets similar to those in the clerestory, it only remains to add a few words descriptive of the side-chapels which terminate each aisle.

They are entered under lofty arches , and are half octagon in plan. Within they are vaulted with stone ribs springing from corbels in the angles, and gathered into a central boss. They are amply lit by groups of lancets. The three stone altars, which are of great beauty, were presented to the church. The architect of the church is Mr. George Goldie, of London, whose much-admired church of St. Wilfrid is well known to all visitors to the ancient capital of our county. The estimated cost, exclusive of the altars and internal fittings, was £3,500. It will seat 600 worshippers. Mr. John Wood, builder, Leeds, was the contractor for the whole, and the work has been executed most satisfactorily.

Having thus described, somewhat briefly, the architectural character and design of the church, we now turn to its decorative features. First we notice the high altar, a very beautiful work of art, the gift of Miss E. Baillie, of Leeds. It is executed in Caen stone, richly carved, with polished granite shafts and slabs of Devonshire marble. In the centre of the reredos rises a lofty canopy, surmounting the tabernacle which is a beautiful piece of workmanship of metal enamelled and set with precious stones. The extremities of the reredos are ornamented with graceful statues of angels carrying groups of candles. The whole rises to the height of about twenty feet. Rising above the lofty canopy of the tabernacle is an original treatment of the crucifixion. It is a noble design, admirably carried out, but its effect is somewhat marred by the powerful light from the adjacent white windows, and especially the rose window behind it - a defect which, it is to be hoped, will be remedied by some generous benefactor filling the windows with stained glass (*This soon proved to be the case for the windows are now filled with stained-glass representations of St. Michael, Archangel ,St. Theresa of Avila, Our Lady Immaculate and St. Robert of Knaresborough. A dedication almost out of sight at the foot of the windows records their installation in memory of “*

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The altar on the right of the high altar is dedicated to St. Joseph - a beautiful statue of which saint, sculptured in wood & executed at Munich, fills the niche in the centre. Richly sculptured Caen stone and marble completes the design. This altar is the gift of Mrs. Jackson, late of Leeds. The altar on the left of the high altar is dedicated to “Our Lord of the Sacred Heart”, and is somewhat similarly treated in Caen stone with rich inlays of English alabaster and Devonshire marbles, and a beautiful statue (in colours) of our Lord in the upper portion. A small and chaste tabernacle of alabaster fills the centre of the altar - the whole effect being very pleasing. This altar is the gift of Mr. Swaile, of Rudfarlington. The floors of the sanctuary and side chapels are laid with rich mosaic tiles, and the whole of the church is floored with black, white, and red tiles in patterns. The carving of the chancel has been completed ; but the remaining portion of the church is left in block. The windows throughout are in cathedral glass, the small squares being alternately tinted green and a creamy white or very light buff - the light of the interior being very far removed from that “dim obscure” which too frequently characterises cathedrals and churches. The total estimated cost of the church, as we have said, was £3,500, without the fittings, furniture, and altars; and it is very creditable to Mr Goldie, the architect, that this estimate has not in the slightest degree been exceeded. The carving of the high altar was executed by Mr. Ruddock, of London, and of the side altars by Mr. Earl, also of London.

The preparations for the opening were very complete, and highly honourable to the ladies who undertook the floral decorations, which were extremely chaste and beautiful. Precisely at half-past eleven, the Archbishop and the Bishop of Beverley, in full canonicals, attended by a large number of priests, entered the church, and proceeded in procession to the sanctuary, the organist (Mr Pilkington) playing the processional with flute obligato.

His Grace ARCHBISHOP MANNING, standing in the front of the sanctuary, preached the opening sermon, taking his text from the 20th of St John "As my father sent me, so send I you'. And when he had said these words he breathed upon them, and said 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost'". He commenced by saying that the period of dedicating that new sanctuary to the glory of the ever blessed Trinity had been well chosen ; for they were now in the full tide of the Feast of the Pentecost. And they had the full confidence that so long as that altar should not be cast down, so long as there was a Catholic priest to minister before it, so long would the one immutable voice of the Holy Ghost declare the one changeless faith of the true church - the whole of their baptismal creed in all its fullness and in every particular, the glory of the ever-blessed Trinity, the mystery of the incarnation and presence of Jesus on the altar, the gift and sacraments of the Holy Ghost, and indeed the whole of the changeless faith revealed to the church in the beginning would be heard in that place. In the midst of all the confusion and changes and declensions which were going on in the world around them, the Church of God, the Holy Catholic Church, stands immutable and indestructible – the one Church of the Holy Ghost. Now these words of our Divine Saviour were spoken before the Day of Pentecost, and were a symbol of what was fulfilled on that day. During forty days Jesus instructed his disciples, but what were the particular instructions given they were not informed. They were not to depart from Jerusalem until they were fulfilled the words which he had spoken to them. And so they waited and wondered until the Day of Pentecost, and when they were all assembled in the guest chamber, a mighty rushing wind caused the whole house to vibrate, and they were all crowned with diadems of light. Those diadems which crowned their brows penetrated their hearts and formed the fulfilment of the promise which Christ made when he said "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

Thus they received the interpretation of the divine and living expositor. God the Holy Ghost was the expositor of the words of God the Son. The fire sat on each of them, and thus revealed the love of the Father for every created soul. There never yet was formed in the world a living soul with whom God has not dealt in patience and mercy. Every soul that perished perished of its own free will. No soul was ever abandoned by God except those who disavowed him. This was true of all time and everywhere. Even amongst those nations of the East which in a former generation had separated themselves from the truth, the people who live there now would not be held responsible - the fault being not theirs, but their forefathers. Coming nearer home, the divisions, contentions, and warfare amongst Christian men arose from their forefathers having cast away their divine inheritance and their part in the true church ; but God they knew was working in mercy to all, though in a manner and by means which they might not fully understand. They learnt that the apostles were all filled, not one but all, were filled with the Holy Ghost, the spirit descending upon the twelve as they were assembled. The College of Apostles, of which the patriarchs were the type, were all assembled, and the Holy Ghost came down upon them.

That body became the mystic body of Christ. Christ the head, was in heaven : the apostles, the body, were on earth. They were all members of one body - members one of another, a perfect organisation, and, pervaded with one faith, one love, and one mind. He united their hearts so intimately that they had but one heart. This mystic unity expressed itself outwardly by a visible unity ; and as the Son of God had manifested himself visible among men, so had they this visible unity in the true Church of Christ. What was the successor of this College of Apostles, who were instructed to extend throughout the world the Gospel of Christ unchanged and in all its original purity. On the Day of Pentecost, by a miracle, the apostles spoke divers tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them power, and when was founded that one church for all nations it was founded by a miracle. For every man heard them in his own natural tongue in which he was born.

Surely the Church which spoke the same faith as was given to the Apostles - which spoke it in all the tongues of the earth - which preached it to every nation and to every people - surely that Church

must be the lineal descendant of the college of the Apostles.

Were there two such bodies in the world ? Were there two which spread the gospel universally over the whole earth ? Were there two which spoke the divine truth in all languages ? If there were not two, but only one, then that one must represent that mystic body upon whom the Holy Ghost came down. It seemed to him that this was a truth so clear that the Catholic Church could say of all others, in the words of Christ, "When men shall say, 'Here is Christ,' or 'lo there ! believe them not.'" Surely the universality of the Church was proof enough to those who understood the revelation of the Lord, when He said, "Ye are the Light of the World." The Church had, from the days of the Apostles, held one faith. It was one body, and that one body had one doctrine. The infallibility of the Church in teaching was not more wonderful than the perpetual and unchanging faith of the people in the Church, and its triumph over the world's enmity. Three hundred years of martyrdom had failed to touch the faith of the Church of Rome.

And how many years of martyrdom, persecution, contempt, and every kind of human endurance & humiliation had failed to change the faith of the people of Ireland ? And why did the poor of Ireland & their pastors (who are the best and tried friends) continue steadfast to the Universal Church of Rome ? Because of its continued immutable teaching ; shining with the same luminous rays from the beginning. The powers of the earth had been powerless against their Church; persecution had utterly failed; and though they might attempt to bind it hand and foot, and incarcerate it in prisons of stone it could not be extinguished. "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The world might as well strive to bind the wind which made the house vibrate on the day of Pentecost, as endeavour by human laws and presumptuous legislation to bind the doctrines of the Church of God.

Men had tried it for 1800 years and failed; but men would not learn by experience. Men had tried it in every form and were never weary of the trial. Even now in Italy and Rome the same godless attempts were being made. In Switzerland and Germany - that empire intoxicated by success - had in their presumption dared to try a fall with the invincible Church of God. Let them not however be afraid, for whatever man might do against their Holy Church could only result in defeat, discomfiture, dishonour, and contempt. Look at our own country. Those around him no doubt loved this country well, but there were none who loved it more than they of the Church, and yet for 40 years they (the Church) had noted a perpetual crumbling away of faith in the people of this country.

The doctrine of baptism, the doctrine of the real presence, the inspiration of scripture, all these and other articles of their faith had been thrown open to discussion, and in too many instances treated with indifference. And what was the consequence? The Christianity of England, which had been preserved from the days of St. Augustine in its integrity, had received a severe shock. By an act of the Legislature Christian teaching was swept from their schools. The name of the Saviour must no longer be heard during the school day. And were they come to that ! Were the rich and the poor, the cultivated and the simple, alike losing their hold on their Christian faith and Christian profession ? And while that uncertainty was spreading like a palsy everywhere, and while that leprosy was eating into the walls of every building, they saw the Catholic Church adding definition after definition with more precision and with more inflexible certainty to the doctrines which it taught to the world. Only the other day when proud men endeavoured to loosen the arch, the Council of the Church met and declared once and for ever that God the Holy Ghost inhabited the Church, guiding it by His light, guiding the heart and guiding the head, as the shepherd guides the flock. In conclusion, he would repeat the first words which he uttered in that Church. Never as long as that altar stood and a priest stood before it, - never would any other doctrine be taught but the one immutable and catholic faith of Rome, without change from the faith as it descended on the Day of Pentecost. The Archbishop concluded his sermon, which occupied nearly an hour in its delivery, by asking a blessing upon all those assembled there, and upon the whole Catholic Church.

The offertory was then taken, and during its collection Cherubini's offertory music was performed, the leading vocal part being executed by Miss Anyon. This was followed by Sanctus and Benedictus, from Haydn's 16th Mass, the leading soprani being Miss Brown, of Harrogate, and Mrs. Dickenson, Leeds; contralto, Miss Anyon, Harrogate; tenor, Mr. Vevers, Harrogate, - bass, Mr. Briggs, Leeds.

The Lord Bishop of Beverley then celebrated Pontifical High Mass, and the ceremony was brought to a conclusion about half-past one o'clock.

LUNCHEON AT THE QUEEN.

In the afternoon there was a public luncheon at the Queen Hotel, to which fully 150 ladies and gentlemen sat down, under the presidency of Archbishop Manning. After the tables had been cleared -Archbishop MANNING proposed the health of the Pope, which was most heartily received. His Grace said that by a letter which he had received within a few hours – and which had consequently been written within a few days – he rejoiced to be able to state that all which His Holiness had been suffering from were rheumatic pains. Otherwise he had been well; and during the whole of his recent illness had not for a moment been in danger. (Applause). This was a good augury, considering that Pope Pius the Ninth was in his 83rd year. He referred to the fidelity which the Pope had won amongst the clergy by whom he was surrounded, and indeed throughout the whole Catholic Church; and no Pontiff had enabled the Catholic Church to stand up with such courage as Pope Pius the Ninth. (Applause.)

The ARCHBISHOP next proposed the health of “The Queen,” observing that she set an admirable example to the Sovereigns of all other countries. He adverted to the loyalty felt for the Queen by the people of Ireland ; and said that of all the Sovereigns who had reigned over this country none had been more popular or more beloved by the Catholics of this country than Queen Victoria. (Applause.) In the history of our country the reign of Her Majesty would be distinguished, not only for the great progress it had witnessed in arts and science, but also as the reign during which her Catholic subjects had been reinstated in the enjoyment of those liberties of which they had been deprived of under previous Sovereigns. He coupled with the toast, “The Prince and Princess of Wales.” (Cheers.)

The Bishop of BEVERLEY proposed “The health of Archbishop Manning,” who responded, and gave “The Bishop of Beverley,” who acknowledged the compliment.

Archbishop MANNING next proposed “The health of the Rev. J. Glover,” principally by whose zeal the new church that day consecrated had been erected.

The Rev. J. GLOVER responded, and proposed “The health of Mr. Goldie,” the architect, who returned thanks.

The company then separated.

EVENING SERVICE.

In the evening service was again celebrated, and the church looked even handsomer by night than by day. The musical service was well rendered. In the absence of the Bishop of Salford, Archbishop Manning again preached.

The attendance was again large, though the church was by no means so crowded as it was in the morning. It was originally intended that the office of Compline should precede the solemn rite of Benediction, but owing to the fact that His Grace had to take his departure by the 9 p.m. train to Leeds, the clergy merely chanted an anthem prior to the sermon.

ARCHBISHOP MANNING selected his text from the 14th chapter of St. John's Gospel : “At that day ye shall know I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” This, he said, was one of those many sayings of our Lord which the Apostles did not understand. He had just said to them, “In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would not have told you I go to prepare a place for you ; and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you.” The Apostles had not then received the light of the Spirit of God, and therefore though these words fell upon their ears, yet they did not understand the sense of them. Their hearts were not enlarged. They understood but partially, and not the full meaning of the truth relating to the kingdom of God. But, He said, there would come a

day when they should understand these things, when they should have the spirit of truth which would bring back to their memories long-forgotten things, which would open and expand their hearts, and reveal to them the full light of the kingdom of God. That day came ; it was the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost revealed to them the mysteries of the Blessed Trinity. They then understood what they had heard and seen before - how it was that on the mountain he was transfigured and surrounded by the cloud, the type of the Holy Ghost ; why he had spoken to them of ascending to his Father and sending another Comforter ; and they then comprehended that they were met together for the descent of the Holy Ghost, and that they were united to Him at the right hand of the Father. They saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, because the light of brightened faith supplied them with the vision, and the words of Jesus were fulfilled - "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." First of all they knew that Jesus had ascended to Heaven and was at the right hand of God, in the glory of his victory over sin, death, and the world. They knew that he was invested with the glory, power, and prerogative of the kingdom, His first exercise of that power being to send the Holy Ghost. Christ was the conqueror of sin. His first conquest over sin was the immaculate conception of His Blessed Mother. The line of sin was broken ; she was exempted. It was an act of the grace of Christ to exempt His Blessed Mother and make her the dwelling-place of the incarnate God. When incarnate, He overcame sin in the wilderness, and agony in the garden ; and by dying He destroyed death, changing it into a sleep to those who believed. He overcame sin because when He laid in the grave He sustained His sacred body incorruptible, - rising from the dead and passing through the unopened tomb.

Now it was that all which the Apostles had read became visible in the light of the Holy Ghost, Christ was the heir of all things, having purchased all things by His precious blood, and become heir of all things by merit. He was their elder brother, and because the inheritance was His, it was theirs also, as they were joint heirs with Christ. There was a resting-place, a throne, a white raiment lying on that throne, and a crown of light for each of them, and just as He had prepared a place for them, He was preparing them for the place, and leading them step by step in the way - preparing them by ordinances and penances, and by the discipline of life. Turning, to the occasion which had brought them all together that day, the Archbishop asked to what end had they come ? Was the day to pass away without leaving some lasting impression upon their hearts and minds - without influencing their future conduct? Not so, he trusted. If the day did not stir them up to greater activity in the life of faith, it would be wasted. If it did not lead them to greater self-denial and more zealous action, as well as prayer, it would be lost to them. Where there was more light there should be more warmth, and greater charity. Addressing the members of the Roman Catholic Church, he urged them to assume no superiority over others. As their light was greater, their charity should burn the brighter. The second lesson of the day should teach them to ask God what was His will, and to do that will in the midst of the pleasures, the disappointments and the various engagements of life and trade. It should lead them to seek the salvation of their neighbours, to give bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, to console the mourners, to help the needy, and to do all this not looking for earthly recompense. Finally he urged those who, like him, had to labour for souls, to labour on in the midst of contradiction, failure, and unbelief.

At the conclusion of the sermon some 50 or 60 candles were lighted upon the high altar, displaying all its beauties, and presenting a most imposing spectacle. The impressive ceremony of the "Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament" was then celebrated, the altar and its surroundings being shrouded in a cloud of incense. Finally, the Archbishop, Bishop, and clergy traversed the aisles of the church - the former blessing the people as he proceeded.

The proceeds of the offertories at the close of each service, together with donations and the sale of tickets, amounted to about £200.