

The address given by the Headmaster, Mr. R. W. Elliott,
on Sunday July 6th 1969 on the occasion of the
final attendance of the boarders at
morning service in the Cathedral.

I have brought with me today this Psalter as a piece of tangible history appropriate for this particular Sunday in the school's long story. It falls into two sections. The second is the Psalter proper, with a beautiful title page which reads

The Psalter, or Psalms of David, after the translation of the Great Bible, pointed as it shall be sung in Churches

At the end — printed by William Seres 1562

The first section, printed by William Seres in 1563, has its own fine title page

The Psalter or Psalms of David corrected and pointed as they shall be sung in Churches after the translation of the Great Bible: with certain additions of Collects and other the ordinary Service, gathered out of the book of Common Prayer, confirmed by Act of Parliament in the first year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth.

Seres Psalters are very rare, and not even the collection in St. Paul's Cathedral contains an edition as early as this, or so I have been told by a scholarly student of Psalters known to Canon Rhodes.

I could have brought two. I have made no attempt to find out when or how they came into our possession. I have preferred to allow my imagination to roam and to see the then Headmaster or High Master as he was officially called, a man who had had to discard both the first and the second Prayer Books of Edward the Sixth whilst Mary reigned, purchasing two copies on publication, one for himself, and one for the Usher, the only other Master in a school of those days, each bringing his copy to St. James Church Sunday by Sunday. Certain it is that two books in such excellent condition were not brought by the boys Sunday by Sunday. And when the Prayer Book of James the First was introduced where would these two volumes go other than on the Library shelves—as they are today.

From roughly the time of the first landings of Europeans in that part of the world known to us as the United States, to, seemingly, that month that will see their descendants land on the moon, boys of King Edward the Sixth School have been attending this church—from 1550. There were those still living who remembered Columbus as a human being and not as a historical personage—Drake, seven years of age, was as yet no bowls player—Shakespeare had not yet written his set books for the G.C.E. Officially, conversation both in and out of school was in Latin. A wonderful picture it must have been—the boys proceeding to church indulging in lively chatter in that classical tongue.

Boys of the Winthrop family sat in this church and, although not amongst the Pilgrim Fathers, they followed hard behind them, and the history of Massachusetts and of Connecticut was in no small measure shaped by the Winthrop family. And this church in no small measure helped to shape the Winthrop boys and thousands of others.

And that thought led me to the last line of Psalm 15, which is read by our Head Boy at our first Assembly of the term, and our last:

Whoso doeth these things shall never fall

which in its turn led me to

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them

For over four hundred years 'these things', these truths, have been presented to the boys of the school as an integral part of their education. The impact has surely been incalculable. And yet, today, in the world of education there are those who freely and seriously plead for the abolition of Morning Assembly and of religious instruction in schools.

It is sad that after four hundred years we shall not be here on Sunday mornings, and I am aware of the depth of good feeling that there is for us in this church at this moment no lack of belief in boarding. I am proud that our many friends here refused to allow today to pass unnoticed, and I am particularly proud that I have the honour of representing the school in the way that I am, by talking to you—especially as this service marks the end of 41 years of my attendance with the boys. It is not an idle boast that I have accompanied them on fifteen hundred occasions, and that I have had the privilege of knowing four Bishops of this Cathedral and three Provosts. Through the ages no small number of Headmasters have preached here, for once upon a time they had to be in Orders. Indeed, on one famous occasion, no sooner had the preacher entered the pulpit than he fainted—thereupon the quick-witted Verger marched straight to the school, beckoned to the Headmaster, and escorted him to the pulpit. It was St. Luke's Sunday and an extempore sermon was preached from the text 'Only Luke is with me'.

Those of you who know schoolboys, indeed those of you who remember your own school days, would not doubt for a moment that there has at times been a certain reluctance, a dragging of feet, sometimes my feet, through the Abbey Gardens on a Sunday morning and the last Provost didn't always help matters when, finding himself off duty on the occasional Sunday morning, he would waylay us, and, puffing immense clouds of tobacco smoke, gleefully commiserate with us.

Yet, dragging feet or no dragging feet, these seats produced an Archbishop— Sancroft, of Seven Bishops fame. Perhaps not the most outstanding of the Archbishops of Canterbury, for Archbishops, like Headmasters, vary, yet certainly one of the best known. A Bishop of Exeter sat here, a Bishop of Lincoln, a Bishop of Winchester, and a Bishop of London. But a recital of such names merely ignores the countless numbers who were to serve their generation well.

Through the ages Church and School have moved forward together. That is exemplified by the tablet at the far end of the north aisle. It repeats the wording that was formerly over the west doors—that our most noble sovereign Lord Edward the Sixth gave to the finishing of this church the sum of £300 and for the maintenance of a free grammar school within this town the sum of £80 yearly.

Yes, they moved forward together, for the first Statutes of the school, long lost, but ultimately found by chance, in the second half of the 19th Century, tucked away in the British Museum, and I don't need to tell you they remain there, record

On Holy Days the whole school shall be assembled on the benches appropriated to them in church, and shall take part in public worship.

The church is not named but we know it to have been St. James'. The whole school, Boarders and Dayboys. In those days, of course, boarders were housed with local families.

In passing, other interesting regulations were:

Let no one come to the school with uncombed head, unwashed hands and face, dirty shoes or boots, torn or untrussed garments

When they have to write let them use their knees as a table

Let not the Masters keep a family or have their beds under the roof of the school. Let women, like deadly plagues, be kept away.

The 1665 Statutes made a similar provision, but, with a degree of low cunning, added that the boys had to be present from the beginning of the Service and, what was more, had to remain to the end. By that time the school was housed in Northgate Street, most of the boarders within the building—hard by Schoolhall Lane, which was not so named in honour of the young ladies educated in that vicinity in a subsequent generation.

Not until the 1855 Statutes did the name of St. James' appear, nor until then was mention made of two attendances on Sunday, though that had long been the case. And willynilly, dayboys too attended twice. As the young ladies of the East Anglian School make their way

back after this service I hope they may be able to turn their thoughts from the present boys of the school and remember those of earlier generations who also made their way along Northgate Street.

Church and School together. Sometimes in odd circumstances. Lord Burleigh, Elizabeth the 1st's great statesman, who knew Bury well, wrote requesting the Governors of the school to confer with well disposed people of the neighbourhood and with the justices of the peace to consider the removal of the Headmaster. But, let me add, the removal of the minister of this church too, and, for good measure, the minister of St. Mary's.

And not even a book of Latin exercises written by a seventeenth century Headmaster—and I have a copy—could refrain from asking the boys to translate

In Bury there are two churches in one churchyard, not many paces distant the one from the other.

and

St. Mary's is the bigger of the two churches in Bury.

A pity.

As recently as 1899 a father sought permission for his son to attend St. Mary's with him. The Governors gave due consideration to this and ultimately agreed that he could do so for one, but one only, of the two services on Sunday.

When I came here in 1928 all dayboys attended the Sunday morning service, but not the evening. That custom ceased in the nineteen forties as did the boarder custom of attending in the evenings.

An Old Boy of the nineteenth century records that in those days the school was always granted its request to have the hymn 'Lord dismiss us with thy blessing' on the last Sunday of term. There was always great indignation amongst those who sat near the school at their rendering of the final verse. There ought to have been greater indignation amongst the English Staff:

*So whene'er the signal's given
Us from school to call away,
Borne on train's swift wheels to London,
Glad the summons to obey,
May we ever, may we ever,
Spend our happy holiday.*

What each succeeding vicar of St. James has really thought about the boys has probably not been recorded. Our Minute Books of long ago record that the Vicar of St. Mary's had remarked that he dare not send his son to the school as 6 of its pupils had been seen smoking short black pipes in a frequented part of the town. Possibly the sin was in choosing a frequented part of the town.

In 1889 a Bury lady made a formal complaint about the very objectionable habit the boys had of walking up and down between St. James' and St. Mary's just before the service. I am happy to report that that particular piece of wickedness was stopped.

Twenty five years ago one of my boarders had organ lessons here under Percy Hallam. Not until years afterwards did Provost White tell me that the young man, determined to get down to basic principles, explored the interior of the organ and put his foot through something or other. Nor was the same Provost at all ready to tell me that the same young man left on a light by the organ and that the air raid warden had to get the Provost out of bed at midnight to put it out.

A boy who once sat here was to write

*Awake, for Morning in the bowl of Night
Has flung the stone that puts the Stars to flight,
And lo, the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultan's turret in a noose of light.*

Whether one of those now sitting here will be inspired enough to attempt to equal it remains to be seen.

Mr. Provost, we thank you and your staff for your help and for your many kindnesses. We thank the congregation for our many friendships. And to my boys I say, as I say at the end of every term:

*Go forth into the world in peace;
hold fast to that which is good;
render to no man evil for evil;
strengthen the faint-hearted;
support the weak;
help the afflicted;
honour all men;
love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in
the power of the Holy Spirit.*

We have been taught to know these things.
Happy are we if we do them.