

THE DIOCESE OF SOUTHWELL RETURNED TO THE PROVINCE OF YORK, 1935

On October 25th 1935 the Minster was the scene of a remarkable service of thanksgiving, rejoicing and dedication. The Archbishop of York, the Most Reverend William Temple, came to Southwell to preach in the Minster at a service to mark the return of the Diocese of Southwell to the province of York. It was quite remarkable that after the association of the Minster with York from the earliest days of its foundation (even possibly back to St Paulinus), that in 1837 the Archdeaconry of Nottingham, and in 1841 the Jurisdiction of Southwell, were transferred from York to the Diocese of Lincoln and so to the Southern Province.

When in 1884 the Diocese of Southwell was created, it included the two counties of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. In 1927 the Diocese of Derby was created, and the Diocese of Southwell was now left with an area co-terminus with the county of Nottinghamshire. For several years there had been appeals for the return of the Diocese of Southwell to the Northern Province, and in 1935, at the request of the Diocesan Conference, the Church Assembly decided that the Diocese should be transferred back. One who had pleaded most eloquently for the return to the Northern Province, was Canon Field, Chancellor of the Cathedral. He adapted the words of Psalm 126 in one of his sermons, to read: "When Southwell's exiled God turned back, like men that dreamed were we; then was our mouth with laughter filled, our tongue with melody".

The Diocesan magazine carried a full account of the service 60 years ago and of the sermon which Dr Temple preached on the text: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named". (Eph.3 v.14 & 15).

The Diocesan magazine records parts of the sermon:-

"In what we are doing today", said the Archbishop, "there is much to remind us of that wider loyalty. We are engaged in the performance of an act unique, I believe, in the history of England. I think it has never happened before that a whole diocese fully constituted has been thus transferred".

He urged that no one should suppose that what they were engaged in was only a matter of administrative convenience or antiquarian interest. It was something which should go much further than that, for the administrative life of the Church ought to be inspired by the purpose for which the Church existed.

The unit of the Church was the Diocese, and not the parish as some might think. The parishes were subdivisions of the diocese, and in the diocese the whole family was represented with the bishop as its father in God. The whole conception of the Church itself was a family, a great family of God. In so far as we escaped from limiting our interest in the Church to the frontiers of our own parishes, we had taken the first steps towards appreciation of that world-wide family. Dioceses were grouped into provinces, and if there was nothing to remind us of the wider life beyond, a narrow diocesan feeling might be almost as destructive of the truly Christian outlook as parochialism itself. As the diocese brought men out of the narrowness of parochialism, so the province might help to draw men out of the narrowness of diocesan life. "I am allowed to stand here as representing to you the wider fellowship of that Province into which you have so lately come", said his Grace, "to give you most heartily my welcome, and to assure you that there is in my heart no greater desire than that this union shall not be merely official and formal, but shall be expressed through a growth in personal acquaintance and true friendship.

It was not merely a matter of detached interest that the man who built the Quire of Southwell Minster also built the chapel in which he (the Archbishop) daily prayed. That in itself constituted a link between them which enable the spirit which inspired the Church's purpose also to inspire its administrative work.

(From an article written for "Leaves" by David Leaning, Provost of Southwell)

After announcing the celebration of the anniversary, the Provost went on to say:-

"Some may say that this is just an irrelevant, historic commemoration; I think it is good to remember our roots, to remember with thankfulness all that we have received from belonging to the Archbishopric of York, not least to the many Archbishops who are our benefactors, some of whom are buried within the Minster. We may be "in the Midlands", as people often say, but our roots, as far as the Church of England goes, lie firmly in the North! In York! I hope that we shall never forget what we owe to Archbishops of York and ask that we pray for David, our Archbishop, who is to be enthroned on the 8th December as the next Archbishop of York".