

No. 19: Teachings from the Rev Thomas R: Jones – Holy Trinity's first Vicar.

When Holy Trinity was first opened for worship in 1819 it was attached to the parish of Huddersfield and its minister was legally entitled a 'Perpetual Curate'. Holy Trinity became a parish church in its own right in 1857 when it was given the parish, the boundaries of which have changed little since.



Rev Thomas R. Jones was therefore Holy Trinity's first vicar and he began his ministry that same year. He moved into the first vicarage – No. 4 Westfield (60 Trinity Street, now renumbered 140) in 1861. It was purchased for the church by Mrs Sarah Allen. [Read more about her here: <http://www.holytrinityhuddersfield.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Churchwardens-Blog-No-12.pdf>]

You can still make out the name Trinity Vicarage on the gateposts of No. 140 even though it was replaced as vicarage in 1931 with the house 4 doors down (No. 132). It was claimed 140 was too small for the family and servants of the incoming vicar!

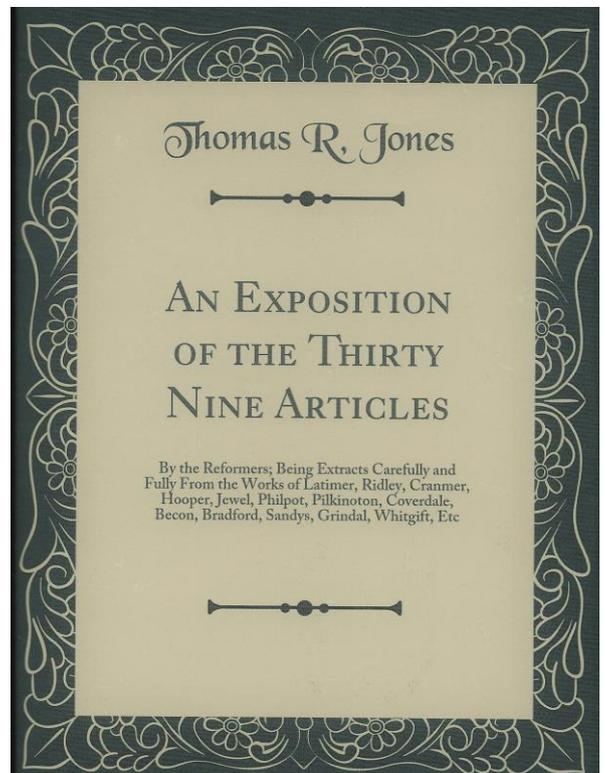
As a parish church, Holy Trinity was able to conduct weddings for the first time. Also it meant that any baptism or burial services no longer had to be charged at a double rate (with half the fee payable to the vicar of Huddersfield at the Parish Church in town).

Jones was clearly a principled and well educated man. Prior to his arrival in Huddersfield, he had been vicar of St Mary's Kelbrook, near Barnoldswick, in what was then the West Riding, but is now part of Lancashire.

While at Kelbrook, Jones had written an important book about the beliefs and teachings of the Church of England, which then was in the midst of a big doctrinal debate between the Evangelicals ('low' church) and the Tractarians ('high' church). The book entitled 'An Exposition of the Thirty Nine Articles' outlines the teaching and interpretation of various leading members of the Anglican Church, including Thomas Cranmer, who collated the first English 'Prayer Book'. The Thirty Nine Articles are the historically defining statements of doctrines and practices of the Church of England. They were compiled in 1571 and are published in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. They can be read here if you don't have a prayer book to hand: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/articles-religion#1>.

The Thirty Nine Articles remain the foundation of belief in the Church of England. Some scholars have labelled their content as an early example of the idea that the doctrine of Anglicanism is one of "Reformed Catholicism".

Jones dedicated his book to the Lord Bishop of Ripon, in whose diocese both Kelbrook and Huddersfield was at the time of writing. In his book, he largely sought unity in the church:



"It is scarcely to be expected that all will utter the same accents – that upon every subject even the Fathers of the English Church will be wholly agreed. And yet there is an almost incredible unanimity of opinion among them. The differences that do exist, do not assume the character of light and darkness, but may more justly be compared to that variety existing between different lights, one more and another less brilliant; or, "like as one star differeth from another star in glory."

Jones also emphasised the importance of scripture, as the Word of God in determining doctrine, without countering the statements contained in articles XIX, XX and XXXIV about the agreed wisdom of the church and its fallen state, despite being Christ's body 'militant here in earth'.

During his time as vicar, Thomas Jones saw the formation of the Marsh school; the church interior was altered with the triple-decked pulpit being reduced in size and the heating improved, (although the 2 stoves in the church still required stoking part-way through the services). Considerable investment was made in the choir and organ and it was decided to move the choir out of the chancel and back into the gallery, (where it had previously been) nearer to the organ to improve its timekeeping and discipline. Some of the privately rented pews were personally purchased by Jones for public use.

It was in Jones' time that the Holy Trinity Church Union published its rules, as quoted in the 13th Churchwarden's Blog: <http://www.holytrinityhuddersfield.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Churchwardens-Blog-No-13.pdf>

Part of the debate at the time was associated with the importance of good works. Jones endorsed the importance of service in his book and in the Church Union rules but was clear to point out the doctrine as laid out in article XXII that it is only by faith in Jesus Christ and dependence on his grace that Christians are saved.

"Faith doth not exclude the justice of our good works necessarily to be done afterward, of duty towards God ... but it excludeth them so that we may not do them to this intent, to be made good by doing them... Our office is not to pass the time of this present life unfruitfully and idly...." [Archbishop Cramer, as quoted by Thomas Jones].

Rev. Thomas R. Jones served as vicar until 1871 when he 'exchanged livings' with his successor, Rev Thomas Henry Sharpe and went to Codicote, Hertfordshire.

In today's times the church is still broken through disunity, although relations between its different denominations are far warmer than they were two centuries ago. We still need to remember that we are united by the big 'light and dark' issues and it is only the shadowy details open to different interpretations that can lead to debate. As the late Jo Cox said, who died two years ago this month, "We are far more united and have more in common with each other than things that divide us". This is as true for the church as it is as for wider society. Today in many ways the world is a much darker place than it was when Jones was writing, how much more does it need the light of Christ?

The church is seen by many in the twenty-first century as a complete irrelevance and the media is quick to pick up on our divisions and use this as an example of how the teaching of the church is ungrounded. Jones' book recognised and celebrated the fact that the Church of England has wide doors and its core beliefs are more than enough to bind it together. There have been many attempts since the 1850s to split up the Church of England, but through its sometimes ponderous but generous nature, the Church has remained more-or-less intact, evidence perhaps of Christ's continued creative hand in reshaping the gospel message for the society of the present day to keep it relevant.

We must remain true to our primary calling – sharing the gospel news of Christ and living out that gospel through lives spent loving God's world and all the people in it. At our 'Vision Sunday' and APCM in April we sang what used to be nicknamed the 'Trinity Anthem'. May these words and our common beliefs continue to mark out what church is meant to be:

*Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided,
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.*

*Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us,
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.*

*Lord, for our land, in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care;
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.*

*Lord, for our world; when we disown and doubt him,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain;
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him,
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.*

*Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us,
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne;
past put behind us for the future take us,
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.*

Timothy Dudley Smith.
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**Andy Barber
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