Pope appoints new nuncio

Archbishop Antonio Mennini. Photo: CNS

Christopher Lamb, Elena Curti and **Robert Mickens**

POPE BENEDICT XVI has chosen a new apostolic nuncio to Great Britain, *The Tablet* has learned. He is Archbishop Antonio Mennini, known in Italy as the priest who heard the final confession of the country's murdered Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, in the 1970s.

Archbishop Mennini, a native of Rome, is currently serving as nuncio to the Russian Federation. He will formally be announced as the Pope's "ambassador" to Britain early in the New Year. One of the most important duties facing him will be to oversee the vetting process for the appointment of a substantial number of new bishops for England, Wales and Scotland.

Britain's new nuncio is 63 and has been in Moscow since 2003. Despite having to deal with some extremely thorny issues, he is credited with dramatically improving the Holy See's relations with the former Soviet countries in the federation and with the Orthodox Church. As recently as 2001 Rome was criticised by the Russian Orthodox for establishing dioceses, with little consultation, in Russia. However, through the nuncio's fence-mending efforts the situation gradually began to change and in December 2009 President Dmitry Medvedev ordered that full diplomatic relations between the two states be established.

Archbishop Mennini is known to be a discreet diplomat. He served as an attaché at the Holy See's embassies in Uganda and Turkey before becoming papal nuncio to Bulgaria in 2000. Shortly after arriving in Sofia he began preparing Pope John Paul II's 2002 pastoral visit to the Eastern European country amid great controversy. The visit was hailed as a success, largely because the new nuncio established excellent working relations with Orthodox leaders who had originally opposed it. It is likely that Archbishop Mennini's appointment is recognition of the delicate diplomatic work that will be required for the establishment of the Anglican ordinariate in Britain. The new structure will enable Anglicans to join the Catholic Church en masse. Britain will have the first such structure in the world when it is set up next year. While it is up to the bishops' conference in England and Wales to erect the new ordinariate, the Congregation of the Doctrine for the Faith will have overall control of the scheme.

The new nuncio will also have to provide shortlists for nine dioceses in England, Wales and Scotland with bishops having reached or due to reach retirement age over the next two years. Archbishop Mennini has little experience as a nuncio in preparing episcopal appointments, having only been responsible for one or two in his entire decade as a papal ambassador. However, he has been in the Holy See's diplomatic service since 1981 and is well versed in the process.

Archbishop Mennini comes from a family with strong links with the Holy See. His father, Luigi, worked for Archbishop Paul Marcinkus, the former president of the Holy See's Institute for Religious Works – otherwise known as the Vatican Bank. Mr Mennini, who died in 1997, was managing director of the Vatican Bank at the time allegations of money laundering were made against Archbishop Marcinkus. Mr Mennini was arrested in relation to the collapse of a New York-based bank run by convicted fraudster Michele Sindona. He always denied the charges. Archbishop Mennini's brother, Alessandro, worked for Banco Ambrosiano, the institution that collapsed amid controversy with the death of Roberto Calvi, who was found hanged in 1982 under Blackfriars Bridge in London.

The archbishop – known by friends as "Don Antonello" – came to prominence in 1978 when he went to hear the confession of Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro who had been kidnapped and was being held captive in a secret location by the Red Brigades, a leftist Italian militant group. Archbishop Mennini, then an assistant priest, is believed to have delivered a letter to the terrorists from Pope Paul VI and a letter to Mr Moro from his wife. Shortly after his secret mission, the Prime Minister was killed and his body dumped in central Rome. The Vatican has shielded the priest from ever having to testify in subsequent state hearings concerning Moro's abduction and murder.

Benedict XVI told UK abuse victims 'never again'

PREVENTION OF clerical abuse is to top the agenda of talks held by bishops on their five-yearly visits to the Vatican, according to an eyewitness account of the Pope's meeting with abuse victims in London, *writes Abigail Frymann*.

Speaking publically for the first time about the closed-door meeting held at the nunciature in Wimbledon during Benedict XVI's September visit to Britain, Fr Joseph McCullough told *The Tablet* that the Pope was adamant that clerical sex abuse should never happen again.

Fr McCullough, who attended the meeting with an abuse survivor known as Mary, said the Pope listened to her story and then was moved to tears when she told him of the recent death of her son from cancer.

"The Holy Father assured the group that the Church would do everything it can to make sure that such abuse does not happen again and that it will do all that it can for survivors," said Fr McCullough. "He mentioned that it would be a priority for the agenda of all the bishops' *ad limina* visits to the Vatican."

Fr McCullough, chaplain at the Royal Marsden Hospital, said the meeting was restricted to five survivors, their three "advocates", the Pope, curial Archbishop Rino Fisichella and the official photographer.

The compilers of the 2009 Ryan report into clerical abuse in Ireland interviewed Mary, who now lives in England. When she met the Pope she told him of the sexual, physical and psychological abuse she had experienced at the hands of religious sisters at an Irish religious industrial school. Fr McCullough said the Pope took hold of Mary's hands and listened attentively as she spoke, interjecting with statements such as "I am deeply sorry", "you have suffered greatly", and "may God give you strength". She also told him about the death of her son at which point Fr McCullough noticed the Pope's eyes "welling up with tears".

The Pope was given a folder detailing the support that survivors said they require in relation to recognition, healing and justice. The group also made a request that the Pope make the safeguarding of vulnerable people and the implementation of transparent procedures priorities, and a part of all religious and priestly formation.

(See Fr Joseph McCullough, page 10.)

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Catholic royal condemns abortion

Christopher Lamb

ABORTION IS a bigger threat to Europe than al-Qaeda and the Taliban, according to Lord Nicholas Windsor, a member of the royal family who converted to Catholicism.

The youngest child of the Duke and Duchess of Kent, who is the first blood member of the royal family to be received into the Church since King Charles II in 1685, described abortion as "a mortal wound in the heart of Europe" and one of the gravest "abuses of human rights society has ever tolerated".

It is highly unusual for a member of the royal family to make an intervention of this kind. Lord Nicholas is a second cousin once removed of the Queen and followed his mother, the Duchess of Kent, into the Catholic Church in 2001 when he was 21.

Writing in the religious American journal *First Things*, Lord Nicholas said that while the threat of regimes such as the Taliban and groups such as al-Qaeda calls for "robust and, where necessary, lethal response", "these are not threats that appear existential and have not as yet provoked a real sense of public crisis".

He describes abortion as "the single most grievous moral deficit in contemporary life" and continues: "Today legal, permissive abortion is a fact of life so deeply embedded and thoroughly normalised in our culture that – and this is the most insidious factor in that normalisation – it has been rendered invisible to politics in Europe."

He called for a "new Abolitionism for Europe" where, like the slave trade, abortion can be abolished.

Lord Nicholas, 40, was twenty-seventh in line to the throne but renounced his claim when he became a Catholic. In 2006 he became the first member of the royal family to marry in the Vatican since the Reformation. He also met the Pope at Holyrood during September's papal visit.

Christian consciences 'being ignored'

CHRISTIANS' FREEDOM of religious expression is not properly protected in Britain, Cardinal Keith O'Brien has told Christian politicians and civil servants in London, *writes Sam Adams*.

The Scottish cardinal said freedom of religious expression "is not upheld in our midst as widely and completely as it should be".

He also said Christian politicians "risked public ridicule, loss of office [and] being overlooked for promotion" for expressing their faith but said it was reassuring that so many were still willing to "stand up to be counted".

Cardinal O'Brien was preaching on 9 December at a carol service at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, for Christians in Government – a non-denominational faith network for Christians in government service. He called on Christian public figures to support the forthcoming national Declaration of Christian Conscience – entitled "Westminster 2010" – which pledges to protect freedom of religious expression.

The cardinal also recalled Pope Benedict XVI's address to politicians in Westminster Hall during his visit to Britain in September. "One might say that Pope Benedict XVI had similarly been condemned over the years and especially since his election as Pope for his views and for his outspoken ways of proclaiming the 'truth' of Jesus Christ and his teaching," the cardinal explained. "It almost seemed, as his words were proclaimed, that he was in turn defending his message of truth."

Cardinal O'Brien also praised the Not Ashamed campaign, which aims to promote Britain's Christian heritage, and the recent efforts of Scottish Catholics who have "raised their voices" against sectarianism.

■ Catholic educationalists say they are concerned by the Government's decision not to include religious studies in a list of preferred GCSEs, *writes Christopher Lamb*.

Plans have been drawn up for schools to be ranked in new league tables according to which pupils gain good GCSE results in core subjects. Pupils will be awarded an "English Baccalaureate" certificate if they receive five A-star to C grades in subjects that must include English, maths, and science, as well as a language and one humanitarian subject. However, religious studies is not in the list of qualifying humanities subjects drawn up by the Department for Education (DfE).

Fr Tim Gardner, religious education (RE) adviser to the Catholic Education Service, said: "RE itself is a broad-based humanity, demanding knowledge and skills in history, textual criticism, anthropology, ethics, philosophy and theology. Thus it seems aptly suited to being part of any qualification which seeks to ensure that our pupils receive a genuinely broad education. We therefore urge the Government to ensure that RE be regarded as a humanity for the purposes of the English Baccalaureate."

Walsingham nuns to join ordinariate

Sam Adams

THREE ANGLICAN nuns have left one of the Church of England's most high-profile religious communities to join the Catholic Church via the up-coming ordinariate.

The sisters, including the community's Reverend Mother, left the Priory of Our Lady in Walsingham, Norfolk, earlier this month for a period of discernment, with the intention of joining the new structure. The ordinariate established by Pope Benedict XVI allows Anglicans to join the Church en masse while retaining some of their traditions.

The nuns' decision is symbolic as the 1,000-year-old shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham has been one of the most important places of pilgrimage in England since it was founded in the eleventh century. The original shrine is administered by the Church of England and Catholics have their own shrine at the Slipper Chapel a mile away. The departure of Reverend Mother Carolyne Joseph, Sr Wendy Renate and Sr Jane Louise leaves the priory with just four remaining nuns.

Bishop Lindsay Urwin, administrator of the Anglican shrine, said: "Because of the pain caused by their decision, they were asked to leave as soon as possible ... We are very sad that the sisters have left, but I do not condemn their decision."

The bishop denied that there was any division among the Anglican guardians of the shrine with some wanting to join the ordinariate and others wishing to stay in the Church of England. Under the apostolic constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* – published in November 2009 – the ordinariate will be able to establish religious communities.

Sr Mary Teresa, now the priory's acting Reverend Mother, said the nuns' decision "has come as a shock" but that they had a right to "follow their consciences".

Icel sidelines priest who criticised Missal changes

A PRIEST who worked on the new English version of the liturgy but publicly criticised the way last-minute changes were made to the new Missal has been sacked by the body in charge of the new translation, *writes Christopher Lamb*.

Fr Alan Griffiths has been told by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (Icel), that he will not be asked to do any more work for them.

A priest in the Diocese of Portsmouth and a respected translator, Fr Griffiths is a longstanding advocate for a new translation of the Mass to replace the one prepared by Icel in 1973, and has been extensively involved with preparing priests and laity for the new version. However, he became critical of the final text after comparing it with the version approved by the Bishops of England and Wales in 2008. The final text was then re-edited by the Vatican and appeared earlier this year.

In a letter to *The Tablet* (30 October), he wrote: "The differences are so extensive as to argue that the 2010 text is not that which was approved in the first place." He added that the new changes "are simply not correct English", that they contravene agreed Holy See guidelines on how to translate texts and that whoever made the latest changes did not communicate with Icel. Fr Griffiths said he was "neither upset nor surprised" by Icel's move and "guessed" that it was because of his letter to *The Tablet*. A spokesman for Icel said he did not wish to comment on the matter.

Church 'arrogant and self-centred' over abuse

THE CHURCH in Ireland was "self-centred and arrogant" when dealing with clerical sex abuse and "rarely empathised with children", according to Dublin's archbishop, *writes Sarah Mac Donald*.

During a visit to the west Dublin parish of Ballyfermot, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin told parishioners that the "catastrophic manner" in which allegations of abuse were dealt with by the Irish hierarchy was symptomatic "of a deeper malaise within the Irish Church".

He travelled to the parish, where the archbishop himself grew up, to renew his apologies to the people. Three boys were abused in Ballyfermot during the 1970s and 1980s by ex-priest Tony Walsh, who was jailed for 16 years last week.

■ Diplomatic cables from the United States Embassy to the Holy See released by WikiLeaks disclosed that while the Vatican's first concern last year was for the victims of abuse in Ireland, it felt that requests for it to cooperate with the Murphy Commission into sexual abuse threatened its sovereignty.

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IN BRIEF

Fr Kit Cunningham dies

THE former rector of St Etheldreda's Church, Ely Place, has died aged 79. Fr Cunningham became one of London's best-known parish priests during 30 years at Ely Place. A full obituary will appear in the 1 January issue of *The Tablet*.

Nun praises Pope's condoms comments

Sister Lynda Dearlove, who runs charity Women@theWell working with prostitutes in London, says she is "delighted" by Pope Benedict XVI's recent remarks on the use of condoms to protect against HIV infection. In *Light of the World*, a book-length interview with German journalist Peter Seewald, the Pope said that a prostitute using a condom could be taking a first step towards moral responsibility. She said the remarks had "reignited a debate relating to the use of condoms in preventing the transmission of life-threatening diseases".

Irish Bishops warn against defeatism

The Bishops' Conference of Ireland had urged people against "negativity, defeatism and despair" over the state of the country's economy. They said people should pull together to respond to the difficulties while protecting the poorest in society.

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11.30pm: Readings and carols for choir and congregation.

Midnight Mass: Adams, Darke

Saturday 25 December

11am: Nativity of the Lord, Solemn Latin Mass. Mozart, Handl, Marenzio, Victoria, Bach

Sunday 26 December

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

11am*: Solemn Latin Mass with organ and congregational singing.

* The Choir is on holiday for December 26 2010 and January 2 2011. They will return to sing at the 11am Solemn Latin Mass on January 9 2011

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Divorce an option in domestic abuse

Sam Adams

DIVORCE SHOULD be an option available to victims of domestic abuse, according to a Catholic bishop.

An auxiliary in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, Bishop David McGough said the break-up of a marriage might be the only solution in some cases of abuse, but that this should normally only be considered alongside a number of other options.

Speaking at the launch of the Catholics Experiencing Domestic Abuse Resources (Cedar) initiative – which aims at raising awareness of and solutions to the problem among Catholics in England and Wales – Bishop McGough said priests would usually suggest separation if they feared for the safety of the victim.

"As an immediate response it would be necessary to advise that person to leave that situation and to end that relationship, possibly through divorce, to ensure the ongoing safety of that person and the children as well," he said.

"We would never advise anyone to continue in a situation that is possibly dangerous to themselves or anyone else living in that household. The Church would most certainly recommend in that situation that that person should move out of it."

Bishop McGough said that debt, particularly during the Christmas period, was a possible trigger in some cases of domestic abuse, but added this was "never an excuse".

The Cedar initiative was developed by the Domestic Abuse Working Group of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Much of this has been collected on the programme's website (www.cedar.uk.net) with leaflets and stickers being handed out to churches across England and Wales.

■ Plans to merge three Anglican dioceses in the north of England have failed to win the support of the region's bishops, *writes Sam Adams*.

Under the cost-cutting proposals outlined in a new report by the Church Commissioners, the dioceses of Bradford, Wakefield, and Ripon and Leeds would be dissolved and combined into one "mega diocese". However, two assistant bishops in the Diocese of Bradford – former Archbishop of York, Lord Hope of Thornes, and Colin Buchanan – said they were unconvinced by the scheme. Bishop Buchanan, while saying he was "open-minded" to change, said there would be opposition to the plans in the diocese.

QUIZ ANSWERS

The Language Game

from page 38

Words of the year: 1. b; **2. a** The word was accidentally coined by Sarah Palin, to the amusement of commentators. **3. c**; **4. b**; **5. a** The word was used by President Obama to describe results in the mid-term congressional elections. **6. c** The expression was used by women attending parties organised by Silvio Berlusconi. **7. c**; **8. c.**; **9. b**
Neologisms: 1. b; 2. a; 3. c; 4. b; 5. a; 6. b Yes, it does exist. **7. c; 8. a; 9. b**
Words of which year?: Group 1: 1910; Group 2: 1810; Group 3: 1710; Group 4: 1610; Group 5: 1510.
Author! Author! 1. b 1374; **2. e** 1599; **3. f** 1725; **4. c** 1677; **5. j** 1711; **6. i** 1768; **7. g** 1748; **8. a** 1819; **9. h** 1819; 10. **d** 1858.
Doing the business: 1. c; 2. a; 3. b; 4. c; 5. b; 6. c; 7. a
Religious terminology: 1. b; 2. c; 3. a; 4. b

Jumbo crossword

from page 39

Across: 1 Sears; 4 Corinth; 7 Aidan; 10 Initial Letter; 12 Exegete 13 Wed; 15 Alexander; 16 Olaf ;17 Opal; 20 Bach; 22 Prince Consort; 28 Rosary; 29 Natus; 30 Newton; 31 Lambeth Palace; 36 Ankh; 39 Rule; 40 Elul; 41 Nethaniah; 44 Est; 46 Cesario; 48 Transmigrator; 50 Tubal; 51 Mohican; 52 Myrrh.
Down: 1 Saint Albert; 2 Arinze; 3 Shimeah; 4 Calendar; 5 In The; 6 The; 7 Aster; 8 Date; 9 Novella; 11 Rebato; 13 Wren; 14 Dove; 18 Puritan; 19 Asher; 21 Caswall; 23 Imnah; 24 Cotta; 25 Costa; 26 Cribs; 27 Cricket; 32 Talbot; 33 Pole; 34 Lent; 35 Catenian; 37 On The Hearth; 38 Majorem; 42 Igitur; 43 Cruel; 45 Sinai; 47 Serb; 49 Rho.

Tablet Crossword No. 237

27 November issue

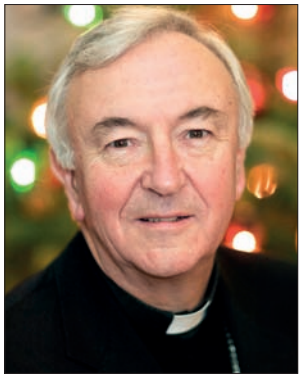
Congratulations to Miss Ann O'Brien, of Rochford, Essex, winner of our 27 November crossword competition. Hers was the first correct entry drawn at random. She will be receiving a copy of the hardback *Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus* (second edition, RRP £30).

Solution

Across: 6 Gideon's Bible; 7 Ursuline; 8 Seth; 9 Dead Sea; 10 Bless; 12 Moses; 14 Jonadab; 17 Leah; 18 Lions' Den; 19 Before Christ.
Down: 1 Edmund; 2 Novices; 3 Asher; 4 Missal; 5 Old Testament; 6 Garden of Eden; 11 Dorothy; 13 Eshcol; 15 Austin; 16 Elder.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGES

'The birth of Christ came in a setting of conflicts'



Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster

Some stories don't tire with telling. This is certainly true of the story of the birth of Jesus. It is told over and over again and gathers layers of meaning with this repetition. I recently saw a pre-release recording of the BBC's retelling of the Christmas story due for broadcast in the days before Christmas. It is well worth watching.

This retelling, like the original, reminds us that the birth of Christ came within a setting of conflicts. There was conflict with the occupying Roman forces. There was conflict within the Jewish community as to the proper response to that occupation. There was conflict between Herod and local leaders, for Herod was always anxious about his grip on power. The arrival of the three visitors from the East set him on edge again.

These are all fascinating stories, well explored in the new production. But the central message of the Christmas story is unchanging, and as relevant today as when it first happened. It is this. If you want to see the deepest secrets that God is disclosing to us, then you have to look beyond the surface conflicts. Only in a hidden depth, only in more inaccessible places, will that full message of God-among-us be truly revealed.

It is so easy to have our eyes fixed on the plot and counterplot of politics, be they in the Church or in society. They are fascinating. They fill the editions of newspapers and bulletins endlessly. But they are only a surface account. They are not the real story. They rarely proclaim the Gospel in its richness. The star was a "surface event". It rose, it shone, it glittered. News editors would have loved it! But it was no more than a pointer, and only the wise actually followed its light.

May the Lord who comes among us grant us such wisdom that we may travel the surface without getting ensnared, yet be attentive enough to see his signs and follow them.

'Those words of comfort reach out: "Do not be afraid!"'

Cardinal Keith O'Brien
Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh

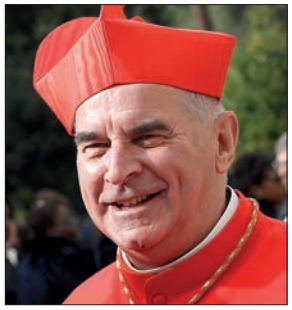


Photo: CNS

The past year has been one of many celebrations, including the momentous visit of Pope Benedict XVI to our country, yet, whether personal or national, any celebrations we have had to date pale in comparison to the one we now prepare for as we get ready to commemorate the greatest event in human history – the birth of Jesus Christ, the son of God and son of Mary, in a stable at Bethlehem.

There was no pomp and ceremony in connection with the birth of Jesus – rather the opposite, it took place in simplicity and in poverty. Jesus continued to preach that same message through the simplicity of his own lifestyle leading up to his Crucifixion and Resurrection – always reminding us that what matters most in life is the love of God and a love of our neighbours.

That same message has been handed on to us in a special way through the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to our country. And that is the same message which should inspire each one of us in our own Christian living – difficult though it might be to follow.

I am sure you have taken to heart those words which the Pope used when preaching to the great crowd gathered in Bellahouston Park in Glasgow on the Feast of St Ninian. He said then: "Society today needs clear voices which propose our right to live, not in a jungle of self-destructive and arbitrary freedoms, but in a society which works for the true welfare of its citizens and offers them guidance and protection in the face of their weakness and fragility. Do not be afraid to take up this service to your brothers and sisters, and to the future of your beloved nation."

Those words of comfort must reach out to each one of us wherever we are called upon to preach, whether from a pulpit, from our office desk, from a work bench, at school or in a retirement home: "Do not be afraid!" I hope these words will inspire and console you in the year which lies ahead, and that you will enjoy the peace and joy which comes from celebrating the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

50 YEARS AGO

The Popes and Football, by Christopher Hollis. One can hardly suppose Leo XII and Pius XI had the problems of professional football in mind when they composed their encyclicals, nor, though no doubt a considerable proportion of the professionals who are now threatening a strike are Catholics, is it very probable that they are consciously basing their attitude on the teaching of those encyclicals. Yet it is interesting to see how they stand in the light of Catholic teaching.

The two basic demands of the professionals are that the maximum wage should be abolished and that the transfer system should be brought to an end. At present a club is not allowed to pay a player more than a certain amount. There is no question that a star international player, who has a national reputation, attracts a large gate ... yet the club certainly draws as a result of his appearance in gate money inordinately more than it pays out to him in wages. This certainly seems like naked exploitation ... The transfer system, as it now operates, would seem even more plainly to contradict Catholic teaching. At present the player, once he has signed for a team, is the property of that team. He cannot leave it and transfer himself to another team. "Let the working man," says Leo XIII, "and employer make free arrangements, and in particular let them agree freely as to the wages." It may perhaps be argued that the club, by giving the player his opportunity, has some claim to share in the benefits of this increased fame and in the transfer fee he subsequently attracts. It cannot in Catholic morals claim the whole benefit. "One class," says Pius XI, "is forbidden to exclude the other from a share of the benefits ..." Labour, Pius says again, "is not a mere chattel; the human dignity of the working man must be recognised in it, and consequently it cannot be bought and sold like any piece of merchandise". A footballer's playing ability under the present system is exactly bought and sold like a piece of merchandise.

The Tablet, 24 December 1960

100 YEARS AGO

The 1911 Catholic Directory presents its customary Christmas-box of progress, at the threshold of a new year. The Catholic clergy of England, Scotland and Wales now total 4,302, an advance of 64 on their number twelvemonth ago ... The total number of churches, chapels and stations in Great Britain has accordingly risen by 17. And Westminster appropriately leads the triumphant way, with five new churches. Menevia adds three to its total, Liverpool two; and the rest are single gains.

The Tablet, 24 December 1910