



## The Parish of Saint Barnabas, Gorse Hill The story of the mural paintings

The subject of the Paintings is Worship, represented as a movement towards the Altar (Offering), and a movement from the Altar (Mission).

The scene on the South Side of the Chancel and Sanctuary represents the movement towards the Altar, the offering of St. Barnabas, the Apostle, carried on by the parish, whose patron he is. The scene is placed between two angels, one above the Vicar's stall, and the other on the East wall by the window; for we worship with angels and archangels; the angel above the stall lowers his censer to receive the prayers of the congregation, and the other by the altar raises them towards the heavenly place, and they ascend as the sweet-smelling smoke of incense with the prayers of the saints. The central group represents the Apostolic Church standing as a great light shining in our dark world, the world made by the ruthless greed of the industrial revolution, which regarded neither God nor man and built the satanic mills and slums of our great cities, suggested in the background.

St. Peter, holding the keys of the Kingdom of God, condemns the Golden Calf, the god of greed, who rules the world. St. John, the seer of Patmos, prays. St. James, the first martyr, preaches, showing the glory of the kingdom shining beyond the dark clouds. St. Andrew, the pastor, who led Peter to Jesus, receives Barnabas, who leaves the world, and, kneeling, offers his all at the Apostles' feet. As Barnabas enters into the light of the new life, Ananias, who lied to the Holy Spirit, and retained his gold secretly, condemned by St. Peter, is carried back dead to the outer darkness of Hell, to which he belongs.

St. Barnabas is directed towards the altar, where heaven and earth meet, and where our imperfect human offering are united with the one Holy Sacrifice of Christ.

It is the Parish, militant here on earth, which today carries on the offering of the Saint triumphant in heaven.

The men of the parish, with the help of God's grace, symbolized by a powerful angel, raise a factory from the dark world of greed towards the peace of God's nature and offer it.

The women of the parish offer their children.

The young men offer a railway engine.

The parish priest presides over the corporate offering of the family. On the altar, stands the chalice, and all around, the branches of the Vine cluster symbols of our union with Christ, Who said, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches: without me, ye can do nothing".

In the background, bathed in supernatural light, are to be seen the pillars of the Heavenly Jerusalem, in contrast with the darkness of the world.

The scene on the North Side represents the Mission of the Church, expressed by the spiritual coming of St. Barnabas to Gorse Hill. It is a movement from the altar, showing that worship, which begins with offering, cannot remain barren, but must issue in action and conquest. The great angel by the window proclaims the coming of Christ with those whom He sends forth.

On the North wall, by the altar, the prophets of Antioch, where the followers of Christ were first called Christians, commission St. Barnabas and St. Paul. They lay their hands on them, and they are filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit. Amongst the Antiochene prophets was Simon ----- (perhaps Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus to carry His Cross). By them is a young olive tree in blossom.

Above, the Council of Jerusalem is shown. Barnabas and Paul put forward the case of the mission to the Gentiles, backed by St. Peter and approved by St. James, sitting in his chair as the first Bishop of Jerusalem. (By St. James sits his secretary, the Rev. Basil Minchin, sometime Assistant Curate of St. Barnabas, and Chapter Clerk to the Cricklade Rural Deanery; also the Rev. I. T. Page-Wood, Vicar of St. Barnabas at the time of the painting of the murals, standing behind).

The two central figures are St. Barnabas and St. Paul, represented as Jupiter and Mercury, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Barnabas holds the Apostolic Letter received from St. James, and carries the fiery cross of the Gospel. Both hasten across the Mediterranean Sea towards Swindon. St. Paul points towards Rome, where he was to die a martyr and whence Bishop Gregory was to send St. Augustine to Canterbury.

The two missionaries storm a synagogue; Paul falls, stoned into unconsciousness (as in the episode at Lystra); Barnabas, undaunted, goes forward.

They reach Gorse Hill and its gas works; they are supported by the prayers of the churches they leave behind, and raise a fiery cross. Swindon is seen in the background with the Railway Works and the green downs behind.

An Angel hands over the fiery cross to the preacher, who in the pulpit proclaims the Word of God. So the circle is complete. The worship offered by the church-people, duly united with the Sacrifice of the Cross, consecrated and sanctified, returns to the world as a new conquering power.

The Mural Paintings are the work of the Rev. John Perret, sometime Rector of Stanton Fitzwarren, near Swindon; their execution was encouraged by the Rev. Basil Minchin, and they were a thank-offering on the part of the author for recovery to health. The walls were prepared with white lead and canvas for the work, and were painted in the years 1946, 1947, and 1948. Ad Maiorum Del Gloriam: To the Greater Glory of God.