

## **‘THIS TOO SHALL PASS’**

### *Not the parish pew sheet*

*A miscellany of matter serious and not so serious*

Issue number 34: Trinity XXIII<sup>1</sup>

*Edwin Muir meditates on the beauty and mystery of the sunset:*

Fold upon fold of light,  
Half-heaven of tender fire,  
Conflagration of peace,  
Wide hearth of the evening world.  
How can a cloud give peace,  
Peace speak through bodiless fire  
And still the angry world?  
  
Yet now each bush and tree  
Stands still within the fire,  
And the bird sits on the tree.  
Three horses in a field  
That yesterday ran wild  
Are bridled and reined by light  
As in a heavenly field.  
Man, beast and tree in fire,  
The bright cloud showering peace.

*Dr Eric Mascall, in He Who Is, reflects on the reasons for belief:*

Why do we believe God exists? This is an extraordinarily difficult question to answer, for several reasons. In the first place, it depends very much upon *us*. It may quite well be that no two people have come to believe in God in precisely the same way, and that no two people would give exactly the same set of reasons to justify their belief. But this does not mean that their reasons are necessarily unsound, for there may be quite a number of different arguments leading to a particular conclusion and all of them may be perfectly valid . . . The trouble is not that there are no reasons, but that there are so many, and that it is impossible to discuss all of them at once.

*The index reaches its triumphant conclusion:*

unsearchable Providence, irresistible and, 207  
uproot constancy of the patriarch, 249  
vehicles of indecorous jesting, 246  
well-merited torture, refined but, 325  
white, black held to be, 36–37  
wig under Blackfriars bridge, full-bottomed, 171  
yak belting, 86  
Zeruiah, Cromwell and sons of, 45

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<sup>1</sup> CW Second Sunday before Advent.

*Another aperçu from Professor MacCulloch:*

Many Christians do not like being reminded of Christianity's capacity to develop, particularly those who are in charge of the various religious institutions which call themselves Churches, but that is the reality and has been from the beginning.

*Hampstead graffito:* There is no fury like a vested interest masquerading as a moral principle.

*Some further help for classical travellers, who will no doubt wish to discuss their favourite programmes with their hosts. These may include classics such as Ministrarisne?<sup>2</sup> and Seniorum Exercitus;<sup>3</sup> or you may prefer more recent favourites such as Diligenter Venite ad Saltandum,<sup>4</sup> Contentio Coquentium Magna Britannica<sup>5</sup> or Spectaculum Itinerans Rerum Antiquarum.<sup>6</sup>*

*St Augustine (Sermon 52) reminds us that our definitions can never capture God completely:* What then, brothers and sisters, are we to say of God? For if you have understood what you want to say, it is not God. If you have been able to understand, you have understood something other than God.

*While Evelyn Underhill, in a letter to an enquirer in 1934, has some sensible advice for Christians grappling with the details of our faith (which includes all of us at some time):*

As to dogmas which you cannot accept – e.g. the Virgin Birth – it is useless to force yourself on these points. Leave them alone for the time being, neither affirming nor rejecting them, and give your mind and will to living in harmony with those truths which you *do* see. This is the way – in fact the only way – to get further light.

*And finally, I invite you to compare and contrast the following unguarded utterances,<sup>7</sup> and decide which of them makes you feel the more disorientated:*

They are inviting their colleagues to march down a cul-de-sac which has no end.

You have reached a turning point on a voyage of no return.

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## **Readings**

*For this Sunday (Trinity XXIII; CW Second before Advent) Zephaniah 1: 7, 12–18;*

*I Thessalonians 5: 1–11; Matthew 25: 14–30      Psalm 90: 1–12*

*For next Sunday (Sunday next before Advent; CW Feast of Christ the King) Ezekiel 34: 11–*

*16, 20–24; Ephesians 1: 15–23; Matthew 25: 31–46      Psalm 95: 1–7*

O God, our refuge and strength, who art the author of all godliness: be ready, we beseech thee, to hear the devout prayers of thy Church; and grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.

*Collect for the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity*

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<sup>2</sup> *Are You Being Served?*

<sup>3</sup> *Dad's Army*

<sup>4</sup> *Strictly Come Dancing*

<sup>5</sup> *The Great British Bake-Off*

<sup>6</sup> *The Antiques Road Show*

<sup>7</sup> From *Colemanballs*, of course, in case you hadn't guessed.