

‘THIS TOO SHALL PASS’

Not the parish pew sheet

A miscellany of matter serious and not so serious

Issue number 36: Advent Sunday

Richard Crashaw encapsulates the paradox of the incarnation of Our Lord:

When love of us called him to see
If we'd vouchsafe his company,
He left his Father's court, and came
Lightly as a lambent flame,
Leaping upon the hills, to be
The humble King of you and me.

Another extract from Fr Gerald Vann's The Divine Pity reminds us of an uncomfortable truth:

Why, people ask, are the Christians no better than the non-Christians, if all that they claim for their faith is true? And the answer, in so far as the accusation is a true one, must be that we are influenced far more deeply than we know by the individualism we inherit and the selfish materialism with which we are surrounded. We are busy with the defence of man's right to property, and so we must be; but only if we remember that we are advocating no absolute right, only if we take care that in opposing one error we do not fall into a worse one. We have a right to property, yes; but every right implies a corresponding duty, the right to property implies a duty to the common good – and the more we have, the greater our responsibility to that common good. We have a right to property, but only within the life of charity. We have a right to a house, a home; but it must be, not a fortress from which all are excluded, but a home where all can find a welcome.

More of those bookshop quotations:

I'd like to order a brand new copy of this out-of-print book . . .

Where do you keep the books you don't stock?

But why can't you sell me a bus ticket to Yugoslavia? And I also want some information on boats to Spain!

And a list of some of the things people apparently hope to buy in bookshops (as well as resuscitation dummies; see last week's issue):

Tights (*Greener & Sons Ltd, Barry*); hair dye and leather soap (*Hatchard's*); handpresses and hat-pins (*Blitzgeist Bookshop, Birmingham*); place mats (*Sherratt and Hughes, Peterborough*); buckets (*The Stamford Poste*); and frozen chickens (*City Books, Hove*).

Alister McGrath again in Through a Glass Darkly, this time expanding on St Paul's dictum that 'now we know in part':

Some make uncertainty into a fetish – 'we can know nothing'. Yet this extreme scepticism ultimately rests on a certainty – that nothing can be known. I simply draw the more realistic conclusion that we are *entitled* to believe, yet are often unable to provide totally compelling and conclusive reasons for what we believe. As I have become older, I have accepted that I

must not merely *live* with this difficult truth, but *work* with it, realising that this leaves many unanswered questions and unresolved issues. That is perhaps the most difficult lesson I have had to learn.

The report Living in Love and Faith points out another uncomfortable truth:

Only in looking honestly at the fact that we have sisters and brothers in Christ who have vehemently opposed views to ours, can we come in humility before God and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It's been a while since we had any odd names, so you might like these. Shirley Harris kindly supplied the first four; the rest are from Mr Train's collection Remarkable Names of Real People again:

Pearl Button

Olly Berry

Henrietta Seal

R. Sole

Luscious Pea

Bunyon Snipes Womble

Silence Bellows

Loyal Lodge No 296 Knights of Pythias Ponca City Oklahoma Smith¹

More on the nature of prayer, this time from Fr Harry Williams CR in Becoming What I Am:

Prayer is not escapism. It is not a running away from the brute ugly facts of a situation into an illusory never-never land. Prayer is an acceptance of the reality of evil and suffering and death, while at the same time seeing these penultimate realities in the light of the ultimate and final and most real reality of God's love, victorious over everything which opposes it. And so in prayer we see things as they really are, finally and ultimately from God's point of view, the God for whom past, present, and future are all one.

And finally, I commend to you W. B. Yeats on education:

Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire.

Readings

For this Sunday (Advent I) Isaiah 64: 1–9; I Corinthians 1: 3–9; Mark 13: 24–37

Psalm 80: 1–8, 18–20

For next Sunday (Advent II) Isaiah 40: 1–11; II Peter 3: 8–15a; Mark 1: 1–8

Psalm 85: 1–2, 8–13

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light; now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal: through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever.

Collect for Advent Sunday

¹ One can understand bearers of the ancient and honourable but extremely common name Smith wishing to distinguish themselves from the average; but this 1876 example does seem to take it a little far.