

‘THIS TOO SHALL PASS’

Not the parish pew sheet

A miscellany of matter serious and not so serious

Issue number 48: Lent I

The prayer which Jesus left us as a model, the Our Father, is always worth meditating on; here is a re-imagining of it by Robert Bridges:

Eternal Father, who didst all create,
In whom we live, and to whose bosom move,
To all men be thy name known, which is love,
Till its loud praises sound at heaven’s high gate.
Perfect thy kingdom in our passing state,
That here on earth thou may’st as well approve
Our service, as thou ownest theirs above,
Whose joy we echo and in pain await.

Grant body and soul each day their daily bread:
And should in spite of grace fresh woe begin,
Even as our anger soon is past and dead
Be thy remembrance mortal of our sin:

By thee in paths of peace thy sheep be led,
And in the vale of terror comforted.

St John Henry Newman, writing in 1869 to Louisa Simeon, ‘a girl experiencing religious difficulties’, draws out the implications of conscience:

We have the idea of duty – duty suggests something or some one to which it is to be referred, to which we are responsible. That something that has dues upon us is to us God. I will not assume it is a personal God, or that it is more than a law (though of course I hold that it is the Living Seeing God), but still the idea of duty, and the terrible anguish of conscience, and the irrepressible distress and confusion of face which the transgression of what we believe to be our duty, cause us, all this is an intimation, a clear evidence, that there is something nearer to religion than intellect; and that, if there is a way of finding religious truth, it lies, not in exercises of the intellect, but close on the side of duty, of conscience, in the observance of the moral law.¹

Howlers and malapropisms are fruitful ground for the student of linguistic peculiarities; here are a few collected by the American writer Jack Smith which you may not have come across:

In 1937, Eugene O’Neill won a Pullet Surprise.²
The doctor said to take some milk of amnesia.
Moses went up Mount Cyanide to fetch the Ten Commandments.
We found it hard to understand his Scottish derelict.

¹ Readers of C. S. Lewis may remember that this is one of the arguments he deploys at the beginning of *The Problem of Pain*, along with Rudolf Otto’s concept of the numinous.

² More commonly known as a Pulitzer Prize, in case you were wondering.

Every American state is permitted to send two centaurs to Congress.³

Winter is almost over, but there is still time to appreciate the beauty of bare branches as described by Piet Hein in 'Willow Pattern':

The winter sun
gilds the bare willow trees; their shadows, tall
and starkly silhouetted, overrun
my whitewashed wall.

The strength life owns
is such, that vivid life is what one sees
in the mere shadows of denuded bones
of living trees.

A warning from St Augustine, in On Christian Doctrine, about the proper use of the Bible:

Whosoever, then, thinks that he understands the Holy Scriptures, or any part of them, but puts such an interpretation upon them as does not tend to build up this twofold love of God and our neighbour, does not yet understand them as he ought.

And finally, a reminder from Graham Denton of the precarious nature of success ('A Bit of a Low Point'):

Reflected a top mountaineer:
'I've had a successful career.
Alas, as I plummet
From off this high summit,
I guess it's all downhill from here.'

Readings

For this Sunday (Lent I) Genesis 9: 8–17; I Peter 3: 18–22; Mark 1: 9–15 *Psalm 25: 1–9*

For next Sunday (Lent II) Genesis 17: 1–7, 15–16; Romans 4: 13–25; Mark 8: 31–38

Psalm 22: 22–end

O Lord, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights: give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.

Collect for the First Sunday in Lent

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.

Collect for Ash Wednesday

³ Given that centaurs have a reputation for wisdom, I suspect quite a few voters would like to exercise this option.