

‘THIS TOO SHALL PASS’

Not the parish pew sheet

A miscellany of matter serious and not so serious

Issue number 58: Easter IV

A spring song from the Benedictbeuren (Carmina Burana) MS, translated by Helen Waddell:

The earth’s aflame again
With flowers bright,
The fields are green again,
The shadows deep,
Woods are in leaf again,
There is no living thing
That is not gay again.
With face of light,
Garbed with delight,
Love is reborn,
And Beauty wakes from sleep.

And to follow that, a pertinent exhortation from a mediaeval Jewish text, Orchoth Zadikim (‘The Ways of the Righteous’):

Be not blind, but open-eyed, to the great wonders of Nature, familiar, everyday objects though they be to thee. But men are more wont to be astonished at the sun’s eclipse than at his unfailing rise.

Charles Williams, writing his ‘history of the Holy Spirit in the Church’ The Descent of the Dove in 1939, foresees the present ecumenical climate:

The separations in Christendom remain, nor will they be soon or easily ended. But the vocal disputes are a little suspended, and courtesies between the clamant bodies are easier; as when the Roman Catholic Paul Claudel wrote in honour of the Lutheran Niemöller – ‘*ce courageux confesseur de Christ.*’ It might be possible now to praise the confessors of other obediences without supposing that we compromised our own; as, for example, both Donne and Dryden are acknowledged to be sincere when the one submitted to the Church of England and the other to the Church of Rome.

In order to make sense of this incident reported in a letter to the Sunday Mirror in the late 1960s, remember that ‘intellectuals’, and ‘revolting students’ in particular, occupied the same place in public demonology then as anyone suspected of being ‘woke’ does now:

A mother slapped her little boy hard after he had demolished a display of canned foods in the supermarket. Facing the hostile stares of assistants the mother said in a loud voice: ‘If I don’t correct him now he might grow up to be a student.’

Anthony Trollope, in North America, is our ‘voice from the grave’ this week:

There is nothing more tyrannical than a strong popular feeling among a democratic people.

St Oscar Romero, quoted in The Tablet of 24 April, reminds us that the Church is meant to make us uncomfortable sometimes:

The Church was put here to convert humankind, not to tell people that everything they do is all right; and because of that, naturally, it irritates people. Everything that corrects us irritates us.

John Milton, in Areopagitica, his defence of free speech, is realistic about the limits of all political systems:

For this is not the liberty which we can hope, that no grievance ever should arise in the Commonwealth, that let no man in this world expect; but when complaints are freely heard, deeply considered, and speedily reformed, then is the utmost bound of civil liberty attained that wise men look for.

Some words of wisdom from Charles M. Schulz, creator of Peanuts:

Every time there's a good suggestion, someone brings up the budget.

Joggers have to be careful – it's easy to run into a barbed comment.

If light travels so fast, how come the afternoons are so long?

Never lie in bed at night asking yourself questions you can't answer.

Friedrich von Hügel, in a letter to his niece quoted in The Tablet of 1 May, reminds us of a basic fact of faith:

We have not got to invent God, nor to hold him. He holds us. We shall never be able to explain God, though we can apprehend him, more and more, through the spiritual life. I want you to hold very clearly the otherness of God, and the littleness of men. If you don't get that you can't have adoration, and you cannot have religion without adoration.

And finally, a point to ponder from Don Marquis (in archy and mehitabel):

procrastination is the
art of keeping
up with yesterday.

Readings

For this Sunday (Easter IV) Genesis 22: 1–18 or Baruch 3: 9–15, 32–4: 4; Acts 8: 26–40; I John 4: 7–21; John 15: 1–8 Psalm 22: 25–31

For next Sunday (Easter V, Rogation Sunday) Isaiah 55: 1–11; Acts 10: 44–48; I John 5: 1–6; John 15: 9–17 Psalm 98

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men: grant unto thy people that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter