

‘THIS TOO SHALL PASS’

Not the parish pew sheet

A miscellany of matter serious and not so serious

Issue number 69: Trinity VII

John Bunyan’s shepherd boy in The Pilgrim’s Progress offers a counter-cultural view of the world:

He that is down needs fear no fall;
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.
I am content with what I have,
Little be it or much;
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
Because thou savest such.
Fullness to such a burden is,
That go on pilgrimage;
Here little, and thereafter bliss,
Is best from age to age.

Francis Edwards, writing on the subject of mediaeval religious drama in Ritual and Drama, draws our attention to a significant difference between that period and our own:

To us, religious belief, or rather belief in God, is a matter of personal choice . . . This is an approach to the matter which an average person living in, say, the twelfth or the thirteenth century would have found puzzling, to say the least. This is because the question of choice would never have arisen in the first place. To have questioned the existence of God would have been like questioning the greenness of grass or the wetness of water.

This week it’s the turn of motor sport to drop the linguistic bricks on our toes; the first three from the veteran Murray Walker, and the surrealist fourth from Jackie Stewart:

You can cut the tension with a cricket stump.
He’s in front of everyone in this race except for the two in front of him.
Here’s Giacomelli – driving like the veteran he is not.
There’s enough Ferraris there to eat a plate of spaghetti.

The critic George Steiner, in Real Presences, tries to define what is special about music:

It is in and through music that we are most immediately in the presence of the . . . verbally inexpressible but wholly palpable energy in being that communicates to our senses and to our reflection what little we can grasp of the naked wonder of life . . . This is, beyond any liturgical or theological specificity, a sacramental motion.

How to be a social success, in a translated haiku (Teramura Hyakuchi, 1748–1836, rendered by Jonathan Clements):

With one who does not speak his every thought
I spend a pleasant evening.

After motor sport, motor accidents; Christopher Ward, in Our Cheque is in the Post, reports some of the less plausible excuses offered:

I misjudged a lady crossing the road.

Coming back, I took the wrong turning and drove into a tree that was not there.

Whilst waiting at traffic lights, I was rammed by the stationary car behind me.

Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I haven't got.

A pedestrian hit me and went under my car.

I was having a dispute with my wife. She pulled my hair, causing me to turn into a lamp standard.

The Revd Dr Jane Shaw, writing in the Church Times about possibilities for church growth, suggests an alternative to current thinking:

Cathedral congregations and communities have been growing in the 21st century . . . This growth did not come out of a vacuum. Throughout the 20th century, cathedrals increasingly opened their doors to the broader community, were patrons of the arts, and enlarged their educational and civic engagement. So why, when it comes to models for church growth, does there seem to be only one game in town for the Church of England: church-plants? . . . Cathedrals appeal to people who would probably never go near a church-plant. Cathedrals evoke awe as we enter them, helping us to appreciate the beauty of holiness and the glory of God . . . The church-growth report *From Anecdote to Evidence* (2014) stated 'there is no single recipe for growth.' So let's try a range of models.

And finally, another fact which may surprise you:

A graven image in the Bible is an idle maid with hands.

Readings

For this Sunday (Trinity VII) Jeremiah 23: 1–6; Ephesians 2: 11–22; Mark 6: 30–34, 53–56

Psalm 23

For next Sunday (St James the Apostle) Jeremiah 45: 1–5; Acts 11: 27–12: 2 or II Corinthians 4: 7–15; Matthew 20: 20–28 Psalm 126

Lord of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things: graft in our hearts the love of thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

Collect for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity