

perhaps, that can be found in our books'. The compliant jury gave its verdict of 'guilty'.

Lord Chief Justice: Campion and the rest, what can you say that you should not die?

Campion: It was not our death that ever we feared. But we knew that we were not lords of our own lives, and therefore, for want of answer would not be guilty of our own deaths. The only thing we now have to say is, that if our religion do make us traitors, we are worthy to be condemned; but otherwise are and have been as true subjects as ever the queen had. In condemning us you condemn all your own ancestors—all the ancient priests, bishops and kings—all that was once the glory of England, the island of saints, and the most devoted child of the see of Peter. For what have we taught, however you may qualify it with the odious name of treason, that they did not uniformly teach? To be condemned with these old lights—not of England only but of the world—by their degenerate descendants, is both gladness and glory to us. God lives; posterity will live; their judgment is not so liable to corruption as that of those who are now going to sentence us to death.

The sentence was passed.

On December 1st 1581, Campion, Sherwin and Briant came forth from the Tower to be dragged to Tyburn and there hanged, drawn and quartered. Looking cheerfully around on the vast crowd assembled, Campion saluted them: 'God save you, gentlemen! God bless you and make you all good Catholics.' To effect that had been his mission, and for that also he died.



ST AMBROSE, A CONTEMPLATIVE

By PAX

I CAN never quite forgive St Jerome for being so cutting about St Ambrose's Latin. It seems to my ignorant mind that his Latin is only the shell of the kernel of the good nut within. Take at random, the homily for the sixth Sunday after Pentecost, almost at once, one finds this: 'The food of heavenly grace is

given, not to the idle, not in the city or to those accustomed to worldly dignity, but in desert places, to those who seek Christ. For Christ receives the humble, and the word of God speaks with them, not of worldly things, but of the kingdom of God.'

How wonderful is the next passage as a preparation for confession, for communion, or for, perhaps, a near-convert on the threshold of the Church: 'None receives the food of Christ unless he be first healed, and those who are invited are healed by the very call. If a man were lame, he received the power to walk, so that he might come. If he were deprived of the light of his eyes, he could not enter the house of the Lord, unless his sight were restored.' Or this: 'The five loaves are like milk, but the more solid meat is the body of Christ; the stronger drink is the blood of the Lord.'

How limpid his teaching on the sacraments. 'The sacraments have come from heaven whence comes all counsel. Perhaps thou sayest, "my bread is ordinary bread". But this bread is bread only before the sacramental words are spoken. When the consecration takes place, the bread becomes the body of Christ. How . . .? By consecration. What are the words used at the consecration, and by whom spoken? . . . The words are those of the Lord Jesus, and were spoken by him . . . when the consecration of the venerable sacrament takes place, the priest no longer uses his own words, but the words of Christ. . . . Seest thou how powerful is the word of Christ? . . . Which dost thou think is greater, manna from heaven, or the body of Christ? Without doubt, the body of Christ, since he is the maker of heaven. "They who did eat the manna are dead: he who shall eat this body, it shall be to him remission of sins, and he shall not die forever." Not idly, then, dost thou say "Amen", when thou receivest it, already confessing in spirit that it is the body of Christ that thou art about to receive. The priest says to thee, "the body of Christ" and thou sayest "Amen", that is, "It is true". What thy tongue confesses, let thy heart hold fast.'

He has a gentle sense of humour and is apt to poke fun at the foibles of his hearers, turning the tables adroitly, first in favour of virginity, then in favour of the matrons who locked up their marriageable daughters, lest St Ambrose's eloquence give them a religious vocation; or again, in favour of widows.

St Ambrose, naturally enough, for he was a patrician, was not as hard on the rich as are some of the saints, but he courteously puts them in their place, a very humble one in God's sight: 'Let us return to the rich, but kindly . . . for we do not wish to offend them, as we should like, if possible, to heal all'. He leaves them no doubt as to their being ill, and in need of healing. 'Let the rich know that the fault does not lie in abundance, but in those who know not how to use the abundance rightly, for though riches are a hindrance to the wicked, to good men they are an aid to virtue. Zacheus assuredly was rich, yet he was chosen by Christ. He had not yet seen Christ, but merited the title of "little".' That word 'merited' is worth noticing, as is also the 'little'. St Teresa of Lisieux would surely find a spiritual kinship with St Ambrose.

He seems not to be able to see any earthly thing without immediately seeing its heavenly counterpart. If he, too, descends to the multitude, it is because he always ascends with our Lord and the apostles. He cannot see a tree without perceiving the tree of the cross, and even a very grasping little sinner, intent on having the best view at the cheapest vantage-point by climbing a tree, at once evokes another tree and another man. 'And so he saw Zacheus raised on high.' And like his Lord, he knows how to draw an undreamed-of best from the worst defect of the most sinful sinner, and his confidence is always justified, and Zacheus truly preaches openly from his leafy pulpit; St Ambrose, indeed, seems to have a secret preference for the go-getting sinner who climbed, rather than for the just Nathaniel who 'defended the Lord in secret'; how splendid his conclusion: 'Nathaniel was under the tree, that is to say, upon the root, for he was a just man; and the root indeed was holy. He was under the tree, because he was under the law. Zacheus was high in the tree, for he was above the law. . . . The former had looked for Christ till then in the law, but the latter, being even then above the law, gave all he had and followed the Lord.' (Book 8 on Luke.)

If St Ambrose through sinful man sees always the sinless Man, the saviour, he sees always in woman, weeping the death wrought by sin, another Woman, whose tears bring healing, as witness his sermon on the widow of Naim. 'We may well believe that this widow, surrounded by a crowd . . . stands for something more than a woman, whose tears earned for her the resurrection of this young man, her only son . . . Thou shalt rise from the tomb, if

thou wilt listen to the word of God. And if thy sin be so grievous that thou canst not wash thyself with the tears of penitence, let thy mother the Church weep for thee, for she pleads for each one, as a widowed mother her only son.' He might well have been thinking of St Monica and St Augustine at that moment. That 'only son' echoes always that other only Son.

St Ambrose, although he was born in the year 340 and died in the year 397, is always modern, for holy scripture for him is always transparent of the eternal providence of God. He does not read it as a mere recital of past events, but as it were transposes them from the focus of God's views for us. Thus, when he talks of Simeon's receiving the holy child into his arms in the temple, it is not only Simeon that he sees, but each one of us, ever seeking our Saviour, that he may be renewed in Christ. He sees each of us enmeshed in the consciousness of our own failure, yet ever hoping: 'Let him who wishes to depart, come into the temple', the temple that each one is, 'come to Jerusalem'—that is the Church—'let him await the Christ . . . and let him receive in his hands the Word of God'. But St Ambrose's contemplation overflows into his daily life, for he continues: 'Let him lay hold on him by his works and with the arms of his faith. Then he will depart, as one who shall not see death, for he has seen him, who is Life.' (On Luke, Book 2, Ch. 2.)



GAMALIEL

ED. And have you got the soul all nicely buttoned up, Gamaliel?

GAM. I beg your pardon?

ED. You know, the soul-theory, soul and spirit; we broached a question on it last time, and left it to be dealt with this time.

GAM. Oh, that. But what makes you think I think the soul is something you can button up, and presumably put on and take off, like the skin of Kipling's archetypal and 'just-so' rhinoceros?

ED. Come off it, man. It's an expression, the way one talks nowadays, up-to-date, contemporary.