

Today, Whit Sunday, is the festival of the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Giver of Life; the power of intellect and creativity; the purifying fire. How appropriate of Him then to put in an appearance in the week of His Feast Day and set fire to whole Saatchi collection. Jesus told us that there is only one sin which is unforgivable and it is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. And the only reason why it is unforgivable is that those who commit it don't accept that they have done anything wrong. So blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is the intellectual arrogance-cum-philistinism of the unmade bed, the pickled sheep and the dilapidated tent. There is the Millennium bridge. At one end is St Paul's and at the other Tate Modern: the shortest distance, you might say, between the sublime and the ridiculous.

It was at Tate Modern that I created a little bit of havoc. I ignored the piles of junk pretending to be artistic representations of an artist's workshop and drew an attendant's notice to a fire-door. "Look," I said in my loudest parsonical voice "Look at that magnificent installation of a fire-door!"

"Oh no, Sir, " said the attendant, swiftly and politely correcting my great ignorance "that's not a work of art: it's a real fire-door".

But I persisted, "Oh do come off it! How can you pretend that a piece of construction so beautiful and finely-wrought is not a work of art?" I began to walk up and down the room, drawing other visitors' attention to the fire-door as I went: "Look at the exquisite line! The way that the handle is fixed deliberately on to one side instead of the other. Notice the bold elegance of the red lettering FIRE DOOR. Only a genius would have thought to do that lettering in red. Run the palm of your hand over the surface and feel the texture of the metal. Sense, if you will, the sheer fire-doorishness of this fire-door! Something so profoundly beautiful as that is surely a worthy modern successor to Raphael's *Pieta* or the *Mona Lisa* of Leonardo!"

In the end, the attendant called for his colleague and they had to restrain me. I protested that what they so rudely called my "making a nuisance of myself" was really my own work of art, my own personal statement of true artistic integrity; my very own installation. I had to leave, but not before I'd thoroughly enjoyed my ten minutes of "artistic freedom"; my finger-pointing, nose turned up mockery of the whole pretentious shambles.

We get the same sort of fakery and pretentiousness in the awful telly-crazes *Big Brother* and *I'm a celebrity; get me out of here* - a return to the bread and circuses of the last days of the Roman Empire. But Tessa Jowell, the Culture Secretary, says that *Big Brother* "...is in the public interest". What, given government ministers like her, is there no case for bringing back the guillotine? Voyeurism - but voyeurism of something that isn't in the least interesting. Is there anything more damnable than to be fascinated by something so completely empty - like *Blind Date* and *The Eurovision Song Contest* and wall to wall football, party-political broadcasts and *EastEnders* - in which life is a mixture of glue-sniffing and talking about shopping occasionally relieved by package holidays and incest?

What the Holy Ghost does is give us the gift of discernment: to put it bluntly, the Holy Ghost enables us to tell what's quality from what's rubbish. In the run up to the local elections, politicians of all parties have been falling over one another to appear the most Accessible - that is to say the most banal - on the assumption of the Hollywood movie producer who said, A No one ever lost money by underestimating public taste. But also this week A.N Wilson reminded us of Gladstone talking casually and *for fun* about Odysseus meeting his mother's ghost in Hades. She says:

It was not sickness that came upon me; it was wearying for thee and thy lost counsels, glorious Odysseus; and for all thy gentle kindness this it was that broke the heart within me.

Of course, Gladstone quoted this passage in Greek. His friend Morley said, AAh you can=t translate the Greek word *pothos*. It won=t go into English≡ Quick as a flash, Gladstone replied, A>Course you can, try *desiderium*≡. Wilson adds, AWho is the last politician you can imagine having a conversation of even comparable literacy?

Again the great pianist John Lill, writing in *The Sunday Times* about the music of Beethoven whose C-major Mass is being heard in St Michael's today very likely for the first time: AMusic is far more than just an expression of life - it is a glimpse of the other side. When Beethoven wrote music, he was without food and drink for three or four days .and he would be discovered with his shirt ripped to pieces, one shoe on and one shoe off, the room in complete chaos. But while he was in that state of inspiration food and drink didn=t matter. Nothing mattered except this incredible spiritual vision of the life to follow. Once that vision and inspiration had left him, he was then hungry and thirsty again, and he got back into his earth body. And when you think that these works were written by a man who was deaf, it=s even more fantastic, and proof that he was in receipt of inner hearing≡.

When I read that passage, I thought immediately of Our Lord in the wilderness, led there by the Holy Ghost to be tested. Tested as Beethoven was tested - by the spirit. But it seems nowadays that Whit Sunday or, as the new calendar refers to it with pedantic anachronism, "Pentecost", has been taken over by the happy-clappies who claim a monopoly of the Holy Spirit. What I want to know is, why, if the Holy Ghost is supposed to be behind these things, is it all so fifth rate? You know what I mean: endless repetitions of choruses that weren=t worth singing once. The banana-split smiles. Enough over-friendliness to bring on the belly-ache. People who claim to have been born again but by their doggerel hymns, Bad News Bibles and windy rhetoric you can tell they were only born yesterday. Mere trendiness dressed up as creativity. *Heilige Geist* reduced to mere *Zeitgeist*. The spirit of the age passed off as the Spirit of God. Not the Holy Ghost, only so much hot air. You will detect hatred here. Yes, there are some things we *have a duty* to hate.

For possession by the Spirit of God is not a heedless outpouring of undifferentiated emotionality, as the happy-clappies vainly believe. Possession by the Spirit always results in a new and intelligent creative act. This is not to be confused with what nowadays is called Aself-expression≡ - as in the pitiable cases of those so called artists who leave their bed unmade and call the result a masterpiece, or the composers who copy the aleatoric rhythm of raindrops and call it a tune. I knew a man who recorded the dripping of a lavatory cistern in the gents at the *Boot & Shoe* pub in Tockwith, Yorkshire, amplified it and got it performed on the *BBC*. What you might call western culture with its trousers down.

The Holy Ghost does not produce what is merely modern. The Holy Ghost is not possessed by the penchant for Amodernising≡ stable institutions: The Holy Ghost re-arranges old shapes and forms so that they appear in a new and thrilling way. I should say an inspiring way. The Holy Spirit does not provide us with an *avant garde* excuse for knowing nothing of the past that has made us what we are. *A people without history is not redeemed from time*. It drives us so to apply ourselves to our tradition that we make it new This is the same Spirit that the Prayer Book calls the Comforter! Let me remind you that one of the meanings of Acomforter≡ is of a sharp goad to urge on unwilling horses.

And yet the Spirit according to Mother Julian is feminine and appears with great tenderness to comfort and console. All that is necessary in order to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost is that you really desire it, single-mindedly. As Kierkegaard said, APurity of

heart is to will one thing \cong . But be careful what you ask for, because you might get it. *The love of God comes readily to those who have most need.* The Spirit appears also as a dove to say, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased \cong .* The Holy Ghost comes to rouse us and move us, to make us become what God intended us to be: fully alive not with ego, artistic or otherwise, not given over to trash, but with the personality of God himself. The astonishing promise of Whitsunday is that God will never take his Spirit from us. And He has promised to lead us into all truth. Amen.

