

Parkinson's Disease

March 6, 2010

People choosing to observe that kind of thing had noticed that a hand of Bishop Williamson trembles, so for years a rumour had been circulating that he suffered from Parkinson's Disease. Recently the rumour was given another run for its money. An examination being called for, two weeks ago a London neurologist duly observed, amongst other symptoms, that the muscles of the two arms show no marked difference, and that the trembling occurs when the arm is active and not, as in Parkinson's Disease, when it is inactive. The neurologist duly ruled out Parkinson's and pronounced that the symptoms are rather of Benign Essential Tremor. (In other words a trembling hand proves that the Bishop has a Malady of Trembling. Ah, how re-assuring are all the syllables of medical diagnoses!)

However, let nobody be disappointed at this news. Let them take their pick from a rich variety of ways of not having to take the Bishop seriously. Some of them actually come from enemies!-

He is a Rosicrucian (member of a pernicious secret society, as is proved by his episcopal arms which show the Rose of England on a Cross).

He has always had strange ideas (like, 9/11 was an "inside job").

He is like uranium, difficult to have in one's possession, but difficult also to leave by the roadside (that last bit is nice!).

He gets ideas into his head, becomes fixated on them, and exaggerates (like, he believes what he says).

He is a Fabian Socialist (pernicious ideological left-winger from England).

He is an artist and not a scholar (well, at least the “not a scholar” bit is true).

He talks in public, on serious questions of truth or falsehood, “nonsense.”

The less he talks, the better off is the Society of St Pius X (oh dear, talking is his trade!).

He is an idealist (follower of Immanuel Kant – well, blow me down with a feather!).

He is growing old, and soon he will be 70 (that one is true! – In exactly two days’ time).

He is a badly converted Anglican (also true – he greatly needs to convert).

He is a live grenade, just waiting to explode, but it is difficult to throw him away (oh, come now! – with just a little extra effort?).

It all puts me in mind of an episode from the life of Frederick the Great, 18th century King of Prussia. High in a tree of a town he was visiting in his kingdom was a portrait of him in caricature. When he noticed it, the courtiers accompanying him were horror-struck – how would the King react? “Bring it down lower so that everyone can see it,” said the King.

Kyrie eleison.