

Travel broadens the mind, so they say. I travelled down to those foreign parts called Norwich the other day. There's a bit of old ruin around the back of the cathedral that is the remains of the medieval monastic infirmary. Well, I might be missing the point, but it now looks like a bunch of old pillars that neither support nor contribute to anything other than taking up space. You could reasonably conclude that the cathedral had lost its objectivity; except that these ruins are in the shadow of its recently built hospitality centre (the Hostry). This, too, as well as the cathedral, is well worth a visit; a welcome and information reception area, good cafeteria, nice toilets.

But back to the ruins. Perhaps they do serve a purpose: to show that nothing of this life is permanent. Just have a look at one of the local Ordnance Survey maps to see, eg, how many churches have come - and gone. Without doubt there are things worth hanging onto, but the ideas that "it's always been there," or "it's our heritage," simply are not true. The puritans, Oxford Movement, various Victorian whims, etc, turned most of our medieval churches into places that suited their needs and tastes. We, of course, are just referring to our particular nostalgia when we assign to these places the idea of permanence.

In fact, from that study of the most ancient heritage we have, geology, there is only one type of rock - metamorphic. It's very symbolic of earthly life: everything will change from one thing to another.

The people of 1st century Corinth nonetheless were given a teaching that has far outlasted the magnificent architecture of their day (the crumbling of which even now, despite our best efforts to arrest, continues). St Paul told them that only three things will remain: faith, hope and love. The pattern of eternity, as we go into our longest season of "Sundays After Trinity."

So, if we want something to last, if we want to leave a heritage...?