

6th December 2021

Variant

“As you are lovely, so be as various.”

Robert Graves, Pygmalion to Galatea

So, another variant has appeared, *Omicron*, the newest manifestation of the Coronavirus. We've had *Alpha*, *Beta*, and *Delta*, and now we have *Omicron*. What happened, I wonder, to the missing letters of the Greek alphabet between Delta and Omicron? But then again, perhaps a new variant is enough to contend with. Indeed, that's the point. Variants *are* hard to contend with. We're just getting used to one thing – difficult though that is – and along comes a variant, a change, a new development, and we have to adjust all over again. Variants! Who needs them?

But some variants, even though they take us by surprise, are surely good things, because they offer us new ways of working. In gymnastics, skateboarding, skiing, ice-dancing, to name but a few sports, there are always participants who push boundaries, performing in ways nobody's seen before, more daring than anyone believed possible. It's astounding! There are even moves named after the person who created the variant. And other competitors will try to emulate them. Variants are a challenge. On the one hand, we'd rather do without them. On the other, they take us “out of our comfort zone” and make us do things in new ways.

Jesus was a variant. The poet, Robert Graves, said to his lover: “As you are lovely, so be as various.” Was this not Jesus' challenge? You love? Here are new ways of loving. You follow the rules? Here are new ways of living. You're close to God? Here are new ways of devotion. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul gives this advice (from *The Message*.)

When I was an infant ... I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good. We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears, and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then ... as clearly as God sees us ...

We learn to deal with variants. It's hard, of course. It may not be clear at the start. But it *will* come right, and we'll be performing in new ways before we know it. “We'll see it all then” – until another variant appears.

A prayer for today

I'm a variant, Lord, while you are a constant. When that takes me down wrong paths, forgive me. When it teaches me new moves, I know you'll be as astounded as I am. Amen