

A poem by Pam Ayres broadcast on Radio 4 'Ayres on the Air' on Wednesday 9th September - On the parallels between Supermarkets and Churches

Pam's intro: Interestingly near where I live in Gloucestershire they've recently been putting up a new supermarket. As it went up I couldn't help thinking that it had similarities with the church, 'cause it is a big building, a long building, and it had a tower at one end, and they actually put a clock on it, and it had like a little pointed roof, and I could see great parallels between it and a church, although on Sunday you wouldn't confuse the two of course because the church is fairly deserted, whereas at the supermarket there's a stampede.

Nowadays we worship at St Tesco	Today no candles twinkle in the window
At first the neighbours seemed a little shocked	And no confetti lingers round the gate
But then St Tesco's doors are always open	There's no more blushing brides or bouncing babies
Whereas St Cuthbert's doors are always locked	Verily it's past its sell-by-date
It's hard to get to know the congregation	But business is booming at St Tesco
And the vicar isn't actually ordained	The worshippers are spending more and more
They haven't got a pulpit or a chancel	They're getting such a throng on Sunday morning
But they've got enormous windows	That they're going to have to reinforce the floor
And they're stained!	And frankly it has been a revelation
I'm glad we're in the parish of St Tesco,	On Sunday now we relish going out
I feel so happy walking down the aisle	And seeing all that inexpensive largesse
While the Reverend was always rather gloomy	Has made my husband so much more devout
But the check-out girls have always got a smile	They're stripping out the timber at St Cuthbert's
Their uniform is anything but dreary	Well it doesn't earn enough to pay its keep
It's polyester cotton and it's striped	They ought to take a lesson from St Tesco
And pretty tunes come floating down from heaven	And learn to pile it high and sell it cheap
It isn't organ music but it's piped	Some ladies still are singing in the choir
Thank heavens I converted to St Tesco	Of the Earth they will inherit if they're meek
I find this new religion suits me fine	But St Tesco have on high the voice of Angels
It's altogether younger than St Cuthbert's	With all the special offers for the week
Where the congregation all look ninety-nine	But sometimes in the busy supermarket
The vicar used to talk about the 'profits'	Above the merry ringing of the till
But he didn't mean the same as you and I	I fancy I can hear a church bell ringing
He couldn't hold a candle to St Tesco	From the steeple of St Cuthbert's on the hill
And anyway his steeple's not so high	The bell has gone, the roof, the stained glass window
Sometimes I dream I'm sitting in St Cuthbert's	I dare say it's a merciful release
In that old pew where water always dripped	For nowadays we worship at St Tesco
I can smell the incense sweetly burning	It's closing time St Cuthbert
And the rising damp that flourished in the crypt	Rest In peace...