

THAW!

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IN THIS ISSUE

With war and rumours of war, this issue once again addresses topic of the will of God in the matter of bombing Iran targets by the United States. And we continue the text of a speech in Cairo in 1990 about the then plight of Palestine. And we take a glimpse at an oddly productive battle in the Church of England in the mid 19th century which extended even unto the Canadian prairies one hundred years later and has changed Anglican Church life big time. And we provide a prosaic list of things which can be done to reduce toxic gases and the use of energy. We also congratulate Ty Ragan on the up and coming publication of his poetry. Well done!

GLORIOUS BATTLE

Recently published, "Glorious Battle" by John Sheldon Reed is a dose of salts for timid Anglicans of the present day. It is mildly sub-titled "The Cultural Politics of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism" but it's actually about the (chiefly) ceremonial wars by which the Anglo Catholics, at first known as Tractarians, defined themselves. Against the staid, dull, hierarchical Church of England of the mid-nineteenth century, the outburst of vigour, vituperation and venom which "Glorious Battle" describes was a

counter-culture to match that of the 1970's in North America. It engaged the courts no less; it angered the populus as much, it commanded the headlines of the newspapers equally. Yet it was not about peace, the abolition of all government, the cessation of wars, the disobedience of a whole generation. It was about singing the service, about choirs in surplices, about hearing confessions and about freedom of the Church of England from the rule of the government, about incense, acolytes, monstrances, Benediction, slum parishes, say the Mass.

It was, at first, about the solemn assertions of Newman, Keble and Pusey, which caused little fuss, but were the fundamentals of the new regime. Their story, the Oxford Movement, is well known. But it was, second and ultimately, about the "catholic" practices which burst out in the parishes and caused supreme disruption among the people in one diocese after another. One hundred years later, in the 1950's the very same outrage was being experienced in Canada as the Ritual Revolution reached the boonies, though to a far less dramatic degree.

Two things resulted, as I estimate this scholarly and detailed account of the "battle".

One was the explosion of spirit which accompanied first the tractarian and then the ritualistic outbursts. That is, an Anglo-Catholic parish might have ended up doing liturgical and pastoral things in ways akin to Roman Catholic parishes. But it was also imbued with an exultant sense of arrival; of having reached a goal; of having discovered a new way of being an Anglican, of being a Christian. Dullness in the Anglican Church was shattered for at least a century.

The other important feature of the "Glorious Battle" was that many of its scandalous innovations became the rule of the ordinary over the next century. Some innovations fell back into obscurity. But the "Mass", or the Holy Eucharist actually became the central service in many Anglican parishes throughout the world, displacing the hoary, choir-laden service of Matins or Morning Prayer. National Churches in the Anglican Communion grew into self-government. New books of Common Prayer re-instated the distinctly Church calendar, saints' days, the Church year, the lectionary and a model for future liturgical reform. The church which emerged from the theological and liturgical revolution was rich in its aesthetics, its music, and the orderly conduct of its services. In short, the "counter culture" which was Anglo-Catholicism shaped the "culture" of Anglicanism today throughout the world.

In the mid nineteenth century, parish clergy who were agitating their parishioners over the use of lace on the edge of their "cottas" could not have known that their seemingly picky preferences would contribute to a matter of importance in the years to come. But it turned out that theirs was a Glorious Battle worth fighting.

THE SACRED STRUGGLE – WITH VERVE

Whatever else you may think of the Oxford Movement and its devotees one has to admit that it happened with verve. Sometimes one finds a combination of silliness and vitality. In my view, the release of the latter into the Anglican soul was worth a lot of froth.

Here is a passage containing both, from "Glorious Battle" page 33.

"...young Reverend Hilary Oriel (gushing) about his plans to

*'stir up Squire Bradshaw, and all these dull people,
to restore the old church, and rebuild the steeple.
To come once every day to the church, at the least;
To keep strictly each fast day, each vigil and feast;
To refurnish the fald-stool, if not the sedilia,
And with all the old rites to become quite familiar'*

He forms a boys' choir to chant the services; gets a new altar, books, cushions and altar-cloths; and has a new surplice made:

*'this at least I will have, I may shortly, I hope
bear a cross on my scarf and most surely, a cope'*

He sets out to repair the images of saints that adorn the old screen:

*'There is one wants a head and another a nose
St. Chad has no fingers, St. Crispin no toes.'*

When he tries to remove Squire Bradshaw's old enclosed family pew, however, the otherwise tolerant and humorous old man refuses and accuses him of 'New-mania'.

INCENSE NEXT

And here is a verse supplied by Archdeacon Weir Shivering from his time as a young priest in Western Canada before going (being sent?) to the Arctic.

They think I hadn't otta
Wear lace upon my cotta
They contemplate vendetta
Because of my biretta

They're going to start a riot
To keep my chanting quiet

Throw me down upon my ass
For saying daily mass!

Penitence auricular
Is grievous in particular
They'll haul me into court
Uncivil last resort

On these I will not budge
Not back to that old drudge
Which was once the deadly, boring liturgy;
No more, since came Newman, Keble, Pusey.

GEO-POLITICAL SICKNESS

I have discovered that a prime reason for not feeling well, for feeling a general nausea, is that I am reading the newspapers.

In particular, I have been reasoning about the President of the United States declaring unequivocally that he wants to initiate World War III.

He is going to bring this about by attacking Iran. My complexion is green.

Nobody else wants this to happen, except Israel. As to the Middle East there is some doubt whether Israel is supporting the USA in further destruction of the Arab nations or the USA is supporting Israel. It is a moot point who is calling the shots in Washington as everybody knows.

Certainly God does not want this to happen; the bombing of Iran, that is. St. Francis doesn't want this to happen.

Let's take Francis first. Francis was into little things; things of today, things you could reach out and touch, things that were immediate. Like Jesus, Francis was not interested in things several removes away such as "taking thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink and what ye shall put on". George W. Bush, however, and his neo-cons, disdain the present (which they can know) in favour of the future (which they cannot know). And so we read of great plans to destroy 134 (plus or minus) sites of nuclear production in Iran in the days to come; we do not read about conversations today between world leaders and the leaders of the next target of USA military power. That is what is so terribly un-Franciscan about geopolitics right now. It's "Shoot now, talk later".

It is as if the Devil is not the once-great archangel, but a little boy, intent on

mischievous and wanting to do something memorable in the short time still available to him. Even if it's a thing of astonishing stupidity.

Francis would walk across the sand and start a conversation. Francis would speak peace. Unfortunately, George stays in the White House and speaks war.

That's what turns my stomach. It is the lack of common sense and decency in these affairs. One comes to recognize imbecility in one's enemies; it is sickening to find it among one's friends.

As for God, our nausea is nothing compared to God's rage. The Bible knows quite a bit about "wrath" when God is thwarted. Is that what we can expect: God's anger against the USA and Israel? Once the torch bearer for God, but now turned in disobedience?

Could we expect God, therefore, to destroy the USA over the horrors which have been perpetrated or contemplated publicly?

One might say, "Yes". We see that God is already undoing the USA. Think of the truths that were revealed by Katrina. Think of the debt of the world's richest nation. Think of the scorn expressed throughout the world towards a nation that could have been the herald of peace. Think of the persistent hypocrisy over the oft-promised justice for Palestine and the formation of a Palestinian state. Think of 9/11. Think of the fear which awakens many American citizens, think of porous borders and elements of lawlessness in the population. Think of the love of violence displayed from the President down.

But God is not predictable. God changes the divine mind. Nineva is to be destroyed in the morning but by the evening it has repented and God is merciful. God consults widely. God listens to everyone; people and rulers, victims and criminals. For this reason God is slow to act as decisively as we think advisable, more slowly than, say, George W. Bush. George is a lot faster than God at deciding to drop bombs. When God decides for war it is because the time for consultation is over and because the injustice of a given situation is unbearable in heaven and because the toppling of a human warmonger is the only way towards peace and justice. So it was in 1939.

So God is slow to declare war on Iran (or Iraq) and slow to declare war on the USA. God gives both a multitude of signs and those who have eyes may see them and repent.

God cannot be taken for granted. There is no telling what God can and will do. God is sovereign. Therefore be careful, be prayerful; be slow to judge and quick to praise. And to make friends with one's enemies.

BUSH'S FOLLY

How vain a thing to think you pre-empt God!
To think that you can get there first of all,
And beat the very Maker to the ball
And play your game on someone else's sod.

For God is everywhere that God has made
The Presence goes before and after stays
God hears the cries, the hopes of every day
God's love is there, to give them sun and shade

But here you come propelled by long range fears
Is tomorrow's thought sufficient to suffice?
Carelessly, without authority, you throw the dice
And bring so many innocent to tears.

Think you that you are the foremost earthly power?
You have no shield from God's hot, brimstone shower

SHRINKING YOUR FOOTPRINT

1. Shorter car trips. Fewer car trips. For me this means not driving the 75 k into Winnipeg. (Saves money too)
2. Upgrade your furnace. Costs money but it uses much less fuel to heat the house in wintertime. So they promise.
3. Wear a sweater inside and turn the thermostat down a degree or so.
4. Check heat leaks in your house. Use plastic "windows" for a double pane effect
5. Change to efficiency light bulbs.
6. Recycle
7. Use less paper. Save paper printed on one side for use on the other side later.
8. Make shopping lists for things you'll need tomorrow and not just for today. This goes with (1) above.
9. Wear long johns. No one will know.
10. Use emails everywhere possible. Snail mail uses paper, handlers, energy.
11. Fix dripping taps.