

For my bedtime reading last night I read an article on monitoring the Holly Blue butterfly, *Celastrina argiolus* and its parasitoids, in Bedfordshire 1990-1923 by the late Richard Revels an astute observer and superb photographer. We have the Holly Blue here in our garden. It needs both holly and ivy if its two or more broods are to survive. Some years it's abundant, others not; and this follows a pattern of parasitisation. There's a wasp that lays eggs on its larvae which eat the caterpillar from the inside out and there's yet another wasp which seeks out these parasitical larvae and lays its eggs on the larvae of the other wasp. It's a hyper-parasitoid, so the Holly Blue has a lot to put up with and this is true of all creation. It works because of the tension between all the opposing forces, like the lyre of Heraclitus or the bow and its arrow. It's all a matter of tone or tautness or in the words once more of Ian McGilchrist:

If the opposing forces in lyre or bow simply annulled one another the string would go slack – no 'tonus' and nothing, no flight of notes, no arrow's flight – could come from either.

Life depends on opposing forces. It's why we are here, now, acutely aware that we are subject to opposing forces and asking God's help not to dispel the tension but to survive it: that tension between inner and outer demands, to make sure that what we believe in our hearts finds expression in our actions: that our actions in short are not merely a display of religiosity but come from a true devotion to the good, to our God, to the Christ willing to live that tension in us if we allow it. That tension that will wound us as it works; will indeed appear in us as both wounds of weakness and wounds of love. I have in mind here a quote from the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey:

It can be possible to accept even the pain of disunity as a part of the Passion of Christ

We strive for unity because we know the pain of disunity, or, as he goes on to say:

The true credentials of the Anglican Church are its incompleteness, with the tension and travail in its soul.

This is true of us here today beginning a Lent of return to the Lord because we know our own incompleteness. *O felix culpa* also comes to mind. This is not an invitation to sin but to live the tension, knowing that Christ has already lived it for us, and will live it in us again.

Then the Lord, jealous on behalf of his land, took pity on his people Joel 2:18.

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