

The Church of Morons and Popinjays

In Winchester recently I was struck once again by the aesthetic incompetence – or is it vandalism? – of the Church of England. There is hardly a beautiful church in the country whose interior it has not wrecked or is not in the process of wrecking by its pursuit of false gods. If ever a Bolshevik government were to come to power it would find its work of turning churches into museums of religion and atheism half-done for it.

The interior of the cathedral was festooned with several dreadful modern artworks. There were stacks of horrible steel chairs and other things one expects to find in a furniture warehouse. There were many garish, brightly-coloured notices. There was even a large cardboard cutout of a dinosaur, as if the Church were making its peace with Darwin. There was a prominent notice warning people watch their step at the entrance to a side-chapel: faith, hope and watching your step being the commandments of the new religion, watching your step being the greatest of these.

The disregard of aesthetic considerations, the visual desecration, absolutely typical of the present Church of England (Winchester being by no means the worst example) seems to me indicative of a loss of confidence, of real faith. There is nothing dedicated to the glory of God because there is no God.

Among the many notices in the cathedral was one informing

visitors who was who in the cathedral hierarchy, just as hospitals put up notices with photos of the most important people in the hospital (Director of Strategic Planning, Director of Diversity, Director of Quality Assurance etc.). The men on display in the cathedral were all intelligent, almost certainly cultivated, several with doctorates: and yet they had presided over this mess, this aesthetic barbarism.

In a way it was only of a piece with what has been done to Winchester as a whole, by the barbaric or stupid city council (I make no serious allegations), in concert with the crudest commercial interests. A hotel of almost comical ugliness, the Mercure, stands just outside the cathedral precincts. But the ugliness of a metal-frame shopping centre a little further away is not comical, it is criminal. One would advocate its immediate demolition if one had any confidence that it would be replaced by anything better, despite the profusion of obvious models in the ancient city.

Is it any wonder that the people in Winchester – in one of the most prosperous parts of the country – dress as sobs and slatterns?

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