

Archbishop William Laud (1573 – 1645)

The Calendar carries a Commemoration of 'William Laud, Archbishop, 1645' on January 10th. It is not a special day or a Holy Day and Laud was not a Martyr, but that was the day of his execution by beheading on Tower Hill. Van Dyck's contemporary portrait shows us a thoughtful man realizing ruefully that his vision is not going to be accepted. To understand a life driven by ideals and ambition it helps to read a biography by Hugh Trevor-Roper.



But he remains an enigma because he involved himself in the stormy politics of his time. Born in 1573, the tenth son of a prosperous clothier in Reading he might well have felt sensitive about what we fashionably call 'his low origins' had it not been for the doorway opened by Edward VI's grammar schools to able sons of all parts of society, and from the local school he went, on a scholarship to St. John's college, Oxford. He read divinity and developed a loyal love of the Church of England and a deep understanding of the Prayer-book Services. His watchword was 'the beauty of holiness' and the development of ceremony within the bounds of the Reformation and reaching out to other ancient Liturgies even, it is suggested to elements from the Moorish Mozarabic sources.

This attracted patronage from high places. His 'intellectual and organizational brilliance' earned him a name. He was ordained Priest in 1601 and was soon recruited by the Bishop of Rochester, who introduced him to the court of James I.

By this time the battle with the Puritans was on. Laud fiercely defended the Apostolic Succession and resisted the Calvinist elements who were trying to infiltrate the services in country parishes. He emphasized free will over pre-destination and insisted on uniformity of services in every parish. This got him the name for "Popery" among the Puritans and he was soon involved in their political attacks on James I and Charles I.

Charting Laud's meteoric rise and fall is an emotional experience, like watching a really brilliant rocket. Between the age of thirty eight and seventy two he was Presidents of St. John's College, Prebendary of Lincoln, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, Bishop of St. David's, Bishop of Bath and Wells and Bishop of London. Finally, trusted and admired by the King, he became Archbishop of Canterbury at age sixty, twelve years before his execution. It is tragic to see him using his considerable political clout in the wrong way every time. Charles I seems to have been the determining factor in Laud's downfall. Laud actually encouraged him to believe in the divine right of Kings. While Strafford struggled blindly against the political dangers of Puritanism, Laud fought aggressively against their religious 'sedition'. He actually tried to force the Scots Presbyterians to use the Prayer Book and accept Bishops, a task as impossible as trying to slam a revolving door. He was totally unsuited to politics, never dreaming of using persuasion instead of making martyrs. His enemies easily loaded on to him responsibility for the uproar in Scotland, the Covenanters and the disastrous 'Bishops' Wars.'

Meanwhile the King's Servants were trapping the King. The new, grave lords stood round him with "the men of the new religion, with their bibles in their boots", menacing and discussing. But Laud loyally continued to support and rely on this King in danger, poor loveable, vacillating, Charles I, not the wisest fool in Christendom but stiff in opinions, always in the wrong, faithless like poor George in *Vanity Fair* and totally unable to protect his friends. He broke his promise to save Strafford from execution in 1641, and by 1645 was unable to push through the royal pardon he granted to Laud when the Long Parliament sentenced him to death by a Bill of Attainder, being unable to prove a charge of treason.

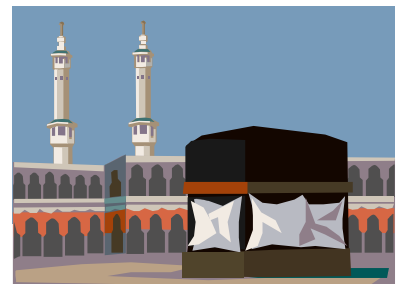
Perhaps William Laud had the last word, proving in his life and death the adage "No Bishop, no King!" Or perhaps the Website has the right of it, saying that his "attempts to bring uniformity of worship and the 'beauty of holiness' into the liturgy precipitated the slide into Civil War."

Mac McLaughlin

Eid Al-Adha

Eid al-Adha or the Feast of Sacrifice is the most important feast in the Muslim year. It is also known as Eid al-Qurban or al-Eid al-Kabir. It takes place on the 10th day of the Islamic month Dhul-Hijjah which is the last month of the Islamic calendar. In 2006 it will be celebrated around 10th January. During the month of Dhul-Hijjah millions of Muslims from around the world will make an annual pilgrimage or hajj to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Eid al-Adha celebrates the completion of the hajj rites at Mina and is celebrated 70 days after the end of the month of Ramadan and immediately after the Day of Arafat (when Muhammad completed the foundation of Islam).

The festival lasts for three days and commemorates Abraham's willingness to obey Allah and sacrifice his son. Muslims believe the son that Abraham sacrificed to be Ishmael rather than Isaac as is stated in the Old Testament. Ishmael is considered to be the forefather of the Arabs. According to the Koran, Abraham (or Ibrahim) had a dream in which he was told to sacrifice his most valued possession. He sacrificed his favourite goat and his favourite sheep but the dream came back again. He then realised that the dream was referring to his son as that was his most valued possession.



Abraham told his son Ishmael about the dream and Ishmael said that Abraham must do as Allah had commanded. Abraham blind folded himself and sacrificed his son. A voice from heaven told him to look down and when he did he saw that he had sacrificed a ram instead of his son. Allah told Abraham that it had been a test to see how much Abraham and Ishmael loved Allah.

Pilgrims in Mecca re-enact this story by slaughtering a sheep of their own. Many Muslims throughout the rest of the world also slaughter a sheep to remember Abraham and Ishmael's obedience to Allah. The family eat a third of the meal, a third is given to family and friends and the remaining third is given to the poor. Eid al-Adha begins with communal prayer at daybreak on its first day and people visit their friends and eat lavish meals. Children in particular are given presents and new clothes are worn.

Eid al-Adha is known as Hari Raya Haji in Singapore and Malaysia and as Tabaski in West Africa.

Christeen George

