

Lepanto

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 11 Jan 2005

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Alice K. Turner — 11 Jan 2005, 14:16

Andrew Bollen:

I've never read Chesterton before, but his "Lepanto" (below) surely is horrendously awful.

To which vizcacha replied:

I wouldn't say it's _that_ bad. Like Kipling, if you encounter it at a certain age, it's quite thrilling. It also works better if you recite it out loud; the alliteration and meter are stirring. Or at least I remember these impressions from when I was a certain age. Check out _The Man Who Was Thursday_, or a light dose of Father Brown if you want something by Chesterton that you might enjoy more.

Oh, I agree completely. This kind of writing is completely out of fashion now, but "Lepanto" is actually a fine example of robust Victorian jingoism, or, from Orwell's point of view, admiration for Catholic conquistadores. But you really have to admire the nerve of:

Love-light of Spain--hurrah!
Death-light of Africa!
Don John of Austria
Is riding to the sea.

At least when read aloud. Nobody mentioned, btw, what a splendid piece of invective prose the Orwell excerpt is, so I will.

-alga

Stanisław Bocian — 11 Jan 2005, 15:10 · in reply to Alice K. Turner

Tuesday, January 11, 2005, 11:16:46 PM, Alice K. Turner wrote:

AKT> Oh, I agree completely. This kind of writing is completely out of fashion AKT> now, but "Lepanto" is actually a fine example of robust Victorian jingoism, AKT> or, from Orwell's point of view, admiration for Catholic conquistadores. But AKT> you really have to admire the nerve of:

AKT> Love-light of Spain--hurrah!
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AKT> -alga

I am sorry to disappoint you, but battle of Lepanto had nothing to do with the conquisadors,

except that most Christian soldiers there were Spanish. It was a defensive battle against Turkey. If you think that Europeans having a temerity to defend themselves against an Islamic barbarous invasion constitutes robust Victorian jingoism, I can say nothing more.

I use the word barbarous deliberately. When Famagusta surrendered to the Turks, they made a drum of the skin of the commander.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica

Lepanto, Battle of

(Oct. 7, 1571), naval engagement between allied Christian forces and the Ottoman Turks during an Ottoman campaign to acquire the Venetian island of Cyprus. Seeking to drive Venice from the eastern Mediterranean, the forces of Sultan Selim II invaded Cyprus in 1570. The Venetians formed an alliance with Pope Pius V and Philip II of Spain (May 25, 1571). Philip sent his half brother, Don John of Austria, to command the allied forces. By the time the allies assembled at Messina, Sicily (Aug. 24, 1571), the Turks had captured Nicosia (Sept. 9, 1570), besieged Famagusta, and entered the Adriatic. Their fleet lay in the Gulf of Patras, near Lepanto (Návpaktos), Greece. The allied fleet of more than 200 ships sailed for Corfu on September 15 and on October 7 advanced in four squadrons against the Ottoman fleet, commanded by Ali Paşa, Muḥammad Saulak (governor of Alexandria), and Uluj Ali (dey of Algiers). After about four hours of fighting, the allies were victorious, capturing 117 galleys and thousands of men. Of little practical value (Venice surrendered Cyprus to the Turks in 1573), the battle had a great impact on European morale and was the subject of paintings by Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese.

Stanislaus Bocian