

GLIMPSE

Between a Rock

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Perhaps you have visited Mount Rushmore near Rapid City, South Dakota. Carved upon a granite shield are four faces of former presidents of the United States. It is named after a New York attorney who while touring the area, just named it for himself. Years later a man, Gutzon Borglum got the idea and had enough money to begin this project. He ran into plenty of resistance from state officials who refused him any funding. The granite also offered him and his engineers even plenty more resistance.

He began by drilling two holes into the stone while being lowered by ropes down the side. Imagine using dynamite carefully placed to remove thousands of tons of ancient rock. There were mistakes of course. Teddy Roosevelt's nose developed an unsightly crack and so his face is set back thirty feet from its originally-meant position. It is a monument to several things like the history of the contributions of four great presidents. It is a testament of American ingenuity and engineering power. My view is that it is also a celebration of what can be done in the face of opposition, and especially our own personal natural hard-rock resistance.

It is said that nature abhors a vacuum. Nature also abhors cultivation, trimming, discipline, stability. I picked weeds the other day knowing full well that the lawn had other plans. I could almost hear the grass laughing behind me. Artificial turf would eventually develop artificial weeds I think.

Human nature has its weeds, its resentments, its reluctances similar to our lawns and our mountains. It is quite healthy to know and accept our personal resistances and especially as we stand against God. Yup! We do resist God and God knows the fact and the various areas and, like the engineers on Rushmore, God reverences those sacred-to-ourselves hardnesses which are ancient as well. Art in all its forms cares for the fragilities of the medium. Clay, glass, wood, ice, wax, metal, stone, they all have qualities of fragility and strength which the artist knows, respects and works with. The real beauty of art is

what the artist can do with the medium, the material while balancing its strength and weaknesses. Whether it be the marble which became The David at the hands of Michelangelo or the hands which make a Stradivarius, the person of those hands knows and grows to reverently love the resistances.

We who are somewhat interested in the relationship that God has with us tend to dislike, even hate how we resist God by feeling so doubtful, distrusting, unforgiving-of-self, so frightened about our own goodness. No dynamite with us, no blastings and choppings. God reverences our humanity and invites us to do the same. We have weeds and would wish, at times, to be artificial. God labors within our natures and asks us to reverence our experiences of doubting, fearing, rebelling.

It took Gutzon the rest of his life and he failed to see it completed. But the artistry remains and so does the rocky resistance and both can be seen by thousands every year. We are God's work of art, but it does take time, patience and the humility to be of the earth ourselves. It is only a glimpse and what a sight it all is.