"Aftermath"
By Jackie Byers

life on the high plains is wind-worn
cleared by gusts that carry much away
scoured by in-line winds that blow
barns down

wind sound drowns
bird song, water rush, human
voices. . .

worse winds spin
destroying in erratic path--
terrifying wind
born in a wall cloud heart
wind without heart--
tornado

two years gone
a behemoth of spin
two-legged and a half mile wide
stomped across the plains
flattening
scattering
demolishing

it felled splendid trees
still in early spring leaf
trees planted by wind-scattered
seeds
majestic trees that climbed
skyward
sweeping heaven's floor

now, above ground, a strange
graveyard grows
huge trunks and branches
broken and grayed
stacked high

but nowhere near heaven
destined to be burned
when they are cured
not of disease
but disaster

when the funeral pyre
has reduced them to ashes
wind will scatter once more
--no seeds this time--
just tree remains

Continued on page 2
St. Boniface Catholic Church, Stuart, Nebraska
by Jeff Grinvalds

Now we have traveled back in time from the modern Wesleyan church to the classical Catholic church. I walk in and see the columns, ornate and marbled, the high vaulted ceilings and statuary statuary statuary. I am a bit awed by the extravagance of this little church in this little town. Really? Do we need all of these stain glass windows? Would the money poured into this space be better spent investing in the infrastructure of the town?

There are enough pews in here to seat the entire population (590) of Stuart, Nebraska. It’s otherworldly.

I investigate the statues and come across the Angel Gabriel with a curvy sword (I know the name, but it escapes me). Why must an angel in church carry a sword? Is he feeling a little threatened? Then I think back to my childhood, growing up singing the song, “I’m in the Lord’s army, YES SIR! I’m in the Lord’s army, YES SIR! I may never fight in the infantry, shoot the artillery, fly over enemy, no I may never ride in the cavalry, but I’m in the Lord’s army! Yes sir.”

We really sang that. And when you grow up you sing, “Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war!” on the way here we had a conversation about religion and violence. Churches, all Christian, fighting against one another. John Wesley himself created Wesleyan churches and Methodist churches. This endless splitting of faiths, like the tower of Babel, over slight disagreements in dogma, what does it lead to? He believes that, she believes something else. Stone them all!

Is it so one group of people can feel superior over another? Is there a natural inclination to faith that bonds people of like minds together? Does the faith inject itself upon the people or do the people create the faith?
Writing is a marathon not a sprint. Enjoy the run.

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