

versions of Pell’s trial and appeals, and the Royal Commission’s findings. Those who have read transcripts of these proceedings will find their knowledge enriched by Windschuttle’s book. For those who have relied only on the media for information about the saga of Pell,

BOOK REVIEW

Prison Journal, Volume One: The Cardinal Makes His Appeal
27 February–13 July 2019

Author: George Cardinal Pell

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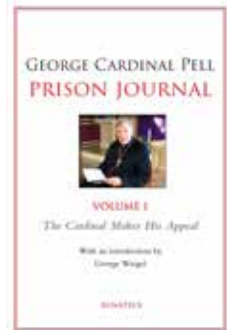
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Reviewed by Edmund Campion*

When Cardinal George Pell went to jail, he knew he must set up a daily routine to stop himself going mad. With a Jerusalem Bible he planned serious biblical study, first of the Book of Job, next Revelation. Also he had his breviary, from which the Office psalms and readings would afford him rich material for meditation. As well there were some challenging books to stretch his mind, *War and Peace* for bedside reading, a few magazines, a “prison rosary” and Sudoku puzzles. For exercise he could expect two half-hours alone in a small prison yard; and for relaxation Australian Rules football games on TV in his cell... Would these be enough? So, to maintain his mental balance, he decided to write a journal, starting with his first day in solitary confinement and kept it up daily, thus averaging two or three printed pages in this first volume.



Pell is a man of faith, which means that secularists will dislike this

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book while Christians may see it as spiritual reading. Seminary life was a good preparation for prison, he says. He draws strength from the redemptive sufferings of Jesus – “offering it up” in Catholic parlance. Jailtime humiliations, such as strip searches, remind him that Jesus too was humiliated (cf. Mt.26:67-68, Mark 14:65, Luke 26:63-65, Jn.19:1-3). There are telling images of him washing his socks or sweeping his cell and the exercise yard. When asked by jail officers how he was, he always replied, “No complaints”. Once, asked whether he was in danger of self-harm or suicide, he barked (his word), “Don’t be bloody silly”. No, jail did not break him.

Daily meditation gives him material for early pages of the journal, suggesting that he intended it to be a book of spirituality. Sister Mary O’Shannassy SGS, jail chaplain, brings Holy Communion twice a week and prompts him to watch Sunday Mass on his cell TV, where he sometimes follows this with the Hillsong program and, later in the day, *Songs of Praise*. Quite soon, shoals of letters arrive from sympathisers and even prisoners (these he answers quickly, knowing the joy of mail when you’re locked up).

The piles of letters open the journal to problems in the church, changing the focus of the book. There are few surprises: in this church the bishop is still the boss; and he dodges criticism of “the Vatican” by writing about the Pope, although he allows himself to criticize Papa Ratzinger for hanging round the Vatican in his retirement. He considers Trump a barbarian “but our (Christian) barbarian” and reckons him an argument against popular election of the president in a republic.

Throughout, his legal team has access to him to prepare an appeal against his sentence. Twice a week friends and family can make short visits; and he can telephone them from the exercise yard. On Holy Saturday (20 April) he receives a *Quadrant* article that reveals suspicious parallels between his case and maybe made-up accusations in USA. A fortnight later the appeal opens, closing the next day. Pell’s legal team and his friends are jubilant, sure that he will be acquitted. He tries to rein in his optimism but it is hard going when people learned in the law keep telling him he will surely win, 3-0. So the days drag on, with no result and this volume ends on 13 July, Cardinal Pell still in the dark.

Writing to his collaborators in last century’s *Bicentennial History of Australia*, K S Inglis told them to write about people who did not know

what happened next – that is, Cardinal Pell’s situation at the close of this volume of his prison journal. **We** know, but he does not, that 39 days later, on 21 August, the court will reject his appeal, 2-1. To learn how the Cardinal endures this disappointment, we must await his Volume Two.