

# ANNUALS

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Journal of Catholic Culture



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# ANNALS AUSTRALASIA

*Journal of Catholic Culture*

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[Sunday readings at Mass: Year A/Weekday readings: Year II]

*Australia's Oldest Catholic Magazine*

Published by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) since 1889.

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*Front Cover:* "It was an unexpected privilege when Blessed John Paul II appointed me Archbishop of Sydney. It is an honour to lead and serve such an important archdiocese, the mother church of all the churches in Australia. These have been happy years. My thanks go first of all to the Sydney priests and bishops. As always healthy parishes remain the foundation of all Catholic life. ... God has blessed the Archdiocese of Sydney in many ways, not least through World Youth Day in 2008, priestly vocations, a vibrant youth scene, through our Catholic university campuses, and perhaps above all in our Catholic schools, where academic standards continue to improve. Our schools are happy communities. The works of CatholicCare in caring for families, the disabled and marginalised people have expanded, while the offices of the archdiocese for social justice, life and family, and ecumenical and interfaith dialogue have gone from strength to strength... When in the Eternal City I will always pray for the people, priests and religious of the Archdiocese of Sydney. God bless, God speed and thank you. ✠ George Cardinal Pell – Excerpt from the *Order of Mass*, March 27, 2014.

**Cover Photo: Catholic Communications, Archdiocese of Sydney**

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**F**OR GOD has said only one thing: only two do I know: that to God alone belongs power and to you, Lord, love; and that you repay each man according to his deeds.  
– Psalm 61 [62]



In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and  
of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## A PERFECT END, AND PEACE AT THE LAST

---

**B**LESSED are they  
who give the flower of their days,  
and their strength of soul and body to Him;  
blessed are they who in their youth  
turn to Him who gave His life for them  
and would fain give it to them  
and implant it in them,  
that they may live forever.

**B**LESSED are they who resolve –  
come good, come evil,  
come sunshine, come tempest,  
come honour, come dishonor –  
that He shall be their Lord and Master,  
their King and God!  
They will come to a perfect end,  
and to peace at the last.

– Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman, 1801-1890 'The Shepherd of our Souls,'  
*Parochial and Plain Sermons*, Ignatius Press, 1997, p.1706



*On Thursday March 27, more than three thousand Sydney-siders farewelled their Cardinal Archbishop in a traditionally Catholic way – at a Solemn Mass celebrated in Australia’s premier Catholic Cathedral, St Mary’s Basilica.*

## CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP GEORGE PELL

Eighth Archbishop of Sydney

May 2001 – March 2014

*By Paul Stenhouse, MSC*



EW OPINIONS, Old Traditions. Catholics are not usually thin-skinned. They cannot afford to be.

The baptismal water has scarcely dried, the baptismal ‘brand’ – to use St. Augustine’s image<sup>1</sup> [of Roman legionaries branded so that they could always be identified] – has barely had time to mark the soul, before your average Australian Catholics find their ancient Faith being challenged, and Catholic teaching and traditions attacked in the daily papers, over a ‘friendly’ meal, in a school or university lecture or on TV or the internet.

Rational argument, and fair, open-minded discussion is welcomed. But Catholics find uninformed criticism, half-truths, and blatant bias and prejudice unacceptable, especially in a democracy, and more especially from publicly funded bodies.

The real or alleged failings of priests or religious, or of individual

Catholics, have often been held up as arguments against the truth of Catholicism. Yet failed lawyers or judges or doctors are never offered as proof that our legal and health systems are flawed. Nor are corrupt politicians used as an argument against the Westminster system of government.

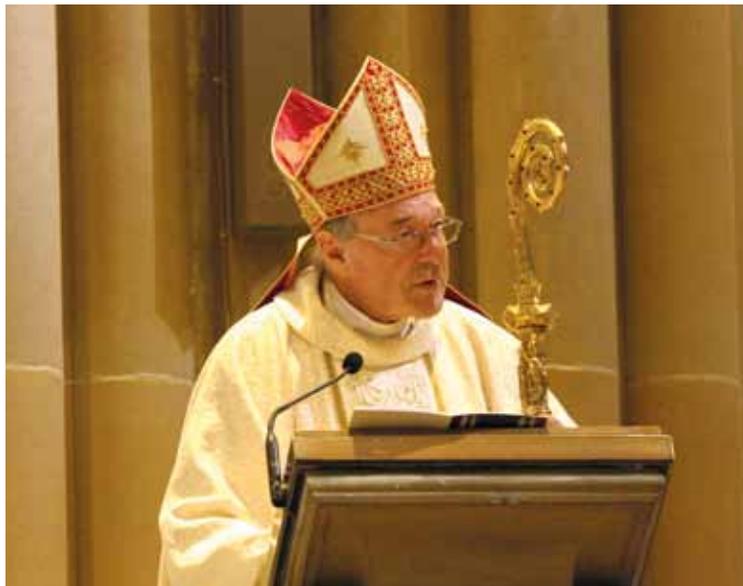
I suppose we should be flattered that the Old Faith is still worrying

Lord founded His Church for the lost sheep – i.e. for sinners. At every Mass that is offered throughout the world they confess that they – like the Publican in the parable – are the lost sheep, that they are sinners, and that they need God’s mercy.

Most of us know from experience how many people are made uncomfortable by talk of sin. Our mediaeval ancestors, much maligned these days, knew that sinners belong by right in the Church; and that it was not founded for saints, though saints are welcomed and celebrated. Sinners are the ones that need help – they need saving; and salvation is the ‘Good News’ that the Catholic Church has been offering since that first Pentecost.

Vatican II set the scene for a more tolerant attitude, but,

with some impressive exceptions Catholics continue to find their Faith and their Church presented as out of step with modern ‘thinking’ – for ‘thinking’ read ‘feeling’ – and held to be irrelevant in a world growing further and further away from God.



*The Cardinal preaching the homily at the Farewell Mass*

Photo: Peter Rosengren, Catholic Weekly

the consciences of many of our contemporaries who can’t stop themselves picking at it – rather like picking at a scab that bothers them, and forgetting that this only delays the healing.

THE CHURCH. Catholics are only too aware, and grateful, that our



Photo: Peter Rosengren, Catholic Weekly

*The Beginning of the Mass: the Cardinal welcomes all to the Mass of Thanksgiving. The Introit from Psalm 30 had just been sung in Latin: 'As for me, I trust in the Lord. Let me be glad and rejoice in your mercy ...'*

As I was writing the above paragraphs, it was as if I could hear G. K. Chesterton muttering through the ether or across cyber space – something about there having always been conflict between *new opinions* that most people never follow to their logical conclusion, and *old traditions* that even fewer people bother to trace back to their beginnings. Were they to follow the new ideas to their end, the Master of Paradox declared, they would be appalled. And if they were to follow their better instincts backward, they would find, as Belloc found, that the road led towards Rome.<sup>2</sup>

THE MASS. On Thursday March 27, more than three thousand Sydney-siders farewelled their Cardinal Archbishop in a traditionally Catholic way – at a Solemn Mass celebrated in Australia's premier Catholic Cathedral, St Mary's Basilica.

The Mass was offered in thanksgiving to God for our Cardinal's faith, vision, generosity, and untiring service as our Chief Shepherd.

In addition to these qualities we also celebrated his constant awareness of the importance of his office as Archbishop of Australia's first Catholic archdiocese, and that

he did his utmost to live up to it. He worked tirelessly to eradicate the evil of sexual abuse and to help those hurt by it, frankly acknowledging the painful lessons he learnt along the way.

Many of those present would have had first-hand knowledge of his courage – his refusing to postpone taking difficult decisions, his being accessible to the media, his willingness to confront his critics, and his refusing to allow media bullies to intimidate him.

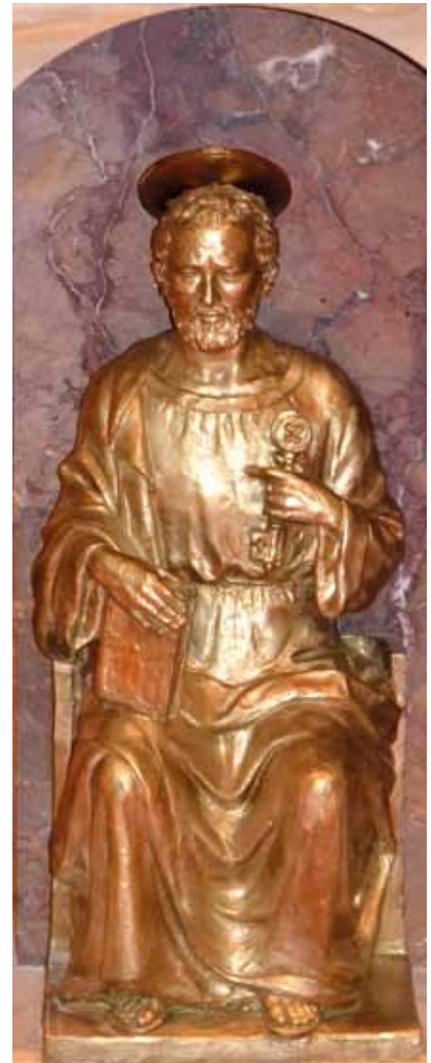


Photo: Catholic Communications, Archdiocese of Sydney.

*The statue of St Peter which, along with a similar statue of St Paul, is set into the front of the altar in the Chapel at Domus Australia, in Rome.*

The official Archdiocesan record will note that concelebrants at the Farewell Mass included the Papal Nuncio and twenty Archbishops and bishops, and more than one hundred priests. The beautiful Neo-Gothic Cathedral of St Mary



Photo: Peter Rosengren, Catholic Weekly

*The Offertory of the Mass. The Cardinal offers the chalice: 'Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you – fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink'. The congregation responded: 'Blessed be God forever'.*

– designed and built by William Wardell, and substantially restored and beautified by Cardinal Pell – was crowded, with nearly three thousand of the faithful.

The Cathedral Choir conducted by Thomas Wilson its director of music sang Giovanni Pierluigi Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli*. [Mass of Pope Marcellus]. The Cardinal preached the homily at the Mass, to spontaneous applause from the congregation, and Archbishop Denis Hart of Melbourne, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, delivered the Farewell Address on behalf of the bishops, priests, religious and laity not just of Sydney, but of the whole of Australia.

What the official record will not be able to tell you is the number of faithful who because of family or work-related commitments were unable to attend the Mass scheduled at short notice for 7.30 in the city centre that Thursday evening. It would also find it hard to quantify the degree of heartfelt sadness mixed with joy with which most Catholics accepted their Archbishop's appointment by the Holy Father as Prefect of the new Secretariat in Rome.

THE MEDIA. From 2001 until now, intensely personal and offensive attacks on the Cardinal's character and competence have been led by the ABC, Australia's national and publicly funded broadcaster, ably assisted, among others, by the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Melbourne Age*. Some of his critics, however, cannot disguise the fact that the *real* object of their venom is not the Cardinal but the Catholic Church and her teachings and tradition, and especially the authority of the Catholic hierarchy – Pope and Bishops.

On the day before the Mass some of the 'usual suspects' were rounded up and given a run in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.<sup>3</sup> One claimed that Cardinal Pell 'wasn't really a pastoral person,' and that 'the archdiocese became like a corporation with him as its CEO'. No one with any acquaintance with the Cardinal would find that credible.

*Eureka Street*, the Melbourne-based Jesuit Journal, carried an article that quoted an unidentified priest who claimed that many of the Cardinal's fellow bishops 'saw

him as too eager to please Rome, and too prone to do his own thing without acting in concert with them'. The author, and *Eureka Street*, apparently, saw no irony in this claim.

It should be noted for the record that had it not been for the Cardinal's unswerving loyalty to the Holy See and his fidelity to the core teachings of the Catholic Faith he would not have been the marked man he undoubtedly was – from the day he was solemnly enthroned as Archbishop of Sydney in 2001 until his farewell Mass a few days ago.

In the same *Eureka Street* article, we are treated to a description of the Catholic Church in Sydney before 2001 i.e. before the Cardinal arrived.

Allegedly, the Archdiocese then had 'a reputation for a pragmatic approach to Catholicism befitting the nation's oldest, largest and most diverse city. This expressed itself in a degree of tolerance for the innovations of its clergy, for a benign acknowledgement (in practical terms if not official pronouncements) that homosexuals are part of the fabric of the city's

Catholic community, and in a lack of enthusiasm for the old Catholic tribal displays of more sectarian times.<sup>4</sup> All this, according to *Eureka Street*, became a thing of the past when the new Archbishop, George Pell, arrived from Melbourne in 2001.

Am I alone in thinking that we are meant to find this reminiscent of the description of Middle Earth in *The Lord of the Rings*, before the coming of the Dark Lord Sauron? Tolkien, a Catholic through and through, and a daily communicant, would not be amused.

ROME. I was living in Rome in the 1970s at the height of the *Brigate Rosse* [Red Brigades] terror. Terror isn't too strong a word to describe the arbitrary and cold-hearted murder and mayhem unleashed by these young Marxist-Leninist thugs. They resorted to kidnapping, assassination and bank robbery to usher in a Communist Paradise for the people of Italy. Their victims were often chosen arbitrarily – carabinieri, journalists, politicians, wealthy middle class entrepreneurs

and innocent bystanders; and their every move was followed closely by the media.

## Collapse of Big Media

AT THEIR best, the elite media pursued stories of public importance and reported them thoroughly, accurately, and in reasonably fair and balanced fashion. And they did that a great deal of the time. They were never the relentlessly vigilant “watchdogs” they congratulated themselves on being ... Perhaps the urgent need to compete for smaller pools of viewers and readers also played a role in the rise of negative news. But to judge by opinion polls, the public wasn't impressed. The negativity, not to mention the arrogance with which it was often served up, caused many to tune out.

— Excerpted from ‘The Collapse of Big Media: Starting Over,’ By Terry Eastland, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 2005

At one time it was suggested that Cardinals might be targeted. Pope Paul VI lost no time in publicly reminding the Cardinals and their potential kidnappers that Cardinals wore red to signify their willingness to die for their Faith; and that no ransom would be paid.

The *Red Brigades* are a thing of the past. Rome in 2014 is different from Rome in the 70s, but Cardinal Pell has been made acutely aware that his Cardinalial red is not a fashion statement: it is a daily reminder that his life is to be lived and, if necessary, to be put on the line, in the service of the Church. He did us proud in Australia. We wish him every blessing and success in his important role as Prefect of the new Secretariat for the Economy of the Holy See in Rome. *Ad Multos Annos.*

1. *De Bapt. cont. Donat.*, iii, 16, 21; Migne, P.L. tome xliii, col.149.
2. ‘The Roots of Sanity,’ *The Thing*, Unicorn Books, 1939, p.182.
3. February 26, 2014, quoting a Father Daniel Donovan.
4. Vol 24, No 3, ‘Coming out of Cardinal Pell’s shadow’ by Chris McGillion.



Photo: Peter Rosengren, Catholic Weekly

Cardinal Pell greets the concelebrating priests who line the side aisle as he and the bishops process to the Vesting Sacristy, after the Mass

*Attacks on Christians and their places of worship continued to rise in 2013. Since 2007 more than 700 churches in Nigeria have been attacked by Islamist extremists wanting to impose Shari'a throughout the country.*

# THE PERSECUTED CHURCH 2013

*By* George J. Marlin



AS CHAIRMAN of *Aid to the Church in Need* U.S.A. (ACN), a Catholic charity for persecuted and other suffering

Christians, plenty of data crosses my desk describing anti-Christian acts. Here's a status report on a few of the oppressive hotspots in the world that have gotten little attention:

**Bosnia-Herzegovina:** Rising Islamic radicalism, particularly the growth of the Saudi Arabian Wahhabi movement, is driving Catholics out of some parts of the country.

In December 2013, the head of the Catholics Bishops' Conference, Most Rev. Franjo Komarica of Banja Luka called on Western governments to pressure his country's political leadership to grant equal rights to Catholics. Croatian Catholics are not equal in status to the other main ethnic groups, Bosnians and Bosniaks, who are Muslims or Eastern Orthodox.

Catholic refugees who are returning to their homeland have 'no guarantees for a sustainable return, no houses, no work, no electricity, no roads, no medical provisions and no schools,' the bishop said, adding, 'a Croatian

name is often a handicap in looking for work.'

According to Church officials, only about half of the 835,000 Catholics who had been living in Bosnia-Herzegovina prior to the civil war are living there today.

**Syria:** Christians continue to be threatened, are being driving from their homes, and are being murdered for their faith. In the City of Homs, for example, over 100,000 Christians have fled and



*The rebels may be gone from Yabroud, a former rebel stronghold in Syria near the Lebanese border, but St Mary's Melkite Catholic Church has been desecrated by the fanatical Islamists: icons with features obliterated, statues of our Lord, our Lady and the saints smashed, and liturgical books and bibles burnt.*

approximately 3,000 Christians have been killed.

In the first week of December 2013, twelve Greek Orthodox nuns from the Convent of St. Thekla of Ma'loula to the north of Damascus were kidnapped by Islamist fighters after the Christian town had been occupied.

The Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of the region demanded their release: 'we've now reached the point where even nuns are being abducted. What have they done wrong? It's a crime. The abductors want to demonstrate that they know no mercy.' He went on to plea for international organizations to commit themselves to bringing about an end to the war in Syria, adding, 'The Syrian people no longer believe this is a revolution or reform on the setting up of a new state on a clear foundation.' (Happily the nuns were finally released on March 9.)

Reports released in January 2014 indicate that approximately 600,000 Syrian Christians, a third of the total, are either displaced within the country or living as refugees in neighbouring countries.

**Nigeria:** Attacks on Christians and their places of worship continued to rise in 2013. Since 2007 more than 700 churches have been attacked by Islamist extremists wanting to impose *Shari'a* throughout the country.

Bishop Hyacinth Egbebo, the Administrator of the Apostolic Vicariate of Bomadi in Nigeria's Niger Delta – in the oil-rich but economically-deprived south – has said that Christians 'are confronted with the growing threat of radical Islam in the form of the extremely

violent anti-Christian Boko Haram sect, which was declared a terrorist organization by the U.S.?

Approximately 50 percent of Nigeria's 160 million are Christian; 30 million of them Catholic. In 2012, over 1,000 Christians died for their faith and in 2013 Boko Haram was responsible for the deaths of at least 700 Christians.

In a January 2014 interview with ACN, the bishop warned Western leaders 'Don't sit by while Nigeria disintegrates! Make sure Boko Haram is defeated. If Islam overruns Nigeria, the rest of Africa might easily fall prey to them. That would be an unimaginable humanitarian disaster.'

**India:** The government continues to be complicit in violence by Hindutva radicals in numerous states that includes facial mutilation, destruction of churches, and desecration of graves.

On December 11, 2013, protesters marching in India's capital, Delhi, demanding equal rights for low-caste Christians and Muslims, were victims of police brutalities. Police beat priests and nuns, and blasted the protesters with water cannons loaded with muddy water. Delhi's Catholic Archbishop, Anil Couto, was among the 400 plus demonstrators who were detained by the police.

In a recent interview, the archbishop stated that the denial of Constitutional Rights 'stems from the Hindutva ideology that India must be strictly Hindu and eventually become a Hindu theocratic state. Adherents propagate the view that Islam and Christianity came from outside the country; that these religions were not born here. . . . Christians in particular are discriminated against because there is a fear that if Christian *dalits* [untouchables]

are granted their rights many Hindu *dalits* might convert to Christianity?'

**Northern Arabia:** To end this sombre essay on a positive note, I am pleased to report that on February 11, 2013, on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, Bishop Camillo Ballin, Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia) received a written communication from Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa bin Al Khalifa confirming a gift of land upon which a cathedral may be built.

Last week, Cardinal Edward Egan, fellow ACN, U.S.A. board member Brad Miner, and I had dinner in New York with Bishop Ballin. He told us that 2.5 million Catholics live and work in his Vicariate, which covers 880,000 square miles. Most of the faithful are hardworking migrants (80 percent from the Philippines) who have come in search of jobs.

The new cathedral – which will be dedicated to Our Lady of Arabia and will accommodate 2,600 – will be a place of worship, not only for the faithful in Bahrain, but for the 10 parishes and more than 100 underground Catholic communities. ACN sponsored Bishop Ballin's trip to America to describe his plans to build the first Catholic cathedral in Northern Arabia. If you want to support this initiative or other efforts to help Christians suffering in many parts of the world, please visit [www.aidtochurch.org](http://www.aidtochurch.org). Our fellow Christians need your support.

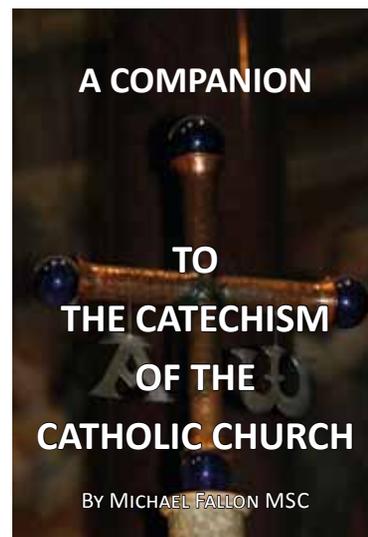
[See also page 43 of this issue of *Annals* for our advertisement for the work of *Aid to the Church in Need*. Ed. Annals]

GEORGE J. MARLIN, *Chairman of the Board of Aid to the Church in Need USA, is an editor of The Quotable Fulton Sheen and the author of The American Catholic Voter. His most recent book is Narcissist Nation: Reflections of a Blue-State Conservative.* © 2014 *The Catholic Thing*. All rights reserved.

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## God is not mocked

**G**OD IS NOT mocked by the denial of reason any more than by the denial of justice.

- G.K.Chesterton, *The New Jerusalem*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, London, [undated] p.124

*To see mankind's quest for God as nothing but a fantasy of some Mega-Alien, or the projection of repressed libido, displays not only small-mindedness, but ultimately a kind of mental squalour.*

## GOD, THE TERMINUS OF ALL THOUGHT

By Maolsheachlann O Ceallaigh



AS A RULE, the New Atheists' concept of God is simply that of some very immense and powerful being among other beings, who serves as the first cause of all other things only in the sense that he is prior to and larger than all other causes."

So writes David Bentley Hart in his article "Believe it or Not", published in 2010 on the website of the magazine *First Things*. (When the article was originally published, it led to a "flame war" of angry comments from atheists which ran to the hundreds. It seems the comments have now been removed.)

Hart is expressing a frustration that is (I think) familiar to many religious believers in their discussions with atheists—and not just with New Atheists, but with civilized and emotionally mature atheists too.

Time and again, we run into the assumption that the idea of God is a rather bizarre one, an idea that had to *come* from somewhere—perhaps from a "God of the gaps" attempt to explain the natural world, or from an ancestral memory of a tribal elder, or from some Freudian yearning for a father figure writ large.

There is also the common assumption that the desire for God is a substitute for something else, a sublimation of the sexual urge or (in the Marxist view) an opium that should no longer be necessary when our material and cultural and intellectual needs are met,

and when our social alienation is brought to an end.

A fulfilling job, ample leisure, plenty of sex, and no social injustices to fret about—and who would bother with praying anymore?

The hostility against religious education—a form of abuse, as some of the more bullish New Atheists claim—is that it takes innocent, healthy-minded, wonder-filled children and implants a mental virus in their brains. Without the interference of some crafty Jesuit or vicar, we are to take it, they would be happy with Bunsen burners and trips to the museum.

I find it incredible to think that anybody actually believes this stuff.

God is not an idea. God is *the* idea. The human mind—surely any mind capable of conceptual thought, in fact—inevitably moves to the idea of the primordial, the superlative, the ultimate, and God is that idea. God is the horizon of all ideas.

When a man looks at the light of dawn and is filled with a sense

of beauty, it is only natural for him to wonder whether there is such a thing as Ultimate Beauty, something more beautiful than anything else, something more beautiful than anything else *could* be.

When a woman feels utterly happy and fulfilled—say, she finds a new job and feels as though she is *made* for this job—surely it is not bizarre to think that she might find herself pondering happiness and fulfilment, and wondering if there is a perfect and definitive happiness available to the human soul, and if that feeling of being *meant* for something might somewhere find a satisfaction that literally cannot be exceeded.

When I think about the nature of intelligence, it occurs to me that intelligence is an apprehension of reality. But it also occurs to me that the perfect intelligence would not be a mere apprehension of reality, but would in fact *contain* reality; there would be no gap between the truth and the thoughts.

God is the terminus of every train of thought.

The idea that the yearning for God is simply a sublimation of some other, cruder or more prosaic yearning is laughable. Because if all our animal needs, and even all our higher yearnings, were satisfied, we would still feel a hunger for the transcendent, the sublime, the unbounded and the unsurpassable—what Saint Anselm famously described as "that than which nothing greater can be conceived."

This is why it is so ridiculous that a belief in God should be

### Through Christ our Lord

WHEN WE speak of Christ's priesthood, what else do we mean other than the incarnation? When we offer our prayers through him, our priest, we confess that Christ truly possesses the flesh of our race.

— St Fulgentius of Ruspe [in modern day Tunisia], 468-533 AD, *The Roman Breviary* for Matins of Thursday in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the year.

considered obscurantist, or anti-intellectual, or mentally stultifying. Because if there is no God, then mankind's intellectual adventure will inevitably end in anti-climax.

We may penetrate all the secrets of nature, but those secrets no longer seem as interesting or as significant as they did when they were the expression of a divine intellect, when something much more marvellous than themselves lay behind them.

To the religious believer, science and philosophy and aesthetics and ethics and metaphysics are all part of one harmonious whole, and each staging-post of truth is leading up to a dazzling "source and summit" (to take a phrase from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.)

To the unbeliever, all these different fields of knowledge are not only disparate, but they may actually be in *tension* with each other. The scientific truth about mankind's origin and destiny may be ugly and absurd, for instance.

To abandon the idea of God also means that we will sooner or later run into the brick wall of contingency—the laws of nature are the laws of nature, rather than the rulings of a benevolent Providence, and there is nothing more to be said about the matter.

The hard-headed materialist may shrug his shoulders and say that this is simply the way things are. But he is at least obliged, in all fairness, to admit that passing from faith to unbelief is not a mental liberation. It is rather a narrowing of our horizons, a lowering of our expectations, the abandonment of any hope of ultimate intellectual fulfilment.

To see mankind's quest for God as nothing but a fantasy of some Mega-Alien, or the projection of repressed libido, displays not only small-mindedness, but ultimately a kind of mental squalour. No wonder Hart's article provoked such wrath.

MAOLSHÉACHLANN O'CEALLAIGH writes for the *Catholic Voice* newspaper and blogs at Irish Papist ([irishpapist.blogspot.ie](http://irishpapist.blogspot.ie)).



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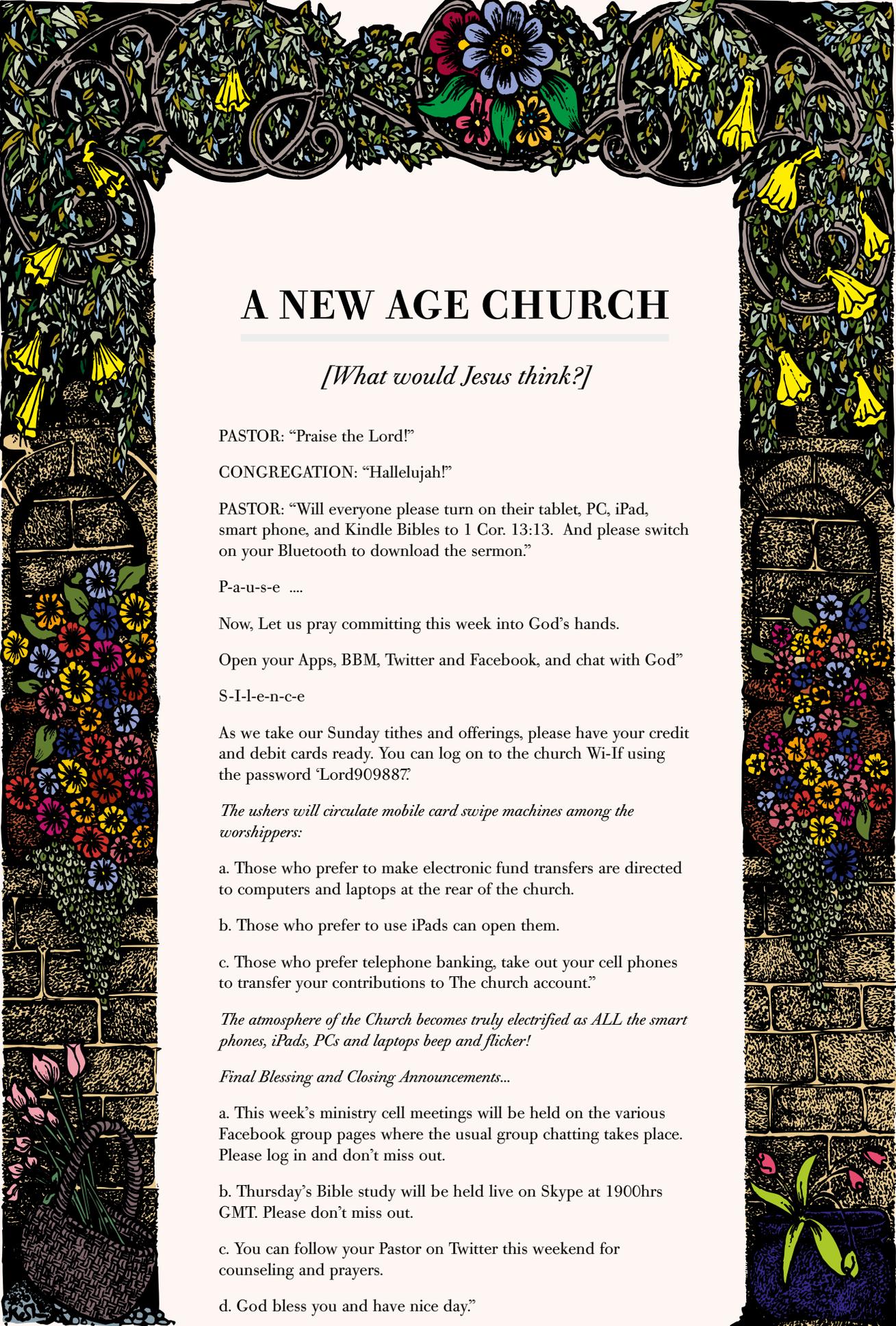
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– Editor, *Annals*

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2165 MR H IGLINSKI	67	2048 MARGARET LIU	7
2086 MR & MRS C J MATHISON	7	3188 MR & MRS C KINSEY	4
2100 MISS M P REEN	9	3189 MRS M ERNST	13
2100 MR P H DALY	17	2071 MR & MRS M KIRWAN	17
2150 MR & MRS P VAN TILBURG	14	6010 JANET KOVESI WATT	30
7018 MRS JANET GRUBB	17	2074 DR HUGH IVENS	17
7008 MR B J GILLON	22	3143 DES CARROLL	47
2031 MRS MARY CAHILL	17	4017 MRS MAUREEN McLAUGHLIN	4
2032 MISS A SLATTERY	50	4350 DR EDWARD TAN	67
2034 MISS C E BACKHOUSE	50	7310 P J BOLSTER	27
2027 MRS V DIGGES	17	4152 J A & J A VAN ROOYEN	4
2074 MRS PATRICIA LAWRENCE	20	3154 MRS E P HALL	17
2117 MRS N CARUANA	17	3204 MISS B FYFE	17
2125 MRS E MILLER	4	2615 MRS C A ROWE	7
2121 MR P F CROMBIE	27	7011 MRS J M BROOKING	17
2220 MR P A KELLY	24	2153 MR J WILKS	20
2233 MRS MARGARET O'BRIEN	7	2035 MRS J LONG	74
2261 MR RAYMOND NOLAN	10	2074 MR L M SCHAAFSMA	17
2627 MRS M MCCABE	17	2111 MRS M YOUNG	7
2753 MRS C BAGNARA	17	2125 MR E V KREJCI	7
3977 MR KEVIN HAM	33	2234 MRS P R TAYLOR	4
4178 CAPUCHIN FRIARS	10	2203 MRS P GEOGHEGAN	17
3338 MRS E TOPALOV	17	2219 MRS L CORRIGAN	3
5061 MRS E M WARD	20	2219 MRS K NORTH	17
2073 MR B A WHITTY	33	2350 MR K G SCHMUDE	67
2315 H L DAVIS	4	2525 MRS P BARRETT	24
2154 MR B BYRNE	17	4165 MRS DIANNE THOMAS	7
2113 MR C NIEUWENDYK	27		
2097 MR R F KEAN	27	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$1871</b>

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# A NEW AGE CHURCH

*[What would Jesus think?]*

PASTOR: "Praise the Lord!"

CONGREGATION: "Hallelujah!"

PASTOR: "Will everyone please turn on their tablet, PC, iPad, smart phone, and Kindle Bibles to 1 Cor. 13:13. And please switch on your Bluetooth to download the sermon."

P-a-u-s-e ....

Now, Let us pray committing this week into God's hands.

Open your Apps, BBM, Twitter and Facebook, and chat with God"

S-I-I-e-n-c-e

As we take our Sunday tithes and offerings, please have your credit and debit cards ready. You can log on to the church Wi-If using the password 'Lord909887'.

*The ushers will circulate mobile card swipe machines among the worshippers:*

- a. Those who prefer to make electronic fund transfers are directed to computers and laptops at the rear of the church.
- b. Those who prefer to use iPads can open them.
- c. Those who prefer telephone banking, take out your cell phones to transfer your contributions to The church account."

*The atmosphere of the Church becomes truly electrified as ALL the smart phones, iPads, PCs and laptops beep and flicker!*

*Final Blessing and Closing Announcements...*

- a. This week's ministry cell meetings will be held on the various Facebook group pages where the usual group chatting takes place. Please log in and don't miss out.
- b. Thursday's Bible study will be held live on Skype at 1900hrs GMT. Please don't miss out.
- c. You can follow your Pastor on Twitter this weekend for counseling and prayers.
- d. God bless you and have nice day."

*I first started learning to paint during my holidays from boarding school at the home of a man who lost much of the right hand he previously used for painting, during the First World War.*

## RURAL RECOLLECTIONS

by Giles Auty



**T**HINKING ABOUT *Annals* recently I found I could not remember when I first put pen to paper – or rather fingers to keyboard – for this journal, but I do recall it as being at a time when I still had lunch regularly with Frank Devine and Paddy MacGuinness, two of the finer journalists Australia can claim from relatively recent years.

If other well-known journalists were present in the restaurant, especially from Australia's radical Left, Paddy would always greet me when I arrived very loudly as 'comrade' and later lard his conversation very audibly with expressions such as 'come the revolution'.

Our lunches, in short, were always intended to be fun and were improved even further if the editor of this publication could sometimes be present. It was through the late Paddy and Frank, in fact, that I first met the late Christopher Koch – until recently a fellow member of the editorial board of this magazine.

Among his other more widely recognised talents, Chris possibly also had the finest grasp that I have ever met of the beauties

and subtleties of the American author Scott Fitzgerald's prose as exemplified in *The Great Gatsby* and the first third, at least, of *Tender is the Night*. Chris studied for some time in America and it is worth remembering here that 'Gatsby' was in previous times the favourite novel of writers as various as T. S. Eliot and James Thurber. Why is it that filmmakers have apparently proved so unable to appreciate the subtleties and utterly haunting beauty of Fitzgerald's writing?



Samuel Palmer: *A dream in the Apennine, 1864.*  
*This work is from a later period than his 'mystical' Shoreham period in the 1820s.*

In the last edition of *Annals*, James Conley wrote very movingly of "the role of beauty in the rediscovery of Catholic culture". To quote merely one line from his piece: "The experience of beauty is transformative. It awakens a sense within us that life is meaningful at the most profound level".

Most of us live today in a world so generally crass and insensitive that formerly emotive words such as beauty itself have become increasingly drained of meaning. In times past beauty was very widely understood to mean an inner as well as outer state of being. If you doubt me, re-read the novels of Jane Austen or, indeed watch the most recent filmic version of *Pride and Prejudice* which makes that increasingly forgotten point very persuasively.

But has anyone ever taken the trouble to explain that vital point to the tens of thousands of young women who expose themselves regularly on what is euphemistically described today as 'the social media'.

As I tried to argue in last month's *Annals* a parallel flight from belief in the importance of beauty in art may ultimately prove fatal to the entire future of visual art

in the West – if it has not done so already.

Before long I hope to divide my time more evenly between Australia and England and am greatly saddened by the mystery still surrounding, as I write, the fate of a Malaysian airliner. These were the people I always flew with from choice.

During our normal lives today many of us face regular stresses – such as flying long distances – which were largely unknown to our parents although in the cases of my own mother and father they faced the much greater ordeal instead of living through two world wars.

Where I am living at present is quite close to Heathrow airport and at certain times of day the sky is criss-crossed endlessly by vapour trails. In the recent fine, dry weather however almost every local garden is ennobled by outbursts of blossom and by exultant birdsong, stemming almost always from male blackbirds intent on establishing their springtime territories. Blackbirds are simply black thrushes, though the spotted varieties of the species seem to have vanished almost entirely since I was a boy.

As a small child I was brought up in East Kent during the Second World War and well remember the skies overhead being full of combatant aircraft although these hardly competed for me with my intense juvenile interest in ornithology,

For this, as well as my equally precocious interests in painting and poetry, I am truly thankful to my parents. Earlier today I heard the distinctive call of a green woodpecker – which is a fairly unlikely sound in an outer London suburb – and could not help wondering how many other people would have recognised the sound?

Years ago I also found the wing of a very rare butterfly indeed while sweeping up autumn leaves in a garden not far from here and asked myself a very similar question.

Both of my parents had a deep knowledge of and interest in natural history.

I first started learning to paint during my holidays from boarding school at the home of a man who lost much of the right hand he previously used for painting, during the First World War. Valiantly he taught himself to paint left-handed and constructively employed what

remained of his right hand, which included a hole in its palm, as a useful repository for spare brushes.

On fine days we would paint in his garden which contained a vast variety of shrubs and trees plus beehives and a marauding flock of geese. A wasp in one's linseed oil was about the height of life's inconveniences. At lunchtime his wife brought us honey sandwiches which were washed down with tankards of Guinness. Are such unlikely experiences still possible today?

My mentor used to approach me regularly with small plants of fine intricacy which he demanded that I should study in great detail. After such intense visual exertions I could scarcely keep control of my

bicycle during the half hour it took me to ride home through twisting lanes flanked by hop-gardens and orchards. The whole world seemed exultantly alive. Even the name of the village where the artist lived was a thing of timeless beauty in itself: Old Wives Lees.

During the past two years my wife and I have revisited all the most southerly counties of England from Dover to Land's End. At various times in my previous life I have lived in Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, the three most southwesterly counties, and have also made umpteen excursions of late into more accessible counties but have somehow until now slightly neglected Kent, which was my birthplace.

## The Collapse of Big Media

**T**HERE ARE many explanations for why Americans have been turning away from their old news providers ... But the media can also blame themselves for the change. Here it bears noting that though journalists aspired to the status of professionals, they never acquired the self-regulatory mechanisms found in law, medicine, or even business. The nation's journalism schools, which taught — and still teach — a craft better learned on the job, never really filled the void. Those schools often tended to hire former journalists lacking both the intellectual capability and the inclination to undertake serious analysis of the institutions whence they came. Critical scholarship by those outside the guild tended to be summarily dismissed, and the field was always thin on professional journals examining its practices and guiding ideas. Most of those that were tried — for example, I edited *Forbes Media Critic* from 1993 through 1996 — found no footing. Media criticism, such as it was, leaned mostly to polemics and insider chatter (news people are happy to talk endlessly about themselves, evidently on the assumption that others are eager to listen). Of course, the media did have critics who didn't publish articles — ordinary Americans. Too often they'd turn on the evening news and hear about conflict and controversy. It was as though news, if it were to be real, had to be boiled down to some negative essence, some clod of dirt that the subjects of a story flung at each other. Or they'd see an interview in which a correspondent would ask a nonquestion question designed to put the hapless interviewee in his or her place. Thus in 1995 did a CBS Good Morning host "ask" then-senator Phil Gramm of Texas, "If you really want to reduce the deficit, are you going to have to cut entitlements? But I'm sure you don't want to talk about that." Or the public would read news stories in which the writers took gratuitous shots at their subjects.

— Excerpted from *The Collapse of Big Media: 'Starting Over'* By Terry Eastland, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 2005 pp.42-43. Terry Eastland is the Publisher of *The Weekly Standard* and a member of the Board of Directors for the *Centre for Individual Freedom Foundation*.

Nearly two hundred years ago, when in his youth, the English painter Samuel Palmer lived in the North of that county in a small town called Shoreham which is near to the very famous Battle of Britain airfield of Biggin Hill. Sadly Palmer's mystical Shoreham paintings are little known in Australia, even among artists, yet they embody a certainty of God's benign presence in a manner which is virtually unique – except perhaps for the Australian artist Lloyd Rees's pencil drawings of Sydney made in the mid 1930s.

Because of the existence of the Channel Tunnel and easy access to the Continent plus the building of motorways – which did not exist when I was a boy – the character of the county of Kent has altered greatly in some ways but hardly at all in others.

Kent provided a convenient gateway to England for the Romans, of course, and when I was young it was still quite common to find coins and other Roman artefacts when out in the fields. In some areas the feeling of antiquity is almost tangible as is the singularity of the ambient light. In Kent the light is generally greyer and less warm than in the adjoining county of Sussex. Architectural styles are also different as is the proliferation of *oast houses*, where locally grown hops were once dried, most of which are converted by now into much sought-after dwellings.

Through excellent books of reproductions of his work I knew Samuel Palmer's Shoreham paintings very well even as a child and believe these awoke in me a very deep love of the now increasingly neglected art of landscape painting and of landscape itself.

As a boy I played at the weekends at a farm which was barely accessible by normal roads. The bus driver dropped me off at the edge of a field whence I walked into a hidden valley where all the important pulling work of the farm was still done by giant

## Challenging the Empire of Ugliness

ONCE – many years ago – a minuscule incident afforded me a deeply upsetting revelation. I was writing in a cafe; I had been sitting there for a couple of hours already, comfortably settled at a table with my books and papers. Like many lazy people, I enjoy a measure of hustle and bustle around me while I am supposed to work – it gives me an illusion of activity – and thus the surrounding din of conversations and calls did not disturb me in the least. The radio that had been blaring in a corner all morning could not bother me either: pop songs, stockmarket figures, Muzak, horseracing reports, more pop songs, a lecture on foot-and-mouth disease in cows – whatever: this audio-pap kept dripping like lukewarm water from a leaky faucet and nobody was listening anyway.

Suddenly a miracle occurred. For a reason that will forever remain mysterious, this vulgar broadcasting routine gave way without transition (or, if there had been one, it escaped my attention) to the most sublime music: the first bars of Mozart's clarinet quintet began to flow and with serene authority filled the entire space of the cafe, turning it at once into an antechamber of Paradise. But the other patrons who had been chatting, drinking, playing cards or reading newspapers were not deaf after all: this magical irruption of a voice from heaven provoked a general start among them – all faces turned round, frowning with puzzled concern. Yet, in a matter of seconds, to the huge relief of all, one customer resolutely stood up, walked straight to the radio, turned the tuning knob and cut off this disquieting *intermède*, switched to another station and restored at once the more congenial noises, which everyone could again comfortably ignore.

At that moment the evidence hit me – and has never left me since: true Philistines are not people who are incapable of recognising beauty; they recognise it all too well; they detect its presence anywhere, immediately, and with a flair as infallible as that of the most sensitive aesthete – but for them, it is in order to be able better to pounce upon it at once and to destroy it before it can gain a foothold in their universal empire of ugliness.

Ignorance is not simply the absence of knowledge; obscurantism does not result from a dearth of light, bad taste is not merely a lack of good taste, stupidity is not a simple want of intelligence: all these are fiercely *active* forces, that angrily assert themselves on every occasion; they tolerate no challenge to their omnipresent rule. In every department of the human endeavour, inspired talent is an intolerable insult to mediocrity.

If this is true in the realm of aesthetics, it is even more true in the world of ethics. More than artistic beauty, moral beauty seems to exasperate our sorry species. The need to bring down to our own wretched level, to deface, to deride and debunk any splendour that is towering above us is probably the saddest urge of human nature.

— From Simon Leys, 'An Empire of Ugliness,' *The Angel and the Octopus, Collected Essays*, Duffy & Snellgrove, Sydney 1999, pp.87-88.

draught horses. Looking through an old portfolio of my drawings the other day I came across a watercolour I made aged eight of the farmer's son and me sitting atop these marvellous beasts as they were led home from their day's labours in the fields.

GILES AUTY was born in the UK and trained privately as a painter. He worked professionally as an artist for 20 years. Publication of his *The Art of Self Deception* swung his career towards criticism. He was art critic for *The Spectator* from 1984 to 1995. He continues to devote himself to his original love – painting. He is a regular contributor to *Annals*.

*US feminist Jillian Keenan states that 'legalized polygamy in the United States is the constitutional, feminist, and sex-positive choice' seeing it as an unbearable restriction of 'rights' to prevent such 'marriages.'*

# MARRYING JUST ABOUT ANYONE

*By Wanda Skowronska*

**I**F MARRIAGE is not seen as the unique bond between a man and a woman, how can one argue against *any* group of people getting together and insisting they are 'married'? 'Gay 'marriage' is not the only option up for grabs – but also marriage between three, four, five or more people of any combination or permutation – whether, gay, straight, gender queer or transgender. While former US Republican senator Rick Santorum, among others, warned about the slippery slope if gay 'marriage' was allowed, the reality is that since then the slippery slope is becoming an avalanche.

A pro-polygamy website in the US declares 'Polygamy is the next civil rights battle.' What is interesting is that some feminists are advocating polygamy, as it is part of the right of any woman to 'choose' to marry whomsoever she wants. US feminist Jillian Keenan states that 'legalized polygamy in the United States is the constitutional, feminist, and sex-positive choice' seeing it as an unbearable restriction of 'rights' to prevent such 'marriages'.<sup>1</sup>

US Mormon Vicky Darger 'married' Joe Darger who has two other 'wives' and between them they have 23 children.<sup>2</sup> In fact one of the three 'wives' is Vicky's twin sister Valerie Darger. Although polygamy is illegal in the US, the government tends to look the other way in some states, seeing one woman as a 'wife' and the others as mistresses even though the Darger multi-wife group consider themselves 'married' to Joe.

Thus polygamy is not pursued as a crime in Utah, where some Mormon

groups allow it, nor among some Islamic groups, unless evidence of abuse, neglect or incest is brought forward.

As one of a 'three wives, one husband situation', Vicky Darger stresses it was a 'free choice' and asserts much discussion went into the establishment of *ménage à quatre*. She reassures us that 'consensus' amongst everyone brings on happy times.

There were no such happy times for American Susan Ray Schmidt who escaped a polygamous marriage as a sixth wife.<sup>3</sup> Susan says she was forced into the marriage at 15.

She was told she would go to hell unless she married her 'husband' who was a fundamentalist Mormon. Speaking from experience, she cites the confusion of the situation, the children not knowing where they stood in the family and the unhappiness among the 'wives'.

Susan finally escaped from this situation and is now a Protestant Christian who believes in the uniqueness of marriage between a man and a woman. She speaks publicly about her experience and does not tire of quoting Genesis and the divine institution of marriage with Adam and Eve.

Academic K.D. Ignatin who is executive director of *Americans Against Polygamy* has examined 200 studies of polygamous marriages across various cultures. She found that each study revealed negative psychological and social outcomes for both women and the children.<sup>4</sup>

In one study the majority of Afghan women interviewed admitted to great unhappiness in such situations. Interestingly Ignatin points out that the cultural practice of polygamy is still recognised by the United Nations as a 'human rights abuse of women, worldwide'.<sup>5</sup>

So if it is a 'human right' for feminists and a 'human rights abuse' for the UN, will this lead to a conflict between some feminists and the United Nations? While some would say 'perish the thought,' others might say 'bring it on.'

But why have complicated group 'marriages' when things could be simpler? Why marry another human at all when one can marry Gaia? There was a media sensation when on December 4, 2010, 61 year old

## Royal Robbery

**F**ROM ANY point of view the destruction of the English monasteries by Henry VIII must be regarded as one of the great events of the sixteenth century. The King sought to abolish the entire monastic system in order to add to the royal coffers and to break down opposition to royal supremacy. The Dissolution of the Monasteries (which term includes abbeys and convents), covers the four years between Apr 1536 and Apr 1540. In Apr 1536, there were over 800 monasteries, abbeys, nunneries and friaries that were home to over 10,000 monks, nuns, friars and canons. By April 1540 there was none left.

— Source: [http://www.tudorplace.com.ar/Documents/suppression\\_of\\_english\\_monasteri.htm](http://www.tudorplace.com.ar/Documents/suppression_of_english_monasteri.htm)

American Danny Bloom married his long-time companion and love of his life – the earth, more poetically named Gaia.<sup>6</sup> With a green fern wrapped around his balding head, Bloom kissed the earth and had some statements of vows made by himself and the earth read out. He asked that there be no wedding gifts but that donations be made to global warming awareness groups in various countries.

But why even marry another at all? Surely there is someone to love closer to home. So it turned out for 36 year old Nadine Schweigert from Fargo North Dakota who married herself in 2012.

Schweigert said she was tired of waiting for Mr Right to come along so she arranged a marriage to herself in front of 40 of her closest friends. Wearing a long peacock blue satin dress and carrying a cluster of white roses, Nadine said in her ‘commitment’ vow:

*I, Nadine, promise to enjoy inhabiting my own life and to relish a lifelong love affair with my beautiful self.*<sup>7</sup>

Lest anyone think this is restricted to Westerners, Nadine was preceded in her unusual marriage by Chen Wei-Yi who also married herself in a publicised wedding ceremony in Taiwan in 2010.<sup>8</sup> 30-year-old Dutch artist Jennifer Hoes also walked down an aisle to marry herself because she wanted ‘to celebrate with others how much I’m in love with myself.’ She has been married to herself for such a long time she just celebrated her ninth wedding anniversary. There are even websites, with a decidedly new age flavour giving tips to people who want to marry themselves but most seem to be able to do it without any advice from anybody. To date there have been no requests for marriage guidance counselling or divorces among people who have married themselves but perhaps it is just a question of time.

There is always the species divide which may concern some people, but this frontier has already been crossed. A Toowoomba man Joseph Guiso has ‘married’ his five year old Labrador dog Honey. Thirty of the couple’s close friends and other dogs attended



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the apparently emotional ceremony held at dusk in Laurel Bank Park. During the ceremony at which Honey wore a white cape, Guiso said to his pooch ‘You’re my best friend and you make every part of my day better’ adding that when he declared his love for her ‘She didn’t say anything so I took that as a yes.’

There are stories of people ‘marrying’ the Eiffel tower, trucks and Nintendo characters. If there is no recognition of the uniqueness of the man woman bond, the divine institution of marriage and its spiritual dimension, then morally relativist doggerel can justify



‘marrying’ anyone or anything. It can even justify madness disguised as tolerance and, as Orwell said in another context, ‘is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.’

WANDA SKOWRONSKA is a registered psychologist who works as a counsellor in inner city schools in Sydney. She has recently been awarded a PhD in Psychology/Theology at Melbourne’s John-Paul II Institute. She has done voluntary work for the Catholic pro life organisation Family Life International, and is a regular contributor to *Annals*.

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2. ‘Legalise Polygamy?’ <http://live.huffingtonpost.com/r/segment/516c1e0ffe34442d750007b9>
3. Ibid.
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5. D. Ignatin, in a letter to the Attorney General of British Columbia, Dec 13, 2009.
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*The Grand Mufti of Syria, Sheikh Ahmad Badr ad-Din Hassun consistently decries using violence to bring about regime change. His 22-year-old son Saria, a student, was murdered because radical imams issued a fatwa against his father 'because in their view I am betraying religion and am too moderate.'*

# SYRIA: UNRAVELLING THE SPIN

By Paul Stenhouse

**D**ESPITE THE euphoric celebrations that ushered in the third millennium, these first years of the infant 21st century have been far from promising. Whether or not it be true that Tallyrand said of the Bourbons that 'they forget nothing and learnt nothing,' were he alive today [he died in 1838] he would surely say it of our generation.

Our fragile world order is reeling dangerously from regular overdoses of *ad hoc*, short-term, usually military, solutions to age-old human problems. Because many of those problems are of our own making, the irony running through the spin that our leaders and the media put on our plight, should be obvious.

But it isn't of course. How could it be when short-term *everything* is the name of the game: short-term and disposable goods, short-term marriage, short-term belief, short-term 'celebrity,' short-term loyalty, short-term government, short-term truth, short-term job-security, short-term morality ... short-term memory?

We poor humans suffer from severe long-term memory loss which is not necessarily helped by the

plethora of social media that infest our homes, schools, work places and, dare I say it, our churches.

### War and its aftermath

Does anyone remember July 2003 – almost eight years before the so-called 'Arab Spring' engulfed Syria – in the aftermath of 9/11, the invasion of Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq, we were told that rebuilding Iraq's economy would take three years. It is still not rebuilt in 2014, and the cost so far has

and households had 7.6 hours of electricity each day, and one sixth of the population had potable water for two hours a day.

The Defence Department allegedly 'held decisive sway over \$45 billion [87%] of the roughly \$52 billion set aside for reconstruction in Iraq'. Billions of dollars were diverted from reconstruction to security in the wake of the abuses of Abu Ghraib which helped stir widespread opposition to U.S. occupation.<sup>3</sup>

There were exceptions to the widespread fraud and waste and mismanagement. The Baghdad railway station was repaired on time and under budget; and telecommunications repairs have enabled mobile phone use to climb from 80,000 to 23 million subscribers.<sup>4</sup>

That terrorists and other criminals were major beneficiaries of this enhanced service seems to have escaped the attention of the auditors.

The effort by the US to reconstruct Iraq after the ill-advised invasion is allegedly the second-largest such endeavour in history. The largest is what the US invested in invading and reconstructing Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup>

Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was quoted as saying in 2004: 'If you think we're going to



*Hooded Jihadists flaunting their weaponry in Aleppo, Syria*

been well over \$US60 billion!<sup>1</sup>

We were also told at that time, that 'electricity, water and health care would be back to pre-war levels in two months'. The U.S. was committed to spending \$US26 billion in Iraq on restoring electricity and water.<sup>2</sup> They had spent \$US15 billion by 2011,

spend a billion dollars of our money over there, you are sadly mistaken? He was proved right. Eleven years ago this month [March 24, 2003] the war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq began, and by March 2013 had cost, according to some estimates, more than \$US800 billion.<sup>6</sup>

The real cost is not in \$US. It is in human lives, dashed dreams and abandoned hopes. And it is incalculable.

### **'Birth pangs of the New Middle East'**

In an interview with Maria Bartiromo, in *Business Week*, July 23, 2007, the then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said 'I'm a terrible long-term planner.' She, too, has been proved right. Long-term planning still does not stand out as a top priority in Western policy towards the Middle East.

In July 2006 *TIME* described Secretary of State Rice's 2005 talk of spreading 'creative chaos' in the region as a 'bloody mess' if you consider Iraq, and 'misguided' if you consider the Middle East generally.<sup>7</sup>

The same issue of *TIME* noted that when the US tried to delay a cease fire during the failed Israeli military campaign against Hizbollah Lebanon in 2006, Secretary of State Rice reportedly

'explained that the violence that had already killed more than 400 Lebanese and turned more than half a million into refugees represents the 'birth pangs of the New Middle East'. She went on to reject the call for an immediate cease-fire on the grounds that 'whatever we do, we have to be certain that we're pushing forward to the New Middle East, not going back to the old Middle East.'<sup>8</sup>

These sentiments need to be viewed in the light of Condoleezza Rice's claim 'in an article hosted by the *Washington Post* in April, 2000,' that

'the anarchy that involves reforms and democratic transformations in the Middle East is a constructive one to the extent that it can create a much better and more acceptable situation

## **Islam and Democracy**

**F**OR ALL its casuistry, Islamic Law generally does not give detailed information about how its commandments should be applied. An example would be the liberty which is left to a Muslim judge in penal matters. His competence to pronounce *ta'zir* penalties [punishment, usually corporal] is not tied to any detailed norms.

The only secular intervention recognised by Islamic Law is the famous consensus of the Islamic community which is called *Ijma'a*. In theory *Ijma'a* is regulatory even of the Law itself. But in practice this universal consensus is impossible to manage; there is no way of doing it. The different attempts made by scholars to give it a more practicable definition have necessarily been vague in the extreme. Furthermore, it could be maintained that the true *Ijma'a* is a negative force supporting in this way the conservative spirit of Islam. Wherever *Ijma'a* is invoked to legalise certain new practices it is actually *custom* and *usage* -- disallowed by the Shar'ia -- that are in play here, and the arbitrary judgement of Islamic jurists declares that to be *Ijma'a*.

In our judgement the lack of means interposed between God and his Law on the one hand, and man on the other, makes the practical exercise of democracy as we understand it, illusory.

— 'L'islam et la Démocratie,' in *Analecta Orientalia Posthumous writings and selected minor works of J.H.Kramers*, volume 2, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1956, p. 169. Translation Paul Stenhouse,

than the one existing today in this part of the world.<sup>9</sup>

Which brings us to the so-called 'civil war' in Syria.

### **Death throes of the 'Old' Middle East**

Estimates of the numbers of those who have died in Syria since March 2011 range from 102,886 to 146,065.<sup>10</sup>

In December 2013 the number of wounded – many of them without adequate medical care – was estimated to be more than half a million, with half of the population of twenty-three million 'food insecure' and a third in need of urgent assistance.<sup>11</sup>

Try telling these victims that the anarchy and hatred that ruined their lives and continues to fill our TV screens nightly is bringing about 'a much better and more acceptable situation'<sup>12</sup> than the one that existed in early March 2011 – before the dogs of war were unleashed.

Try telling the millions of displaced and wounded – civilians and combatants – whose shattered lives, families, homes, businesses and futures give the lie to the cliché, that they 'are pushing forward to

the New Middle East'.<sup>13</sup>

In January 2012 – nine years after Iraq was invaded and only a few months after returning from Syria – while glancing through an Algerian newspaper<sup>14</sup> that was reporting on the so-called 'Arab Spring' in Syria I noted, as various side bars came up, that readers were being invited to vote in two polls being conducted by the paper.

The first poll concerned Libya. The questions were 'Was what happened in Libya a revolution? Or a coup d'État? 80% of those polled answered 'A coup d'État'. Only 20% of the readers who were polled thought what happened was a popular revolution – despite intense world-wide media pressure on readers and viewers to accept the fact that Libya was a 'people's revolution'.

The second poll concerned Syria. The question there was: Is what is happening in Syria 'a revolution' or 'an attempt to replay the Libyan scenario?' 100% of those who answered the question thought that what was happening was an attempt to replay the Libyan scenario.

I agreed then, and I still agree.

## Unleashing Sectarian Violence

Despite the post-invasion situation in Iraq described by *Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction* Stuart W. Bowen, Jr. – his final report on the US occupation is the source of much of the data quoted above – and despite the fact that radicals and jihadists with experience gained from fighting in Libya and Afghanistan were known to be armed and active in Syria in 2011, the US and the West joined the chorus of usual suspects calling for the downfall of Bashar al-Assad and his regime.

This is not to say that I uncritically support the Assad regime in Syria. Quite the contrary. But I know that Bashar al-Assad has tried under difficult circumstances to liberalise his government, has succeeded in removing the

influence of the Ba'ath Party, and introduced municipal elections and a new Constitution. His will to do this was well known to media and foreign governments before the 'Arab Spring' struck Syria in February 4, 2011, a week before the fall of Hosni Mubarak and almost six weeks before the events at Dara'a. A new *facebook* page – then only a week old – called 'The Syrian Revolution 2011,' already had 15,000 fans. This was taken by some as a sign that Assad's regime would be the next to fall.<sup>15</sup>

I agree with the Grand Mufti of Syria, Sheikh Ahmad Badr ad-Din Hassun whom I met in October 2011 and who consistently decries using violence to bring about regime change. His 22 year old son Saria, a student, was murdered because radical imams issued a fatwa against his father 'because in

their view I am betraying religion and am too moderate.' He is on record as saying: 'I see myself as the grand mufti of all 23 million Syrians, not just Muslims, but also Christians and even atheists.'<sup>16</sup>

No reasonable person could support jihadist fighters who now allegedly number around 100,000, and who belong to as many as 1,000 armed opposition groups<sup>17</sup> – many of them foreigners armed and trained by the Gulf States, the US, the UK and France – who are not fighting for Syria, or democracy, or constitutional government, but for militant Islam.

### Salafis, Wahhabis and Ibn Taimiyya

The sectarian Salafist jihadist element was present in Syria from the beginning. This was evident to me in October 2011 when I spoke with people in Hama who had taken part in the demonstrations in July that ended with more than 100 demonstrators killed or injured.<sup>18</sup>

According to a Syrian opposition journalist in July 2012,

The salafi narrative is the only narrative that will make any sense if you're a religious Sunni in Syria today. The salafis are all about one thing: Ibn Taimiyya, Ibn Taimiyya, Ibn Taimiyya. And what did he say? He said the Noseiris [i.e. Alawites *ed.*] are more dangerous than Jews and Christians; you mustn't trust them. Over the past year and a half, this has come to be seen as true by many in Syria. Also, jihad is a fundamental part of their beliefs; for a salafi, what makes you Muslim is your capacity to go and fight a jihad. So this jihad-focused ideology, which is anti-Noseiri [i.e. Alawite, *ed.*] and anti-Shia, becomes very attractive to a young Sunni man who's been radicalized and wants to get out and fight.<sup>19</sup>

The 'Salafis,' lit. followers of the devout 'ancestor' ['salaf], claim to be Sunni Muslims, but are regarded by many Muslims as akin to the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia: a radical sect differing from the majority of Sunni.



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Salafi Jihadis support violent jihad,<sup>20</sup> but not all salafi scholars approve of them. Ibn Taimiyya was a follower of the Hanbali school, like the Wahhabis, and, like them, puritanical in many of his teachings. He opposed the visiting of graves, beautifying mosques, celebrating Muhammad's birthday, and constructing mosques around the tombs of Sufi saints.

The radical al-Qaeda sub-group Ansar ad-Din that destroyed the Sufi tombs in the mosques in Timbuktu in early July 2012 were followers of Ibn Taimiyya. And Ibn Taimiyya was one of the models for Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of the Wahhabi movement. Taimiyya allegedly approved the killing of Shia and Sufis.<sup>21</sup>

### Telling it like it is

In October 2012 George Friedman presented what he called an 'Emerging Doctrine of the United States' in the Middle East. Concerning the so-called 'people's revolution' in Syria he spelled out what many had suspected:

'The United States wanted Iran blocked, and that meant the displacement of the al-Assad regime. [my italics] It did not mean Washington wanted to intervene militarily, except possibly through aid and training – potentially delivered by U.S. special operations forces – a lighter intervention than others advocated.'<sup>22</sup>

The foolishness on the part of the West and especially of the US, of siding in this sectarian war with the Saudis, Qataris, Turks and Israelis – all of whom have a major stake in what happens if Syria breaks up – should have been self-evident.

And, as if Syria's [and Lebanon's] woes were not more than flesh and blood could stand, we understand from *Reuters* – presumably from Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Yuval Steinitz – that Israel is technically at war with Lebanon and Syria.<sup>23</sup>

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*Always think before you speak or write or act or judge*

## THE SCANDAL OF FATHER BROWN



NOT MUCH more than half an hour had passed, between the time when Rock [writing for the *Minneapolis Meteor*] had telephoned to say the priest was helping the poet to run away with the lady, and the time when he telephoned to say that the priest had prevented the poet from doing precisely the same thing.

But in that short interval of time was born and enlarged and scattered upon the winds the Scandal of Father Brown. The truth is still half an hour behind the slander; and nobody can be certain when or where it will catch up with it. The garrulity of journalists and the eagerness of enemies had spread the first story through the city, even before it appeared in the first printed version.

It was instantly corrected and contradicted by Rock himself, in a second message stating how the story had really ended; but it was by no means certain that the first story was killed.

A positively incredible number of people seemed to have read the first issue of the paper and not the second. Again and again, in every corner of the world, like a flame bursting from blackened ashes, there would appear the old tale of the Brown Scandal, or *Priest Ruins Potter Home*.

Tireless apologists of the priest's party watched for it, and patiently tagged after it with contradictions and exposures and letters of protest. Sometimes the letters were published in the papers; and sometimes they were not. But still nobody knew how many people had heard the story without hearing the contradiction.

It was possible to find whole blocks of blameless and innocent people who thought the Mexican Scandal was an ordinary recorded historical incident like the Gunpowder Plot. Then somebody would enlighten these simple people, only to discover that the old story had started afresh among a few quite educated people, who would seem the last people on earth to be duped by it.

And so the two Father Browns chase each other round the world for ever: the first a shameless criminal fleeing from justice; the second, a martyr broken by slander, in a halo of rehabilitation. But neither of them is like the real Father Brown who is not broken at all; but goes stumping with his stout umbrella through life, liking most of the people in it; accepting the world as his companion, but never as his judge.

G. K. Chesterton, *The Scandal of Father Brown*, Cassell and Company, London, 1933, pp.26-28. Father Brown, as Monsignor Ronald Knox explains, was invented by Chesterton to be a detective with a difference: he had no knowledge of obscure poisons, or fingerprints. His special knowledge was of the human heart. See his introduction to *Father Brown Selected Stories*, Hamlyn, 1987, pp. ix-x.

*In the decades since Roe v. Wade, pro-lifers have taken the lead in offering vital services to mothers and infants in need*

## THE LAZY SLANDER OF THE PRO-LIFE CAUSE

by Helen Alvaré, Greg Pfundstein, Matthew Schmitz, and Ryan T. Anderson



ONE OF THE most frequently repeated canards of the abortion debate is that pro-lifers really don't care about life. As much as they talk about protecting the unborn, we are told, pro-lifers do nothing to support mothers and infants who are already in the world. Liberal writers such as Matthew Yglesias are given to observing that pro-lifers believe that "life begins at conception and ends at birth." At Commonweal, David Gibson, a journalist who frequently covers the abortion debate, asks how much pro-lifers do for mothers: "I just want to know what realistic steps they are proposing or backing. I'm not sure I'd expect to hear anything from pro-life groups now since there's really been nothing for years."

This lazy slander is as common as it is untrue. Of course, there is much more that needs to be done, but in the decades since *Roe v. Wade*, pro-lifers have taken the lead in offering vital services to mothers and infants in need. Operating with little support—and often actual opposition—from agencies, foundations, and local governments, pro-lifers have relied upon a network of committed donors and volunteers to make great strides in supporting mothers and their infants. It's time the media takes notice.

In the United States there are some 2,300 affiliates of the three largest pregnancy resource center umbrella groups, Heartbeat International, CareNet, and the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA). Over 1.9 million American women take advantage of these services each year. Many stay at one of the 350 residential facilities for women and

children operated by pro-life groups. In New York City alone, there are twenty-two centres serving 12,000 women a year. These centres provide services including pre-natal care, STI testing, STI treatment, ultrasound, childbirth classes, labor coaching, midwife services, lactation consultation, nutrition consulting, social work, abstinence education, parenting classes, material assistance, and post-abortion counseling.

### Not a Sedative

**A** CENTURY AGO there was a tendency to treat Christianity as a kind of social sedative that kept the lower classes obedient and industrious, and the consequence of this was the Marxian denunciation of religion as the opium of the poor. And if to-day we treat Christianity as a social tonic that will cure economic depression and social unrest and make everybody happy, we shall only ensure future disillusionment and reaction. It is impossible to create a Christian social order *ab extra* by the application of a few ready-made principles or by introducing legislative reforms. And even if it were possible, it would be of little profit to get the world to accept Christian economic principles, when it does not accept Christian intellectual and moral principles.

— Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, Sheed and Ward, London, 1935, p.121-122

Religious groups also provide crucial services to needy mothers and infants. John Cardinal O'Connor, the late Archbishop of New York, famously pledged to assist any woman from anywhere experiencing a crisis pregnancy, and the current Archbishop of New York, Timothy Dolan, recently renewed Cardinal O'Connor's pledge. The Catholic Church—perhaps the single most influential pro-life institution in the United States—makes the largest financial, institutional, and personnel commitments to charitable causes of any private source in the United States. These include AIDS ministry, health care, education, housing services, and care for the elderly, disabled, and immigrants.

In 2004 alone, 562 Catholic hospitals treated over 85 million patients; Catholic elementary and high schools educated over 2 million students; Catholic colleges educated nearly 800,000 students; Catholic Charities served over 8.5 million different individuals. In 2007, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development awarded nine million dollars in grants to reduce poverty. And in 2009, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network spent nearly five million dollars in services for impoverished immigrants.

The Catholic Church is far from the only pro-life religious group that assists the needy. At the Manhattan Bible Church, a pro-life church in New York since 1973, Pastor Bill Devlin and his congregation run a soup kitchen that has served over a million people and a K-8 school that has educated 90,000 needy students. Pastor Devlin and other church families have adopted scores of babies, and taken in scores of pregnant women, including some who were both drug-addicted and HIV positive. The church runs a one-hundred-and-



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fifty-bed residential drug rehabilitation center and a prison ministry at Rikers Island. All told, the church runs some forty ministries, and all without a government dime.

No major pro-abortion group or institution has taken on a comparable commitment to vulnerable Americans. Pregnancy resource centers devote significant resources to supporting women who have already decided to have an abortion, but abortion advocates offer no similar support to women who wish to continue their pregnancies. Indeed, they often devote their resources to shutting down the services provided by pro-lifers. NARAL Pro-Choice America reports spending twenty thousand dollars on "crisis pregnancy centers" in Maryland in order to "investigate" and publicly smear such centers for demonstrating a bias for life. (One might point out that the same bias once motivated the entire medical profession.)

If pro-life Americans provide so many (often free) services to the poor and vulnerable—work easily discovered by any researcher or journalist with an Internet connection—why are they sometimes accused of caring only for life inside the womb? Quite possibly, it is the conviction of abortion advocates that "caring for the born" translates first and always into advocacy for government programs and funds. In other words, abortion advocates appear to conflate charitable works and civil society with government action. The pro-life movement does not. Rather, it takes up the work of assisting women and children and families, one fundraiser and hotline and billboard at a time.

Still, the pro-life movement is not unsophisticated about the relationship between abortion rates and government policies in areas such as education, marriage, employment, housing, and taxation. The Catholic Church, for example, works with particular vigor to ensure that its social justice agenda integrates advocacy for various born, vulnerable groups, with incentives to choose life over abortion.

One of the significant ironies of accusing pro-lifers of being "anti-vulnerable," "anti-women," and "anti-poor" is that poor women tend to be more pro-life than their more

privileged counterparts. It is especially important, therefore, to offer them options that do not simply appeal to their economic interest or personal autonomy narrowly understood, but rather that accord with their moral outlook and overall wellbeing.

Abortion advocates, however, continually argue that one public policy in particular—further increases in government-supplied birth control—can become a panacea for high abortion rates. However, there is more than a little doubt about the claimed relationship between contraception programs and abortion rates. Rather, in the altered sex and marriage markets made possible by contraception and legal abortion, more and more women engage in non-marital sex without any “shotgun marriage” guarantee in the event of pregnancy. This leads (ironically) to more non-marital pregnancies, more non-marital births, more sexually transmitted diseases, and (irony of ironies) more abortions.

Figures out just in the past few weeks show that this contraception-related increase in abortion is not limited to the United States. In Spain, legal availability of birth control and abortion has drastically increased, with some 60 percent more women reporting that they used contraception in 2007 than in 1997. Over the same period, researchers found abortion rates more than doubled. The results of government policies promoting widespread contraception are clear: more of every outcome that birth control and abortion were promised to curb, including non-marital pregnancies, births, and abortions. Not to mention sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment; is it any coincidence that Planned Parenthood serves roughly the same percentage of clients for STIs (31%) as it does for contraception (36%)?

No one doubts that birth control used in a particular instance of sexual intimacy increases a woman’s chances of avoiding pregnancy. But the social policy of widely available birth control has been accompanied by an increase of out-of-wedlock births and abortions. In New York City some 41 percent of all viable pregnancies ended in abortion in 2009 despite the fact

## Growth in the Infant Church

I WAS convinced that, putting aside the extreme application of the theory, some kind of evolution is to be found in all developments of life. It could be no new thought to anyone who had read Thomassinus, as I had been led to do some years ago, nor to any student of S. Thomas, my favourite author, nor to any one who had read S. Augustine on Genesis. Dr. Routh’s celebrated saying, if it was really his, that there would be development of statement in the Church, carries with it the whole contention of Cardinal Newman; for development in statement of truth will naturally be coincident with development in the general life of the Church. I was prepared, therefore, to find something in the way of evolution in the Mystical Body of Christ. There would be growth; successive differentiations; such a thing as the Infant Church, as there was an Infant Saviour. I was prepared to see doctrines, held first in germ, gradually asserting their proper force and form, as the proportions of the Mystical Body enlarged. Amongst the Apostles themselves, all confirmed, as they were, in grace, there could be no need of a head for quite the same purposes as afterwards. And there could be little capacity of its exercise in days of persecution. Its true value would be discerned as the Church emerged from the era of tyranny and persecution and put out its expanding powers. The head, ever there, would come out to view, as need arose and opportunity favoured. And this I found to be actually the case. The headship of Peter is, as I shall presently show, clear enough in Holy Scripture and is exercised there; but, beyond Holy Scripture, it only appears in the scant records we possess on a few critical occasions during the first two centuries. In the third it becomes more marked. In the fourth it is making itself universally felt, and beginning to cement distant provinces under its binding authority. In the fifth it towers over the entire world, and is an acknowledged portion of that which had been ‘heard from the beginning.’

— Luke Rivington, *A Plain Reason for Joining the Church of Rome*, London, 1890, pp 6,7.

that the city distributed 40 million free condoms during the same year.

The insistence that pro-lifers make birth control the centerpiece of a pro-life strategy has reaped a three-fold reward for abortion advocates. First, its surface logic (“birth control equals no baby”) has blinded onlookers to the historical results of birth control as a social policy. Second, pro-lifers are easily tagged as “religious zealots,” ignoring the most obvious solution to abortion for irrational, theological reasons. Third, abortion advocates can claim to be women’s best friend—by increasing sexual autonomy—despite the dubious effects of their proposed solution.

In sum then, the charge should be laid to rest once and for all that the pro-life movement is not active on behalf of women, children, and vulnerable persons generally. Those bringing the charge—the same groups that do very little personally to help

women and children—should be held to account, both for their lack of real charity and for their refusal to acknowledge that their entire strategy—state supplied birth control and unlimited abortion—has backfired upon the very groups they promised to help.

While the pro-life cause has always been animated by the conviction that life begins at conception, it has never forgotten that it continues after birth. The pro-life movement’s message has been vindicated by 40 years of legalized abortion: the personal dignity, happiness, and prosperity of women, children, men, and the nation is advanced when life is cherished both before and after birth.

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*A Formation in Nihilism. it appeals to our lower nature, perhaps more than any other popular video game, by exploiting the alluring but short-lived thrill of 'being bad.'*

## GRAND THEFT AUTO V

*By Christopher Menzhuber*



WE NEED GAMES to play. “Play is a kind of other world, an oasis of freedom, where for a moment we can let life flow freely,” wrote Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, in his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (Ignatius Press, 2000). “We need such moments of retreat from the pressure of daily life if its burden is to be bearable.”

Perhaps it is a sign of how unbearable life is for many people in our culture that Grand Theft Auto V, the latest incarnation of the interactive video-game series first released in 1997, made over \$800 million in the first 24 hours after its Sept. 17 release.

Two weeks later, the online component of the game went live, and its millions of fans – or at least some of them, as Rockstar Games’ servers were immediately overloaded and most users found themselves frustrated by numerous technical glitches over the first several days – were able to gang up and engage in all manner of virtual mayhem.

Such is the popularity of this role-playing, “open-world,” action-adventure game that perennially receives wide criticism for its racy and violent content.

I grew up enjoying video games. I even have played GTA V, although probably not enough to have credibility with its fans and too much to have credibility with those who want to see the offensive video game

banned. But at the risk of provoking both sides, I would like to make a few observations about Rockstar’s newest record-breaking instalment of GTA.

A large part of GTA’s popularity has to do with the immense degree of player freedom it provides. The Grand Theft Auto franchise was revolutionary in establishing the “sandbox” format, where the player controls and modifies a graphical character – an avatar – who is situated in a detailed three-dimensional environment that he can freely explore at leisure.

Back in 2001, Sam Houser, one of the creative geniuses (or evil masterminds) behind the series, described the unlimited freedom within the Grand Theft Auto series

the game is the seamless way these are linked, and the fact that you can do them all at the same time – this is a limitless game world with action game play – the player has complete freedom to do things in a living 3D world. This is the new territory – no limits, but very easy to play, with a game plot that unfolds and draws you through the adventure at your own pace.

Each successive game has developed this basic vision of player freedom by adding on new layers of complexity as technology made them possible. The concept of “freedom” advanced in this game means players can do what they want, whenever they want it. They don’t have to follow a two-dimensional map or a plotted-out storyline as in so many other video games.

In fact, in GTA, a player’s freedom extends even to moral choices within the game: A player, through his graphic avatar, can participate in objectionable activities such as theft, fornication, pornography, and murder within this fantasy world into which he is immersed – and for many the experience becomes something of a virtual thrill ride. For this reason, GTA-V has been described by many fans in terms such as “narcotically fun.”

Not everyone agrees with that conclusion, however. Even other video-entertainment experts, like Greg Tito of the gaming magazine *The Escapist*, found that the “defining emotion” of the game isn’t “excitement or elation, but sadness.”

Not only is the game’s appeal built on breaking limits of convention or



*Grand Theft Auto V has been described by fans as ‘narcotically fun.’*

for the entertainment website IGN:

There aren’t that many single things that you can do in the game that you couldn’t do in another game in terms of the actions you do – fighting, shooting, driving vehicles, running, exploring, buying stuff, speaking to NPCs (non-player characters), watching cut scenes and so on. What is unique about

socially acceptable behaviour, but it also can be argued that GTA cultivates an appetite for such behaviour. In the world of GTA, once a player enjoys the thrill of one excess, he finds himself searching for the next. Think of Pleasure Island, the lawless amusement park from Disney's *Pinocchio*.

In the online version of the game, GTA-V becomes a virtual-reality environment in which a player's character interacts not only with resident characters programmed by the game's designers, but also with characters created and controlled by other online users – in other words, a virtual world populated by virtual characters who are controlled by real people. A player can use his avatar to fight, rob, or kill the avatars of other players or collaborate with them in such activities, almost as though he is indulging in evil pleasures vicariously through his GTA character.

Although GTA-V might be dismissed as only a video game, its implicit treatment of moral choices is relativistic and troubling precisely because it is so much more than a game, as most critics attest with their perfect praise. And unlike many other video games which also allow a player to engage in virtual killing and theft, GTA actually *aspires* to raise questions about morals and choice. This becomes really problematic when the context for exploring these questions is built up around the illusion of *my* freedom; a world where *my* will is complete and autonomous.

Law is viewed as a constraint on my freedom. In GTA, each choice I make is independent and complete in itself: It is not affected by previous choices, and has no effect on any subsequent choices. This opportunity to "choose between good and evil," even in a simulated environment, is easily mistaken for freedom, but in fact it is a parody of what freedom really is.

True freedom, by contrast, consists not in *being able to do whatever one pleases without judgment or consequence*, but in *being free to choose the good*. Dominican professor of moral theology Servais Pinckaers describes this "freedom for excellence" in his 1995 book *The Sources of Christian Ethics*:



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The greatest freedom is God's. He, being impeccable, is fully creative; his power has no interior limitations. The nearer man approaches to God through the moral progress that weakens his inclination to sin, the more he grows in full freedom, sharing in the divine freedom itself.

According to Father Pinckaers, freedom is a process that involves growing in virtue, where each decision is connected with others, and where the law is important because it helps us internalize right and wrong.

Choosing to sin, in this view, actually diminishes freedom because it draws us away from the source of freedom.

Some video-games producers are picking up on the idea that having a virtue-like moral system is engaging. Take for example, Bethesda Games' use of "Karma" in its Fallout titles. It is an imperfect model, to be sure, but in Fallout making a good or bad choice builds up good or bad "karma" with definitive consequences.

GTA takes a different approach: Instead of helping to form individuals

in the critical and satisfying process of making prudent choices and practicing self-sacrifice, it appeals to our lower nature, perhaps more than any other popular video game, by exploiting the alluring but short-lived thrill of “being bad.”

One might object that GTA-V is just a game, after all. “I know the difference between simulated murder and real murder’ is the chilling retort of fans who will also defend its corrupt notion of freedom and other objectionable content under the guise of being good satire (situations, dialogue, and sight gags in GTA often parody elements of popular culture, even of video-game culture).

Playing the devil’s advocate, one might even say the in-game choices which basically are “all bad’ and often lead to discomfort and sadness – for example, in some scenes the player is given a choice as to *how* to torture another person but not *whether* to torture them – demonstrate how the game is wickedly satirical about real life.

Being bad in real life, just like in this game, does lead to unhappiness, after all. So why doesn’t this complex experience deserve praise for being a dark work of satire displaying the frustration of a hedonistic consumerist American mentality? GTA-V is a formation in nihilism more than a biting satire because of how it subverts the very framework of truth, good, and evil.

Even good satire necessarily has to mock and display what it judges to

## Religious Freedom with a Difference

**H**E [Lord John Russell, British Prime Minister 1846-52 and 1865-66] attached great importance to his fight for religious freedom, by which he meant, to put it crudely, keeping the churches in their place. His own religion was a vague benevolent deism and he had no patience with deep religious feelings ... The most popular act of his life was not the Reform Bill, but the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill of 1851, which forbade Catholic bishops to take territorial titles of places in England - an odd way of defending religious liberty. Even odder, the last public act of this soldier of liberty was to congratulate Bismarck on his campaign against the Catholic Church in Germany. In fact Russell was a Protestant, in the sense of being hostile to the Church of Rome, but not a Christian; a combination formerly common, though now, I think, extinct.

— A. J. P Taylor [British historian, 1906-1990], writing in THE LISTENER, 20 March 1947.

be “wrong’ from within a framework of good and evil, of objective truth – something that doesn’t exist in the world of GTA. Or, as Foster Kamer, senior editor of the trend-watching website Complex.com put it: “The game itself seems to be goading you into becoming a vapid, violent, numb participator in a world where existentialism reigns supreme above all.’ The game “hates you and the world that created GTA V as much as it hates the world of GTA V,’ Kamer writes. By contrast, if Father Pinckaers is right, and freedom “develops in us principally through a sense of the true and the good, of uprightness and love, and through a desire for knowledge and happiness,’ then GTA-V fails to deliver a sense of true freedom both as a game and as satire.

In his earlier remarks about the necessity of “play,’ our Pope Emeritus was careful to caution us: “It all depends on what we are playing.’ The oasis of freedom in Grand Theft Auto V turns out to be a mirage. The freedom we long for has to be received from God; we cannot seize it for ourselves, any more than we can plan our own surprise birthday party. I think some of the many players of Grand Theft Auto V are noticing the joylessness that comes with trying to do just that, and I hope they are not so beguiled driving around in the world of GTA as to pass right by the truly joyful and recreative experience of God’s freedom.

CHRISTOPHER MENZHUBER writes from Minnesota where he is director of faith formation at Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Saint Paul, Minn.



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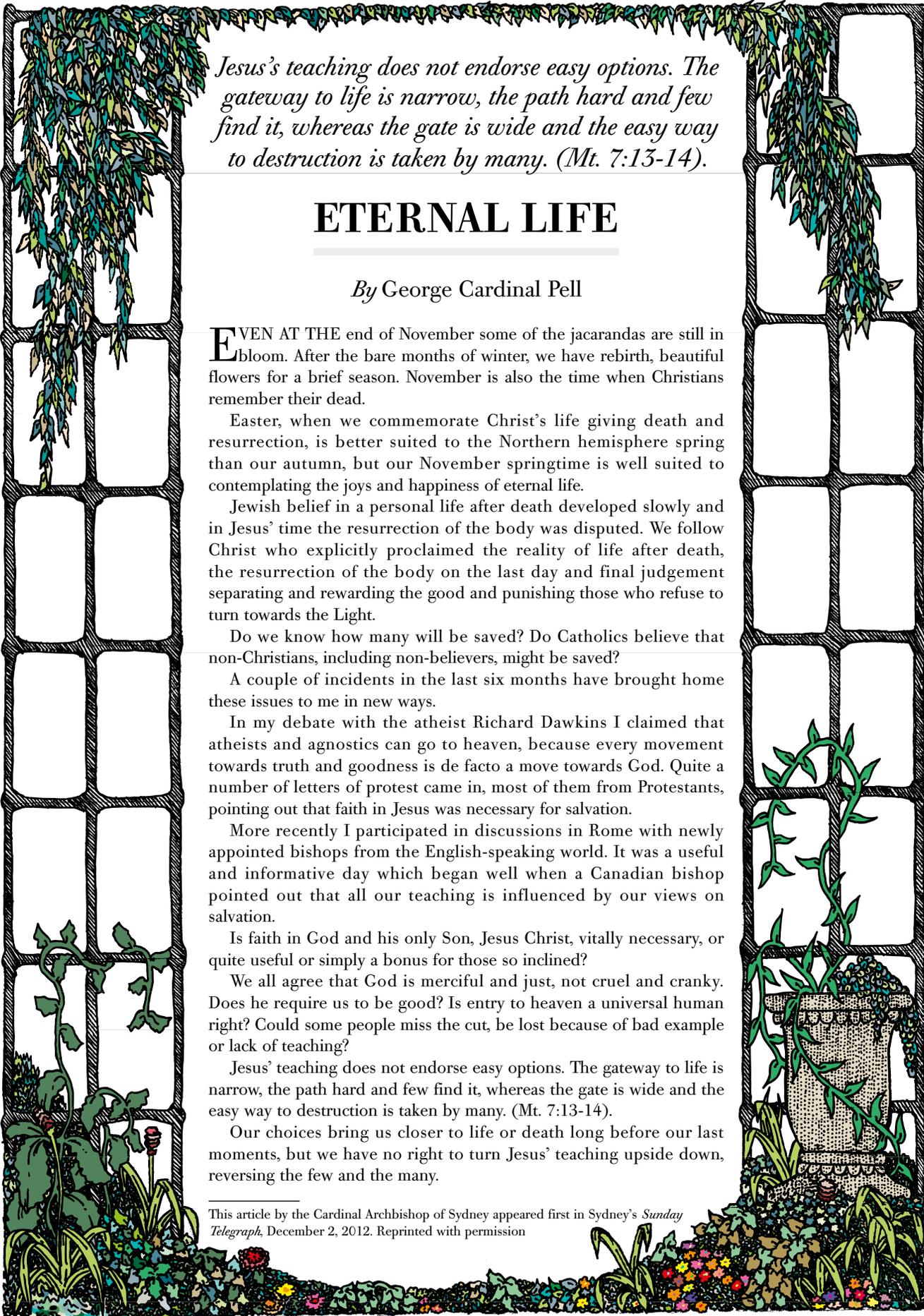
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*Jesus's teaching does not endorse easy options. The gateway to life is narrow, the path hard and few find it, whereas the gate is wide and the easy way to destruction is taken by many. (Mt. 7:13-14).*

## ETERNAL LIFE

*By George Cardinal Pell*

**E**VEN AT THE end of November some of the jacarandas are still in bloom. After the bare months of winter, we have rebirth, beautiful flowers for a brief season. November is also the time when Christians remember their dead.

Easter, when we commemorate Christ's life giving death and resurrection, is better suited to the Northern hemisphere spring than our autumn, but our November springtime is well suited to contemplating the joys and happiness of eternal life.

Jewish belief in a personal life after death developed slowly and in Jesus' time the resurrection of the body was disputed. We follow Christ who explicitly proclaimed the reality of life after death, the resurrection of the body on the last day and final judgement separating and rewarding the good and punishing those who refuse to turn towards the Light.

Do we know how many will be saved? Do Catholics believe that non-Christians, including non-believers, might be saved?

A couple of incidents in the last six months have brought home these issues to me in new ways.

In my debate with the atheist Richard Dawkins I claimed that atheists and agnostics can go to heaven, because every movement towards truth and goodness is de facto a move towards God. Quite a number of letters of protest came in, most of them from Protestants, pointing out that faith in Jesus was necessary for salvation.

More recently I participated in discussions in Rome with newly appointed bishops from the English-speaking world. It was a useful and informative day which began well when a Canadian bishop pointed out that all our teaching is influenced by our views on salvation.

Is faith in God and his only Son, Jesus Christ, vitally necessary, or quite useful or simply a bonus for those so inclined?

We all agree that God is merciful and just, not cruel and cranky. Does he require us to be good? Is entry to heaven a universal human right? Could some people miss the cut, be lost because of bad example or lack of teaching?

Jesus' teaching does not endorse easy options. The gateway to life is narrow, the path hard and few find it, whereas the gate is wide and the easy way to destruction is taken by many. (Mt. 7:13-14).

Our choices bring us closer to life or death long before our last moments, but we have no right to turn Jesus' teaching upside down, reversing the few and the many.

This article by the Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney appeared first in Sydney's *Sunday Telegraph*, December 2, 2012. Reprinted with permission

*Every day more than one million passengers travel on 2365 daily services over the 2080 kms of railway tracks around New South Wales. Among the one million passengers was Joe Meagher.*

## **JOE MEAGHER AND THE CHAMPION OF RELIGIOUS SENSITIVITY**

*By* Max Barrett

**I**T WAS a different Joe Meagher who rode the 8.05 this particular morning. He was vocal as usual; even vociferous. But different. He was provoked by a fellow-passenger.

His agent provocateur gave the impression of a man who had been doing university courses for fifteen years. The 20-year-old lass beside him was a regular on the 8.05: a delightfully bright girl with sunny disposition, a predictable smile and then – just as predictably – into the next-in-line of her endless Uni assignments. She changed her expression to a frown as the (mildly aging) campus guru gave tongue.

“The Third Millennium ushers in our second childhood. We are hobbled, positively hobbled, by an incredible accumulation of religious ... junk.” He rid himself of the last word with something between acute pain and

**F**ATHER MAX BARRETT is a Redemptorist priest now resident in Sydney. This piece was the tenth in a popular series that we ran in *Annals* in 2002, following the career of Joe Meagher over quite a few train rides. A number of readers have asked us to re-run the series. *Annals* is happy to do so and we hope that our new readers will enjoy Joe Meagher as much as we did when first we ran it.

disbelieving regret. Impressed with the sound of his own diction, he guru-ed on.

“They used to say that peasants needed religion to explain thunder and lightning. Now we know what causes these phenomena – at least, some of us do – yet the religious baggage goes unchallenged. We cling to this Christmas and Easter stuff ...”

His frowning companion interrupted. In controlled tones she said: “I love Christmas, and I base my life on what you call the Easter stuff, and I have an assignment to work on, so would you please ...”

That is where the morning started to go wrong for the guru. He had made a point this particular morning of joining the 8.05 train out of Cronulla because he entertained thoughts of impressing the lowly second-year undergrad. Her reaction was not as he had scripted the scene.

“Well, ho, ho, ho. Little Miss Middle Ages! How touching. And how correct.”

When the definitive history of the Cronulla 8.05 is compiled, it will be noted that this was the point at which the young man going on forty should have cut his losses and shut up.



But there is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, sometimes results in a painful dumper. His unfortunate come-back was charged with quivering tones of righteousness.

“It doesn’t seem to have occurred to you, my dear, that Australia is now a multi-cultural nation. Our current population includes approximately 400,000 practitioners of Islamic faith\* – I think you will find my figures are accurate – and they have to be considered. How do you think they feel about Christmas and Easter? What right do we have to marginalise them? Your convent education may not have included this type of sensitivity,” (in his lofty moments he sounded as if he had adenoid trouble) “and you might as well know: there is a movement afoot to excise, drop, banish these ... these archaic Christmas and Easter celebrations from our calendar. There is a movement ...”

Enter the different Joseph A. Meagher. The explosion which erupted that moment must have carried all the way from Como to Kogarah:

“O, infidel! Know you have trod on the toe of Ivan Skavinski Skivar.

Joe Meagher stood and walked steadily to the place occupied by the mogul of Moslem migrants. With his old-world courtesy he smiled to the flustered girl: “I’ve just vacated a place up there. You may find it more congenial? This gentleman and I have matters to discuss.”

The girl gratefully made her escape. Not that there was any chance of concentrating now; but distance from her patronising mentor had no uncertain charm about it.

The said mentor affected a contemptuous look and made to push past Joe. But, for all his seventy plus years, the man who stood over six foot tall had about him an unmistakable command. His adversary feigned nonchalance as he flopped back into his seat. At least consistent in not knowing when enough was enough, he attempted to retain the guru role.

## Truth and Taste

**T**HE WORD truth is often used without any understanding of the difference between ‘descriptive’ truth [the conformity of our mind with what really is] and ‘rescriptive’ truth [the conformity of our actions with what *ought* to be done] and without clear differentiation between matters of truth and matters of taste.

- Mortimer Adler, *Adler’s Philosophical Dictionary*, Simon and Schuster, 1996

“It may interest you, sir, to know that I am not an infidel, as you so crudely put it. I have an open mind and ...”

Joe began.

“You are an infidel, make no mistake. And some people with open minds need to have them shut for repairs.”

The regulars in Joe’s compartment folded their papers and leant back. This gave promise of being vintage Meagher.

“You favour the abolition of the great Christian feasts. It surprises me that, with your breadth of reading, you don’t appear to know a great deal about the founder of the Islamic religion.

“Mohammed had deep admiration for Jesus. He regarded him as the greatest of the prophets (next to himself, that is). I can’t imagine he would likely be signatory to any petition for the abolition of Christmas and Easter.

“You spoke almost passionately about respect for Moslems. You echo my sentiments exactly.”

The younger man looked sharply at Joe. Was this odd-ball setting him up? Joe was serious – and not a little sad.

“The Moslems who want to make Australia their home have a right to feel at home in Australia. They have a right to practise their religion. This is part of the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights. (That was adopted in 1948. I think you’ll find my statistic is correct.) Even more basically, it is part of the natural law. Follow conscience; allow the same privilege to others.”

The heaviness in Joe began to come through even more strongly.

“But the same thing is supposed to happen in reverse. In Moslem countries, Christians should be afforded freedom of religion. It doesn’t always happen.

“My son John spent two years of his working life in Saudi Arabia. He describes them as the two most unpleasant years in his life. His own description was ‘religious persecution.’”

The savant with the sneer interjected. “What of persecution of Moslems in this country? Broken windows? Tearing at the hijab clothing of Moslem women?”

Joe breathed heavily before replying. “In your rich array of tertiary studies, you never took a course in logic? No? Broken windows and targeting of people in distinctive dress are examples of unpardonable conduct; but they are not law. They are not the law of our country.

“I am talking about LAW.” (Joe held the word till it reverberated.) “The law of Saudi Arabia proscribes the practice of religion other than Islam. If that law is not observed, the ‘offender’ is put in jail and deported from the country by the first available flight out of Saudi Arabia. In the case of a foreigner on a work visa, his or her emoluments are not infrequently withheld.

“Coming back to your support for doing away with Christmas and Easter: do you know, I can’t bring myself to believe that our Moslem people have initiated any such proposal.

“I believe the push comes from so-called Christians. Retired Christians. Nominal Christians who have lost the Christian plot completely and who want to pass on such ‘benefits.’”

Joe reflected for a moment.

“You know, an interesting

thing about Mohammed: he never really knew Christianity. He was raised in paganism. The only Christians he knew were heretics ... Monophysites ... The sadness was that, from a moral point of view, these people lived as though they disbelieved in Jesus. They were lustful ... usurers ... they practised slavery. Had they lived as true Christians, who knows? Possibly there would never have been a thing called Mohammedanism ... Perhaps Mohammed would have become a great saint, proclaiming: 'There is but one God, and Jesus is his name' ..."

Inside the lead carriage of the 8.05 there was quiet. At least subconsciously the regular passengers were aware that they were listening to a different Joe Meagher that morning. No wild burst of song; no light sprinkling of appropriate verse, other than a deeply sighed:

Of all sad words of song and verse, the saddest are these:

And at least three or four fellow-travellers quietly joined in:

It might have been.

Joe had not quite finished. He turned ninety degrees and focused once more on his companion. His manner was not hostile, but there was tiredness in his voice.

"You are not an infidel? No. Probably you were baptised. But you walked away from your birthright and now are quite prepared to rubbish your birthplace. My friend, you are an infidel ...

"... and a distraction. I've gone past my stop."

The train was pulling into Bondi Junction. A handful of 8.05 regulars who had likewise gone beyond their stop looked sheepishly at one another, crossed to the other side of the platform for the train back into the city ...

... and they remained thinking.

\*According to the 2011 Census, adherents of Islamism in Australia numbered 476,300, 2.25% of the total population.



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# MEDIA MATTERS

By JAMES MURRAY

## Tony awards

The up-coming Queen's Birthday Honours list will surely provide proof of the knights-'n'-dames pudding (*bombe Australienne?*) Prime Minister Tony Abbott served to the nation.

Possibly, even as you read, candidate recommendations will have gone from his office. Certainly Abbott needs to do more to validate his amended order; co-opting the retiring and incoming Governor General, Quentin Bryce and Peter Cosgrove, as respectively first new dame and knight was not enough; Bryce's reportedly republican views cast a shadow on the gilding.

Cosgrove? He is in the line where knighthoods used to be won: the battlefield. In that line a predecessor, General Sir John Monash, was knighted by King George V; it is on record that amid the armaments and plunder of mass warfare, no sword was available; an ADC had to fetch one, and Monash's spurs were upside down.

Abbott could further validate his order with a dame-knight option to those of appropriate rank in the previous order, effectively Gough Whitlam's (borrowed from Canada).

Without cribbing, your correspondent has doubts on the appropriate rank but believes that if a TV current affairs show did a *vox pop* segment most respondents would also fail to decode the Whitlam order's initial letters and its order of precedence.

Despite this, Sarah Ferguson on 7.30 seemed royally unamused; few, however, would be so deserving of a damehood as she, though what this would make her husband, Tony Jones, is an anomaly that should be addressed. DC (Dame's Consort)? Moreover the ABC has a hierarchy (and pay scales) of Byzantine complexity supported dutifully by the humble taxpayer.

Non-fans of the change included Abbott's mentor and ex-PM John Howard. Fair enough, if only he hadn't already accepted an Order of Merit and raised no demur at reports of his listing for the Most Noble Order of Order of the Garter, highest of British orders which also include the Order of the Thistle and the Order of St Patrick (suspended).

No Order of the Leek. Pity; it would make an apt award for Laurie Oakes, Denis Shanahan and other Parliamentary Press Gallery eminences.

Has the social currency of UK knighthoods and damehoods depreciated? Ask Dame Edna Everage and Sir Les Patterson's spokesperson, Barry Humphreys.

Yet hierarchies of one kind or another are inevitable. Among the oldest are the Catholic orders, clerical and civil. Masonic hierarchies abound.

The slogan of the French Revolution was *Liberte! Egalite! Fraternite!* and *Madame La Guillotine* its equaliser. Nonetheless a consequence (surely unintended) was the *Legion d'honneur* which, as modified from Napoleon's original, now consists of: 80 *grands croix*, 200 *grands officiers*, 1000 *commandeurs*, 4000 *officiers* and an unlimited number of *chevaliers*.

Why Whitlam, a Francophile, did not borrow the French system is intriguing. Too baroque? Need for translation? Surely not. Having taken on the metric system, Australians would have had no problems coping with the French honours systems, especially outback where many, both black and white, are born to the title *chevalier* – horseman.

## Tip focus

Coverage of the Royal Commission into institutional child abuse has been wide but not deep. Tip of the iceberg coverage still



prevails, that is, Catholic institutions get most of the front-page, top of the inside-pages headlines and feature spreads plus radio and TV equivalents.

At one level this is predictable: the Catholic Church, not least through its educational and charitable institutions, has world-wide, newsworthy status; at another level this close focus tends to blur the fact that child abuse (or paedophilia) is a vile part of the human condition and that its perpetrators tend to insinuate themselves into institutions (including state orphanages naval and military units as well as families, nuclear and extended) where child-care is a *raison d'etre*.

To child-care add child entertainment and you have a situation which involves if not complicity then lack of due care by TV networks including the most influential of them, the BBC.

Add also the question: if the State guards the Church, who guards the State? The question is most pertinent when the State seeks to add to its licence, control of radio and TV, control of the free press which had its origins in the Liberties of Alsatia, an area of London of which Fleet Street was a part, and where Church, not State, control lingered for the benefit of hacks of all degrees and none.

### Liz tizz

Architect turned Corinthian columnist, Elizabeth Farrelly (Fairfax Media, April 3), took vivid exception to what she reported was Cardinal George Pell's suggestion to the Royal Commission: insuring priests to cover the costs of abuse charges. Under free-press rules, that is her right, though she might have remarked that when immorality is seen by plaintiff, contingency-fee lawyers mainly in terms of financial compensation, it is not surprising that contingency insurance to enable payment should be mooted.

In her down-the-piece comment, Farrelly got off a wild burst about, 'the blatant greed, hypocrisy and betrayal that drove the Reformation and the Enlightenment'.

As to the Reformation, next time Farrelly is overseas (presumably after taking out travel insurance covering an attack contingency), she should visit Durham Cathedral. Why Durham? Because of the Solemn High Mass

celebrated there as part of the Pilgrimage of Grace (1536-7).

Armed and led by Robert Aske under the banner of the Five Wounds of Christ participants were not inspired by hatred of blatant greed, hypocrisy and betrayal but by pleas for redress of grievances including doctrinal and ritual changes from traditional Catholic faith and practice.

Henry VIII, an instrument of disruption sharpened by his need for pillage of Church-held property to repay his moneylenders, offered a full pardon and redress but not quickly enough. Further risings gave him cause to execute more than 200 participants including Aske and the Duke of Northumberland. Other such risings continued during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

As to the Enlightenment, one of its scions, Karl Marx, suggested that Henry's pillage was the basis of modern capitalism, a view emphasised by the hellish, killing light that in 1945 blazed over Hiroshima and then Nagasaki; in the former city. Jesuit-led rescue teams were first to react; in the latter city lived a community that, like British recusants, had discreetly held to the Catholic faith.

### Rinehart advice

Always stimulating to hear from Gina Rinehart even it doesn't entail the offer of an interest-free loan on the collateral of cremation ashes; her modest suggestion: Australia needs more Thatcherism.

As the Minister for Communications, Malcolm Turnbull, tussles with his capacious portfolio he should heed Rinehart and do what Thatcher did: auction off TV licences.

True, there were unexpected outcomes; the losers included Sidney Bernstein's Granada TV and a group headed by Bruce Gyngell, a masterly executive. But the resultant shake-up improved UK commercial TV and had a positive side-effect on the BBC.

Auction results here might have similar results. The current commercial licence holders are too ready to seek government-aid while stultifying shows with a plethora of advertisements and fake-news segments where the star tends to be a vacuum cleaner.

Moreover the stultification is infectious: to create 'junctions' for its commercial rivals, the ABC screens an equivalent plethora of

promotions which can create the impression you've seen a show before you've watched it. Or vice-versa.

### M tweet

The tweets of the world's first twittering media proprietor, Rupert Murdoch, rarely make it into enduring print. When they do, they are never less than revelatory. So much so that Chris Mitchell, editor-in-chief, of *The Australian* should set an example to lesser stable-mates, including *The Times*, and give the tweets space, say something akin to Court Circular space.

Extravagant? Not if you think of a tweet responding to a query about tax evasion: 'Biggest problem multinationals not paying taxes. Not biggest but real problem. Amazon, Google, etc should pay like the rest of us.'

There's more to this than met *Private Eye* which printed it. Murdoch implies a nice understanding of the split-hair distinction between evading and avoiding tax, a distinction increasingly blurred by those ignorant of the English court ruling contra evasion but pro the arrangement of affairs to avoid tax.

### Password

The M tweet should be forefront as the Abbott Government implements its election platform while dealing with the question: can you run a nation (as distinct from an economy) by sacking workers and over-taxing the rest?

Forget the easy option of increasing the GST (originally a French socialist tax); go after corporations that dodge taxes through havens and/or jurisdictional shifts; cut boardroom packages before cutting shop floor packages, the former being raised in line with international indices, the latter lowered in line with poorly paid overseas counterparts.

Notably two mandarins, the Treasury's Martin Parkinson and the Reserve Bank's Glenn Stevens have appeared publicly to support a GST increase. No surprise there, a key GST benefit was the revenue it created for unfunded public-service

superannuation entitlements. The tax raised was more than estimated. Was the surplus returned to taxpayers? Not Doolittle likely. It was consolidated into a Future Fund, administered pro bono? Or for a token dollar a year? Again not Doolittle likely.

In the Anthony Jay-Jonathan Lynn's satires, starting with *Yes, Minister*, the clearest and funniest picture of Westminster workings, the principal character, Sir Humphrey Appleby, rarely, if ever, made a public statement on policy.

The Parkinson-Stevens public emergence illustrates the evolving nature of the system; in Australia it is becoming what might be called the Ozminster System in which public servants play chief executives while elected MPs play boardroom directors.

### Bolt on

Debate on repeal of section 18c of the anti-discrimination law has generated enough heat to incinerate a banana-tree in a monsoon. The Attorney General, George Brandis, added a force-blast in the federal parliament by proclaiming the right to bigotry.

Startling; Brandis, a QC, is normally judicious as if envisioning a future seat on the High Court. His proclamation was parliamentary histrionics carried beyond hyperbole to bolshiness.

That said, it may be worth recalling that a significant group of Australians, of which Brandis is a member, made their way against bigotry without the aid of legal sanctions: Catholics. Here and elsewhere they conducted their personal and family lives in a style that cut off discriminatory blatancies such as employment advertisements saying: 'Catholics need not apply.'

Missing from the overall 18c debate has been the need for an element practised in Australia, where passengers thank bus drivers and customers thank check-out staff; it is the element Hilaire Belloc celebrated:

*Of courtesy it is much less  
Than courage of heart or holiness  
But in my walks it seems to me  
That the grace of God is in courtesy...*

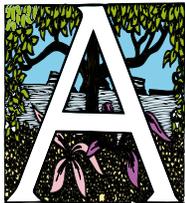
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*'Our whole life and mind is saturated with a slow upward filtration of a new spirit—that of an emancipated, atheistic, international democracy'*  
— George Santayana

## RE-MAKING THE SHELL OF CHRISTENDOM

By Jude P. Dougherty



AMONG CONTEMPORARY cultural historians, political theorists Brad S. Gregory, Pierre Manent, and Rémi

Brague, have addressed – each in his own way – the transformation of what was formally known as ‘Christendom’ into its modern present. No one needs to be told that the repudiation of an inherited culture has left individuals as well as societies without a moral compass. The evidence is too great.

Some saw it coming a generation or more ago. We could cite the English historians, Hilaire Belloc, Christopher Dawson, and their French contemporary, Paul Valéry, as well as the American George Santayana.

The 2013 reprinting in a critical edition of Santayana’s *Reason in Society* leads one to recall his often quoted judgment: ‘The shell of Christendom is broken. The unconquerable mind of the East, the pagan past, the industrial socialist future, confront it with equal authority. Our whole life and mind is saturated with a slow upward filtration of a new spirit—that of an emancipated, atheistic, international democracy.’

Writing more than a hundred years ago, Santayana, in Volume Two of his five-volume study, *The Life of Reason*, draws a distinction often missed between ‘social democracy as an ideal’ and ‘democracy as a form of government in which power lies more or less directly in the people.’

Social democracy, he claims ‘is a general ethical ideal, looking to human equality and brotherhood, and its radical form is inconsistent with such institutions as family and heredity property.’ Democratic government, by contrast, is merely a means to an end, an expedient for better and smoother government in certain states at certain times.

‘A government is not made representative,’ he warns with considerable insight, ‘by the mechanical expedient of electing its

members by universal suffrage. It becomes representative only by embodying in its policy whether by instinct or intelligence, the people’s conscious and unconscious interests.’

No friend of social democracy, Santayana finds its spirit deadening, given its attempt to unite whole nations and even all of mankind into a society of equals, admitting of no local or racial privileges by which a sense of fellowship may be stimulated. The spirit of social democracy is deadening, he maintains, for it is ‘to ambition, to the love of wealth and honour, to the love of a liberty which meant opportunity and adventure, we owe whatever benefits we have derived from Greece and Rome, from Italy and England.’

‘Civilization’ he continues, ‘has hitherto consisted in the diffusion and dilution of habits arising in privileged centers.’ One may think of Vienna, Paris, and Oxford, or Palermo, Munich, and Cambridge, among others. It has not sprung from the people, he claims. ‘To abolish a natural aristocracy would be to cut off the sources from which all culture has hitherto flowed.’ And then this powerful condemnation, ‘The one way of defending the democratic ideal is to deny that civilization is a good.’

Samuel P. Huntington, speaking of the transformation of life in America, is of the opinion that it was sometime between 1920 and 1970 that the United States lost its Anglo-Protestant soul which theretofore had provided

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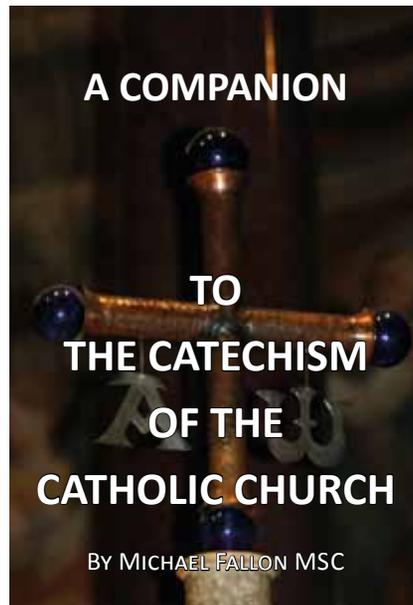
a commonly accepted moral and cultural framework, an American Creed, as it were.

Brad S. Gregory looks to the 16th century, convinced that modernity dates from the Protestant Reformation itself. In Gregory's judgment the Reformation succeeded in the sense that it provided an alternative way of grounding Christian answers to Life Questions and thus provided a basis for living a Christian life, ideologically and socially separate from the Catholic Church.

'On the eve of the Reformation Latin Christianity had achieved a comprehensive, sacramental world view based on truth claims about God's action in history, centred on the Incarnation, life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Intellectual life was vibrant, if sometimes contentious, variously institutionalized not only in universities but also in monasteries, at princely courts, and among participants in the religious Republic of Letters.'

The unintended problem created by the Reformation became the problem of how to know what true Christianity is, given the open-ended range of rival truth claims that followed diverse exegetical interpretations of sacred scripture.

'Reason alone' in modern philosophy, Gregory holds, like 'scripture alone,' has proven incapable of discerning or devising consensual persuasive answers to life's large questions. There is no shared, substantive common good,



*See page 7 this issue for details of this new book from Chevalier Press by Father Michael Fallon MSC*

nor are there any prospects for devising one.

A centrally important paradoxical characteristic of modern liberalism, Gregory finds, is that it does not prescribe what citizens should believe, how they should live, or what they should care about.

Pierre Manent would not disagree. In his discussion of modernity he too looks to its origins, 'We have been modern now for several centuries. We are modern, and we want to be modern.' In what century did modernity really begin—the 16th, 17th, or was it the 18th century? Origins are bound to be obscure but whatever the case, in Manent's judgment, modernity is a project, formulated and implemented first in Europe, but nevertheless

intended from the beginning for all of humanity, a movement that is destined never to arrive at a term.

Developing a theme from an earlier work, *The City of Man* (1995), Manent probes deeply into Western history: 'If we want to understand the modern project, we must begin with the city, for it is in the city that people deliberate and form projects for action. It is in the city that people discover that they can govern themselves and learn to do so. They discover and learn politics. . . . The city is the shaping of human life that makes the common thing and the execution of the common thing in a plurality of cities hostile to each other and divided within.'

The political form that succeeded the city was the empire. With the coming of Christianity, add a third form, one created by the Church that is at once a city and an empire. Europeans soon found themselves confronted by competing authorities. 'They were assailed by prestigious and contradictory words – the words of the Bible, the words of the Greek philosophers, the words of the Roman orators and historians—and they did not know which to retain.'

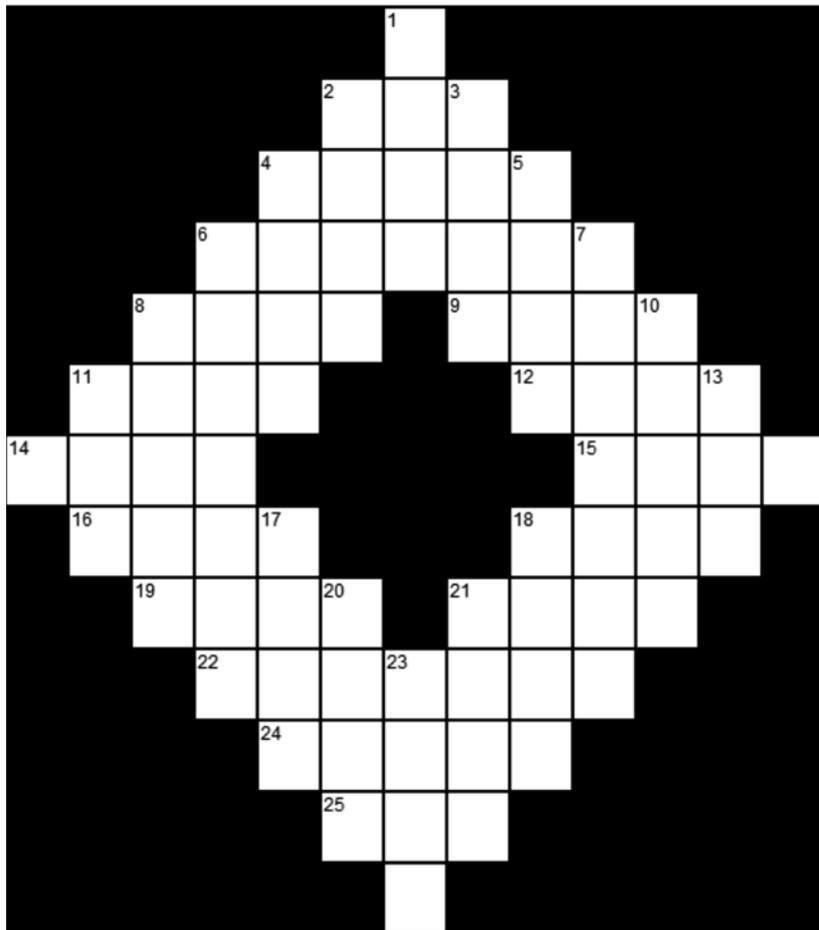
With Luther's revolt, the authority of the Word of God itself became divided between that of the Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church. Ironically, the Scriptures themselves were accessible only through the mediation of the Church and in the first instance in the language of the Church, Latin.

## Development, not Alteration

**I**S THERE to be no development of doctrine in Christ's Church? Certainly there should be great development. Who could be so grudging towards his fellow-men and so hostile to God as to try to prevent it? But care should be taken to ensure that it really is development of the faith and not alteration. Development implies that each point of doctrine is expanded within itself, while alteration suggests that a thing has been changed from what it was into something different. It is desirable then that development should take place, and that there should be a great and vigorous growth in the understanding, knowledge and wisdom of every individual as well as of all the people, on the part of each member as well as of the whole Church, gradually over the generations and ages. But it must be growth within the limits of its own nature, that is to say within the framework of the same dogma and of the same meaning.

— St Vincent of Lerins, died before 450 AD. *Commonitorium*, Chapter 23.

## ANNALS CROSSWORD NO. 80



### Across Clues

- 2 A riotous group of people
- 4 Smooth glossy fabric
- 6 One of the archangels who assisted Tobias;  
an Italian painter
- 8 Supreme god of the ancient Greeks
- 9 Stimulate emotionally
- 11 Ringlet
- 12 To pierce and wound with a knife
- 14 A type of flatfish
- 15 Paradise
- 16 Partially opened flowers
- 18 A small nail
- 19 To make dirty
- 21 Shakespeare's tragic king
- 22 Long eared gundog
- 24 Body of teachers at a school
- 25 First woman

### Down Clues

- 1 A rude or barbaric person
- 2 Charts
- 3 A weight inside one side of a bowl
- 4 He experienced conversion on the road to  
Damascus
- 5 Fishing gear
- 6 A screen or wall decoration at the back of  
an altar; fireback
- 7 Word for word
- 8 Members of a tall race of South Africans
- 10 A method for detecting the position of a  
distant object
- 11 A male swan
- 13 The bottom of a river
- 17 Drinks delicately
- 18 Meat from cattle
- 20 Overdue
- 21 Period between birth and death
- 23 The hub of a wheel

© Brian O'Neill February 2014

By all accounts, Luther's Reformation created a spiritual upheaval, but it was also and inseparably a political revolution, indeed, a national insurrection. Different European nations selected the Christian confession under which they chose to live; and imposed it. Thus, says Manent, the confessional nation became one of history's political forms.

Europe produced modernity, and for a long period of time

Europe was its master and owner. Today Bacon and Descartes reign in Shanghai and Bangalore at least as much as in Paris and London.

Within Europe, in spite of the multiple treaties that created the European Union, Manent finds that civic cooperation is feeble and the religious word almost inaudible. 'Europe finds itself militarily, politically and spiritually disarmed in a world that it has armed with the instruments of modern

civilization. It soon will be wholly incapable of defending itself. By renouncing the political form that was its own, Europe has deprived itself of the association in which European life had found its richest meaning.'

Manent's emphasis on the city follows his recognition that a degree of cultural unity is required as the foundation of a body politic. One cannot be a citizen of the World nor even of Europe. An identifiable common good can only be the fruit of a coherent, sustainable tradition within a homogenous population.

In addressing the political development of the West, Manent finds it necessary to pause in order to take stock of the tools of knowledge appropriate for his investigation. Like Santayana he finds that there are two versions of modern political theory, with one emphasizing science and the other experience.

There is the political science of Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke, whom Manent calls 'the architects of the modern state,' and 'the guiding spirits of modern politics.' Arguing not from experience, modern political science takes its inspiration from Hobbes's fictional individual, postulated in a state of nature in which all war against all. From that postulate Hobbes derives the mythical social contract theory and all that it entails, including the scope of human rights.

In Manent's judgment, 'Modern political science in its founding moment, overcomes the grave deficiencies of modern political experience, the absence, so to speak, of an authentic political experience in the Christian world, by forging access to a pre-political human experience on the basis of which it will be possible to construct a new political order.' Lost is the experience of those living in what was formerly called Christendom.

Perhaps the most up-to-date version of Hobbes's starting point is that of John Rawls, whose

'original situation,' Manent suggests, is 'the postulation of a state of nature without nature.' As in the case of Hobbes, Rawls's Theory of Justice trumps experience, and facts do not matter in a theoretical construct. We should contrast Hobbes and Rawls with Machiavelli, who, Manent says, 'wrote about how men actually lived, not the way they behaved in those imaginary republics and principalities.'

In *Metamorphoses of the City*, at the end of the discussion 'Empire, Church and Nation,' Manent identifies Jewish law, Greek philosophy, Christianity, and Democracy as four great moments in the history of humanity.

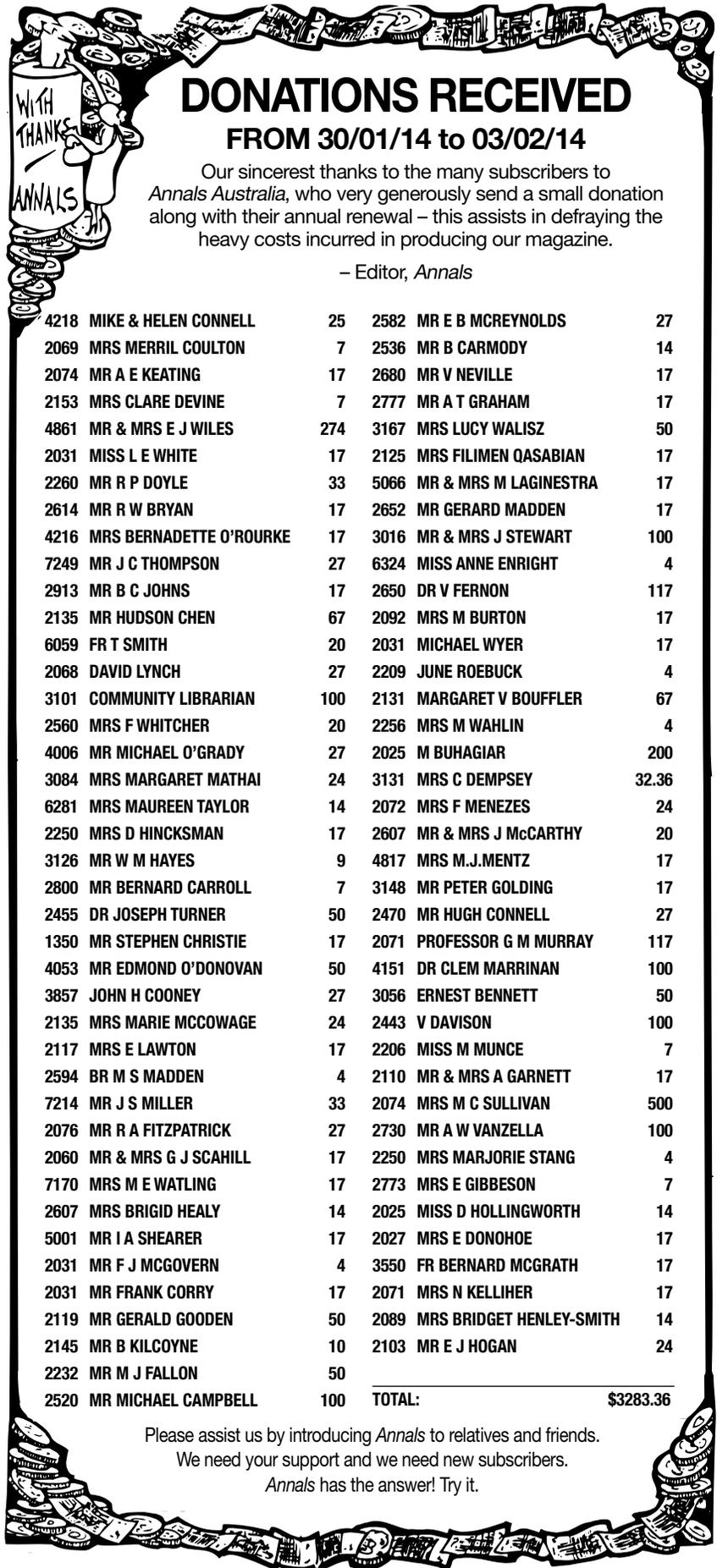
The four great spiritual determinations of Western humanity, he maintains, not only form a chronological succession but also mark the major stages on the gradient of increasing universality. In drawing his study to a conclusion, Manent is wistful: Is it possible to imagine a new stage, the result of a mediation of Christianity and the modern conception of humanity?

By way of an answer, he finds the building blocks in a certain solidarity between Jewish law and Christianity, and between Christianity and the gods of the Greek philosophers, insofar as those accounts provide a rational conception of divinity. But the 'Religion of Humanity' understood from the modern perspective has left behind Jewish, Christian, and even Greek philosophical notions of the divine.

'Modernity, by embracing Humanity,' writes Manent, 'has expelled the highest idea to embrace the largest idea which is the idea of humanity itself.'

It is true, as Brad Gregory has ably point out, that the Reformation in rejecting the mediation of the Church as a separate and visible institution weakened Christianity to the detriment of its social influence.

In the aftermath of the Reformation, 'the believer,' writes Manent 'instead of being saved by



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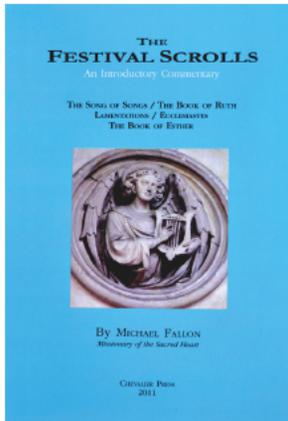
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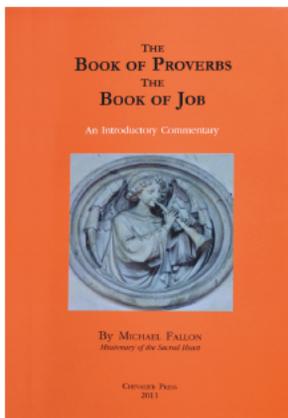
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partaking in the sacraments of the Church, instead of being part of the Church, is instructed by Luther that he is saved by faith in the Word of God alone.

What happens, Manent then asks, when the Church is set aside? 'The spiritual ministry is appropriated by every Christian in what is called the universal priesthood.' Lost is the mediation of the Church between man and God. Relieved of the burden of the ecclesiastical order,

the Christian community inevitably falls under the state, as it soon did in Luther's Germany. 'However unsatisfactory or disappointing the mediating institution may be—Yahweh is forever reprimanding or chastising his people—it is the bridge over the abyss that separates the Immense from the lowly. What Christianity brings is mediation, not distance.'

Rémi Brague, in the company of Paul Valéry, insists on the

recognition of another dimension of Europe that is sometimes not given due weight or is overlooked, namely, the contribution of Rome, not only for its sense of law but as transmitter of the Hebrew and Greek contribution to European culture.

Rémi Brague, in his insightful work published in an English translation as *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization* argues that Europeans have failed to recognize, value, and defend what is a unique culture with consequences for the rest of the world.

Brague begins his treatise in an attempt to define what we are talking about when we speak of 'Europe.' It is a geographical entity to be sure, and as a place, Europe precedes Europe as a Continent. As to its 'content' or character, Europe is the whole set of historically identifiable facts that have taken place within that geographical space we call Europe. Thus Husserl can speak of 'European sciences' and Heidegger of 'Occidental metaphysics.'

Obviously mere residence on the Continent does not make one a European. Confronting the fact that many immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa refuse to assimilate, choosing instead to retain their own culture and even live under their own law, Brague concludes: 'A European is one who is conscious of belonging to a whole. One is not a European without wanting to be one. . . . The frontiers of Europe are solely cultural.'

Continuing his analysis, Brague argues, 'A culture is defined in relation to the people and to the phenomena it considers as its other ' Europe to the extent that it is Occidental is the other of the Orient. As Christendom, Europe is the other of the Muslim world. To the extent that it is Latin Christendom, Europe is the other of the Byzantine world. 'Byzantium,' says Brague, 'never thought of itself as European. It always thought of itself as Roman.'

The cultural realities that one designates in this way do not limit themselves to the European space, neither in their origin nor in their ultimate expansion. To the question, 'Who are we as Europeans: Greeks or Romans, or Jews, or Christians, or in a sense a little of each?'

Brague is convinced that Europe is essentially Roman. The Roman character of Europe is found in its sense of order, in the patriarchal family, in its sense of fatherland. 'To be Roman is to perceive oneself as Greek in relation to what is barbarous, but also barbarous in relation to what is Greek. It is to know that what one transmits does not come from oneself.'

Roman culture is essentially a passage, a way, an aqueduct. The relation of Europe—as Christendom—to the Old Testament is in a sense a 'Roman' relation. 'The Christians themselves are essentially 'Romans' insofar as it is from Rome that they have their 'Greeks' to which they are tied by an invisible hand.' In the light of this somewhat fanciful analysis, Brague can say 'Christianity is to the Old Covenant what the Romans are to the Greeks.'

Christianity played a major role in the early stages of the formation of the European Community following World War II due to the influence of Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schumann, and Alcide de Gasperi. That influence has waned as time has gone by, and today the European Union is little more than a set of trade agreements.

As to the future of Europe, Brague is convinced that the cultural task awaiting Europe consists in becoming Roman again. Europe must also become conscious of its intrinsic and even global value, that is, of its exceptional nature, of its 'eccentric' character, as it faces both internal and external barbarism. It must again become convinced of its worthiness in relation to which it is only the messenger and servant. 'It must regain or become once again the

## Online auctions and the fate of MSS

ONLINE AUCTION companies such as eBay are enabling dealers to make quick returns by breaking up manuscripts and selling the leaves individually. This is not a new phenomenon, but the rate at which it happens has accelerated recently. The commercial benefits of the practice are explained by Christopher de Hamel in his *Cutting up Manuscripts for Pleasure and Profit*, Charlottesville, 1996, p. 19: 'You buy a manuscript for a thousand dollars [for example]. You break it in two and each half is worth \$900. You tear it in half again and each quarter is worth \$800; you split it again and each eighth is worth \$750; and so on'. He goes on to give an example of a manuscript sold at auction for \$12,000 in October 1980, which was then 'worth' \$190,800 shortly thereafter when cut into single leaves retailing at prices from \$350 [text leaves] to \$1750 [leaves with historiated initials]. ... What is perhaps troubling about the recent trend is that while many dealers would not break up a complete manuscript [limiting themselves to more or less imperfect ones], especially one in an old or fine binding, other dealers do not have such scruples. And while most might limit themselves to breaking-up textually unimportant manuscripts such as mass-produced late 15<sup>th</sup>-century Rouen books of Hours — though perhaps the only reason for this is that they can be bought relatively inexpensively, and have a relatively high proportion of commercially preferable pages with decoration — a number of more interesting manuscripts have been recently dismembered.

— Newsletter of AMARC *The Association of Manuscripts and Archives in Research Collections*, No.42, May 2004.

place where one recognizes an intimate relationship of man with God, a covenant that descends to the most carnal dimensions of humanity, that must be the object of unflinching respect.'

Amplifying that judgment, he writes, 'For Europe to remain itself, it is not necessary that everyone who inhabits it recognize explicitly that they are Christians.'

As to its future, Brague hopes that, in spite of the cultural problem created by its immigration policy, Europe will remain a place that recognizes the separation of the temporal and the spiritual, where each recognizes the legitimacy of the other in its proper domain.

Pierre Manent and Remi Brague are not alone in taking a dim view of Europe's future. Charles Murray, in promoting his book, *Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences: 800 b.c.-1950*, summed up his conclusion for a promotional blurb when he asserted, 'Europe's run is over.'

Pierre Manent, although pessimistic, stops short of Murray's conclusion. Rémi Brague calls for a 'Counter Enlightenment.' Viewing Europe in the light of its modern history, it is difficult to believe that the philosophical scepticism introduced in the 18th and 19th centuries has so undermined the self-confidence of a civilization that has given so much to the world, such that it is not able to defend itself.

Christianity may be on the defensive in some self-blinded intellectual circles, but the empiricism of Hume and the fideism of Kant are easily challenged.

Yet, Jurgen Moltmann stands to remind us that traditions once challenged are all but lost.

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## The Invisible Woman

First-time directors who are also actors tend to give them selves strong roles. Ralph Fiennes does not resist the tendency: he gives himself the role of Charles Dickens, English literature most histrionic writer, and proves it by mimicking Dickens in one of his packed solo readings.

Not that the movie is a solo effort, not with Felicity Jones cast as the young actress Nelly Ternan, 18, for whom Dickens, 47, left his wife and mother of his children, in the process uttering the most enduring of adulterous clichés, the one about his wife not understanding him.

Jones as Ternan is by turns hesitant, enchanting and, after the still-birth of a child, penitent.

Scriptwriter Abi Morgan, worked from Claire Tomalin's account of the affaire and its aftermath which included Ternan's lowering her age to marry a younger man.

Skilfully Morgan uses lines from the works of Dickens in explanatory dialogue. She has Dickens recall shameful days sticking labels on blacking bottles but makes no reference to the experience that made Dickens: his work as a journalist (fastest shorthand reporter in the parliamentary gallery and editor of *The Daily News*).

Charles Dickens was the author of classics, Ralph Fiennes has matched his style.

M★★★★NFFV

## Belle

In the title role of this romance, Gugu Mbatha-Raw shines unforgettably as a 18<sup>th</sup> century mulatto (the usage then). She is taken by her naval officer father (Matthew Goode) to live with his uncle, William Murray (Tom Wilkinson), first Earl of Mansfield, Lord Chief Justice, and his wife (Emily Watson) at their stately home. There she is brought up as an English lady with a cousin Lady Elizabeth Murray (Sarah Gadon).

The drama is based on the true story of Dido Elizabeth Belle, and director Amma Assante draws pitch perfect performances from her principals as Belle negotiates the minuets of courtship and manners

## MOVIES

By James Murray

while her adoptive papa decides a slave-ship insurance case which will help to decide whether slaves are merely chattels or have all the rights of human beings.

Miranda Richardson etches a superlative portrait of a match-making mama with two sons to marry off, the elder James (Tom Felton) and the younger Oliver (James Norton).

Despite opposition from James, Marriage is arranged between Oliver and Belle but she has fallen in love with one of her papa's pupil lawyers John Davinier (Sam Reid)

The costumes, the courtship rituals and, not least, the setting, Kenwood House, give the romance a Jane Austenish air.

Indeed this is a story that Miss Austen could and, perhaps should, have written. There again Miss Austen's world was confined; she wrote little or nothing about Catholics of old lineage who in her time and place continued to practise their faith.

Or is it possible from his name to deduce that Mr Darcy should have shocked Elizabeth Bennet by revealing he was a recusant Catholic? Could he possibly have suggested firmly that their marriage should involve a Nuptial Mass?

PG★★★★SFFV

## The Monuments Men

Co-writer/director/co-star George Clooney tackles a true story of World War II in which Frank Stokes (Clooney) recruits a mixed expert squads to retrieve as much as possible of six million pieces of art looted and cached by the Nazis.

Some have dismissed the movie as a kind of Dirty Half Dozen. On a box-office level it may be so, the art experts are played by boffo heroes: Matt Damon, Bill Murray, John Goodman, Bob Balaban and Jean Dujardin.

Yet Clooney aims for a deeper level: the power of beauty to create reverence (almost as if he'd read Bishop Conley of Nebraska's thoughts. Published in the previous issue of *Annals Australasia*).

Clooney achieves his aim first through the squad's British expert, played by Hugh Bonneville with more than a touch of Downton Abbey's Lord Grantham. He risks his life to reconnoitre the whereabouts of Michelangelo's Madonna, and finds it in a monastery guarded by priests. Simultaneously, a Nazi looting unit is on the way. Before it arrives to snatch the statue, he makes a reverence which is also a requiem.

During a further sequence, set in a mine full of looted art, the Michelangelo Madonna is uncovered. Frank Stokes, steel helmet off, also makes his reverence to an eternal beauty.

M★★★★SFFV

## Noah

In the title role, Russell Crowe carries a backpack more primitive than anything on sale in Katmandu stores. He also carries the ungainly epic director Darren Aronofsky and co-writer Art Handel have made from the Genesis account of Noah and his Ark.

Ray Winstone playing Tubal-Cain, who seeks to take over the ark, has a totally ferocious beard and manners to match.

Anachronism abound. Noah wears trousers. No problem but shields of what appear to be corrugated iron carried by an attacking horde, are a stretch. An even more elastic stretch are the computer generated Fallen Angels who aid Noah in building the ark; they appear to be constructed from lumps of licorice. Emma Watson, still bravely in flight from being Harry Potter's pal Hermione, gets a turn as an orphan adopted by Noah and his wife (Jennifer Connelly).

The animals do not form a queue nor enter two-by-two. Led by birds they approach the ark *en masse* and are drugged to sleep. The rain flood when it comes both falls and erupts.

Waste of time? Not entirely even nondescript movies do inspire viewers to read the original works. Noah's Genesis story is part of the Old Testament prelude to the New, together they may be said to constitute the master narrative of the human race.

M★★★★SFFV

## The Lego Movie

No one who has stuck one Lego block to another can fail to be charmed by the ingenuity of this movie directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller with the help of a construction crew from Australia's Animal Logic.

Reservation: the producers should have stayed away from established characters like Batman and Superman. The Emmet Lego hero (voiced by Chris Pratt) and the heroine, Lucy (Elizabeth Banks) outdo them all.

Good Cop/Bad Cop (both voiced by Liam Neeson) steal the movie. The sequel; is already being stuck together+.

PG★★★★SFFV

## Tracks

The book version of Robyn Davidson's *National Geographic* feature was published last century. Why so long for the 21<sup>st</sup> century movie version? Partly because of the difficulty in maintaining the narrative tension of a 2,700 kilometre traverse of Western Australia's Gibson Desert, partly because of casting problems.

Director John Curran, pseudonymous co-writer Marion Nelson and cinematographer Mandy Walker solved the first difficulty; time solved the other through the advent of Mia Wasikowska.

As charming and tough as golden wattle, Wasikowska epitomises the elegant derring-do of Davidson who undertook the trek with five camels, a dog, Diggety, and for a time the indigenous guide Mr Eddy (Rolley Mintuma).

As part of her National Geographic deal, Davidson agreed to the intermittent attendance of photographer Rick Smolan. In the movie Smolan is played by Adam Driver who provides intense rather than intermittent companionship.

The movie's finest moment is its most understated and even to hint at it would be to spoil it, and its evocation of the thin line of people who hold the Outback.

Smolan's end credit *National Geographic* photographs show what a valuable reference they were

for the filmmakers, up there with those of the greatest of Outback photographers, Jeff Carter.

M★★★★NFFV

## Galore

Teenagers Billie (Ashleigh Cummings) and Laura (Lily Sullivan) are best friends, Laura has a boyfriend Danny (Toby Wallace) who tags along with both. Writer/director Rhys Graham makes a reel of this with all the savvy skill of a fan intent on a topsy-turvy version of the classic *Jules et Jim* starring Jeanne Moreau Oskar Werner and Henri Serre.

A subplot involves Billie's social worker Mum giving caravan shelter to Isaac (Alik Matangi) which adds up to a more complicated quartet. All the young players are eager and talented, the characters they play are sadsacks.

Graham locates his movie in Canberra during the 2003 bushfires, creating the opportunity for a climactic image: Billie (or is it Laura?) arms upraised defiantly against the bushfire, not driving to help fight it: a dim photocopy of just another rebel without a cause.

The title is problematic. Your reviewer took soundings from a younger generation; few were aware of its meaning, too young to remember *Whisky Galore* which gave

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G: for general exhibition;  
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announced

wide currency to the word (derived from the Gaelic *goleor*) and meaning 'abundant' or 'lots of'.

TBA★★★★NFFV.

## The Broken Circle Breakdown

Who would have thought it? Belgium, land of tapestries, beer, chocolates, *frites* and the world's finest bureaucratic-political gravy-train, should also have a cult following for American blue-grass music.

Director Felix Van Groeningen makes the music the driving core of his romance between crimper-turned-singer, Elise (Veerle Baetens) and bandleader Didier (Johan Heldenbergh).

Theirs is an idyll of uninhibited sex with tattoos on full display, a greenie dream, you might say, part urban, part rural, until they beget a child; After they absorb the shock (their facts of life did not allow for the eventuality) they give the child the bluegrass name, Maybelle; she brings them joy but after a long treatment succumbs to cancer.

Baetens and Heldenbergh offer performances of high-definition professional exuberance. At five, Nell Catrysse cast as Maybelle, is not a player, simply a natural star.

In the aftermath of Maybelle's death, Elise takes some comfort from her childhood Catholicism. Didier goes into a rant against the God he does not believe in, and against the Vatican ruling forbidding what he thinks would have been a cure for Maybelle: embryo-stem procedures.

Unmentioned: claims for such procedures were over-blown; permissible, alternative procedures were available.

Elise and Didier split only to be reconciled in a sequence of blue-grass music fit to top the bill at Tamworth.

MA15+★★★★NFFV

## Pompeii

No need for a sub-title. The eruption of Vesuvius made Pompeii the world's archetypal disaster area. Director Paul WS Anderson delivers catastrophically appropriate treatment by way of computer imaging, though his framing romance means that he

takes too long to get the eruption.

This – the romance, the romance – puts a slave-gliadiator unfortunately named Milo (Kit Harrington) next to the aristocratic Cassia (Emily Browning) by way of their shared love of horses. She, however, has been forcibly betrothed to a Senator played by Keifer Sutherland in a scene-theft mix of his commanding father, Donald of that ilk, and Sir Laurence Olivier.

Can Milo save Cassia from the dastard and the eruption? This happened in 79 AD. No hint of Christianity.

In a clear sign of the way movie entertainment is going, most of the packed preview audience attended because Kit Harrington, star of the TV home-entertainment hit *Game of Thrones* was guest of honour; there was also elaborate promotion for GOK. All of which demonstrates that *Annals Australasia* has been ahead of the curve in reviewing movies with cinema and home release dates in mind.

M★★★NFFV

### Wolf Creek II

He's back: Crocodile Dundee's second cousin, twice removed, Mick, as played by John Jarrett is as mad as a meataxe, a cut snake or any vernacular equivalent.

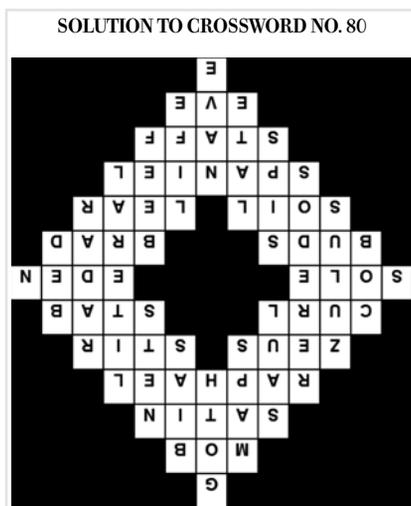
Writer/director Greg McLean may be working off the premise that he is showing how silly Mick's xenophobia is by directing it mainly at Poms which is permissible but not dagoes, wogs, boongs or balts, thus proving that beneath is swagger Mick is PC (Politically Correct).

Yet he is never multi-cultural his victims include a pair of Scandinavian backpackers).

In the Sixties, Johnny Speight working off a similar premise, created Alf Garnett for the BBC. Garnett's racism was supposed to make racism ridiculous. Not according to current news from the UK.

Through his ending McLeant makes it clear that there will be Wolf Creek III, like the others an odd title; there are no wolves in Australia except those who bear it as a surname.

MA15+★★NFFV.



### Rise of the Eco Warriors

Written and directed by Cathy Henkel this documentary is so crammed with electronic effects that it resembles a busy-busy wide-screen video game. The warriors of the title are an international bunch of ecologists who have travelled to Borneo to spend 100 days aiding locals confronted with two problems: saving rain forests from palm oil plantations and saving orangutangs.

There are glimpses of the centre on which the Eco Warriors base themselves. A hi-tech habitat bristling with aerials? No, a remote Catholic centre fulfilling the ancient mission statement 'Going teach ye all nations baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

PG★★★SFFV

### Only Lovers Left Alive

Silver hip flasks are the main props in writer/director Jim Jarmusch's latest offering. So Jarmusch's, a notably libertarian filmmaker, is into Prohibition? Not exactly, the hip flasks are used by a coterie (a bite?) of louche vampires to substitute for the customary fanged method invented in 1897 by the arch-creator of the genre, Dublin-born Bram Stoker.

Jarmusch also brings more than a touch of rock-'n'-roll to his effort. His lead vampire, Eve, is played by Tilda Swinton in the style of a groupie mature enough to remember when Mick Jagger was young. Appropriately her partner, Adam, as played by Tom

Hiddleston has the lithe moves of the Zimmer-frame denying Rolling Stone.

The startling entrance is Mia Wasikowska, unrecognisable as Swinton's wild-child sister. Sating her appetite is not restricted to hip-flasks. As a result Adam and Eve have to decamp from Detroit to Tangier – not easy since they must travel in the dark.

Undoubtedly Jarmusch is a filmmaker of considerable, if dark, satiric talent. The credits for this one show he has had the experience to inspire his next one.

The co-production companies range across Europe as a result there are so many executive producers, co-producers and associate-producers that he could make another vampiric epic where the vampires come on disguised as movie producers who win Oscars and create havoc during the air-kiss rituals of the Academy Awards.

MA15+★★NFFV

### All is Lost

Writer/director JC Chandor's title is deceptive in relation to his ending. Robert Redford plays a lone, ocean sailor who awakes to find his yacht has been holed in a collision with a drifting container.

He has to shift the container, patch the yacht with fibre-glass, pump it out, haul himself to the masthead to fix the rigging, all this with a storm brewing.

His yacht sinking, the storm rising in fury, he has to take to his inflatable raft.

These challenges and more Redford meets with a fortitude that will make him an ideal Superman if Hollywood decides to green light a seniors version.

Based on a quick reading of *Sailing for Dummies* your reviewer has a few queries.

Why didn't the lone sailor reinforce the fibre-glass externally and internally?

Why did he have to whittle a stick to make a pump lever?

Why didn't he wake as soon as the collision occurred?

Lubberly queries aside, an unremittingly exciting movie.

M★★★SFFV

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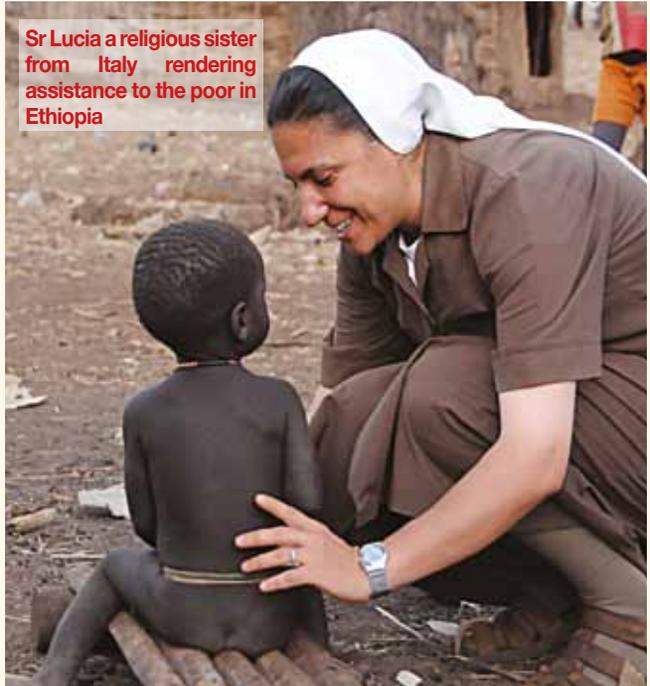
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*The failure of the Church to teach or guide or console this woman, herself born into a Catholic cradle, was apparent in all her pain. . . . Baptized herself, she counts as a “Catholic” for demographic purposes. But her son will not, unless Christ intercedes.*

## LAPSED . . . OR LOST CATHOLICS

By David Warren



OUR COLUMN yesterday in the *Catholic Thing*, on the general *slouchment*, seemed to touch off a discussion on the disinclination of Catholics to be Catholic. This was expressed statistically in that Yanqui election, wherein government healthcare proposals that will create a crisis of conscience for every faithful Catholic, and end inevitably in the destruction of Catholic charitable institutions, were greeted by Catholic voters in this way: about half voted for the party that would bring on the Persecution, and half voted against. Let us expand on what we said in comments to the comments, over there.

When we were writing for a certain daily in Ottawa, we were often warmly criticized by the secular humanists for persistently mentioning Christianity in a family newspaper. And as if that weren't irresponsible enough, we would go farther, and specify Catholic Christianity.

One of the complaints to the Ontario Press Council against our habitual tendency to political incorrectitude stated that we “openly admitted to being Catholic.” But not only the secularoids were disturbed by our experiment; for we took heat from self-identifying Christians, too, and usually from “Catholics” among those.

Dragonfire came regularly from a fellow columnist, who accused us of espousing “Benedict Catholicism,” which she seemed to equate with child molesting. By other Catholics we were frequently dismissed as a “mere convert,” as an upstart or *arriviste*, for taking some doctrine or other “too literally.” On several occasions, we were

even condemned by a self-identifying Catholic priest.

For instance, when we indicated opposition to the practice of abortion in one column, we received a memorably intemperate email from one urbane priest in Quebec, accusing us of misogyny and intolerance and giving Catholics a bad name. In retrospect, we regret not having pushed “Send” on an email forwarding his note to his Bishop with the query, “From what seminary did this man graduate, and have you closed it down yet?”

Ottawa is an ex-Catholic town, Toronto more ex-Protestant, and so the flavour of Catholic anti-Catholicism is different between the two.

Toronto ex-Catholics (and we are using this term presumptuously) tend to be more laid back. The Ottawa ones can be virulent, and even when of the Irish heritage, to have adopted post-modern French Canadian attitudes

towards Holy Church. That is, there is nothing a Pope could say that would not inspire them to do the opposite. For which reason we have sometimes thought a Pope should send a special encyclical to his flock in Quebec and Ottawa, instructing them to discard every teaching in the Catechism and never to attend a Latin Mass.

Within weeks we would have seven million new saints, and the streets of Montreal cluttered by pilgrims saying their Rosaries and singing the Angelus at the stroke of each hour. (In Latin, to the consternation of Quebec's language police.)

Yet, conversely up here in the Great White North, we have found that lapsed Catholics may take great umbrage at the employment of such terms as “nominal,” “cafeteria,” or “lapsed.” They, who apparently go back generations, will not be told what's what by some upstart, or *arriviste*, or as one high-toned older Catholic woman called us, about ten times in a five minute rant, a “Baby Catholic.”

In thinking about this we have come to realize that we are using the term “Catholic” in quite different senses. For us, it refers to something like a religion. For them, however, it is a tribal thing, an ethnicity: often qualified for precision as, “Irish Catholic,” “Polish Catholic,” “Italian Catholic,” and so forth. That is what makes them “authentic” and therefore qualified to speak on behalf of all the other Catholics – in the same way as, say, only women may speak about women, or only blacks may speak about blacks.

They all have “feelings,” and thanks to those, they are able to apprehend Catholicism in its totality without any reference whatever to its intellectual premisses.

### Fruitful Failures

WHISTLER USED to make many rapid studies of a sitter; it did not matter if he tore up twenty portraits. But it would matter if he looked up twenty times, and each time saw a new person sitting placidly for his portrait. So it does not matter (comparatively speaking) how often humanity fails to imitate its ideal; for then all its old failures are fruitful. But it does frightfully matter how often humanity changes its ideal; for then all its old failures are fruitless.

— G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, The Bodley Head, London, 1908, p.181

# The Catholics of England

Christ, because He can never be surprised, would not be surprised to learn that they have “felt” their way into a better understanding of what He meant by all the things they haven’t read in the Gospels. In particular, they “feel” that they are good people, who have never done anything bad and have therefore no need of Confession.

Some even feel themselves to be “traditional” because they were married in a church and attended a “very traditional” Novus Ordo Mass at Christmas; to say nothing of a funeral which they found “very comforting.”

In a similar way, the lapsed Scotsman has sometimes been seen in a kilt, and singing “Auld Lang Syne” at New Year’s. (Few go as far as to eat the haggis.) In an age of cultural desiccation, one clings to decorative fragments of the past.

There are some who do, however, consider Catholicism more a religion than an ethnicity; or more precisely some kind of opiate, or brainwashing cult; and these self-identify as “Recovering Catholics,” omitting the ethnic tags.

Ottawa seems especially to be crawling with customers so self-styled, and we imagine rooms set aside in government and corporate offices where these people hold their alternative rituals.

Yet one should not only mock. For we have encountered, among these “recovering” and “tribals,” people who are haunted by priestcraft in more telling ways.

We think at this moment of a lady on her third marriage, suddenly provided with her first child. Further provided with her fourth drink, she expressed concern about the fate of this child. She wanted to get him baptized. To this end she had several times stolen into a church, to attend some portion of a Mass with the intention of collaring the priest afterwards. In each case she had lost her nerve and fled. In her cups she made an extraordinary statement: “I know that I’m going to Hell. Sometimes I think I’m in Hell already. But I don’t want my child to go there, I want him to be saved!”

Here was a woman who could easily pass, in daylight hours, for a glib lapsed Catholic.

Her confusion about the Church was heart-rending. Nor did it seem possible to set her straight. She was actually convinced a priest would decline to baptize her child because she’d been

THREE CENTURIES ago, and the Catholic church, that great creation of God’s power, stood in this land in pride of place. It had the honours of nearly a thousand years upon it; it was enthroned in some twenty sees up and down the broad country; it was based in the will of a faithful people, it energized through ten thousand instruments of power and influence, and it was ennobled by a host of Saints and Martyrs ...

But it was the high decree of heaven, that the majesty of that presence should be blotted out... No longer, the Catholic Church in the country; nay, no longer I may say, a Catholic community but a few adherents of the Old Religion, moving silently and sorrowfully about, as memorials of what had been. ‘The Roman Catholics’; not a sect, not even an interest, as men conceived of it; not a body, however small, representative of the Great Communion abroad but a mere handful of individuals, who might be counted like the pebbles and detritus of the great deluge, and who, forsooth, merely happened to retain a creed which, in its day indeed was the profession of a Church. Here a set of poor Irishmen, coming and going at harvest time, or a colony of them lodged in a miserable quarter of the vast metropolis. There, perhaps, an elderly person seen walking in the streets, grave and solitary, and strange, though noble in bearing and said to be of good family, and a ‘Roman Catholic.’ An old-fashioned house of gloomy appearance, closed in with high walls, with an iron gate, and yews, and the report attaching to it that ‘Roman Catholics’ lived there; but who they were or what they did, or what was meant by calling them ‘Roman Catholics,’ no one could tell; though it had an unpleasant sound, and told of form and superstition. And then, perhaps, as we went to and fro, looking with a boy’s curious eyes through the great city, we might come to-day upon some Moravian chapel, or Quaker’s meeting-house, and tomorrow on a chapel of the ‘Roman Catholics’; but nothing was to be gathered from it, except that there were lights burning there, and some boys in white, swinging censers; and what it all meant could only be learned from books, from Protestant Histories and Sermons; and they did not report well of the ‘Roman Catholics’ but, on the contrary, deposed that they had once had power and had abused it. And then, again, we might on one occasion, hear it pointedly put out by some literary man, as a result of his careful investigation, and as a recondite point of information, which few knew, that there was this difference between the ‘Roman Catholics’ of England and the ‘Roman Catholics’ of Ireland, that the latter has bishops, and the former were governed by four officials, called Vicars-Apostolic ...

Such were the Catholics of England, found in corners, and alleys, and cellars, and the housetops, or in the recesses of the country; cut off from the populous world around them, and dimly seen, as if through a mist or in twilight, as ghosts flitting to and fro, by the high Protestants, the lords of the earth.

— From Blessed John Henry Newman’s homily, ‘The Second Spring,’ preached on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1852, at St. Mary’s College, Oscott, England, during the First Provincial Synod of Westminster.

remarried; or for some similar solecism – of hers. She wanted help in finding a priest who would perform this baptism “illicitly,” without being told who the parents were. And more; and more.

This story does not have a happy ending, so far as we have been able to follow it. We suspect the lady “solved” her terribly misunderstood problem by putting it progressively out of her mind.

The failure of the Church to teach or guide or console this woman, herself born into a Catholic cradle, was apparent

in all her pain. Our own failure to compensate for this larger failure counts within that. Perhaps most discouraging: the indifference to her fate, and that of so many like, from the bleary world of the diocesan bureaucracies, compiling their numbers. Baptized herself, she counts as a “Catholic” for demographic purposes. But her son will not, unless Christ intercedes.

THE AUTHOR of these Essays is a self-confessed white male, Catholic of the worst kind. He pings [blogs] mostly from the Parkdale district of Toronto, Canada.

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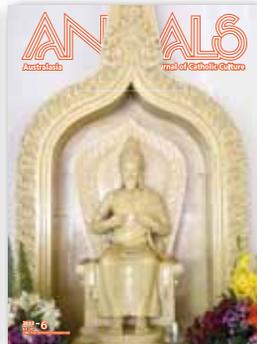
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