

ANNALES

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Journal of Catholic Culture



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ANNALS AUSTRALASIA

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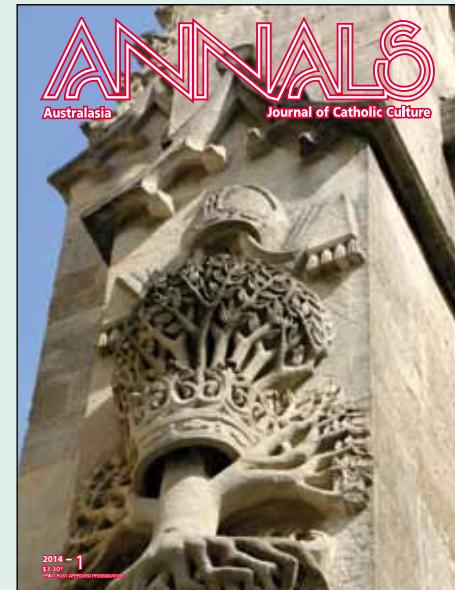
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[Sunday readings at Mass: Year A/Weekday readings: Year II]

Australia's Oldest Catholic Magazine

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MAX BARRETT



Front Cover: Our cover is taken from the façade of the Abbey Church in Bath, England. On one of the buttresses the 'identity' of the founder of the third Catholic church to occupy this site, Bishop Oliver King, is revealed. Readers will notice the olive tree [Oliver] the crown [King] and the bishop's mitre. From 757 AD to the dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII in 1539, three different churches occupied the site: an Anglo-Saxon Abbey Church (757-1066); a Norman cathedral begun about 1090, and the present Abbey Church begun in 1499 by Bishop King and completed just a few years before the Crown confiscated the monasteries.. Bath Abbey church was sold by the Crown to a lawyer, Humphrey Colles, of Taunton in Somerset. The last Catholic Abbey church to be built in England before the Reformation was stripped of its lead, iron and glass and left to decay. The last Catholic bishop of Bath betrayed his oath of fidelity to the Pope as successor of St Peter and accepted royal supremacy in 1534.

Cover Photo: Paul Stenhouse

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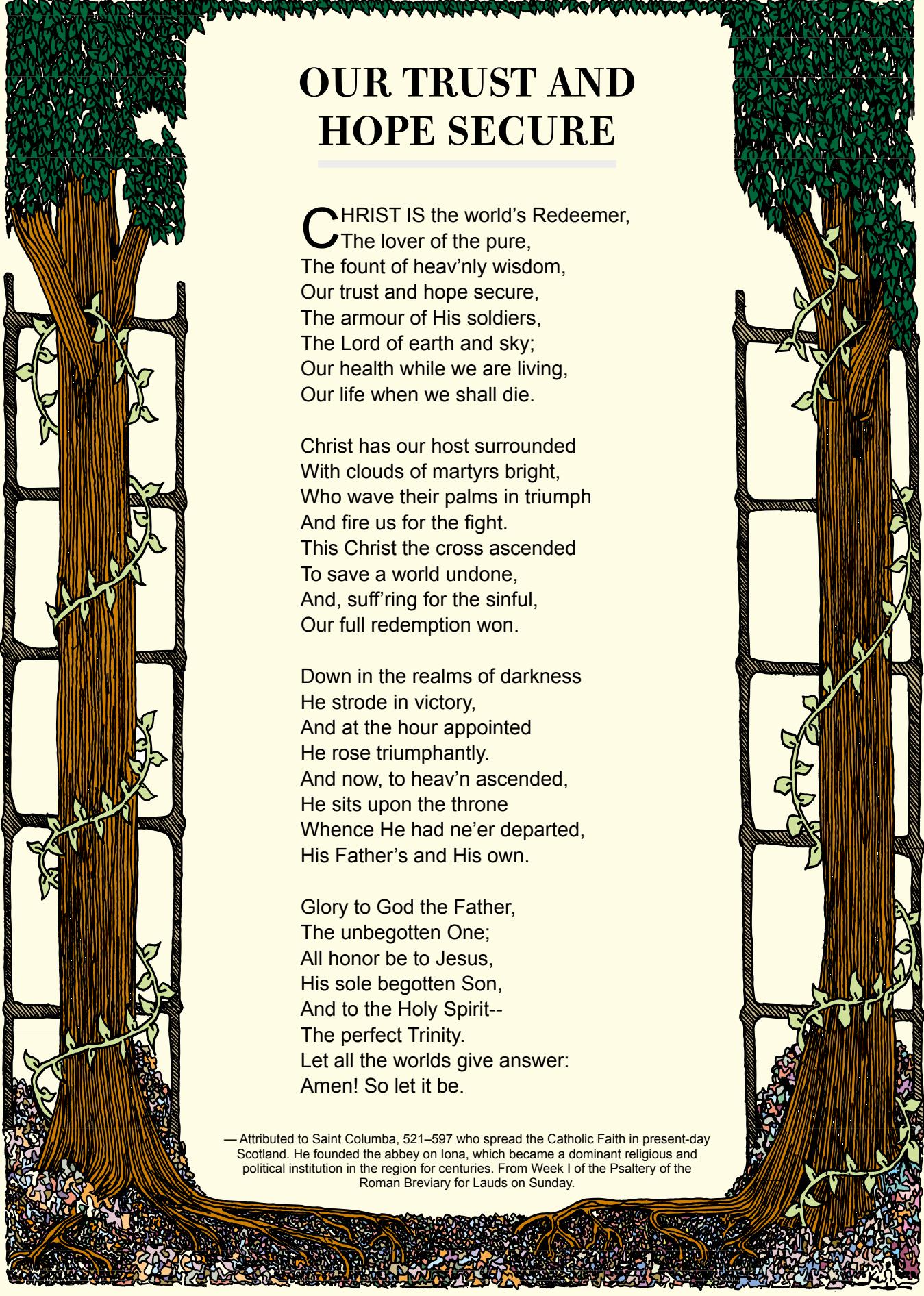
JESUS SAID:
"This Is My Body;
This Is My Blood.
We Believe In Him;
Let Us Also Believe
His Words.
- St Caudentius of Brescia,
died c.410 AD , Treatise 2,
Roman Breviary, Reading
for Thursday of Week 5 in
Easteride.

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

CALLING LIGHT 'DARKNESS'

Not having understood the faith of the Catholic Church, they have fallen into impiety, and are consequently, impaired in their intelligence. They think that even straight things are crooked and call light darkness, while they think that darkness is light.

— St Athanasius of Alexandria [c.298-373] *On the Opinion of Dionysius*, concerning Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, showing that he, like the Synod of Nicæa, opposed the Arian heresy, and that the Arians labelled him by claiming that he was on their side.



OUR TRUST AND HOPE SECURE

CHRIST IS the world's Redeemer,
The lover of the pure,
The fount of heav'nly wisdom,
Our trust and hope secure,
The armour of His soldiers,
The Lord of earth and sky;
Our health while we are living,
Our life when we shall die.

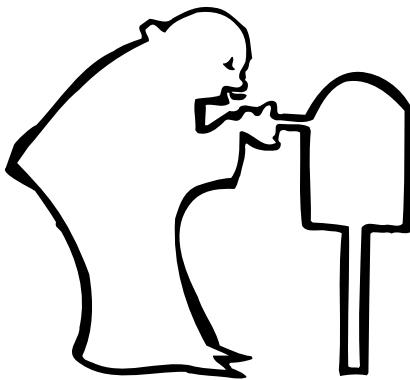
Christ has our host surrounded
With clouds of martyrs bright,
Who wave their palms in triumph
And fire us for the fight.
This Christ the cross ascended
To save a world undone,
And, suff'ring for the sinful,
Our full redemption won.

Down in the realms of darkness
He strode in victory,
And at the hour appointed
He rose triumphantly.
And now, to heav'n ascended,
He sits upon the throne
Whence He had ne'er departed,
His Father's and His own.

Glory to God the Father,
The unbegotten One;
All honor be to Jesus,
His sole begotten Son,
And to the Holy Spirit--
The perfect Trinity.
Let all the worlds give answer:
Amen! So let it be.

— Attributed to Saint Columba, 521–597 who spread the Catholic Faith in present-day Scotland. He founded the abbey on Iona, which became a dominant religious and political institution in the region for centuries. From Week I of the Psaltery of the Roman Breviary for Lauds on Sunday.

LETTERS



The Elephant in the family room

CONTRACEPTION IS the underlying factor responsible for today's scourge of unwed pregnancies, single-parent families, sexually transmitted diseases, deficient fatherhood, and high abortion rate, says a prominent family expert. 'Since the introduction of contraception, everything else has fallen,' said Patrick Fagan, director of the Family Research Council's *Marriage and Religion Research Institute*, reported CNS.

Addressing the annual conference of the Frederick Douglass Foundation in Washington D.C. recently, Fagan cited 'alienation of men from women, the breakdown of marriage,' and 'sex outside of marriage,' as a few of the tragic results of contraception use. The foundation is a black, faith-based organization. 'Universally, in all the history of Christianity, contraception was always seen as a grave sin against God,' he said; 'a sin by which one lost divine life and the soul.'

Planned Parenthood's birth-control campaign, said Fagan, was the beginning of the societal scourge: 'The first family targeted by Planned Parenthood in the late 30s, early 40s was the black Family'. The abortion giant campaigned in low-income black neighborhoods. That campaign, said Fagan, is partly responsible for the breakdown of the black family as well as a host of other consequences affecting society at large.

REBECCA MILLETTE

WASHINGTON D.C. USA

Christmas Cribs

I READ YOUR 'Happy Christmas' editorial in Annals [9/10/2013]. I am pleased to report that the Toowoomba Regional Council has a crib prominently displayed in front of the City Hall in Ruthven street, Toowoomba's main street; and the Grand Central Shopping Centre also had a large Nativity Scene encased in glass. On the New England Highway leading to and from Toowoomba, there is a life size Nativity Scene at the Toowoomba Garden of Remembrance Cemetery featuring the crib, Mary and Joseph, the three wise men and all the animals including camels. It is well lighted by night and can't be missed by all travellers along this main highway. Murray's Picture Framing business in the main Toowoomba C.B.D. also has a prominent Nativity Scene in the window, as has Burstow's Funerals. Sad to say, these places are the exception, and Nativity Scenes are not as prominent as they once were. Let's make a change for next Christmas.

PATRICK McGOVERN

DALBY, QLD 4405

mere respectability as being no substitute for strict observance of the law of Christ. Or perhaps Brewer may have heard Newman's sermon when forming his analysis. The sermon was preached when he was Anglican Vicar of St Mary's at Oxford and is readily available on the internet [vol 4 of the Sermons] for any reader interested.

KEVIN WALKER

THORNLEIGH NSW 2120

Better than the Pictures

THE IMPORTANT decisions we make in life are often preceded by a series of events or experiences that kind of 'soften one up' – something like preparing a garden plot for planting. My initial interest in the Catholic Church was generated by my friend 'Ginger' Matheson who was a reluctant altar boy at St. Mary's church in East St. Kilda. I say *reluctant* because before we could go off together on our dubious adventures he had to serve at 'High Mass' on Sunday morning. I often went to the church to wait for him. One morning the sounds of singing and organ music enticed me to sneak into the back of the church. I was not unaccustomed to music and singing church music at the local Congregational church my parents sent me to. What a shock! What a contrast with the bleak, unadorned almost senseless atmosphere I was used to. I still remember the brilliant, flickering candles; there appeared to be thousands of them. There was colour, smell, sound and a whole world of people which seemed to throb with an intense connection. There was a small man walking up and down the main aisle of the church conducting and seemingly urging the congregation to sing a hymn which was sung loudly at first and gradually diminished to total silence – almost like dying! What a show! Better than the pictures and, for a young bloke, no charge! I had to have more of it. And so today, Christian liturgy is the celebration of Christ's life itself, of the signs he has left us, of the mysteries he lived and now offers us so that we will

live them in happiness.

PETER SLATE

BERWICK, VICTORIA.

Bishop Gsell

I VERY MUCH enjoyed Sister Elizabeth Little's memories of Bishop Gsell MSC [Annals 9/10 2013]. She mentions that the newly consecrated bishop spent three weeks on Thursday Island on his way back to Darwin. My parents [and I just a few months old then] were among the residents and my parents always spoke warmly of his character. Sister records that Father Taylor MSC was the priest in charge but my baptismal certificate records that I was baptised by Father [later Bishop] John Doyle MSC who, many years later, persuaded my widowed mother that my faith would be safe when I went to work in Papua New Guinea. Some three years later when we had moved to Darwin and were at a gathering that included Bishop Gsell, I am on the family record as having announced to the gathering that the bishop was wearing purple socks! I can imagine the bishop enjoying a good chuckle. He was a great man and his cathedral in Darwin is a glorious asset to the city.

MICHAEL O'CONNOR AM GIBSON, VICTORIA 3437

Are we kidding ourselves?

I KNOW IT is very convenient for urban dwellers to have farmers ploughing, tree clearing and animal gas expulsions to blame for the supposed excess of CO₂ in our atmosphere but that childish blame shifting will not stand up to scrutiny. Until about 400 years ago, our atmosphere was constantly stable despite tree clearing, farming, bushfires, volcanoes or animal gas expulsions. Then someone discovered the usefulness of coal, oil and gas, these concentrated carbon forms had been safely sequestered for millions of years but the demands of industrialization have forced their ever increasing use. Now, sorry for the urban dwellers imagination, 100% of any excess CO₂ is a result

of our burning coal, oil and gas.

Probably the earliest craft of mankind is that of the flint knapper. Next to that may well be that of the charcoal burner. Charcoal was found to be so much more convenient than wood, lighter, did not decay, burnt readily even when wet and was fairly easily acquired. That should establish the longevity of this early craft. Its modern application is in the gas works where fossil wood (coal) is heated in the absence of oxygen. The flammable gases given off in this process are collected and piped around our urban areas for cooking lighting and heating. The residue from this process is coke which is carbon in an indefinitely stable form...until burnt. If we were to substitute wood (leaves, branches, stumps, grasses and meadow cakes), which we might call proto coal, for coal in our oven, we would generate flammable gases for the generation of electricity and the remainder will be charcoal another extremely stable form of carbon.

Charcoal, when returned to the ground has astonishing effects on the fertility of that soil. It is not a fertilizer, it is not absorbed by plants but what it does do is absorb water and nutrients which become available to all soil micro-organisms. The resulting proliferation of these life forms results in the astonishing improvement of soil fertility. In Amazonia, because of prodigious rainfall, soils are generally poor, lateritic, acidic and not very productive. In some areas, through systematic addition of charcoal to the soil over the past 7000 years, soil to several metres depth have been so improved as to be dug up, bagged and sold in the marketplaces as potting mix. Go to Google and look up «terrapreta do indio»

We must ask some questions and we should demand straightforward answers. I suggest:

1. If there is now so much excess CO₂ in our atmosphere causing polar ice caps to melt, polar bears to be facing extinction and

oceans expected to rise by 1.5 to 7 metres, how will putting more CO₂ into the atmosphere even at a lesser rate alleviate that problem?

2. What effect will a carbon tax have on levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere other than our feeling good about doing something?

3. If \$25 per tonne is to be demanded of emitters, should not the same money be paid to those who are willing and able to put tonnes of carbon back into the soil permanently?

There are millions upon millions of tonnes of carbon sitting in mature, though scruffy forests. These should be fully harvested, the material passed through a pyrolysis machine, the resulting gases collected for power generation and the residual charcoal returned to the soil from which it came. Harvesting should be conducted so as to not upset the wildlife and immediate first opportunity replanting performed. Our trees are our most efficient collectors of CO₂. Can we really afford to leave all our mature forests sitting idle? Or are we just kidding ourselves and creating a new enormous revenue source?

ERROL WILES

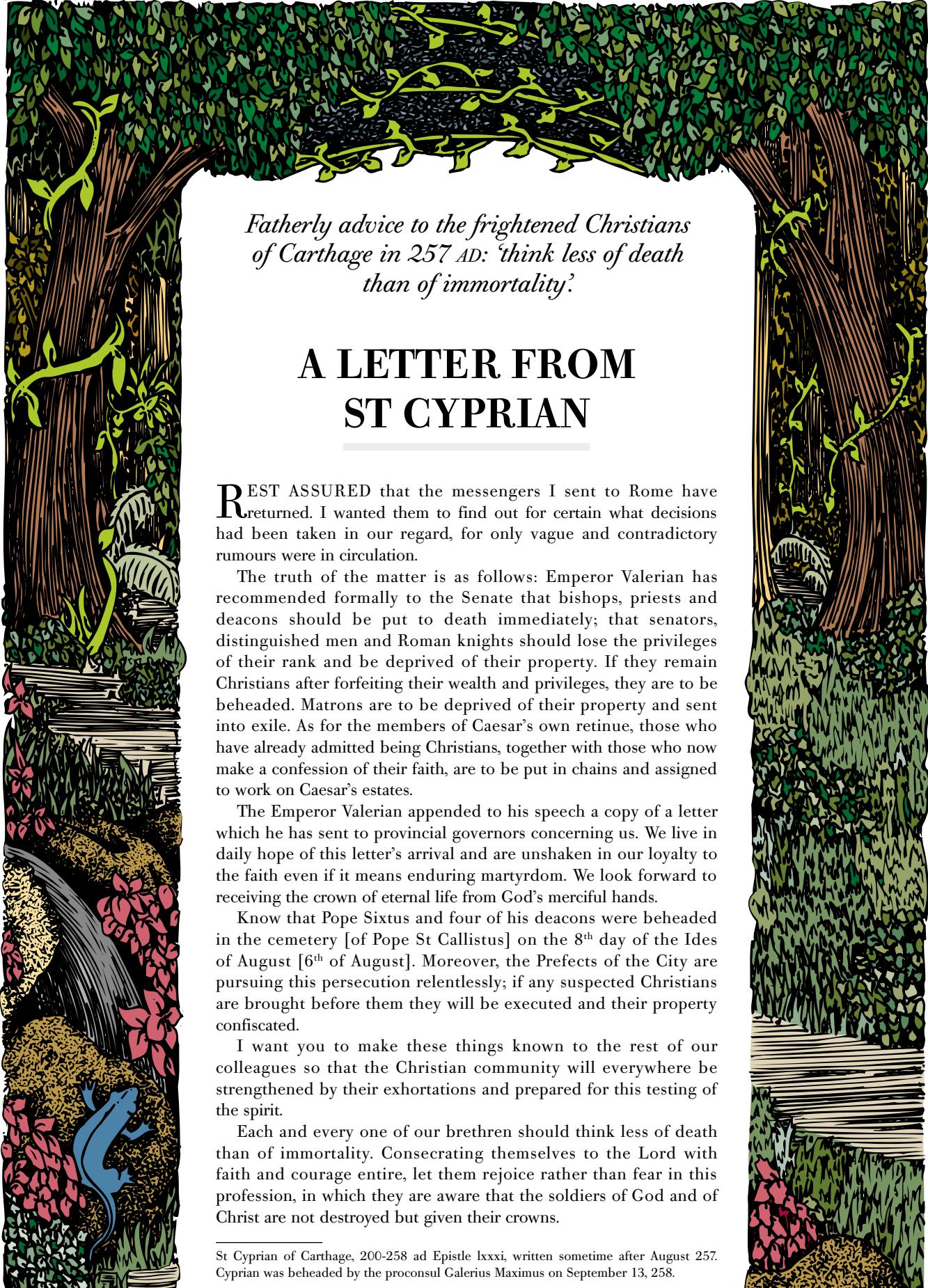
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Church Militant?

CATHOLICS HAVE been blessed with a precious gift of faith and we better stop sitting back, cowering and pretending to morph on Jesus's words of 'turning the other cheek' as an excuse for doing nothing; and meditate on his saying that 'if you are neither hot nor cold I will vomit you out of my mouth'. Satan has had his go; we better get a bit of verbal and active church militant happening.

MAUREEN FEDERICO FRANKSTON SOUTH VIC 3199

(Readers' comments are welcomed, not just on material that appears in *Annals* but on issues that concern the Catholic and the wider community. Please keep your letters short. They may be edited if too long. Always print your full name and street address [not post box, please] and include a daytime phone or fax number or preferably an email address at which you may be reached. Editor, *Annals*)



*Fatherly advice to the frightened Christians
of Carthage in 257 AD: ‘think less of death
than of immortality’.*

A LETTER FROM ST CYPRIAN

REST ASSURED that the messengers I sent to Rome have returned. I wanted them to find out for certain what decisions had been taken in our regard, for only vague and contradictory rumours were in circulation.

The truth of the matter is as follows: Emperor Valerian has recommended formally to the Senate that bishops, priests and deacons should be put to death immediately; that senators, distinguished men and Roman knights should lose the privileges of their rank and be deprived of their property. If they remain Christians after forfeiting their wealth and privileges, they are to be beheaded. Matrons are to be deprived of their property and sent into exile. As for the members of Caesar's own retinue, those who have already admitted being Christians, together with those who now make a confession of their faith, are to be put in chains and assigned to work on Caesar's estates.

The Emperor Valerian appended to his speech a copy of a letter which he has sent to provincial governors concerning us. We live in daily hope of this letter's arrival and are unshaken in our loyalty to the faith even if it means enduring martyrdom. We look forward to receiving the crown of eternal life from God's merciful hands.

Know that Pope Sixtus and four of his deacons were beheaded in the cemetery [of Pope St Callistus] on the 8th day of the Ides of August [6th of August]. Moreover, the Prefects of the City are pursuing this persecution relentlessly; if any suspected Christians are brought before them they will be executed and their property confiscated.

I want you to make these things known to the rest of our colleagues so that the Christian community will everywhere be strengthened by their exhortations and prepared for this testing of the spirit.

Each and every one of our brethren should think less of death than of immortality. Consecrating themselves to the Lord with faith and courage entire, let them rejoice rather than fear in this profession, in which they are aware that the soldiers of God and of Christ are not destroyed but given their crowns.

St Cyprian of Carthage, 200-258 ad Epistle lxxi, written sometime after August 257. Cyprian was beheaded by the proconsul Galerius Maximus on September 13, 258.

*It is on the ground of Truth, where our Lord stands,
that we have to wage our battle for Catholicism and for sanity*

SELF-EVIDENT TRUTH AND THE CHALLENGE OF LIBERALISM

By Paul Stenhouse



HEN THOMAS JEFFERSON drafted the Declaration of Independence in seventeen days for the English colonists in North America in 1776, he couldn't have imagined how often its second paragraph would be cited: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.'

As Judge Bork noted in his well-known book on Modern Liberalism and American Decline, 'The "unalienable" Rights of the Declaration turned out, of course, to be alienable.'

The Fifth Amendment to the American Constitution, Bork notes, 'explicitly assumes that a criminal may be punished by depriving him of life or liberty which certainly tends to interfere with his pursuit of happiness'.¹

The second paragraph which originally read 'We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable' was changed² by Benjamin Franklin, a Freemason, to read, 'We hold these truths to be self-evident.'

The phrase 'self-evident maxims' is found in John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* [1690], the *vade mecum* of empiricists and liberals. The *Essay* was well known to Franklin who much admired

Locke. While Franklin *may* have borrowed the term 'self-evident' from Locke, it was not Locke's, even though it is true that the first time we find 'self-evident' in English literature *was* in the seventeenth century.

That we can't find use of the term before 1671 does not mean that our Catholic ancestors didn't know it or use it. It gives us some idea how many books written and read, illustrated and prayed by our

pre-reformation ancestors, never survived the book-burnings and destruction that accompanied the attempted extinction of the Old Faith in sixteenth century England.

'First principles' and 'self-evident truths' feature in the teaching of Aristotle who died in 322 BC, and they feature in the commentaries on Aristotle's work by Saint Thomas of Aquino – known to the English as Thomas Aquinas – and in his numerous other works on philosophy, theology and sacred scripture.

There are truths which *really are* self-evident. It is a reflection on the intellectually bereft state of our world that this thirteenth century Dominican saint – Thomas of Aquino – got it right on the subject of self-evident truths as he did on much else that baffles our secular society.

And he did it without 'benefit' of the almost five-hundred years of post-Reformation private interpretation of the scriptures, enlightenment, idealism, empiricism, utilitarianism, secularism and pragmatism. He foresaw our world, predicted some of its pitfalls and suggested remedies helpful for our body politic, social and religious.

Some of us flaunt our self-styled superiority over our mediaeval forebears, and bumble around extolling discredited populist causes like *individualism* – the cause of the 'modern,' liberated, autonomous, 'authentic' individual who is in an

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adversarial relationship with the ‘common good’ – imagining that we are encouraging far-sighted ideas when we are actually playing with fire – the fire of scepticism, relativism and atheism.

All indications are that – unlike Thomas – we have got it terribly wrong.

Thomas speaks to us and our befuddled generation when he notes that there are foundational, self-evident, truths – first principles – that we humans cannot deny without locking ourselves in an impenetrable and subjective world of relativism; a world of shadows where, we know from experience and we have it on good authority,³ the Prince of Evil lurks and flourishes.

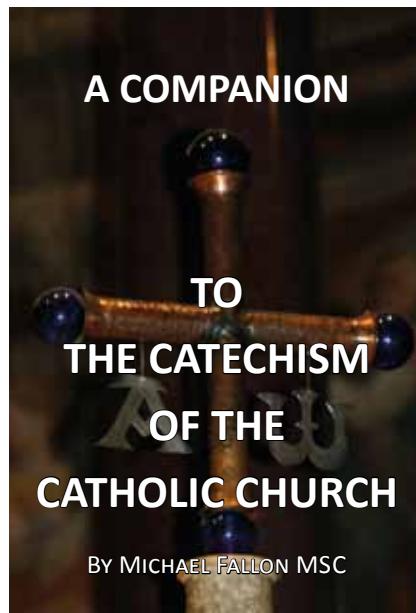
The self-evident truths to which Thomas referred, are: [1] There are things that exist independently of our perceiving them; and [2] we *can have knowledge* of them. Truth is within our grasp; we can arrive at what is true; we do not have to lose ourselves in a subjective maze.⁴

To the questioner who asks: ‘What is it that makes these truths self evident?’ Mortimer J. Adler the famous philosopher whose well-known longing to be a Catholic was fulfilled before his death, replied: ‘Because the opposite is unthinkable’⁵.

Another self-evident truth is that *a thing cannot be and not be, at the same time under the same circumstances*. It is also self-evident that *a thing cannot be true for one person, and false for another*. Reality and Truth are coextensive. Truth is not subjective or relativistic.

In case some readers think this is all too obvious to need stressing, may I refer them to the first lines of *The Closing of the American Mind* by Allan Bloom: “There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative.”⁶

Do we really need convincing that we humans are skilled at kidding ourselves; at coming up with good, rather than real reasons;



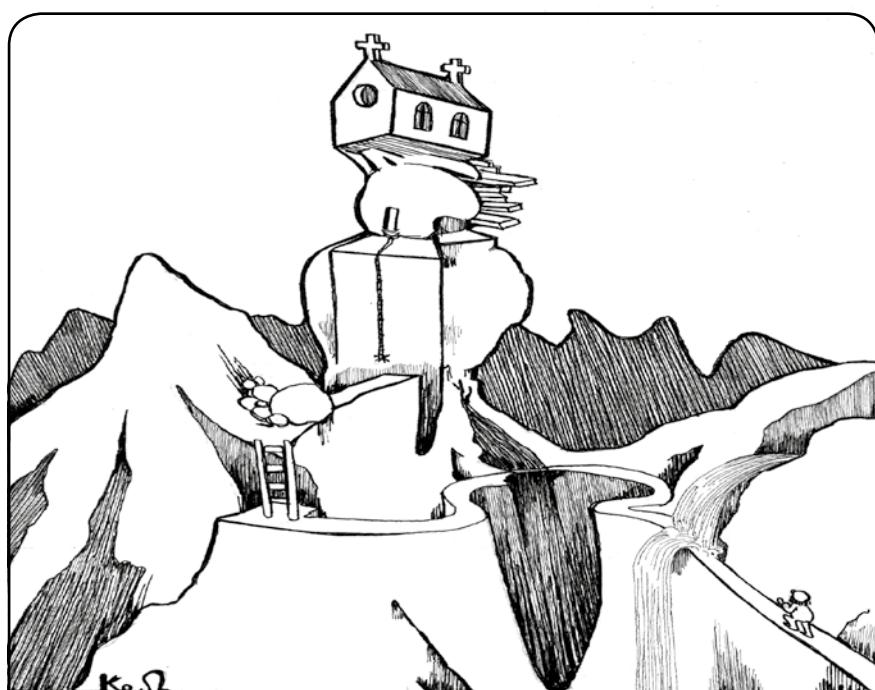
See page 34 this issue for details of this new book from Chevalier Press by Father Michael Fallon MSC

at justifying ourselves, our thoughts, actions, belief or disbelief – no matter how self-contradictory or illogical we may be?

May I anticipate a protest and point out that St Thomas, though he belonged to a noble family, was no recluse. He was no stranger to the realities – including the harsher realities – of life in thirteenth century Italy.

The Emperor Frederick I [Barbarossa], 1122-1190, was his great-uncle. The Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, 1194-1250, was his cousin. That did not stop one of Thomas’s brothers – he had seven – being put to death by Frederick II for supporting the Pope whose cause, as Chesterton notes, was the cause of the people.⁷

When Thomas was nineteen he entered the recently founded Dominican Order in 1244 – against his family’s wishes. The Dominican General sent him to the university of Paris, but on the road north of Rome he was waylaid by two of his remaining brothers, and taken



ON A huge hill,
Cragged and steep,
Truth stands, and he that will
Reach her about must, and
about must go;

And what the hill's suddenness
resists, win so;

Yet strive so that before age,
death's twilight,

Thy soul rest, for none can work
in that night.’

— John Donne, 1572-1631, Satire III

back to Aquino where he was kept a prisoner in the family castle for over a year. He finally got to Paris in the autumn of 1245, but only after escaping from the castle, like St Paul, through a window, with some help from his sisters.

Those who say [usually in good faith] that Christianity is first and foremost a social doctrine, concerned with mutual help – a sort of sublimated philanthropy – are treading a dangerous path⁸ that our Lord warned us against: it is well populated, and *very* wide; there is plenty of room for everybody.⁹

Moreover we acknowledge with French Catholic Existentialist Gabriel Marcel [whose thoughts are reflected in the previous paragraph] that those who say that ‘It doesn’t matter what you think so long as you lead a Christian life’, are committing the worst of offences against Him who said, ‘I am the Way, the Truth and the Life’.

It is on this field, the ground of Truth, where our Lord stands, that we have to wage our battle for Catholicism, and for sanity. On this field only can the battle be won or lost.¹⁰

By trivialising these self-evident truths, we risk cutting ourselves off from reality [especially from the reality of God]. If we deny them, we create and inhabit a world that *is not*; an alternative world to the one that God created – the one that *is*.¹¹

To put it another way, we cut ourselves off from the Truth; we lose ourselves ‘in the labyrinthine ways of our own mind’ as Francis Thompson, the nineteenth century Catholic poet, put it.

Henry VIII knew, when he married his deceased brother’s wife, that he needed to obtain [and had obtained] a dispensation from the Pope. Nevertheless he ignored the reality and preferred an illusion



– for the sake of an heir and the survival of the Tudor dynasty. He claimed, tongue in cheek, that he had sinned by his ‘false’ marriage to Catherine. He omitted to mention to the Pope or [probably] to admit to himself that this thought came to him after he decided to divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry the hopefully more fertile Anne Boleyn.

The second ‘marriage’ lasted three years, after which Anne was charged with treason, adultery, incest and witchcraft and then beheaded. The devastating reverberations from the consequences of this first of many double-thinks by Henry are still being felt. The Tudor dynasty didn’t survive the death of Anne Boleyn’s daughter Elizabeth.

These days we are inundated by advertisements, articles in the media, news reports, politicians,

radio talk-back pundits, internet blogs and lecturers in secondary and tertiary institutions who peddle subjectivity and relativism and assure us [or, perhaps *reassure* us, because not all of us are *that* suggestible] that our opinions *matter*, no matter how outrageous, anti-social or subjective they may be.

If this is how we *feel* about reality, we are told, then it’s all right. What’s good and right is what we think is good and right. Our perception of reality is what really counts. It is *ours*. No one – especially not parents, older people, teachers, magistrates, bosses, or priests – has the right to deprive us of what is *our* most deeply felt *feeling*.

We encounter this cavalier attitude towards reality and truth especially when social, doctrinal or moral issues arise in families, in politics, law, morality and the community.

I recall otherwise intelligent university students, many of whom would undoubtedly have been Catholic, who would submit essays crammed with *non-sequiturs* and facetious and preposterous nonsense. When challenged by the lecturer they would say : ‘Well, it could be true, couldn’t it?’ to which one lecturer replied ‘and this lecture hall could be made of marshmallow; but it isn’t. What we are looking for is not possibility but *probability*. And for probability you need sound arguments based on solid research.’

That was many years ago. Many if not most of those students would have gone on to occupy positions of influence and power within the Australian community.

In the past one hundred years we’ve learned more than we need to know about the destructive forces latent in matter, and as Catholic psychiatrist Karl Stern pointed out in the aftermath of World War II, we have learned more than our predecessors knew about the destructive forces latent in man.¹²



ALWAYS KEEP in mind that an article of faith is not something that the faithful assume. Faith, for those who have it, is the most certain form of knowledge, not a tentative opinion.”

— Mortimer J. Adler, *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*

It seems that we and our world still have a lot to learn from St Thomas.

Gabriel Marcel thought himself into the Catholic Church from an irreligious and atheistic background. He reminds us that in the conflict waged for Catholicism and for sanity on the field of Truth, much depends on the issue of that struggle.

'Man will show whether he has indeed betrayed his mission and his destiny; we shall see then whether or not loyalty must remain the standard of a little chosen band of saints advancing to their certain martyrdom, and indefatigably praying, as they go, for those who have chosen the shadows.'¹³

All that I've written above is not meant to bring on a desperate bout of lamenting and hand-wringing as if we and our world have no hope. On the contrary it is meant to inspire joy and gratitude that we have largely untapped resources upon which to draw.

The wisdom of St Thomas Aquinas is one such resource. Another is the fact that while we all should be aware of the dangers of evil, it is, as Karl Stern puts it, in the 'noblest tradition of Catholicism that our love for the good should be greater than our fear of the bad'.¹⁴

1. *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, Regan Books, 1997, p.57.
2. Peterson, Merrill D. (1970). *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation; a Biography*. Oxford University Press, p. 90.
3. See Jean Danielou, *The Scandal of Truth*, The Catholic Book Club, London, 1962, p.10.
4. James V. Schall, SJ, *Reasonable Pleasures: The strange Coherences of Catholicism*, Ignatius Press, 2013, p.12. "There are things and we know them" is how the French Philosopher Etienne Gilson once put the first intellectual affirmation that we must implicitly make before we can state anything else ... they are first principles, evident. Nothing can be and not be at the same time. ... we must distinguish. This distinguishing is why we have minds.'
5. Rick Pimentel, Quoted: www.philosophynews.com/post/2010/05/06/Thats-Common-Sense!.aspx
6. Tuchstone Books, Simon & Schuster Inc, New York, p.25.
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Changing the Rhythm of Life

By Christopher Dawson

BUT THE ROOTS of the instability of our civilization go even deeper than this. The economic and social changes of the last century have produced a revolution in the relations of man to nature and in the vital structure of society itself. They have destroyed the biological equilibrium between human society and its natural environment.

Hitherto in every European society the higher urban civilization has been a comparatively light superstructure which rested on the broad and solid foundation of rural society. Whatever were the intellectual changes and the political transformation of the ruling and self-conscious social classes, the life of the peasant went on unchanged, following the unvarying rhythm of the life of nature and the changes of the seasons.

In many parts of Europe this peasant life was sufficiently differentiated to possess a distinct art and culture of its own, but even in England, where this was not the case, the countryfolk possessed their own traditions and their own way of life which were but little affected by the contemporary standards of the educated classes.

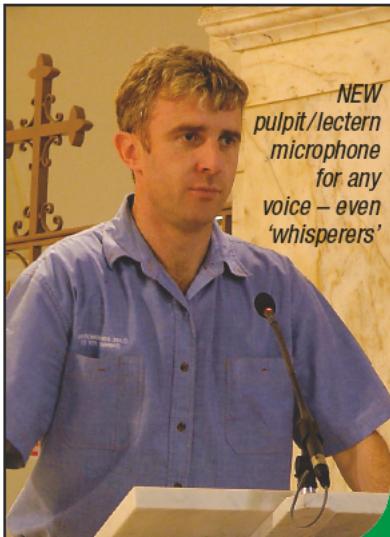
Thus there existed in every society, as it were a vital reservoir of human material, from which the culturally active elements of the cities and the ruling classes could derive new life and energy. There was a continual movement of population from the country to the towns, and from the lower to the upper strata of society, which served to replace the human material that had been exhausted by the strain of an artificial way of life and an intenser form of social activity. We have only to look at the pedigrees of a few representative English county families or men of business to realize how extensive was this movement of social circulation, and how the ruling elements in society were constantly brought into contact with the instinctive vitality of the peasant substratum.

To-day all this is changed. In highly industrialized societies like Great Britain, the country folk form a small minority in a predominantly urban population, and are themselves rapidly becoming urbanized in their standards of culture and their view of life. Even in the countries where agriculture retains its economic importance, the peasant no longer preserves his separate way of life, and all the powers of the state and of public opinion, acting through politics and the press, standardized education and universal military service, co-operate to produce a population of completely uniform habits and education.

Modern urban civilization no longer has any contact with the soil or the instinctive life of nature. The whole population lives in a high state of nervous tension, even where it has not reached the frenzied activity of American city life. Everywhere the conditions of life are becoming more and more artificial, and make an increasing demand on man's nervous energies.

The rhythm of social life is accelerated, since it is no longer forced to keep time with the life of nature. This complete revolution in the conditions of life must inevitably have a profound effect upon the future of mankind. For it is not merely a transformation of material culture, it involves a biological change which must affect the character of the race itself.

— *Progress and Religion*, Sheed and Ward, 1938, pp.221-223.



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I remember when Marc was diagnosed as being autistic, I used to walk around thinking 'We've got a handicapped child. What are we going to do?' and 'How are we going to cope?'

MARC'S STORY

[Mater Dei, 1998-2006]

By Jan Verbinyecz

I'D LIKE TO share some of the experiences we have had with raising our autistic son. Marc is nineteen years old; he graduated in 2006, and was at Mater Dei for six years.

When Marc was four months old he became ill. I took him back and forth to doctors for the next six months. When he was ten months old, doctors found a rare heart condition that needed heart by-pass surgery immediately. Marc had the surgery, made an excellent recovery and was walking one month later. He continued to develop normally in all areas: speech, play skills, socially and verbally.

Now this is where the story takes a twist. What I'm going to say no is not meant to cause controversy, I'm simply telling our story.

Because Marc had been ill, he didn't have his vaccinations until he was sixteen months old. It was then that we believe we lost him. He completely shut down and stopped developing in every way. He no longer looked at us; he

Marc's story is excerpted from a beautiful book - *Journey to the Heart* - produced by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan to celebrate in 2007 the golden jubilee of Mater Dei Orphanage's becoming a school for children with special disabilities in 1957. Mater Dei Orphanage was set up by the Sisters in 1910 and occupied property that was granted to the Cowper family by Governor Macquarie in 1812. The Cowper family home *Wivenhoe*, built in 1837, may still be visited. The gates to Mater Dei are at the top of Kirkham Lane, not far from Cobbitty, NSW. My mother met a Catholic priest for the first time during World War I as she was riding her pony from *Matavai* where she lived in Cobbitty, through the bushland surrounding old Wivenhoe. She became a Catholic some years later, grew to love the nuns and always enjoyed visiting Mater Dei. The priest was Fr. Buisson, MSC. He was from Alsace-Lorraine.

stared beyond us. Play and social skills went out the door and he stopped talking. And today Marc is non-verbal. Friends and family would say, 'Don't worry, he'll start to talk when he's ready'. But of course Marc was never ready.

Generous Prayer

OLORD, remember not only the men and women of good will but also those of evil will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted upon us; remember the fruits we have brought thanks to this suffering: our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart that has grown out of all this. And when they come to judgement let all the fruits we have borne be their forgiveness. Amen.

— Prayer written by an unknown prisoner, in the Ravensbrück Concentration Camp and found on a piece of wrapping paper in the camp, near the body of a dead child. www.college.ampleforth.org.uk/resource.aspx?id=12820

We take for granted that our children will always be able to tell us if anything is wrong, if they are ill or being bullied or hurt in some way. Marc isn't able to do that because of his autism. Marc has absolutely no idea of danger of any description; and even now we have to make sure that someone is with him when he is crossing the road or walking through a busy parking area.

Marc is incredibly afraid of all animals, even birds, so his brother was never able to have a pet, or we were never able to go anywhere where there were animals or pets. Such was the depth of his fear.

We can't leave Marc alone at home and yet he's nineteen years old. Most nineteen-year-olds are working, learning to drive, going out with friends, having girlfriends or boyfriends. Marc won't be able to do any of those things.

When I take Marc shopping he is very happy and makes loud noises and flaps his arms around. So I spend my time saying, 'Marc, no noise' and I do that because, so often, people around us are staring at him as if he was from another planet. Or they look at me with pity.

That's something that I have never come to terms with.

I remember when Marc was diagnosed as being autistic, I used to walk around thinking. We've got a handicapped child. What are we going to do? and How are we going to cope? And, like every other family with a child who has a disability, one of our continuing

worries is what will happen to Marc when we're not around. We weren't the only ones to suffer. Marc's brother Alex also suffered. He not only lost his brother, but his playmate and friend.

When Marc was ten years old, we found Mater Dei. And when he was accepted into Mater Dei, we were thrilled because both my husband and I had gone to Catholic schools and Alex was at St Gregory's (Campbelltown). Of course, we didn't think there were any Catholic schools that were solely for children with a disability, especially one that was a high school as well. Marc has been able to receive the Sacraments of Communion and Confirmation at the Mater Dei Chapel.

Enrolling at Mater Dei was the making of Marc. In his last two years at school he was involved in a number of programmes: meals on wheels and the workshop, which we hoped would lead to paid work when he left school. He loved the swimming programme, going bowling and generally being involved in a whole range of activities run by the school. He has a lot of untapped skills – one being that he is absolutely brilliant at jigsaw puzzles. He can do a 1000-piece puzzle in no time at all. It's almost spooky to watch. We're especially happy that the cooking lessons that were run by the school have taught Marc to eat a greater variety of foods which, being autistic, was a real problem for him. We are very grateful to the staff for this.

You know, as difficult as it has been, we wouldn't trade Marc for anything. He is our beautiful son, and we love him very much.

We are just so blessed and thankful to have had Marc at Mater Dei. He was very well cared for by wonderful staff. He has post-school opportunities for work and left Mater Dei being the very best person he could be. As parents we couldn't ask for anything more.

JAN works on the property for a few days each week. *Journey to the Heart* may be obtained by ringing 02-4655-7481. Ed.



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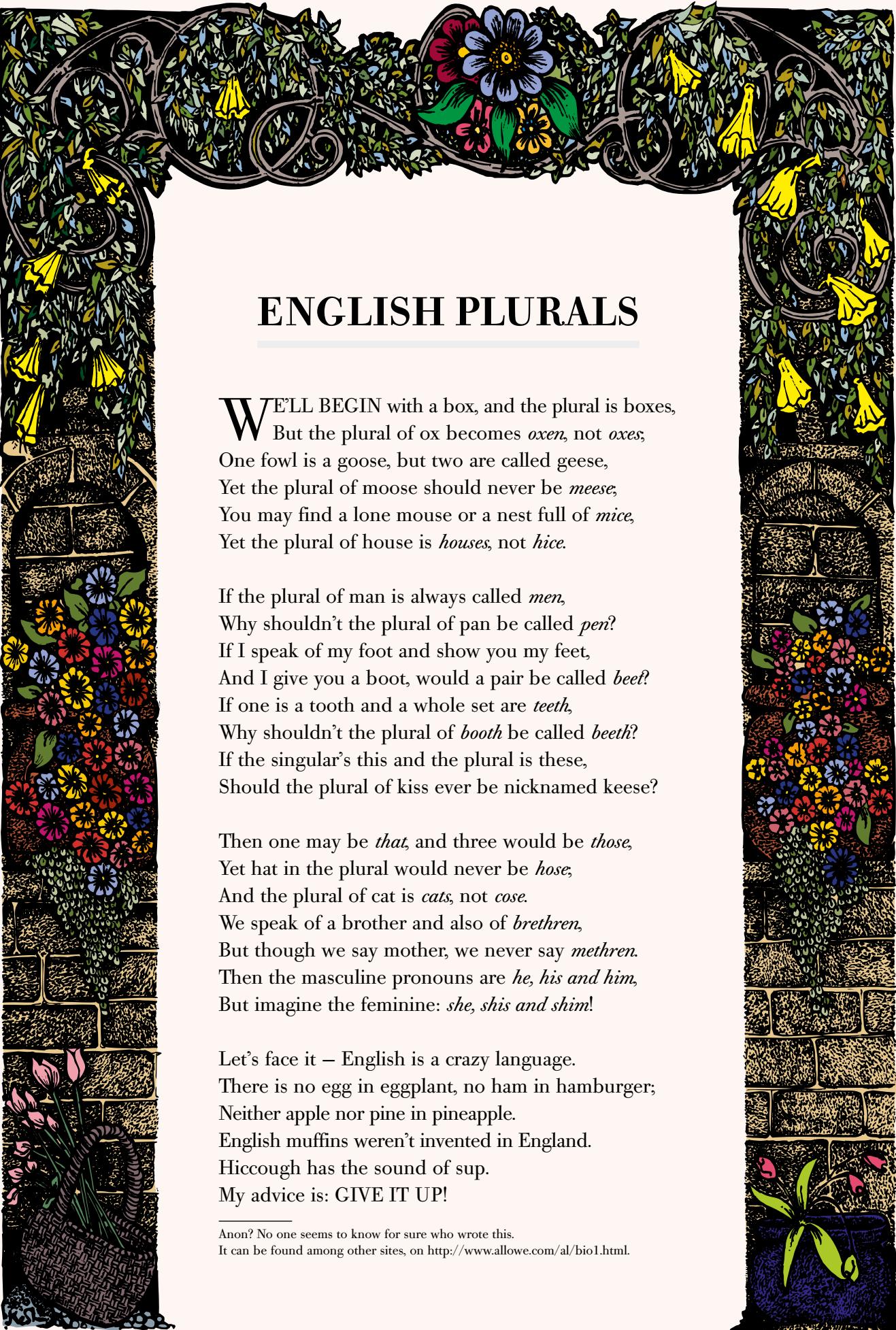
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ENGLISH PLURALS

WE'LL BEGIN with a box, and the plural is boxes,
But the plural of ox becomes *oxen*, not *oxes*;
One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese,
Yet the plural of moose should never be *meese*;
You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of *mice*,
Yet the plural of house is *houses*, not *hice*.

If the plural of man is always called *men*,
Why shouldn't the plural of pan be called *pen*?
If I speak of my foot and show you my feet,
And I give you a boot, would a pair be called *beel*?
If one is a tooth and a whole set are *teeth*,
Why shouldn't the plural of *booth* be called *beeth*?
If the singular's this and the plural is these,
Should the plural of kiss ever be nicknamed *keese*?

Then one may be *that*, and three would be *those*,
Yet hat in the plural would never be *hose*;
And the plural of cat is *cats*, not *cose*.
We speak of a brother and also of *brethren*,
But though we say mother, we never say *methren*.
Then the masculine pronouns are *he, his and him*,
But imagine the feminine: *she, shis and shim!*

Let's face it – English is a crazy language.
There is no egg in eggplant, no ham in hamburger;
Neither apple nor pine in pineapple.
English muffins weren't invented in England.
Hiccough has the sound of sup.
My advice is: GIVE IT UP!

Anon? No one seems to know for sure who wrote this.
It can be found among other sites, on <http://www.allowe.com/al/bio1.html>.

Dramatic cures and instant conversions

MIRACLES, AND BLESSED JOHN PAUL II

By Wanda Skowronska

IN AN AGE of moral relativism and digital hubris people react variously to stories of miracles. Some dismiss them, some consider them events of past biblical times, some are puzzled, some view them as manifesting God's power.

Emile Zola, upon arriving at Lourdes in 1898, declared to a group of newsmen that he would not believe that a miracle had occurred even if someone was cured there. Not even the instantaneous cure of Marie Lemarchand from advanced, terminal tuberculosis — whose multiple, disfiguring ulcerations disappeared before his very eyes — was enough for Zola.

When agnostic Dr Alex Carrel was asked to replace a doctor going to Lourdes in 1902, he went and witnessed the instantaneous cure of a Marie Baillie from tubercular peritonitis for which he had given Marie morphine injections. His reaction was different from Zola's — he realised this cure could not be explained by science and found himself moving from agnosticism to accepting a 'higher power' and eventually died a Catholic.

Pope John Paul II reflected on the term 'miracle' during a general audience in 1988:

The universe in which man lives is not limited to the order that can be ascertained through logic or the senses. A miracle is a 'sign' that the order we perceive is superseded by a 'Power from above' and that it is therefore subjected to it. This 'Power from above' (Luke 24: 49) in other

One involved the cure of Sister Marie Pierre, a nun from Aix-en-Provence in southern France, which led to the pope's beatification in 2011. Sister Marie was a member of the Little Sisters of Catholic Maternities and had suffered from an irreversible and advanced form of Parkinson's disease since 2001 which left her bed-ridden. When the pope died the entire congregation prayed, asking for the late pope's intervention to ease their sister's suffering. One night, after more prayers, Sister Marie fell asleep. She woke up feeling strangely well — and like the paralytic in the parable, she got up and walked. Needless to say, all were dazed with joy to see this sudden cure — the sisters, the neurologist, not to mention Sister Marie Pierre herself, who was able to take up her work in the maternity wards again.

More stories of miracles kept circulating and a website was set up to record some of them.² While the stories varied — describing cures from disease, infertility, addiction to smoking and even giving thanks for good weather in Ireland (!) — many stories recount very dramatic cures of irreversible medical conditions.

When Catherine Lamey in England watched a gastroenterologist examining a CT



Pope John-Paul II, 263rd successor of St Peter as bishop of Rome; the second-longest serving Pope in history [the longest was Pope Pius IX] and the first non-Italian Pope since Pope Adrian VI who died in 1523.

words God Himself ... lets us see both through it and outside of it ...¹

He understood well this 'Power from above' as his life was replete with visible manifestations of it. Moreover there have been many reported miracles since his death on April 2, 2005.

scan in 2011, she feared the worst. She was told that her husband had cancer which had spread to the liver and kidneys. Catherine was understandably distressed knowing what this would mean to her and her two sons. She turned to ask for John Paul II's intercession. To her joy, a subsequent scan showed no evidence of what the previous scan had shown - the cancer had entirely disappeared!

In 2011 Sara Fuentes of Yucatan Mexico was told she had a tumour that obstructed 80 percent of her throat and required surgery. After asking the intercession of Blessed John Paul II, whose relics had been recently brought to Mexico, this devotee of the Pope was suddenly cured and the tumour disappeared.³

Another story concerns Floribeth Mora from Costa Rica. 50-year-old Floribeth lived in Dulce Nombre de Tres Ríos with her family. She woke on April 8, 2011 with such a strong headache she went to hospital and was told she had a serious, incurable aneurysm.⁴ The pain increased over several days and the hospital confirmed that the right side of her brain had begun to haemorrhage.

Floribeth looked at her husband and children knowing she was going to die or suffer irreparable neurological damage. Her family placed a picture of John Paul II on an altar as his beatification loomed and fervently sought his intercession. As one report states, while Floribeth was watching the late pope's beatification on May 1, 2011, she gazed at a magazine photo of the pope, and suddenly heard a distinct voice say 'Get up, don't be afraid.' She stood up and felt instantly better. Shortly afterwards, a variety of medical exams revealed that her aneurysm had simply disappeared.

Floribeth showed reporters 'before and after' brain scans and publicly wept as she recounted her cure. This miracle was examined in depth by the Vatican Commission concerned with the late pope's cause and was accepted as 'the



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second miracle' for his canonisation (to occur on April 27, 2014).

Many lesser-known, equally dramatic miracles are recorded by Paul Zuchniewicz in *Miracles of John Paul II* (2006).



A young Polish-Canadian woman, who had advancing lymphoma and had had chemotherapy, went with her family to World Youth Day in Toronto in 2002. She saw the Pope arrive on that grey windy day and recalls praying intensely, offering her life completely to God, and sensing something inexplicable was happening. As she watched the pope at prayer, she recalls seeing the clouds part, the sun shine — and feeling better. Subsequent tests revealed no evidence of lymphoma.⁵

During the same World Youth Day, Zuchniewicz records that sixteen-year-old, Angela Baronni – ill with devastating bone cancer – was prayed over by the pontiff, who put his hands on her head and made the Sign of the Cross. Afterward, her body showed no trace of cancer.

In 1999, during a visit to Poland, John Paul became aware of a boy with a “hopeless”, malignant, brain tumour. The Pope prayed for the boy and soon afterwards all scans indicated that the tumour was gone.⁶

In one case, says Zuchniewicz, the parents of an extremely ill child sent a telegram imploring the Pope’s prayer and the youngster was healed at the time John Paul II prayed for him.

In 1979, when Bernard and Mary Mulligan held up their small daughter, terminally ill with kidney disease, to the Pope as he passed by during his visit to Ireland, the Pope paused, prayed and touched the girl gently. Later the parents learned she was totally cured.

Chinese-Canadian Mrs Lieu went with her family to Rome, and was in a papal audience group. The pope paused to hear her say that for many years she and her husband could not conceive a child and had had three miscarriages. John Paul II leant over and told Mrs Lieu she would have a son – and she did – his name is John-Paul Lieu.⁷

29 year old Australian Emil Barbar who had cerebral palsy was taken to Rome in 1980. While in St Peter’s Square, Emil began to shout ‘Holy Father, come this way! Come this way!’ The Pope greeted him and asked his mother ‘why are you crying?’ She replied that her son could not walk, whereupon the Pope said ‘take him to Lourdes ... You will see that he will walk.’⁸ The Pope gave her a cross and rosary. Rosemary and son Emil went to Lourdes – Emil was immersed in the water before his weeping mother and then said, ‘Mother, don’t cry- the Mother of God told me that I will walk.’ Emil



The body of Pope John Paul II lying in State in St Peter's Basilica

returned to Australia still disabled. But six weeks later, he stood up and got out of his wheelchair and walked. He has led an active life since then and subsequently enrolled in a law degree.

Equally dramatic are the conversions triggered by the late pope. A young Chinese atheist migrant to Australia, who had watched the papal funeral Mass on TV out of curiosity, personally related to me that he was converted by the end of it and decided to become a Catholic.

Another story comes from ex-Episcopalian American Helen Geraghty who told me that during a visit to the United States she found the pope gazing at her for several seconds and in that time she realised she had been spiritually transformed. This led to her becoming a Catholic.

It is not difficult to see some heavenly irony in the Pope’s blessing of a new ambulance at the Gemelli hospital in 1984 – with a special blessing for the first person to use it.

Little did he know he would be its first passenger the next day, May 13, after the assassination attempt in St Peter’s Square. At the Gemelli, neither the pope nor the doctors could explain the strange path taken by Ali Agca’s bullet that was supposed to have killed him. It was as if the bullet hit a brick wall – but there was only soft tissue in its path. The Pope’s finger was so injured by the bullet an amputation was planned but the finger began healing rapidly. And then there was the fact that Agca’s gun jammed after two bullets.

About these events personal secretary to the pope Cardinal Dziwisz remarked, ‘It seemed to everyone that an invisible hand was directing everything ... we did not talk of a miracle but we were all thinking of it as such’.⁹

As also thought the Filipino police, who realised the pope was the target of a planned terrorist attack during his visit to Manila in January 1995. The house holding the bombs and detailed plans suddenly caught fire and



the perpetrators fled. None of the bombs went off and extensive evidence was found. The house was a few doors away from the Apostolic Nunciature where the pope was staying. The bombs were so powerful they would have taken many lives.

The sense of ‘something strange happening’ is often experienced by people in the presence of holy men and women. As Dr Thellier, director of the Medical Bureau of Lourdes remarked:

‘One of the characteristics of saints who are still alive on earth is that they are changed in nature...It can be said that the very surroundings, even nature itself is affected in the vicinity of a holy person. This is one of the reasons for the call to holiness: through the holiness of each person, the world itself is transformed.’¹⁰

As pope, John Paul II transformed people and the world on a large scale. He also listened to individual stories of suffering with compassion and interceded incessantly for those needing help. The stories of physical healings and spiritual conversions show no signs of abating and this great intercessor continues to write in people’s hearts from the other world, pointing to the fathomless benevolence of our Creator.

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.

1. ‘Miracles Manifest the Supernatural Order’, General Audience, Jan 13, 1988. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/audiences/alpha/data/aud19880113en.html
2. <http://www.karol-wojtyla.org/En/Testimonianze/Testimonianze.aspx>. This site has a ‘Testimony’ link, which lists the miracles by year.
3. Ibid.
4. ‘John Paul miracle woman cries describing cure’, Associated Press, July 5, 2013. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/john-paul-miracle-woman-cries-describing-cure>
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6. Ibid. 18.
7. Ibid. 16-19.
8. Ibid. 18.
9. Ibid. 134.
10. Zuchniewicz, 88.

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A century and a half – even less – was sufficient for human liberty emancipated from Christ to plunge the world in a chaos of woes

A WORLD WITHOUT CHRIST

By Jacques Maritain

IT WOULD BE foolish to think that, in liberating itself from old fetters, Catholicity will not find fresh dangers to meet, against which it must be on its guard. The nationalism of the young nations in a high fever of emancipation is as capable of great excesses as the nationalism of the exhausted nations and States heavily laden with history; their susceptibility is no less quick to take offence; it is far from certain that the world which set out to behold a deliverance is not simply taking part in a change of servitude. To speak less superficially: it may be observed that every moment of *deliverance* is for humanity a moment of danger.

We should always be on our guard against sudden releases, because our nature is weak and bent beneath such a heavy load. At the slightest sensation of alleviation, it imagines that all the constraints and all the old misery, all the rigour of the law, are about to cease.

This is the reason why, after the great deliverance of the Cross and the Resurrection and Pentecost, God reserved for it such a long and bitter penance. The persecutions of the early centuries, the anguish and the agonies of the Dark Ages, were the *noli me tangere*, as it were, of the Holy Ghost; under cover of such darkness

He kept Christ and the redemption alive in the souls of men. Oppressed by the constraints not of fear but of love, compelled by suffering to make an avowal of love and prove it, as Pere de Foucauld said, they did not let their

deliverance go the way of the flesh. The Christian centuries needed such a schooling to teach them where to find true liberty. Yet it was a question then of a genuine and divine deliverance, the only deliverance.

The world experienced later another deliverance, one that was not pure. When the French Revolution, fostered by the long injustice of men, burst like a fruit, what it rejected was the whole system of constraints which preserved being, and of force which protected man against himself and such a system, though normal to

the human being, had ruined itself by a surfeit of abuses.

The Revolution, as we know, inaugurated the era of liberty. If, from the Edict of Milan down to the Declaration of the Rights of Man, human energy in the service of Christ lasted for fifteen centuries before going bankrupt, a century and a half – even less – was sufficient for human liberty emancipated from Christ to plunge the world in a chaos of woes.

The Things that are not Caesar's, London, Sheed & Ward, pp.97-98.



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We can no longer listen to his mighty conversation, his arguments, his singing and his laughter; but we can read his essays – the next best thing.

HILAIRE BELLOC THE ESSAYIST

By Tony Evans



THE WORD 'essay' evokes in many minds those tiresome exercises prescribed in junior school – 'what I did in the holidays' – or at university, sweating over the writing of lengthy assignments in Literature or History. And then there are those ponderous specialist studies which few people read, with such titles as 'An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science' running to one hundred and sixty-eight closely-packed pages including diagrams and graphs.

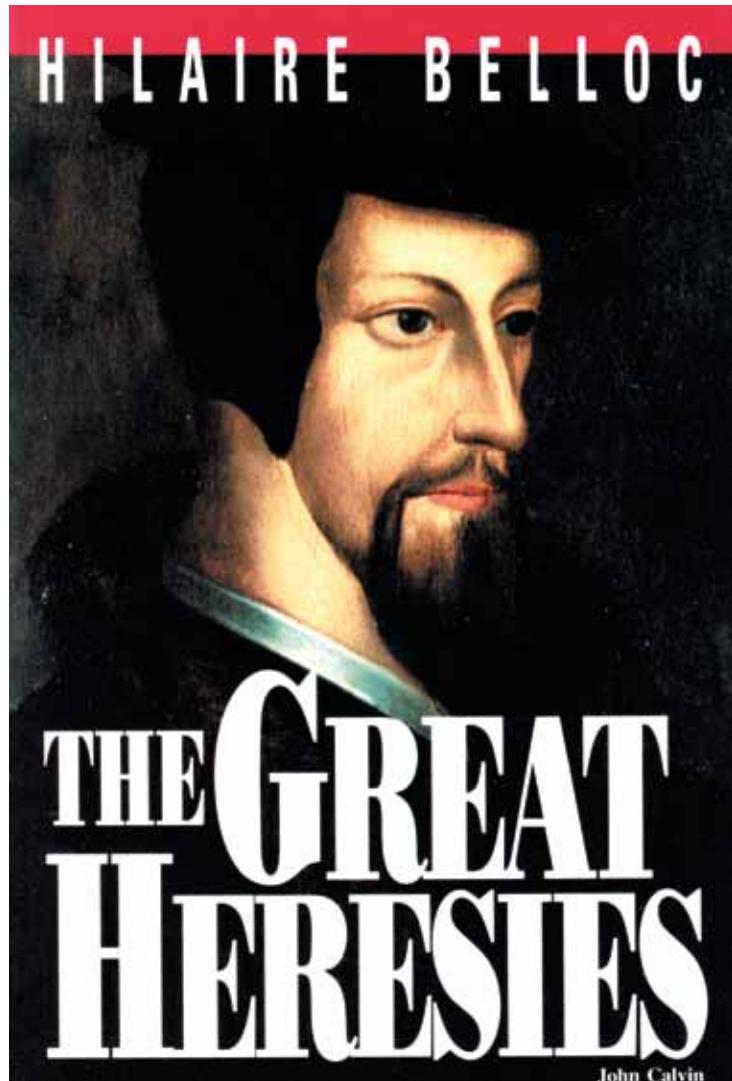
But the essay in its literary form has a long and honourable tradition dating back to Roger Bacon in Elizabethan times and it grew to maturity with Montaigne and Pascal and so on to Charles Lamb and Macaulay and many others in the Victorian age.

Probably the halcyon days of the essay – when it came to full blossom and popular appeal in newspapers – was towards the end of

the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. At that time no successful newspaper could hope to attract a readership without its regular essayists who became, in some instances, star attractions. These essayists should not be confused with today's writers on the opinion pages of

the major newspapers who confine themselves to short commentaries on political news and current controversies. The essay which we have in mind may be defined as a short piece of prose on any random subject, a collection of thoughts or reminiscences either formal or informal, argumentative or discursive, but – most importantly – imbued with the personality of the writer. Such discursive essays of a very personal nature are now fairly rare and are more often found – if at all – in weekend colour supplements or in monthlies like *Quadrant* (Peter Ryan); and of course not forgetting Giles Auty in *Annals*.

Two of the most prolific masters of the essay form in the hey-day of the newspaper essay were the Catholic writers, Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton. Each wrote hundreds of newspaper essays which were later collected and published in book-form under a variety of catchy titles such as, *All Things Considered* and *Generally Speaking* (Chesterton), and *On Nothing and Kindred Subjects*, and *On Everything* (Belloc).



Calvin: his doctrine is dead, but its effects live on in Swiss Society

Unbelief is a Refusal to believe

FROM THE POINT of view of faith and of the believer, unbelief, at any rate when it is explicit, begins to look like a refusal, refusal moreover which can take on many different forms. I will merely observe here that very often, perhaps most often, it takes the form of inattention, of turning a deaf ear to the appeal made by an inner voice to all that is deepest in us. It should be noticed that modern life tends to encourage this inattention, indeed almost to enforce it, by the way it dehumanises man and cuts him off from his centre, reducing him to a collection of functions which have no power of intercommunication. We must add that where religious faith seems to survive in a man who is thus departmentalised, it is apt to become debased and to look like mere routine to an outside observer. Unbelief will this time have a shred of justification, though here again it rests on nothing but a misunderstanding.

— Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, Collins, The Fontana Library, 1965, pp.226-227. Marcel, born in Paris in 1889, was raised without any faith by an agnostic father. A leading existentialist philosopher, he thought himself into the Catholic Church and was received formally in 1929. He was one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century. He died in 1975.

In this essay – if it may be called by such a respected title – I want to share my enthusiasm for Belloc, rather than Chesterton, as an essayist. This is justified partly because Chesterton is mentioned frequently in *Annals*, and Belloc less so; and because Chesterton has received a good deal of publicity recently following the first timid steps being taken in England which may lead eventually to his sainthood, thus he often seems in the public imagination to overshadow Belloc.

The impression is given that beside Chesterton, Belloc was the lesser of the two and this, I hope to prove, is far from the case.

In terms of numbers Belloc wrote fewer essays than Chesterton whose total was swelled considerably by his weekly essay for the *Illustrated London News* over a period of thirty-one years. Even so, Belloc's essays total many hundreds and are of a markedly different style from those of his great friend and contemporary.

Belloc was first and foremost a trained historian who, on whatever subject he was writing – and he wrote on many diverse subjects other than history – first considered the evidence which he himself had gathered in the course of his many

journeys and from his inexhaustible reading.

When reading Belloc's essays one can be confident that he knew what he is talking about. For example when he accuses the *Cambridge History of the French Revolution* of propagating a false account of the battle of Wattignes, he lists 'five great positive errors in six lines' including the date of the battle, the number of French troops involved and even the place where it occurred. We know he is right because he has been, literally, over the ground, and has read the original documents. In the same

essay, titled 'On the Decline of the Book', he warns that 'the less the true historical book is read and the more men depend on ephemeral statements, the more will legend crystallize, the harder will it be to destroy in the general mind some comforting lie.... and an accurate knowledge of how men acted in the past will become unknown'.

Belloc can be argumentative and dogmatic but even when you disagree with him you admire his prose; he never writes a dull sentence. His meaning is always clear and his choice of words simple and exact.

As J. B. Morton writes in his introduction to the Penguin collection of essays: '[Belloc's writing] is the fruit of an orderly mind, sparing no pains to make the reader see a landscape, or appreciate the detail of the complicated debate'. Morton goes on to quote from the essay 'On a Piece of Rope' in which Belloc claims that 'If you can describe clearly the proper way of making this or that knot without a diagram then you are a master of the English tongue'. Of course in the essay itself this is just what Belloc does, and thus proves unselfconsciously the accuracy of his own claim.

Belloc, who shared with all poets occasional feelings of great emotion and melancholy, could be both gentle and compassionately thoughtful, as he was in his contemplation of a photograph of a child skipping through the grass in 'The Portrait of a Child' 'I say that in this portrait which I treasure there is not only blessedness, but holiness as well – holiness which is the cause of blessedness and which contains it, and by which secretly all the world is sustained.'

Many of Belloc's essays were inspired by his love of the sea and sailing in small boats, and he sees in the skills necessary in confronting the dangers, the adverse tide and weather conditions, a metaphor for the journey through life itself.

Often he found himself in danger as he certainly was in the North Sea



rounding Orfordness: 'The seas that had hitherto followed like giants in battle now took to a mad scrimmage. They leapt pyramidically, they heaved up horribly under her; she hardly obeyed her helm, and even in that gale her canvas flapped in the troughs. Then in my despair I prayed to the boat itself (since nothing else could hear me), 'Oh boat bear me safe round this corner and I will scatter wine over your decks'. Later when safe in harbour he keeps his promise, which to Belloc who loved wine and chose it well, must have been a heavy debt to pay.

Sometimes Belloc in his essays can be light-hearted and amusing as he is in 'A Guide to Boring', in which he complains that although there has been plenty of writing describing the horrors of being bored, and plenty of invective against the Bore, there is nothing describing the Art of Boredom, no instruction manual for those who wish to inflict boredom on their enemies. Naturally Belloc then proceeds, with tongue in cheek, to provide such advice. 'Another very useful tip is the bringing in of useless detail and the branching of it out into a luxurious growth of irrelevance. It is a very good plan to open with hesitation over a date...' At the end of the essay we are left with the conviction – unintended by the author I feel sure – that none of these boring techniques are to be found in Belloc's own writing, nor in his conversation which was recognised as eloquent and scintillating and greatly praised by all who had the privilege of meeting him.

Probably the most anthologised essay in Belloc's vast collection is the poetic description of 'The Mowing of a Field'. It is judged as an example



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of his finest prose. It describes how Belloc who was proud of his little farm in Sussex, rose early in the morning to attempt to mow his field of hay, not with a modern tractor but with the scythe. His description of the steady work, the atmosphere, and the hard labour as the sun comes up and warms the day, is one of his most lyrical evocations of an English country craft of the early twentieth century.

We learn in the essay how the scythe was made, how it was sharpened and about the art of swinging it so as to conserve the body's reserves of energy. 'So great an art can only be learnt by continual practice; but this much is

worth writing down, that, as in all good work to know the thing with which you work is the core of the affair.'

I hope this little essay has tempted *Annals* readers to search out collections of Belloc's essays, perhaps to renew old acquaintance, or perhaps to read for the first time. All his essays are worth reading even those whose titles at first glance may mean little to the browser. In every essay there is much of interest – original thoughts expressed, poetic descriptions, reasoned arguments and high spirits. We can no longer listen to Belloc's mighty conversations, his singing and his laughter, but we can read his essays – the next best thing.

Educating Children

THE TOIL undertaken for the literary education of children remains equally ...reassuring to all who are discussing the moral development of humanity. It is the latest movement of the religious instinct, which is the instinct of trust.

— G. K. Chesterton, Lunacy and Letters, Sheed and Ward, 1958, p.25

TONY EVANS was a producer with the ABC for many years and is now a freelance writer living in Western Australia. He has published three historical biographies, including a very popular biography of William Wardell, architect of St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne, St Mary's Basilica in Sydney, and St John's College within the University of Sydney. Evans founded the *C.K.Chesterton Society* in W.A. Recently it became the national *Australian Chesterton Society*.

CATHOLICS, MUSLIMS, AND THE SECULAR STATE

By Paul Stenhouse MSC

 UNTIL THE RISE of Islam with its unique blend of politics and religion, in the seventh century of the Christian era, it was not customary to impose religious belief by force on subject nations.

Over the preceding centuries religions had routinely been controlled and sometimes even cruelly proscribed by emperors and kings in the Graeco-Roman empire. The religion of the majority [or minority], however, had not been imposed under pain of death.

Even the torture and execution of Christians for not offering incense to the emperor as a god in the early centuries of the Christian era was not an attempt to force Christians to embrace paganism, but a ploy to make them renounce their faith in Jesus Christ.

With the coming of Muhammad and his religion of Submission [Islam] all that changed.

Almost 800 years after Muhammad's death the traditional understanding by Muslims of his teaching as contained in the Qur'an and the Hadith, was summed-up by Ibn Khaldun [1332-1406] as follows:

"To discuss or argue ... with them [Christians] is not up to us. It is for them to choose between conversion to Islam, payment of the poll tax, or death."¹

According to Ibn Ishaq his earliest biographer, Muhammad's last command before he died, was 'Do not leave two religions in the Arabian peninsular'.²

Anyone so ill-informed as to have thought that modern-day Islamic teaching has departed from this understanding of the legitimate place of violence in propagating fundamentalist Islam would surely

have been disabused by the horrors of 9/11 and subsequent continuing bloody events throughout the Muslim world and elsewhere.

As I write, the Editor of the Malaysian Catholic *Herald* – Father Lawrence Andrew SJ – is being burned, in effigy, in Selangor Malaysia. The photo of this burning in effigy was published in *The Malaysian Insider*, a news portal that has been disseminating news in Malaysia since 1988.³ Father Andrew has been labelled a traitor by Islamic extremists for defending the use of the word 'Allah' for God in the Catholic Malay press, and in the Catholic Malay Liturgy.

This despite the easily verifiable fact that 'Allah' was used by Christians for centuries before Islam was founded by Muhammad. In fact, Muhammad's father's name was 'Abdullah' [Servant of Allah] and he died six months before Muhammad was born. Islam did not coin the name.

Present day fundamentalist Islam's very public and wide ranging confrontation with Western liberal 'values' continues to receive massive exposure in all media, especially television and the so-called 'social' media.

A superficial overview has led some to conclude that Orthodox Islam's attitude towards Christianity has mellowed because of Catholicism's opposition to many aspects of Western secularism and liberalism which also offend Islamist sensibilities.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The situation is, however, complex in the extreme, and made

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all the more so by the lack of any single authoritative voice that all Muslims may heed.

It is true, for instance, that the Qur'an officially forbids the *unlawful* taking of human life – but what constitutes ‘unlawful’ killing is much discussed.⁴ It also opposes, in principle, abortion and contraception,⁵ though again a great variety of opinion exists. It permits divorce, or at least the one-sided dissolution of marriage by the man. It stresses marital fidelity on the part of the woman but turns a blind eye to sexual infidelity on the part of males. And this includes legalised prostitution under the name of *mut'a*, euphemistically called ‘temporary marriage’.⁶

Islam is not a homogeneous system of belief. It is eclectic and heterogeneous – not only

Still not too late to learn

ONLY IN MAY 2000 did the United States send its first counterterrorist experts to Sudan, and then their brief was to investigate whether Sudan was maintaining terrorist training camps, not to examine the Sudanese security agencies’ extensive files on al Qa‘ida and other terrorist organisations. ... The first US eyes passed over Khartoum’s dossiers in the autumn of 2001, and were reportedly impressed by what they found. The low level of tradecraft in US government institutions will recur as a factor that undermined the Administration’s policies. Instead of seeking a scapegoat among policy makers, perhaps we should seek it in the systemic failures of institutions.

— Alex de Waal, ed. *Islamism and its enemies in the Horn of Africa*, Shama Books, Addis Ababa, 2004, pp. 223,224.

racially and linguistically, but also religiously and morally.

This reflects the wide sweep of religious and civil cultures from which the conquered peoples who make up Islam were originally drawn. It also reflects the influence of the major theological schools

on Islamic thinking down to the present: the five Sunni Schools, Maliki, Hanafi, Shafi'i, Hanbali and Zahiri; and the two Shi'a Schools, the Ja'afari and Zaidi.

Whether the subject be tolerance, predestination, fate, usury, violence, mercy, slavery, lying, jihad, education, suicide, democracy, prayer, marriage, freedom of religion, womens' status and the wearing of the veil, there is a variety of often contradictory and divergent views to be found in Qur'anic and Hadith verses, and in the interpretation offered by followers of the various Schools.

In all the above, differences exist between official Catholic Church teaching, and Islamic Law. It is important that Christians who, out of a laudable charity, seek the good in Islam, and its apparent points of contact with Christian doctrine, not succumb to the temptation to gloss over major differences. These differences between the first century Catholic faith and the seventh century Islamic faith are deep seated, and far reaching. They should not be underestimated.

Jesus

On some Catholic internet sites and elsewhere you will find Islamic websites advertised that declare ‘We love Jesus too’. They may well do so, but it will be the Jesus of the Qur'an, not the Jesus of Christianity and the New Testament, whom they profess to love.

These are not the same.



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The Dilemma of Christians in Syria

AS MEN OF THE CHURCH, we cannot incite Christians to take up arms and to take part in the conflict. We cannot say these things, it is insane. It goes against the Gospel and the Christian doctrine'. This is what the Syrian Catholic Archbishop Jacques Behnan Hindo, titular of the eparchy of Hassaké - Nisibis says to *Fides Agency*.

His words are related to recent statements made by the Greek-Orthodox bishop, Lukas el-Khoury, according to whom 'every young Christian in a position to do so should take up arms to protect Syria, churches and convents', because before what happens to the Syrian people, 'we cannot remain with arms folded'.

According to Archbishop Hindo, 'the situation in which we find ourselves, every individual, even Christian, is free to make his own choices according to conscience. Last year the government had offered me 700 Kalashnikovs to be distributed among the Christians of Hassaké, and a thousand for those of Qamishli, and I refused. We are against violence, from whatever side it comes'.

The tragic situation in Syria and targeted attacks suffered by Christians in the Syrian conflict according to Archbishop Hindo can lead to unbalanced reactions: 'We are all under pressure, we are now in anguish for the Sisters of Maalula, who have been kidnapped. But as pastors we must comfort our people. Moreover – the Syrian Catholic Archbishop concludes 'reckless statements put Christians in danger of becoming targets of violence'.

— Source: *Agenzia Fides* 11/12/2013

Islam does not accept the divinity of Christ. It denies that Jesus is the Son of God. The Qur'an consigns to a fiery hell anyone who believes in the divinity of Jesus Christ.⁷

Muslims who worship Allah are invited⁸ to 'wage war' against Jews and Christians, and to pray 'May Allah fight against them'.⁹ Christians and Jews are vilified as 'infidels' and 'hypocrites,' 'whose abode is hell, which is a very evil place'.¹⁰

I am referring here to verses from the Qur'an, not to the beliefs of individual Muslims. There are many Muslim people who would be surprised and some would even be shocked to learn exactly how embedded their religion is in the mentality of seventh century Arabia. And to find how different in their thinking many of them are from extremist Islamist proponents of 'orthodox' Islam.

The Jesus of the Qur'an is a prophet, but not as important a prophet as Muhammad. Even though the Qur'an seems not to

make any distinction between the prophets,¹¹ some Islamic traditions consider Muhammad as Lord of the [other] Prophets i.e. Lord of Noah,

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Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.¹²

Christians who claim that Jesus is the Son of God are called 'liars',¹³ and treated as 'polytheists' for whom in hell 'garments of fire will be cut out',¹⁴ and 'over whose heads boiling water will be poured - and with it shall be melted whatever is in their bellies and skins'.¹⁵

According to the Qur'an Jesus did not die on the cross, nor did he rise from the dead.¹⁶ Therefore he is not the Saviour of mankind. He will come again, to herald the Last Day, but he will have to fight the Antichrist, break the crosses of the Christians, destroy the synagogues and churches, exterminate pigs and kill all the Christians except those who believe in him. Then there will be only one community—that of Islam.¹⁷

The Qur'an would even have us believe that God described to Muhammad how Jesus told the Jews that he had come to bring the good news of 'an Apostle who will come after me whose name will be Ahmad'.¹⁸ Ahmad is taken by Muslims to refer to the heavenly name of Muhammad.

This appears to be a garbled memory of the account in St John's gospel of John the Baptist's response to a question put to him by certain Pharisees: 'Among you ...' replied John the Baptist, 'stands the one who is to come after me: I am not worthy to untie his sandals'.¹⁹ 'Ahmad' ['more laudable', 'more praiseworthy'] is the comparative form of 'Hamid' which means 'commendable' or 'praiseworthy'. 'Muhammad' means 'praised', or 'praiseworthy'.

The Trinity

Muhammad and the Qur'an reject the doctrine of the Trinity in three much disputed places,²⁰ but what they reject has nothing in common with the Christian doctrine as defined by the Church Councils held before the time of Muhammad.

The Qur'an gives the impression that Muhammad thought that the Christian Trinity comprised God the Father, Mary the mother, and Jesus

the Son.²¹

Catholics, too, reject this understanding of the Trinity as false. The Qur'anic understanding is reminiscent of the stellar triads of the pre-Islamic Pantheon, and of certain Christian sects of Arabia, the Mariamites and the Collyridians, who seem to have elevated Mary to quasi-divine status,²² and were condemned by the Church as heresies.²³

The Virgin Mary

Much is often made of the fact that Mary, the mother of Jesus is honoured by Muslims, and that she is the most prominent woman in the Qur'an; in fact the only one to be identified by name.

Islamic scholars argue about Mary's place among the famous women of Islam - Khadija [Muhammad's first wife] 'Aisha [his favourite wife] and Fatima [his daughter]. Along with them and Asya [Pharaoh's wife] Mary is regarded generally as being one of the ruling females in heaven.

As with Jesus, Mary of the Qur'an is not Mary of the New Testament or of Christian tradition. Catholics will be shocked to learn that according to some authorities Mary, Asya, Khadija and 'Aisha are Muhammad's four female consorts in heaven.²⁴

It should be noted that Muhammad has apparently confused Mary, mother of Jesus, with Miriam, daughter of Amram ['Imran] and sister of Moses and Aaron [Harun].²⁵

Among the Shi'ite who have special reverence for Muhammad's daughter Fatima who was the wife of 'Ali and mother of the martyrs Hasan and Husain, Fatima is known as *Maryam al-Kubra* 'the Greater Mary'.²⁶

<> <> <>

The horrific Calvary that our fellow Catholics and fellow Christians are enduring in too many war zones in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia is the result of the build-up – over more than thirteen

The West and the Rest

If, IN THE YEAR 1411, you had been able to circumnavigate the globe, you would probably have been most impressed by the quality of life in Oriental civilizations. The Forbidden City was under construction in Ming Beijing, while work had begun on reopening and improving the Grand Canal; in the Near East, the Ottomans were closing in on Constantinople, which they would finally capture in 1453. The Byzantine Empire was breathing its last. The death of the warlord Timur (Tamerlane) in 1405 had removed the recurrent threat of murderous invading hordes from Central Asia - the antithesis of civilization. For the Yongle Emperor in China and the Ottoman Sultan Murad II, the future was bright. Western Europe in 1411 would have struck you as a miserable backwater, recuperating from the ravages of the Black Death - which had reduced population by as much as half as it swept eastwards between 1347 and 1351 — and still plagued by bad sanitation and seemingly incessant war. In England the leper king Henry IV was on the throne, having successfully overthrown and murdered the ill-starred Richard II. France was in the grip of internecine warfare between the followers of the Duke of Burgundy and those of the assassinated Duke of Orleans. The Anglo-French Hundred Years' War was just about to resume. The other quarrelsome kingdoms of Western Europe — Aragon, Castile, Navarre, Portugal and Scotland - would have seemed little better. A Muslim still ruled in Granada. The Scottish King, James I, was a prisoner in England, having been captured by English pirates. The most prosperous parts of Europe were in fact the North Italian city - states: Florence, Genoa, Pisa, Siena and Venice. As for fifteenth-century North America, it was an anarchic wilderness compared with the realms of the Aztecs, Mayas and Incas in Central and South America, with their towering temples and 'skyscraping' roads. By the end of your world tour, the notion that the West might come to dominate the Rest for most of the next half-millennium would have come to seem wildly fanciful. And yet it happened.

— Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, Allen Lane, 2011 pp.3-4.

hundred years – of an anti-Christian culture that has resulted from Muhammad's misunderstanding and the Qur'an's misrepresentation of Christian belief and practice.

We do not break the hold that prejudice, hate and fear have on simple people by pretending that error is truth, or that dangerous bias doesn't exist, or, worse still, that it doesn't matter.

1. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: an Introduction to History*, by Franz Rosenthal, Bollingen Series xlivi, 2nd printing 1980, 3 vols. Princeton University Press, vol.1, Chapter iii, Section 31, 421-422.
2. *The Life of Muhammad: a translation of Ishay's Sirat Rasul Allah*. A Guillaume, OUP, 1955 re-issued Karachi Pakistan 1967, 13th ed. 1998, p.689. Arabic text published by Dar Ehsa al-Tourath al-Arabi, Rue Dakkache, Beirut, Liban vol.4, p.323.
3. January 4, 2014.
4. Q5²².
5. Abdulaziz Sachedina, 'Abortion' *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed. Brill, 2003, vol. 1, p.3.
6. Q 4²⁴. Slaves may be compelled to prostitution: see Q 24³³.
7. Q 14^{29,30}.
8. Q 9³⁰.
9. Various and euphemistically translated for non-Arabic readers of the Qur'an as, e.g., 'God confound them' [N.J.Dawood, *The Koran*, Penguin Books]; 'God's curse be on them' [*The Holy Qur'an* transl. A. Yusuf Ali, The Islamic Centre, Washington]; 'May God resist them' [George Sale, *The Koran*, London]; 'Allah fighteth against them' [Muhammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*, London] etc.
10. Q 66⁷]
11. Q 2¹³⁶
12. See *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed.cit., vol.4, p.303.
13. Q 41⁷¹; 10⁶⁶⁻⁶⁹
14. Q 22^{17,19}
15. Q 22²⁰
16. G.C.Anawati, *Encyclopaedia of Islam {EI}*, CD-ROM version, Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands, 'Isa'.
17. ibid. See also *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed.cit., vol. 3, p.138.
18. Q 61,6
19. John I, 26-27.
20. Q4¹⁷¹; 5⁷³; 5¹¹⁶
21. Q5⁷³
22. G.C.Anawati, *art.cit.*
23. See Adversus Haereses, Epiphanius of Smyrna, c. 320 – 403.
24. Ibn Kathir, *Qisas*, ii, pp.375-383, quoted: *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions and Interpretations*, OUP, 1994, p.80.
25. Q19²⁹
26. L. Vecchia Vaglieri, *Encyclopaedia of Islam {EI}*, CD-ROM version, Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands, *Fatima*, Fatima's Names.



*The first Pope to take the name
Francis' pays a visit*

ASSISI – TOWN OF ST FRANCIS

By George Cardinal Pell

IT WAS 6.45 am on Friday October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, when the Italian government helicopter took off from the Vatican Gardens bound for Assisi. On board was Pope Francis with his Council of eight Cardinal advisers.

Dawn was breaking and clouds of mist still hung here and there as the 2,000 plus years of Roman history unfolded beneath us. Most obvious was the new St. Peter's Basilica, whose foundation stone was laid by Pope Julius II in 1506.

St. Francis of Assisi, who died in 1226, is the most popular of the Catholic saints outside the Church. The son of a wealthy businessman who objected strongly to his living as the poorest of the poor, Francis loved the world of nature, plants and animals and believed he was called to follow Christ in radical simplicity and revitalize the church. He now has thousands of priests and nuns who live according to his rule.

Pope Francis belongs to the Jesuit order founded by the Spaniard St. Ignatius of Loyola in 1540. He is the first Jesuit pope and the first pope to take the name of Francis.

The visit was packed with 12 different engagements and the most moving of these was the first at the *Istituto Serafico*, where the Pope embraced and blessed each one of the 100 disabled young people of different ages and greeted each of their carers. It took him nearly an hour to do so, but all waited patiently amid the cries and the groans. In the best sense of the word it was a Christ-like moment. Francis is at ease with the sick and they sense this.

For the first time in its 800 year history a pope entered the room where Francis broke with his father and stripped off his clothes before the local bishop. His father was furious and stalked out after picking up the clothes!

Wild press accounts were predicting that Pope Francis might make some radical announcements there, but he only pointed out that everyone, not just cardinals and clergy, should reject the values of the world. No one was interested in giving that message too much coverage.

In the late afternoon 50,000 young adults met for a series of questions and answers; a mini World Youth Day.

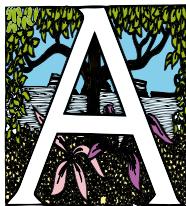
A visit to the sacred hut of Rivo Torto, where Francis and his first few followers lived for three years rounded off a wonderful visit.

This article first appeared in Sydney's Sunday Telegraphy, October 20, 2013. Reprinted with permission.

Until the Muslim world can itself deal with the extremists, the leadership of the West will only make things worse by intervening. It could, of course, try praying unless it has forgotten how.

GOOD INTENTIONS ARE NEVER ENOUGH

By Michael O'Connor



S I WRITE, it is the Feast of The Epiphany, the manifestation of Our Lord and Saviour to all the peoples of the world and not merely to the Jewish people. It is also a day on which our media report that the city of Fallujah in Iraq has been captured by Islamist radicals opposed to the supposedly elected government of Iraq. Government security forces are reported to have withdrawn from the city leaving its population at the mercy of these al-Qa'eda aligned fanatics.

Fallujah was, it will be remembered, the scene of at least two fierce battles during the Western occupation of Iraq, the last resulting in the expulsion of the Islamist militants that had taken control of the city. So the wheel has turned full circle. The future not just for Fallujah but also for Iraq is murky indeed.

Late last year, the Australian government withdrew the bulk of its troops that had been committed to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Comprising forces from 49 countries, near the end of 2013 the ISAF mustered more than 80,000 troops, 60,000 from the United States. Notably only eight of the contributing countries could

be considered Muslim and most provided no more than token numbers.

The Western enthusiasm for military intervention has shied away from committing forces in an attempt to end the two-year civil war in Syria. In the meantime, the Syrian government battles a mixed bag of rebels including well-organised and financed al-Qa'eda fanatics under Saudi influence. To many, the violence in Iraq and Syria at least reflects a struggle between the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam

of major and minor attempts to bring stability to areas of conflict. For more than 40 years until the collapse of the Soviet Union, most efforts, notably in Korea and Vietnam, were designed to limit the spread of evangelical communism. In retrospect, that may seem funny since communism has disappeared except perhaps in Cuba and North Korea. But it did not seem funny at the time.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the principal threats to international security seemed to stem from what were called 'rogue' or 'failed' states and there was perceived a window of opportunity to enforce peace through the United Nations. The 1982 conflict between Britain and Argentina over the Falklands suggested that a robust resistance to aggression could be effective in restoring peace. Thus the UN was persuaded with Soviet support to authorise the expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait after Iraq's 1990 invasion. Despite pressure from a range of sources, US president George Bush senior passed up the opportunity to invade Iraq, widely seen as a rogue state, and eliminate

its regime. Bush was clever; by resisting the temptation and the pressure, he served to reinforce the validity of UN-backed operations to stabilise rogue and failed states.

Unfortunately in many cases such as Rwanda, Bosnia, Somalia and



The face of ISIS, The Islamic Nation in Iraq and Syria [ash-Sham], is ominous but not as ominous as the clandestine organisation it exalts. Controlling large parts of northern Syria, ISIS, an off-shoot of al-Qaeda, has expelled, imprisoned or killed members of rival militias and imposed strict Shari'a. The Arabic reads: 'The Islamic Nation in Iraq and Syria'

but, whatever the outcome of that centuries-old feud, those who suffer will be minorities and, of course as always, the poor and the weak.

The history of Western intervention since the end of World War II shows a wide range

Opposition was lacking in the 7th Century

IT [ISLAM] WAS a social revolution. Islam poured over like a flood, not because it beat down opposition by force, but because opposition was lacking, and because those over whom the startling transformation came were ready to receive it. The process was not like one whereby fire destroys some old but solid structure : it was rather like an explosion; the disintegration of a mixture which is already in highly unstable equilibrium. For what happened was that the Greek and Roman world, over more than half the ancient Empire, fell almost automatically under new masters. One could almost say that it [the former Byzantine Empire] accepted them, [the new masters] rather than yielded to Islam.

— Hilaire Belloc *The Battle Ground*, Cassell and Company, London, 1937, p.306.

others, the UN proved incompetent and had to call on Western nations to do the job because they were the only ones willing to try. Even so, the restrictions imposed on their operations were such as to almost guarantee failure in many cases. Increasingly the UN began to depend upon regional groupings to provide the necessary personnel.

In late 2001 following the al-Qa'eda attack on the United States on 11th September of that year, the US government asked the Taliban government of Afghanistan to extradite Usama bin Laden for trial as the perpetrator of the attack. The Afghan government refused and the US launched military operations to overthrow the Taliban and capture bin Laden. As we know, the Taliban government was defeated but has maintained a lively and persistent insurgency ever since.

Shortly afterwards, the US government of George Bush junior, helped by Saddam Hussein himself, tried to persuade the UN that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction and that, failing their dismantling, should overthrow the regime. The UN was not persuaded and in early 2003, a US-led coalition (including Australian forces) invaded Iraq and toppled the regime, proposing to introduce Western-style democracy to the country.

All of this was too easy. Western military forces are virtually

impossible to defeat in the field. What went wrong in both Iraq and Afghanistan were the confused attempts to win the peace. Modern soldiers tend to understand that to be their task. Policymakers, on the other hand, tend to forget that restoring peace is the objective of intervention and one that cannot be achieved by military means or military forces alone. Mountains of cash were spent in the effort but the result is continuing turmoil in Iraq, the failure to eliminate the Taliban in Afghanistan and, perhaps and hopefully, a growing recognition that the West cannot do the job.

On both occasions — the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan — I was executive director of the Australia Defence Association. I publicly opposed both adventures before the event because I believed they could not succeed except perhaps in the minds of politicians

and their media cheer squads. I read all the public justifications and heard them again in face-to-face discussions with key people. The soldiers, ever loyal, professed to be able to do the job well knowing that they probably could not, that they would leave and that chaos would result.

Some years later in June 2010, I wrote in an article for *The Australian* about Afghanistan. If I quote at length it is because I have no reason to doubt every word.

The war in Muslim Afghanistan cannot be won by the armed forces of a Christian country. Even less can it be won by those of a pagan country which is the way the United States and Australia are increasingly perceived. For Muslims, we are too easily portrayed by the Taliban and al-Qa'eda as unbelievers and enemies of Islam. For all our billions of dollars, the clever theories of counter-insurgency, the brilliant weaponry and the dogged courage of our soldiers, this conflict is unwinnable because Western politicians have lost sight of their objective, the cardinal sin of war making.

“Looking back to the immediate aftermath of the al-Qa'eda attack on the United States on 11th September 2001, the United States demanded of the Taliban government of Afghanistan that it hand over Osama bin Laden, the mastermind. The Taliban refused and the US went to war. The Taliban was joined with al-Qa'eda as the enemy.

Islamic Extremism in Pakistan

JIHAD HAS DONE roaring business in Pakistan because it appeals to the imagination of people whose prospects are severely limited. Death offers worldly glory and security in the hereafter, whereas their lives would otherwise promise nothing but oppression and humiliation. The political culture that supports the ideology of jihad is rooted in both material culture and religion, albeit religion reduced to a series of formulaic rituals and customs based on a superficial understanding of Islamic ethics. Contrary to the perception that extremism incubates in religious seminaries, most recruits to militant organizations in poor cities of the Punjab have come from government schools and colleges. ... Most Pakistanis killed in Afghanistan and Kashmir have been Punjabis.

— Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah*, Harvard University Press, 2008 p.247. Jalal is quoting Abdul Ala Mawdudi, from his book *Jihad in Islam*, reprint Lahore, Islamic Publications, 2001,

The Taliban were overthrown and a replacement government of Afghanistan was manufactured. It was supposed to be a national government of a collection of tribes that demonstrates nationality only when attacked from outside - by the British, the Russians and now the Americans. In the process, the West has developed a mythology that Afghanistan can be turned into a modern nation, that its women can be educated to take their place in the modern world and that Western-style democracy will reign supreme.

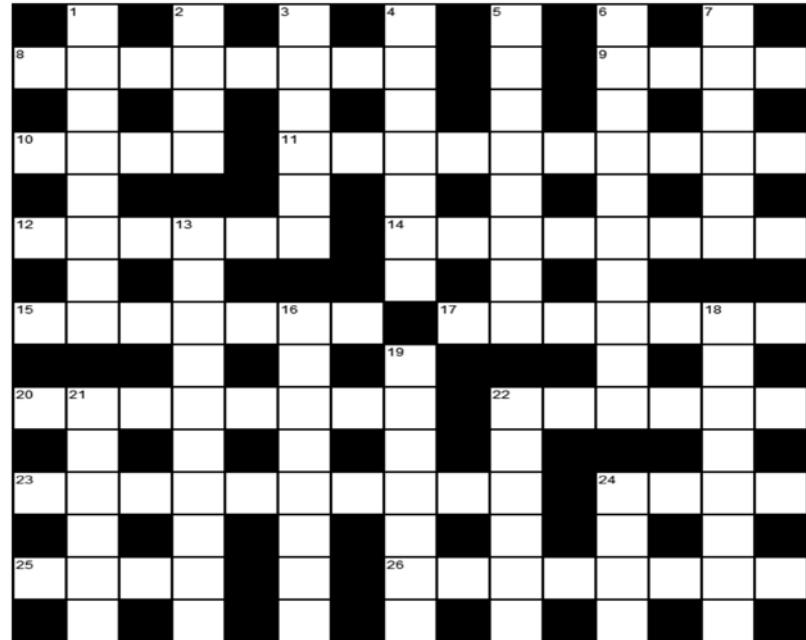
Most futile of all, the West seeks to replace opium as Afghanistan's premier cash crop with something else that probably won't grow as well, won't pay as well and will have to face competition from other sources.

"So the Taliban has recovered. With a combination of fundamentalist Islamic proselytising and terrorism that the North Vietnamese of another era would envy plus safe havens in Pakistan, the lightly equipped, very mobile Taliban can keep the fight alive indefinitely. Certainly they suffer casualties but these are relatively insignificant politically compared with those suffered by the West. And every time, Western technology kills by accident, it recruits even more willing foot soldiers for the Taliban.

"The religious factor must not be underestimated. It was not a factor in Vietnam which was lost by American incompetence and a loss of will. Whatever we in the West think, religion is the dominant factor in Afghanistan - as it was when the United States backed the anti-Soviet Afghan forces between 1979 and the Soviet withdrawal in 1989.

Since that time, militant Islam has become an even more powerful force in Muslim countries and communities. It will continue to be the primary motivating factor of the Taliban and its allies in Afghanistan. If Afghanistan is to be modernised, that will be achieved only by Muslim countries that are frankly reluctant to take on the militants

ANNALS CROSSWORD NO. 78



ACROSS CLUES

- 8 Major Old Testament prophet (8)
- 9 One of Isaac's twin sons (4)
- 10 Stolen goods (4)
- 11 Saint who was named Bishop of Cracow in 1072 (10)
- 12 Word used as an aide to concentration in Hinduism and Buddhism (6)
- 14 Showed excited emotion (8)
- 15 Distorted facial expression (7)
- 17 A disgraceful action (7)
- 20 To get the better of (8)
- 22 Second most holy city of Islam (6)
- 23 Release from guilt or punishment (10)
- 24 Zoroastrian priests of the ancient Persians (4)
- 25 Mother of the Virgin Mary (4)
- 26 Faithfully representing the truth (8)

DOWN CLUES

- 1 Suave and refined (8)
- 2 Period between Ash Wednesday and Holy Saturday (4)
- 3 Early afternoon nap (6)
- 4 Tricked or swindled (7)
- 5 Relating to a belief in God (8)
- 6 Having a pleasing shape (4-6)
- 7 Early King of England, Denmark and Norway (6)

13 Markers of graves (10)
16 Outer vestment worn by priest during Mass (8)
18 Deny oneself privilege and pleasure (8)
19 In accordance with correct principles (7)
21 Release from the restraints of formality (6)
22 Mother of St Augustine (6)
24 One of the Gospellers (4)

SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD NO. 77



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in their own countries, never mind elsewhere."

The Muslim world is in a mess with widespread sectarian divisions and mainly authoritarian governments that lack the legitimacy of popular support and constitutional systems that permit peaceful change.

Islam lacks an authoritative structure that provides legitimacy for its teachings so that any local imam in Cairo, Baghdad, Karachi, Jakarta, even London or Sydney can claim to be a true interpreter of the Koran.

Of course, most Muslims want what we all want: the ability to live our lives in peace, to provide for our families and to worship our God.

Until the Muslim world can itself deal with the extremists, the leadership of the West will only make things worse by intervening. It could, of course, try praying unless it has forgotten how.

MICHAEL O'CONNOR is a former patrol officer in Papua New Guinea. He also served in the Royal Australian Navy as an intelligence officer.

LITERATURE, ART AND COMPASSION

By Christopher Koch



MY BELIEF in (the novel as a work of art) has guided me from a very early age and I've always attempted it. It's quite true that if one writes for a living, this sets up a tension since financial (and publishers') pressures threaten the refinement of a book – but I only once allowed this to happen, with my second novel, lured by a New York publisher; the book was botched and I never allowed this to happen again. A novel is only finished when it says it's finished! This has caused me some tense times, but when I was younger, Literature Board grants helped; later, decent-sized publishers' advances kept me afloat.

It's an interesting topic, the novel as work of art. In my opinion such novels only began to appear in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with such writers as Joseph Conrad (a supreme and immense original artist in my view), Proust, Thomas Mann, Tolstoy, William Faulkner, and, yes, Stendhal. I suppose I have my own concept of fiction as art, since I'm not really sure that Balzac, Dickens and Dostoevsky – all of whom I admire as supreme novelists – produced novels that were also refined works of art. They couldn't, for the reasons you discuss: working under pressure, churning the work out (mostly) in serial form, they hadn't the time to refine,

THE FORMER CHAIRMAN of our Editorial Board Christopher Koch, who died last September in Hobart aged 81, is regarded as one of Australia's finest novelists. What follows is excerpted from a letter that he wrote some months before he died to his friend Pierre Ryckmans; who kindly passed it on to *Annals*. Christopher's comments on the novel as a work of art, and his judgement that 'no great novelist despises human beings or his characters' now form part of our literary history. We offer them to *Annals* readers as a tribute to the memory of a great Australian literary figure.

shape or revise, so I suppose I'm saying that there are two kinds of quality novelists.

I began in my teens – by writing and publishing verse but was already drawn to the novel and this gave me a conflict. I didn't believe I could practise both forms; I had to choose. But in choosing the novel I resolved to give it the same themes and care I gave to verse. And here again there are two sorts of novel: those plainly written (which included the great Dostoevsky) and those that give attention to the music of prose and pay

attention to cadence. I detest the term 'poetic novel' since the poetry in prose is different from that of verse: a different kind of cadence and rhythm is employed, and the result need not be flowery or overblown. I'm sure you'll know what I mean.

Which brings me to your question on Patrick White. I always avoid public comment on my contemporaries, but between us, I've long regarded White as one of the most overrated writers of the 20th century. It's exactly as you say: he has a tin ear, his prose jars, and that academics call it 'poetic' only shows their sad lack of genuine response to literature. More seriously, he can't be regarded as a major novelist in my view since he has a snobbish, petty contempt for most human beings, whom he caricatures. No great novelist despises human beings or his characters. Dostoevsky (who seems to spring to mind a lot lately) portrays the most depraved as well as the most exalted characters and has compassion of some sort for all of them. That is a great writer; and very few exist in our present culture.

CHRISTOPHER KOCH: Even though two of his books – *The Doubleman*, 1985 and *Highways to War*, 1996 – won the coveted Miles Franklin Award, his best-known book is probably 'The Year of Living Dangerously,' 1978, which described violent events that led to the fall of the Sukarno regime in Indonesia in 1967.



MEDIA MATTERS

By JAMES MURRAY

Bernardi challenge

Few authors outside the best-seller list have the luck of notice at the level enjoyed by Senator Cory Bernardi's, *The Conservative Revolution* (Connor Court Publishing, \$24.95). Top of the notice list must be the ABC NewsBreakfast show's first-reserve anchor, Beverley O'Connor. She engaged Bernardi on abortion, citing a figure of 50,000 as against his published figure of between 80,000 and 100,000.

Bernardi is such a unflappable interviewee that you could believe the impossible: he was trained in the same stone-walling academy as his fellow South Australian, and Labor opponent, Senator Penny Wong.

Nonetheless he lost the point to O'Connor by forgetting that in a contest of lies, damned lies and statistics, it is a tactical error to cite the highest figure. Acceptance of the lower figure would still have left room to suggest that even 50,000 over 10 years equals a horrendous half a million. Twenty years? Do the dreadful sum.

Not content with her point, however, O'Connor asked rhetorically whether the matter hadn't been settled by the Roe V Wade decision. Since when has a decision by the US Supreme Court on what has proved over 40 years to be a dubious case become the unalterable law for Australia (or anywhere else)?

Bernardi's views on abortion (and euthanasia) take up about four pages of his 163-page primer. Primer? That's its value; it is a basic reassertion of conservative views that were once the consensus. Admirably he is outspoken on the topic of Islamic Sharia law – a topic which might well have engaged the attention of the ABC and O'Connor. He is enlightening on the genesis of 'political correctness' at the Marxist-influenced *Social Research* at Frankfurt University.

Yet his title, a smart contradiction in terms, is a problem. Bernardi would

have been better advised to go for *The Conservative Restoration*, if only because he keeps shooting down the idea of revolution from the primordial (and romanticised) French Revolution onwards. He cites the great Irish conservative Edmund Burke as an anti-revolutionary and Adam Smith as a prophet of the Market, without quoting the latter's remark about men of the same trade never getting together except to make a conspiracy against the public (Some might see Australia's banks as an example).

He seems also to have missed the opportunity of linking his moral stance on abortion with his pragmatic, free-market economic stance: to destroy human resources before birth helps create population imbalances correctable only by taking preferably skilled immigrants from other countries which need them, thus helping to make local imbalance global.

Bernardi strays from his adherence to the traditional in his attitude to trade unions, given their validation by papal encyclicals going back to *Rerum Novarum* (1891). He might have done better focusing on the relatively new Big Unions which have taken on aspects of *laissez-faire* executive privilege long enjoyed by Big Business hence construction-industry corruption, a case of mutual greed in action.

Quotations from conservative thinkers, Bernardi deploys with rare finesse yet he seems to forget that the sharpest come from left field. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* did not find favour with the publisher Victor Gollancz whose Left Book Club volumes insulated many a room from reality. In *Nineteen Eighty Four*, The Ministry of Truth with its Newspeak which begot Doublethink, is said to be patterned after Broadcast House in London where Orwell, having failed his military service medical, worked for the BBC during World War II.

Perhaps the most pointed anti-revolution dictum was that of Albert Camus: 'Every



revolutionary ends up as an oppressor or a heretic.'

Obscure? Try Camus's other dictum: 'All modern revolutions have ended in a reinforcement of the State.'

Which inspires a general compliment: in his short book *Cory Bernardi* like Camus is never less than engaged in the French sense, that is profoundly and bravely concerned about humanity and its destiny.

Ridiculous comparison? Camus being an existentialist, Bernardi being a man of faith in a hereafter. Only if you forget the biblical condemnation of those who are neither hot nor cold.

ABC of doubt

Coming on top of the ABC's concerting with *The Guardian* on-line about the Snowden mutual exclusive on all-seeing surveillance, the national broadcaster's report of service personnel holding refugees hands to hot engines was (mixed metaphor alert) the straw that broke the camel's back.

More simply it caused the Prime Minister Tony Abbott to go into over-drive during an interview with the nation's most understated talk-

jock, Ray Hadley. The PM, possibly thinking you can't go wrong with a sporting analogy suggested that the ABC lacked home-team sympathy.

Boom! It was on for young and old. Clearly the PM should have responded with one of the oldest of journo-craft rules: 'if in doubt, leave out.' Okay, it's a hard rule, made harder by 24/7 coverage.

The ABC Jakarta correspondent, George Roberts, went for an alternative: fudging. He suggested that a video confirmed his report.

Cut to definitive video? Not in the telecast your correspondent saw.

Are reporters on the ground solely responsible for implementing the hard rule? Again the exigencies of 24/7 coverage are pertinent. HQ producers should be backstops when a report is not live-to-air.

This is not censorship as Tanya Plibersek suggested with the authority of being Labor deputy leader (and Sydney University of Technology journalism faculty's most distinguished graduate). It is what used to called 'copy-tasting,' the assessment of the validity, implications and newsworthiness of a story.

The ABC's own radio commentator Jon Faine, a former lawyer, reportedly took another view saying that he would not have put the story to air without more corroborating evidence. ABC *Media Watch* anchor Paul Barry, a highly skilled reporter whose has negotiated legal minefields, came to a similar verdict.

So George Roberts carries the can? Not alone, his producers failed to ensure that the national broadcaster's checks and balances operated. The ABC's

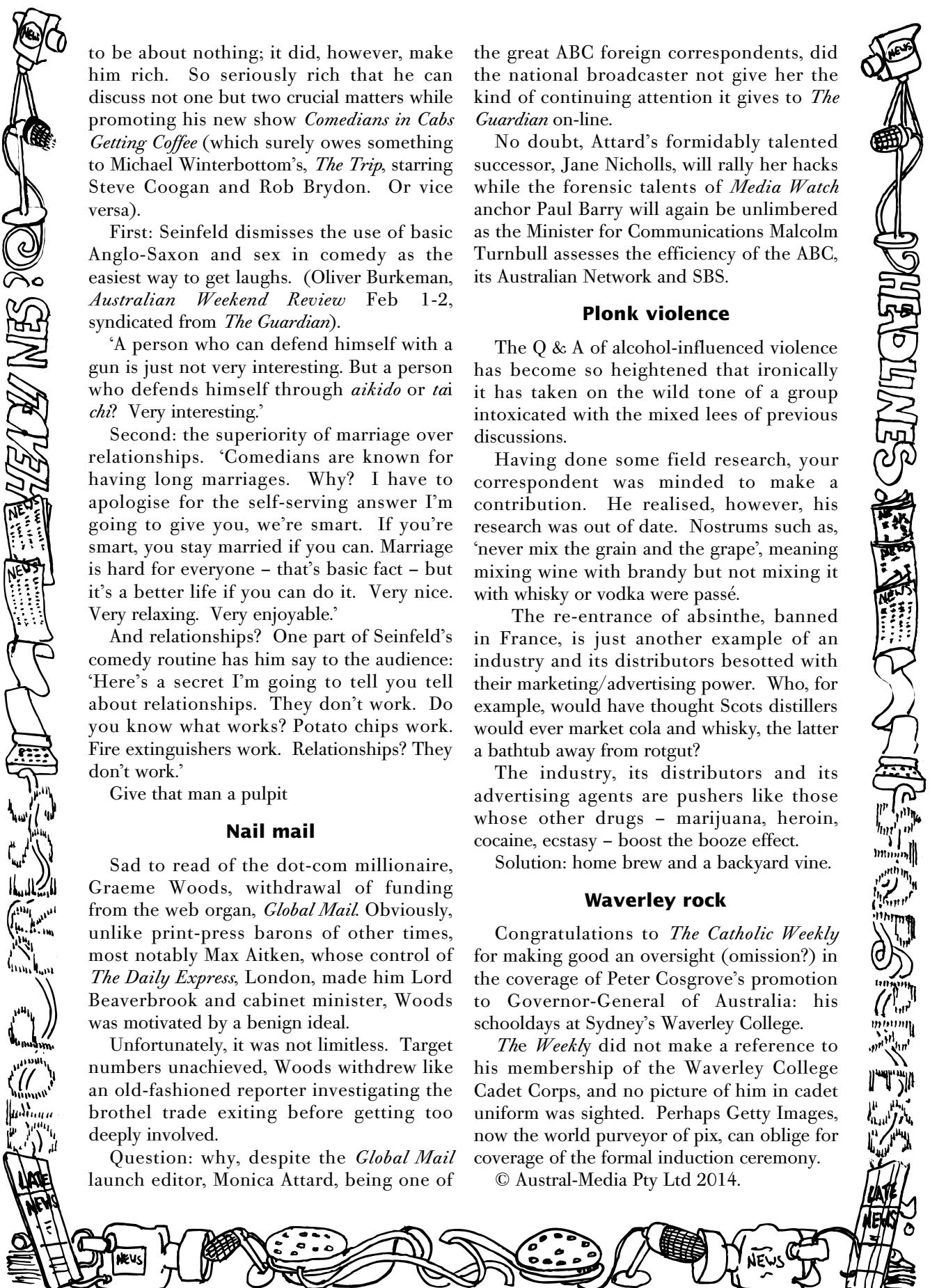
tax-funded status means that it is not in the ratings chase; accordingly it cannot cite ratings, as the commercial networks can, in mitigation of haste in breaking news.

Intriguingly the ABC seen by your correspondent did not factor in the Faine-Barry verdicts in a follow-up commentary.

Jerry candour

Nonchalance was comedian Jerry Seinfeld's keynote in his long-running eponymous television show which was said





to be about nothing; it did, however, make him rich. So seriously rich that he can discuss not one but two crucial matters while promoting his new show *Comedians in Cabs Getting Coffee* (which surely owes something to Michael Winterbottom's, *The Trip*, starring Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon. Or vice versa).

First: Seinfeld dismisses the use of basic Anglo-Saxon and sex in comedy as the easiest way to get laughs. (Oliver Burkeman, *Australian Weekend Review* Feb 1-2, syndicated from *The Guardian*).

'A person who can defend himself with a gun is just not very interesting. But a person who defends himself through *aikido* or *tai chi*? Very interesting.'

Second: the superiority of marriage over relationships. 'Comedians are known for having long marriages. Why? I have to apologise for the self-serving answer I'm going to give you, we're smart. If you're smart, you stay married if you can. Marriage is hard for everyone – that's basic fact – but it's a better life if you can do it. Very nice. Very relaxing. Very enjoyable.'

And relationships? One part of Seinfeld's comedy routine has him say to the audience: 'Here's a secret I'm going to tell you tell about relationships. They don't work. Do you know what works? Potato chips work. Fire extinguishers work. Relationships? They don't work.'

Give that man a pulpit

Nail mail

Sad to read of the dot-com millionaire, Graeme Woods, withdrawal of funding from the web organ, *Global Mail*. Obviously, unlike print-press barons of other times, most notably Max Aitken, whose control of *The Daily Express*, London, made him Lord Beaverbrook and cabinet minister, Woods was motivated by a benign ideal.

Unfortunately, it was not limitless. Target numbers unachieved, Woods withdrew like an old-fashioned reporter investigating the brothel trade exiting before getting too deeply involved.

Question: why, despite the *Global Mail* launch editor, Monica Attard, being one of

the great ABC foreign correspondents, did the national broadcaster not give her the kind of continuing attention it gives to *The Guardian* on-line.

No doubt, Attard's formidably talented successor, Jane Nicholls, will rally her hacks while the forensic talents of *Media Watch* anchor Paul Barry will again be unlimbered as the Minister for Communications Malcolm Turnbull assesses the efficiency of the ABC, its Australian Network and SBS.

Plonk violence

The Q & A of alcohol-influenced violence has become so heightened that ironically it has taken on the wild tone of a group intoxicated with the mixed lees of previous discussions.

Having done some field research, your correspondent was minded to make a contribution. He realised, however, his research was out of date. nostrums such as, 'never mix the grain and the grape', meaning mixing wine with brandy but not mixing it with whisky or vodka were passé.

The re-entrance of absinthe, banned in France, is just another example of an industry and its distributors besotted with their marketing/advertising power. Who, for example, would have thought Scots distillers would ever market cola and whisky, the latter a bathtub away from rotgut?

The industry, its distributors and its advertising agents are pushers like those whose other drugs – marijuana, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy – boost the booze effect.

Solution: home brew and a backyard vine.

Waverley rock

Congratulations to *The Catholic Weekly* for making good an oversight (omission?) in the coverage of Peter Cosgrove's promotion to Governor-General of Australia: his schooldays at Sydney's Waverley College.

The Weekly did not make a reference to his membership of the Waverley College Cadet Corps, and no picture of him in cadet uniform was sighted. Perhaps Getty Images, now the world purveyor of pix, can oblige for coverage of the formal induction ceremony.

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What we think we know or have read

By G. K. Chesterton

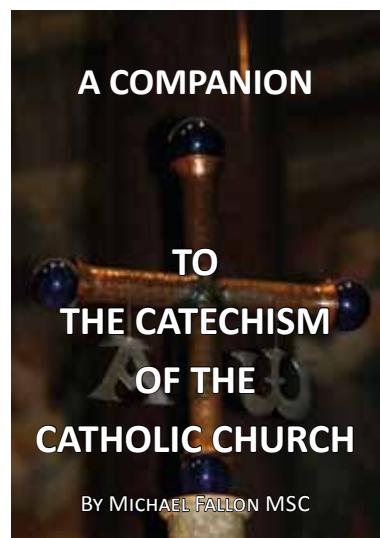
A VERY interesting branch of mental science might be found in the things which we think we know and do not know. At first sight it seems a somewhat wild proposition to say that we can think we know anything, since knowledge implies certainty and sincerity. It is hard to believe that a sane man can think he knows Arabic when he does not; it is hard to believe that he can be profoundly convinced that he has counted the steps up to St. Paul's Cathedral when as a matter of fact he has no idea whether there are ninety or fifteen. But that is the real and genuine state of affairs. People think, for instance, that they have read the English Church Prayer Book: they are sure they have read it; they love it and pore over it as the essential heritage of Englishmen. You quote a passage out of the actual text of the Articles or the Rubrics, and they nearly jump out of their boots and think you are quoting either St. Alphonso de Liguori or Mr. Bernard Shaw. It is so in everything: they think they have read *Hamlet*, and they go and see it at the theatre, and do not rise to their feet and howl because things have been left out as they would if they had read it. They think that they have read the Education Bill, and you see by their brave, happy, hopeful faces that they have not. The conclusion is the same in all cases—that our knowledge is perpetually tricking and misleading us, that we do not know what we know, but only what we feel. If a man knows a thing it is very possibly right, but if he knows that he knows it, it is most probably wrong. One of the most striking instances of this general fact is that of the history of literature. We all think we know who were, for instance, the best poets of the nineteenth century. We know nothing of the sort. We know what poets it was the fashion in our youth to account the best. We read a rather small fraction of the works of these, and nothing at all of the rest. But no one who is acquainted with the changes of artistic fashion will attach much importance to the fact that certain men were at one time neglected. If the Renaissance artists had had their way, they would have smashed Amiens Cathedral as a barbaric absurdity; if Dr. Johnson had had his way he would have thrown into the gutter the last copy of '*Chevy Chase*'. And in the same way very few people are aware that with the rise of the Art for Art's sake school of poetry and criticism—the school which devoted itself to the deification of technique—a great body of very fine poetry disappeared from the public view, poetry which was concerned with the great problems and great struggles of the earlier part of the nineteenth century. It disappeared with all its moral energy and aesthetic individuality, just precisely as Gothic architecture, with all its moral energy and aesthetic individuality, disappeared at the Renaissance, that great classic domes might rise like monstrous bubbles over that wide and watery age.

— *Lunacy and Letters*, Sheed and Ward, London, 1958, pp.50-51.

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For the faithful, India's constitutional guaranteed freedom of religion and equality before the law remains meaningless slogans.

THE PERSECUTED CHURCH OF INDIA

By George J. Marlin



FTER severing its colonial ties with Great Britain in 1947, India, a nation of 1.2 billion people, organized a secular Democratic Republic that guarantees freedom to practise and propagate one's faith.

Christianity in India dates back to the Acts of the Apostles, but is the faith of only 2.5 percent of the population today. The total number of Catholics is 19.5 million.

Sadly, in the twenty-first century, the religious liberty clause in the Indian constitution has been ignored by Hindu fundamentalists who have planned, coordinated, and executed anti-Christian pogroms.

On Christmas Day 2008, for example, over 100 Churches and Christian facilities were looted, damaged, or destroyed, and more than 400 Christian houses were gutted.

Since 2008, the focus of Hindu terrorists has been in the jungle village of Kandhamal located in the state of Odisha (formerly Orissa). Over 56,000 of the 117,000 Christians living there have been driven from their homes, with 6,000 of their houses burnt to the ground. Three hundred Churches and holy places have been desecrated or destroyed.

The Christians are being persecuted not only because of their faith, as they are in Egypt and Syria, but because they refuse to renounce it and embrace Hinduism. As a result, thousands of Indians, including priests, nuns, and ministers, have been sadistically tortured. Many have lost limbs; others have been burnt alive. Over 100 have been martyred for the faith.

Reacting to these hideous crimes, the Archbishop of Bombay, Cardinal Oswald Gracias said: 'The blood of the martyrs has always been the seed of Christianity. That is the mystery of the Cross! I have no doubt that much blessing from God will be showered upon the people of Odisha and India as a result of the suffering of the Kandhamal Christians.'

But it will come at a heavy price. In his work, *Early Christians of the Twenty-first Century*, award-winning Indian journalist Anto Akkara, who visited Kandhamal sixteen times, recounts how the anti-Christian violence was orchestrated, and records the testimonies of victims and their families. The volume contains 'a collection of over one hundred true witnesses to Christ-testimonies soaked in blood, tested and purified by untold suffering.'

Akkara describes how police looked away as churches were being destroyed and further how, in many cases, they refused to report the cause of deaths as murders. To avoid prosecution, Hindu terrorists hid the

evidence. The bodies of martyrs were cremated or dumped into bogs or rivulets in the jungle. As for the few cases that went to trial, kangaroo 'fast track' courts dismissed or acquitted Hindu bigots, citing lack of evidence.

After a dozen Christian leaders led by Archbishop Raphael Cheenath of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar confronted Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh about the orchestrated violence. Singh publicly acknowledged that it was a 'national shame,' but took few measures 'to restore the confidence of the Christian community.'

For the faithful, India's constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religion and equality before the law remain meaningless slogans.

There are many heart-wrenching stories in Akkara's book, but one that particularly struck me involved a 56-year old priest and a 28-year old nun.

Father Thomas Chellan, director of the Divyajyoti Pastoral Centre, and his assistant, Sister Meena, managed to escape over a wall of their compound as Hindu terrorists destroyed the

How Communism treated the 'Workers'

WHEN WORKERS went on strike to protest the Bolshevik practice of rationing 'according to social origin' and abuses of power by the local Cheka, as at the armaments factory at Motovilikh, the authorities declared the whole factory to be 'in a state of insurrection.' The Cheka did not negotiate with the strikers, but enforced a lockout and fired the workers. The leaders were arrested; and all the 'Menshevik counterrevolutionaries,' who were suspected of having incited the strike, were hunted down.' Such practices were normal in the summer of 1918. By autumn the local Chekas, now better organized and more motivated by calls from Moscow for bloodier repressions, went considerably further and executed more than 100 of the strikers without any trial.

— *The Black Book of Communism*, Stephane Courtois et alii, Harvard University Press, 1999, p 78.



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complex, which included a church, a large dormitory, and other facilities.

The next day they were captured and just before Chellan's kerosene-soaked head was torched, there was a last second decision to hold off. Instead, a gang of fifty Hindus beat the priest and nun. 'It was like a crucifixion parade,' Father Chellan later recalled.

Their tormentors stripped them of their clothing and began raping Sister Meena. Later they paraded their half-naked prisoners through the streets and Chellan was ordered to rape the nun: 'When I refused, they kept beating me and dragged us to the nearby government office. Sadly, a dozen policemen were watching all this quietly.'

Finally, a senior policeman took them to a police station 12 km away and their ordeal ended. The next day they were released and flown to Mumbai for treatment.

Sister Meena, who recovered from her traumatic ordeal, refused to be silent. She went public, held a press conference in front of 200 television cameras in New Delhi and demanded an investigation into her rape. Sister described everything in gruesome details and how the police tried to dissuade her from lodging a criminal complaint after the mandatory medical test confirmed the rape.

'Maybe God wanted me to suffer with our people and become an instrument to speak up for the voiceless people of Kandhamal,' she told the media. Sister Meena concluded by publicly thanking God 'for choosing me to face this humiliation and giving me the opportunity to suffer for the people of Kandhamal. I got a chance to undergo the experience of being crucified.'

The rock-like faith of Sister Meena and thousands of others inspired Anto Akkara to write his book. He believes they deserve the title 'Early Christians of the Twenty-first Century' because they held on to their faith 'amid diabolic cruelty, rampant impunity, and state apathy.'

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*. © 2013 The Catholic Thing. All rights reserved.

From the Apostolic Age to the Third Millennium

CATHOLICISM

By Christopher Beiting



F MAKING many books there is no end. These words of *Ecclesiastes* seem particularly appropriate with regard to the number of church histories there are. Is there need for yet another one? What can one more work add to the field? In the case of this work, *History of the Catholic Church: From the Apostolic Age to the Third Millennium*, the answers to those two rhetorical questions would be 'Yes' and 'Plenty,' respectively.

Hitchcock brings his impressive combination of scholarship and faith to the kind of project that is the fruit of an academic in the mature years of his career. It is a big work on a big subject, and succeeds impressively. The book is comprehensive and magisterial, but at the same time approachable to the average reader, and manages the difficult task of providing a fresh approach to a very traditional subject.

History of the Catholic Church weighs in at a comfortable fourteen chapters and 580 pages (concise considering its subject matter). Its writing style is learned but neither complicated nor pedantic, appealing primarily to a popular audience but not without use for an academic one. The work is well-suited to serve as a textbook: It is written in short, self-contained passages, and each page has several index terms in its margins. Footnotes are few and explanatory in nature, with sources listed in a bibliography at the end, and there is a comprehensive and useful index.

The style of exposition is narrative and (broadly) chronological, covering in turn the New Testament era, early Imperial Rome, Christian Rome, the Patristic and post-Roman period, the formation of European

James Hitchcock, *History of the Catholic Church: From the Apostolic Age to the Third Millennium*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012.
584 pages.

Christendom, the rise and fall of Byzantium, the Renaissance, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, Modernity (the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries), and the present era, which consists of Vatican II and afterwards.

There are also special chapters dedicated to the spread of Christianity during European colonialism, with particular attention paid to the English-speaking regions of Canada, Australia, and the United States. As such, *History of the*

Catholic Church serves the useful secondary function of being a short but comprehensive history of Western civilization while being a history of the Catholic Church.¹

All very well and good, but what sets *History of the Catholic Church* apart from any of the dozens of works like it, and makes it worthy of the reader's attention? Besides the content, which is well-researched, well-presented, and quite up to date² – there is the overall tone of the work. It is, quite simply, a *Catholic* work. Hitchcock makes it very clear from the introduction that he rejects the all-too-popular conceit that one must be a non-believer to be able to write a credible study of a religious subject.

He writes with a genuine belief in, and affection for, his subject, which gives the whole effort a warm and appreciative tone. This does not mean that he sacrifices scholarly rigour in any way, nor does it mean that the work overall is in any way pietistic or triumphalist – neither is the case.

Instead, Hitchcock has surveyed the totality of Catholicism, and come away liking what he has found. He does not spare criticism of the Church where such is warranted, but neither does he allow the book to turn into an angry polemic against its subject, as such works sometimes do.

In particular, Hitchcock writes with an appreciation of both Tradition and traditions. His is an historian's Catholicism, with awareness that some Catholic things are not accretions or aberrations, but rather organic developments, and should be celebrated as such.

On the other hand, he does not praise as evolutionary developments some things that are popular now, but may, in fact, constitute aberrations of Catholic standards.



A fine example is his treatment of the practice of abortion and contraception: Hitchcock is quite good at demonstrating Catholicism's deep historical opposition to these practices, however fashionable they may be these days.

He is similarly good with sometimes-controversial issues of doctrine, such as papal authority, the sacraments, or purgatory, consistently noting throughout the work the early development of such teachings.

The work also has a strong intellectual-history component, and Hitchcock is very careful to examine some of the significant intellectual developments in the eras he considers, particularly where these have either challenged Catholicism, or where Catholics have made contributions to them. As one might expect, this makes the complementary interrelation of faith and reason in Catholicism a major theme of the work.

Furthermore, Hitchcock's deep perspective makes it possible for this work to be intriguingly critical of some modern verities. While appreciating some aspects of nineteenth-century Liberalism, he does note how closely its early adherents were allied with forces opposed to the Catholic Church, making it possible to wonder whether it is the unqualified good that many moderns make it out to be. Or, consider the modern *shibboleth* of religious toleration – is it truly the cornerstone of a free society, or a contributing factor to widespread religious indifference?

Hitchcock's treatment of the Second Vatican Council at the end is especially interesting in its nuance: His overall assessment is a sober one, which avoids both the reactionary condemnation and the mindless adulation of the Council that one so often gets in works like this.

Indeed, it is just this tone of appreciation and balance that makes *History of the Catholic Church* such a good work. Histories of the Catholic Church are so often relics of their times and their authors' agendas: sometimes condemning the modern era in favor of an idealized portrait of the Church of the past (usually

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the medieval or early Christian era); sometimes condemning the Church of the past to produce a Whig-style history celebrating the Church's arrival at a bold new Progressive/Protestant/Modernist/'Relevant' (take your pick) present.



Hitchcock avoids both extremes, and produces a work that is respectful of tradition, and warmly appreciative of its subject. It will doubtless become a very useful tool in the New Evangelization.

CHRISTOPHER BEITING is Associate Professor of History at Holy Cross University, South Bend, Indiana, USA.

1 If there is any difference between the two: this reviewer believes that the history of the Church is the history of Western Civilization.

2 This reviewer was particularly gladdened to see the likes of Marianne Cope [St Marianne of Molokai 1838-1918] and Kateri Tekakwitha [Lily of the Mohawks 1656-1680] identified in the text as saints, showing just how current this work is. They were canonized together by Pope Benedict XVI in Rome on October 21, 2012.

Healing

Injured birds – wedgetail eagles, falcons and owls – become the therapeutic instruments for convicts in director Craig Monahan and co-writer Alison Nisselle's drama.

Hugo Weaving, an actor for all roles, plays senior prison officer Matt Perry; with the co-operation of personnel at Victoria's Healesville Bird Sanctuary, he starts a programme of using birds to tame wild convicts at a low-security facility.

Pre-eminent in the first intake is a murderer Viktor Khadem. As played by Don Hany he is never less than compelling. The birds? The sequences involving the birds in flight – particularly the wedgetail, Jasmine – provide a soaring counterpoint to the earthbound convicts.

The movie's defect is a defect of abundance; it is overpopulated with sub-plots and talented players, among them: Justine Clarke, Jane Menelaus, Anthony Hayes, Tony Martin and Xavier Samuel.

Director John Frankenheimer's *Birdman of Alcatraz* demonstrated in classic style the advantage of confining the main inter-action to a brace of stars (Burt Lancaster and Karl Malden).

Nevertheless, with Tait Brady producing, this is a movie of considerable worth – if only in its proof that understatement can be more potent than blatant violence.

M★★★SFFV

Half of a Yellow Sun

War and its impact on non-combatants have been previously explored. But director Biyi Bandele, takes us into a relatively uncharted Sixties conflict: the one in which the Ibo of the south attempted to establish a breakaway state – Biafra – from Nigeria.

The story line, from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's faction novel, concerns twin sisters Olanna (Thandie Newton) and Kainena (Anika Noni Rose) returned to Nigeria after education in Europe.

Each takes a different path; Olanna goes to live with an academic, Odenigbo (Chiwetel Ejifor); Kainena who successfully runs the family

MOVIES

By James Murray

business, falls in love with a writer, Richard (Joseph Mawle), a character some may find reminiscent of Auberon Waugh who covered the war.

Bandele deftly intercuts archival newsreel footage with live action and includes a shot of Frederick Forsyth reporting from the front in the style that put him at odds with the BBC-British government pro-Nigeria (and Big Oil) view; this led to his resigning, the publication of a Penguin special and the writing of his first thriller, *The Day of the Jackal*.

Biyi Bandele gives evidence of a capability bright enough for a sequel showing the internecine Muslim-Christian confrontations that continue to trouble Nigeria's unity.

M★★★NFFV

Labor Day

Writer/director Jason Reitman may work from Joyce Maynard's romantic novel of the same title. What drives the movie, however, apart from a tincture of Nicholas (*The Notebook*) Sparks, is a variation of Stockholm Syndrome through which hostages sympathise with their captors.

The bonny Kate Winslet plays Adele, separated from her husband who not only left her because she was too romantic but refuted Dorothy Parker by making a re-marriage pass at girl who wore glasses. Adele lives out-of-town with her son Henry (Gattlin Griffith). She is also agoraphobic.

Enter Josh Brolin as Frank Chambers, a convict on the run. Here the movie turns into a peanut butter and schmaltz sandwich. Chambers killed his wife for her unfaithfulness while he was in Vietnam but he is an accomplished dancer, guitarist, baseball coach and cook.

Reitman does not always succeed in matching actors to flashbacks of their younger selves. Result: confusion. But he does provides a tense, slow twist to whether or not his characters will accomplish their plan to escape across the US border to Canada.

The scene where Adele, Frank and Henry join in baking a peach pie is very fine but it also raises the question: does Adele suffer from cookbook phobia as well as agoraphobia? While the clock ticks to a high noon of love, the hunt for Chambers is on.

The Nicholas Sparks optimism comes through in the way Henry, played as an adult by Toby Maguire (who also contributes the narration) becomes a successful baker of peach pies. Jason Reitman does show that the American constitutional right to the pursuit of happiness can be fulfilled if only in the cinema.

Warning: tissues preferable to popcorn.

MA15+★★★SFFV

The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug

As noted elsewhere, the material of JR Tolkien's single book has been multiplied into three billion-dollar box-office hits through computer-generated imaging of which director Peter Jackson is the Hieronymus Bosch.

In the title role Martin Freeman provides continuity reinforced by Ian McKellen's Gandalf as they venture through Tolkien's world of hobbits, elves, dwarves and orcs. This time round, however, it's not all Tolkien; Jackson has taken the liberty – dead liberty to Tolkien purists – of adding to the canon, an Elf warrior, Tauriel, her weapons the dagger and bow and arrow; Evangeline Lilly plays her with consummate grace.

Among the most exhilarating sequences is a wild-river, barrel voyage which will be hard to top in what should be the book's final episode, and the capstone to Jackson's previous work, *The Lord of the Rings*.

'Should be' is the operative phrase. Jackson may be tempted to add to the Elf, Tauriel, further non-Tolkien material, thereby spinning out the already humungous box-office take (plus popcorn-income stream).

Inevitably, despite the dictum that comparisons are odious, the work of Peter Jackson and Baz Luhrman bears contrast. Jackson's breakthrough came with *Heavenly Creatures*, based

on an infamous case of murderous *folie à deux*. Luhrman's breakthrough, *Strictly Ballroom*, evolved from workshopping at Australia's National Institute of Dramatic Art; it was followed by his gangster-style *Romeo and Juliet* and his *Moulin Rouge*.

Both Jackson and Luhrman directed remakes (cover versions?). Jackson's *King Kong* was not totally appreciated although the animatronic gorilla was out-acted by Naomi Watts; Luhrman's *The Great Gatsby* has garnered more bouquets than brickbats. What about *Australia*? Jackson has not made a movie like this; no one has; it had everything in it except the necessary drover's dog.

The difference: Peter Jackson is a filmmaker; Baz Luhrman is an impresario. How to plus the difference? Make Jackson the director of an Australia-New Zealand epic and Luhrman its impresario.

Your reviewer digresses.

Back to *The Hobbit*.

M★★★SFFV

Saving Mr Banks

Obscure title for a revelatory comedy on how Walt Disney brought the PL Travers fantasy *Mary Poppins* to the screen. Tom Hanks plays Disney with a calculating bonhomie, closer to Disney's current cryogenic state than to the lively talent that enabled him to ride Mickey Mouse to fame, fortune and Oscars.

The very English Emma Thompson plays Travers (nee Pamela Lyndon Goff). Some may see this as incongruent with the author's Queensland background. As an actress in London, however, Travers became as English as gin and tonic, a change that makes the scene where she orders a pot of tea in a Los Angeles cocktail bar less convincing than Poppins wafting around on an umbrella. The Travers theatre experience is wholly convincing when it comes to outplaying Disney and persuading him to retain the benignity of the character Mr Banks. Hence the obscure title.

In flashbacks, Rachel Griffith appears as the governess who inspired Poppins. Annie Rose Buckley joins her as the child Travers. Paul Giamatti comes on as the studio

driver for Travers. And Colin Farrell, as the wastrel banker Travers Goff, proves to be a better actor shaven than unshaven.

The movie's provenance is as fascinating as its subject. Local producer Ian Collie made a documentary, *The Shadow of Mary Poppins*. He followed this by commissioning a movie first draft from Sue Smith. Eventually under the direction of John Lee Hancock, Smith shared a co-writer credit with Kelly Marcel.

Most intriguing of the main credits is: 'Based on a True Story'. Well, yes. Much further down the credits is the name Valerie Lawson who wrote the definitive biography: *Mary Poppins, She Wrote: The Life of PL Travers*. It is not the first time the synergy of basing a movie on a distinguished published work has been neglected. Perhaps the new boss of Screen Australia, Graeme Mason, should consider rules of engagement for tax-assisted movie projects that enhance this synergy.

PG★★★SFFV

The Wolf of Wall Street

Whatever else he believes multi-talented filmmaker Martin Scorsese clearly does not believe in the dictum, 'nothing fails like excess'. Excess is his signature element.

Official Classifications key

G: for general exhibition;
PG: parental guidance recommended for persons under 15 years;
M 15+: recommended for mature audiences 15 years and over;
MA 15+: restrictions apply to persons under the age of 15;
R 18+: Restricted to adults, 18 years and over.

Annals supplementary advice

SFFV: Suitable For Family Viewing;
NFFV: Not For Family Viewing.
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Evidence that he glorifies rather than excoriates is in his title; it is taken from the memoirs of Jordan Belfort who had he been less self-serving might have categorised himself as a vulture, a jackal or a hyena since he batten on the remains of what was left over or ignored by the big game of Wall Street.

From these remains he took a substantial share of the \$200 million he and his crew fast-talked investors to entrust to his initial outfit and to his later grandiose Stratton Oakmont, a name that matches the grandeur of Belfort's own.

Leonardo DiCaprio plays Belfort as to avarice born; Jonah Hill is his tubby offshider Donnie Azoff and Margot Robbie (risen like Aphrodite from Victoria's Ramsay Avenue de soap) is his trophy second wife.

Matthew McConaughey makes too brief an appearance as Belfort's early mentor. Too brief? His flamboyancy gives his scenes with DiCaprio a manic edge; this would make him perfect casting when someone (possibly Scorsese himself) makes a Scorsese bio-pic.

Yes, Belfort has a Humpty-Dumpty fall into disgrace and jail after becoming the target of an FBI agent. But in an epilogue Belfort is seen spelting in New Zealand; he has also reportedly been operating in Australia.

Writer/director Ben Younger's, *The Boiler Room*, back in 2000 gave a more convincing account of the greed shemozzle, sanctified as The Market.

R18+★★★NFFV

Are We Officially Dating?

Clumsy title for a romantic comedy in which writer/director Tom Gormican examines the life and courtship times of three best friends: Jason (Zac Efron), Mike (Michael B Jordan) and Daniel (Miles Teller), as they seek to maintain a bachelors-forever pact.

Not an easy pact; a posse of girls led by the beguiling Ellie (Imogen Poots) are determined to get their man, preferably alive but if not alive, then dead drunk.

The outcome is not written in the stars but in the clichés of Hollywood

going back at least to *The Tender Trap* (1955) which had Frank Sinatra and Debbie Reynolds who got a chance to sing and dance.

No such luck for Gormican's cast, their moments of wit are intercut with sequences in Greenwich Village bars and clubs, shambolic enough to have been shot by a second unit in Sydney's Kings Cross.

MA15+★★NFFV

Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit

He's back, Tom Clancy's answer to Ian Fleming's James Bond. As played by Chris Pine, he may be lighter than his predecessors Alex Baldwin, Harrison Ford and Ben Affleck but he has a higher IQ plus youth box-office appeal.

He's a computer whiz; from Mick Jagger's *alma mater*, the London School of Economics who volunteers for the US Marines is disabled and rehabilitated by Cathy Muller (an Americanised Keira Knightley). As the romance and the plot thicken, Ryan is recruited by a CIA-nik (Kevin Costner).

His eventual task: under cover as a market analyst he must go to Moscow and hack the computer system of an oligarch (or more exactly plutocrat) Viktor Cherevin who, for patriotic rather than Communist reasons, plans to upset American markets in a way to make the Global Financial Crisis look like a corner-store collapse.

Cherevin is played by Kenneth Branagh with a native Ulster grimness. Ryan is assisted by Muller's beguilement of Cherevin. Extreme physical violence, gunfire and sniping disturb the hacking. Be sure of one thing no one lives happily ever after. Branagh, who also directs, gives himself a final scene to die for. Which he duly does.

M★★★NFFV

August: Osage County

The location of the Tracy Letts Broadway hit marches with William Faulkner's fictional Yoknapatawpha County; it is yet another saga of a dysfunctional clan getting together, this time for its patriarch's funeral.

The patriarch, Beverley, an award-winning poet, is played by Sam Shepard; his matriarch is played by

Meryl Streep; he drowned himself in the local river; she drowns herself in booze.

An outstanding cast of players come to the funeral board bearing hammy cameos. They include Ewan McGregor, his upgraded teeth reinforcing his Yankee persona as the philandering husband of eldest daughter Barbara (Julia Roberts).

The main sub-plot concerns Little Charlie (Benedict Cumberbatch) and his romance with Ivy (Julianne Nicholson) to whom, it transpires he is more closely related than he thinks. But that's okay. Director John Wells makes it clear Ivy has had a hysterectomy.

Meryl Streep is, as always, superlative. The only acting challenge left to her would seem to be deliberately playing a role badly and so prove she is human.

MA15+ ★★★NFFV

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

Against expectation this remake is stronger than the 1940s version; Danny Kaye's talents as a comedian/song and dance man diminished the Walter Mitty character.

Ben Stiller, who also directs from a script by Babaloo Mandel and Lowell Ganz, gets closer to the James Thurber original as published in *The New Yorker*.

Mitty's workplace has been shifted from a pulp-mag house to the splendours of the *Life* building in New York where he works as a photo-librarian as the magazine prepares to go on-line. And where Kaye had Virginia Mayo and Boris Karloff as co-stars. Stiller has the ever-beguiling Kristen Wiig, playing a colleague Cheryl, and Sean Penn as the intrepid photo-journalist, Sean O'Connell. Stunts involving computer generation are far more effective than the original edited fantasies.

Impossible to ignore Adam Scott's turn as the expert brought in to oversee the change to on-line. His area of expertise? Scott, beard bristling with condescension, makes it clear that the expertise is expertise. His experience of the magazine business is minimal. He is a *shaman* hired for his ability to

utter incantations about business efficiency. Hyperbole? Scan local business pages.

The comedy's location shift is not an ultimate. The ultimate would have Mitty working as a fact-checker on *The New Yorker*.

Maybe next time.

PG★★★★SFFV

Her

We are all nerds now (more or less). Theodore Twombly (Joaquin Phoenix) is a superman of the genus. Not only does he work for a company that computer-creates letters for the lovelorn, he lives in a high-tech apartment building where he enjoys 3D (or is it hologram) TV.

In keeping with this lifestyle, Twombly becomes obsessed with an app on his smart phone voiced by Scarlett Johansson. His obsession does not quite cut him off from the real world nor a charming ex-college friend played by Amy Adams.

Yet for all the ingenuity of his treatment, writer/director Spike Jonze is still bound by Hollywood's first law of box-office dynamics: the co-stars of any given romance must come together at the end. No prize for guessing which of Phoenix's co-stars that is. And, final credit to Jonze, it's not a sunset clinch.

MA15+★★★NFFV

The Book Thief

Director Brian Percival bases his movie on Markus Zusak's novel of the same title (which your reviewer has not read). Drawing on the multi-million best-seller, writer Michael Petroni spins a fine story-line: Hans Hubermann (Geoffrey Rush) and his wife Rosa (Emily Watson), a childless couple have agreed to take in Liesel Meminger and her brother Werner (who dies on the way, enabling Liesel to steal her first book, *The Gravedigger's Handbook*).

The Hubermann act partly because the children's mother as a Communist is under threat, partly because their father gave his life to save Hubermann's life during World War I. (No need to go into the obvious anomaly: this time-line means the Meminger offspring would be much older than they appear).

Both Rush and Watson are great players; it detracts little from their performance to suggest that the internationalisation of box-office casting can lead to scepticism. German-looking actors in the roles would have been more convincing. (Awkward fact: Adolf Hitler didn't look stereotypically German).

As it is, the task of convincing falls mainly on child actor Sophie Nelisse in the role of Liesel. (Awkward fact II: Nelisse is French Canadian not German).

Nonetheless scepticism lingers. Percival should have listened more closely to his sound track. In air-raid scenes, bombs explode but there is no sound of anti-aircraft fire (ack-ack or as the Germans said flak – *Fliegerabwehrkanone* – a minor technicality).

It does, however, add to a further reservation: the sense of a horrific reality being transmuted to a more acceptable folklore – the way it was by the way we wish it had been.

Reprehensible? Inevitable if the Brothers Grimm precedent is followed. Indeed it may be that Percival aggravates the precedent by using the word 'Communist' to epitomise resistance. No word of the infamous Stalin-Hitler pact. A crucifix does hang on the wall but it is shadowed; there is no explicit reference to anti-Hitler plots being Christian-led crusades.

The fairy-tale approach is integral to the ending; Liesel is re-united with Max (Ben Schnetzer), the Jew, she helped to shelter; they live happily ever after in a spacious, splendidly furnished New York apartment.

PG★★★SFFV

Grudge Fight

Mix a ladle full of schmaltz with a handful of gritty hokum and a dollop of nostalgia; let the ragout be served by veteran mummers, Sylvester Stallone and Robert De Niro, both of whom have played pugs (in *Rocky* and *Raging Bull*).

Director Peter Segal and his scriptwriters Doug Ellin, Tim Kelleher and Rodney Rothman name them Henry 'Razor' Sharp and Billy 'The Kid' McDonen, the former a Pittsburgh heavy-industry worker

(shades of Scotland's ex-world champion, Benny Lynch, labouring in a Clyde shipyard), the latter a successful club owner and car dealer.

Cue for a memorable line. When The Kid meets his grandson, he is asked 'Should I call you grandpa?

The response: 'Call me Kid.'

On the way to the climactic bout, Segal inserts a comedy sequence with promoter Dante Slate Jr persuading the rivals to provide motion-capture for a video game; they over-oblige with mayhem. In the part Kevin Hart gabbles so frantically he appears to fear being fired and replaced by Cuba Gooding Jr.

Kim Basinger comes on as Sally Rose, begetter of the grudge between Razor and Kid. BJ her son (by Kid) becomes his trainer while Razor has recourse to Louis 'Lightning' Collins (Alan Arkin, as querulous as when, during an interview, your reviewer let slip that he hadn't seen the reason for the interview: Arkin's greatest movie *Catch 22*)

The Grudge Match? Segal and his team clearly don't believe enough is enough. Razor is blind in one eye. Unknowingly Kid attacks that eye. Result: See the movie.

M★★★NFFV

The Past (Le Passe)

Thirty minutes of the 130 minutes of running time could have been cut if director Asghar Farhadi had got the scriptwriter to speed the somnambulant deliberation of his scenes. Difficult: Farhadi wrote the script.

It concerns an Iranian Ahmad (Ali Mosaffa) returning to France to finalise his divorce from his wife



Marie (Berenice Bejo). Meeting Lucie (Pauline Burlet), older daughter of a previous marriage, is part of the arrangement.

Unarranged is the meeting with Samir, an Arab. Marie plans another marriage with him though his wife (like Marie also French) lies in a coma, result of a suicide attempt triggered by her being sent emails of her husband's affaire with Marie.

It says something for Farhadi's multi-award talent that he is able to resolve this mess in a manner as decent as it is convincing.

M★★★NFFV

Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues

The Keystone Cops did it. The Three Stooges did it. Even Charlie Chaplin did it: held to the showbiz rubric: when you're on a good thing, stick with it. Now Will Ferrell and his fellow loons (David Koechner, Paul Rudd and Steve Carrell) follow the good thing they began with the original Anchorman about the dim but hyper-confident, Ron Burgundy.

Inevitable pun: the Burgundy sequel has had a ten-year-vintage period and is very much the blend as before except that real TV has become so glitz (cocktail frocks for breakfast TV) that it is more difficult to satirise.

Ferrell and director/co-writer Adam McKay try hard; they have Burgundy fired from his San Diego job by his boss, played by Harrison Ford with such hardness you suspect his nose may be made of titanium. After due humiliation in lesser jobs, Burgundy and his loon squad are taken on by the 24/7 GNN (Global News Network) where competition between news teams has a cats-in-bag ferocity.

Boosting GNN, its blond wunderkind Australian chief, played exuberantly by Oz's own Josh Lawson, utters a line about his father leaving him five million that he turned into five and half million.

Had the quip been about the father leaving him five million of debt that he turned into a ten billion credit line it might have come closer to mad, market reality.

M★★★NFFV.

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Annals

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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.

J. A. MEAGHER AND THE MOBILE PHONE

By Max Barrett



RDINARILY, Joe Meagher enjoyed the rollicking motion of the 8.05 out of Cronulla. Occasionally it lulled him to sleep, but that was very occasionally. Ordinarily it stimulated speech in him, or song, or soliloquy.

This morning, however, was different. A newcomer to the compartment produced his mobile phone and immediately proceeded to negotiate his first business transaction of the day. To say he spoke into the apparatus would be to show a lamentable disregard for language. He bellowed.

It reminded Joe of an item he had once read about hog-calling contests conducted in certain parts of the world. The man with the mobile could well have been the reigning champion. After five minutes he switched off the apparatus, gave his newspaper an authoritative snap and commenced to glare at the *Financial Review*.

No one had enjoyed this splitting the ears of the groundlings; but there was a general smile and an air of expectancy; there

FATHER MAX BARRETT is a Redemptorist priest now resident in Sydney. This piece was the ninth 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.

had to be a sequel! (Theoretically, the 8.05 train was the property of CityRail; but, in the minds of these patrons, it belonged to Joseph A. Meagher; and the patrons were not wrong in anticipating proprietorial reaction.)



Joe looked round and discovered that the seat next to the hog-caller was empty. (A lady who feared for the tympanic quality of her eardrum had wisely moved into the adjoining carriage.) Joe eased himself into the vacated seat. A slowly-unfolding drama suddenly rocketed into top-gear. Joseph opened his lungs and, in decibels matching those of the hog-caller, proclaimed:

All the beauty I see has been given to me ...

Then, softly,

And his giving is gentle as silence.

The hog-caller glared at the lunatic beside him. Joe returned a gaze of sweet affability. 'Wonderful things, aren't they ... Mobile phones, I mean ... Imperative these days for business ...

A blessing for parents ... Security ... Kids can get in touch with home-base, and parents are relieved of a good deal of anxiety. Of course, we realise they have to be used with discretion on public transport.'

The gent who had put so much energy into a belligerent phone call now wanted to invest the same heavy concentration in the *Financial Review*. He was completely disinterested in the relationship of the mobile to a train carriage ... but what could one do when an elderly, obviously loopy escapee from some protected nursing home

was smiling a sleepy smile such as is usually bestowed only by couples in the first flush of love?

It would be wrong to say that the other commuters were straining forward to catch Joe's utterance, because one never had to strain to hear Joe. But even Pavarotti could not have commanded this total attention.

In a train like the 8.05, passengers settle into an extraordinary variety of occupations. You've noticed, of course; one would have to be extraordinarily self-absorbed not to notice. Some of our fellow-travellers are catching up on sleep. Some are catching up on breakfast. (I speak loosely; but it's a free country and if a person chooses to call a coke and potato chips breakfast, so be it.) Some are catching up on a dubious version of the news. The more discriminating, like yourself, are analysing the things that really matter. (Now there remaineth three things: faith, hope and the Financial Review.)

But there are further categories among the travellers by train! Some are studying. Some of our companions on this train are actually praying. I invariably feel that all is not entirely askew with the world when I see a fellow-commuter reading the Bible or poring over a well-thumbed book of devotions; when I see our new Arab compatriots fingering their worry beads. (I'm not sure whether that means they are praying. I hope it does.)

'Hence the imperative need ...' This came close to the hog-caller at his best. 'Hence the imperative need for volume control, for considerateness, for saying all things gently. On public transport, it is my golden rule always to speak quietly.'

A burst of laughter greeted this remark. Joe was actually startled! He half-stood, swung round, and was met by serried ranks of smiling faces. Joe shook his head and resumed his seat. 'Take no notice. I have a suspicion that some of these commuters are slightly unbalanced.' A moment's thought. 'Probably not enough fish in their diet.'

'Now, where was I? Yes, the desirability of a considerate, tempered tone on trains. By the way, have you noticed that the loudest mobile users are usually the ones buying controlling shares in BHP or speaking to the Prime Minister on the latter's private line?'

Christian Culture and the Half-educated

UNTIL A MAN ACQUIRES some knowledge of another culture, he cannot be said to be educated, since his whole outlook is so conditioned by his own social environment that he does not realize its limitations. He is a provincial in time, if not in place, and he almost inevitably tends to accept the standards and values of his own society as absolute. The widening of the intellectual horizon by initiation into a different world of culture was indeed the most valuable part of the old classical education.

The study of Christian culture would, I believe, provide a really effective substitute. It would initiate the student into a world that was unknown or at best half known, and at the same time it would deepen his knowledge of modern culture by showing its genetic relation to the culture of the past. No one denies the existence of a Christian literature, a Christian philosophy and a Christian institutional order, but at present these are never studied as parts of an organic whole. Yet without this integrated study it is impossible to understand even the development of the modern vernacular literature.

But how does this affect the question of Christian education? Obviously the academic study of Christian culture as an historical phenomenon is no substitute for religious education in the ordinary sense. What it might do, however, is to help to remove the preliminary prejudice against the Christian view of things which plays so large a part in the secularization of culture. The fact is that the average educated person is not only ignorant of Christian theology, he is no less ignorant of Christian philosophy, Christian history and Christian literature, and in short of Christian culture in general. And he is not ashamed of his ignorance, because Christianity has come to be one of the things that educated people don't talk about. This is quite a recent prejudice which arose among the half-educated and gradually spread upwards and downwards. It did not exist among civilized people in the nineteenth century, whatever their personal beliefs were. Men like Lord Melbourne and Macaulay could talk as intelligently about religious subjects as Gladstone and Acton. It was only at the very end of the century that Christianity ceased to be intellectually respectable and it was due not only to the secularization of culture but also to the general lowering of cultural standards that characterized the age.

— *The Crisis of Western Education*, Christopher Dawson,
Sheed & Ward, London, 1961, pp 113-114.

'Not that all noise proceeds from mobile users or macho types.' Joe chuckled reflectively. 'Not so long ago I was aboard a fairly full train. Six friends arranged a seat so that they could face one another. In a very short time, one of the sextet emerged as the prima donna.

She dominated. Insubordination was quelled as soon as a companion tried to break into the monologue. Her give-out was about as interesting as a squinting perusal of a page from the Phone Directory. But her mastery of the Uninteresting was limitless. Eventually, one of the other passengers walked along the aisle and asked, so politely: 'Pardon me. How much do you charge to haunt a house?"

Joe affected not to have noticed that the hog-caller had stomped out of the

carriage two stops earlier. 'Not everyone has your civility,' he confided to the empty seat.

It was a morning of musical chairs. A pleasant-faced 8.05 regular now slid himself into the place beside Joe. 'My name is Eddie Travers. Look, ah, could I ask: that man who inquired about the going rate for house-hauntings; his name wouldn't have been J. Meagher, by any chance?'

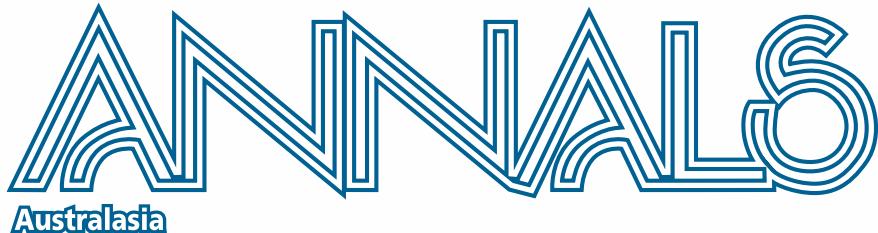
Joe closed his eyes and his smile became more-than-usually Mona Lisa-ish.

He drifted unselfconsciously into song: 'And His giving is gentle as silence'.

Next Month: Joe Meagher and the Champion of Religious Sensitivity

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