

# ANNUALS

Australasia

Journal of Catholic Culture



2015 - 8

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# ANNALS AUSTRALASIA

*Journal of Catholic Culture*

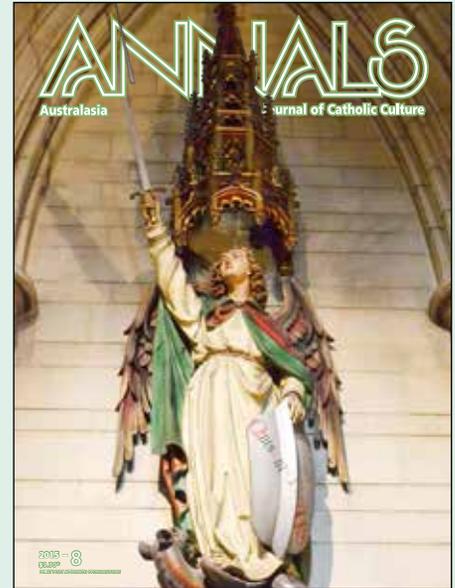
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[Sunday readings at Mass: Year B/Weekday readings at Mass: Year I]

*Australia's Oldest Catholic Magazine*

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*Front Cover:* Statue of St Michael the Archangel, in the church of St James, Spanish Place, London. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth I the Spanish Embassy was in Ely Place, London, and the Chapel of the bishop of Ely which was part of the Embassy, became a haven for Catholics who could attend Mass there, when attendance at Mass was a capital offence in England. In 1791 the Embassy moved to Marylebone, and occupied the building then known as Manchester House, where the Wallace Collection is now housed. A chapel was erected across from the Embassy on the corner of Spanish Place and what is now George Street, close to where the present church stands. St Michael is, as usual, represented with a sword, and trampling on a dragon, or demon. The latin on Michael's shield - Quis ut Deus, Who-is as [powerful] as-God? - is a literal translation of his name in Hebrew: Mi-Kā-El.

*Back Cover:* A whimsy of our artist Kevin Drumm, showing that *Annals* has something of interest for everybody. *Annals* celebrates its 126<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. May we suggest that our readers consider sending a gift subscription to loved ones and friends in order to extend our outreach.

Cover Photo : : Paul Stenhouse

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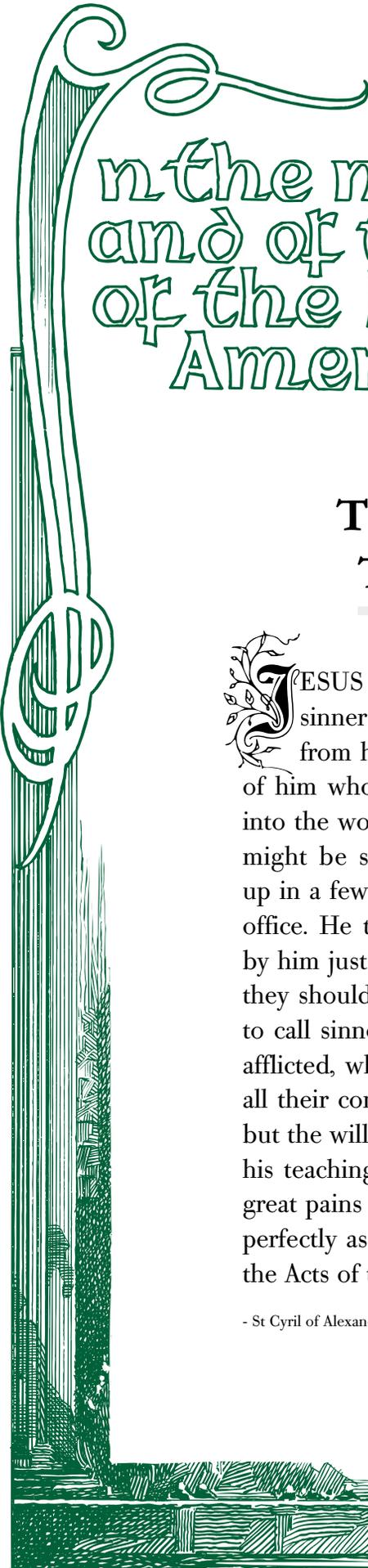
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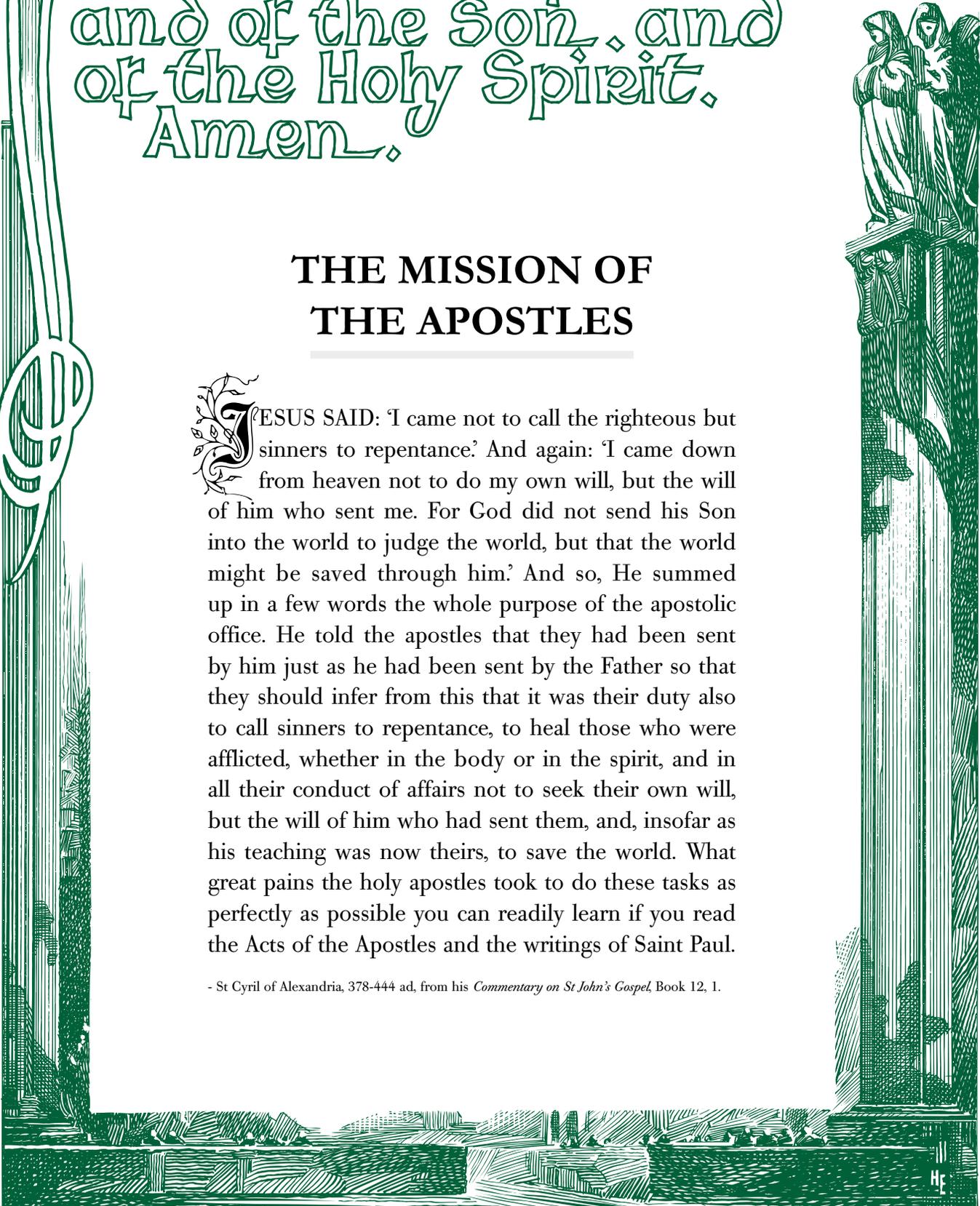
**BY** this  
love you  
have for one  
another,  
everyone will  
know that  
you are my  
disciples.

– Jesus, from the Gospel  
of St John, 13, 35.



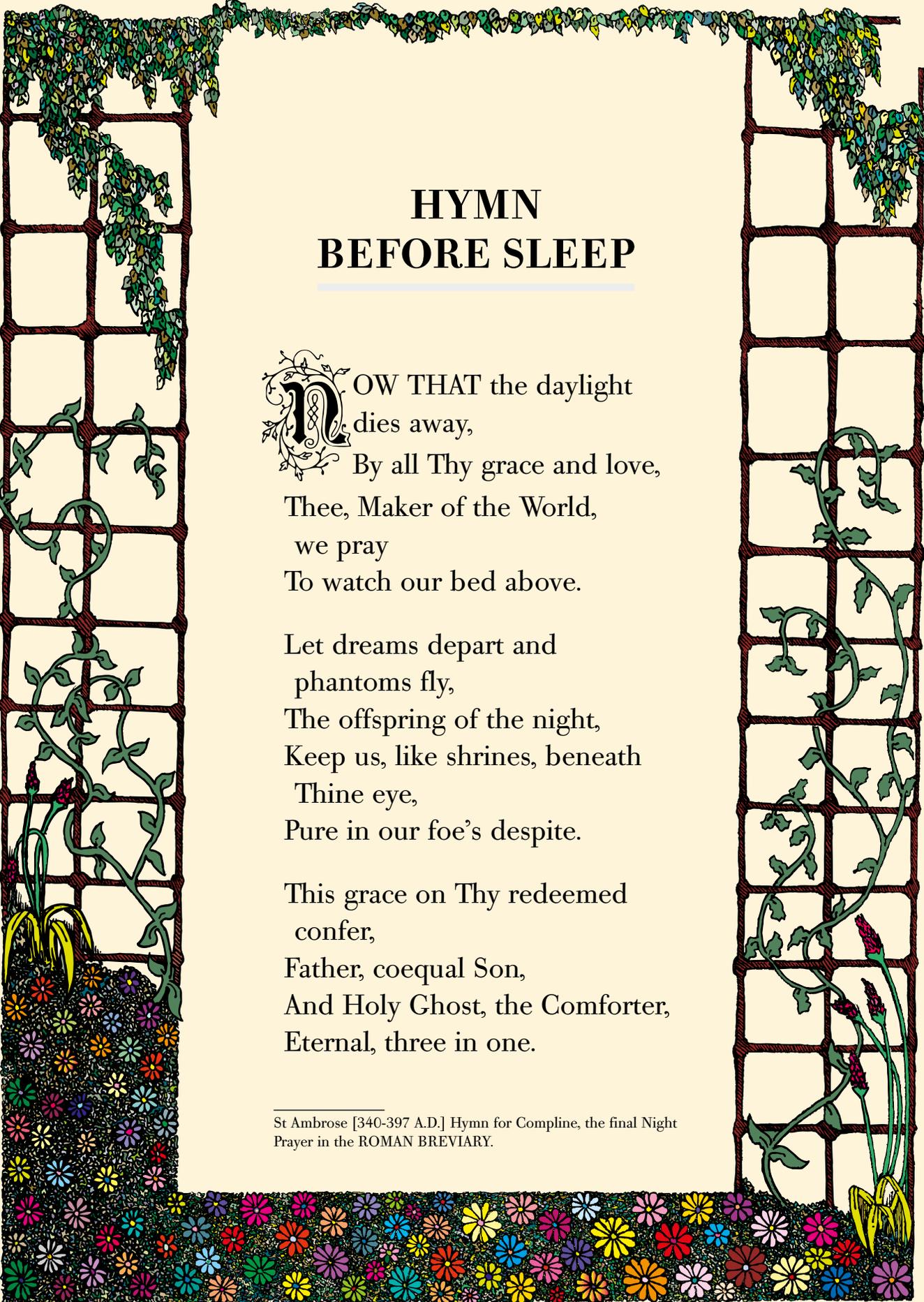
In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and  
of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## THE MISSION OF THE APOSTLES



**J**ESUS SAID: 'I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.' And again: 'I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.' And so, He summed up in a few words the whole purpose of the apostolic office. He told the apostles that they had been sent by him just as he had been sent by the Father so that they should infer from this that it was their duty also to call sinners to repentance, to heal those who were afflicted, whether in the body or in the spirit, and in all their conduct of affairs not to seek their own will, but the will of him who had sent them, and, insofar as his teaching was now theirs, to save the world. What great pains the holy apostles took to do these tasks as perfectly as possible you can readily learn if you read the Acts of the Apostles and the writings of Saint Paul.

- St Cyril of Alexandria, 378-444 ad, from his *Commentary on St John's Gospel*, Book 12, 1.



## HYMN BEFORE SLEEP

**N**OW THAT the daylight  
dies away,  
By all Thy grace and love,  
Thee, Maker of the World,  
we pray  
To watch our bed above.

Let dreams depart and  
phantoms fly,  
The offspring of the night,  
Keep us, like shrines, beneath  
Thine eye,  
Pure in our foe's despite.

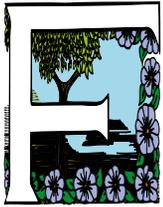
This grace on Thy redeemed  
confer,  
Father, coequal Son,  
And Holy Ghost, the Comforter,  
Eternal, three in one.

---

St Ambrose [340-397 A.D.] Hymn for Compline, the final Night  
Prayer in the ROMAN BREVIARY.

*We can only begin to hope, and we can only start to think clearly, when we believe in Jesus Christ and know that we're loved by God. We'll never have serenity if we start anywhere else.*

## THE ONLY PLACE TO START



**F**C: *During the first week of the synod, many small groups mentioned the problem of gender theory, but this topic is not very prominent in the English-speaking groups. Why?*

Cardinal Thomas Collins's group, English circle D, did briefly mention gender theory, which is deeply anti-nature and anti-human in its implications. But the scope of the working document is large, and its flaws are many. So there just hasn't been time to focus properly on that important issue.

FC: *Some synod fathers have suggested that more power might be given to bishops' conferences, in particular concerning the problem of divorced and remarried Catholics. What is your opinion about this?*

It's not a good idea. We live in a confused time. It's an age of conflict and disruptive social forces. The Church needs unity in her doctrine and practices, not fragmentation. Cardinal [George] Pell is right about the imprudence of delegating decisions like sacramental discipline to local bishops or bishops' conferences. Communion for the divorced and civilly remarried is a perfect example. What amounts to a sacrilege for a person in one country can't be a source of grace for exactly the same person in another country.

FC: *Cardinal Dolan mentioned on his blog that "a new minority" needs the support of the synod. This minority is made of Christian families*

**T**HE FOLLOWING interview on *The Synod of the Family*, with ARCHBISHOP CHARLES CHAPUT of Philadelphia, was conducted on October 15 by SAMUEL PRUVOT of the French Catholic magazine *Famille Chretienne* (FC). Reprinted with permission.

*who are devoted, faithful, practicing and exposed to mockery. What do you think?*

Reaching out to alienated groups like persons with same-sex attraction is important. But our first priority needs to be the families and married couples who really believe in Jesus Christ and already live their faith vigorously. Going to the peripheries can't be done unless we first nourish the faithful people who provide the cornerstone of our Church life. So Cardinal Dolan's comments were articulate and very valuable.

FC: *Some think that the Church should leave more space for personal conscience. That would help the faithful to overcome the "obstacles" – so they say – which the Church creates for them on the question of birth-control or the sacraments (Reconciliation and Communion) for divorced and remarried couples. What is your opinion?*

Each of us has the duty to follow his or her conscience. But conscience doesn't exist in a vacuum, and it's more than a matter of personal opinion or preference. The Church is not a collection

of sovereign individuals. We're a community, a family, organized around the person of Jesus Christ and his Gospel. We have an obligation to form our consciences in the truth. That means we need to allow ourselves to be guided by the wisdom and teaching of the Church that Jesus founded. If my conscience disagrees with the guidance of the Church on a matter of moral substance, it's probably not the Church that is wrong. Human beings – all of us – are very adroit at making excuses for what we want to do, whether it's sinful or not.

FC: *Why do you recommend that we should start our pastoral reasoning from Jesus and the Scriptures rather than a sound analysis of the difficulties that today's families are facing?*

If we really believe in Jesus Christ – if he's a living, daily reality for us, and not just the source of a good moral system – then he's the centre and meaning of history, the Alpha and the Omega. "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." We need to begin at the beginning, in the embodied love of God who is Jesus Christ. If we don't start with Jesus and the Scriptures, then the social problems and challenges that exist in every century will always overwhelm us.

We can only begin to hope, and we can only start to think clearly, when we believe in Jesus Christ and know that we're loved by God. We'll never have serenity if we start anywhere else.

FC: *Would you agree that very little is said in the Instrumentum*

*Laboris about Catholic families who are really trying to remain faithful to the Gospel?*

Yes, as I suggested earlier, the synod's working document is weak in its attention to faithful families. But there's more. I've been surprised by how little the synod text says about the joys of having children, and especially the beauty and heroic witness of large families. Children are the future. They're a gift from God. They renew the world. It's sad to see so many couples today cheat themselves out of more love and more joy by having only two children. Life is meant to be an adventure, to be abundant – not to be strangled by worry. God provides. He never abandons hearts that are generous. I have tremendous esteem for large families. I wish we had many more of them. They're the hope of the Church.

FC: *Why do you think that there is a risk of considering today's social problems through too much of a Western lens?*

The Church is alive and growing across most of the Southern Hemisphere. Catholics of the global South naturally have a different perspective on the world. They see the needs of the Church through fresh eyes, without the pessimism so common in Europe and even North America. We should never discount the wisdom and learned lessons of the Church in the North. But we do need to expand our thinking to include the experience of Africa, Asia, Oceania and Latin America. In a sense, that's where the Church of the future lies.

FC: *The message of the Gospel concerning couples and families is very demanding. How can this message reach the "peripheries" on which the Pope insists?*

We need to be careful not to defeat ourselves. Jesus meant what he said in Matthew 11:30: "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Married life can be demanding. So can every other vocation in Christian life. That's

## Inscriptions from Phrygia and Gaul in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries

### Belief in the Real Presence

IT WOULD be difficult indeed to find a more explicit and definite exposition of the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and of the transubstantiation of the bread and wine to become His true Body and Blood, than we have here in these two epitaphs, when once we have been given the key to their interpretation. They are earlier than almost all the purely literary evidence that remains to us in the writings of the fathers. In them we are listening to the voice of the second and third centuries; when it was still impossible to speak clearly on such subjects because of persecution. Mystical they are, of course, but not obscure. Indeed they could scarcely speak more plainly. It is almost with a shock of surprise that we find the doctrine of the twentieth century, as it is held and taught in the Catholic Church to-day thus definitely set out, engraved on imperishable stone, before a hundred years had passed from the time of our Lord's Ascension. These inscriptions of Abercius from Phrygia, and of Pectorius from ancient Gaul testify to the definiteness of the doctrine thus held in union in the second and third centuries by Christians very widely divided by race and locality. The inscriptions of Pope St. Damasus at Rome two or three hundred years later have a very different character. These latter were official monuments, set up by authority in a city which was not yet Christian, but in which Christianity was already free. We have seen how in the earlier centuries, all the essentials of the Catholic belief are already set forth, although they are shrouded in mystical and symbolical language.

— Arthur Stapylton Barnes, *The Early Church in the Light of the Monuments*, London, 1913.

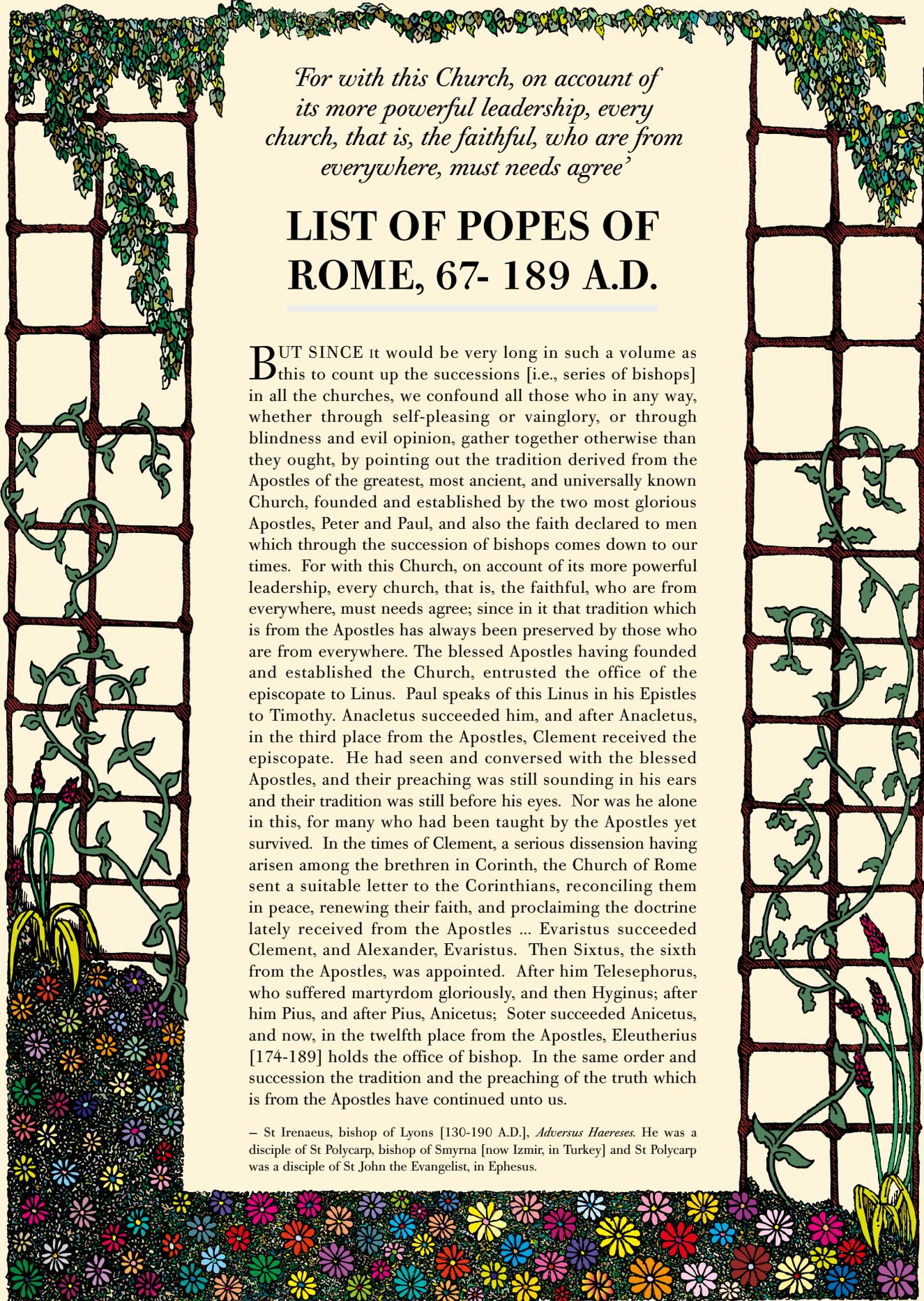
obvious. But the rewards of unselfish love are always greater than the cost. Ask any parents of a child with Down syndrome. In the eyes of the world, they have a child who is "disabled." In the eyes of the mother and father, they have a child who is a miracle and a mystery.

Geography and distance are only one way of thinking about the peripheries. The real unexplored, unconverted territories lie much closer to home – in the way we treat our families, our friends, the poor, the sick and the elderly in our own neighbourhoods. The darkest periphery is the point in our hearts where our generosity ends. And, at the same time, there's no more powerful witness anywhere on earth than an ordinary Catholic family radiating the love of God. With enough of those families, God could rebuild the world.

FC: *Following the Festival of Families in Philadelphia, how can the spirit of this event be maintained?*

Big events always have an emotional high that subsides over the following months. That's normal. The same will happen in Philadelphia. But a lot of people were uniquely moved by the World Meeting of Families, and many of them will remember and keep the experience alive in their hearts. God gave us the raw material of a wonderful success. My job after the synod is to help our priests and people turn that gift into a lasting renewal of our local Church. So please ask your readers to keep us in their prayers!

MOST REVEREND CHARLES J. CHAPUT, O.F.M. CAP. is the ninth and current Archbishop of Philadelphia. As member of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Tribe, Archbishop Chaput is the second Native American to be ordained Bishop in the United States, and the first Native American Archbishop.



*For with this Church, on account of  
its more powerful leadership, every  
church, that is, the faithful, who are from  
everywhere, must needs agree'*

## LIST OF POPES OF ROME, 67- 189 A.D.

**B**UT SINCE it would be very long in such a volume as this to count up the successions [i.e., series of bishops] in all the churches, we confound all those who in any way, whether through self-pleasing or vainglory, or through blindness and evil opinion, gather together otherwise than they ought, by pointing out the tradition derived from the Apostles of the greatest, most ancient, and universally known Church, founded and established by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul, and also the faith declared to men which through the succession of bishops comes down to our times. For with this Church, on account of its more powerful leadership, every church, that is, the faithful, who are from everywhere, must needs agree; since in it that tradition which is from the Apostles has always been preserved by those who are from everywhere. The blessed Apostles having founded and established the Church, entrusted the office of the episcopate to Linus. Paul speaks of this Linus in his Epistles to Timothy. Anacletus succeeded him, and after Anacletus, in the third place from the Apostles, Clement received the episcopate. He had seen and conversed with the blessed Apostles, and their preaching was still sounding in his ears and their tradition was still before his eyes. Nor was he alone in this, for many who had been taught by the Apostles yet survived. In the times of Clement, a serious dissension having arisen among the brethren in Corinth, the Church of Rome sent a suitable letter to the Corinthians, reconciling them in peace, renewing their faith, and proclaiming the doctrine lately received from the Apostles ... Evaristus succeeded Clement, and Alexander, Evaristus. Then Sixtus, the sixth from the Apostles, was appointed. After him Telesphorus, who suffered martyrdom gloriously, and then Hyginus; after him Pius, and after Pius, Anicetus; Soter succeeded Anicetus, and now, in the twelfth place from the Apostles, Eleutherius [174-189] holds the office of bishop. In the same order and succession the tradition and the preaching of the truth which is from the Apostles have continued unto us.

— St Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons [130-190 A.D.], *Adversus Haereses*. He was a disciple of St Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna [now Izmir; in Turkey] and St Polycarp was a disciple of St John the Evangelist, in Ephesus.

*We are still experiencing the after-shocks of the late 1960s and the so-called 'Age of Aquarius'.*

# POPULISM

*By Paul Stenhouse*

**L**ESS politically correct days, in the Roman Empire, the populace at large was called *plebs* or *vulgus*. Rulers were termed *optimates*. The verb *vulgo* meant 'to make something wide-spread, common or universal' and the noun came to mean 'crowd', 'public', and even 'mob' and 'rabble'— hence our adjective 'vulgar'.

*Optimates* is the plural of the noun *optimas* derived from the adjective *optimus*, 'best', which is the superlative of *bonus* 'good'.

Ours is an age of anti-elitism in matters cultural, educational, political and ecclesiastical. We are still experiencing the after-shocks of the late 1960s and the so-called 'Age of Aquarius'.

In those deeply troubled years, for many of the self-styled 'beautiful people,' offering or receiving an education worthy of the name, was at best bourgeois, middle-class posturing, and at worst, a betrayal of those less privileged. The 'hip' crowd, in between smoking 'pot' and taking LSD 'adored' the re-discovered Futurists who proclaimed a racing car to be 'more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace,' and whose Manifesto went on to declare,

'We wish to glorify war – the only health-giver of the world – militarism, patriotism, the destructive arm of the anarchist, the beautiful ideas that kill, the contempt for women. We wish to destroy the museums, the libraries ...'<sup>1</sup>

More than fifty years later, in 2015, the ghostly spectres of LSD populariser – Timothy O'Leary –

and the founder of the Futurists – Tommaso Marinetti – still stride the boardwalks where the 'in-crowd' meet to exult in the downfall of 'elitism' and 'privilege'.

Elitism in sport or the arts, especially the entertainment industry, is the only elitism permitted to us today, as we throw off the shackles of our much-maligned past. We are invited to applaud elite sportsmen or women, film stars or media 'icons' who have won acclaim worldwide [often well-deserved and orchestrated by the media] for their achievements.

As is their wont, radio, TV or the print media quote the *ipsissima verba* of these bright, usually young, 'elite'. Those of us old enough to remember when Australia was different, reel back in dismay at the incoherence and paucity of ideas [with, of course, notable exceptions] of many of those

held up today as models and heroes for our children.

Sportsmen and women, artists and film stars are only the tip of this iceberg of cultural deprivation. Public figures in all walks of life too often speak ungrammatically, incoherently, illogically – when they aren't speaking blasphemously and scatalogically.

Usama bin Laden was in no danger of being caught if we couldn't even pronounce his name, and the name of his shoddy gang of terrorists correctly; when 'alternate' and 'alternative' have become interchangeable, and when the ABC unblushingly puts to air interviews with correspondents who apparently don't understand that if the subject of the sentence is plural then the verb must be plural.

We live in a world where logic and reason have been subordinated to 'political correctness,' 'equality,' and the search for so-called 'level playing-fields'.

Our ancestors would be appalled. They argued and fought for the right of the majority [the *vulgus*] to enjoy the privileges of the minority [the *optimates*] especially in the realm of education and government.

We find ourselves today obliging the majority to embrace the minority's views, goals and ideals, even, or rather especially, when these involve the repudiation of centuries of culture and educational advances.

The call for 'equality' has become the catch-cry of those who would [at least metaphorically] burn down museums and destroy libraries. They appear to be anxious to rid the minds of the minority of

## The Church is Catholic

**S**HE WOULD still be Catholic if tomorrow apostasy on a vast scale deprived her of almost all the faithful. Catholicity has nothing to do with geography or statistics. If it is true that it should be displayed over all the earth and be manifest to all, yet its nature is not material but spiritual. Like sanctity, Catholicity is primarily an intrinsic feature of the Church.

— Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (Ignatius Press), 48-9.

any sensitivity towards culture or tradition, and to destroy any hope that the majority 'vulgus' may once have had of bettering themselves.

There is no place for 'better' or 'worse' in the vocabulary of the New-Man and New-Woman. The horrors of Communism apparently have taught us nothing. We seem intent on our own Australian-made 'Revolution,' with its in-built negativity and pettiness. And backwardness.

What we call the 'classical' languages, Latin, Greek, Hebrew etc, were cared for, over many millenia, like gardens that required constant attention.

One of the tasks of a good gardener is to rid a garden of weeds; and to encourage the growth of beautiful and compatible varieties of

flowers and vegetables that will be beneficial for soul and body.

We seem intent on reducing these gardens to their pristine state of neglect and disorder.

Where our ancestors longed for order, we seek freedom of expression.

Where they sought clarity and toughness of mind, we demand respect for the individual's need to express himself or herself differently from anybody else, and appeal to psychologists and counsellors if any attempt is made to make us conform, even to grammatical rules.

Quintilian [Marcus Fabius Quintilianus] 35-100 AD a Spanish rhetorician said of Julius Caesar that he 'spoke in the same way that he waged war' [*Caesarem eodem animo dixisse quo bellavit*]<sup>2</sup> by which he meant that he planned and took pains over what he said, just as he planned his campaigns and waged them with care.

Cicero's comment that 'nothing is sweeter than brevity' [*nihil est brevitate dulcius*]<sup>3</sup> deserves well of those of us who care. Priests,

especially, would benefit from pondering Cicero's comment as they prepare their sermons.

Alexander Pope said of Quintilian 'In grave Quintilian's copious works we find / the justest rules and clearest method joined.'<sup>4</sup>

Imprecise language, careless spelling, neglect of basic rules of pronunciation and all-pervasive illogic, all in the name of populism – what Cicero called *vulgaris* – will lead inexorably to shoddy thinking.

Modern descendants of the ancient *plebs* or *vulgus* will discover, when it is too late, that shoddy thinking makes the majority

Modern descendants of the ancient *plebs* or *vulgus* will discover, when it is too late, that shoddy thinking makes the majority vulnerable to domination by a modern minority that will bear little resemblance to the *optimates* of old.

vulnerable to domination by a modern minority that will bear little resemblance to the *optimates* of old.

These latter, for all their many and serious weaknesses and

failings, at least knew there was a difference between good and evil, and better and worse, and sweet and discordant, and tried their hardest to communicate these values.

In a different context, Abraham Lincoln warned his fellow Americans, four years before the 'Brothers' War' destroyed the unity and decimated the youth of their country from 1861 – 1865:

What constitutes the bulwark of our own liberty and independence. ... is not our army and navy ... it is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere. Destroy this spirit and you have planted the seeds of despotism at your own doors. Familiarize yourselves with the chains of bondage and you prepare your own limbs to wear them ... and become fit subjects of the first cunning tyrant who rises among you.<sup>5</sup>

1. *Manifesto of Futurism*: Nos. 9,10.

2. Quintilianus *Institutio Oratoria* x, 2, 25.

3. *De Claribus Oratoribus Liber qui dicitur Brutus* 75. 262. Nobbe. p.155

4. *An Essay on Criticism*, lines 669-670.

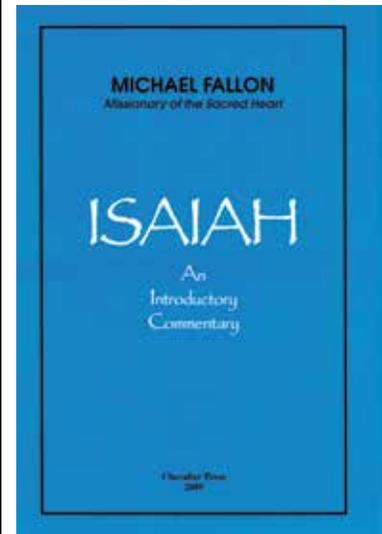
5. Speech at Edwardsville Illinois, September 13, 1858

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your heart shall thrill and rejoice,  
because the abundance of the seas  
shall be brought to you. ...  
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and shall proclaim the praise of YHWH.'  
— Isaiah 49, 18, 22.



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Michael Fallon is a Missionary of the Sacred Heart [MSC]. His books, lectures and CDs have made a significant contribution to Biblical literacy among all who seek insights into the Bible. See his website [www.michaelfallonmsc.com](http://www.michaelfallonmsc.com)

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*Precisely from the historical point of view, the evidence in favour is so strong and extensive, and the lack of contrary evidence is so glaring, that this offensive against Pius XII is destined to exhaust itself.*

## HISTORY WILL DO JUSTICE TO PIUS XII

*An interview by Maurizio Fontana with Paolo Mieli*



Q: THERE IS often talk about the play by Rolf Hochhuth 'The Vicar,' performed for the first time on February 20, 1963, at the *Freie Volksbühne* in Berlin. But the criticism of Pope Pacelli's attitudes dates back to long before this. When did the 'Pius XII problem' truly emerge?

A: The watershed was without question the performance of 'The Vicar,' but some of the accusations, even if they were not of the same kind as those of Hochhuth, go back even before the beginning of the second world war. The first to speak of the reticence of Pius XII was, in fact, Emmanuel Mounier, who in May of 1939 courteously objected to a silence that brought embarrassment to many: that of Pius XII concerning Italian aggression against Albania.

The same kind of accusation was then lodged against him by another French Catholic intellectual, François Mauriac, who

in 1951 lamented, in the preface to a book by Léon Poliakov, that the persecuted Jews had not had the comfort of hearing the pope condemn in clear and distinct terms 'the crucifixion of countless brothers in the Lord.'

But it should also be recalled that this same book – one of the first important texts on anti-

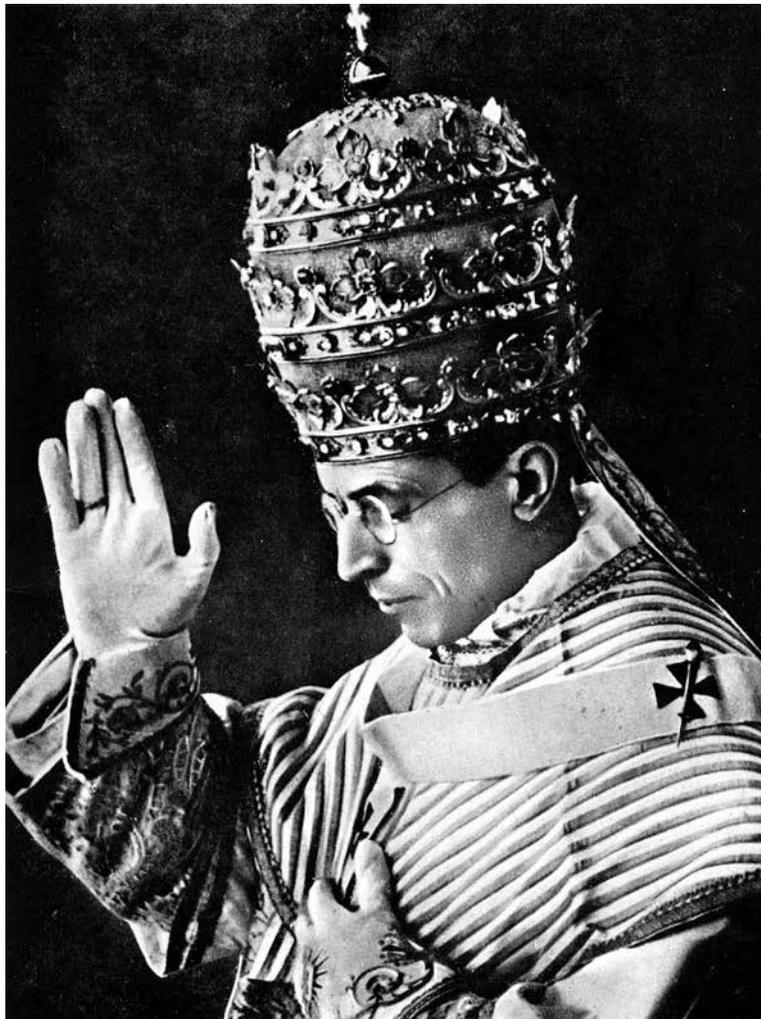
Semitism – presented justifications for this silence. In essence, Poliakov, himself a Jew, wrote that the pope had been silent in order to avoid compromising the safety of the Jews to a much greater extent than had already been done.

Q: So, the first statement on this topic by a Jewish scholar was very cautious?

A: I would go even further. Except for Poliakov, the first assessments of the Jewish community all over the world were not only cautious, they were very favourable toward Pius XII.

Q: Could one reason for this caution be the fact that the real accusations against the pope began to come, already during the war, from the Soviets?

A: Pius XII was certainly a pope who was also – and I emphasize 'also' – anti-communist. And during these decades of controversy, he has often been criticized for being swayed by this view. We recall, for example, two



famous speeches he delivered before becoming pope, during his trip to France (1937) and to Hungary (1938), in which he emphasized the persecutions of the communist regime rather than those of the Nazi regime.

But a premise must be noted in this regard: the thematization of the Holocaust as we know it today came many decades after the end of the second world war. I remember that during the 1950's and '60's, one still spoke roughly of deportees in the concentration camps.

It was known that the Jews had suffered the worst fate, but full awareness of the Holocaust came later. During the 1930's, very few had any idea about what could happen to the Jews. Of course, in Germany, there had been the 'night of broken glass.'

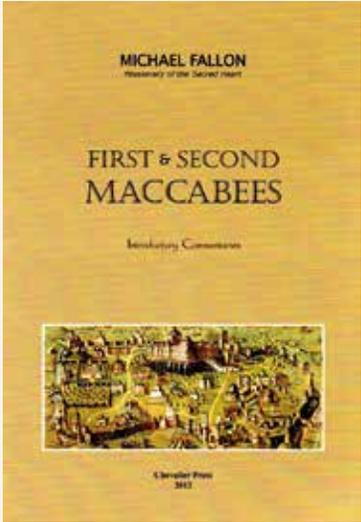
But it is obviously much easier to interpret and understand the facts today, in hindsight. And the Jews who escaped from Germany were not welcomed with open arms in any part of the world, not even in the United States. In short, it was a complex problem. The Western world, the civil world, apart from a few exceptions, did not understand, did not realize what was happening. For this reason, when we talk about a pope at the end of the 1930's, we can understand why he would be more sensitive to anti-Christian persecution in the Soviet Union than to what was emerging in the Nazi world. This does not mean that he was secretly a Nazi.

Q: The 1930's: controversy is often directed at Pius XI as well . . .

A: One of the criticisms of Cardinal Pacelli, who was secretary of state for Pius XI, is that he softened the condemnations of National Socialism. Among the many accusations – which I do not believe are entirely justified – against Pacelli was that he moderated the tone of the encyclical 'Mit Brennender Sorge.' In reality, examining Pope Pacelli's activities from an historical standpoint, I would recall a few details. When the war began, he criticized the apathy of the French

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Church under Nazi domination in Vichy France; he then criticized the flagrant anti-Semitism of Slovakian Monsignor Josef Tiso; he extended



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– as documented in a book by Renato Moro, 'La Chiesa e lo sterminio degli ebrei [The Church and the extermination of the Jews]'; published by Il Mulino – his own willingness, and even assistance, with highly risky decisiveness, to some of those who plotted against Hitler between 1939 and 1940.

I continue: when in June of 1941, the Soviet Union was invaded by Germany, there was a certain resistance in the Western world to making pacts with those who until

## Lack of Objectivity

THE RECENT BBC documentary on Pope Pius XII and the Jews, which *The Tablet* extensively reported, illustrates how easy it is for the media to present loaded versions of a particular theme and set the unsuspecting viewer off on the wrong track. There was a glaring omission which would have made a difference: the real record of Jewish-Vatican relations during the war. The Vatican has published four volumes on its work for the victims of the war and, in particular, its correspondence with the world Jewish organizations appealing to it for help. This assistance was readily given and earned the spontaneous appreciation of the Jewish leaders in Britain and the United States. ... As one of the editors of that series, *Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, allow me to express my astonishment at the systematic blindness in evidence. The BBC 2 producers let loose an avalanche of cruel imputations of motives, while ignoring, with an air of objectivity, substantial evidence in conflict with their thesis.

— Excerpt from a letter by Father Robert Graham S.J. to *The Tablet*, London, on February 4, 1995.

that moment had fought on the side of Nazi Germany. Pius XII instead exerted himself greatly to facilitate an alliance between Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

And finally, there is the most important chapter: during the Nazi occupation of Rome – as recounted, for example, in two books, the famous volume by Enzo Forcella ('La resistenza in convento [The resistance in the convent],' published by Einaudi) and one just recently released by Andrea Riccardi ('L'inverno più lungo [The longest winter],' Laterza) – the Church made all of its resources available: almost every basilica, every church, every seminary, every convent accommodated and helped the Jews. So much so that in Rome, in comparison with two thousand deported Jews, ten thousand were able to save themselves.

Now, I don't mean to say that all of those ten thousand were saved by the Church of Pius XII, but without a doubt the Church contributed to saving most of them. And it would have been impossible for the pope to be unaware of what his priests and sisters were doing. The result was that for years, for years and years – dozens of examples could be given – extremely important figures in the Jewish world acknowledged this contribution,

attributing it explicitly to Pius XII.

Now, almost any trace of these witnesses has been lost. This was the subject, for example, of a wonderful book by Andrea Tornielli ('Pio XII il papa degli ebrei [Pius XII, the pope of the Jews],' Piemme). It is an extremely vast literature, of which I would like to provide just a sample.

In 1944, the grand rabbi of Jerusalem, Isaac Herzog, said: 'The people of Israel will never forget what Pius XII and his illustrious delegates, inspired by the eternal principles of religion that are at the basis of authentic civilization, are doing for our unfortunate brothers and sisters in the most tragic hour of our history. This is living proof of divine providence in this world.'

That same year, Sergeant Major Joseph Vancouver wrote: 'I would like to tell you about Jewish Rome, about the great miracle of finding thousands of Jews here. The churches, the convents, the monks and nuns, and above all the pontiff, ran to the aid and rescue of the Jews, snatching them from the clutches of the Nazis and of

their fascist Italian collaborators. These great efforts, not without their dangers, were undertaken to conceal and feed the Jews during the months of the German occupation. Some religious paid with their lives for this rescue operation. The entire Church was mobilized for this purpose, working with great dedication. The Vatican was at the center of every activity of assistance and rescue, under the given circumstances an under Nazi domination.'

I also cite a letter from the Italian front, by the soldier Eliyahu Lubisky, a member of the socialist kibbutz Bet Alfa. It was published in the weekly 'Hashavua' on August 4, 1944: 'All of the refugees are talking about how helpful the Vatican was. Priests put their lives in danger to conceal and save Jews. The pontiff himself participated in the work to rescue the Jews.'

Again, October 15, 1944. We note the address given by the extraordinary commissioner of the Jewish community in Rome, Silvio Ottolenghi: 'Thousands of our brothers were saved in the convents, in the churches, in the extraterritorial buildings. On July 23. I was summoned to meet with His Holiness, to whom I communicated the thanks of the community of Rome for the heroic and affectionate assistance extended to us by the clergy through the convents and colleges . . . I told His Holiness about the desire of my fellow Jews in Rome to go en masse to thank him. But this kind of demonstration was not possible, except at the end of the war, in order to avoid compromising all of those in the north who still needed to be protected.'

Q: This was while the war was still going on. Let's come to today . . .

A: Today, unfortunately, attention to Pius XII is so strong that even a normal historiographic discussion becomes heated.

Q: The issue is so incendiary that there is still the problem of the photograph of Pius XII at Yad



Vashem, and its caption. This in spite of the mass of testimonies to which you have just referred. What happened?

A: What happened is that over the years, the black legend of Pius XII has been spread. We recall the books by John Cornwell ('Hitler's Pope') and by Daniel Goldhagen ('Hitlers willige Vollstrecker [Hitler's willing executioners]'), in which these accusations are made more explicit. A common judgment was formed, according to which Pius XII was seen as a pontiff who was nothing less than an accomplice of the Nazi Führer.

This is crazy! And just think that at Eichmann's trial in 1961, a judgment about the pope was expressed that is worth rereading. The person speaking is Gideon Hausner, the state prosecutor in Jerusalem: 'In Rome, on October 16, 1943, a vast round-up was organized in the old Jewish neighborhood. The Italian clergy participated in the rescue operation, the monasteries opened their doors to the Jews. The pontiff intervened personally in favor of the Jews arrested in Rome.'

Q: This was just two years before the performance of 'The Vicar' . . .

A: And it was in 1963 that a twofold revision of Pius XII's role began taking hold. One of these was malicious – inside the Church itself – and contrasted Pius XII with the figure of John XXIII. It was a devastating operation: John XXIII was treated as a pope who had demonstrated a sensitivity during the second world war that Pius XII had not. This is a very bizarre idea. And between the lines of the invective against Pacelli, it seems to emerge that the pontiff has been made to pay for his anti-communism. In reality, Pius XII was a pope in line with the history of the Catholic Church in the 20th century.

If one reads what he wrote or listens to the recordings of his speeches, one realizes how he also expressed, for example, criticism of liberalism. I mean that he was not at all a pawn of anti-communist Atlantism.

## Implacable

IT IS CERTAIN that an open protest – and not only about the fate of the Jews in Hitler's hand – would have had no effect on the Nazis. Does anyone doubt this? Perhaps for some that should have made no difference. This was not enough for Pius XII. He had to look farther and ask if he was not putting innocent lives at risk by an open, foreseeably ineffectual, declaration of protest. . . . Pius XII exemplified his dilemma in particularly dramatic and explicit terms when he gave an audience, in 1942, to Don Pirro Scavizzi, an old friend and fellow-Roman. As chaplain of the hospital train of the Order of Malta, he brought to the Pope what he had learned through his mission in the East. Scavizzi had not seen any concentration camps but he had seen enough, and heard enough, to give a gruesome picture of the treatment of the Jews. The Pope, distressed by the shocking revelation, stated: 'Perhaps my solemn protest might have obtained for me the approval of the civilized world, but it would have brought to the Jews a most implacable persecution, even greater than the one they are now suffering.'

— Excerpt from a second letter by Father Robert Graham to *The Tablet*, March 11, 1995.

Q: This means that he wasn't the chaplain of the West . . .

A: Absolutely not. The image of Pius XII as the chaplain of the great anti-communist offensive during the cold war is off track. Although, naturally, he was anti-communist. And for this anti-communism, he has been made to pay a very high price, which has distorted his image through theatrical performances, publications, and films.

But anyone who has not taken a prejudicial attitude and has tried to understand Pacelli through the documents cannot help but be stunned by this black legend, which makes no sense. Pius XII was a great pope, able to meet the situation.

It is as if today we were to blast Roosevelt for not speaking more clearly about the Jews. But how can one scrutinize a war, especially regarding an unarmed figure like the Pope? This speciousness of this offensive against Pius XII seems truly suspect to any person of good faith, and it is a speciousness that should be opposed. Sooner or later, someone will reinterpret the facts in the light of the testimonies to which I referred earlier.

Q: Are there differences between European, and in particular Italian, historiography on Pius XII, versus American?

A: I think so. We should not forget that this aversion toward Pius XII emerged in the Anglo-Saxon,

Protestant world. It did not emerge from the Jewish world, which instead adapted itself over time in order to avoid being caught off guard by an international campaign.

To put it in another way: if the pope is accused of letting anti-Semitism run free, obviously the Jewish world feels itself responsible for seeing things clearly. This brings us to the episode of the seventh hall of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, where a photograph of the pope appears with a caption that describes his behavior as 'ambiguous.' Or to the request, in 1998, by of the ambassador of Israel to the Holy See at the time, Aaron Lopez, to put a moratorium on the beatification of Pius XII. Now, I have nothing to do with this matter of the moratorium, because it is not an historiographical issue. But there is something excessively obstinate about attitudes toward this pope, and it stinks from a mile away.

It was in 1963 that the spotlight was focused on Pius XII, in an effort to find evidence of his guilt, and nothing emerged. On the contrary, the studies brought to light copious documentation attesting to how his Church gave crucial help to the Jews.

I recall, in this regard, one beautiful gesture: in June of 1955, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra asked to be allowed to give a concert at the Vatican in honor of

Pius XII, to express gratitude to this pope, and it played in the presence of the pope a movement from Beethoven's seventh symphony. This was the atmosphere.

And when the pope died, Golda Meir – Israel's foreign minister, and future prime minister – said: 'When the most appalling martyrdom ever struck our people during the ten years of the Nazi terror, the voice of the pontiff was raised in favor of the victims. We weep for the loss of this great servant of peace.' For some, the pontiff's voice had not been raised, but they had heard it. Understand? Golda Meir had heard his voice.

And William Zuckerman, director of the magazine 'Jewish Newsletter,' wrote: 'All the Jews of America pay homage and express their sorrow, because it is likely that no leader of this generation gave more substantial help to the Jews in the hour of tragedy. More than anyone else, we were able to benefit from the great and charitable goodness and magnanimity of the lamented pontiff during the years of persecution and terror.'

This is how Pius XII was considered for years, for decades. Were they all crazy? No, they were the ones who had suffered the persecutions for which Pius XII is blamed as an accomplice. If we take this as a case of historiography, the black legend is crazy. But I think that, apart from some polemicists, any historian worthy of the name – even in the case of people like me who are not Catholic – will fight to re-establish the truth.

Q: What has emerged so far from Israeli historiography? Has there been an evolution in the judgment of historians? Is there still a debate about Pius XII?

A: I would say that Israeli historiography is very restrained. In reality, the case is still open because of the obstinacy of another world, which is not the Jewish world. I think that three aspects must be considered. First of all, Pius XII has been made to pay for his anti-communism. Second: this pope knew Germany well, and had a



*The family crest of Eugenio Pacelli, Pius XII, incorporated into his Papal Coat of Arms. Note the dove of peace.*

pro-German attitude that, make no mistake, does not mean pro-Nazi. Finally, it must be said that the criticisms of Pius XII always come from circles that could be criticized ten times as much themselves. During the Holocaust, these circles were unable to demonstrate a presence anywhere near what they criticize Pius XII for not doing.

Q: Do you want to give us some examples?

A: I think about what happened in France, in Poland, but even in the United States. Let's think about it: the idea of those who accuse Pius XII is that everyone knew, or that in any case it was possible to know. So I ask: whom do we remember, during the second world war, among the personalities of these

circles who raised their voices in a way that the pope is criticized for not doing? I don't know any.

Q: Are you also referring to the Italian anti-fascists?

A: Absolutely. But essentially: who can be pointed to as someone who did for the Jews something that the pope did not do? I don't know anyone. There are individual cases, just as there were individual cases among Church authorities. At least this pope did everything he was able to do. He made it possible for ten thousand Jews in Rome – but this also happened in other parts of Italy – to save themselves, compared to the two thousand who were killed. I don't understand what the terms of comparison should be. So I believe that it is possible to conjecture that these criticisms, these invectives, come from circles whose consciences are not at ease in regard to this problem.

Q: So the black legend is a case of a guilty conscience?

A: I would say so. It doesn't make sense otherwise. The truth is that hatred for Pius XII emerged in a specific context, at the start of the cold war. We should remember that it was the pope who made possible the victory of *Democrazia Cristiana* in 1948. I am convinced that the accusations against him are the purging of a hatred that emerged in the second half of the 1940's and during the 1950's.

The literature hostile to Pius XII came after the war. In Italy, it began after the collapse of the

## Better the Pope kept silent

THE JEWISH writer Pinchas Lapide in his book *Three Popes and the Jews* quotes a Jew who, like thousands of others with Vatican help, was able to escape the roundup of Roman Jews in October 1943, as saying twenty years later: 'None of us wanted the Pope to speak out openly. We were all fugitives, and we did not want to be pointed out as such. The Gestapo would only have increased and intensified its inquisition....It was much better the Pope kept silent. We all felt the same, and today we still believe that.' Thanks to secret Vatican efforts, Pope Pius XII's silence saved Dr. Marcus Melchior, Chief Rabbi of Denmark, with almost his entire community.

— Margherita Marchione, *Yours is a Precious Witness: Memoirs of Jews and Catholics in Wartime Italy*, Paulist Press, New York, 1997, p.178.

national unity government in 1947, and became more heated during the 1950's. This entire depository of hatred and strong aversion emerged in later years. If it had come to light immediately, the Jews whose lives have been saved thanks to this Church would not have permitted the speaking and writing of what has been said and written. Because it came out twenty or thirty years later, all of the witnesses, all of those who were saved – we are talking about thousands of people – were gone, and the new generation of their children took in these accusations. And in fact, who was it who resisted the accusations? The historians.

Q: In addition to this, there were Catholic voices that have contrasted Pius XII and his successor, John XXIII.

A: In fact, I believe that the opening of the beatification causes of these two popes was not announced at the same time by accident. When Paul VI went to the Holy Land in 1964, and spoke in very warm terms about Pius XII, there were no great protests. No one protested. And operation 'Vicar' had already begun. The accusations seemed incredible. After this, the landslide gradually gained force, as the generation of eyewitnesses disappeared. In any case, I think that historians will do justice to Pius XII.

Q: We have mentioned the Catholics. 'La Civiltà Cattolica' has written that Pius XII failed to speak with a prophetic voice. Isn't that a somewhat anachronistic judgment? Should the pontiff have gone to the ghetto on October 16, 1944, as he had gone to the bombed neighborhood of San Lorenzo a few weeks earlier?

A: Sincerely, the Jewish blood that runs through my veins makes me prefer a pope who helps my fellow Jews to survive, rather than one who performs a showy gesture. A pope who goes to a bombed neighborhood is a pope who weeps for the victims, he performs a gesture of warmth and affection for the city, while his presence in the ghetto might be controversial.



Of course, in hindsight anything can be said, even – as has been written – that it would have been right for him to throw himself on the tracks to keep the trains from leaving. But I think that these are frivolous judgments. And also, in sincerity, criticizing another for not doing what none of your own people did is a bit risky. In fact, I don't recall that any representatives of the anti-Nazi Roman resistance went to the ghetto, or threw themselves on the tracks. These discussions are truly lacking in moderation.

Q: About the controversy within Catholicism, Rabbi David Dalin has gone so far as to write that Pius XII is the biggest club that the progressives can use to attack the traditionalists . . .

A: The most inconvenient aspect, but to me it is evident (even if I am looking at it from the outside) is that this battle in the Catholic world that opposes the figures of John XXIII and Pius XII is not very courageous, because no one

does it openly. There is no book or article from an authoritative representative of the Catholic world that says clearly, John XXIII yes and Pius XII no. It is a battle carried out between the lines, made up of subtleties. For me, the issue is clear: either one is truly convinced that Pius XII was a Nazi accomplice, or if instead things are the way they have been discussed in this interview, then certain people should realize that these arguments contributed only to perpetuating the black legend about this pope. It should be noted: I believe that this black legend is running out of time. Pius XII will not be a pope marked by a 'damnatio memoriae.'

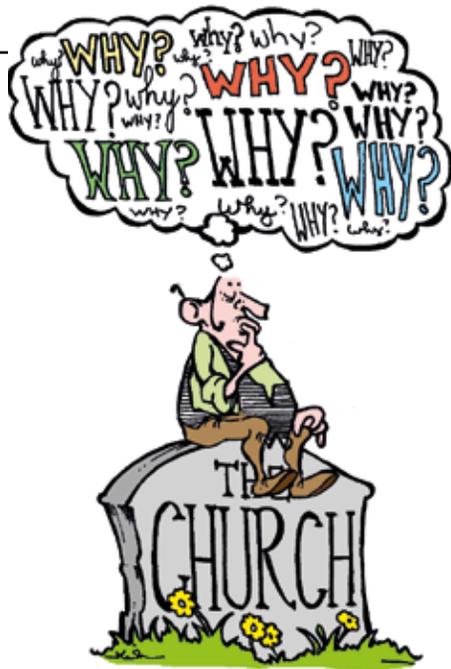
Q: Why do you say this?

A: Precisely from the historical point of view, the evidence in favor is so strong and extensive, and the lack of contrary evidence is so glaring, that this offensive against Pius XII is destined to exhaust itself.

Q: A final question about the attitude of Pius XII. How is it possible to reconstruct the nature of his silent work regarding the Holocaust?

A: I have often thought about Pius XII, trying to imagine what kind of personality he had. He has been compared to Benedict XV, the pope of the first world war. But the second world war was very different. Certainly Pacelli was a tormented man, one who had his doubts. He himself dwelt upon his





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own 'silence' in 1941. He found himself at a horrible crossroads that brought some of his convictions into question.

Then there was a long period after the war, until 1958, in which he continued to be a strong pope, present, important, decisive for the reconstruction of Italy in the period following the war. He may have been the most important pope the 20th century. He was certainly tormented by doubts. On the matter of his silence, as I have said, he questioned himself. But it is precisely this that gives me a sense of his greatness.

One thing has struck me above all. Once the war was over, if Pius XII had had a guilty conscience, he would have bragged about his work to save the Jews. But he never did this. He never said a word. He could have. He could have had it written about, had it said. He didn't do it. For me, this is the proof of how substantial his character was. He was not a pope who felt the need to defend himself. Regarding judgment about Pius XII, I must say that there remains in my heart what Robert Kempner, a Jewish lawyer of German origin and the second prosecutor at the Nuremberg trial, wrote in 1964: 'Any propagandistic statement of position by the Church against the government of Hitler would not only have been premeditated suicide, but would have accelerated the killing of a much greater number of Jews and priests.'

I conclude: for twenty years, the judgments about Pius XII were unanimous. In my opinion, therefore, there is something that doesn't add up about the offensive against them. And anyone who ventures to study him with intellectual honesty must start from precisely this point. From these figures that don't add up.

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PAOLO MIELI was a student of the great historian of Fascism Renzo De Felice, and Director of *Corriere della Sera*. He is of Jewish family, with relatives who died in Nazi concentration camps. This interview appeared originally in *Osservatore Romano*, October 9, 2008, and in *Annals* in September 2009.

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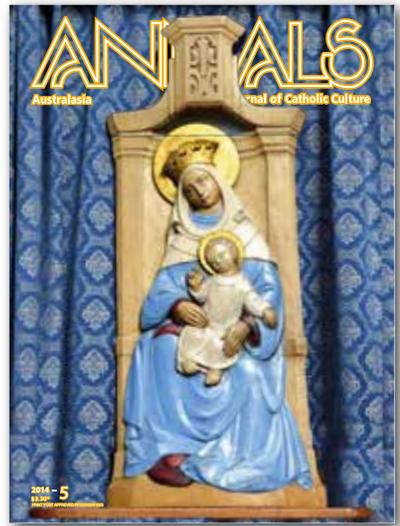
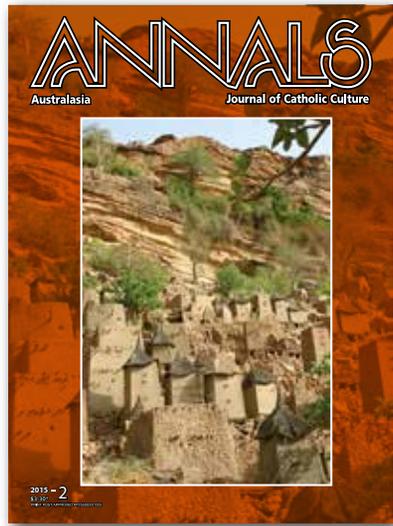
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Visits to a Malaysian prison in the 1980s

# AN RAAF CHAPLAIN LOOKS BACK

## ON LESSONS IN FORGIVENESS

By Father Ted Burns



WHEN CONVICTED drug courier Michael McAuliffe was hanged in Kuala Lumpur's Pudu prison in June 1993, he appeared to be composed. His defence council Karpal Singh described him as 'calm and prepared'.

I was relieved to hear this. It was five years since I had spoken with Michael in Penang prison in September 1987. That was the last time we met. I remember his asking me to bless him, and as we shook hands I promised I would keep him in my prayers. He told me that he felt more at peace.

I was serving as a RAAF Chaplain at the Butterworth Airbase in 1987. One morning I was called to the CO's office and instructed to report to the Penang Prison the following Saturday.

The documents I was given didn't provide much by way of information other than, that an Australian national was in trouble, and wished to see a Catholic priest. I soon became acquainted with Michael McAuliffe who was charged with drug offences.

This was the first I had heard of Michael, though it had been two years since his arrest. Like everyone else I was very familiar with the Barlow and Chambers arrest in 1984; their case attracted much more publicity. As neither of these men was Catholic, I was not involved directly, though there were continuous references to their story in the media in Malaysia and Australia.

Kevin Barlow and Geoffrey Chambers were arrested together

1991. He was convicted and then appealed. His appeal was heard and dismissed in June 1993 and he was hanged in that same month – eight years after his arrest.

Penang prison was built in 1850 to accommodate about 500 prisoners. By the 1980s it was said to house over 2600. It was obviously crowded, though it appeared clean and efficiently operated. I found my visits there a humbling experience. Michael would gather with a small group

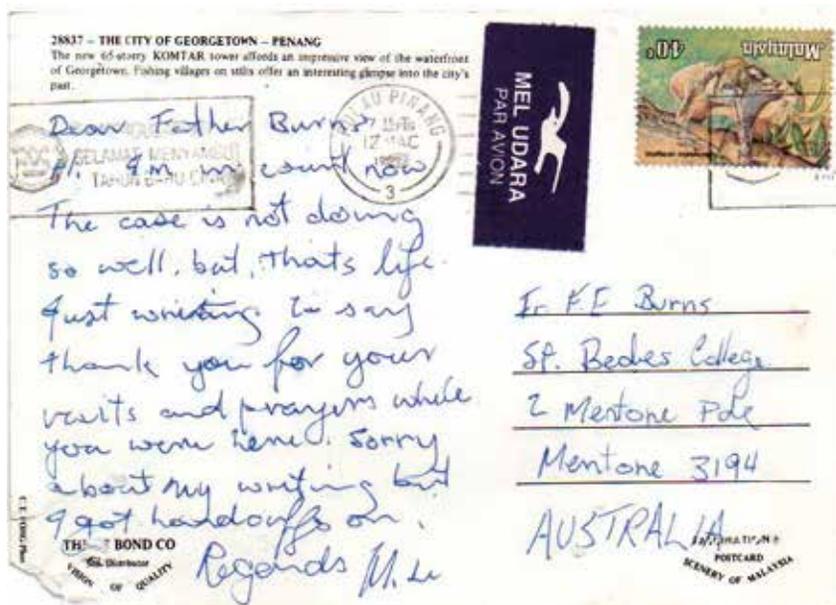
from several other Western Countries, all glad to welcome anyone from 'outside'.

During these visits we would all sit around a large steel table talking

– a guard always nearby. Also nearby was a kiosk, and I was glad to let these men place their orders as they were all broke, and always

hungry. They happily ate and drank for the duration of my visits.

On one occasion the guard said there was far too much noise, and ordered me to quieten things down. I was also told not to buy any more food, and just to make sure he closed the kiosk. The boys were greatly amused. They reckoned the guard relished the opportunity to



in 1984. They were tried and convicted in the Penang court in 1985. They appealed and their appeal was heard and dismissed in 1986 and they were hanged in that same year.

I never understood why Michael's case was treated so differently. Though arrested in 1985, he was not tried until August

tell an Aussie officer where to get off.

Usually things were more sombre; the discussion naturally tended to come back to the awkward plight they were all in, and of course, there were the stories from home, and the memories.

On one occasion early on, I blundered in with a question as to why two of our company were handcuffed to the steel table. I had not been informed that those on death row had to be constrained at all times. I could only wish that I had been told.

Michael consistently denied that he was guilty of the main charges brought against him, and I never quizzed him about that, or about his activities in Thailand – where he had been before his arrest. It was enough for me that he seemed to be coping well. He reverently received the Sacraments more than once, and assured me that they had brought him peace.

I corresponded with him when I returned to Australia, though communicating was difficult and spasmodic. I presumed that other priests would have visited him, though he didn't mention it.

He told about his life in Queensland – how he had moved to Sydney and worked as a barman, and had joined the Army Reserve. He seemed pleased when I shared with him my own days in the Army Reserve in Shepparton, and how in my student days I had worked in a pub.

He took me by surprise on one occasion when he commented that, had our lives taken different courses, he could have been the priest, and I the resident in Penang prison. Enough to make anyone think.

So much for the past; we agreed that what really mattered lay ahead.

Although I now wish that I had met Michael in happier circumstances, I still found him very agreeable company, and while we were both only too aware that his future looked grim, he seemed to be able to put it out of his mind.

## Communion in the Hand

**A**PPROACHING [the altar], do not come with your palms stretched flat or with fingers separated. But, making your left hand a seat for your right, and hollowing your palm, receive the Body of Christ, responding *Amen*. And, having with care hallowed your eyes by contact with the holy Body, take it, vigilant lest you drop any of it. For should you lose any of it, it is as though you were deprived of a member of your own body. Then, after Communion of the Body of Christ, approach the Chalice of his Blood, not extending your hands but bending low and with adoration and reverence saying *Amen*, sanctify yourself by receiving also the Blood of Christ.

– St Cyril of Jerusalem, 313-386 ad, *Instructions to Catechumens*.

That resignation was evident in a communication I received from him, a card with just a few thoughts, among them, one expressing calmly that his trial was not going well. His exact words were: 'but that's life'.

What struck me particularly about Michael was the absence of any anger or resentment, especially against those whom he believed may have duped him. He remarked that most arrests such as his were reported as police 'acting on a tip off', and he suspected this may have been so in his case. He certainly believed that he had been deceived by at least one of his contacts in Thailand.

We will never know to what extent Michael was guilty or innocent, gullible or betrayed, but it would seem almost as though – resigned to his circumstances – he had forgiven those involved in his downfall. While it is very difficult to read a situation like this one, I can only record how it appeared to me.

Now, more than 20 years later, and seeing ever increasing evidence of an angry and vengeful society, forgiveness must be among the least fashionable of the virtues. There are excellent reasons for giving this some thought.

When we say the *Our Father* we pray, among other things, that we be forgiven our sins. And, whether we realize it or not, we place a condition on *God's* forgiveness of us. We say 'Forgive us our sins,' and

then we add 'as we forgive those who sin against us'. Clearly we are praying to be forgiven provided we are forgiving people ourselves – even praying, it would seem, that God not forgive us, if we don't forgive others.

The more I reflect on this, the more powerful the prayer that Jesus taught us, seems.

I don't really know what Michael would have been thinking as he calmly went to his death. I've prayed that it was that he knew his Redeemer lives, and that they were reconciled, whatever had gone before. I certainly am grateful that he went peacefully, despite his being hanged.

Looking back, all these years later, I am dismayed that my first reaction to that order to report to Penang prison was not enthusiastic. I confess too, that every time I heard those prison gates close behind me I wished I were somewhere – anywhere – else.

I'm so glad now that I did go, and along with others, perhaps gave some support to Michael in those difficult days. And, as for the insights on forgiveness, I'll always be grateful.

---

FR TED BURNS is a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, ordained in 1967. He served in various parishes, and in 1980 joined the Military Ordinariate (Diocese). As a member of the RAAF Specialist Reserve he worked in Australia and Malaysia (in 1984 and 1987). He now does parish supply in the Melbourne area, and works with the Ryder-Cheshire Foundation at Klibur Domin in East Timor.

*Truth of any kind became merely one of the early victims of the new modes of thinking and in what seemed no time at all the word truth itself became a synonym in the minds of the ignorant simply for personal opinion.*

# LEARNING CURVES

by Giles Auty

**I**N THE LAST issue of *Annals* I touched on the vital importance of culture in its broadest sense to our everyday lives and in the issue before that wrote about the important ways in which our physical surroundings affect us.

Australia has many facets and achievements of which we can be justly proud but I do not think that the variety or outright quality of our cultural life is necessarily one of those although I may obviously make myself unpopular by saying so.

I basically came here to live and work twenty years ago and look back at least occasionally now in a state of amusement and considerable disbelief at some of my earliest experiences of this country.

Thus on an initial visit to Darwin to cover the annual Aboriginal art awards there I was approached politely after the show by a group of important local citizens who chose, most surprisingly, to throw a dinner party in my honour.

I should emphasise here that the reason they had done so probably had rather less to do with me than the fact that for many years before coming here I had been a columnist for what was then a wholly British publication: *The Spectator*.

Indeed it was their degree of weekly reliance on the wit,

sophistication, originality and political wisdom of that magazine that formed the vital bond which held my various distinguished hosts together.

As one of the latter admitted to me later on: "You simply can't imagine what a welcome degree of style, culture and civilization a foreign magazine like *The Spectator* brings to those of us who live in such an isolated outpost as Darwin. For my part, at least, it may even have helped keep me sane".

When the dinner party finally

in London – would certainly have been no more than a few centimetres long.

It was at that precise point that I began to realise just how much I had yet to learn about the physical parameters and topography of Australia.

It was not long after that, in fact, that I also realized just how much I had to learn about the psychological parameters of life here too when a review I had written about an Australian book for the pages of *The Spectator* caused me to be hauled before the editor-in-chief of the Australian paper which then employed me.

What kind of hideous solecism had I innocently committed?

The precise nature of my offence had been to describe the nature of intellectual life in Australia in my review as "rather less than effervescent".

Indeed the nature of the entirely humourless reaction of an editor of one of our major newspapers might have seemed to provide plenty of evidence to confirm my view.

No less absurdly my supposed solecism was quoted subsequently in a book about another former art critic for *The Australian*. Indeed my casual, off-the-cuff remark was then held to provide conclusive proof of my lack of suitability to work in such a sophisticated country as this.



broke up one of my hosts kindly offered me a lift back to my hotel.

First, though, he asked me to help remove a stick insect of about the length and girth of a car jack from the windscreen of his vehicle where it was clinging with great determination to the wiper blades.

Had I ever encountered such insects before?

I assured him that I had but remarked that the largest I had seen previously – in a pet shop

Thankfully Australia has grown up substantially since those less than edifying days and *The Spectator* has also been published for some years now in an Australian edition which upholds many of the fine qualities of the original.

However, outside *Annals* which has been kind enough to publish me now for many years the outlets for genuinely thoughtful writing still seem to me to remain fairly thin on the ground in Australia – at least for those of us who are not of a particularly entrenched Left-wing political mindset.

Politically correct, anti-religious Left wing bias extends also – with certain honourable exceptions – to much of the world of Australian publishing and I draw your attention once again here to the perceptive words of John O’Sullivan in last month’s *Quadrant* which I quoted from quite extensively in my last piece for *Annals*.

Other than our own editor’s recent, yet to be concluded but epic series on the history of Islam – which demands much wider recognition – O’Sullivan’s comments on the current shortcomings of Australian culture provide a sharp analysis of where we are exactly and where we should aspire to be. For Australian intellectual life is not just – as I remarked nearly twenty years ago – “rather less than effervescent” but by now is also all too frequently parochial, myopic and even downright lazy.

In short, the generally lacklustre nature of a large part of our home-grown ‘culture’ is a poor reflection by now on a nation which wishes to be thought of as civilized.

Indeed, in spite of my strong revulsion for Islamic acts of terrorism I could not avoid feeling some slight sympathy for the assertion of a recently arrested Muslim youth that much of our present way of life here is decidedly decadent.

I was a small child during the Second World War and grew up in an era of general privation and of fairly tough personal choices

## Dickens and Ebenezer Scrooge

ALMOST as familiar as Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* is the received tale behind its creation, how the cash-strapped author cobbled together the redemptive morality play of miserly Ebenezer Scrooge with the Victorian sentimentality of the Cratchit family to create his classic Christmas confection. Timko, professor emeritus of English at the City University of New York, detects a deeper design. His attention is drawn to the disparity between the evocative scenes of goodwill and peace on earth ... and the facts that are now known about Dickens, ‘the acquisitive author and heartless husband.’ As Dickens’s own daughter once remarked, ‘Nothing could surpass the misery and unhappiness of our own home.’

— Review of “Why Dickens Wrote *A Christmas Carol*” by Michael Timko, in *Current*, March–April 2002 in *The Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn, 2002

for most people. That said, in the English country area where my parents lived the strength of community spirit, neighbourliness and mutual respect nevertheless puts large tracts of our present-day world to shame.

At one time Australia was by repute a highly hospitable and community-conscious nation but I have strong doubts whether we are still quite as friendly to outsiders or even to ourselves as we once claimed to be.

Nearly half a century ago now a concerted attempt was made – by spoilt university students among others – in a number of Western countries to try to overthrow as many existing cultural, social and religious traditions as possible and to supplant these with what I personally regard as an entirely ersatz culture which is frequently founded on little more than rhetorical propaganda and the mouthing of empty slogans. In few areas has this generally mindless campaign been more successful – sadly for me – than in the visual arts.

Often the novel rhetoric on offer simply proved self-fulfilling as in the supposed existence of ‘a permissive society’ and where it was not – as in the case of so-called political correctness, for example – social and legal coercion was soon called in to lend a helping hand.

Truth of any kind became merely one of the early victims of the new

modes of thinking and in what seemed no time at all the word truth itself became a synonym in the minds of the ignorant simply for personal opinion.

One after another the novel platitudes were trotted out and shortly most became lodged immovably in the minds of those many whose education had become increasingly politicized as well as dumbed down.

Wonderful new words were invented to describe what were certainly meant to be refreshing new initiatives.

So-called multiculturalism is just one obvious case in point.

The word sounds brimming with virtue but what does it truly signify to the average Australian?

A slightly larger choice of local ‘foreign’ restaurants perhaps?

Probably the most important issue in terms of future social cohesion is that all would-be immigrants should basically subscribe to the culture, laws and vital traditions of their host country – and should also make a solemn, legally enforceable vow to do so.

Following the Second World War many thousands of immigrants undertook to do more or less precisely that when coming to Australia – a valuable process which also led in time to an enviable degree of integration.

It should be obvious here that skin colour is infinitely less

important in such a context than any would-be immigrant's core beliefs but somehow the two unrelated issues soon became muddled in the minds of many.

A true post-modernist probably regards all forms of religious belief as anachronistic forms of superstition and may well hope that all who think otherwise may shortly be converted to his or her more sophisticated views. Herein lies one of the principal weaknesses of so-called multiculturalism. In short it is often promoted and advocated by those who are utterly incapable of understanding its most crucial - that is religious issues - themselves.

The word ghetto once referred exclusively to Jewish areas within a city but today encompasses areas of ethnic and religious diversity of a great many kinds not just in Australia but in great swathes of our world. The existence of ghettos, *per se*, thus undermines the basic dream of the multiculturalist because what immigrants most often try to replicate as closely as possible is the condition of living in their own former or traditional lands.

In a huge number of cases, in fact, they are simply economic migrants rather than those genuinely fleeing oppression.

I am grateful to have become an Australian citizen myself but frequently feel frustrated by the lack of opportunities I have received to contribute much more actively to the life of this nation.

The probable reason for that is that I am thought to hold too many 'wrong views' even though many of the latter are surely shared by a great many of those who would like to help re-establish some kind of proper backbone for this country.

I fear the entirely valid dream of an 'old' Australia - which first attracted me here - is slowly but surely vanishing before our eyes.

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

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## SAINT JOHN



‘St John wrote  
for all’

— St Gregory of Nazianzus,  
329-389 AD

‘In the centre, round the throne itself were four living creatures ...the fourth was like an eagle in flight ...’ See St John’s *Apocalypse*, 4,6-7.

**S**T JOHN, the teacher of all the world, Jew, Gentile, slave or free, is represented with the royal eagle which can gaze unblinkingly at the sun. It was his privilege to look upon the face of God, and live. He understood and loved the Word made flesh and his Gospel appeals most directly to the heart as well as to the intellect. The eagle is the symbol of the Ascension of our Lord.

## A Miracle in the Second Century A.D.

**N**ARCISSUS, Bishop of Jerusalem, when oil failed for the lamps on the vigil of Easter, sent the persons who had the care of them to the neighbouring well for water. When they brought it, he prayed over it, and it was changed into oil. Narcissus was made Bishop about A.D. 180, at the age of eighty-four; he was at a Council on the question of Easter in A.D. 195, and lived through some years of the third century, dying at the extraordinary age of a hundred and sixteen, or more.

It is favourable to the truth of this account, that the instrument of the miracle was an aged, and, as also was the case, a very holy man. It may be added that he was born in the first century, before St. John’s death, and was in some sense an Apostolical Father. But there are certain remarkable circumstances connected with him, which, as persons regard them, will be viewed in contrary lights, as making the miracle more or as less probable.

Eusebius [of Caesarea] informs us that Narcissus was for some years the victim of a malignant calumny. Three men, disliking his strictness and the discipline he exercised, accused him of some great crime, with an imprecation on themselves if they spoke falsely; the first that he might perish by fire, the second that he might be smitten with disease, and the third that he might lose his eyesight.

Narcissus fled from his Church, and lived many years in the wild parts of the country, as a solitary. At length the first of his three accusers was burned in his house, with all his family; the second was covered from head to foot with the disease which he had named; and the third confessed his crime, but, overcome with shame and remorse, lost his eyes by weeping. Narcissus was restored, and died in possession of his See.

Now it may be said that the extraordinary nature of this history only increases the improbability of the miracle. It reads like a made story; there is a completeness about it; and there is an extravagance in the notion of the loss of sight by weeping. Yet the same thing happened to St. Francis. ‘His eyes,’ says Alban Butler, ‘seemed two fountains of tears, which were almost continually falling from them, insomuch that at length he almost lost his sight.’ He was seared with red-hot iron from the ear to the eye-brow, with the hope of saving it. In his last illness ‘he scarce allowed himself any intermission from prayer, and would not check his tears, though the physician thought it necessary for the preservation of his sight; which he entirely lost upon his death-bed.’ ... On the whole ... there seems sufficient ground to justify us in accepting this narrative as in truth an instance of our Lord’s gracious presence with His Church.

— Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Two Essays on Biblical and Ecclesiastical Miracles*, Longmans, London, 1907 pp. 255-257.

*Movie Critic Doyen's take, on Reel and Eternal Life*

## THE PICTURE PARADE

By James Murray

**I**N A SEQUENCE of sweeping shots, Peter Malone has created a memoir that appropriately resembles programmes during the pre-multiplex, golden age of cinema in that it is a mix of big pictures and cartoons.

The mix is so rich it is difficult to sum up. Given Malone's ancestry it is an abundant Irish stew; given his dinkum Aussie-ness it is also a magic pudding; cut it where you will there are silver coins of perception and anecdote.

In his account of his Novitiate, he writes of the novice master: 'Fr. Butler did offer me a cheery piece of advice during the 30 Day Retreat when I was feeling down, "Just go and dream about *On the Water Front*." But he had also avowed to rid me of my "celluloid fever". He was not in favour of films. He saw them as worldly, potentially corrupting. He had us almost ready to vow that we would never see a film again.'

Had the vow been taken, Malone would not have written his most affirmative work, *Can the Movies Provide a Moral Compass?*

There's a flash of irony in an addendum about Butler, who was transferred to Papua New Guinea where his work included showing films on an outdoor screen to rapt audiences.

Always the Malone memoir is a pilgrim's progress by way of montage involving first his family, father, Joe, mother Eileen, brother (and fellow priest) Philip and the redoubtable Mrs. Addams.

She, in the 1940s period when his mother became ill and died,

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*An Ever-Widening Screen, A Memoir* By Peter Malone MSC,  
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cared for him, part of her care being 'going to the pictures,' his first remembered: *Bambi* at the Amusu in Anzac Parade.

The key to Malone's view of film's spirituality is in his chapter on Christ figures which includes references to Luke Skywalker, and the Jesuits in *The Mission*, played by Jeremy Irons and Robert De Niro.

Only a pastoral cineaste-teacher of Malone's calibre could point out that for many seminarians the goal was to take vows or be ordained



without thinking of the living of the vows for life.

And add: 'A bit like Muriel in *Muriel's Wedding* wanting to get married, wanting to walk down the aisle, wearing the wedding dress and grinning to all and sundry that the marriage mission was being accomplished rather than think about living a married life.'

The Malone pilgrimage traverses pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II; contrasts, accordingly, are dramatic. But so, too, are rainbow contrasts, another God-given sign.

Memoirs can be closely personal or create a larger picture of social life, the Malone memoir is in the latter category. The contrasts abound, and his tone has the engaging, rambling quality of Mark Twain's classic, *Innocents Abroad*.

He writes. 'It certainly was an experience to visit Israel, to be aware of the recent history as well as of the past, to think of 1948, to think of 1967 and realise that the De La Salle College on the wall where we stayed was almost in No Man's Land... On a visit to Galilee, we were stopped at 10 road blocks - and I was blamed. Having economised on haircuts while away and since hair and beards were longer in those days, they thought that if anyone looked like a terrorist, it was me!'

Of a brief working holiday in California he writes: 'On the plane, I noticed that the print of *Capricorn One* had been cut, a sequence where astronaut James Brolin, surviving in the desert eating some snake flesh, and a pleasing scene tracking towards Brenda Vacarro as a mother telling her child a fairy story. Cuts to what purpose?'

His account of the Berkeley Campus of the University of California, celebrated for protest and flower power, shows another countervailing spiritual power at work there.

He links Franciscan theological studies and spirituality to a seminar on apocalyptic themes in the works of Kurt Vonnegut, John Faulkner, John Barth and Flannery O'Connor.

For Malone, San Francisco's golden gates open on vistas of films.

'Of course it is a beautiful city. There is the bay, the bridge, the cable cars and the hills with movie memories of *Bullitt*, *What's Up Doc* and *Foul Play*... There is the Episcopalian Grace Cathedral with surprising stained glass windows of Pope John XIII... There is Fisherman's Wharf and the tour of Alcatraz... Burt Lancaster in the *Birdman of Alcatraz*. In late 1978, Don Siegel was filming *Escape from Alcatraz* with Clint Eastwood... North is Marin County with the Muir Woodland and the giant sequoias James Stewart and Kim Novak meditated on in *Vertigo*.'

Like anyone who reviews films Malone has his brushes with the stars; his are in a constellation of their own. The photograph section of the memoir depicts him at Cannes with Ken Loach and at Venice with Rolf de Heer.

Not pictured, his attendance at the wedding of the Shakespearean players, John Bell and Anna Volska – as the celebrant.

Not that Malone is star struck as he makes clear in his description of the Cannes Film Festival: 'And as for glamour, I suppose there is a great deal of it if you want to look for it. Crowds meander along the Croisette then stand for hours and crane their necks to glimpse the arrival of the limousines, the stars and other celebrities in fashion magazine dresses as they alight and walk on the red carpet up the Salle Lumiere steps.'

Clearly Malone is not simply a film fan, he sits in the gallery with the likes of the omniscient David Stratton, Leonard Maltin, Leslie

## Nations of Converts

THE DARK AGES were distinguished for the vigour and success with which the mission work of the Church was carried on. During the ninth century, Christianity, says Dean Milman (*Lat. Chris.* Vol. III. c. viii.), 'was gathering in nations of converts.' The Bulgarians were won to the Gospel by Cyril and one of the first steps taken by the new Church was to submit a list of no fewer than 106 questions to Pope Nicholas I. Some of the Papal decisions indicate that at Rome at least the standard of morals was by no means a barbarous one. No violence was to be used to those who adhered to Paganism. Torture, with the object of obtaining evidence, was strictly forbidden, as was also polygamy. The same century witnessed the conversion of Moravia and Bohemia, and the despatch of missionaries to Scandinavia, where the work of conversion begun by Anschar (who was created Archbishop of Hamburg) was carried on for a century and a half, until, in the reign of Canute, who wore the English and Danish crowns, the task was completed by a band of English missionaries sent by the king. During the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, the Normans, Magyars, and a multitude of formidable tribes were won to Christianity, and the havoc wrought in Christendom by the ravages of these pitiless invaders before their conversion were repaired. Nor was this period intellectually barren. 'The Church,' says Milman, 'did not entirely rely on fixing the infamy of heretical doctrine upon the more daring reasoners. She reasoned herself by her sons with equal vigour, if with more submissiveness, sounded with her antagonists the depths of metaphysical inquiry, examined the inexhaustible processes of human thought and language, till gradually the gigantic bulwark of scholastic theology rose around the Catholic doctrine.' (*Lat. Ch. Bk. VIII. c. v.*) And Milman was a writer who cannot be suspected of any undue leaning towards Romanism.

— Frederick Stokes, Introduction, *The Dark Ages* by S.R. Maitland, John Hodges, London, 1890, p.xi, xii. Neither Stokes nor Milman nor Maitland was Catholic.

Halliwell and Bill Collins (also a former *Annals* reviewer).

Even these cinema scholars would grant Malone superiority in education. Ordained in 1965, he studied at the Australian National University, Canberra and the Gregorian, Rome.

The word unique can be fraught, but it is safe to say that no other reviewer has had such an extraordinary education combined with such an enduring stint: 47 years starting in 1968.

His principal distinction is that individually and as head of the World Catholic Association for Communication, SIGNIS, he pans for gold, spiritual gold, among the dross of so many films, more turbid now than when the 100 best were

shot in the years when Hollywood had a code that made for creative tension and with it wit, subtlety and brevity.

To an industry where the popcorn revenue stream can rival the box-office stream for a blockbuster, Father Peter Malone brings profundity, making this work one of the few that that could be read in Lent as a spiritual substitute for going to the movies.

Regret: No one has followed Malone around with a ciné camera. What a documentary. Reservation: the memoir's rich harvest of names and film titles deserved an index.

JAMES MURRAY is a Glasgow-born Catholic. A Sydney-based writer, his career includes ten years in Fleet Street, and contributions to Australia's major publications. He writes *Annals* film reviews, and is the author of our ever-popular *Media Matters*.

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*To presume that some of those in power actually desire chaos means that one has already made the prior assumption that these individuals do not have the best interests of the American people at heart. That, increasingly, seems to be a reasonable assumption. Either that, or one would have to assume that their idea of what is good for Americans is radically at odds with what all past generations have believed.*

## ASSUMING THE WORST

By William Kilpatrick



SOMETIMES IT pays to assume the worst. Jews who assumed the worst about the Nazis in the early days of Hitler's rule fled Germany to safe havens and survived. Most of those who assumed that the situation couldn't get any worse stayed put and did not survive.

The disposition to assume the worst goes against the grain for Americans. Except for a small minority of conspiracy theorists, Americans tend to be of the optimistic sort. It would be difficult to convince most of them that bad times lie ahead. That may be because nothing really bad—bad in the sense of large-scale devastation and loss of life—has happened on these shores since the Civil War. The next most trying time for Americans after that conflict was the Great Depression. But very few living Americans have a clear memory of that period. For that matter, few Americans have any sense of history and, thus, no measuring stick against which to compare the present. We could be slipping into the next Dark Ages and many would be none the wiser.

Speaking of the Dark Ages, you may have noticed that they seem to be staging a comeback. Sex slavery, crucifixions, beheadings, and other seventh-century Arab customs now vie for headline space with computer hacking and space probes. The recent resurgence of Islam version

1.0 is just one of many reasons why it might not be wise to assume that better times are right around the corner.

Any event or series of events can be looked at from either a glass half-full or a glass half-empty perspective, but there are a number of trends about which we may be justified in assuming the worst. Take the matter of rising racial tensions and divisions. The optimistic way to look at recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, New York City, Tampa, Oakland, and elsewhere is to assume that they result from misunderstandings. Those of a Pollyannaish disposition further assume that those in power are doing all they can to restore calm. That's one way of looking at it. Another view—more gloomy, yet probably more accurate—is that many of those in power want to exacerbate racial tensions.

Why? Because more tensions translates into more power for them. Crime and chaos provide governments with an excuse to expand their power. When things get out of control, law-abiding citizens will gladly cede more control to the authorities. In the worst possible scenario (which from one point of view is the best possible scenario), widespread race riots will create an opportunity for the federal government to impose martial law and assume near-dictatorial powers.

To presume that some of those in power actually desire chaos

means that one has already made the prior assumption that these individuals do not have the best interests of the American people at heart. That, increasingly, seems to be a reasonable assumption. Either that, or one would have to assume that their idea of what is good for Americans is radically at odds with what all past generations have believed. President Obama's promise that he would "fundamentally transform" America suggests that he believes there is something fundamentally wrong with it. And one way to convince others about the fundamental wrongness of American society is to take measures that will hasten its breakdown.

The Obama administration's attack on law enforcement and its insistence that we live in a racist society is one way to put stress on the system. Another way is Obamacare. The Affordable Care Act seems tailor-made to ensure that health care becomes so unaffordable that the government is the only provider left standing.

The idea of precipitating a collapse in the economic system as a means of introducing socialist solutions was first proposed in the mid-1960s by two Columbia University professors, Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven. The Cloward-Piven strategy was originally aimed at the welfare system. The idea was to drive up welfare enrolments to the point where state and local governments

could no longer handle the strain, and the federal government would be “forced” to take over public welfare.

Obama’s contribution to the Cloward-Piven strategy is to extend it to every area of life. In other words, if you can overload the local welfare system, why not overload local law enforcement? Why not overload the health care system? Why not overburden the immigration system by letting in hundreds of thousands of illegals? Then you can claim that all these systems are broken and have to be totally rebuilt—preferably in the image of some imaginary socialist utopia.

It seems that you can’t go wrong in assuming the worst about this administration’s domestic policies. How about its foreign policy? The worst possible assumption would be that the President and some of his key appointees don’t really like America: that they actually believe all the hype about America being the sum of all evil, and therefore want to weaken its power on the global stage.

Once again, the worst assumption is the one that best fits the facts. Let’s start with the fact that the administration has been radically cutting back our military force at a time when world threats are on the rise. There are fewer troops, fewer tanks, fewer ships, and fewer planes than at any point in recent history. That should raise a red flag even for the most optimistically inclined. Moreover, at the same time that we were reducing the size of our own army, the President was planning to even up the global balance of power by sending F-16s and Abrams tanks to assist the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Fortunately, the more moderate forces led by General el-Sisi were able to topple the radical Morsi government before Obama was able to prop it up. Undeterred, the Obama administration embarked on a series of steps seemingly geared to improving our enemies’ standing in the world while weakening our



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own. Among other things, the administration has:

- Lifted the ban on Libyans attending flight school in the U.S. and training in nuclear science.
- Traded five high-level Taliban leaders for one low-level private, Bowe Bergdahl.
- Released Mohammed Zahir, a nuclear terrorist who had, before his capture, been working on the production of an atom bomb for the Taliban.
- Conducted negotiations with Iran in such a way as to practically guarantee that Iran will soon have nuclear weapons.
- Prematurely pulled U.S. troops out of Iraq, allowing ISIS to take control of large swaths of the country and to wreak havoc on Christians and Yazidis.
- With the results of an abrupt Iraqi withdrawal staring him in the face, Obama decided

to do the same thing in Afghanistan.

Whatever your views on the wisdom of sending troops to Iraq and Afghanistan in the first place, you don’t have to be a Nostradamus to predict what will happen next in Afghanistan. It will fall back into the hands of the Taliban, who, with the help of all the top-level talent Obama is returning to them, will soon be back in the business of exporting terror to the rest of the world.

It’s not just paranoid right-wingers in America who worry about the intentions of the Obamites. So do many of our allies—including allies in the Middle East. Obama’s terror-friendly policies have convinced them that they can no longer rely on the U.S. For example, in August 2014, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates teamed up to launch airstrikes against Islamist forces in Libya without, as would normally be the case, informing the U.S. or asking for its consent. Apparently, they were worried that

Washington, still in the grip of Arab Spring fever, would give the Libyans advance notice. So Obama trusts Libyans to study nuclear science in the U.S., but the Egyptians don't trust Obama to keep secrets from Libyan Islamists.

The Saudis are also having second thoughts about their fickle ally. Along with Egypt and the UAE, they have been working to undo the effects of Obama's Arab Spring policy. One of their initiatives is to convince the Emir of Qatar to discontinue his support for the Muslim Brotherhood and to shut the Qatari-based Al-Jazeera TV network, which, critics say, is a mouthpiece for the Muslim Brotherhood. Egypt has already shut down its own Al-Jazeera channel.

Whereas Obama has done everything in his power to promote the Muslim Brotherhood, both Egypt and Saudi Arabia have designated the Brotherhood as a terrorist organization. The UAE list of terrorist organizations also includes the Council on American-Islamic Relations and the Muslim American Society—two Muslim Brotherhood

affiliates which have long worked closely with the White House and the Justice Department. Meanwhile, Egypt and the Gulf States are also deeply concerned about the administration's continued outreach to Iran and its seeming unwillingness to thwart Iran's nuclear agenda.

The Saudis and the Egyptians seem to be assuming the worst about the current administration. Maybe the rest of us should do the same. Among the possibilities we should contemplate are the following:

- President Obama and his closest advisers want to weaken America's position in relation to the rest of the world.
- They want Iran to have nuclear weapons.
- They want Islamists (such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Taliban) to prevail over more moderate Muslims in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

That's only on the foreign policy front. On the domestic front, it's difficult to avoid concluding that:

- They want dumbed-down

schools which will produce dumbed-down citizens who will have no idea that their rights are being hijacked.

- They want to encourage racial division and animosity.
- They want to wreck the health care system.
- They want to overload the immigration system—not because they see it as a justice issue, but because they see it as an opportunity to “fundamentally transform” America into a different kind of society.

For many Catholics, such conjectures may seem overly cynical, if not over-the-top. After all, many Catholics support administration policies which purport to help minorities, migrants, and the marginalized. According to various polling data, a majority of Catholics voted for Obama in the last two presidential elections. All that talk about social justice, hope, and change was difficult to resist. On the other hand, Catholics who gave Obama the benefit of the doubt over issues that are often considered (mistakenly) as specifically “Catholic”—birth control, abortion, same-sex marriage, religious liberty—have been proven to be more than a tad naïve.

Catholics have, so to speak, been fooled once. According to the old adage, the blame for being fooled once can be assigned to others—in this case, dishonest politicians and manipulative media. But Catholics who persist in believing that Obama and his left-wing machine have the country's best interests at heart when it comes to racial matters, health care, immigration, and foreign policy will have no one to blame but themselves when the next bill comes due.

Sometimes, assuming the worst is the best policy.

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## Timing is everything

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO was not involved in the conspiracy that planned and carried out the assassination of Julius Caesar. Nevertheless, because he favoured a return to Republican form of government he supported Decimus Brutus who had killed the dictator Caesar. In a letter he wrote in April 43 BC to Brutus who was besieged in the north Italian town of Mutina by Mark Antony who was determined to avenge Caesar's death, he wrote: 'You don't need reminding how important timing is in matters of politics, and how important it is to the policy whether you are prompt or slow in declaring it, adopting it, and acting upon it' [Non enim ignoras quanta momenta sint in re publica temporum, et quid intersit idem illud utrum ante an post decernatur, suscipiatur, agatur'.] In 43 BC an alliance was formed between Caesar's adopted son Octavian, later to be known as Augustus, Mark Antony and Marcus Lepidus. Known as the Second Triumvirate, this alliance proscribed Cicero and his supporters as enemies of the state. Cicero was hunted by Herennius, a centurion and Popilius a tribune but protected by the general public who liked the orator and refused to report that they'd seen him. He was caught on December 7, 43 BC – betrayed by Philologus, a freed slave of his brother Quintus – as he left his villa at Formia on the Mediterranean coast half-way between Rome and Naples. He was in a litter hoping to catch a ship to take him to exile in Macedonia. He was killed by Herennius. He was 63 years old. His timing was poor. – Ed. *Annals*

## UNDERSTANDING ISLAM VII

*When Damascus opened its gates to the Muslim army of Abū ‘Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrāh in 635 ad, three years after the death of Muhammad, its citizens little dreamt what a force they would eventually unleash upon themselves and their city – and indirectly upon the world that we have inherited from them.*

# FILLING IN THE BACKGROUND

*By* Paul Stenhouse MSC



THE TRAGIC random murder on October 2, of an innocent employee of the NSW Police based in Parramatta New South Wales, at the hands of a 15-year-old Muslim boy has shocked Australia. The Iranian-born boy of Iraqi Kurdish origin, who had seemingly been influenced by as yet unidentified Islamic extremists, died in an exchange of gunfire with police. He was evidently seeking death under the delusion that this would make him a martyr, and redound to the glory of Islam.

Mr Curtis Cheng, the innocent victim of this tragic murder, was one of countless millions who over the centuries have died at the hands of fanatics who have modelled themselves, or been modelled by others, on the life and example of Muhammad as described in Islam’s sacred books and traditions.

### Opening the Gates to Violence

When Damascus opened its gates to Abū ‘Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrāh in 635 AD, three years after

the death of Muhammad, its mainly Christian citizens agreed to pay the *Jizyah* or poll-tax to the Muslim conquerors.

They also agreed to accept *Dhimmi* [or ‘tolerated minority’] status, and received, in writing, guarantees of their religious freedom and political autonomy.

They little dreamt what a force they would eventually unleash on themselves and their city – and indirectly on the world we have inherited from them.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the seventh century Damascenes had no choice. Surrender, in order to prevent a massacre of all the inhabitants by the

Muslim army, was their only realistic option. One of the commanders of the besieging Muslim forces was Khalid ibn al-Walid – nicknamed the ‘unsheathed sword of Allah’.

As it was – after a six-month siege<sup>2</sup> – they narrowly avoided a wholesale massacre. Damascus had seven gates and while the Byzantine commander was surrendering to Abū ‘Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrāh at the Jabiyah Gate in the west, Khalid ibn al-Walid was fighting his way through the Sharqi Gate in the eastern wall. The street called ‘Straight’ referred to in *The Acts of the Apostles* 9<sup>11</sup>, ran then, and still runs, between the two gates. When the two Muslim commanders met in the middle of the street called ‘Straight,’ Khalid insisted that he had won



The courtyard of the ‘Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. In 391 AD, the Christian emperor Theodosius I commenced building a cathedral on the site of a Temple to Jupiter in Damascus. This was to be dedicated to St John the Baptist, and in its day was the longest church in the world. In 706 the sixth ‘Umayyad caliph, al-Walid I, ordered the cathedral to be demolished and a mosque erected on its foundations.

Photo: Paul Stenhouse

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the city by force. Abū 'Ubaidah, for his part, insisted that the surrender be honoured. Fortunately for the Damascenes, Abū 'Ubaidah prevailed.<sup>3</sup>

But as for the ambivalently phrased guarantee that the Damascenes were offered by Khalid that 'as long as they pay the poll tax [jizya], nothing but good shall befall them'<sup>4</sup> – they must have wondered what weight could be attached to it, granted the fate of the Jewish tribes in Medina who had entered into a similar non-aggression pact with Muhammad himself.<sup>5</sup>

## Medina's Jewish Tribes

The fate of the three Jewish tribes in Medina – the Banu Kainuka', the Banu al-Nadir and the Banu Kuraiza – would have been common knowledge throughout Arabia and beyond. It had taken four years for their fate to be settled, and the first tribe – the Banu Kainuka' – was exiled eleven years before Damascus fell.

Before Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD these three Jewish tribes and some smaller clans, constituted a powerful majority among the population of Medina – a fertile and wealthy oasis on the spice road from Yemen to Syria.

Many of the principal non-Jewish tribes in Medina, the Aws and Khazraj – originally from Yemen<sup>6</sup> – were employed by Jews as agricultural labourers, or as watchmen in shops and warehouses. These two Yemeni tribes, according to 'Ali Dashti, a Persian Muslim scholar and journalist who died in 1982, were envious of their Jewish employers.<sup>7</sup>

'Ali Dashti notes that one of the reasons the Aws and Khazraj approached Muhammad to be Prince of Medina and took the oath of allegiance to him at al-'Aqaba, on the eve of the Hijra, was their desire to overcome Jewish dominance in Medina.

'As long as the Moslems were weak, no incidents arose. Not until a year and a half after the *hijra* did the Prophet Mohammad change the direction of Islamic prayer from ... Jerusalem to the Ka'ba (at Mecca).'<sup>8</sup>

## Setting the Stage for Conflict

The Jewish tribes became alarmed at this change, and one of the leaders of the Banu al-Nadir – Ka‘b bin al-Ashraf – approached the Quraish in Mecca for help against Muhammad and his supporters.

The anxiety of the Jewish tribes was further heightened by raids carried out by the Aws and Khasraj led by Muhammad, on Quraish trading caravans – especially the Muslim victory over the Quraish at the battle of Badr in March 624.

The formerly poverty-stricken Aws and Khasraj – now replete with booty – formed what Dashti called ‘a strong, united front’ against their former employers under Muhammad’s leadership, and the Jewish Medinans were accused of having ‘infringed the contract [with Muhammad] in various ways’.<sup>9</sup> The stage was being set for confrontation with them.

## Fate of the Banu Kainuka’ and the Banu al-Nadir

The first of the Jewish tribes to be targeted some time after March 27, 624, was the Banu Kainuka’ whose settlement was near the middle of the oasis of Medina.

They were goldsmiths and armourers but not agriculturalists. According to al-Tabari’s *History*, Muhammad assembled around seven hundred of the men of the Banu Kainuka’ in the Suq of Medina and called on them to make their Islam [submission]. They refused and rioting broke out, and they were besieged in their enclave for fifteen days. They surrendered and only after ‘Abd Allāh bin Ubayy persistently pleaded with Muhammad for their lives, were they grudgingly permitted by Muhammad – ‘he was so angry they could see shadows in his face’ – to depart, taking with them only what they could carry on camels

or other beasts of burden. Almost all their possessions, including their weapons, their tools of trade, their homes and their businesses, were forfeit.<sup>10</sup>

This enriched the *muhajirun* or Muslim emigrants from Mecca, and the *Aws and Khasraj*, and filled the other Jewish tribes with deep dismay.

In AD 625, sometime before August, Muhammad appealed for someone to rid him of Ka‘b bin al-Ashraf from the Banu al-Nadir. Five people volunteered, including a foster brother of Ka‘b. These tricked him into leaving his fortified residence and they murdered him.<sup>11</sup>

Six months after the battle of ‘Uhad in north western Arabia, i.e. around September 625, the Banu al-Nadir, were targeted. They were accused of trying to kill Muhammad, and after being besieged for fifteen days, surrendered and were allowed to leave Medina with their lives and whatever they could carry on their camels except coats of mail and armour. Muhammad took their land, all their palm trees, and coats of mail and armour.<sup>12</sup>

## Compounding the Problems

ANGELA MERKEL was in Istanbul on Sunday, offering a deal in which Europe would agree to visa-free travel for Turks in Europe starting next year, along with quicker movement on Turkish membership in the European Union, if only Ankara will do more to resettle Syrian and other refugees in their own country. Europe would also foot the bill. This is *machtspolitik* in reverse, in which the chancellor is begging small favours from weaker powers on temporary matters in exchange for broad concessions with far-reaching ramifications. There are 75 million Turks, whose per capita income doesn’t match that of Panamanians. The country is led by an elected Islamist with an autocratic streak, prone to anti-Semitic outbursts, who openly supports Hamas, denies the Armenian genocide, jails journalists in record numbers, and orchestrates Soviet-style show trials against his political opponents. Turkey also has borders with Syria, Iraq and Iran. These would become Europe’s borders in the event of Turkish membership. This is the country Ms. Merkel proposes to bring into the bosom of Europe. Her apologists will say she’s being disingenuous, but that only compounds the disgrace of her overture. It also compounds the danger. Could Europe’s liberal political traditions, its religious and cultural heritage, long survive a massive influx of Muslim immigrants, in the order of tens of millions of people? No. Not given Europe’s frequently unhappy experience with much of its Muslim population. Not when you have immigrant groups that resist assimilation and host countries that make only tentative civic demands. ... It says something about the politics of our day that this column will be condemned as beyond the moral pale. Such is the tenor of the times that it is no longer possible to assert without angry contradiction that Europe cannot be Europe if it is not true to its core inheritance. This is the marriage of reason and revelation that produced a civilization of technological mastery tempered by human decency.

— Bret Stephens, *The Wall Street Journal*, October 19, 2015

## Fate of the remaining Jewish Tribe

By 627 the only Jewish tribe of significance remaining in Medina was the Banu Kuraiza. They were to come to a worse end than their exiled fellow-Jews.

After being falsely accused<sup>13</sup> of helping a confederation of Quraish, Bedouin and Abyssinian mercenaries who attempted to take Medina by force, and defeat Muhammad, they withstood a siege of twenty-five days. Finally, they, too, were obliged to surrender and looked for terms similar to those that were extended to the other two tribes.

Muhammad refused to allow them to leave with their lives, and instead, appointed as arbiter of their fate an Aws tribesman, Sa‘d ibn Muadh known to be hostile to them.<sup>14</sup> Sa‘d ordered that every adult male be executed, their women and children enslaved, and all their property and possessions divided among the Muslims.<sup>15</sup>

The numbers of men beheaded range from six hundred, to nine hundred depending on the source.<sup>16</sup> Their wealth, their wives and their children were divided among the Muslims, and Muhammad selected one of the women of the Banu Kuraiza – Rayhanah bint ‘Amr bin Khunafah – as one of his concubines.

Al-Tabari, quoting Ibn Ishaq, says that the attack on the Banu Kuraiza took place, either in March or late April 627. He also describes how Muhammad ordered that trenches be dug in the ground in Medina for the bodies of the Banu Kuraiza. Then Muhammad sat down, while ‘Alī his son-in-law and al-Zubair ibn al-Awam, one of his closest companions, beheaded the men in front of him.<sup>17</sup>



## Damascus – Capital of the Islamic Empire

Within twenty-six years Damascus – the jewel in the crown of the Byzantine Empire’s Syrian territory – would become the Capital of an Islamic Empire, the centre of the ‘Umayyad Caliphate under Mu‘awiyah, the fifth Caliph, in AD 661.

‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib, Muhammad’s son-in-law and cousin and adopted son, the fourth Caliph or ‘successor’ to Muhammad, unlike his three predecessors Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthman, had moved the capital of his Caliphate from Medina – where Muhammad had spent the last ten years of his life, and where he had died in 632, and was buried – to al-Kufa in Iraq.

In ‘Ali’s day, Al-Kufa, Basra and to a lesser extent Mosul were vast encampments of Islamic fighters strategically placed adjacent to the borders of the Byzantine, and the former Persian, empires.

These cities still exist in modern-day Iraq; and still are being fought over. Following on the ill-fated U.S. invasion of Iraq on spurious grounds in 2003, Mosul is occupied by, and Kufa and Basra are under threat from, the murderous followers

## Misquoted

**WASHINGTON POST:** What’s it like to be an American Archbishop in the Francis era? Your remark from Rome about the ‘confusion’ was widely quoted, as well as your comment that the whole debate seemed stirred up by ‘enemies’ who hate the church. Why is this papacy confusing?

**Chaput:** Widely misquoted, you mean. What I actually said after the 2014 Erasmus Lecture, which was in New York not Rome, was videoed and transcribed. Anybody can look it up on the Web. My comments had nothing to do with criticizing the extraordinary synod or the Pope. Criticizing some in the media for encouraging confusion and conflict – well yes, that’s another matter and something this Pope is familiar with. His treatment by the government and media in Argentina when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires was anything but friendly, unless his being accused of running an inquisition on issues like marriage and sexuality is considered ‘friendly.’

If there’s anything confusing for people in their perceptions of this papacy, it’s a matter of style, not substance. And again, candidly, it’s hard not to see some in the media and blogosphere as fueling that confusion.

Finally, to state the obvious: Catholic belief and practice don’t depend on polls. People need to be respected and loved and met where they are. Mercy is an expression of love, and the Church needs to speak the truth with love. But she does need to speak the truth, which is not always what people want to hear.

— Archbishop Charles Chaput, interviewed by the *Washington Post*, September 22, 2015

of the self-styled Islamic State led by Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali Muhammad al-Badri al-Samarrai, who now calls himself Abū Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Kufa proved to be ‘Ali’s bane; he was murdered there in 661 – struck down by a sword coated with poison, wielded by ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam, a ‘Kharijite,’ one of his former supporters. ‘Abd al-Rahman was one of myriad Arab warriors disillusioned by Muhammad’s son-in-law’s agreeing to settle his differences with Mu‘awiyah by arbitration instead of on the battlefield. All this happened in the days before Muslims split into Sunnis and Shi‘a.



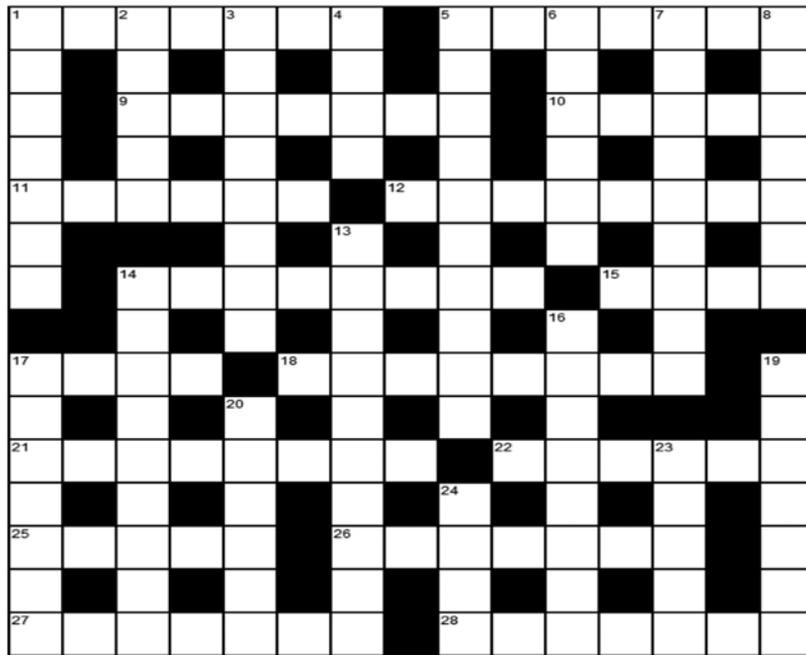
## Return of the Kharijites

Abū Bakr al-Baghdadi and his criminal henchmen, and his deluded and murderous young followers, like the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, are modern-day Kharijites who prefer blood-letting to arbitration. They don’t understand the meaning of the word ‘mercy’ or ‘compassion’ when dealing with non-Muslims, so-called ‘infidels,’ or with fellow-Muslims who refuse to be conform to their puritanical regimes.

Like cowardly criminals they hide their faces behind masks, and don’t hesitate to shave their beards and lose themselves in crowds to avoid detection. Jihadists from Syria, Iraq and Libya have reportedly travelled with migrants to Europe because it meant they would have ‘no biometric data [in Europe] ... no fingerprints ...’.<sup>18</sup>

After ‘Ali’s death in Kufa, Mu‘awiyah transferred the Caliphate to Damascus. Moving the seat of Political Islam away from Medina and Mecca [and Kufa] meant removing it from all the tribal rivalries and

## ANNALS CRYPTIC CROSSWORD NO. 42



### Across Clues

- 1 Put last 100 into fund little Edward established (7)
- 5 Shoemaker, a learner, moves from fifth to second gear (7)
- 9 So, around morning time, five get a top Russian urn (7)
- 10 Where some northern Italian citizens may live in central Cardiff or Limerick? (5)
- 11 Let cat out with members of herd (6)
- 12 A student of Plato returns extra large containers (8)
- 14 Punch a gnu silly inside a single storey house (8)
- 15 Patron saint of Canada is boxed in by St. Brendan next door (4)
- 17 Scoundrel returns with head of European fresh water fish (4)
- 18 Infidels attending robberies (8)
- 21 Conservative follows corrupt boss with a tale of woe (3,5)
- 22 On edge, marine loses direction around midnight (6)
- 25 Patron of girls grows older around start of novena (5)
- 26 Occupy redesigned Thai bin (7)

- 27 Record he's before us in city where Timothy was visited by Paul (7)
- 28 Document writer in part of a baseball field (7)

### Down Clues

- 1 Old French money is enough for this saint (7)
- 2 Annoy frequent flier clique? (5)
- 3 Media boss leaves dumped fish for fruit filled pudding (8)
- 4 Hindi goddess in some sad evil land (4)
- 5 Corinthians rob Noreen pointlessly in Aboriginal gathering (10)
- 6 Draught animal crossing university city (6)
- 7 Singers ban it before nose gets broken (9)
- 8 Corrupt treasuries, getting rid of rat, to redistribute book (7)
- 13 Teresa lies about blasts from the Orient (10)
- 14 Support platform at dog show, where minor members sit? (9)
- 16 Saint runs amok! Lets off bullets in city (8)
- 17 Underworld to alleviate pestilence (7)
- 19 Go on Ann! Make a polygon (7)
- 20 Assist with change to stagnation of blood (6)
- 23 Arise from bed with 5 across? (3-2)
- 24 Jonah, a biblical character, hugs an Old Testament king(4)

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vendettas infesting these places that had led to the civil war that brought Mu'awiyah and the 'Umayyad clan to power, and that ultimately led to the murder of 'Ali.

Moving to Damascus, however, did nothing to stem the killing and violence that accompanied the spread and expansion of Islam. And the 'Umayyad dynasty – for all its broadmindedness and tolerance of non-Muslims in the Empire – was to be exterminated root and branch, less than one hundred years later, in a terrible bloodbath in AD 750.

The first Caliph of the Abbasids – the new dynasty that arose from the

ashes of the 'Umayyad – was Abū al-Abbās, a cousin of Muhammad, whose preferred nickname was *al-saffāh*, 'the killer'.<sup>19</sup>

### Violence in Context

Muḥammad, the Caliphs who succeeded him as Princes of Medina, and the Arab tribesmen who fought their jihads with such reckless abandon, were children of their times and of their desert milieu and tribal and nomadic customs.

Acknowledging this as an indisputable fact helps put the violence of their eras in perspective, but as the noted Egyptian Arabist Father Samir

Khalil Samir SJ comments, and as *Annals* stated last month, it also poses grave problems for 21<sup>st</sup> century Muslims – whether they live in Islamic societies or Western non-Muslim host countries that have welcomed them as refugees or migrants.

'Violence was definitely a part of the rapid rise and expansion of Islam. At the time no one found anything blameworthy in Muḥammad's military actions, since wars were part of the Arab Bedouin culture. Today the problem is that the fiercest Muslim groups keep adopting that model. They say: 'We have to take Islam to non-Muslims as the Prophet did, through war and violence,' and they base their statements on some verses of the Qur'ān.'<sup>20</sup>

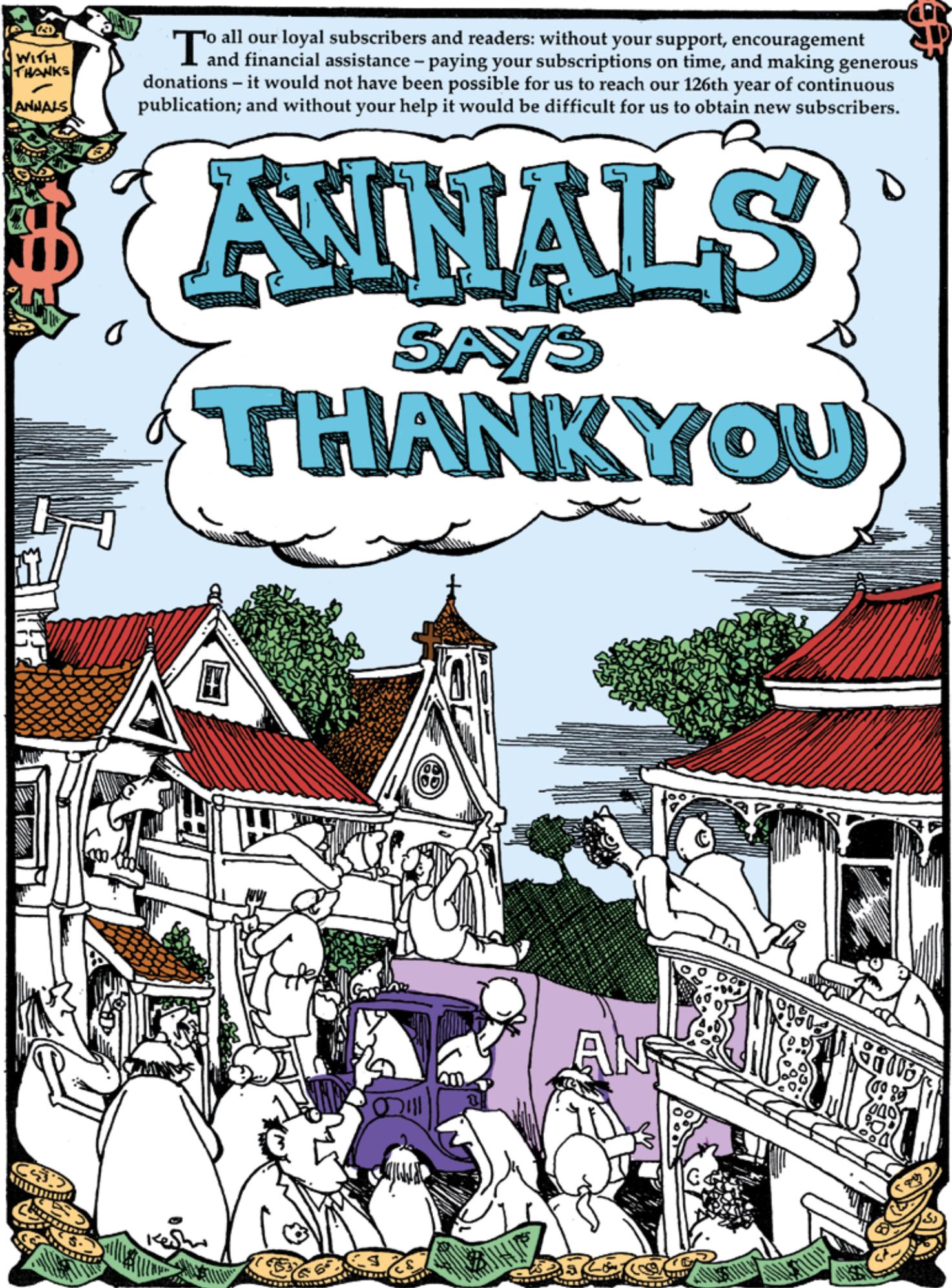
It is not true to say – as our politicians and media and some Catholic and Protestant priests and pastors, and Islamic polemicists keep repeating – that violence in Islamic societies and communities has nothing to do with Islam. It is also not true to say that nothing can be done to stem the violence.

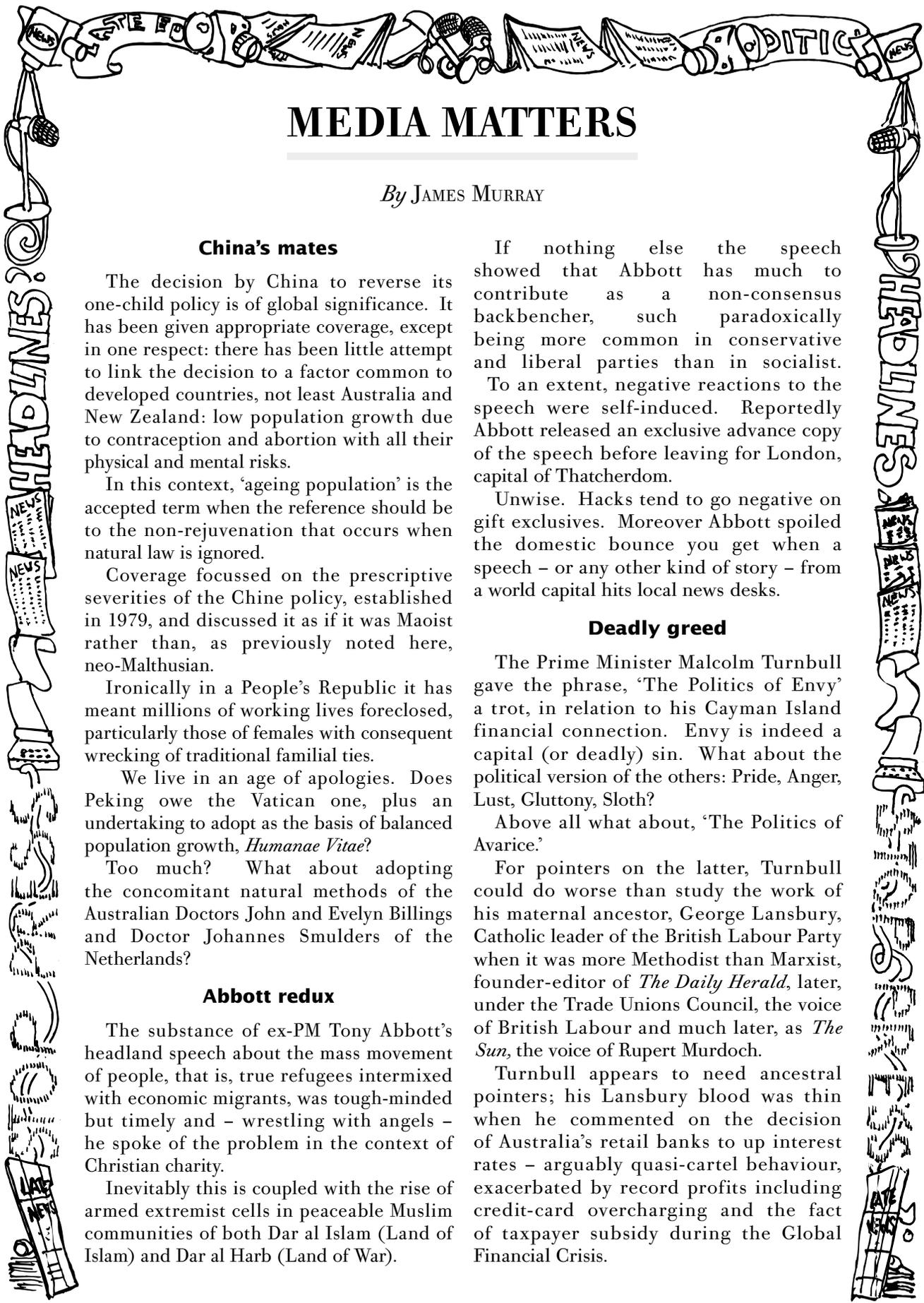
*Next month:* Islam and the West: the first five hundred years.

1. Some sources say that Damascus fell in AD 634. Philip K. Hitti, *The History of the Arabs*, London, MacMillan 1968, p.150, favours 635.
2. Hitti, *loc.cit.*
3. Al-Baladhuri, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan*, translated by Philip Khuri Hitti, Columbia University, 1916 [reprint Gorgias Press, 2002] pp.186ff.
4. *ibid.* p.187.
5. The History of al-Tabari, State University of New York Press, 1987, Vol. 7, p.85.
6. Hitti, *op.cit.* p.104.
7. 'Ali Dashti, *23 Years : A Study of the Prophetic Career of Muhammad*, Mazda Publications, 1994, p.87.
8. *ibid.* p.88.
9. Al-Tabari, *loc.cit.*
10. *ibid.* pp.85-87.
11. See *The Life of Muhammad* by Ibn Ishaq, trans. A. Guillaume, OUP, 2001, pp.367-369. See also entry under *Ka'b bin al-Ashraf*, by W. Montgomery-Watt, in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden, 1978, E.J. Brill, vol. iv, p. 315.
12. Al-Tabari, *vol.cit.* pp.156ff.
13. See 'Ali Dashti, *op.cit.* p.90; and Hitti, *op.cit.* p.117. Al-Tabari, *op.cit.* vol 8, pp.14-15 describes how one Jew, Ka'b bin Asad, broke the treaty with Muhammad; but not the Banu Kuraiza as such; and pp.23-25ff describe how Muhammad played the Banu Kuraiza and the Quraish and their allies, against one another: tempting the former to break the treaty, and tricking the latter into calling off the siege.
14. See 'Ali Dashti, *op.cit.* p.90.
15. See Q33<sup>26-27</sup>.
16. Al-Tabari, *op.cit.* vol.8, p.35.
17. Al-Tabari [Arabic], 2 vols., Dar Ibn Hazim, Beirut, Lebanon, vol. 1, p.700.
18. *Daily Mail*, May 18, 2015. See also UNHCR Refugees Daily, June 17, 2015.
19. Hitti, *op.cit.* pp.285-290.
20. Samir Khalil Samir SJ, *111 Questions on Islam*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2002, p.66.

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# ANIMALS SAYS THANK YOU





# MEDIA MATTERS

By JAMES MURRAY

## China's mates

The decision by China to reverse its one-child policy is of global significance. It has been given appropriate coverage, except in one respect: there has been little attempt to link the decision to a factor common to developed countries, not least Australia and New Zealand: low population growth due to contraception and abortion with all their physical and mental risks.

In this context, 'ageing population' is the accepted term when the reference should be to the non-rejuvenation that occurs when natural law is ignored.

Coverage focussed on the prescriptive severities of the Chine policy, established in 1979, and discussed it as if it was Maoist rather than, as previously noted here, neo-Malthusian.

Ironically in a People's Republic it has meant millions of working lives foreclosed, particularly those of females with consequent wrecking of traditional familial ties.

We live in an age of apologies. Does Peking owe the Vatican one, plus an undertaking to adopt as the basis of balanced population growth, *Humanae Vitae*?

Too much? What about adopting the concomitant natural methods of the Australian Doctors John and Evelyn Billings and Doctor Johannes Smulders of the Netherlands?

## Abbott redux

The substance of ex-PM Tony Abbott's headland speech about the mass movement of people, that is, true refugees intermixed with economic migrants, was tough-minded but timely and – wrestling with angels – he spoke of the problem in the context of Christian charity.

Inevitably this is coupled with the rise of armed extremist cells in peaceable Muslim communities of both Dar al Islam (Land of Islam) and Dar al Harb (Land of War).

If nothing else the speech showed that Abbott has much to contribute as a non-consensus backbencher, such paradoxically being more common in conservative and liberal parties than in socialist.

To an extent, negative reactions to the speech were self-induced. Reportedly Abbott released an exclusive advance copy of the speech before leaving for London, capital of Thatcherdom.

Unwise. Hacks tend to go negative on gift exclusives. Moreover Abbott spoiled the domestic bounce you get when a speech – or any other kind of story – from a world capital hits local news desks.

## Deadly greed

The Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull gave the phrase, 'The Politics of Envy' a trot, in relation to his Cayman Island financial connection. Envy is indeed a capital (or deadly) sin. What about the political version of the others: Pride, Anger, Lust, Gluttony, Sloth?

Above all what about, 'The Politics of Avarice.'

For pointers on the latter, Turnbull could do worse than study the work of his maternal ancestor, George Lansbury, Catholic leader of the British Labour Party when it was more Methodist than Marxist, founder-editor of *The Daily Herald*, later, under the Trade Unions Council, the voice of British Labour and much later, as *The Sun*, the voice of Rupert Murdoch.

Turnbull appears to need ancestral pointers; his Lansbury blood was thin when he commented on the decision of Australia's retail banks to up interest rates – arguably quasi-cartel behaviour, exacerbated by record profits including credit-card overcharging and the fact of taxpayer subsidy during the Global Financial Crisis.



What Lansbury would have made of legal changes to exempt private companies from tax-disclosure requirements is beyond calculation. But the exemption is notable; it goes to the timing of the Turnbull coup.

### Stormy isles

Obviously last month's comment on corporate tax avoidance came before Senator Sam Dastyari led the charge on the PM's Cayman Islands, Uglad House connection.

In all the ensuing pro and con commentary seen by your correspondent, only Graham Richardson (*The Australian*) mentioned 'blind trust,' once the standard instrument for politicians with their fingers in legitimate pies sauced with potential conflict of interest.

Mix Richardson's point with the suggestion by Alan Ramsay (Fairfax Media) that Turnbull invest his fortune in domestic enterprises and you have a rebuttal of his Rumpolian defence that he used a Cayman's based equity fund to avoid domestic conflict of interest.

The risk with equity funds, even the most ethical, is that their cash may inadvertently flow into or across dubious projects or shady people.

Such was the case with Kerry Packer, so boldly guided and defended by Turnbull. Packer was only a wealthy businessman, albeit politically influential, he was not the Prime Minister of a nation navigating in a world where the Politics of the Cardinal Virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance) should apply.

### Bondi putsch

The reconstruction of the prelude to the Turnbull coup by Pamela Williams (*The Australian*, Oct 20) deserved a Rupert tweet. Through no fault of hers, however, it was marred by Turnbull's failure to maintain his *persona* by preferring a Volvo station wagon to a Volvo bus.

How much funnier the scenario would have been if Turnbull and his Significant Seven had boarded buses to reach their rendezvous at say, Bondi Junction Terminal with its lifts, escalators and snack bar. Instead they dodged off to Queanbeyan and a mystery bush property which conjured memories of the farmhouse used by the Great Train Robbers.

### Mea culpa

Your correspondent confesses to being facile, okay, asinine, in proposing that Brian Loughnane and Peta Credlin put together a cure for ACS – Australian Coup Syndrome.

Such a cure is already innate to the Westminster system. It involves fortitude: the challenger moves for a vote of no confidence in the incumbent PM before a joint sitting of the lower and upper houses

Thus the matter is decided, not by a succession of opinion polls, but as it should be through debate and a vote on the floor of the Parliament (televised with a worm, of course).

Had Turnbull, republican, used this measure he could have addressed Abbott with Oliver Cromwell's line to the Rump Parliament in 1653: 'You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, let us have done with you. In God's name go!'

Abbott's response? More difficult; his speeches display clumsy honesty not smooth spin. Here a draft might serve: he spotted a gap in the party-room line, dummied and went through to win the leadership in the open and lead the Liberal Coalition to victory.

Better, Abbott could have paraphrased Winston Churchill: 'I cannot forecast to you the action of the honourable member who seeks to displace me. He is a businesslike riddle wrapped in a nimble mystery inside an agile enigma.'

In any case, a parliamentary ouster would be altogether braver than the shabby huggemugger of ACS to which Turnbull added the kind of condolences and hugs common at mafia funerals.

### Joe's go

In his departure speech Joe Hockey changed the line about 'five prime ministers in five years' to 'four prime ministers and four treasurers in four years'.

An intriguing change which raises the fantastic question: was the timing of the coup set to get rid of Hockey, a treasurer going in hard on corporate tax avoidance, and was Abbott, so to speak, collateral damage?

If, as predicted, Hockey takes up the post of Washington ambassador, he will be in a position to examine at source America's multi-national tax strategies.





His encrypted reports could enable the PM Malcolm Turnbull to pass the intelligence to his Treasurer Scott Morrison as further evidence of the need for an increase in the GST.

Rationale: the poor are inured to being the shock absorbers of economic change unlike corporate executives on profit-linked remuneration, which might be eroded through the payment of corporate taxes.

### Volkscam

Analysis of the VW emissions scandal has accentuated the negative. Yet there is a positive: the company's engineers devised a technology that was supremely efficient, and a demonstration that the solution to perceived global warming lies with engineers not economists.

The VW – *Das Auto* – scam also shows that profiteering can lead to covert tinkering to make technology less efficient with immeasurable consequences for the environment. Similarly, market tinkering can militate against economic solutions.

Historic pendant: post-World War II, VW was available as a war-reparation. The British military administration officer who inspected it took in its bomb-wrecked state and turned it down.

### Kenny's war

When Evelyn Waugh used 'scoop' as the title for his marvellous comic novel, he built on the amusement with which journalists use it when talking shop over a cup of tea. But there are indeed scoops – exclusives, local and global – where journalists overcome, or get round, barriers erected by those who do not want something revealed.

Chris Kenny achieved such a scoop in *The Australian* by getting a visa for Nauru to report on refugee facilities there and, more specifically, allegations of sexual abuse.

Applause? Applause?

No way. Kenny was castigated on two levels: for intrusion and for getting to Nauru solo, not as a member of a posse.

The most surprising critic was Paul Barry on the ABC's *Media Watch*; he did congratulate Kenny but it was praise with faint damns. Barry is an incisive reporter

who did not write his books on Alan Bond, Kerry Packer *et al* by tagging along with the pack.

Had he secured permission to visit Nauru would he have insisted that transport be provided for other journalists?

Kenny has been on the right-wrong side before. Twenty years ago he was criticised by *Media Watch* (Stuart Littlemore presiding) for his exposure of the falsity of the Hindmarsh Island 'Women's Business' – an episode of Waugh-like tragi-comedy that included a Royal Commission finding in support of Kenny.

Peace proposal: Chris Kenny and Paul Barry should collaborate on a fresh look at the Australian Wheat Board-Saddam Hussein deals now that AWB executives are before the courts. So far the then minister responsible, Alexander Downer (for whom Kenny worked), has not appeared. No doubt his duties as Australian High Commissioner in London have kept him there.

Another potential source: Kevin Rudd whose criticism of the wheat deals on the floor of the parliament was epic and marked him as potential PM.

In print, the AWB-Hussein matter was originally a scoop by Caroline Overington (ex-*Sydney Morning Herald*, ex-*Australian*, currently with *The Australian Women's Weekly*).

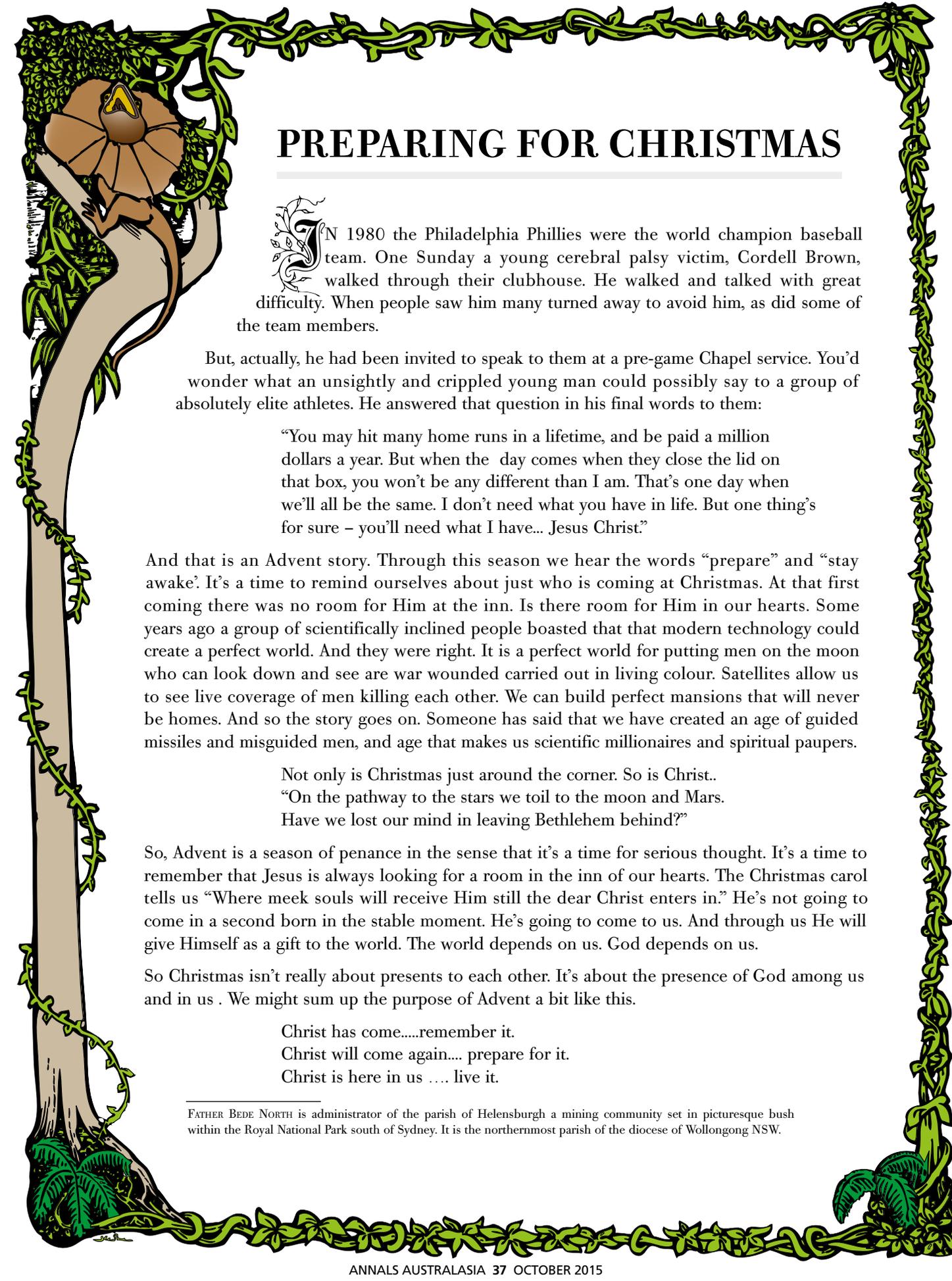
### Nun's story

Anecdotes about Nobel Laureates have a certain rarity value. Scotland Island's Deb Adamson delivered a classic (*Daily Telegraph*, Sept 23). In the early 1960s she attended Sydney's Loreto School Kirribilli and learned that the nuns kept an alms basket for leftover lunch food. This they packaged and gave to homeless men who around 4pm queued at the convent door.

One day, later than the appointed time, a loner knocked on the door and was promptly told to return the following day since all the food parcels had been distributed.

The loner: Patrick White, invited to take tea with a nun who had written her Ph.D thesis on his work.

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## PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS

**I**N 1980 the Philadelphia Phillies were the world champion baseball team. One Sunday a young cerebral palsy victim, Cordell Brown, walked through their clubhouse. He walked and talked with great difficulty. When people saw him many turned away to avoid him, as did some of the team members.

But, actually, he had been invited to speak to them at a pre-game Chapel service. You'd wonder what an unsightly and crippled young man could possibly say to a group of absolutely elite athletes. He answered that question in his final words to them:

“You may hit many home runs in a lifetime, and be paid a million dollars a year. But when the day comes when they close the lid on that box, you won't be any different than I am. That's one day when we'll all be the same. I don't need what you have in life. But one thing's for sure – you'll need what I have... Jesus Christ.”

And that is an Advent story. Through this season we hear the words “prepare” and “stay awake”. It's a time to remind ourselves about just who is coming at Christmas. At that first coming there was no room for Him at the inn. Is there room for Him in our hearts. Some years ago a group of scientifically inclined people boasted that that modern technology could create a perfect world. And they were right. It is a perfect world for putting men on the moon who can look down and see are war wounded carried out in living colour. Satellites allow us to see live coverage of men killing each other. We can build perfect mansions that will never be homes. And so the story goes on. Someone has said that we have created an age of guided missiles and misguided men, and age that makes us scientific millionaires and spiritual paupers.

Not only is Christmas just around the corner. So is Christ..  
“On the pathway to the stars we toil to the moon and Mars.  
Have we lost our mind in leaving Bethlehem behind?”

So, Advent is a season of penance in the sense that it's a time for serious thought. It's a time to remember that Jesus is always looking for a room in the inn of our hearts. The Christmas carol tells us “Where meek souls will receive Him still the dear Christ enters in.” He's not going to come in a second born in the stable moment. He's going to come to us. And through us He will give Himself as a gift to the world. The world depends on us. God depends on us.

So Christmas isn't really about presents to each other. It's about the presence of God among us and in us . We might sum up the purpose of Advent a bit like this.

Christ has come.....remember it.  
Christ will come again.... prepare for it.  
Christ is here in us .... live it.

FATHER BEDE NORTH is administrator of the parish of Helensburgh a mining community set in picturesque bush within the Royal National Park south of Sydney. It is the northernmost parish of the diocese of Wollongong NSW.

*Quietly sitting on their verandahs, watching sunsets, looking at passers-by meandering on foot, and conversing with neighbours, shop owners, or fellow shoppers constitute, for all of them, continuing sources of joy.*

## ALEXANDER MCCALL SMITH'S BOTSWANA SERIES

*By Susan Reibel Moore*



IF THE outstanding literary works published over the past half-century, three fictional series are likely to outlast all of us: Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* books, and Alexander McCall Smith's Botswana novels. Most readers, old and young, find Rowling much easier to read than Tolkien because of her superior plots, her linguistic accessibility, and her contagious humour. And virtually everybody addicted to fiction loves McCall Smith as soon as they read even one of his fourteen readily available novels about Botswana's only lady detective, traditionally built Precious Ramotswe, a highly intelligent and lively woman in her mid-thirties.

If there is a more gifted contemporary novelist, nobody has introduced their work to me. For many years McCall Smith was Professor of Medical Law at Edinburgh University. Much in demand, both then and now, as a speaker and reader, he has travelled widely; and his novels have been translated into 46 languages. As I write, Novel No 15 in this series can now be purchased in the UK. But only recently has the paperback edition of Number 14, *The Minor Adjustment Beauty Salon*, been easy to access in Australian book stores and municipal libraries.

Since many adults are still unfamiliar with the African country whose essential history interests virtually everyone, it is worth stating explicitly that happy—never sentimental—memories link his central characters with their forbears. Each of the main figures takes pride in national achievements linked with harmony and peacefulness. As unobtrusively as all familiar landscapes, his settings become deeply etched in our memories. So when we finally see them in televised episodes of this beloved series of books, nothing greatly surprises us.

Particularly appealing about the daily lives of McCall Smith's protagonists and their closest companions is the fact that the

restlessness and speed of modernity do not disfigure their daily round. For all of them, life proceeds slowly. Warm conversations with strangers are as likely to occur in their meanderings as casual meetings with old friends. Since Precious Ramotswe, her husband JLB Matekoni, and their closest companions are people of absolute integrity, they are not seduced into the pursuit of excitement, nor do they appear to mind if nothing out of the ordinary happens to them. Spontaneously and without fuss, at critical junctures, they say profound things. Quietly sitting on their verandahs, watching sunsets, looking at passers-by meandering on foot, and conversing with neighbours, shop owners, or fellow

### Dr Profit and Business Growth

Mma Ramotswe frowned. The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency was exactly the same size as it had been when she had founded it. It had one owner and one employee, one vehicle, a filing cabinet, a kettle, two teapots and three mugs. There was also one typewriter, which was operated by Mma Makutsi, and one box of stationery. These assets had been there more or less from the beginning, although the second teapot was certainly a later addition. Did that count as growth? Could you say that your business had expanded if it had gone from owning one teapot to two? Somehow she thought that Dr Profit would answer both those questions with a shake of his head. Of course, she herself had expanded in girth since the agency was founded, but she did not think that such a form of growth was what the author of the article [*Dr Profit's Business Clinic*] had in mind.

— *The Minor Adjustment Beauty Salon* by Alexander McCall Smith, Little Brown (UK), 2013, 248pp, Chapter 1: 'Mechanics Can Cook'

shoppers constitute, for all of them, continuing sources of joy.

Precious and everyone else who plays a major role in her life thrives on simple pleasures. Typically, she and her closest companions delight in the prospect of two pieces of cake, the purchase of new shoes to replace a one-and-only dilapidated pair, a view of the distant Kalihari on the road to Mochudi, the look of the thorn tree outside a bedroom window, the sight of a crippled child being wheeled to school daily by neighbourhood children taking turns, the summer light of early morning, a car motor perfectly repaired, and a beautifully swept footpath.

Thoreau's view that the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation has no provenance in McCall Smith's Botswana even though modern ills—e.g. grandparents caring for their wayward children's progeny, AIDS, forms of material deprivation that make the presence of two bedrooms in a house a luxury—are omnipresent. The natural world inhabited by his major figures, like James McAuley's in "At Rushy Lagoon", has sense and use. With a restful ease unparalleled on contemporary literary terrain, he encourages us to live so completely in a world of his imagining that it is hard to believe that the office in JLB Matekoni's Speedy Motors repair shop does not really exist.

In *The Minor Adjustment* Beauty Salon Precious Ramotswa's

indefatigable assistant, Mma Makutsi, who has married her devoted Phuti Raphuti, gives birth to a son who is his parents' greatest delight. Maintaining her usual independent self-assurance despite the demands of young motherhood, she returns to work much sooner than is considered desirable by her husband's rigidly prescriptive aunt, who protests the abandonment of 'traditional' child-rearing practices in their home by suddenly fleeing from it in disgust. This, of course, harms nobody. The daily round goes on almost exactly as it did before her arrival.

Threats to life by venomous snakes, attempted inheritance fraud, and efforts to deprive hard-working

professionals of their livelihoods, though potentially very dangerous, vanquish nobody. Rather, these threats become engaging tests of character. Without ever becoming morally intrusive, they create lasting bonds among community members whose cooperative efforts are effortlessly instructive. Even when mysteries surrounding the sudden appearance or disappearance of minor figures threaten to remain forever unresolved, nobody broods for very long. Everybody simply gets on with their ordinary duties, hoping for the best.

DR SUSAN MOORE is a grandparent raised in America, who has lived in Australia for over 49 years. Her most recent book is *Text Types: A basis for Classroom Study* (Five Senses, Sydney).

## A Dream of Salvation and Heaven

CHESTERTON reminds us that dreams are functions of the human soul, and the human soul is the only thing that we cannot properly study, because it is at once both the study and the student. He tells us that the metaphysicians of the Middle Ages who talked a great deal more sense than they are nowadays given credit for, taught that every object had two parts: its accidents [colour, weight, height, length etc] and its substance [i.e. what *sub-stat*: what *stands beneath* the accidents]. He goes on: 'The mediaeval doctors, of course, applied this principle most strongly to the idea of Transubstantiation, maintaining that a thing might be, in its accidents, bread, while being in its substance, divine.' It all depends on what disguise the highest spiritual power took in appearing to [us]; the incognito in which the King chose to travel.'

— See G. K. Chesterton, *Lunacy and Letters*, Sheed & Ward, 1958, p.33 [160]



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## The Dressmaker

Movies have created a variety of whimsical villages: Brigadoon (Scotland), Clochemerle (France), Rathcullen (Ireland), Black Rock (America). Add Dungatar in the Sue Maslin production of the Rosalie Ham bestseller, directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse and co-written by her husband PJ Hogan.

Dungatar lies somewhere beyond the Black Stump and is so dilapidated that surprisingly it does not collapse when a train arrives carrying Myrtle 'Tilly' Dunnage (Kate Winslet) and her trusty Singer sewing machine.

Tilly is back home ostensibly to care for her mother Molly (Judy Davis) but also to take care of unfinished business from the past.

What a confrontation of stars: Winslet, elegant, imperious: overplaying; Davis, tatty, sly: underplaying. But Moorhouse and Hogan are not content; they populate Dungatar with a spectrum of characters ranging from caricature to grotesque.

Hugo Weaving plays the local cop Horatio Farrat with flourishes from his cross-dresser role in *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*. Shane Jacobsen is the local storekeeper, Alvin Pratt and Rebecca Gibney his wife.

Sarah Snook is their frumpish daughter, Trudie, awaiting make over by Tilly into a bride worthy of the local squattocracy represented by Elizabeth Beaumont (Caroline Goodall) and her son William (James Mackay).

Liam Hemsworth is Teddy, eldest sibling of the McSwineys, fated to be Tilly's lover. The McSwiney matriarch Mae (Genevieve Lemon) and the schoolteacher Beulah Harridiene (Kerry Fox) somehow resist submission not only to Tilly's Singer but to a more up-to-date machine of her rival Una Pleasance (Sacha Horler).

*The Dressmaker* is being promoted as 1950s comedy-drama. Here the term is not simply a marketing tag: two movies have been stitched together: the drama is by Moorhouse who made the austere *Proof*; the comedy (or farce) by Hogan who made *Muriel's Wedding*.

Other cinematic influences appear

## MOVIES

By James Murray

to be in play: *Wake in Fright*, *On Our Selection* and – ironic poetry for Davis – *My Brilliant Career*. Excerpts from Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* are inserted possibly as a tribute to classic movie-making.

Emphasising Dungatar's whimsical status is the absence of Aborigines, not one appears even on the local football team.

The cinematographer Don McAlpine contrives to give Dungatar a setting more authentic than its buildings and opens with a sequence worthy of a star such as Winslet.

Ultimate implausibility: the house-proud Marigold Pettyman (Alison Whyte) stabs her faithless husband Evan (Shane Bourne) but she neither cleans the knife nor mops up the blood.

Tilly leaves for Paris with her Singer, her mission of disclosure and humiliating revenge accomplished.

M★★★★NFFV.

## Bridge of Spies

Filmmaker Steven Spielberg has made it from prodigy (*The Duel*, 1971) to old master as he proved with *Lincoln*, a status he enhances

## Dealing with Criticism

IT IS THE misfortune of this age that its Writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. Should the Public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality; and shall seek to gather, if I live, strength from that defeat, which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may not be worthless.

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, Preface, in *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, OUP, London 1935, p.36

with this classic take on a crucial episode of the Cold War: James Donovan's defence of the Soviet agent Colonel Rudolf Abel, and the subsequent brokering of deal to swap Abel for Gary Francis Powers, pilot of a downed U2 spy plane.

With this material Spielberg knows precisely what he wants to achieve, and does so aided by scriptwriters Matt Charman and the Coen Brothers, Joel and Ethan. Together they create a sense of Cold War doom with archival footage of American schoolchildren taking shelter and location-studio shoots of divided Berlin and the bridge at Checkpoint Charlie.

Mark Rylance plays Colonel Abel with vodka-dry authority. Austin Stowell as Powers goes from initial swagger to terror; Will Rogers as Frederick Pryor, an American student, caught on the wrong side of the Berlin Wall, shows he can act with the best. Above all in Tom Hanks, Spielberg has a star character able to convey how Donovan, who says a Catholic grace before family meals, overcame his hesitance when picked by his boss (Alan Alda) and the American Bar Association to defend Abel.

Hanks personifies the physical and moral courage that enabled Donovan to negotiate the intricacies of the America's Common Law system and the mysteries of the Soviet *apparat*.

*Bridge of Spies* has an over-varnish of nostalgia so strong that it recalls another masterpiece William Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives*, starring Fredric March, one of the few who made it from silent films to talkies.

This entails a hundred-year line of descent for Steven Spielberg who has repeatedly shown that the well-made movie is not passé and that whirligig sex is not necessary for box office success.

Post-credit notes make it clear that James Donovan, under President John F Kennedy's orders, also negotiated with Fidel Castro on the release of those taken prisoner as a result of the Bay of Pigs debacle; Gary Powers was decorated for courage and Colonel Abel enjoyed retirement with his wife and daughter.

M★★★★SFFV.

## Crimson Peak

Gothic horror entails gore, buckets of it. Director Guillermo del Toro adds peppers without attempting to disguise the influence of the Hammer variety starring Peter Cushing.

So much so that Del Toro's star Tom Hiddleston playing the villainous Sir Thomas Sharpe looks like Cushing and his co-star Mia Wasikowska's character is called Edith Cushing.

Okay, the computer-enhanced Bronte-country mansion to which Sharpe carries Edith from prosperous 1900s Buffalo is more mouldering than anything the Elstree Studios provided for Cushing & Co.

In a class of her own is Jessica Chastain as Sharpe's sister, Lucille. Her performance suggests that del Toro's influences may also comprise the operatic version of Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

It must be admitted, however, that in their quiet scenes Chastain and Hiddleston resemble the ABC duo Virginia Trioli and Michael Roland indulging in the amateur theatricals that are now part of *News Breakfast*.

Del Toro lays the make-up horror on so thickly that disgust trumps scariness to a point suggesting he is intent on Montezuma's Revenge.

Never fear: Edith, after a helter-skelter shovel-cleaver duel with Lucille, is rescued by a stalwart Buffalonian doctor as the torches of local villagers flicker across the snow.

In a final twist, del Toro leaves it unclear whether they are carrying garlic or HP (Hammer Productions) Sauce.

MA15+★★NFFV.

## Burnt

Bradley Cooper, looking slightly overdone, is Adam Jones a chef who has taken a drug-induced tumble from the pages of the *Guide Michelin*, and vacated Paris for London aiming to regain his status. He persuades Tony (Daniel Bruhl) a Langham Hotel executive to give him a new start.

Director John Wells, writer Steven Knight and cinematographer Adriano Goldman chop-chop from kitchen to the streets of London where Jones recruits staff and evades villains intent on recovering money he owes.

## One did not Debate

EVERYONE on the survey would be told the same story.

Given a set of facts engineered by Dunstone, Limited.

Even the Organisations involved accepted the facts as truth; there was no reason not to. Financial grants were not questioned; they were academic holy writ. Coveted, revered, never debated. ... one took the money; one did not debate.

— Robert Ludlum, *The Cry of the Halidon*, Orion, 2004, pp.10,11.

Among his recruits are Helene (Sienna Miller) and Michel (Omar Sy) whose smile is tigerish. Uma Thurman does a turn as Simone a supercilious critic; Emma Thompson is Adam's doctor and Alicia Vikander, as an old flame Anne Marie, does more than wash the dishes.

But does Adam, who has an insatiable rival in Reece (Matthew Rhys), regain his Michelin status?

*Burnt* is a Weinstein Brothers addition to the *cuisine genre* that

## 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. TBA: classification to be announced

began with the still unsurpassed *Babette's Feast* (1987). Others may consider the genre began with the scene in *Bonnie Scotland* (1935) where Laurel and Hardy try to grill dried fish on the wire of their boarding house bed.

Totally bizarre? Not really. Helene brings in a gadget commonly used to steam fish in plastic bags. Yuck. Why not the transnational Australian delight: beer-battered fish, invented by army cook Eddy Hahn of Port Noarlunga, South Australia aboard SS Queen Mary carrying soldiers of the Second AIF to the battlefields of the Middle East?

M★★★NFFV

## Now Add Honey

Writer Robyn Butler and director Wayne Hope weave their storyline round the premise of a glitzy expatriate Beth (Portia de Rossi) returning home with her pop star daughter Honey (Lucy Fry) and having to leave her in suburbia with her sister Caroline (Robyn Butler) and her husband, Richard (Erik Thompson).

Add another sister Katie (Lucy Durack) who has quarrelled with Beth over a tell-all book and the scene is set for domestic blitz

Predictable? Never. Butler and Hope, spousal creators of telly shows such as *Upper Middle Bogan* and *The Librarians*, have devised a new genre: the multiplex couch-potato soap-opera.

How fantastic to see other favourites such as David Field, Hamish Blake, Robbie Magasiva, and Ben Lawson strut their stuff with only prelude cinema ads, not endless commercial breaks, the only refuge from them being equivalent déjà vu ABC promos for shows such as *The Beautiful Lie* which create the impression of soft-porn on Sunday.

In the Butler and Hope opus, there's an admirably critical subtext about the sexualisation of minors. They deliver it by means of disrupted photo-shoot where the photographer Mick (Angus Sampson) is de-bagged, and Honey is saved from going viral on *Facebook*.

M★★★NFFV.

## Man Up

Relatives and friends have matched Nancy (Lake Bell) too often when, time against her, she encounters Jack (Simon Pegg) under the clock at London's Waterloo Station.

He mistakes her for his blind date Jessica (Ophelia Lovibond). The situation is, of course, olde Englyshe, going back through *Bridget Jones's Diary* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*.

Nonetheless director Ben Palmer and writer Tess Morris manage to squeeze fresh laughter from the oranges and lemons of St Clements.

Simon Pegg, last seen as second banana to Tom Cruise in the *Mission Impossible* franchise, grabs all his chances to play prat to Lake Bell whose Nancy hovers hilariously between elegance and klutziness as their courtship takes them through the beauties of London.

In a supporting cast drawn from the All Britain Repertory Company, Ken Stott does a scene-stealing bibulous cameo as Bert, Nancy's pa.

M★★★NFFV.

## Sleeping with Other People

Writer/director Leslye Headland is not a neophyte in crafting screwball romantic comedy. She was involved in the making of *Bachelorette* and *About Last Night*. Her new comedy has an intriguing premise: Can a pair of one-time bedmates, Jake and Lainey, protect each other from sleeping around before falling in love?

So far, so reminiscent of Nora Ephron's, *When Harry Met Sally*. In Jason Sudeikis as Jake, Headland has an actor who does nonchalance with-whip smart timing. In Alison Brie, who plays Lainey she has a star of a charm so intense if forbids the printing of puns on her name.

Comedy above all is about pace as the masters of screwball comedy knew, up to and including Peter Bogdanovich's *What's Up, Doc?* Headland forgot this; she interrupts the pace with Jake delivering a clinical lecture on masturbation to Lainey, a clear case of Male Chauvinist Pig transgression. So why does Headland write and

SOLUTION TO CRYPTIC CROSSWORD NO. 42



direct it as if Jake is a Sensitive New Age Guy and not a creep?

MA15+★★NFFV.

## UnIndian

Director Anupam Sharma brings Bollywood spice to his romantic comedy, starring Tannishtha Chatterjee, Brett Lee and Sydney. Chatterjee is Meera, a career woman whose parents are trying to arrange her marriage to a nice Indian boy. Lee is Will a teacher of Aussie vernacular to a multi-cultural class not a cricketer, freeing reviewers from the temptation of quips about bowling the maiden over.

These would have been unavoidable had Shane Warne, with more camera time than Lee, been cast as Will.

To his credit Sharma extracts as much fun from Indian (Hindu) cultural practices as from Australian (secular) folkways.

M★★★SFFV.

## Hotel Transylvania 2

This animation feature is a long, and noisy, way from the Addams Family feature films and an even longer way from the *New Yorker* cartoons of Charles Addams.

But as directed by Genndy Tartakovsky and voiced by the likes of Adam Sandler, Mel Brooks, Steve Buscemi, Fran Drescher and Molly Shannon it pops along like corn.

G★★★SFFV.

## The Lobster

From its title onwards and downwards, this movie by writer/director Yorgos Lanthimos eludes definition. Absurdist allegory comes to mind since the storyline seems to be about a future where individuals arrive at a possibly Scots baronial country hotel; they then have 45 days to pair off with another guest or be turned into the animal of their choice and hunted in the surrounding woods.

At its core is a mystery: how did the producers persuade the likes of Colin Farrell, Rachel Weisz, Olivia Colman, John C Reilly, Ben Whishaw, Léa Seydoux and Ashley Jensen to appear and act as if vying for the Buster Keaton Deadpan Memorial Oscar?

MA15+★★NFFV.

## The Last Witch Hunter

Director Breck Eisner's saga stretches plausibility like bubblegum across eight centuries to modern New York from a prehistoric underworld in which Kaulder (Vin Diesel) became immortal fighting the gruesome Witch Queen (Julie Engelbrecht).

In New York, Kaulder encounters enemies, intent on a major outrage, and allies of varying loyalty. They include Chloe (Rose Leslie) who runs a witches only bar, Dolan 36 (Michael Caine) and Dolan 37 (Elijah Wood) members of The Axe and Cross.

For pursuers of trivia, worth noting that for their roles Caine and Wood joined the long line of mummies who have donned Roman collars.

Caine, as befits a veteran who traded lines with Laurence Olivier, gets the movie's most provocative line. Kaulder says: 'Once, I thought life moved in cycles. Now I don't know what's going to happen next.' Dolan 36 responds: 'We humans call it life.'

True - except that in showbiz lingo it's called 'franchising' and it depends on box-office returns.

How bad is it? Kindness to all concerned induces thoughts of the John Travolta Scientology work *Battlefield Earth* (2000).

M★NFFV.



*A counter-offensive against defamation*

# PIUS XII AND THE JEWS

By Ian MacDonald

**I**N OCTOBER 1958 the Foreign Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, told the United Nations at its New York headquarters: ‘When fearful martyrdom came to our people in the decade of Nazi terror the words of Pope Pius XII were raised for the victims. The life of our times was enriched by a voice speaking out with great moral truths above the tumult of daily conflict. We mourn a great servant of peace.’

Despite the strength of Meir’s words, soon after the Pope’s death, they have become divisive. How did this happen? It is not the least merit of *The Pope’s Jews* by Gordon Thomas that after quoting Meir, he is specific on the source of the first attack on the virtue of Pius XII: Moscow, centre of the Soviet Union’s propaganda apparatus where the term ‘disinformation’ was coined.

Thomas writes that *Pravda*, which with *Izvestia* formed the axis of the propaganda, published a series of articles that the Pope didn’t just ‘accept Hitler but agreed with him about everything; that the pope had secretly worked with Mussolini.’

‘The defamation and evisceration was under way. His praise was brushed aside as articles began to appear in Europe and the United States linking him to racial hatred and Vatican nefariousness towards the Jews. It was no longer enough to attack him for his alleged wartime attitude – ‘the pope who remained silent during the Holocaust’. He stood accused of hating all Jews.’

This and more, Thomas uses as a context for Rolf Hochuth’s play *Der Stellvertreter* (*The Deputy* or *The Representative*) which, particularly through its production in Britain by the National Theatre under Sir Laurence Olivier, crystallised the defamation without regard to the fact that Hochuth (born 1931) was of the first generation of Germans who came to post-war adulthood.

Like others of his generation, he could not countenance the reality of their national past. Thus the English titles cited above should have been *The Scapegoat*.

Thomas also dismisses John Cornwell’s *Hitler’s Pope* (reviewed

in these pages) as ‘a book with a title guaranteed to make the pope’s critics salivate’. He might also have mentioned that Cornwell reportedly has observed that he did not have all the evidence when he wrote the book. But a corrective and/or amplified sequel has yet to be seen.

Gordon Thomas ex-Fleet Street, ex-BBC, and an expert on espionage, and, I’m happy to disclose that we knew each other in Fleet Street years ago, has faced an historian’s greatest challenge: catching and killing Hydra-headed calumny. His subtitle is: *The Vatican’s secret plan to save Jews from the Nazis*. He validates

## THE MYTH OF PLANS FOR RESCUE

**S**PAIN DURING the war [was] a country whose policies were philo-Semitic, despite its fascist regime headed by Franco. In November 1942 Spain (which remained neutral during the war) altered its border policies so that *all refugees without exception* would be allowed to enter and remain.’ Germany soon pressured Spain to close its borders to refugees, which it then did. ... Spain reversed its policy, such that from April 1943, ‘in future all refugees who reached Spain would be allowed to remain there,’ a policy continued by Franco until the end of the war. How many Jews did this remarkably generous policy actually save? Estimates vary, but the number might well have been no more than 7,500 persons. The reasons why so few Jews were saved, despite the fact that Spain abutted directly onto Nazi-occupied Europe, are clear: when Vichy came to power in 1940 it immediately closed its border with Spain to departing refugees. Germany stationed two divisions of troops in south-western France throughout the war. Most centrally, the Spanish border was hundreds of miles from the nearest significant Jewish population centre, and to reach Spain from the ghettos of Poland or the attics and cellars of Amsterdam or Berlin was utterly impossible. For Jews in those places, nothing whatever could be done by the Allies, apart from winning the war as quickly as possible and annihilating the Nazis.

— William D. Rubenstein, *The Myth of Rescue*, Routledge, London, 1997

it by a general description of how monasteries, convents and other Church establishments provided safe havens for Jews, and provided passports priests of the Pallottine order being notably active. The Vatican itself was central.

Thomas is strong on Rome's Jewish community, one of the oldest of the diaspora. He recounts how church organisations provided safe havens for Jews and provided passports and other papers including baptismal certificates. In this Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty was a key player who also supplied aid to escaped allied prisoners of war and enlisted Gaelic-speaking Irish priest to help him.

Other points made by Thomas:

- \* Pius XII contributed 15 kilograms of gold to make up as shortfall in the 50 kilograms demanded by the Nazi authorities as part of their *Judenaktion* to ensure (falsely) the safety of Rome's Jewish community whose Chief Rabbi Israel Zolli was to become a Catholic and take refuge in the Vatican, a move not wholly admired.
- \* Immediately after the war, the Jewish World Congress donated \$US 20,000 to Vatican charities, 'in recognition of the work of the Holy See in rescuing Jews from Nazi persecution?'
- \* In his book *Three Popes and the Jews*, the former Israeli diplomat Pinchas Lapide declared that the Catholic Church under Pius XII, 'was instrumental in saving at least 700, 000 but probably as many as 860,000 Jews from certain death at Nazi hands?'
- \* In 1943, Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first president wrote that 'the Holy See is lending its powerful help wherever it can to mitigate the fate of my co-religionists,
- \* In 1944, Isaac Herzog, chief rabbi of Jerusalem, sent a message to Pope Pius XII: 'The people of Israel will never forget what the His Holiness and his illustrious delegates, inspired by

## In Doubt don't Act

**I**F THE Chesterbelloc was in half part a French animal, the French half - paradoxically enough -- was not on the Bclloc side. Chesterton's sensibility may have been quintessentially English, but his intellectual attitude was oddly continental (and this in turn may account for the fact that he found some of his most perceptive readers *outside* the English-speaking world). Contrary to the pragmatic approach which is so characteristic of the English, Chesterton always held that no fruitful practical initiative can ever be taken without first being set within a clear conceptual framework. He illustrated this point in a remarkable parable:

Suppose that a great commotion arises in the street about something, let us say a lamp-post which many influential persons desire to pull down. A grey-clad monk, who is the spirit of the Middle Ages, is approached upon the matter, and begins to say, in the and manner of the Schoolmen, 'Let us first of all consider, my brethren, the value of light. If the light be in itself good ...' At this point he is somewhat excusably knocked down. All the people make a rush for the lamp-post, the lamp-post is down in ten minutes and they go about congratulating each other on their unmedieval practicality. But as things go on they do not work out so easily. Some people have pulled the lamp-post down because they wanted the electric light: some because they wanted old iron; some because they wanted darkness because their deeds were evil Some thought it not enough of a lamp-post, some too much; some acted because they wanted to smash municipal machinery : some because they wanted to smash something. And there is war in the night, no man knowing whom he strikes. So gradually and inevitably, today, tomorrow or the next day, there comes back the conviction that the monk was right after all, and all depends on what is the philosophy of light. Only what we might have discussed under the gas-lamp, we now must discuss in the dark.

— Simon Leys [Pierre Ryckmans], 'Chesterton: The Poet Who Dances with a Hundred Legs,' in *The Hall of Uselessness*, Black Inc, Melbourne 2011, ppp.81-82.

the eternal principles of religion which are the foundations of genuine civilization, are doing for our unfortunate brothers and sisters at the most tragic hour in our history?'

- \* In 1952, Moshe Sharrett, Israel's second prime minister, met Pope Pius and told him: '...My first duty is to thank you, and through you the Catholic Church on behalf of the Jewish public for all they have done in various countries to rescue Jews?'
- \* Richard Brightman, assigned to assess UK-US World War II intercepts of German signals, confirmed that, 'the secret documents prove the extent to which Hitler distrusted the Holy See because it hid Jews?'

Paradoxically Thomas reinforces his credibility by reference to

a minority in Rome of pro-Axis sympathizers, among them an Austrian Bishop Alois Hudal, whom Thomas names as playing a role in the ODESSA escape line for Nazi leaders.

He includes an account of a plot to kidnap Pius XII from the Vatican, aborted after its negative consequences were assessed.

Pius XII has already been declared 'Venerable' and the case for his beatification and canonisation proceeds amid controversy. Here the State of Israel has the opportunity for an extraordinary gesture of gratitude: declaring Pope Pius XII among those it lists as 'Righteous among the Gentiles?'

IAN MACDONALD is the pen name for a well-known Sydney Journalist.

