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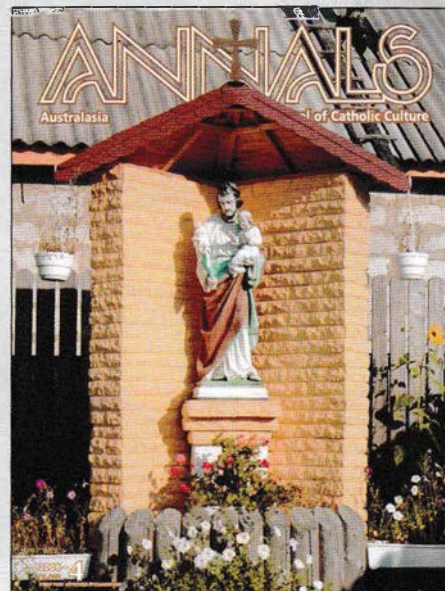
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Among Many Religions: Jesus the Way

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Front Cover: Statue of St Joseph and the child Jesus in the garden of a Catholic orphanage in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. Catholics of the Byzantine rite are becoming once again a significant factor in the religious and intellectual life of Ukraine. The Renaissance of Catholic life in this former Communist satellite state is a modern miracle - the spiritual fruit of the fidelity of the Catholic hierarchy and people who gave their lives, or were imprisoned in Soviet gulags, for their Faith. Millions of others preserved their Faith despite being forcibly incorporated into the Russian Orthodox Church. The collapse of the Soviet Empire has ushered in a Second Spring for Catholics of the Byzantine and Latin rites who after decades of persecution can freely practise their faith in Ukraine - the cradle from which Christianity was carried to Muscovy and beyond.

Back Cover: Two new booklets published in recent weeks by Chevalier Press, and inexpensively priced. They are ideal as gifts for relatives and friends interested in the Catholic Faith, for RCIA groups following catechism courses in preparation for baptism at Eastertime, or as school prizes.

Cover Photo: Paul Stenhouse MSC

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‘I have been at pains to send you this small essay so that, in addition to your faith, you may be put in complete possession of knowledge as well.’

– St Barnabas, Epistle 1, 1ff, written around 70AD.

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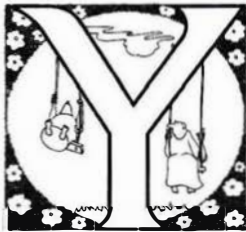
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In the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and
of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Christ our Light



OUR propitiation came from the east. From there came the man whose name is the Dawn, who became the mediator between God and man.

This invites you to keep looking to the east, where the sun of righteousness rises for you, where light is always dawning for you; so that you may never walk in darkness, nor the last day find you in darkness; so that the black night of ignorance may not creep up on you; but that you may always walk in the clear light of knowledge, always have the day-light of faith, and always obtain the light of charity and peace.

— Origenes Adamantius, commonly known as Origen. [185-253 AD] *Homily 9,10*. From the *Roman Breviary*, Second Reading for Matins for Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent.





THE CANON OF THE MASS AND PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING

[Around thirty years after our Lord's crucifixion]

GIVE thanks in this manner. First over the cup: 'We give thanks to you our Father, for the Holy Vine of your child David which you have made known to us through Jesus your child: to you be glory forever.'

Then over the broken bread: 'We give thanks to you our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Jesus your child: to you be glory for ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and was gathered together and made one, let your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom: for the glory and the power are yours through Jesus Christ for ever and ever.'

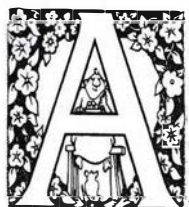
And when you have been filled, give thanks in this way 'We give thanks to you, holy Father, for your holy name which you have made to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you have made known to us through Jesus your child: to you be glory forever. You, almighty Master, created all things for your name's sake; you gave food and drink to men for their enjoyment, so that they might give thanks to you: and on us you have bestowed spiritual food and drink, and eternal life through your child. Above all we give thanks to you because you are mighty; to you be glory for ever. Remember Lord, your Church: deliver it from all evil, make it perfect in your love; make it holy and gather it together from the four winds into your kingdom which you have prepared for it; for the power and the glory are yours for ever.

- The Didache, also known as The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, a first century work, written around 60 AD in Syria by an unnamed author who knew our Lord's teaching well. From the *Roman Breviary*, Matins, Wednesday of the 14th Week of the Year.

When forgiveness is denied, what enters in its wake?

CRIME: HAS IT REPLACED 'SIN' IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

By PAUL STENHOUSE



POPULAR sci-fi TV series centres on prehistoric Doorways called Star Gates allegedly to be found in various places in the universe. Built by 'The Ancients,' original inhabitants of earth who left millions of years ago, whose technology was aeons in advance of ours, they are connected by a 'worm hole' that allows instantaneous travel between different worlds inhabited by beings from vastly different universes. These Portals are revered by some and feared by others. At times they are utilised by alien and human beings alike for their own, often self-serving ends. But the Star Gates are a medium through which much good can be achieved if used wisely as they were intended.

Like the old fairy tales, modern sci-fi literature or movies reflects a nostalgia in modern man for a world and for experiences superior to our own; for an immaterial reality not affected by corporeal limits. Star Gates are analogues, metaphors, for a reality that all will know at the moment of death, but which can be lived on earth through Mysteries that have been erased from much of human consciousness for hundreds of years, and which political correctness has banished from centres of learning apart from those courageous enough to confront the might of secularized educators and hard-nosed, cynical bureaucrats.

I mean the Sacraments of the Catholic Church. The Church, unlike the Star Gate is no fantasy. Its credentials are on the table for all who would, to examine. Founded by Christ she is the Portal through which by means of Baptism and the other Sacraments or 'Mysteries' one can pass from the material to the supernatural realm.

For two thousand years the Catholic Church has performed this role. She witnessed the death of the Apostles and disciples, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the fall of Jerusalem's bane, the Roman Empire. She oversaw the growth of Christianity, and successfully withstood attempts to divide and rule her. She was ancient, when Islam arose; she was present at the birth-pangs and the death-throes of myriad philosophies and governments. She warned of the rise and witnessed the fall of despotic kings, atheistic and murderous regimes

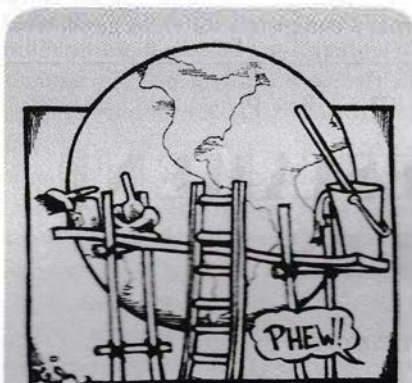
like Nazism and Communism, and today dares to beard Capitalism in its counting houses lest it meet a similar fate. She is wiser than those who deride or trivialise her; she serves Truth, and has nothing to fear from it. She certainly has nothing to fear from a world that flaunts its secular democracy and denies the existence of religious or any other than subjective truth and whose progenitors and their utopias she has seen laid to rest hundreds of years ago.

One effect of the US decision to take the war against terror to Afghanistan and Iraq has been to highlight the powerlessness against organised terror of the West's hi-tech military machine. This contrasts poorly with the illusions promoted by Hollywood moguls [whose TV-soapies and movies prove that nothing is impossible to the FX men] and Washington spin-doctors [where politicians, big business and PR-machines preach the same message].

Our poor world is thrashing about in a quixotic of political correctness of its own making, struggling to identify the specific problems that have spawned this horror, and in a vain attempt to respond to them – knowing now that its very survival depends on finding an effective response.

The Church has an answer, as she did in the fourth and fifth centuries as the pre-Islamic barbarian ancestors of the EU bureaucrats and bankers rampaged virtually unchecked through what had been the the world's greatest Empire. She knew the root of the problem then; and what is more, knew how to deal with it; and with those affected by it. She still knows. This, some people find extremely threatening.

Too many church people remain mute, either because they lack the courage of their convictions, or because they fear losing the esteem of friends



The Bible: A child's eye-view

In the first book
of the Bible,
Guinness, God
got tired of creating
so he took the
sabbath off.

who view Catholicism as a relic of an unenlightened long-past era with nothing to say to a world of cyber-space, neo-paganism and electronic wizardry.

'Sin' doesn't exist, if one accepts the current wisdom. 'Sinners' are constructs [so we are led to believe] of a faulty, imperfect, superstitious understanding of human nature and of the pre-scientific world. There is no need for God in a third millennium universe of 'black holes' and 'big bangs' [so we are led to believe] and if there is no Divine Being there can be no Divine Law. Even if God does exist [so we are led to believe] then he is an indifferent and callous being who is certainly not offended by human foibles or shortcomings.

From London to Washington, via Brussels and Moscow the message is clear: there is only human [national and international] law and human judges. There are no sins, only crimes against the State and the Body Politic. There are no 'sinners' only 'criminals'. And what is a 'crime' is determined by the State and its legal bureaucracy – not by recourse to revelation or first principles.

Above all, there is no 'absolution,' no 'forgiveness'; there is only a sentence and its execution.

If there is no more 'sin,' and therefore no 'sinners' in the world, then the Church is no longer needed. This quite logical conclusion has been arrived at by non-believers. There is a message, here, for slipshod Catholics whose commitment to the Church founded by Christ may be faltering. Without their efforts the Sacraments that are Christ's way of reaching out to a confused and sinful world will cease to be accessible to vast numbers of people.

How did this Orwellian nightmare, reminiscent of the worst fantasies of the Theatre of the Absurd slip by our Catholic defences unnoticed? How has this 'doctrine' become the 'norm,' the 'standard' taught across the board in all but the most religious of schools and universities?

The unpalatable answer is not difficult: our defences, constructed over centuries, have been white-anted by a fifth column cloaked in familiar guise, and calling itself 'Catholic' but operating from a completely different intellectual

and moral and religious foundation from the one that was set in place by Jesus Christ. Some of this fifth column 'work' for the Church as school teachers or bureaucrats; some even are priests, religious and bishops. 'Ex fructibus cognoscetis eos,' our Lord said: 'By their fruits you shall know them'. How can we not know them? Their fruits are everywhere evident.

We know that infection can kill a body unless it be treated quickly and radically. Also we know that infections eventually adapt themselves to the remedies that science offers us against them. Most of the diseases that have afflicted mankind since history began to be recorded have learned in some mysterious way to survive and stronger and stronger remedies have had to be developed to combat them.

The church too is a body – the Body of Christ. And social infections, religious diseases, morally toxic pollution – naturally occurring in a world without God, and sometimes deliberately introduced – have been attacking Christ's Mystical Body since the beginning of the Church's existence. The infections plaguing the world and the Church are familiar: only the strain is more virulent.

A great deal of time and thought has been devoted to explaining why the church isn't succeeding as she should in touching the hearts and lives of human beings. The answer isn't very difficult to find. Catholics, and Christians generally, have been so desensitised that they have forgotten the reason for the Church's existence. They are so in awe of the world [whose shallowness and ephemeralness becomes everyday more inescapable]; they are so fascinated by fashions in religion [that were out of date in the third century] that they balk at offering a remedy because they and the sick persons seem unaware of the malady.

Our Lord died on a cross to expiate the sins of the world. Suffering has meaning; self-renunciation and self-forgetfulness are healthy; in fact life-giving. This is the Christian message. This has been the inspiration for Christian living since Jesus walked with his Apostles around the Sea of Galilee and preached to throngs of joyous people in the villages and towns of Samaria and Judea.

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Before Jesus died he gave us a command. His testament. In three words. We are to 'love one another'. Throughout his life, and by his death, he had made it clear what he meant by loving one another. St Paul spelt it out: Love is patient; Love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not take pleasure in other people's sins; it delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face, there is no limit to its faith, hope, and endurance. Love will never come to an end!

Put simply, love is forgiving. Love nurtures life and mocks death. Love is the essence of the church, its heart, and its reason for existence.

St Aelred of Rivaux put it this way:

The highest type of brotherly love is to love our enemies. There is no greater encouragement to do this than the remembrance of the wondrous patience exercised by him who was the fairest of the sons of men and who offered his gracious face to be spat on by his enemies. All creation is ruled by a glance from his eyes and yet he allowed himself to be blindfolded by wicked men. He exposed his body to scourging and although his head strikes fear into principalities and powers he bowed it to the pain of the crown of thorns. He submitted himself to the insults and finally gave us an example by enduring in peace with gentleness and meekness the cross, the nails, the lance, the vinegar, the gall.

'Hearing that wondrous voice saying "Father forgive them," who would not immediately embrace His enemies? Can any greater degree of gentleness and love be added to this prayer? However he did add something. To praise them was too little, he wished also to make excuses for them. He said Father forgive them; for they know not what they do. They are great sinners, but with little understanding; and so he said Father forgive them.'

The old Testament prophet Ezekiel records God as saying: 'I do not desire the death of the wicked. I would rather than a wicked man should mend his ways and live.'

At Mass, before communion, the priest holds the consecrated Host and says: 'Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sins of the world'. This act of adoration makes no sense in a world where the possibility

Religious Persecution in Saudi Arabia

A Catholic Indian priest was forced to leave Saudi Arabia. He was discovered by the religious police as he organised a prayer meeting in the lead-up to Easter. Arrested on 5 April, he remained in police custody for four days and on Saturday 8 April he left for India. The practice of any religion other than Islam is forbidden in Saudi Arabia. Meetings held privately in people's homes, among friends, are also banned.

The priest, Fr George Joshua, belongs to the Malankara rite of Kerala (India). His visit to Catholic Indians in the Saudi Kingdom was planned with his Bishop's permission.

On 5 April, Fr George had just celebrated Mass in a private house when seven religious policemen (muntawij) broke into the house together with two ordinary policemen. The police arrested the priest and another person.

The Saudi religious police are well known for their ruthlessness; they often torture believers of other religions who are arrested.

Asia-News sources said there were around 400,000 Indian Catholics in Saudi Arabia who were denied pastoral care. Catholic foreigners in the country number at least one million; none of them can participate in Mass while they are in Saudi Arabia. Catechism for their children – nearly 100,000 – is banned.

Often, for feasts like Easter and Christmas, Catholics plan holidays in the Emirates, Bahrain or Abu Dhabi, where at least for once, they are free to attend Mass. – *Asia-News*,

of sin is denied. What is the point of redemption if nobody is capable of sinning, and losing God's grace? Of all the mysteries of the Christian religion, the mystery of forgiveness, the mystery of redemption, is the lynch-pin, keystone and raison d'être of our faith. This mystery cannot be surrendered without compromising the health of the Body of Christ and of the world it.

Yet surrendered it has been; and compromised she is. The Mystery is daily being repudiated by default as timid lay Catholics take their lead from less than courageous bishops, priests and religious afraid of appearing to condone 'crimes' if they show compassion or mercy towards sinners.

Aren't we all sinners? St John says 'If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us'.³ On the other hand, in a world without sin, who would dare imply that all are 'criminals' and not risk litigation? A concept of 'sin' may satisfy the poor [as cynics often remind us], but it leaves the Middle Class cold. They prefer 'crimes' – especially when the State, with an eye on the ballot box, ensures that few actions that once were 'sins' become 'crimes'.

The Church has a duty to ignore political correctness and reach out

to sinners. She is obliged by her very Charter to do so. She must stop allowing human respect [or its latest apotheosis 'political correctness'] to prevent her offering God's absolution to repentant sinners and Christian compassion to all – especially those in prison.

Above all she must proclaim from the roof tops our Lord's prayer: Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. But to do this she would have to carry the challenge to a world unwilling to face it. And for this she needs all of us.

Former Christian countries, on the other hand, would have to repudiate centuries of anti-Catholic prejudice, freemasonry, rationalism, free-thought, free-love and materialism if they were to turn to the Church for guidance as new barbarian hordes beat on the doors of the 'invulnerable' secular democracies.

There are precedents for this. Before it is too late, they should be considered and the dire consequences of continuing to bury their collective heads in the sands of 'political correctness' honestly faced by the leaders of the once Catholic West.



1. 1Cor. 13:4-8.
2. *The Mirror of Charity*, Bk. 3.5.
3. 1Jo. 1:8



HERE it had stood, just off the coast, for at

least tens of thousands of years. And then, in a moment, it was gone, crumbled in seconds flat. A large group of massive rocks called the Apostles, off the coast of Victoria, and one of them had crumbled! An Apostle had capitulated!

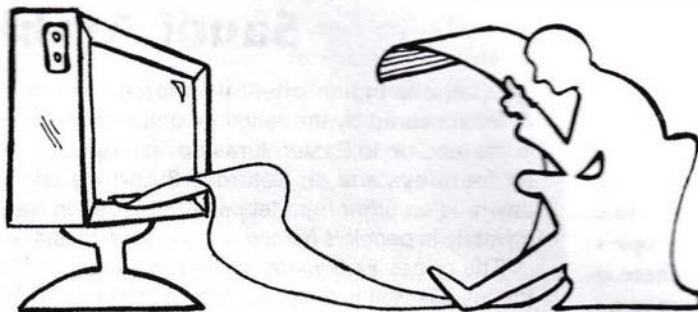
An enormous piece of rock that had taken the blows of a billion waves had had enough. Wave after wave, like drip after drip, a constant wearing away until one wave got the lucky door prize and down the rock went.

You might say it was a bit like the fall of the Soviet Union. That is, it didn't really fall it just sort of folded in and then it was no more. Took everyone by surprise, like Rome you just reckoned on it always being there. Or the Twin Towers, high and solid and imposing, and then they were gone. But the world is different, our world that is. Look at it, look at what we've built, look at how solid its foundations are! We have tamed the sea!

So it goes.

An artist has an exhibition celebrating things sleazy and scandalous. You look out to sea and shrug your shoulders. So what? Just another wave passing over the Saturday supplements. Seen it all before. The ocean looks the same. Another film with explicit sex, a new cause for baby boomer reviewers to feel young and impassioned about. A new book by the Melbourne literary circle's great hope, full of scatological references brilliantly done. Ho hum, you say still looking out to sea. It's all just waves, they'll go to any lengths. The very predictability of the attempts to shock are kind of calming, don't you think?

At night you can lie awake and hear the music of the sea as it crashes against the promontory; youth radio trying to shock through violence. Remember how it was Johnny Cash shooting a man just to watch him die? Then cop killer by that dude who's now a television star. Gangsta rap, that came next. Then there was...what's now? Doesn't matter, same thing, always the boom of the breakers, reassuring one that it's been going



WAVE GOODBYE

By ROBERT TILLEY

sex, bullying and swearing. What's your problem? Change the channel, no one's forcing you to watch the waves. There's more plagiarism, cheating and dumbing down of degrees. More waves, all the time, new ones, big and little ones, they come and go, it's the nature of the economy. If you don't like it don't go to uni, keep your precious feet dry. Look away, let it roll over you.

The rock's solid, so you lose a few grains, it would happen anyway. Check these ones out! You could surf those right across the internet. Hey, so porn and gambling's not your thing, am I holding your hand holding the mouse?

A billion grains and a billion waves, and then one more wave and then a shudder. A funny all-over shudder, deep and not particularly violent, but worrying nevertheless. And then that which seemed so eternally secure crumbles and is gone.

It was true that one didn't have to watch, or for that matter listen or log on. But it wasn't true that simply by not watching or listening or logging on that the waves would cease to have effect. They still went on like it or not. Every little wave had its excuse; it was inevitable. I didn't intend for this to happen. I only wrote a book. It was just a film. The editor told me I had to write it. You have to earn a crust. But special pleading is lost on rubble, it simply washes over it.

All that's left is a submerged reef of splintered and fractured artistic triumphs that once rated well. Now all that's left to read the fragments of the once so daring and sexy, powerful and boastful displays are the fish. And one of them looks at the top most pedestal, once a base for a mighty statue, and reads, 'Look upon my works and weep.' Only there's no need, there's salt-water enough to drown the loftiest of pretensions.

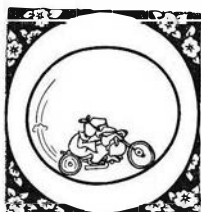




DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

By MAX BARRETT, CSSR

This is the fifth in a series of articles that look briefly at the lives and teachings of those saints who have been honoured with the title of ‘Doctor’ of the Church. The title is awarded *sanctitatis sapientiaeque causa* ‘by reason of sanctity and wisdom,’ by the reigning Pontiff.



OCASIONALLY – but only occasionally – one of the saints is declared a *Doctor of the Church*.

This declaration, coming from the Pope, recognises the outstanding value of the saint’s writings. Up to 2006 A.D., thirty-three ‘teacher’ saints have been declared *Doctor*.

What is offered in this series is an introduction to each of the thirty-three, and a sampling of each one’s writing.

Cronologically, the earliest of those officially declared *Doctor* is St. Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373 A.D.). The most recently recognised *Doctor* is St. Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897).

Before St. Athanasius and after the closure of the New Testament Scripture, there were saints of the 2nd and 3rd centuries who spoke of Christ with their pen. We have already looked briefly at four of these “Fathers”: Pope St. Clement of Rome (who died in 99 A.D.), St. Ignatius of Antioch (35-107 A.D.), St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (69-155 A.D.), and St. Justin Martyr (100-166 A.D.). The fifth and last early saintly-teacher whom we will consider before the time of St. Athanasius was St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons.

St. Irenaeus [130-202 A.D.]

Irenaeus has been called ‘in a certain sense the Father of Catholic dogmatic theology.’¹ His work, *Against Heresies*, was translated from Greek into Latin, Armenian and Syriac.

Born in Asia Minor and a disciple of St. Polycarp, Irenaeus studied at Rome and became a priest in Lyons in Gaul [France]. There he was asked to take letters to Pope Eleutherius in Rome requesting toleration for the Montanists. After the martyrdom of Bishop Pothinus in 177 A.D. he became the bishop of Lyons. Here he spoke Celtic rather than his native Greek. He was above all else a pastoral man. His realization that the Gnostic heresy presented a serious danger to true faith motivated him to undertake his great work, *Against Heresies*.

Irenaeus wrote to a priest who was flirting with the errors of Gnosticism:

‘These opinions are not in accord with the Church ... These opinions were not transmitted to you by the old men who preceded us, those who were familiar with the apostles ... I remember the events of those days ... I can describe the place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit ... how he spoke about his relationship with John [the apostle] and the others who had seen the Lord ... how Polycarp had received all this from eye-witnesses of

the life of the Word and reported it in accordance with the Scriptures. At that time also, by the Lord’s mercy, I heard those things eagerly and I noted them down, not on paper, but in my heart

This letter, ‘which was a special joy to [Cardinal] Newman, calls up all the aspects of Irenaeus’ personality: his fidelity – not only respectful but enthusiastic – to the tradition of the Church, along with his warm humanity.’²

Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies* was laid out in five parts. Part I was the saint’s exposition of Gnosticism. The Gnostics thrived on their so-called secret knowledge; accordingly, the Saint set himself to ‘strip the fox.’ True to his name,³ Irenaeus wrote in a courteous manner. Just occasionally his exasperation found expression; as, for instance, where he refers to the airs and graces assumed by the Gnostic initiate when he has first been admitted into the ‘secrets’.

‘He becomes so puffed up ... and, with the majestic air of a cock, he goes strutting about – as if he had already embraced his angel!’

The remainder of his *Against Heresies* was an outline of true doctrine, presented in catechetical fashion.

Up till this time – as has beautifully been said – the Christian catechism had been *Jesus*: his life, teaching,

'Licking the Earth'

WHEN I look back on my life nowadays, which I sometimes do, what strikes me most forcibly about it is that what seemed at the time most significant and seductive, seems now most futile and absurd. For instance, success in all of its various guises; being known and being praised, ostensible pleasures, like acquiring money and seducing women, or travelling, going to and fro in the world and up and down in it like Satan, explaining and experiencing whatever Vanity Fair has to offer. In retrospect, all these exercises in self-gratification seem pure fantasy, what Pascal called, 'licking the earth.'

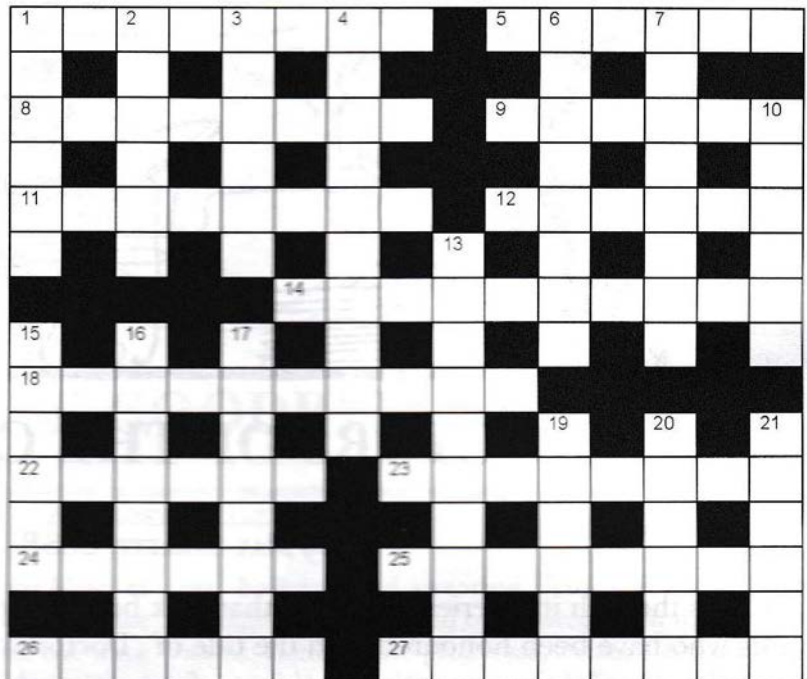
- Malcolm Muggeridge, *A Twentieth Century Testimony*

miracles, saving death, glorious resurrection and his sending of the Holy Spirit. But now a new need had arisen; because, while appearing to profess orthodox faith, the Gnostics were in fact introducing their own errors into the Church. The new need was for a more precise statement belief. It was by providing such a presentation that Irenaeus earned the title, *The Father of Catholic Dogmatics*.

At every turn, the saint adhered to his principle for establishing orthodoxy: adherence to the teaching of the Church.

'We keep our faith, received by the Church and continually renewed by the Spirit of God, as a deposit of great value ... The Holy Spirit (is) the pledge of incorruptibility and confirmation of our faith ... Indeed, where the Church is, there is the spirit of God; and where the spirit of God is, there is the Church ... This is why those who do not participate therein do not receive the food of life from the maternal bosom, nor draw from the pure spring that proceeds from the Body of Christ, but they dig themselves cracked cisterns in ditches in the earth, and they drink putrid water in the mud ...'

ANNALS CROSSWORD No. 39



ACROSS CLUES

1. Youngest son of Jacob and Rachel (8)
5. Patron saint of nurses (feast day 5 Feb) (6)
8. The practice of unselfish concern for the welfare of others (8)
9. Old Testament prophet who succeeded Elijah (2 Kings) (6)
11. Breaks into many small pieces (8)
12. Young men (6)
14. Hatred or fear of foreigners (10)
18. Followers of astronomer's patron saint (10)
22. Old Testament book and prophet (6)
23. Clergyman attached to a hospital, prison etc (8)
24. Fairness (6)
25. Church musician (8)
26. Frees from dirt (6)
27. The sprinkling of holy water over the congregation (8)

7. Sort of baby conceived unnaturally (4,4)
10. Patron of Denmark; shares feast day with 1 down (6)
13. People who lend money at exorbitant rates or interest (4,6)
15. Counsel (6)
16. Not fully grown or developed (8)
17. Undo or untie (8)
19. Narcotic drug (6)
20. Feeling or showing compassion; nursing (6)
21. Amalgamates (6)

DOWN CLUES

1. Saint with an iron comb as symbol in art; feast day 3 Feb (6)
2. A prophet at David's court (2 Sam 7:2) (6)
3. Mature people (6)
4. Rebellion; uprising or riot (10)
6. Another name for Calvary (8)

SOLUTION TO NO. 38



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There is a famous quote from Irenaeus: 'God's glory is in living man.' The context is as follows:

'The Son revealed God to man and raised man to God. He shielded the Father from human sight so that man would never undervalue God through familiarity but would always have something to strive towards. On the other hand, he revealed God to man in many ways so that man would not fall away entirely from God and thereby cease to be. God's glory is in living men, and full life for men is in the vision of God.'

Irenaeus seems not to have met a martyr's death. His feast day is June 28.



1. Altaner, *Patrology*, Herder, 1958, p.150.
2. Louis Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, Seabury Press, 1960, p. 226.
3. The name 'Irenaeus' means 'peaceful'.
4. The words, 'Gloria Dei vivens homo' are often translated 'The glory of God is man fully alive'. This could be a *mis*-translation (if 'fully alive' conveyed the impression that the human creature is God's glory only or especially in moments of achievement or exhilaration. (When I first saw this quotation, it was the caption under a man riding a huge wave on a surf board.) In weakness, in the wilderness, in the womb, the living human person is equally the glory of God.

Next Month: Arianism.

AN OPEN LETTER TO DAN BROWN

FRANK COLYER

Dear Mr Brown

So what is the percentage for you in *your great hoax The Da Vinci Code?*

Forget all those tens of millions poured into your bank account by Doubleday, and now by Hollywood. Even at that level, *cheating never pays*. Hemingway, by and large, did not cheat on his muse but *he did cheat on his body and his body* took savage retribution and it all ended in *sickness, delusion, depression and suicide* in his early 60s. Literary figures, however, *cheat more often against reality*. Telling great lies, they grow to *believe* their own fiction; and so they *inhabit a bubble of illusion*.

Like it or not, we are *all moving inexorably on a conveyor belt*. Moving where? To oblivion? Or should we *muse with Hamlet and ask: Perchance to dream?* Ay, there's the rub. Who might we *encounter then?* No place here for the *pathetic products* of your imagination. Instead, let your fancy consider an *encounter - with the real Christ - The Son of Man, The Second Person of the Trinity, the Incarnate Word*. The most sensational figure *ever to stride out of the printed page*. Him!

I know. I know. All this you brush aside as so much bosh. *But can you be absolutely sure that you are right ... that billions of believers, including many great minds are wrong ... that a vast catalogue of warranting signs and wonders is mere Popish chicanery? And if you are wrong, then I tremble for you*. Christ was amazingly gentle in his dealings with *sincere penitents*. But he was scorching in his response to rogue intellectuals, to *lying dabblers in religious matters*. I refer to the elite of his day, the opinion leaders - *Wasn't you scribes and Pharisees?* (Matthew 13-31).

Put it this way, Mr Brown. *If the Catholic God does not exist, no amount of believing will make him real. But if he does exist, no amount of unbelieving by you will alter that fact. The stakes are high. It is called Eternal Destiny and you only get one shot at the event. By way of hedge insurance, could I suggest some atonement is in order, starting with a straightforward confession of lying in The Da Vinci Code. As a token of sincerely, you could also unload those Da Vinci dollars on worthy causes. (What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his immortal soul?)*

This will do little, *of course, to erase the damage wrought by you to the faith of credulous people. But it might help your cause*. Consider the long queue waiting at the turnstile in the heavenly stadium. With his lofty vision, Christ anticipated those same Pharisees, scribes and elders in that lineup. But they stood way back in the queue, behind the tax collectors and harlots, the people on the lowest rung of society. Even so, he indicated that *these people were in there with a chance. And so could you be*.

FRANK COLYER is a journalist with more than twenty years experience in the print and television media. He lives in Drysdale Victoria.

The Earth's Charter – an anti Judaic-Christian Global Ethic

SHADOWS BEHIND THE TREES: A NEW GREENIE DESPOTISM?

By WANDA SKOWRONSKA



CONFERENCE on Climate Change was held on November 18-20, 2005 in Canberra, hosted by Catholic Earthcare Australia (formed in 2002) and was attended by five Australian bishops – Archbishops Bathersby (Qld) and Doyle (Tas) and Bishops Hurley (SA), Toohey (NSW) and Power (ACT) – diverse Catholic and other religious organisations and international speakers. Bishop Chris Toohey, as chairman of Catholic Earthcare Australia gave the Bishops' position paper issuing from the conference, to be distributed to Catholic schools and colleges, stating that rapid climate change is a reality raising moral and spiritual questions – calling for an 'ecological conversion' on the part of all Catholics saying:

As pastors of more than a quarter of the Australian population, we urge Catholics as a matter of conscience to cooperate in facing global warming as one of the major issues of our time and take roles of responsibility proper to them. Several times we have addressed environmental issues and recently called for ecological conversion. We now urge Catholics as an essential part of their faith commitment to respond with sound judgments and resolute action to the reality of climate change.¹

The following day *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Linda Morris wrote the following about the Conference position paper:

Australia's 5 million Catholics were as morally bound to combat the loss of biodiversity as they were to protect the rights of the unborn child, according to a landmark statement by the church's bishops that calls for Australia to cap greenhouse emissions.²

This statement raises great concerns

as Morris attributes to the Bishops the view that abortion and biodiversity loss are equivalent moral issues. This is like saying that environmental degradation around Dachau is equivalent to the loss of human life within the concentration camp. Of course this is morally untenable. Of greater concern is the fact that the *SMH* article was put on the Catholic Earthcare Conference website with no correction or clarification.

The section of the Bishops' position paper from which Morris derives her account is the following:

The web of life on Earth is under threat from accelerated climate change. That web compares to a seamless garment and it needs the application of a consistent ethic to protect it, one that considers life now and in the future, and ranges from protection of the unborn child to cherishing the diversity of species. Life is one, and human well-being is at its base interwoven with all life on Earth and the rhythm of its systems.³

Perhaps Morris stretched the words of the Bishops further than was their intention. She could be forgiven her interpretation of the paper given the vague terminology, sometimes tinged with

pantheistic monistic cloud trails (ie 'Life is one...'), leaving one uncertain whether the unborn and 'diversity of species' are equivalent, whether the unborn child is at the top of the hierarchy of moral concern and the 'diversity of species' at the bottom or vice-versa. Many readers of the document are still uncertain of what it says and Linda Morris continues to think she accurately described what the document said though her rendition is opposed to central Catholic moral teaching and the article, as we said above, was posted on the Conference website without any clarification or comment.

In the same conference position paper there are copious quotations from a 1990 World Day of Peace address by Pope John Paul II in which he extols nature in typical contemplative vein and exhorts restraint and care for the earth. However, Pope John Paul II's emphasis differs significantly from that of the Bishops' position paper in placing ecological problems in the context of a 'profound moral crisis of which the destruction of the environment is only one troubling aspect.' – a crisis arising from a lack of respect for life and the human person. The dignity of the human person – the philosophical leitmotif of Pope John Paul II's papacy – far outweighs the dignity of trees and animals and none of his ecological statements can be understood clearly without this fundamental emphasis. In the same papal address the destruction of nature is seen as reflecting human sin more than flawed ecological policies:

When man turns his back on the Creator's plan he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order.

As much as Pope John Paul II was concerned for earthly climate change, it is spiritual global warming as a consequence of sin that concerned him far more – a cosmic disorder beyond the scope of

A 21st Century Prayer

FROM all that terror teaches
From lies of tongue and pen,
From all the easy speeches
That comfort cruel men;

From sale and profanation
Of honour and the sword:
From sleep and from damnation,
Deliver us, good Lord.

– Two verses from a well-loved hymn written by G.K.Chesterton.

environmental action. He would much prefer us to avoid other-worldly warming than earthly global warming. While human beings have a duty to protect the natural world, they will do this if they pursue the deeper broader spiritual conversion called for in the Gospels. Spiritual conversion precedes ecological conversion. Reflective Catholics know that perfect ecological policies will not work if there are no good people to implement them. In fact one can take this a step further and say that if there is no spiritual conversion then ecological conversion can only be implemented by political force.

Ironically, at the same time the Climate Change conference issued dire warnings about the future of the planet, only a few kilometres away Tony Abbott, the Federal Health Minister, was fending off aggressive parliamentary calls for the availability of RU-486 which induces abortion and causes the young child to be expelled from the womb. If ever there was an ecological attack on the dignity of the human person this was it. In the Catholic Weekly, Cardinal Pell warned of the dangers of this toxic drug to women as well as to the unborn child. The Catholic Respect Life Office, Family Life International and Right to Life and other pro life groups sounded warnings about it. Yet while trees, greenhouse emissions and biodiversity were getting top coverage at the climate conference and in the press, this new dark push for RU-486, a far greater danger to human ecology, was silenced beneath feminist agitprop and political correctness.

In fact, one might ask what is the point of talking about greenhouse gases

Familiarity Breeds Contempt

MUCH ceremony took place in the common intercourse of life, and little familiarity was indulged by the great. The advantages which result from opulence are so solid and real that those who are possessed of them need not dread the near approaches of their inferiors. The distinctions of birth and title being more empty and imaginary, soon vanish upon familiar access and acquaintance.

— David Hume, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*, Chapter 46

if many Australian families have been damaged by far deeper psychological losses? Phillip Ney, Canadian psychiatrist and Director of the International Institute for Pregnancy Loss and Child Abuse Research and Recovery (IPLCARR), has helped women with post abortion trauma for over twenty years. In *The Centurion's Pathway*, he states that the 'sensitive balances of human ecology ... have been deeply disturbed' in the ongoing abortion holocaust.⁴ He says the instinctual restraint on killing another human being has been transgressed and this deeply damages all who co-operate in that act. He states that abortion's profound ecological and social destabilisation is the greatest threat to our life on earth. This is the ecological issue of the millennium. It

is also one of the most taboo topics of our era. The destructive impact of abortion on the human ecology can be seen, he adds, in increasing aggression towards young children, increasing fragmentation of families, abortion survivor syndrome (where, for instance, children reflect on siblings who have died or wonder why they survived), a diminished sense of the primacy of the human species and decreased sense of a future.

If Western societies have become deeply damaged by the culture of death, planting more trees and focussing on nature will not address the problem. In fact, Ney says it is a denial of the deeper problem. The great 'toxic gloom' of our era are the 'human grief emissions' permeating society in the aftermath of abortion — the grief that dares not speak its name, not even at a Catholic Earthcare Conference which sees climate change as the most serious issue facing humanity. If we do not show profound respect for human life first, how on earth will we ever respect plant and animal life?

There are many hidden dangers in calls to ecological arms to protect forests and exercise restraint (worthy aims in themselves). Lurking beneath the green ferns is a moral death adder — the unstated population control agenda — which is at the heart of most 'greenie' movements. The Catholic opposition to contraception, abortion, the morning after pill and all forms of death to infants does not get a hearing with most greenies. Make no mistake, they adamantly want fewer people on the planet. Access to abortion is taken for granted. There are tears for trees but none for lost infants. The latter are safely silent.



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The almost 'apocalyptic' necessity to support the Kyoto Protocol was a central theme of the Earthcare Conference. To support the Protocol seems a dogma in the new greenie catechism, almost implying those who do not do so commit some new eco-theological sin. For readers unfamiliar with it, the Kyoto Protocol is a document signed in 1997 by 180 countries who agreed to reduce their country's carbon emissions by 5.2% by 2012. The Protocol grew out of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 (held on the twentieth anniversary of the first global environment conference in Stockholm in 1972). It is ironic that non-conformity, usually admired by greenies in religious matters, is not tolerated where the politically controversial Kyoto Protocol is concerned. The fact that the US and Australia have not signed it incurs the wrath of a new ruling greenie hegemony. Catholic greenies can be swept into echoing global condemnations of Kyoto non-signers, unaware of their manipulation by ideological, green-groupthink politics. Similarly, a recent Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate conference held in Sydney on January 11, explored alternative environmental policies which elicited intolerant jibes from Kyoto supporters. No tolerance, dialogue or hugs from Kyoto supporters there! March to the Kyoto music or else!

At this point, savvy observers of human nature might ask who wrote the Kyoto Protocol? This is a good question as it brings into focus a powerful global environmental leader. Its principal architect was Maurice Strong, senior adviser to Kofi Annan, organiser of the first global environment conference in Stockholm, member of the Commission of Global Governance and vice president of the World Wildlife fund. He is arguably the world's most prominent environmentalist. He is a man of extraordinary influence as is pointed out by award winning Canadian author Elaine Dewar in *Cloak of Green*, a fascinating and thoroughly researched critique of green politics.⁵ Dewar, who has no religious affiliation, spent several years investigating environmental groups and was astounded to learn of their connections with big business and their deceptive practices. She found a global interconnectedness which inevitably led

The Shepherds are still Sheep of His Flock

WITH the example of his passion before us, it is obvious that since so many of the sheep have imitated the Shepherd, all the more ought the shepherds themselves imitate him. Are not the shepherds themselves sheep in the one flock, under the one Shepherd? He, who died for all, made of all his sheep, because he himself became a sheep so that he might suffer for all.

— St Augustine of Hippo [354-430 AD]
Treatise on St John, 123.5. From the
Second Reading at Matins, in the Roman
Breviary, for the Feast of St Nicholas of
Bari, December 6.

to one power wielder – a global green-fuhrer, Maurice Strong.

Strong has combined business interests in having been president of Power Corporation (Canada's major energy supplier) with environmental politics, a mix that Dewar sees as contradictory but expedient to Strong's further interests. And what are they? Strong is the president of a global organisation called the Earth Council. It was formed after the Rio 1992 Conference on the Environment as was the Green Cross International headed by ex-Soviet-leader-now-turned-Environmentalist Mikhail Gorbachev. As for many ex-Communists and capitalists-turned-socialists like Ted Turner – ecopolitics provides a new cause.

Both Strong and Gorbachev, the biggest players in global green politics, have used their organisations to push for an 'Earth Charter' which claims to be the most open and participatory consultation about the environment ever held. The Charter, with its rhapsodic statements

about protecting the earth is the velvet glove, while the accompanying Earth Charter Philosophy is the iron fist seeking global acceptance, by force if necessary, of the Charter. It consists of 'environmental commandments' of which Strong says:

The real goal of the Earth Charter is that it will in fact become like the Ten Commandments, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁶

The Earth Charter has even been placed in an 'Ark' – symbolism intended – and the push for its global acceptance is unceasing: a potent ideology drawing most environmental groups into its vortex. To have all religious groups of the world accept it is especially part of the Earth Charter game-plan. Environmental conferences, Catholic or otherwise would seem perfect tools to disseminate its 'global ethic'.

The Australian Edmund Rice Centre, which has helped the community in many practical ways has become part of the chorus calling for acceptance of the Earth Charter. On their Justice and Community Education website, open support (and willingness to disseminate it to all schools) is stated for the Charter, which is printed in full – perhaps without awareness of its deeper agenda. For example along with lyrical calls for a beautiful biosphere, clean water and greenhood (not motherhood) statements the Charter states that its aim is to:

Ensure universal access to health care that fosters reproductive health and responsible reproduction.⁷

The term 'reproductive health' is the United Nations code word for support to access abortion. Any lobbyist who has spent time at the United Nations knows this. When I was at the United Nations as part of a pro life lobby team in 1999, the Vatican Delegation to the UN with supporting pro life groups (greatly outnumbered by radical feminists) refused to give any support to a document which used this term. Its policy has not changed. While not suggesting in any way that the Edmund Rice Centre supports abortion, it does support the Earth Charter which supports abortion. In fact, any Catholics who promote it are in the invidious position of supporting abortion.

Within the green inner glow of the Earth Charter is also a new greenie spirituality. For Maurice Strong environmental concerns have always been at basis a political/new age/ spiritual

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— Editor, *Annals Australasia*.

mix, diplomatically juggled according to whichever group he is addressing. The U.S. National Centre for Public Policy Research website state,

Strong promotes Gaia, the Earth God, among the world's youth. Strong is also the director of The Temple of Understanding in New York. He uses The Temple to encourage Americans concerned about the environment to replace Christianity with the worship of 'mother earth'.

While Christians may use spiritual terms to describe awe for God's creation - the psalmists were greenies long before any greenie came along - the global environmental leaders use these terms in a different way. The earth is 'sacred' - a goddess called Gaia because it is divinised - God as Creator is out of the picture. They speak of interconnectedness and of cosmic energy and have no hesitation in expressing a pantheistic view of nature. And this is precisely what the Vatican warns against in a study of the new age entitled 'Jesus, Christ, the Water Bearer of Life' issued by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 2003. It says:

What has been successful is the generalisation of ecumenism as a testimony with nature and resacralisation of the earth, Mother Earth or Gaia, with the missionary zeal characteristic of Green politics. The Earth's executive agent is the human race as a whole, and the harmony and understanding required for responsible governance is increasingly understood to be a global government, with a global ethical framework ... In such a vision of a closed universe that contains 'God' and other spiritual beings along with ourselves, we recognize here an implicit pantheism

As implied here many well intentioned people are being lured into an ideological pantheist eco-trap, driven by high players whose beliefs are certainly at odds with Catholicism. No matter how many Bible quotations they give in support of their love of nature, Catholic greenie activists will eventually be met with the Earth Charter and Gaia, the earth goddess. For Strong, the environmental activism and new age spirituality are intimately connected. He was one of the founders of the Temple of Understanding in 1960 - a multi-faith 'church' aimed at breaking down barriers between religions which has considerable influence at the UN. On its website is a report by a 'Sister Joan

Kirby, RSCJ, Temple of Understanding, Representative to the UN' and other Catholic contributors indicating their attraction, without appropriate doses of scepticism, to global eco-spiritual causes. Adding a new age touch to their website, the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (Qld) which is listed under 'Catholic links' on the Catholic Earthcare Australia site, speak of 'Sophia - the feminine aspects of God which encompasses care of the earth' and explain:

Our use of the phrase 'Sophia's transformative dream for all creation' is a way of describing working to bring God's kingdom into reality.

Only after mentioning Sophia does the site mention that the group also draws strength from 'the person of Jesus'. The prayer to the 'Four Winds' really adds a nice finishing touch to the Social Action page and one is left wondering what it all has to do with Revelation and Catholicism. However 'care of the earth' and esoteric spiritual references often go together. They certainly do for Maurice Strong and his wife who have instituted what is ostensibly the global headquarters for the Environment and New Age Movement, the Manitou Foundation, with its mix of eastern and Christian 'spiritualities' at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains near Gestone, Colorado to which the movers and shakers in the environmental global game come to pay homage. Its aim is to unite all religions and Strong has representatives of most of the world religions living at this enviro-spiritual mecca. Judeo-Christian morality has no place there. Nor has Revelation, nor the uniqueness of Christ's redemption, the ultimate act which alone saved the

inhabitants of the earth. The Earth charter's 'spirituality' and Catholicism are fundamentally incompatible.

Are Catholics absorbing a new age 'spirituality', a collective greenism and thinly disguised Gaia orientation which is totally at odds with Catholic belief? Are Catholics being used as political pawns in a dangerous global game? Perhaps the social sin of our age is in divinising nature, dehumanising the unborn and in forgetting the true distinction between the Creator and his creatures. Contemporary radical environmentalism speaks of the 'sacred earth' but has forgotten the true Divine transcendence. Greenie politics is truly leading people of goodwill up a clever ideological garden path. The Earth Charter is a gateway to an anti-Judeo-Christian global ethic and as such has no place in Catholic school curricula or Catholic organisations. Catholics - psalmists, bishops or laity have always been greenies - but they do not need to join any organisation or support any charter to prove it.



1. http://www.catholicearthcare.org/POSITION_PAPER.html
2. <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/moral-obligation-to-ratify-kyoto-bishops/2005/11/18/1132016989649.html>
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4. Ney Phillip *The Centurion's Pathway* (Pioneer publishing, 1997)
5. Dewar Elaine *Cloak of Green* (Lorimer 1995)
6. The Earth Charter Campaign. 'Interview: Maurice Strong on a "People's Earth Charter"', March 5, 1998 <http://www.earthcharter.org/welcome/mstrong.hun>
7. http://www.erc.org.au/schools/justice_issues/Environment/extracts/1048744207.shtml
8. <http://www.nationalcenter.org/DossierStrong.html>
9. <http://sao.clriq.org.au/spirituality/spirituality.html>

WANDA SKORONSKA is a registered psychologist who works as a counsellor in inner city schools in Sydney. She has done voluntary work for the Catholic pro-life organisation Human Life International.

Clash between Civilization and Backwardness

THE clash we are witnessing around the world is not a clash of religions, or a clash of civilizations. It is a clash between two opposites, between two eras. It is a clash between a mentality that belongs to the Middle Ages and another mentality that belongs to the 21st century. It is a clash between civilization and backwardness, between the civilized and the primitive, between barbarity and rationality. It is a clash between freedom and oppression, between democracy and dictatorship. It is a clash between human rights, on the one hand, and the violation of these rights, on other hand. It is a clash between those who treat women like beasts, and those who treat them like human beings. What we see today is not a clash of civilizations. Civilizations do not clash, but compete.

- Wafa Sultan an Arab-American psychologist interviewed on Al-Jazeera TV on February 21, 2006.

Kunming, China, April 30, 2006

UNLAWFUL CONSECRATION OF BISHOP FOR FICTITIOUS CHINESE 'DIOCESE'

By AUDREY DONNITHORNE



THE episcopal ordination on the 30th of April, at Kunming, Yunnan province, of Father Ma Yinglin as 'Bishop of Yunnan' [not a diocese recognised by the Holy See] appears to be a deliberate attempt to scupper the negotiations between China and the Holy See. Fr. Ma works in the office of Mr. Liu Bainian, the National Secretary of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and has been his compliant offsider.

Liu Bainian harshly criticised the recent elevation of Archbishop Zen to the Cardinalate, at a time when senior leaders of the Chinese government were making conciliatory remarks. A successful conclusion of the negotiations would threaten the role of the Catholic Patriotic Association and, more especially, of Liu himself who has long shown hostility to the Holy See.

Father Ma Yinglin is General Secretary of the China Catholic Bishops' College (CCBC), which groups the official (above ground) bishops. This excludes the unofficial (underground) bishops and is not recognised by the Holy See as a genuine bishops' conference.

If the Holy See were to give legitimacy to Bishop Ma, who is so closely associated both with the CCPA and the CCBC, it would be widely interpreted as giving legitimacy to both these organisations, neither of which has papal recognition.

Furthermore, in order to ensure the implementation of the 'Three Self Policy,' Father Ma has been 'used' by the authorities to read the approval of the CCBC at all ordination ceremonies of official bishops without making mention of the fact that the priest being consecrated had also obtained Papal approval. In future, as a bishop, Ma is likely to be dispatched to take an active part in such ceremonies, which would automatically deprive them of legitimacy.

Father Ma is from Hebei province, north China and has no connection with Yunnan which is a very complex province. Many of the Yunnan Catholics belong to ethnic minorities about which he knows nothing.

Yunnan province has three ecclesiastical units recognized by the Holy See but the Chinese authorities have amalgamated these to form one diocese with Bishop Ma as 'Bishop of Yunnan'. If Rome were to approve this, it would be interpreted as the Holy See approving the Chinese government's right to alter diocesan boundaries, something which is reserved exclusively to the Holy Father.

There are only 11 or 12 priests in Yunnan province and the Catholics there are very scattered and lack cohesion, partly because of their different ethnicities. Since the departure of the last French bishop, there has been no legitimate bishop in the province. The illegitimate Bishop Kong Lingzhong, whom I knew personally, was prevented by strong-arm lay action from celebrating Mass in his own cathedral. The congregation rioted and drove him out. After that, I used to see him on Sunday mornings, standing near the outer wall of the church compound, trying to chat with the Catholics! So the Catholics of Kunming, although devoid of worldly power, lack neither loyalty to the Church nor determination to defend it.

A positive response to the recent elections in Iraq, and hopes for a democratic future for the war-torn country.

MANY COMMUNITIES, ONE DEMOCRACY

By KHALED FOUAD ALLAM



W e a r e beginning, paradoxically, to grow accustomed to a certain 'normalization'

of the electoral process in Iraq. The December 15 elections consecrated a point of arrival for the democratization of Iraqi society.

The statistical data are clear: the first of these is the 70 percent participation in the voting. Then there is the stark reduction of the terrorist threat during the voting process, and – contrary to what one might have expected – an enormous turnout at the ballot boxes in the zone of Fallujah, symbol of the Sunni triangle. Even Iran's Arabic television news outlet, al-Alam, which has a large audience among the Shiite Iraqis, emphasized the vast participation of all the components of Iraqi society. The definitive results on the composition of the new Iraqi parliament, whose members will remain in office for four years, will be made known in around two weeks.

All this is undoubtedly a success, both for the Iraqi people and for the United States, in the face of those who disputed, and still dispute, the exporting of democracy, a question that is feeding a philosophical debate that will mark all the geopolitical transformations of the twenty-first century.

In any case, the widespread participation in the electoral consultation and the success of the electoral process in spite of the dramatic lack of security in the country require a more profound interpretation.

What is the mechanism by which, in wartime, a people feels called so urgently to the polls? In reality, we

Annals happily offers its readers the following response by Khaled Fouad Allam to the recent elections in Iraq. It has always been our editorial policy to offer our readers both, or as many other sides of a question, as there are. In this instance the author proposes grounds for optimism in the wake of the Iraqi elections and suggests that the new Constitution offers hope for the future of democracy in the new Iraq. His views are commonly aired by supporters of the military intervention of the US and her allies in Iraq. Ed.

have undervalued the fact that, even though the tanks entered into Iraq, the premise of this was a precise American plan for the reformulation of the Iraqi nation, which most Europeans probably did not realize. And they also did not understand that this reformulation of the Iraqi nation – meaning the significance that the notion of Iraqi identity can assume – no longer passes through the equation of Iraqi identity with belonging to the Arab nation, but rather through the possibility granted to the Iraqi to be an integral part of

the Arab nation, this time through community membership: Shiite, Sunni, or Kurdish.

From the beginning, the Americans have kept in mind the fact that the Iraqi mosaic is a patchwork of ethnic-national communities – as, for example, the Kurds, who find their identity in the formation of a national Kurdish community – and confessional communities (Shiite, Sunni, and Christian) which can be multiethnic, because there are, for example, Christian and Sunni Kurds.

The problem is structuring this communitarian universe through political construction, through the creation of new relationships, knowing that the nationalist Arab system, in the name of the Arab nation, made a 'tabula rasa' of all the other forms of membership, marginalizing the most important of these, beginning with the Shiites.

The new constitution completely overturned the Iraqi political perspective, asserting in chapter 1, article 3, that Iraq is a multiethnic and multireligious country, that it is part

Truth is more basic than Power

THIS is the beautiful scandal of the papacy: it is an institution that proclaims that truth is more basic than power even when those of us weaned on a (Protestant) hermeneutics of suspicion can only see the papacy as a contradiction. To see the beauty of truth requires a Protestant rethinking of the papacy. This does not mean denying that truth and power are always linked, but it does mean rejecting the notion that the former is always vitiated by the latter. Even where we still disagree with what the Catholic Church pronounces, we will have to address the truth of what is pronounced and not simply dismiss it as a sinister play for power.

– D. Stephen Long, *Christian Century*, May 17, 2005.

of the Islamic world, and that its Arab population is part of the Arab nation.

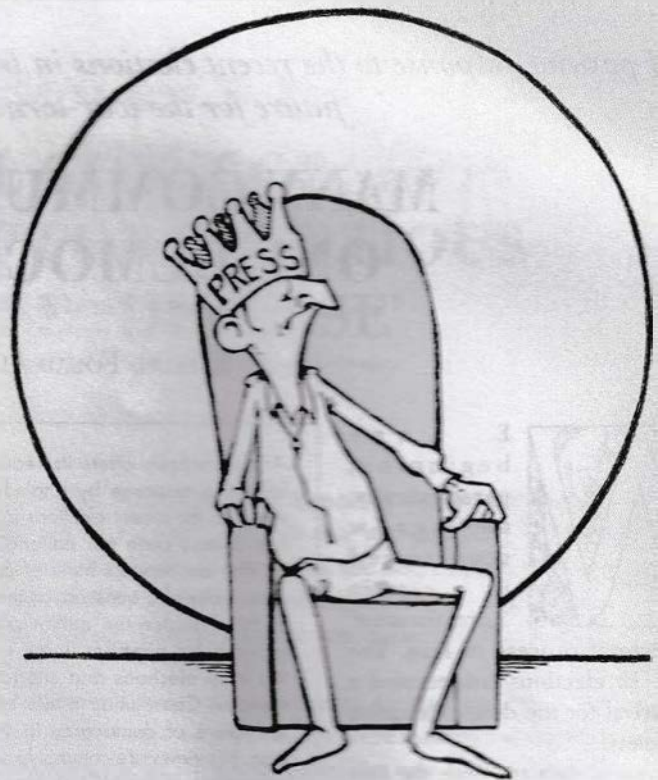
The last sentence is the most important for gaining perspective on the change taking place in Iraq, and it explains in part the Iraqis' enthusiastic participation in the vote. The difference in comparison with the past is noteworthy: in reality, Iraq ceases to be an Arab nation or part of the Arab nation, but the Arabs of Iraq reserve the right to belong to this community even beyond Iraq's borders.

Today, the Iraqi society that is being constructed makes itself visible to the world by participating in political elections, but the new nation must still be constructed, and no one can say today whether this will work or not. Because it will be precisely on the terrain of politics, of the forces in play and the game of alliances, that the new Iraqi society's capacity to define itself politically will be demonstrated. Politics is the very strange art of living together: but to practice it, the Iraqis need to rediscover their liberty, which was taken from them in the name of the nation, eliminating what a society is, meaning its ethnic, religious, and cultural complexity. I maintain that the Americans saw things properly in considering the communitarian perspective an obligatory step for the reformulation of Iraqi society.

There remains a fundamental problem: the situation in Iraq, if it does

Editorial Comment

We suspect that events [in Samarra and elsewhere] have already overtaken our author, and that his thesis is regrettably untenable. If Iraq is not an Arab nation [as it isn't] and if Iraqi Arabs can be part of the Arab 'nation' even beyond Iraq's borders, well and good. This is not much different from Britons living in Australia retaining their UK citizenship. But when the Arab Nation [the Umma] is coextensive with the Islamic Nation [Umma] which is the antithesis of Democracy how secure can the other members of the so-called multi-Ethnic and multi-religious country of Iraq be in their 'democracy'? Shi'ites, Kurds and Christians speak Arabic, but they are not 'Arab'. And the Shi'ite, in the eyes of many Sunni, are not even Muslims. 'Ay,' as Shakespeare wisely warns, 'there's the rub'.



Foreign correspondent

FOR three days the town was in turmoil. Lories were chartered and provisioned; guides engaged; cooks and guards and muleteers and caravan boys and hunters, cooks' boys, guards' boys, muleteers' boys, caravan-boys' boys and hunters' boys were recruited at unprecedented rates of pay; all over the city, in the offices and legations, resident Europeans found themselves deserted by their servants; seminarists left the missions, male-nurses the hospital, highly placed clerks their government departments to compete for the journalists' wages.

The price of benzine was doubled overnight and rose steadily until the day of the exodus. Terrific deals were done in the bazaar in tinned foodstuffs; they were cornered by a Parsee and unloaded on a Banja, cornered again by an Arab, resold and rebought, before they reached the journalists' stores. Shumble bought William's rifle and sold a half share in it to Whelper. Everyone now emulated the costume of the Frenchmen; sombreros, dungarees, jodhpurs, sunproof shirts and bullet-proof waistcoats, holsters, bandoliers, Newmarket boots, cutlasses, filled the Liberty. The men of the Excelsior Movie-Sound News sporting the horse-hair capes and silk skirts of native chieftains, made camp in the Liberty garden and photographed themselves at great length in attitudes of vigilance and repose.

— *Scoop, a Novel about Journalists*, by Evelyn Waugh, Chapman & Hall, 1933.

work, will work only in the context of a homogeneous Middle East. If this new democracy remains surrounded by countries governed by antidemocratic forces, the risk is a weakening of what has just been constructed.



A native of Algeria, KHALED FOUAD ALLAM is a sociologist and a specialist of the Muslim world who teaches at the University of Trieste and the University of Urbino as well as the Stanford program in Florence. In addition to his academic commitments, Professor Allam has been an editorialist and columnist for the national Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* since 2003.

Your spiritual health may be at risk

BEWARE OF THE RAPTURE

By KEVIN HILFERTY



If you haven't yet heard millions of born-again Protestants believe in the rapture. They are quite convinced that when the rapture arrives, they will be swept into the air where they will meet Christ in the sky. Pilots will disappear from planes, bus, truck and car drivers from their vehicles, which makes for a scary scenario. The rest of us will be left behind to suffer seven years of tribulation (if we survive the traffic accidents).

It all arises from the teachings of two 19th century preachers who cobbled together unrelated passages from St Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians and the Book of Revelation plus some dubious prophecy theology to create a totally new and unscriptural message about the rapture and the end of the world.

Mixed with this are highly-selective scriptural quotations from Revelation including 'the four horsemen of the Apocalypse,' 'the mark of the beast,' 'the false prophet,' the infamous number '666' and the 'whore of Babylon' who drinks the blood of Christians in the world's last days (and who the preachers identify as the Vatican). They scour the daily headlines for reports of wars and disasters that may point to the end time, with particular attention to Israel.

The first thing to note about people preaching that the end of the world is at hand and even predicting the date have been around for almost two thousand years and the earth is still firm beneath our feet. But at no time in the past have they had access to the communications technology enjoyed by the current rapture promoters. Books by the scores of millions roll off the presses, TV and radio boom out their message, videos and DVDs supplement it. The mass market for the books is in the

United States but they are big sellers in Australia and not just in Christian bookshops. All the big mainstream booksellers offer them because they are good for business and most council libraries have them on their shelves.

The message they convey is slick and cunningly crafted. The theme is that Christ is coming back not once but twice. On one of these visits will come the rapture; Christ will snatch up into heaven true born-again believers and innocent children, both living and dead. Left behind will be the unbelievers – not just atheists but Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Muslims, Hindus and everybody else.

Massive turmoil will follow and without genuine (i.e. born again) Christians to oppose him, the devil will take control of the world through his human puppet, the Antichrist. Then will follow seven years of wars and destruction until Christ returns and vanquishes the Antichrist at Armageddon and 1,000 years of peace will follow.

You and I may well regard this scenario as a load of nonsense but millions do not and flash their credit cards to buy the latest books and DVDs about the rapture and the end-times soon to be with us (they believe). While millions of Americans consider themselves secular humanists, another 50 per cent believe the events outlined in the Book of Revelation will take place.

There are 70 million evangelicals in the United States, about 25 per cent of the population, attending more than 200,000 evangelical churches staffed by fire-breathing conservative preachers. Historically, evangelicals have a long tradition of belief in the end-of-time and the Book of Revelation going back to the Pilgrim Fathers (who wanted to build a New Jerusalem in the American wilderness). They also harbour a deep-seated hostility to the Catholic Church. To them, belief in the rapture comes easily.

Pre, mid and post

'Are you Pre, Mid or Post? If you don't know how to answer that question, you're probably a Catholic. Most Fundamentalists and Evangelicals know that these words are shorthand for pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation and post-tribulation. The terms all refer to when the rapture is supposed to come.'

With these words an American website, *Catholic Answers*, begins an explanation of the rapture. Virtually all Christians hold that the Second Coming will be preceded by a time of great trouble and persecution of God's people (2 Thess. 2:1-4). This period is often called the tribulation. Until the nineteenth century, Christians agreed that the rapture – though it was not called that at the time – would occur immediately before the Second Coming, at the close of the period of persecution. This position is today

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called the 'post-tribulation' view because it says the rapture will come after the tribulation.

But in the 1800s, some preachers began to claim that the rapture would occur before the period of persecution. This position, the 'pre-tribulation' view, was taken up by John Nelson Darby, a minister of the Church of Ireland (an affiliate of the Anglican Church). He became a leader of a fundamentalist movement known as Dispensationalism before founding the Plymouth Brethren.

Darby's pre-tribulation view was then picked up by a Kansas City lawyer named C.I. Scofield who taught it in the extensive footnotes of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, published with the King James text in 1909 and widely distributed in Britain and America. Many Protestants who read the *Scofield Reference Bible* uncritically accepted what its footnotes said and adopted the pre-tribulation view, even though no Christian had heard of it in the previous 1800 years of Church history.

Eventually, a third position developed, known as the 'mid-tribulation' view, which claims the rapture will occur during the middle of the tribulation. Finally, a fourth view developed that claims that there will not be a single rapture where all believers are gathered to Christ, but that there will be a series of mini-raptures that occur at different times with respect to the tribulation. Confusing, isn't it?

Catholics certainly believe that the event of our gathering together to be with Christ will take place, though we do not use the word 'rapture' to refer to this. Interestingly the term 'rapture' is derived from the text of the old Catholic Latin Vulgate of 1 Thess. 4:17 - 'we will be caught up,' [Latin: *rapiemur*].

The rapture publishing phenomenon

Numerous authors write about the rapture - there is even a Christian Western writer who has turned out 80 cowboy books. These writers call themselves 'faith-based' and are producing books to meet an expanding demand across numerous themes: detective stories, science fiction and romance novels (known in the trade as chick lit).

But far and away the most successful is 80-years-old Tim LaHaye, evangelical co-author of the 12 big-selling *Left Behind* books. He has a populist touch and a real gift for communicating his message to a mass audience.

After World War II service as an air gunner, LaHaye graduated from the virulently anti-Catholic Bob Jones University in South Carolina. He became pastor of a Baptist church in San Diego, California where he built the congregation from 350 to 3,000. Disturbed by the liberal and secularist decisions of the US Supreme Court on such matters as racial segregation, abortion, school prayer and the rights of women he resigned his pastorship in 1981 and joined the Reverend Jerry Falwell to form the Moral Majority. This organisation is credited with helping Ronald Reagan win two presidential terms. Later LaHaye became co-chairman of Republican Jack Kemp's 1988 presidential campaign but resigned when some of his anti-Catholic writings came to light.

His wife Beverly heads an organisation called Concerned Women for America, which has 600,000 members and campaigns against abortion, pornography and sex education in schools.

In the mid-90s LaHaye, already a widely published author, turned his hand to the *Left Behind* books. He made a deal to share authorship with a writer from the Moody Bible Institute, Jerry B Jenkins, who actually wrote the books while LaHaye provided the ideas and inspiration. Published by Tyndale House Press of Wheaton, Illinois, they are similar in concept to a 1970s best seller, *The Late, Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsay, which predicted the world would come to an end in 1988 but with its sequels sold 35 million copies.

The LaHaye series capitalises on the success of the popular books by Tom Clancy and John Grisham, with muscular all-American heroes overcoming the forces of evil. The first *Left Behind*, appeared in 1995 and introduced the hero, airline pilot Captain Rayford Steele. Landing in Chicago, Steele and his crew learn of the mysterious disappearance of thousands of born-again Christians all over the world together with all small innocent children. The rapture has arrived!

Hollywood: Control through Entertainment

... why is moral causality so repugnant to Hollywood? Because it is the only thing that allows people to make sense out of their lives. Hollywood is in the business of control through entertainment. Morality is the opposite of that. It is autonomy through restraint. Hollywood's main weapon against moral causality is pornography in its various forms because passion short-circuits reason and provides the simplest form of control. But their lust to dominate goes beyond that. The thread that leads Theseus out of the labyrinth of his own passion is practical reason, which is another word for morality. Syphilis was a moral tale that got decertified in two different ways in two different movies. Which shows how important it is to those who are willing to wreck their stories and lose Oscars by not mentioning it.

At this point, it might be appropriate to mention successful cures, not to syphilis but to what causes syphilis, namely, movies. The antidote to Hollywood used to be known as the pledge, not the Alcohol Pledge (although it was similar) but the Legion of Decency Pledge not to see obscene movies. The Legion of Decency Pledge was the teeth in the production code. I've written about its demise in John Cardinal Krol and the Cultural Revolution. The pledge is based on the premise of moral causality, the one premise which Hollywood goes out of its way to deny, even if it means wrecking perfectly good stories that could earn lots of money. As Larry Dickson has pointed out, an oath is the only thing that most people have. The only oath of any significance left in our culture is the marriage vow, which is undermined by Hollywood because Hollywood wants to weaken and control people by robbing their lives of moral significance. The pledge is the one thing Hollywood feared in the past, and it is something they can learn to fear again. The details still need to be worked out, but a pledge of total abstinence when it comes to television might be a good place to start.

- E. Michael Jones. This article was published in the May, 2006 issue of *Culture Wars*.

The theme is consistent through the 12 books of the series. There is the unmasking of the Antichrist who turns out to be the Secretary-General of the UN (of which the American right is

deeply suspicious) and who arranges for an evil American cardinal to be elected to the Papacy then to become, as Peter II, Pontifex Maximus of the Antichrist's new church, One World Faith.

World War III breaks out accompanied by famine and disease, and so it goes, with Steele as the Indiana Jones-style hero. In Book 11, *Armageddon*, the final battle with evil begins and in Book 12, *Glorious Appearing*, the prophecy in *Left Behind* is fulfilled. Christ appears at the head of an army, which destroys the forces of the Antichrist in a welter of blood and death, watched by Captain Steele from the roof of his Hummer.

Those who are still alive will see Christ return in glory to begin his thousand-year reign in Jerusalem. Because of their shrewd blend of popular fiction with suggestions of biblical authenticity, the *Left Behind* books are an attractive way of promoting rapture teachings.

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Other authors have adopted the rapture theology and end time theme. Ted Dekker's recent *Obsessed* has as its theme an apocalyptic confrontation between good and evil in which the grace of God protects the innocent and enables them to triumph. But Tyndale really knows how to market the LaHaye books and has produced some 60 million copies. Along with the books (in 33 languages) come the spin-offs: book readings on cassette tapes, t-shirts with rapture logos, videos of movie versions of the books, chat rooms, games, music CDs, comic books and an on-line prophecy club.

There is also the Left Behind youth series targeted at readers aged from ten to 14. The central characters are four teenagers left behind to battle the forces of the Antichrist when their families disappear in the rapture. With four books corresponding to each of the 12 Left Behind adult books, the 48 books encourage teenagers to develop a long-term involvement with the fictional characters and with rapture teaching.

Tyndale has made many millions from the books and LaHaye is reported to have made \$US50 million, although he says he keeps only enough to live on and donates the rest to charity. He has signed a deal for a new series of novels

inspired by Revelation and called *Babylon Rising*. I saw a copy recently in my local council library. Yet another venture for LaHaye and Jenkins is a prequel to the *Left Behind* books, with the familiar characters, so far two of these books have appeared, *The Rising* and *The Regime*.

All these books were written to proselytise, to spread the rapture message and with it fundamental evangelicalism. One recent commentator even describes the series as a revenge fantasy in which right wing Christians win out over the rational, scientific and secularist modern world.

In the US, rapture believers target young Catholics. They warn them that unless they renounce some essential beliefs of the Catholic Church they will not be considered true Christians and will be left behind when the rapture occurs.

Radio, TV and Internet

When I first lived in the United States as a young journalist for an Australian media group, I enjoyed taking a rental car along the roads of the mid-west, west and south-west, listening to country and western music on the radio and occasionally tuning in to the local preachers. I found

their fiery and colourful language entertaining and I did not take their fundamentalism seriously – even their dire warnings against the Catholic Church. If they spoke on social issues it was to warn against the machinations of Wall Street and the banks.

But now their reach has been magnified with the growth of the fundamentalist churches and their ability to tap into funds from donors and big publishing houses. Their message can be heard over 2,000 Christian radio stations and scores of TV stations (TV preachers are called *televangelists*). On my most recent visit to the US their messages came blasting out of the car radio: the end is nigh, the signs are there to be seen if you lift the scales from your eyes, Christ is coming, be ready for the rapture.

On social issues they are deeply conservative and echo the right-wing radio shock jocks who fervently support Israel, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, endorse capital punishment, are critical of the EU and the UN and oppose gun laws.

But by far the oddest manifestation of the rapture can be found on the Internet at www.raptureready.com. This regularly updates its rapture index from signs true believers detect in the daily headlines. As the end draws ever nearer, it recommends those believers convinced they will be taken up into the sky to leave messages on the fridge door for those doomed to stay behind.

One segment questions whether Jesus would vote Republican, presuming he must be an American. Examining the policies of the Democratic Party, it comes down very strongly against this option. The Republicans are far from perfect, it concludes, but they would get Jesus' vote. It closes with the message: Vote Republican and Vote Often. In the US, this bizarre site is the second most popular on the Internet.

Political clout

A substantial group of voters with an apocalyptic view of the future and influenced by their fiery pastors attracted the attention of the conservative right wing of the Republican Party. They sensed an opportunity among rural and working-class people repelled by the excesses of the 60s and uneasy about where

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America was going – and they were right.

The Republicans successfully targeted disaffected Democrat voters in the two Reagan elections but with George W. Bush the Christian right found a presidential candidate after its own heart. Bush had converted to evangelical Christianity in Texas in 1984, at the age of 40.

Bush opened his successful campaign for the presidency in 1999 with a speech at Bob Jones University where he got a rapturous reception from the students. The intellectual calibre of the university can be seen in a description in 2000 by its president, Bob Jones III, of Mormonism and Catholicism as 'cults which call themselves Christian' while other campus leaders have described Pope John Paul XXIII as the 'anti-Christ' and the Catholic Church as 'satanic' and 'the Mother of Harlots.'

Bush also authorised a vicious campaign against his Catholic rival for the Republican nomination John W. McCain which knocked him out of the race. Once in the White House President Bush responded to his political supporters by banning US Government aid to international family planning groups that provide abortion

Blame the Drought

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Ain't they heard of gravity?

Jack broke his crown on the way down,

Dented by a heavy pail,

[Depending on the magistrate Jill could get out on bail].

No witness to the accident,

A 'cover-up' – we worry,

Police records only indicate

They came down in a hurry.

– Ann Cuddy.

or counselling and signed further anti-abortion legislation. Breaking with US tradition which draws a constitutional line between church and state, the President authorised the grant of \$UA1.1 billion to faith-based groups that provided social services. None of these funds went to Jewish or Muslim

organisations and the grant was seen as largely benefiting Christians.

The born again American right has also forged an alliance with right wingers in Israel, which they firmly believe must be preserved and supported by Divine Right as the Land of the Bible. Despite the perils from suicide bombings, hundreds of thousands of American evangelicals visit Israel each year, bringing with them billions of dollars in tourist revenue.

They also provide the Israeli right with a powerful US lobby. In 1998 Reverend Jerry Falwell organised an effective campaign to discourage President Clinton from pressuring Israel to withdraw from the West Bank of the Jordan. The slogan for this was 'Not Another Inch.' When President Bush asked the then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to take his tanks out of Jenin in 2002 he received 100,000 angry e-mails from fundamentalists and never mentioned the issue again.

It is an alarming thought that these people who believe Israel should expand into the biblical lands (most of the Middle East) may be influencing the American agenda in this troubled region.



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Believers should not be outdone by unbelievers

TRUTH, the Word of God and the Wisdom of God through whom all that came to be was made, is supreme above all, and has its lovers. What does Truth's lover say? 'Glorify the Lord with me'. I don't want to be alone in glorifying the Lord. I don't want to be alone in loving him; in being embraced by him. It is of the nature of Wisdom that all souls be encompassed by it, and enjoy it.

But what can I say, brethren? It seems that those who love God are ashamed to have others know of it. Shallow human beings love chariot races. And someone who loves chariots and hunting wants everyone else to go along with him. Someone else will urge them, saying: 'Join me in my love of this unseemly vaudaville act. Join me in my love of baseness. He cries out among the people urging them to love this unseemliness with him. Yet we do not hear the Christian crying out in the Church for others to love God's Truth with him.

Stir this love in yourselves, brethren, and cry out, each to the other: 'Glorify the Lord with me'. If we love the Body of Christ, that is, the Unity of the Church, then let us draw others to embrace it saying: 'Glorify the Lord with me'.

— St Augustine of Hippo, *Commentary on Psalm xxxiii*, Sermo ii, 6,20-35. Delivered at Hippo, in 405 AD. Translated by Paul Stenhouse MSC.

Other Christians and the rapture

It is worth noting that the rapture is not a matter of Catholic-Protestant disagreement. Not one of the major leaders of the Protestant Reformation – Luther, Calvin, Zwingli – ever taught such a doctrine. They would have found it as unbiblical as does the Catholic Church.

Today all but the fundamentalist Christian churches ignore the concept of the rapture. Most bible commentaries, dictionaries and encyclopedias do not even list 'rapture' in their indexes. But the rapture believers continue to press their case, backing it with carefully selected biblical quotations. The same bible, when read by Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and mainline Protestants, tells no such story.

A trenchant critic of rapture promoters is Barbara R. Rossing, a New Testament scholar and an associate professor at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. She maintains that the rapture is a fraud of monumental proportions, as well as a disturbing way to instill fear in people.

'The rapture is a racket,' she wrote in the first sentence of her recent book *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*. 'Whether prescribing a violent script for Israel or survivalism in the United States, this theology distorts God's vision for the world.'

'In place of healing, the rapture proclaims escape. In place of Jesus' blessing of peace making, the rapture voyeuristically glorifies violence and war. This theology is not biblical. We are not raptured off the earth, nor is God. No, God has come to live in the world through Jesus. God created the world. God loves the world, and God will never leave the world behind!'

Catholics and the End Time

In *Glorious Appearing*, the last of the End Time series, the climax is the

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battle between the armies of Christ and those of the Antichrist at Armageddon or Megiddo – south of the Lake of Galilee in the Plain of Jezreel. Christ appears out of the heavens at the head of his army, mounted on a white horse. He wears a brilliant white robe with written on the thigh the words KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Following him into battle are the armies of heaven, clad in white linen and riding white horses.

As Christ speaks, his enemies (the soldiers of the Unity Army and presumably God's creatures) fall down dying in agony, blood erupting from their bodies and forming lakes, rivers and swamps across the land. More words and a chasm opens beneath the feet of the leaders of the army, then as they fall shrieking into the pit, the earth closes above them.

Can a Catholic recognise Christ, the Prince of Peace, in this? I suggest not.

Warning of the dangers arising from the End Time books, the Catholic Bishops of Illinois say the series reinforces an unhealthy and immature belief in a harshly judgemental God. They call on those responsible for faith formation to provide planned, coherent and informed catechesis to all age groups about church teachings on the end of the world, based on Scripture and tradition.

The American Bishops' document on the series makes these points:

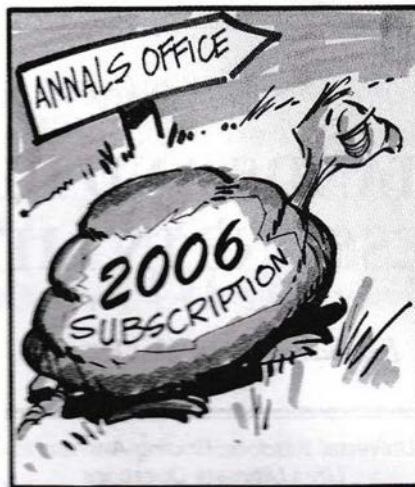
- Any fundamentalist reading of apocalyptic Scripture is not Catholic teaching. Many of the End Time books contain a quotation from Revelation as an epilogue. The familiarity of these ingredients can lead people to assume that the series reflects biblical truth. Not so!
- A 'second chance' at salvation is not biblical. There is simply no basis for a time during which people judged unfit for heaven can make good. Judgement, we are told, will be swift and final. We will all, at the same time, receive the final judgement (Matt. 13:17-43).
- The Left Behind books' harsh and judgemental image of God reinforces a common stereotype of God as a judge on a throne watching each person's every move. In the books, God's judgement seems harsh and focused on small

sins, as if perfect behaviour is required of us.

- The theology of suffering is not Catholic. The escape of 'good' people and innocent children in the rapture, excusing them from years of tribulation, suggests that the virtuous should be excused from suffering. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, quoting Scripture, says the entire Church will suffer tribulation before the return of Christ.
- The Left Behind books deny the efficaciousness of Baptism. In the series people are saved at a specific moment by saying a verbal formula. In contrast with this born again version, the Catholic Church teaches that salvation is a process effected in the sacraments of initiation and continuing throughout Christian life.
- The Left Behind series is both subtly and overtly anti-Catholic. It has had a large impact on the culture of 21st century America. By misleading people to fear the return of Christ rather than to wait in joyful hope, Left Behind theology can be a danger to the Church and especially to impressionable youth. Pastors and religious educators should be prepared to counteract the confusion these books may cause in the minds of Catholics.

The prominent American Catholic scholar Dr Paul Thigpen warns that Catholics need a more careful catechesis to help them avoid the problems of the rapture trap. In this way, he says, they can embrace a more Catholic vision of the end time that focuses on renewal, reconciliation and hope instead of believing, as the rapture doctrine does, in destruction, separation and vengeance.

- Older male readers of *Annals Australia* may recall Victorian adventure books for boys by Charles Kingsley and G.A. Henty; often these were the only books available in poorly stocked libraries. Kingsley (1819-1875) was an Anglican clergyman then Professor of History at Cambridge. He had immense success with his novel *Westward Ho!*, first published in 1855, about the Elizabethan sea captain Sir Francis Drake and his crew of sturdy young



Devon men fighting and humiliating the wicked and cruel Spanish in Latin America. The book is packed with historical inaccuracies and anti-Catholic prejudice.

Henty (1832-1903) was a soldier and an adventurer before he took up writing, often turning out three or four books for boys each year. Typical is *Under Drake's Flag*, which follows the course set by Kingsley, with Drake and his brave lads in an orgy of destruction and looting in Spain's American colonies plus a strong anti-Catholic theme. Long forgotten in Britain and Australia, these books have recently enjoyed a new lease of life in the United States where Henty is a big seller among the Christian Right. The market for them is the one million-plus 'home schoolers' whose parents have taken them out of the state educational systems from religious considerations, distrust of educational fads or fear of shootings. Despite their anti-Semitism, overt racism and glorification of violence, Henty's books sell because buyers believe they represent 'true' history rather than history re-written according to the criteria of political correctness. If we consider this bizarre, ask yourself how many people you know believe every word of *The Da Vinci Code* to be true?

KEVIN HILFERTY is a Sydney journalist with an interest in English Catholic history and is a regular contributor to *Annals Australia*.

YOU should know that this salvation from God has been sent to all peoples.'

– St Paul, *Acts of the Apostles*, 28, 28

America the Beautiful

America the Beautiful,
or so you used to be.
Land of the Pilgrims' pride;
I'm glad they'll never see.

Babies piled in dumpsters,
Abortion on demand,
Oh, sweet land of liberty;
your house is on the sand.

Our children wander aimlessly
poisoned by cocaine,
Choosing to indulge their lusts,
when God has said abstain.

From sea to shining sea,
our Nation turns away
From the teaching of God's love
and a need to always pray.

We've kept God in our temples,
how callous we have grown.
When earth is but His footstool,
and Heaven is His throne.

We've voted in a government
that's rotting at the core.
Appointing Godless Judges
who throw reason out the door.

Too soft to place a killer
in a well deserved tomb,
But brave enough to kill a baby
before he leaves the womb.

You think that God's not angry,
that our land's a moral slum?
How much longer will He wait
before His judgment comes?

How are we to face our God,
from Whom we cannot hide?
What then is left for us to do,
but stem this evil tide?

If we who are His children,
will humbly turn and pray;
Seek His holy face
and mend our evil way:

Then God will hear from Heaven
and forgive us of our sins,
He'll heal our sickly land
and those who live within.

But, America the Beautiful,
if you don't – then you will see,
A sad but Holy God
withdraw His hand from Thee.

– The above is a poem written by Judge Roy Moore from Alabama. Judge Moore was sued by the ACLU for displaying the Ten Commandments in his courtroom foyer. He has been stripped of his judgeship and now they are trying to strip his right to practise law in Alabama. The judge's poem sums it up quite well.

In quest of the multiple keys to success

KELLY STANDS AND DELIVERS LESSONS IN LIFE

Reviewed by IAN MACDONALD



At a low point in his young life, Brett Kelly did thirty-four interviews with people who were more or less notable. He was in quest of the key to success. Such interviews are staple fodder in magazines and newspapers. Predictably representatives of the publishing industry did not rush to beat him over the head with cheque books and compel him to sign a lucrative contract.

Undaunted, and inspired by a mix of

Universal Wisdom: Finding Answers to Life's Ultimate Questions

By Brett Kelly, Clown Publishing nsp \$495 (hardback), \$29.95 (soft cover) Postage \$5.

chutzpah and unadulterated opinion, Kelly raised the finance to publish the work himself. He called it, *Collective Wisdom*. It surprised him by becoming a best seller.

Perhaps it surprised the publishing industry even more, not to mention his interviewees, most of them whom had done previous interviews that were lost in the limbo between the cuttings files

and the recycling depot. They included Cardinal Edward Clancy, Bob Hawke, Malcolm Turnbull, Jeff Kennett, Gerry Harvey, Kathryn Greiner, Cheryl Kennet, Jackie Roche and Ray Martin.


Kelly did have timely assistance from Senator Nansha Stott Despoja whose name and fame helped him to secure a launch at the National Press Club, Canberra. He also donated 50 per cent of the proceeds to Youth off the Streets Inc. And his brother Nathan Kelly took the pictures.

Kelly asked his interviewees a fixed set series of questions. On the plus side this meant being able to compare their answers and attitudes; on the negative side it prevented his following up potentially interesting digressions.

Now he has written a sequel. Well, not exactly written. More created. With characteristic frankness, he makes it clear that he looked up the Yellow Pages when he needed a writer to put together the seven profiles that form the basis for his ruminations on wisdom. He calls the writer Dan.

If anything the profiles are more eclectic in their range than the interviews: Pope John Paul II, multi-billionaire investor Warren Buffett, Martin Luther King, Helen Keller, Nelson Mandela, Mohandas Gandhi and Mother Teresa.

In addition with the power of these names, Kelly offers a CD (\$29.95) *How to Get the Most out of Universal Wisdom*. There's more: *How to publish a best-selling book - The Story of Collective Wisdom* (a special limited edition CD provided free with 2,500 copies of *Universal Wisdom*).

If nothing else, Brett Kelly's work proves that youth is not always wasted on the young. But he must be careful otherwise the marketing tail will wag the narrative dog. 

The Beauty of the Papacy

OF course, the other instruments of unity [Holy Scripture, the ancient Creeds etc] do attract our love and devotion. But they are more easily used than loved. What we have seen in the funeral of John Paul II and the election of Benedict XVI is the possibility of loving the faith as a human gift that is received, and in that very reception acknowledging its contingency and fragility. Hugo Rahner once wrote, 'All the churches who wish to withdraw from the unity of the Church dogmatically first of all seek refuge within the state but soon are absorbed by the state and fall with it.' This is why, he suggested, 'the guiding role of the papacy is needed.' Can those of us who are Protestants deny this accusation? Could we ever see in our own churches the transnational, multicultural and multiclass expression of love and joy we witnessed in St. Peter's Square? If not, then how can we refuse to acknowledge the beauty of the papacy?

— D. Stephen Long, *Christian Century*, May 17, 2005.

Pope Benedict XVI met his priests of the diocese of Rome on March 2, in the Sala di benedizioni, The Hall of Blessings, in the Vatican.

THE HOLY FATHER SPEAKS WITH HIS PRIESTS

[Part 2]

AFTER a greeting by Cardinal Camillo Ruini, vicar of Rome, the Holy Father responded to questions and statements by ten priests, and later responded to the interventions of five other priests. Last month we printed ten of these questions and the Holy Father's reply. The following is a synopsis of the remaining five questions.

11th Question. Adolescents are victims of today's 'desert of love' and suffer appallingly from lack of love. They suffer from the fear of being lonely and misunderstood. Some priests also feel 'inwardly dislocated.' How can we be experts in 'agape,' in the fullness of love, in order to be able to make the total gift of ourselves to help them?

The Holy Father: I will now continue, starting with the Pontifical Academy. We can tangibly feel today all that you said about the problem of adolescents, their loneliness and their being misunderstood by adults.

It is interesting that these young people who seek closeness in discothèques are actually suffering from great loneliness and, of course, also from misunderstanding.

This seems to me, in a certain sense, an expression of the fact that parents, as has been said, are largely absent from the formation of the family. And mothers too are obliged to work outside the home. Communion between them is very fragile.

Each family member lives in a world of his or her own: They are isolated in their thoughts and feelings, which are not united. The great problem of this time - in which each person, desiring to have life for himself, loses it because he is isolated and isolates the other from him - is to rediscover the deep communion which in the end can only stem from a foundation that is common to all souls, from the divine presence that unites all of us.

I think that the condition for this is to overcome loneliness and misunderstanding, because the latter also results from the fact that thought today is fragmented. Each one seeks his own way of thinking and living and there is no communication in a profound vision of life.

Young people feel exposed to new horizons which previous generations do not share; therefore, continuity in the vision of the world is absent, caught up as it is in an ever more rapid succession of new inventions.

In 10 years changes have taken place which previously never occurred in 100 years. In this way worlds are really separated. I am thinking of my youth and of the 'ingenuousness,' if you will, in which we lived, in a society that was totally agricultural in comparison with contemporary society.

We see that the world is changing at an ever faster pace, so that also with these changes it is fragmented. Therefore, at a moment of renewal and change, the element of stability becomes even more important.

I remember when the conciliar constitution 'Gaudium et Spes' was discussed. On the one hand, there was a recognition of the new, of newness, the 'yes' of the Church to the

new epoch with its innovations, its 'no' to the romanticism of the past, a proper and necessary 'no'.

However, the Fathers – proof of this is also in the text – also said that in spite of this, in spite of the necessary willingness to move forward and even leave behind other things that were dear to us, there is something that does not change because it is the human being himself, his being as a creature.

Man is not completely historical. The absolutizing of historicism, in the sense that man is only and always a creature, the product of a certain period, is not true. His nature as a creature exists, and it is precisely this that gives us the possibility to live through change and to retain our identity.

This is not an instant response to what we should do, but it seems to me that the first step should be to obtain the diagnosis. Moreover, why should this loneliness exist in a society that appears to be a society of the masses? Why should there be this lack of understanding in a society where everyone is seeking to understand one another, where communication is everything and where the transparency of all things to all people is the supreme law?

The answer lies in the fact that we see the change in our own world and do not sufficiently live that element which binds us all together, the element of our nature as creatures which becomes accessible and becomes reality in a certain history: the history of Christ, who is not against our nature as creatures but restores all that the Creator desired, as the Lord says about marriage.

Christianity precisely emphasizes history and religion as a historical event, an event in history starting with Abraham. Then, as a historical faith, after opening the door to modernity with its sense of progress and by constantly moving ahead, Christianity is at the same time a faith based on the Creator who reveals himself and makes himself present in a history to which he gives continuity, hence, communicability between souls.

Here too, therefore, I think that a faith lived in depth which is fully open to today

but also fully open to God, combines the two things: respect for otherness and newness and the continuity of our being, communicability between people and between times.

The other point was: How can we live life as a gift? This is a question that we ask now, especially in Lent. We want to renew the option for life, which is, as I have said, an option not to possess ourselves but to give ourselves.

It seems to me that we can only do so by means of an ongoing conversation with the Lord and a conversation with one another. Also with 'correctio fraternal,' it is necessary to develop the gift of one's self more and more in the face of an ever insufficient capacity to live.

But, it seems to me that we must also unite both things. On the one hand, we must accept our inadequacy with humility, accept this 'I' that is never perfect but always reaches for the Lord in order to arrive at communion with the Lord and with all people. This humility in accepting our own limitations is also very important.

Only in this way, on the other hand, can we also grow, develop and pray to the Lord that he will help us not to tire along the way, also accepting humbly that we will never be perfect and accepting imperfections, especially in others. By accepting our own imperfections we can more easily accept those of others, allowing ourselves to be formed and reformed ever anew by the Lord.

12th Question. Holy Father, I bring you the greetings of my confreres who work in secular hospitals, of the sick and of health-care workers. We ask you for a word of encouragement to help everyone be salt, light and leaven in the health-care sector.

The Holy Father: Now for hospitals. Thank you for the greeting from the hospitals. I did not know of the mind-set that sees a priest carrying out his ministry in a hospital because he did something wrong ... I always thought that service to the sick and the suffering was a primary service of the priest, because the Lord came above all to be with the sick. He came to share our suffering and to heal us.

On the occasion of the 'ad limina' visits of the African bishops I always say that the two pillars of our work are education – that is, the formation of the human being which involves so many dimensions, such as education, learning, professionalism, the in-depth education of the person – and healing.

The fundamental, essential service of the Church is therefore that of healing. All this is done precisely in the African countries: The Church offers healing. She presents people who help the sick, help them to recover in body and soul.

It seems to me, therefore, that we should see the Lord himself as our model of the priesthood in order to heal, help, assist and accompany people on their way toward recovery. This is fundamental to the Church's commitment; it is a fundamental form of love and consequently, a fundamental expression of faith. Thus, it is also the central point in the priesthood.

13th Question. Last September I had the joy of taking part in an ecumenical meeting hosted by the Orthodox Patriarchate of Athens. It was a deeply enriching dialogue. I believe the clergy should avoid a conflictual attitude and establish a frank and serene dialogue with everyone.

The Holy Father: Then, I respond to the parochial vicar of Holy Patrons of Italy Parish who has spoken to us of the dialogue with the Orthodox and of ecumenical dialogue in general.

In today's world situation, we see that dialogue at all levels is fundamental. It is even more important for Christians not to be closed in on themselves but open.

Precisely in relations with the Orthodox I see that personal relationships are fundamental. In doctrine, we are largely united on all the fundamental matters, but it is in doctrine that it seems very difficult to make any headway. But drawing close to one another in communion, in our common experience of the life of faith, is the way to recognize one another as children of God and disciples of Christ.

And this is my experience of at least 40 or almost 50 years. This is an experience of

common discipleship, that we actually live in the same faith, in the same Apostolic Succession, with the same sacraments and therefore also with the great tradition of prayer; this diversity and multiplicity of religious cultures, of the culture of faith, is beautiful.

To have this experience is fundamental, and it perhaps seems to me that the convinced opposition to ecumenism of some, of a part of the monks of Mount Athos, stems also from the lack of a visible, tangible experience that the other also belongs to the same Christ, to the same communion with Christ in the Eucharist.

So this is very important: We must tolerate the separation that exists. St Paul says that divisions are necessary for a certain time and that the Lord knows why: to test us, to train us, to develop us, to make us more humble. But at the same time, we are obliged to move toward unity, and moving toward unity is already a form of unity.

14th Question. Your encyclical, 'Deus Caritas Est,' has deeply enlightened me, especially Part 2 on pastoral charity, since it invites us to practice charity directly, not to wait for the poor to come to us but to reach out to them and do something concrete for them. However, priests find it very difficult to pass on the faith to the younger generations. Sometimes we feel somewhat let down by a young parochial vicar, yet we went to the same seminary and are only a few years older. Are we expecting too much, or is there something lacking in our formation?

The Holy Father: Let us now turn to the spiritual director of the seminary. The first problem was the difficulty of pastoral charity. We live it on the one hand, but on the other, I would also like to say: Courage. The Church gives many thanks to God, in Africa but also in Rome and in Europe!

She does so much and so many people are grateful to her, both in the area of the pastoral care of the sick and in the pastoral care of the poor and abandoned. Let us continue courageously to seek to find the best paths together.

The other point was focused on the fact

that priestly formation even between close generations seems to be a little different for many people, and this complicates the common commitment to the transmission of faith. I noted this when I was archbishop of Munich.

When we entered the seminary, we all had a common Catholic spirituality that was more or less mature. Let us say that we had a spiritual foundation in common. Seminarians now come from very different spiritual experiences. I observed at my seminary that they live on different 'islands' of spirituality that had difficulties communicating.

Let us thank the Lord especially because he has given so many new impulses to the Church and also so many new forms of spiritual life, of the discovery of the riches of the faith. It is necessary above all not to neglect the common Catholic spirituality which is expressed in the liturgy and in the great tradition of faith. This seems to me to be very important. This point is also important with regard to the Council.

We need not, as I said to the Roman Curia before Christmas, live the hermeneutic of discontinuity, but rather the hermeneutic of renewal, which is the spirituality of continuity, of going ahead in continuity. This seems to me to be very important also as regards the liturgy. Let me take a concrete example that came to me this very day with today's brief meditation.

The 'Statio' of today, the Thursday after Ash Wednesday, is St George. Corresponding to this soldier-saint, there were once two readings on two holy soldiers.

The first spoke of King Hezekiah, who was ill and condemned to death and who prayed to the Lord, weeping: 'Give me a little more life!' And the Lord was good and granted him another 17 years of life. Hence, a beautiful healing and a soldier who could once again conduct his activities.

The second is the Gospel that tells us of the official of Capernaum with his sick servant. We thus have two motives: that of the healing and that of the 'militia' of Christ, of the great fight.

Now, in today's liturgy, we have two totally

different readings. We have the one from Deuteronomy: 'Choose life,' and the Gospel: 'Take up your cross and follow Christ,' which means it is not necessary to seek your own life but to give life, and this is one interpretation of what 'choosing life' means.

I must say that I have always loved the liturgy. I was truly in love with the Church's Lenten journey, with these 'stational churches' and the readings linked to these churches: a geography of faith that becomes a spiritual geography of the pilgrimage with the Lord. And I was somewhat unhappy at the fact that they had taken from us this connection between the 'station' and the readings.

Today, I see that these very readings are most beautiful and express the Lenten program: choosing life, that is, renewing the 'yes' of baptism, which is precisely, a choice of life. In this regard there is an intimate continuity, and it seems to me that we must learn from this that it is only a fraction between discontinuity and continuity.

We must accept newness but also love continuity, and we must see the Council in this perspective of continuity. This will also help us in mediating between the generations in their way of communicating the faith.

15th Question. There is a great lack of hope in the world today and widespread secularism. Believing in the Church and with the Church means responding to it, seeking the only thing necessary [love], as you pointed out in the encyclical 'Deus Caritas Est.' Contemplation is the only way to understand and love others, a simple way to being more Christian.

The Holy Father: Lastly, the priest of the Vicariate of Rome ended with a word that I perfectly make my own so that with it we can conclude: becoming simpler. This seems to me to be a very beautiful program. Let us seek to put it into practice and thus we will be more open to the Lord and to people.

Thank you!

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Catholic themes and characters in a well-paced thriller

THRILLS AND REVERENCE IN TANDEM

Reviewed by IAN MACDONALD



ERARD Charles Wilson has written a novel of epic scope set in contrasting locations. First, the Victorian country town, Binawarra,

dominated by a peak known to the locals as Death Rock. Second, Middelburg in the Dutch Province of Zeeland, dominated by the eponymous castle on Walcheren.

The sinister, bitter character linking these locations is Gerda Vrouwendijk who arrives at the Binawarra High School disguised as Edith Bicknell, multi-lingual teacher with specialist qualifications in student counselling.

She is taken at face value by the genial, hardworking headmaster Bill Huckerby and his charming wife Joanne. But Vrouwendijk/Bicknell has more in mind than counselling unruly students. She has a specific target: one of the students, Estella Winterbine, beautiful and of formidable virtue, closely protected by her parents, the local carpenter Charles Winterbine, and his wife, the angelic, blue-eyed Aine (nee O'Riordan).

In these three, the author essays one of the most difficult tasks in literature: the portrayal of goodness, even saintliness. To assist them, he creates the tough-minded, incomer Englishwoman Florence Barker, trailing hints of having worked for the secret service, and the crippled Dutch priest, Father Jos van Engelen whose work included service in New Guinea with an order not unlike the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

He is also cross-linked to a post-World War II episode with Vrouwendijk in which the defeated Nazi opened fire on civilians.

Ingeniously, Wilson shows how the hidden currents, hostilities and petty snobberies beneath the benign surface of a town like Bindarra can be manipulated by a person of ill-will, especially one like Vrouwendijk/Bicknell, able to blackmail the local newspaper editor. She is backed

The Castle of Heavenly Bliss
By Gerard Charles Wilson
Steele Wilson Books, PO Box 372
Greensborough, Vic 3888
rrp \$34.95 (postage paid).

by Boris, a mercenary with Balkan-Muslim connections and the influence of a rich and covert international organisation for whom Estella is a sought-after prize.

Here an intrepid hero is called for. Wilson introduces him in the person of Geoffrey Shawcross, a quiet local farmer who is also an ex-Vietnam veteran of the Special Air Service Regiment. He protects and falls in love with Estella.

With the main plot the author meshes two sub-plots. One, the attempt by some of her fellow students to seduce Estella and, two, Fr Van Engelen's conflict with those who take a more extreme view of renewal processes initiated by Vatican II than he does.

As the narrative moves to its climax in *The Castle of Heavenly Bliss*, Shawcross deploys his SAS skills to rescue Estella and the author reveals the nature of the

secret organisation – one readers may find reminiscent of Dan Brown's Priory of Sion in *The Da Vinci Code*.

Unlike the latter, this is a thriller of reverence for the Catholic faith as well as a scholarly novel of ideas and theology. It runs to 752 pages and is the first in what is scheduled to be a trilogy.

Like Walter Scott and Charles Dickens and any number of more recent authors, Wilson is his own publisher. At not a few points, there are signs he has essayed the more difficult challenge of being his own editor. Paradoxically the ease of computer editing makes this process more difficult. Too often the Wilson, author-editor, slows the drive of his undoubtedly imaginative plot lines with redundant material and above all by blurring and fudging his chapter breaks.

The exemplary work here is Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. Waugh was a film buff and wrote his chapters as cinematic cuts. Result: despite an expensive script by John Mortimer, the classic television version of *Brideshead Revisited* was shot from the book not the script.



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A model for Bishops in 2006

BISHOP CHALLONER

By PETER ROACH



RICHARD Challoner's life span was almost co-terminus with what can best be described as an intermediary stage in post reformation English Catholicism: his birth in 1691 occurred only a few years after the martyrdom of the last person in England and Wales for the Catholic faith, and he died in 1781, three years after the first Catholic relief act of 1778. He was born of non-Catholic parents in Lewes, east Sussex, which was then as is now noted for its anti-Catholic sentiments (to this day, an effigy of the Pope is burnt in the town on Guy Fawke's night!). Challoner's father died when he was very young, and to support herself and her son, Challoner's mother took a post in a Catholic household. It was largely through the existence of the Catholic gentry, who had chapels and chaplains that Catholicism was able to survive. They provided small Catholic islands in a hostile Protestant sea, and when a Catholic landowner either died without Catholic heirs or became a Protestant (as frequently happened), such Catholic communities often disappeared. Some years later, when Richard was approximately 13, he and his mother were received into the Church. The law strictly forbade this act in itself at the time, with stiff penalties for the priest who received them into the Church. The fact that nobody appears to have suffered persecution over these two conversions can best be explained by the fact that they were insignificant figures.

Within two years Challoner was to perform yet another illegal act, namely leave England to study abroad for the priesthood. Since the reformation

students for the priesthood had been educated in Catholic countries, the main seminaries being in Rome (the Venerable or English College) and at Douay. Lay students were also usually educated abroad, many of them at Douay, as Catholic schoolmasters were also forbidden. Although the age of the English martyrs had just passed, there was no guarantee that they were over or would not return. Hence, security measures such as enrolling

under a false name, (Challoner was Mr. Willard) because of the existence of spies, were undertaken. Challoner received his secondary and priestly education at Douay. The standards of teaching and scholarship were high in the college. In particular, students were given a thorough grounding in biblical studies, learning and carefully analysing large passages of Scripture, as well as in apologetics, as priests for the English mission had to be thoroughly prepared so as to be able to refute the arguments of their opponents. Challoner was one of the most intelligent students of Douay, and soon became a professor there, first of philosophy and then later of theology.

Although he visited England in 1718 to gain some experience of the English mission, he returned there in 1731, working in London, mainly amongst poor Catholics who lived in and around Holborn. In some senses, London Catholicism was unique. Many foreign embassies had Catholic chapels attached to them, often with a large contingent of chaplains, where the practice of Catholicism was unimpeded, and where many London Catholics freely worshipped. Challoner, however, had to practise as a priest semi-secretly. For example, he used often preach in a pub called the Ship. A pot of ale was placed in front of him, so that he could claim he was on the premises to drink, should the authorities raid the pub. The constant uncertainty of his safety is perhaps best illustrated by the necessity of his flight abroad for two years in 1737. In that year, Challoner wrote a work of instruction on the sacraments and ceremonies of Catholic worship entitled *The Catholic Christian Instructed in the Sacraments, Sacrifice, Ceremonies and Observances of the Church*. This work was partly in response to a book by and Anglican clergyman, one Rev.



No problem!

HE frequently visited the Kinglake family at Taunton, and mention was made one afternoon of a neighbouring clergyman who had refused to read the burial service over a Dissenter. 'Would you object, Mr Smith, to bury a Dissenter?' asked old Mrs Kinglake. 'Not bury Dissenters!' exclaimed Sydney; 'I should like to be burying them all day.'

- Sydney Smith [1771-1845] wit, co-founder of the Edinburgh Review and Anglican Clergyman, quoted in *The Smiths of Smiths*, by Hesketh Pearson, 1934.

Dr. Conyers Middleton, who claimed that Catholic worship was derived from paganism.

Whilst abroad, Challoner's future was determined by his superiors. For some years, Challoner had been the vicar general of Bishop Petre, the vicar apostolic of the London district, and who in his old age desired Challoner to be his coadjutor with the right of succession. At the same time, the college of Douay desired Challoner to be its rector. Eventually, the former path was decided for Challoner, and in September 1739 Rome issued the briefs for his consecration. It was almost eighteen months, however, before he was consecrated, as Rome had to issue a dispensation because Challoner had been born to non-Catholic parents. He was finally consecrated titular bishop of Debra in a semi secret convent in Hammersmith in January 1741.

As a bishop, Challoner was renowned for his ministry to and care of the poor and prisoners, regularly distributing alms. He lived a frugal lifestyle, spending many hours in prayer.

Gradually, the lot of Catholics was improving, and the common sense and tactfulness of men such as Challoner almost certainly were contributing factors. It seems that Challoner was able to secure relief for many victims of a backlash against Catholics in the wake of the Jacobite revolt of 1745, because of his refusal to participate in it, realising early on that it was doomed to disaster. In 1753/4, Lord Hardwick's marriage act was introduced which required all people except for Jews and Quakers to be



married by Anglican clergy. Until Vatican II, Catholics were strictly forbidden to take part in non-Catholic services by the Church. Although the government ultimately refused to grant Catholics an exemption, the fact that it was prepared to listen to Challoner's objections demonstrates not only its respect for Challoner, but also an albeit grudging recognition of Catholics as a body who may have legitimate grievances. In the end Rome ruled, largely on the basis of Challoner's advice, that Catholics may present themselves to an Anglican parson to be married to satisfy legal requirements, but they were not to take part in the purely religious parts

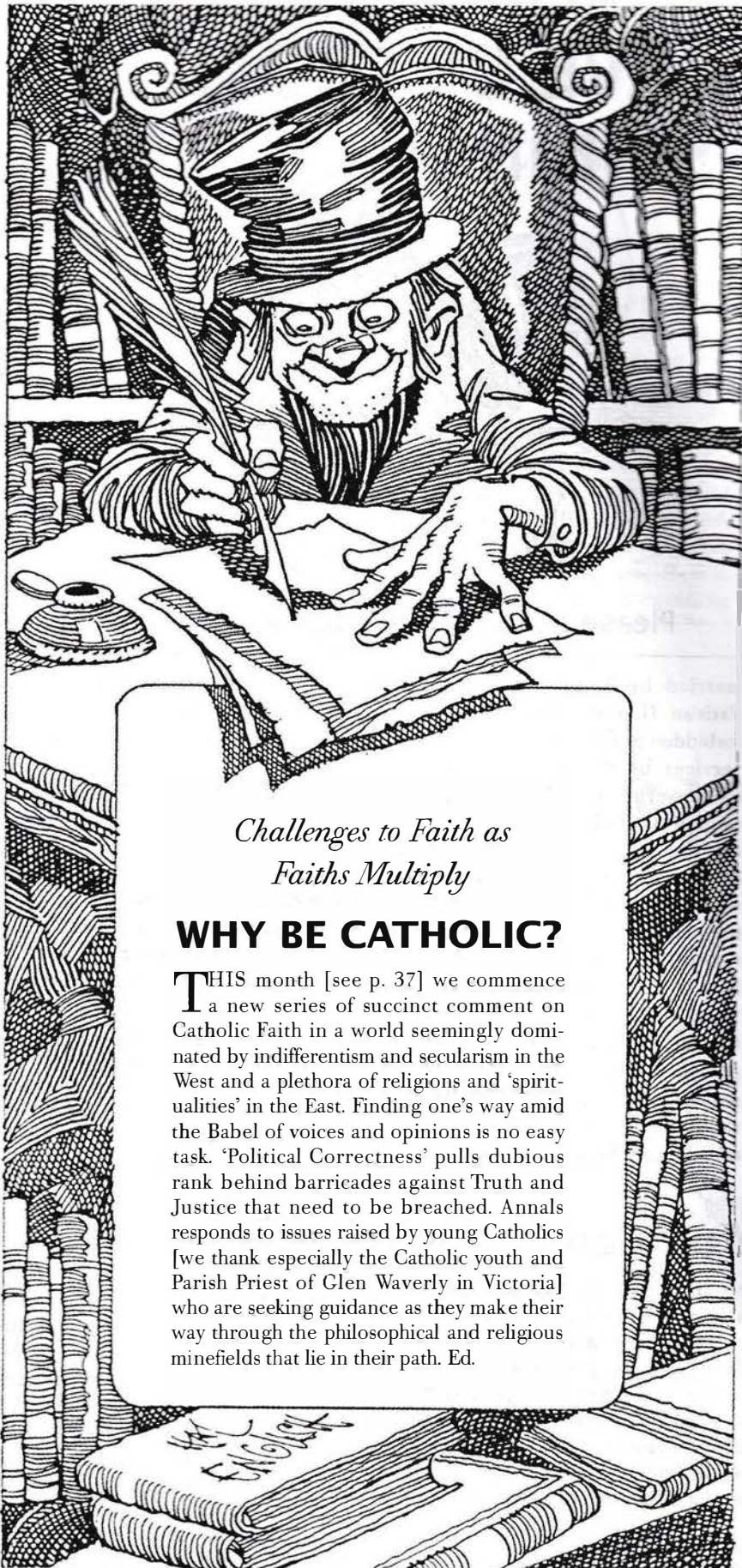
of the service (thus, they were to remain standing, turn around and face the door whilst prayers were being read).

The last years of Challoner's life corresponded with the First Catholic relief act of 1778. As a response to setbacks in the American War of Independence, the British government wanted to recruit Highlanders, many of whom were Catholics. Military service was forbidden to Catholics, due to the anti-Catholic oaths required of troops. Challoner was consulted by Sir. John Dalrymple, but only after negotiations between him and other bishops, and leading clergy had broken down. In the end, the outcome was largely determined by the leading Catholic laity and the government, as the latter were very wary of 'Popish' clergy. The relief granted was very minimal, and it seems that the Catholic side agreed to it, as they were pleased to see any form of relief. Challoner's demands were more substantial, but even what was achieved was enough to provoke the Gordon riots. A mob led by the crazed Lord Gordon embarked on three days of ransacking, looting, and setting fire to Catholic chapels and property in early June 1780. Challoner remained in hiding during the riots, but was to live for only

Feeling Befuddled?

A WORLD which has lost the Christian God cannot but resemble a world which had not yet found him. Just like the world of Thales and Plato, our own modern world is 'full of gods.' There are blind Evolution, clear-sighted Orthogenesis, benevolent Progress, and others which it is more advisable not to mention by name. Why unnecessarily hurt the feelings of men who, today, render them a cult? It is however important for us to realize that mankind is doomed to live more and more under the spell of a new scientific, social, and political mythology, unless we resolutely exorcise these befuddled notions whose influence on modern life is becoming appalling.

— Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, 2nd edition, Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 186-187.
[Powell Lectures on Philosophy, Indiana University, 1939-40(7)]



*Challenges to Faith as
Faiths Multiply*

WHY BE CATHOLIC?

THIS month [see p. 37] we commence a new series of succinct comment on Catholic Faith in a world seemingly dominated by indifferentism and secularism in the West and a plethora of religions and 'spiritualities' in the East. Finding one's way amid the Babel of voices and opinions is no easy task. 'Political Correctness' pulls dubious rank behind barricades against Truth and Justice that need to be breached. Annals responds to issues raised by young Catholics [we thank especially the Catholic youth and Parish Priest of Glen Waverly in Victoria] who are seeking guidance as they make their way through the philosophical and religious minefields that lie in their path. Ed.

another six months, passing away in January 1781.

Challoner is perhaps best remembered for his literary works, all of which were written in response to the dearth of easily accessible good Catholic books. Challoner desired that all Catholics, regardless of their state in life, should understand their faith, and should lead a good spiritual life. Thus, it was he who first translated the *Imitation of Christ* into English, which until comparatively recently was arguably the most read piece of Catholic spiritual writing. He also revised, or rather, practically retranslated the Douay - Rheims Bible, much of which was hitherto incomprehensible. Two hundred years before Pius XII was to say that 'ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ'. Challoner urged Catholics to read the Bible every day.

In recent years, the archdiocese of Westminster has begun the process for the Beatification of Bishop Richard Challoner. His example calls us to persevere in our faith in a society in which Catholics are becoming a minority, a society that is both ignorant of and hostile towards its claims. The basis of our Christian life must be prayer, including the reading and meditation upon Scripture and other good spiritual books, and relieving the sufferings of the poor. At the same time, we are called to acquire a firm knowledge of our faith, so that we may both deepen it and be able to defend it, and lead others to the Church. The entry in the register of the Anglican parish in which Challoner was buried (required then by law) is a fitting summary of his character: Anno Domini 1781, January 22. Buried the Reverend Richard Challoner, a Popish Priest and Titular Bishop of London and Salisbury, a very pious and good man, of great learning and extensive abilities.



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PETER ROACH is a Barrister, with a special interest in justice issues. He has a special rapport with the MSC priests and brothers because he was a member of the first class to matriculate from Chevalier College Bowral in 1950. He resides in Hobart.

OPEN LETTER TO *THE TABLET*

On March 16, 2006 the Annals editor wrote the following letter to the Editor, The Tablet, London, protesting at the English Catholic Journal's publicising anti-papal and anti-Catholic propagandising by Bishop Hilarion, the EU representative of the Moscow Patriarch, Alexiy II.

Sir,

I suppose if Muhammad can be caricatured in the name of Freedom of the Press, *The Tablet* feels justified in devoting space to pillorying the Pope on the same grounds. None the less, allow me to protest at your publicising the anti-papal posturing of the Moscow patriarchate's man in Austria, Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev. Not long ago Hilarion was calling for 'a common Catholic-Orthodox forum'. At least now we know the terms on which the forum will be conducted.

Hilarion clearly finds that the authority of the pope of Old Rome sticks in his craw. Yet, whether latin or byzantine rite, the first Christians of the Kievan Rus were both Catholic and Eastern. Vladimir the Great of Kiev, according to the monk James who wrote before 1072, was baptised by a Catholic Varangian priest in 987/88. He sent an embassy from Kiev to Rome in 991, and three embassies went from Rome to Kiev sent by Pope John XV (985-96), and by Pope Sylvester II (999-1003). Vladimir died in 1015. Iaroslav I requested a bishop from Pope Benedict VIII (1012-1024) and he had the Bulgar bishop Alexis sent to Kiev in 1021. The schism between Old Rome and Constantinople - the origin of the so-called 'Orthodox' Churches - was not till 1054. Vladimir died a Catholic as did his famous grandmother, Olga. Even Alexiy II's predecessor Patriarch Nikon of Moscow [died in prison 1681] appealed to the pope against his deposition by the Council of Moscow in 1666.

So what's happening? Could Hilarion's *animus* have something to do with the politically unacceptable Catholic origins of Christianity among the Kievan Rus? Or the suppressed memory of Muscovy's arising only in the 12th century, and appropriating the title 'Russia' from Kiev to itself under Peter the Great? Or the Moscow patriarchate's dating only from 1590; and being ranked *fifth* in the Orthodox pecking order?

A final thought: has this outburst of Hilarion less to do with Pope Benedict XVI and more to do with sidelining the patriarch of Constantinople, and advancing the cause of Moscow in the everlasting search for primacy among the Orthodox?



MEDIA MATTERS

By JAMES MURRAY

Daffy Code

Should the Catholic Church be so exercised about the generalised daftness of Dan Brown's best-seller, *The Da Vinci Code*? At the deepest and most enduring level, the daftness cannot prevail. Yet at the personal level it can affect the lives of the credulous, conspiracy nuts and those not well instructed in their religion.

The DVC's basis, gnostic heresy, during its primary evolution centuries ago, was dealt with in open debate by the early doctors of the Church as Cardinal Edward Clancy makes clear in his invaluable brief, *God's Trailblazers: Great Figures in the Early Church*, a brief further reinforced by Max Barrett's series in these pages.

It was not the Church that was obscurantist; it was the gnostics who wished to put a secret spin for the elect on the open-to-all, authentic gospels inspired by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

They did this through false gospels from which derive the fable of Christ's marriage to Mary Magdalene and her pregnancy by Him, a fable concocted to serve the modern fantasies of a petty conman inspired by the megalomaniacal notion that he was the rightful king of France.

Much of the research material for *The DVC* we now know came from the Internet via Brown's assiduous muse, researcher and wife, Blythe. Could – should – more be done to get Catholic defence material onto the Internet (perhaps by Opus Dei members who have reacted to *The DVC* with a cool and cogent urbanity)?

Think of the huge corpus of Catholic Truth Society material which dealt with all manner of

heresies, including gnosticism. Or the columns of the incomparable and incontrovertible Dr Leslie Rumble.

Post Vatican II, the Church opened itself in goodwill to the world; the goodwill has not always been reciprocated, hence the need for continuous defence.

US Ripostes

Serendipitously, during a recent trip to the US, your correspondent came across a couple of news items demonstrating means for such continuous defence. On the front page of *Catholic New*

York (now there's a title), Claudia McDonnell reported that later this year the Archdiocese of New York is to create a new Catholic radio channel in collaboration with Sirius Satellite Radio.

The channel will operate nationally seven days a week, 24 hours a day on a monthly subscription basis. It will broadcast talk shows, music and live daily Masses from St Patrick's Cathedral as well as some programming from the Vatican.

The channel will offer open dialogue on Catholicism in today's world, Claudia McDonnell reported. According to a statement by the archdiocese listeners will be encouraged to call in to talk about issues in the news ... including current

events, politics, entertainment, the arts and sports. Listeners will interact with hosts, both clergy and lay, who speak from a Catholic perspective?

In an inside page report, Mary Ann Poust wrote that the US Conference of Catholic Bishops is launching a national website, jesusdecoded.com,

Critics are Paid and Ready Made

A man must serve his time to every trade
Save Censure. Critics all are ready-made.
Take hackneyed jokes from Miller, go: by rote,
With just enough of learning to misquote;
A mind well skilled to find or forge a fault;
A turn for punning, call it Attic salt:
To Jeffrey go, be silent and discreet,
His pay is just ten sterling pounds per sheet:
Fear not to lie, 'twill seem a sharper hit.
Shrink not from blasphemy, 'twill pass for wit;
Care not for feeling – pass your proper jest,
And stand a Critic, hated yet caressed.
– Lord Byron, 1788-1824, *English Bards and Scotch [sic!] Reviewers*, a satire.



aimed at correcting what the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations see as doctrinal errors and myths in *The Da Vinci Code*.

Okay. Okay. America does today what Australia did yesterday on Sydney's Radio 2SM. But our correspondent has never fully understood why 2SM ceased to operate as a Catholic station.

Snick Snack

Prime Minister John Howard shows at least one attribute of the great sports players he likes to team with on photo-opportunities: speed of recovery from a mistake. The way he transformed his play in support of the Snowy Hydro sale had the ruthless deftness of a late cut by the legendary Prince Ranjitsinhji.

He left the Labor Premiers of NSW and Victoria, Morris Iemma and Steve Bracks looking like a pair of anchor persons who'd lost their cue sheets. As for his federal opponent Kim Beazley ... Dot. dot. dot is the kindest comment although Beazley himself might have thought in terms of asterisks.

Underemphasised in coverage of Howard's stroke was what it indicates about his intentions. As in his reaction to Mark Latham blind-siding him on parliamentary superannuation, he realised that the Snowy Hydro sale involved a crucial election point - the straw that could break his backing already burdened with his gouging GST, his Draconian workplace laws and his support for the war in Iraq.

His nuclear energy move? Another mistake from which he will have to recover with a late cut? Which raises the ultimate question. Is John Howard signalling that he is determined to play himself into the record books ahead of his hero Bob Menzies, and retire undefeated.

Too much to see him as the venerable first President of Australia. There again, he has been practising for the role by assuming many of the ceremonial duties of the Governor-General.

ABC of Ads

Does the ABC need to add A for advertising to its call sign? Peter Luck, one of the great all-round media pros, thinks it does. He even suggests that there are those who enjoy TV advertisements.

It might be possible to dismiss reports of people recording programmes and then zapping the rough the ads as merely anecdotal evidence. But that would be to forget the case being mounted by the Packer interests to prevent the operation of a new technology that enables people to render digital Nine Network hours ad-free.

The case is scheduled for hearing later this year. Until then people can love those raucous ads in blissful peace. And wait to see whether new ABC panjandrum Mark Scott, under budget pres-

ures, follows the lead of SBS boss Shaun Brown and allows scattergun ads in addition to in-house programs.

Eddie the Edge

Ads, however, are not a panacea. Just ask the Nine Network's new boss Eddie McGuire. In the style of a British Government stringing an admiral from the yard arm to encourage the others, McGuire is axing some of the best television talent in an effort to make the survivors more 'nimble'.

For McGuire himself to volunteer for the ax or the yard-arm would be premature. He will face them if the policy he has been given does not succeed. The fact is bean-counter cuts are rarely creative. Some suggest that the real aim of the cuts is to make Nine more attractive to buyers. Others that head honcho James Packer needs greater profitability to fund his planned global chain of casino pleasure domes.

Bulletin editor-in-chief Gary Linnell has been made Nine's head of news and current affairs, his first television job. Positive move. Print jourmos set agendas. Telly jourmos follow them.

And Linnell has a great story immediately to hand: The positive and negative social consequences of casinos, including use by criminals of all kinds for money laundering and any risks intrinsic to this, particularly for an associated media company.

Prize Action

The latest law suit involving the Archibald Prize is less fascinating for the matter before the court (whether the 2004 prize-winning portrait of actor David Gulpilil is a painting or a charcoal drawing) than for the prize's terms laid down in the will of *The Bulletin* editor J.F. Archibald. These state that the portrait be 'painted by an artist resident in Australasia'.

For Archibald, Australasia would have included New Zealand. Yet Australian artists seem to have a monopoly on the prize. Time for a New Zealand artist to portray a Maori All Black in hakka pose?

And for yet another legal scrum?

Cup Stir

As the World Cup goes from fever to frenzy, a quick re-wind to Glasgow Celtic and Scotland player Tommy Docherty. Twenty-five years ago, after a stint as manager of Manchester United and 12 other clubs, Docherty was in Australia managing Sydney Olympic.

He told your correspondent that Australian players had a natural athleticism, not then fully exploited. 'Great physique. When their ball skills match their physique, they'll be world-beaters.'

Harry Kewell's ball skills match his physique. So do Mark Viduka's and Marco Bresciano's. The



World Cup put the Docherty prophecy to the test. But under Guus Hiddink the natural athleticism was hobbled with boring, chesslike brain moves involving an over indulgence in passing back.

The Socceroos need a new rule: no more than two passes back in any single phase; in other words non-stop, offensive plays like, er, Aussie Rules. What price Ron Barassi to take over from Hiddink when the latter heads to Russia and rouble-wards?

Timor Mortis

East Timor is agony compounded by a fog of confusion. Coverage uses 'sectarian', 'tribal' and 'ethnic' as if they were synonyms rather than descriptions of distinctive aspects of human interaction.

The confusion is understandable. The present explosive crisis has a long fuse, arguably going back to Portugal's original colonisation during its spice-trade wars with other European nations, and extending through World War II to decolonisation by the Portuguese, and neo-colonisation by the Indonesians (with Australia's connivance, oil having replaced spice in the power play).

Given this historical context, it is difficult to understand how both Australia and the United Nations came up with short-term solutions when Indonesia decided to pull-out.

Vatican policy for East Timor, it is worth remembering, included a 10-year inter-regnum to prepare the former colony for democracy. In other words: quick-fix cures are not feasible in crises with a long history.

Paper Tiger

The Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer is famous for his one-hand-in-pocket nonchalance. But the eager-beaver Defence

Minister Brendan Nelson is bidding to surpass Downer in fame by demanding internal reports and reviews.

Yet these can only add to his problems what the British Army nicknamed 'bumph' during World War II. It was because he believed 'bumph' was an obstacle to successful action that Winston Churchill decreed reports to him should be summarised on one side of a sheet of quarto paper (for younger readers, including possibly Brendan Nelson, shorter than A4).

Rupert's Interest

Hurrah for *The Australian* and its lead in seeking to open up the operation of Freedom of

Information legislation from a plethora of restrictive excuses, including 'national security'. But if its parent News Limited wins the coming High Court case, there could be an ironic outcome.

Another media organisation, using unrestricted FoI legislation, could call for the paperwork under which chief proprietor Rupert Murdoch negotiated the deal with Paul Keating (and Bob Carr) that transformed the Sydney Showgrounds into Fox Studios.

Or would 'commercial in confidence' trump 'national security' as a reason for not publishing information that is in the public interest?

Sic Transit ...

Easter Sunday lunch in America. Making conversation, your correspondent mentioned the Sydney Opera House obsequies of Kerry Packer.

'Who's Kerry Packer?' said the host, a hedge-fund trader. Successful, too. But that's America: so big, so

rich, so secure in itself that it deems the rest of the world a useless appendix until it grumbles or ruptures.

Lambs led to the Slaughter

The politicians guillotined one another in order to escape the guillotine themselves, but what of the anonymous hundreds who were sent to their deaths for no better reason than that they were 'under suspicion' and consequently under arrest, and because Fouquier had orders, as he phrased it, to 'get heads'? Of what possible crime against the state can the seventeen-year-old hairdresser's apprentice Martin Alleaume have been guilty? Or the eighty-five-year-old Jacques Bardy? Or Marie Bouchard, an eighteen-year-old 'domestic servant'? Thanks to Fouquier's meticulous clerks, the names and condition of nearly all the victims who died after Danton's execution are filed at the Archives. And one can only stand perplexed and appalled before the record of these indiscriminate butcheries that tossed together nuns, soldiers, ex-nobles, workmen, servant girls and prostitutes, not to mention the victims without number who belonged to no particular class or category, but who seem to have been caught like sardines in the meshes of an invisible net.

— Stanley Loomis, *Paris in the Terror, June 1793-July 1794*, Lippincott, Philadelphia and New York, 1964, pp. 239.

JESUS, THE WAY



RATHER than start with theories about religions, we can begin with a basic fact. Each of them has the capacity to produce wise, 'saintly' people. The opposite is also true. They all have their share of hypocrites and scoundrels, of deception and error. This should not be surprising. Their members are human beings.

Some people reject religion because of its failures; on the same argument, we would have to reject humanity itself. But that would be a sick approach: a refusal to face the evident beauty, goodness and truth in human achievements. We don't give up mining for gold because it is found amidst rock, mud and slush. A dogma of Catholic faith is that the inbuilt capacity for evil in human beings has not destroyed completely their inbuilt capacity for good. Wherever there are human beings, we can expect a mixture of good and evil.

There is much to admire

The goodness and beauty of creation reflect the infinite goodness and beauty of God. This does not apply only to the material universe in which we live; it is also true of human conduct, the fruit of intelligence, free will and a heart that can combine both. It is true also of religions. Sometimes this is obvious at first sight; at other times we need instruction if we are to appreciate them; at times, too, we have to remove our bias and misconceptions; but we also need to separate wheat from chaff.

Granted the human tendency to make a mess of things, an important measure of the authenticity and reliability of a religion will be its ability to look objectively at its history. Only in this way will it be open to the continuing process of conversion and reform needed if it is to separate the wheat from the chaff and continue its striving to be what it is essentially meant to be for the good of its members and of the world.

Obviously, any goodness or beauty we discover in religions is in conformity with God's will and can be accepted as part of his providence. Vatican Council II tells us, 'The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all' (*Nostra aetate*, n. 2 b).

But the Council goes on immediately to say with equal stress, '[The Catholic Church] proclaims, and is duty bound

to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6). In him, in whom God reconciles all things to himself (2 Cor 5:18-19), we find the fullness of the life religion gives' (ib).

Finding the way

An infinite God cannot create in order to gain anything. He already, by definition, possesses everything. Thus, he can only create in order to share something of his own being and goodness. In other words, he can only create and hold in existence this evolving universe of ours out of love. And if he really loves it, he will want to communicate with it. And if he

communicates with it, he will want what he communicates to be preserved infallibly so that it will not be distorted and even lost by human

BEING Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.

— From *Deus Caritas Est*, first Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI

fallibility. This is not only a central point in our Catholic faith; it also makes sense.

There are various levels of communication. We communicate something of ourselves to others simply by being present. Our body language gives a message. A further step is made when we speak to one another. We can be in a crowd of people in much the same way as in the midst of a forest of trees; but if people introduce themselves by name, a different relationship emerges. The peak of communication is reached when one person says to another, 'I love you'. When that happens, it is not merely information that is given – one gives oneself through words and gestures. If we expect this from human love, how much more can we expect it from infinite love. This is a central point in Catholic faith and in Christian faith in general; it also makes sense.

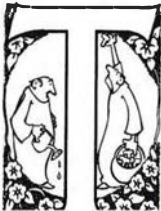
To accept Jesus involves accepting the particular way of life he teaches us by word and example. Understandably, a lot of the conduct he teaches can be found not only in Judaism, but also in other religions and philosophies. He gathers together all goodness and truth. But he is not a prophet like other prophets and philosophers who point out a way of life for us. He is himself the way. What is unique about him is he is the way God has given himself to us. He is God's Word to us. And that Word is summed up in the fact that God is love – and in Jesus, that love becomes incarnate. It is by our response to him as God's Word that we find our way to God.

One of the great theologians of the last century, Hans Urs von Balthasar, said that the loudest word God speaks to us is the silence of the dead body of Christ upon Cross. There he proves his love for us; there too he shares in our suffering. And then through the resurrection of Christ we see that suffering and death are not the final word. The final Word remains eternally, love. – Dennis Murphy, MSC

IT'S A MAD WORLD, MY MASTERS

[Title of a Play by Thomas Middleton 1580-1627]

By FRANK COLYER



HERE'S more cause for worry than meets the eye in that decision of a US Federal Court to bar the teaching of intelligent design in science classes.

In itself, the judgement is curious, but of more concern is the unconcern of the world at large. Are we entering an era of Orwellian madness where newspeak reshapes reality, where simple nouns like 'intelligent' and 'design' have new meanings – or, perhaps, no meaning?

This is the position.

As any normal, sane person will attest, design in living things is a dominant, overwhelming, undebunkable fact. Design is an effect demanding a cause; and the cause can be either design by an intending intelligence or design achieved by mindless accidents, with no intelligent

intervention. Take your pick. There is no third option, other than the old 'God-of-gaps' position.¹

Clearly, the question is not whether intelligent design theory should have a place in the science curriculum, but how the theory should be presented. For nature is proclaiming the case, so to speak from the tree tops. As for the *who* ... and the *what* of the intelligence – that would be another matter and probably not in the court of the science community.

As a theory, worthy of scientific interest, intelligent design (ID) has overwhelming cogency. On this planet creatures teem in bewildering variety. Many of them (most?) function under systems that can only be described as design masterpieces; and none is more masterly than the one owned by the species called *homo sapiens*. As a rule, these systems are, in fact, design

assemblies, integrating other systems in respiration, blood circulation, cardiac function, digestion ... and so on.

Putting aside *homo sapiens* – the thinker, the communicator, the craftsman, the creator of great and much more – drafting him into a special class – we find that creatures survive, adapt and replicate thanks to 'software' systems that we call 'instinct' (for want of a better word). Instinct is wondrously efficient and, for the most part, way beyond our comprehension.²

In the study of non-intelligent design (NID), only one theory has acceptability – Darwin's theory of natural selection.

How did species emerge from species? By chance said Darwin; by the accidental, mindless conjunction of favourable factors – genetic mutations, environmental changes and fitness to survive. From that point, natural selection proceeds by tiny variations, extending slowly across vast spans of time. By that doctrine species would be the product of uncountable blind, chance variations – millions, billions, perhaps trillions of them. And none of these variations would be directed towards an end product because there isn't one;³ for natural selection is not a relay race with predestined finish lines and team changes.

Apart from some success with fruit flies, to the best of my knowledge, Darwinians have yet to produce one substantial case, scientifically credible, with sound data, demonstrating a species outcome from a chaotic natural selection process.

Then there is the problem of finding evidence of the intermediate species, which, by Darwinian reasoning, should occur commonly and widely in the fossil record. It has not been found, which Darwin himself acknowledged as a major objection.⁴ After 150 years, Darwin's theory is still just that – a theory. It is also a begged question, which appears to serve ideological ends rather than to shed light

The Primacy of Conscience?

CERTAIN currents of modern thought have ... exalted freedom to such an extent that it becomes an absolute ... The individual conscience is accorded the status of a supreme tribunal of moral judgement that hands down ... infallible decisions about good and evil ... Claims of truth disappear, yielding their place to a criterion of sincerity, authenticity, and 'being at peace with oneself ...'. Such an outlook is quite congenial to an ... ethic wherein each individual faces his own truth, different from the truth of others. Taken to its extreme consequences, this individualism leads to a denial of the very idea of human nature...

A new situation has come about within the Christian community ... the spread of numerous doubts and objections ... with regard to the Church's moral teachings. It is no longer a matter of linked and occasional dissent, but of an overall and systematic calling into question of traditional doctrine on the basis of ... anthropological and ethical suppositions. At the root of these suppositions are currents of thought that end by detaching human freedom from its essential ... relationship to truth.

Thus the traditional doctrine regarding ... universal and permanent ... natural law ... is rejected; certain of the Church's moral teachings are found simply unacceptable ... The [Church] is considered capable of intervening in matters of morality only ... to 'exhort conscience' and to 'propose values,' in the light of which each individual will independently make his or her decisions ...

– Pope John Paul II *Veritatis Splendor*.

on the great mysteries of the biosphere. For atheists – who tend to proliferate in Darwinian ranks – the question – is there an Intelligent Designer? – is simply not on the table. The Designer *should not exist and therefore does not exist* and should not be entertained.

For decades Darwinism has been hailed as *The Answer* ... Here, at last, was a credible engine to drive evolution.

'Previously, God was needed to explain species,' say some Darwinians. 'After Darwin, God wasn't needed.'

In a recent issue of National Geographic, David Quammen, an ardent Darwinian, wrote: 'Two big ideas, not just one, are at issue: evolution of all species as a historical phenomenon, and natural selection causing that phenomenon.'

And so, with outrage and with scowls and sneers by the great army of Darwin believers, ID has been banished to outer darkness. 'Creationism in a dinner suit,' quipped one Darwinian wit. Unlike David Quammen, many Darwinians make no effort to distinguish between the theory of evolution and Darwin's theory of natural selection. Darwin's theory is, in fact, a theory *about* a theory.

Dubious though, it is, Darwinism has been cleared for teaching in science classes⁵ while ID has been rejected in certain areas of the United States. Why? Not because it offends against scientific evidence, but (this is hard to believe) because it violates the separation of Church and State as stated in the American constitution. Presumably, the judge sank the ID vessel because religious parties – creationists, fundamentalist – had scrambled aboard. Or maybe they had chartered the ship. Which raises an interesting question: if non religious parties had been promoters of ID would the judge have cleared it with the Constitution and so for science teaching.

In itself, ID has no primary religious purpose, though it may reinforce religious belief; for working science has no direct metaphysical role; it has no concern with belief systems, including belief in unbelief.⁶ Granted, from intelligent design you can infer an Intelligent Designer. Hard **not to**. But you can dodge that inference. If it goes against your inclination you can leave the issue in the too-hard basket, along with many other great mysteries of reality.

Nor does intelligent design compel

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acceptance of biological creation by direct Divine acts. This is a separate theory that seems hardly more probable than Darwinism. Both connote fundamentalism. In fact, evolutionary theory is not inconsistent with Christian teaching; witness the comments of Pope John Paul II.

Also curious is the furore created among scientists. Academics and science teachers merely by the recent upsurge of interest in intelligent design. Is not design (as opposed to chaotic non-design) the starting point, the foundation, the primary assumption for all studies of living things? Does not the planet teem with creatures whose design and function could not conceivably have been the outcome of mindless accidents?

Consider the judge in the US Federal Court. But for two design masterpieces

he would be sitting in silent darkness, though more likely, he would not even exist. I am talking about two organs that unite us to the world of external reality – the eye and the ear.

The eyes are paired optical devices, perfectly sited in the head, with lenses that capture the scene around us. But sight does not happen until the physical function is converted to an electronic one in a nerve that conveys the images to the brain for screening.

A similar physical-to-electronic function occurs in the paired hearing system, also well sited in the head. Sounds picked up by the ears are conveyed to chambers for processing by a forest of tiny filaments; and there the switch to the electronic takes place and the brain hears the sounds.

All this means that in humans and other animals the forces of design have anticipated television technology by hundreds of thousands of years. If that is an outcome of natural selection – a triumph against astronomic odds in the spinning wheel of life – then will I believe in non supernatural miracles. Unmiracles if you like.

But who cares in a world foreseen by George Orwell, where words mean what the dominant intelligencia says they mean?



1. Confronted with realities they cannot explain, certain scientists warn against 'filling gaps with God' – in due course, they say, science will evict God from the gaps. This is pre-emption by begging the question. In the face of the great mystery – how could species evolve – Darwinians tend to use natural selection as their own 'gap filler'. 'Well,' they say to critics, 'can you come up with a better theory?' They abhor a vacuum and Darwin's theory, they imply, is better than no theory.
2. Choosing one out of countless examples, consider the African bird that builds two nests, one atop the other. The bottom nest is home, the empty top one is a decoy to fool predators.
3. As Darwin's great modern apostle, Professor Richard Dawkins puts it, despite appearances to the contrary, nothing was intended. Ergo: nothing was intending.
4. Natural selection is a theory about the theory of evolution.
5. Dubious, that is, except in the explanation of variations within species, but that is not evolution of Species.
6. The true function of science might be described as discovering the reality of physical things and applying that knowledge for the good of mankind.
7. In Central America lives a true specialist. It is a hummingbird with a beak like a lance, four times longer than its body. A cumbersome appendage, this, but exactly what is needed to serve a plant with a large bell-like flower. Here the climate is too cold for bees and the hummingbirds perform pollination as a spin-off from their search for nectar. But your average hummingbird cannot penetrate to the pollen at the heart of the bell-like flower. Enter the specialist with the giant beak that can reach all the way. How could that highly specialised bird be the outcome of natural selection ... of blind and multitudinous accidents?

FRANK COLYER is a journalist with more than twenty years experience in the print and television media. He lives in Drysdale, Victoria.

The Da Vinci Code

The one merit of Dan Brown's farrago was that it was a page-turner; it had the narrative speed of a garbage truck heading along Sunset Boulevard to the factories of Hollywood which have for years been recycling garbage into lucrative hokum.

Director Ron Howard, producer Brian Grazer and scriptwriter Akiva Goldman have contrived to slow the speed; the film seems to be moving through the projector at the pace of a sloth's funeral.

This may be because these masters of showbiz are awe-struck by Brown's scissors and paste pot-boiler; they treat it as holy writ rather than the blasphemous travesty it is - a travesty born from ignorance of historical context - a chronic weakness of Hollywood.

But when the trio do try to add context it is with a heavy hand as in their flashbacks including the Council of Nicea depicted as an anarchic gathering of bearded, hook-nosed clerics worthy of Bertelsmann (parent of publisher Random House) in the days when it was doing propaganda work for the Nazi regime.

Moreover Brown's cardboard cut-out characters now have an even frailer aspect; it's as if they aspire to be figures in a comic book. Tom Hanks as the symbiologist Robert Langdon has long hair of inky hue, Paul Bettany as the monk Silas has the albino pallor of blank paper. Audrey Tautou as code expert Sophie Neveu has the look of a matchstick figure with a mop of scrawly hair.

Ian McKellan? Here is a great mummer who late in his career has discovered how lucrative hokum can be and lends his authority to the most melodramatic of aristo dastards, Leigh Teabing, complete with two walking sticks, a .38 Smith and Wesson, a hip flask of poison and an old Etonian tie.

The more solid characters such as Alfred Molina's Opus Dei bishop derive what power they have from being more immediately identifiable as parasitic on their Catholic Church counterparts.

Among a number of bloopers, Howard, Grazer and Goldman contrive to describe Opus Dei as both a sect and a prelature of the Catholic Church, that is a part cut off from the Church and an

MOVIES

By JAMES MURRAY

integral, special part of it.

They top this with the specious way they deal with the friary of Sion which, subsequent to the publication of Brown's farrago was shown to be completely fictitious. One character simply remarks to another that the Priory members arranged for it to be dismissed as fictitious so as to continue its work in secret - a literary device right up there alongside the old penny-dreadful, 'with one bound he was free'.

As the superstar of the show, Tom Hanks gets to carry the lumbering, drawn-out ending. During this, the suspicion grows that he has been subverting the guff and nonsense by drawing on the persona he used in his recent remake of *The Lady Killers*, where he played a hapless, professorial gang-leader: a similar oleaginous charm, wild-eyed enthusiasm, and ersatz sincerity.

Or perhaps he was anticipated by French actor Jean Reno, playing an Opus Dei member who is also the detective in charge of the key murder investigation. When he has to utter the question 'Quoi?', Reno gives it the tone of 'Que?' uttered by the immortal Manuel in *Faulty Towers*.

As DVC moves to DVD, it has already achieved the status of golden turkey, perhaps the ultimate one from the Hollywood turkey farm which has prospered on the basis that no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the public. (See *Media Matters*).

MA 15+ ★☆☆☆☆ NFFV

The Omen

Over-ketchupped replication rather than re-make by director John Moore of the Gregory Peck-Lee Remick 1976 original, out in time to catch the pseudo-religious wave created by *The DVC*. Julia Stiles and Liev Schreiber play the Thorns, parents of Damien (Seumus Davey-Fitzpatrick) deemed to embody the Beast 666, named in the Bible.

Lightning flashes, thunder rolls, savage black dogs bound, priests and cardinals mutter, scurry and roll their eyes in what is yet another piece of hokum deriving its profane, parasitic

power from the sacred.

Mia (*Rosemary's Baby*) Farrow makes an effective entrance as a nanny, sweet-face but ruthless in her protection of Damien. David Thewlis does a strong turn as the seedy paparazzo who sees everything through his camera lens but cannot prevent his own fate.

The end puts Damien close to the White House. For a sequel? Well, 20th Century Fox is also Rupert Murdoch's Cash Box.

(For the record: Damien, Joseph de Veuster (1840-89), was a Belgian-born missionary who devoted his saintly life to the care of the lepers of Molokai).

MA 15+ ★☆☆☆☆ NFFV

X-Men 3: The Last Stand

If only it were. But although director Brett Ratner's version of the Marvel Comics thriller is being promoted as the final feature in a trilogy, there have been reports of a spin-off involving the steel-clawed mutant Wolverine (Hugh Jackman).

As in *The Da Vinci Code*, Ian McKellan lends his mummer's skills to tosh playing the villainous Magneto. In there with him is the great Patrick Stewart, playing Professor Charles Xavier. He believes in co-existence between mutants and ordinaries. Magneto is into world dominance (like Hitler who was really an imbecilic black caterpillar attached to the upper lip of a human host).

Give us a break, guys. Surely you've paid off the Hollywood and Home Comics mortgages by now.

M ★☆☆☆☆ NFFV

Live and Become

The exodus to Israel of Ethiopia's Falashas, reportedly descendants of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, is fact beyond fiction. From it, writer/director Rada Mihalceanu has made a movie of surpassing power. He begins in an African refugee camp where a Christian mother persuades her son to pass himself off as a Jewish Falasha called Schlomo so as to be rescued by the Israelis, her final admonition the words of the title.

Mihalceanu could have chosen to make a sentimental fantasy of the son's life in Israel. Instead he creates a parable of universal relevance from the difficulties of the son's residual

adherence to Christian belief and the anti-black prejudice he endures from orthodox Jews after he is adopted by a secular – and French speaking – Jewish family.

Mihaileanu is well served by his ensemble cast and above all by Sirak M. Sabahat as the adult Schlomo and Roni Hadar as Sarah, the woman who joins him lovingly in fighting prejudice.

M ★★★★★ NFFV

Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story

Bawdy, rude but not sleazoid version of Laurence Sterne's classic, scripted by Martin Hardy and directed by Michael Winterbottom who ingeniously capture the madcap, antic nature of the work by making it a film within a film.

Steve Coogan stars in the title role. He has, however, to duck paddle desperately while appearing calm to avoid being obliterated by the sly, toothy pike of supporting player Rob Brydon in the role of Uncle Toby.

The marvellous aspect of the movie is that Hardy and Winterbottom reserve as much acidic satire for the modern film actors as for the 18th century characters. In a splendid ensemble cast, Kelly MacDonald and Shirley Henderson shine as respectively a modern film wife and an antediluvian maid of all work. Then Gillian (X-Files) Anderson enters to show them how to make a cameo role into a movie's supreme adornment.

M ★★★★★ NFFV

Beyond the Sea

Bobby Darin was one of the choir of Italian American crooners that included Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Perry Como and Tony Bennett, all in their different ways trying to surpass the Irish-American Harry Lillis (Bing) Crosby.

What gave Darin his distinction in this illustrious heirarchy was the desperation of his ambition, a desperation triggered by childhood rheumatic fever that left him with a weak-heart.

Kevin Spacey captures Darin's driven nature in a starshine performance, revelling in performing Darin's songs, particularly, *Mack the Knife*, in a style so authentic that it's difficult to believe Darin's masters were not intermixed with the vocals.

Spacey also directed and wrote the script which has a film within a film

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

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NFFV: Not For Family Viewing

format, giving ample space for the likes of Brenda Blethyn who fired Darin's ambitions, Bob Hoskins as his drover-in-law and John Goodman as his manager.

Great cast, outshone by Kate Bosworth playing Sandra Dee, the estranged love and the light of Darin's life. Spacey, often deemed cynical, gives them a bedroom scene true, romantic power.

M ★★★★★ NFFV

Just My Luck

Ashleigh (Lindsay Lohan) is a PR and thus a self-made princess with a dowry of golden luck. Jake (Chris Pine) is a clumsy frog with nothing between him and Lordom but an unknown rock band, McFly.

But when Ashleigh kisses Jake her luck is transferred to him. On this light foundation director Donald Petrie and his engaging stars create a comedy that dives to slapstick and flies to romance in the streets of New York which, as every popcorn addict knows, are paved with success.

PG ★★★☆☆ SFFV

An Inconvenient Truth

Sharp documentary on global warming directed by Davis Guggenheim and featuring Al Gore; make that starring, for Gore transmutes what is basically an old-fashioned lantern lecture crossed with a computerised power-point event into a vehicle that could again put him in contention for the US presidency he lost to George W. Bush in the hanging-

chads election of 2000.

If the lecture thesis is shy of being totally convincing, it's not because Gore lacks wit, including unusually for a politician, self-deprecation, it's because doom-saying has been around for a long time. Noah got it right. But how many others got it wrong?

Nonetheless, the documentary is a must-see if only because of Gore's past and potential and because the cause is not one he has just taken up. He links it to his boyhood and to days on a tobacco farm where his father ignored the US Surgeon General's warnings on the dangers of smoking – until a beloved sibling died of smoking related cancer whereupon he stopped growing tobacco.

Okay an *ad hominem* point but a moving one. Almost as moving as the brave way Gore describes himself as, 'once the next President of the United States'.

PG ★★★★★ SFFV

Take the Lead

At first sight, *Blackboard Jungle* meets *Strictly Ballroom*. But Antonio Banderas brings a charming effectiveness to the role of dance teacher Jules Dulaine who really did introduce a programme of ballroom dancing to one of New York's most hardbitten, public schools, a programme much imitated and recently introduced in Australia.

Nonetheless, to an extent, director Liz Friedlander and writer Dianne Houston sell the premise short by having the students go (regress?) from ballroom to hip-hop in the movie's climactic scenes.

PG ★★★☆☆ SFFV

On a Clear Day

Another in the working-class consolation genre, pioneered by *The Full Monty* and continued by such movies as *Brassed Off*. In this one, Paul Mullan is Frank, a skilled tradesman who at 55 refuses to adapt to the new demands of the Clydeside, shipbuilding industry. Precisely why he refuses is not totally clear. But his departure from the industry is merely the trigger for a compensatory challenge: swimming the English Channel.

He is aided by a group of friends and later his son (Jamie Sives) though his

wife (Brenda Blethyn) is preoccupied with trying to pass the test as a bus driver.

PG ★★☆☆☆ SFFV

United 93

Director Paul (*Bloody Sunday*) Greengrass's strength derives from the way he creates his movie frame by frame in a quasi-documentary style. For Greengrass the tension, the thrill is in the detail.

He deploys this technique with nail-biting effect to depict what might have happened aboard the fourth of the jumbo jets that took part in the September 11 suicidal attacks by Muslim fundamentalists on America, attacks that included the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon.

So far as can be ascertained, the fourth jumbo was aiming for the heart of American democracy, Capitol Hill. But its passengers, inspired by hope against despair, took concerted action to prevent it reaching its target. It crashed into a Pennsylvania field. All on board died.

Greengrass intensifies the quasi-documentary style of his work by using a cast of unknowns who create an unforgettable sense of, *This could be me*.

Note: Your reviewer saw the Greengrass movie in America between trans-Pacific flights on United Airlines jumbos which concentrated his mind on its merits and made him grateful for the flight attendants who while courteous and elegant also looked as if they might have black belts in judo.

MA 15+ ★★☆☆☆ NFFV

Half Light

Rachel Carlson (Demi Moore) is a best-selling mystery writer. Her husband Brian (Henry Ian Cusick) is a book editor with ambitions to mimic his wife's success. From this partnership writer/director Craig Rosenberg has constructed a thriller that mixes the uncanny on a remote Scottish island with a cunning metropolitan plot.

M ★★☆☆☆ NFFV

Over the Hedge

From the team that made *Shrek* and *Madagascar* comes this fable of a group of animals led by a tortoise Verne (voice: Gary Shandling) in turn diverted

by a Raccoon, RJ, (Bruce Willis).

Their greenspace has been invaded by humans in a housing estate. So it's Over the Hedge into a land flowing with all the packaged food of supermarkets and trafcans plus loads of giggles, chuckles, guffaws and laughter.

G ★★☆☆☆ SFFV

Ballets Russes

The commentary on Dayna Goldfine and Dan Geller's documentary is slightly soporific. But that's all right. The archival footage from the 1920s and 1930s has a dreamlike dazzle and features such premier dancers as Nijinsky, Alicia Markova, Frederick Franklin, Natalie Krassovska, George Zoritch, Tatiana Riabouchinska and Irina Baranova (who now lives in Australia).

Intercut with the archival footage are talking-head interviews that match it in liveliness and wit.

G ★★☆☆☆ SFFV

Mission Impossible III

The indefatigable Tom Cruise again plays super agent Ethan Hunt (offspring of James Bond and Emma Peel). But despite the relentless ingenuity of the murderous challenges he faces and despite Cruise's talent for sangfroid, the thrills are weakened by a relatively new showbiz factor.

The vividness of a star's private life can have a negative effect on the necessary suspension of disbelief. In this case, the negativity is exacerbated by the casting of Michelle Monaghan as Hunt's wife (and a lookalike for Cruise's partner Katie Holmes).

Not co-incidentally the private Philip Seymour Hoffman acts Cruise and everyone else off the screen as the baddie, battling Hunt for possession of the gizmo that could destroy the world.

M ★★☆☆☆ NFFV

Poseidon

The great yarn-spinner Paul Gallico's premise of a rogue wave over-turning a cruise ship has even more validity today than when it inspired *The Poseidon Adventure* back in 1972. Who, looking at a modern cruise ship towering out of the sea like a maritime tenement, could discount the risk of it going bilge-side up in a storm?

Director Wolfgang (*Das Boot*)

ANNALS AUSTRALASIA 42 JUNE 2006

Petersen exploits this risk factor to the full. His cast which includes Kurt Russell, Josh Lucas, Richard Dreyfus, Emmy Rossum and Jacinda Barrett sink and rise to the challenges.

M ★★☆☆☆ SFFV

The White Countess

Is a Shanghai night club. And if you catch a whiff of Rick's place in Casablanca, you're onto the remains of the story: white Russian countess turned taxi-dancer (Natasha Richardson) meets cynical, blind, former Yankee diplomat (Ralph Fiennes).

This being a James Merchant Ivory movie there is a metaphor lurking beneath the visual squalor and splendour. Hiroyuki Sanada plays a suave Japanese power player who assists the ex-diplomat in making his night-club fashionable.

Get it? Dastardly Japan lulls America into a false sense of security. The movie also features two other members of the Redgrave Repertory Company, Vanessa and Lynn.

They display their genetic skills when the Japanese invade Shanghai but fail to prevent the countess and the diplomat sailing off into the sunset.

M ★★☆☆☆ NFFV

Stick It

Haley Graham (Misty Peregrin) is a dani-devil whose bike-riding exploits send her back to the Vickerman Gymnastics Academy run by Burt Vickerman (Jeff Bridges) and the chance to redeem herself by winning a place in America's Olympic team.

Misty Peregrin is an immensely amiable newcomer Jeff Bridges is an immensely able veteran. She, with a little help from French gymnastics star Isabelle Severino performs audacious routines. He, banishing past experience, grunts, grins and grimaces. He even harumphs. And shows pre-identical quality by chewing gum and ~~sucking~~ at the same time.

The title incidentally is gymnastics lingo for making a perfect landing.

PG ★★☆☆☆ SFFV

Correction: In the previous issue, *Where the Truth Lies* should have been classed as R 18+ not MA 15+.

Angels at the Marriage Feast of Cana

A JOYFUL HOMECOMING

By JAMES MUHREN, MFM

THE Council of Archangels had met in full session as soon as the designated guardian angel had reported that the time was now near. He was emaciated by years of fasting and the most rigorous self-discipline. In addition there was the constant loss of blood that flowed from the five sacred 'Jesus wounds'. Now the joyful troubadour Francis Bernardone of Assisi was on the point of expiring. There was no problem about his glorious reception into heaven. All angels and saints were excited at the prospect of meeting this great imitator of the Lord's suffering humanity. But there was a bit of a problem about the holy man's special friends. He had preached so eloquently about the love of the Lord and his compassion with all creatures, that hundreds of birds of all shapes and colours with special regards to the humble swiftlets and sparrows



had listened enthralled to his passionate proclaiming of the Lord. Wherever he went on earth in his native town of Perugia or even Rome the birds had flocked into the trees to listen to him.

It was clear that the heavenly happiness of the stigmatized saint would be greatly reduced if he had to leave his little friends behind on earth. So 'What to do?' that was the question. After much deliberation the Council decided to send out some scouts to some of the more remote clouds. They had to find a suitable one, big enough to be turned into a bird park. They had to make sure that this park would not be too near to the heavenly residence of the Contemplatives. They mentioned by name the Carmelites and the Trappists of the stricter observance. The twittering of the birds might disturb their constant meditation and profound adoration. They also agreed to have some guardian angels at the gates of the park so that they could be closed when Francis decided to

THESE whimsies of Father James Muhren offer a refreshingly Catholic perspective on heavenly life. We may find theology with a dash of humour, as well as generous servings of faith, hope and charity – all the while drawing on the priceless treasury of Catholic tradition and imagination. Ed.



The Bloody Foundations of French Republicanism

THE closing years of the century of Voltaire saw pregnant women anticipating the moment of their delivery with horror. The pregnancy of a condemned woman secured her a temporary reprieve, but upon the birth of her baby she was dragged weak and tottering to the scaffold; the baby was sent to a state orphanage. Many women therefore declared themselves pregnant and managed, while waiting for an examination by the prison doctors, to grasp at another day or two of life. Such a case was that of the Princesse de Monaco, who had been born a Frenchwoman of the noble house of Choiseul-Stainville. Having secured a day's reprieve, she cut her hair with her own hands and was able to have it smuggled out of the prison and delivered to her children. "I inform you, Citizen, that I am not pregnant," she then wrote Fouquier-Tinville. "I did not soil my mouth with this lie from fear of death or because I wish to

avoid it, but to secure a day's grace so that my hair would not have been cut by the executioner. It is the only legacy I am able to leave my children; it should at least be pure."

The Princesse was executed the next day. It is said that she rouged her cheeks so that she would not look pale should weakness over-come her at the last moment. Her maid died with her and she was heard to say to that unfortunate woman as she ascended the steps of the scaffold, "Have courage, my friend. Crime alone should show fear." She died along with forty-six others on 9 Thermidor, the day of Robespierre's overthrow, and she was therefore in the last "batch" (*foumée*) to go to the guillotine.

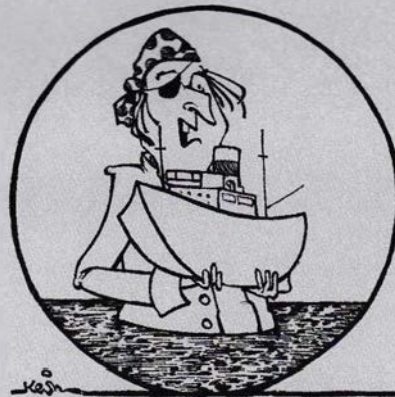
The Maréchal de Mouchy was a man of eighty. He and his wife were in the prison of the Luxembourg when it was decided to empty such houses of detention by

systematically transferring all occupants to the Conciergerie and dispatching them on the scaffold. Mme. de Mouchy was too old and too ill to comprehend what was happening. When the guard came to summon them for trial, her husband said to her in a gentle voice, "Madame, we must go now. God wishes it, let us therefore honor His will. I shall not leave your side. We shall depart together." The Marechal de Mouchy and his wife had made themselves very much liked among their fellow prisoners at the Luxembourg. When they departed, their friends lined up before the gate to bid them adieu. 'Courage, Monsieur le Maréchal' cried one of these.

The Maréchal answered in a phrase that had the knightly ring of another day and age. 'My friend,' he declared, 'when I was fifteen I went into the breach for my King. At eighty I go to the scaffold for my God. I am not unfortunate'.

— Stanley Loomis, *Paris in the Terror, June 1793-July 1794*, Lippincott, Philadelphia and New York, 1964, pp. 333-334.

spend some quiet time with his feathered companions. Now that he had seen the Lord, his preaching would be all the more inspired. And so the court of heaven was full of expectation and eager preparation. The Council issued the necessary orders. Angel scouts flew off in all directions. The bird catchers went through the heavenly realm to gather the birds. Do not get the wrong impression. They did not use nets or cages. There was no need for that. They just called out: 'St Francis is coming!' And there they came in their thousands. It was really very enjoyable, the angels thought, for the birds settled on their heads and their wings and everywhere. The chirping and twittering filled the air like a joyful hymn of praise to the Lord and to his saint. When the moment was near however they all fell silent. A hush came down on the expectant multitude of angels, saints and birdies. They all heaved a big sigh when Francis of Assisi breathed his last and became St Francis. By earthly reckoning his gentle soul left the house at Porziuncula on October 3, 1226. His triumphant entry into heaven is to be remembered for ever on that day by those of us who were still on our way. All over the heavens the birds of Francis proclaim God's glory and the humble submission of the saint to the divine providence. And everywhere the angels keep track of their little friends so that they may not fly astray. They sing in chorus: 'All you holy ones and birds of the sky, praise the Lord in his glory.'



Corsairs still roam the Seas

WHILE everybody talks about digital piracy these days, piracy of the old-fashioned kind, which supposedly disappeared after the Napoleonic Wars, has been making a big comeback – and some fear that the worst is yet to come. There were 445 attacks on ships around the world last year, compared with 370 in 2002 and 106 in 1998. Twenty-one seafarers were killed and 71 others listed as missing. The estimated cost to international trade in lost cargo and ships and higher insurance premiums now runs about \$16 billion annually, according to the Asia Foundation.

'Ninety-five percent of the world's cargo travels by sea,' observes Glass, author of *Tribes with Flags* (1990). 'Yet no one, apart from ship owners, their crews, and insurers, appears to notice that pirates are assaulting ships at a rate unprecedented since the glorious days when pirates were 'privateers' protected by their national governments.'

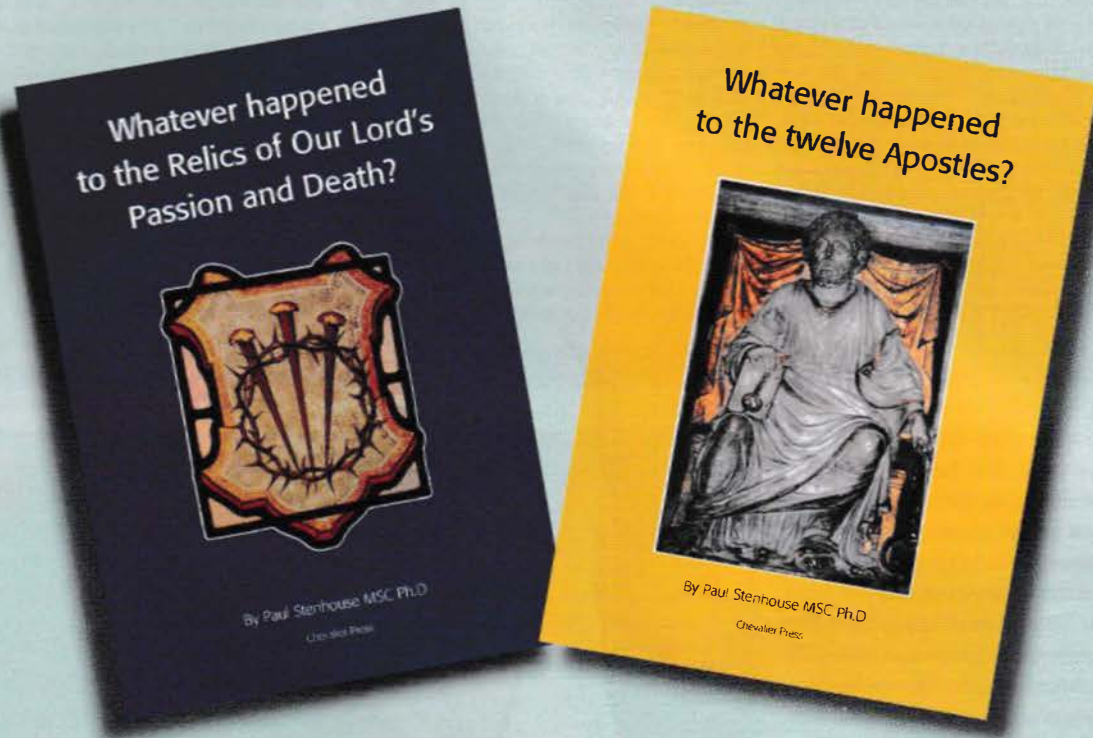
Piracy today is most common in waters where it flourished in the past: in the Bay of Bengal, in the Java and the South China seas, off the Horn of Africa, and in the Caribbean. Instead of Spanish galleons and the like, today's pirates prey on oil tankers and other merchant ships, then sell the captured cargo on the black market. Beyond national territorial waters, there are no laws and no police. 'Many countries lack the will or the resources to police even their own waters,' says Glass.

— Review of *The New Piracy* by Charles Glass, in the London Review of Books, December 18, 2003.

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