

# ANNUALS

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# ANNALS AUSTRALASIA

*Journal of Catholic Culture*

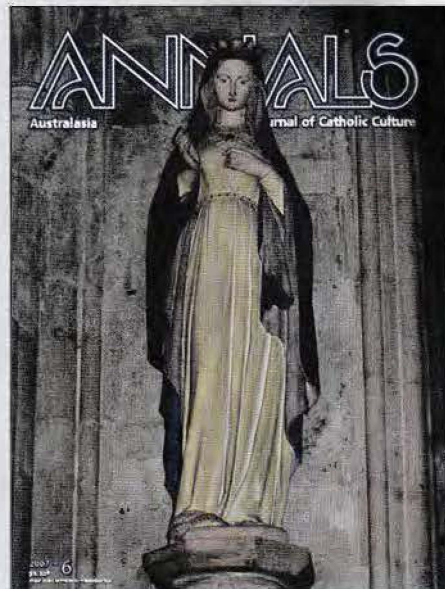
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*Australia's Oldest Catholic Magazine*

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*Front Cover:* Statue of our Lady in St Etheldreda's Church, Ely Place, London. It was the town chapel of the Bishops of Ely from about 1250 to 1570. It is the oldest Catholic church in England and one of only two buildings remaining in London from the reign of Edward I. The chapel took its name from one of England's most popular saints of the day, Princess Etheldreda, daughter of King Anna, a prominent member of the ruling family of the Kingdom of East Anglia. She was born in 630. She wanted to be a nun but agreed to a political marriage with a neighbouring King, Egfrith, on condition that she could remain a virgin. When the King tried to break the agreement, she fled back to Ely, where, as well as founding a religious community, she also built a magnificent church on the ruins of one founded by the efforts of St Augustine himself. St Etheldreda's is now in the care of the Rosminian Order. Its Rector is Father Kit Cunningham, IC, MBE.

*Back Cover:* A selection of new booklets recently published by Chevalier Press. They are ideal as gifts for relatives and friends interested in the Catholic Faith, for RCIA groups following catechism courses in preparation of baptism at Eastertide, or as school prizes. They make ideal bedtime reading, and we recommend them to all Catholics wishing to deepen their understanding of their history, and of their faith.

Cover Photo: Paul Stenhouse MSC

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**Those Who Dishonour Religion**  
 'Tis it I whom they  
 Thurt?  
 - it is the Lord who  
 speaks -  
 Is it not, in fact,  
 themselves,  
 to their own  
 confusion?  
 - Jeremiah the Hebrew  
 Prophet, [born c.650 BC]  
 vii.19.

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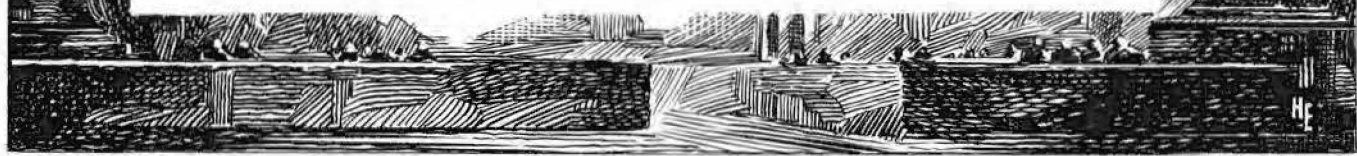
In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and  
of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## THE MASS MATTERS

NOBODY nowadays, save a handful of vulgar fanatics, speaks irreverently of the Mass. If the Incarnation be indeed the one Divine event to which the whole creation moves, the miracle of the altar may well seem its restful shadow cast over a dry and thirsty land for the help of man, who is apt to be discouraged if perpetually told that everything really important and interesting happened, once for all, long ago in a chill historic past. ... it is doubtful whether any poor sinful child of Adam ever witnessed, however ignorantly, and it may be with only the languid curiosity of a traveller, the Communion Service according to the Catholic ritual without emotion. It is the Mass that matters; it is the Mass that makes the difference, so hard to define, so subtle is it, yet so perceptible, between a Catholic country and a Protestant one, between Dublin and Edinburgh, between Havre and Croner. Here, I believe, is one of the battlefields of the future.

-Augustine Birrell, Quaker Essayist, 1850-1933, in 'What, Then, Did Happen at the Reformation?' first published in *Nineteenth Century*, April 1896; reprinted in *The Selected Essays and Addresses of Augustine Birrell*, J.M Dent & Sons, London, 1922 pp. 346-347. Birrell was Secretary for Ireland from 1907 - 1916.

[The expression 'It is the Mass that matters' is much quoted. Even when, occasionally, Augustine Birrell is identified as its probable author, usually no references are given. We have sought to remedy this oversight. Birrell's sense of fairness drove him to acknowledge that the belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, 'a Mystery so tremendous, so profoundly attractive, so intimately associated with the keystone of the Christian faith, so vouched for by the testimony of saints,' was preserved from Apostolic Times in the Church of Rome. Along with the related question of the validity of Anglican Orders, the nature of the Mass and belief in the Real Presence was, Birrell maintained, one of the issue that would determine the fate of the Established Church of England in the future. Ed. *Annals*]



A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring intricate floral designs, including yellow and purple flowers, and architectural elements like stone arches and brickwork. The border is set against a dark background.

## SING A SONG TO GOD

**T**HE TRAIN of prophets in the song conspire.  
Legions of martyrs in the chorus shine,  
By these Thy Church, inspired by heavenly art,  
Around the world maintains a second part;  
And tunes her sweetest notes, O God, to Thee,  
The Father of unbounded majesty;  
The Son, adored co-partner of Thy seat,  
And equal, everlasting Paraclete.  
Thou King of Glory, Christ of the Most High,  
Thou co-eternal, filial Deity;

**T**HOU, WHO, to save the world's impending doom,  
Vouchsafest to dwell within a virgin's womb;  
Old tyrant Death disarmed, before thee flew  
The bolts of heaven, and back the foldings drew,  
to give access and make Thy faithful way.  
From God's right hand Thy filial beams display.  
Thou art to judge the living and the dead;  
Then spare those souls for whom Thy veins have bled.  
O take us up amongst Thy blessed above,  
to share with them Thy everlasting love.

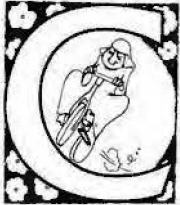
**P**RESERVE, O Lord, Thy people and enhance  
Thy blessing on Thine own inheritance.  
Forever raise their hearts and rule their ways.  
Each day we bless Thee and proclaim Thy praise.  
No age shall fail to celebrate Thy name,  
No hour neglect Thy everlasting fame.  
Preserve our souls, O Lord this day from ill;  
Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy still  
As we have hoped, do Thou reward our pain;  
We've hoped in Thee, let not our hope be vain.

- From John Dryden's translation of the final stanzas of the triumphal Catholic hymn *Te Deum laudamus* traditionally ascribed to St Ambrose [died 397] though also by some to Nicetas of Remesiana [died 414], a Catholic bishop in Eastern Serbia. Dryden's Catholicism cost him his posts as Poet-Laureate and Royal Historiographer when William of Orange was invited to be king in 1688. He died in 1700.

*Chesterton, Cicero and Islam*

## BRIDGING CHASMS WITH COBWEBS

By PAUL STENHOUSE MSC



ICERO once wrote of Themistocles that when he was asked for advice about a girl's marrying a good but poor person, or a less well-thought-of rich man, replied: I prefer somebody in need of money, to money in need of somebody." Isn't he right? For 'money' read 'power'. A poor person genuinely in need of money may be helped, but a man [or woman] *sought* by wealth and power is often defenceless and may find himself in thrall to a monster that devours and destroys him.

Budding historians in our midst may have noticed how tragically unprepared empires and political and religious rulers have shown themselves to have been down the centuries when problems, revolutions, crises and disasters have struck. Isn't it possible that it is the

unpreparedness, the ignorance, the indifference, the reluctance to take advice, and the underlying vanity and ambition of mankind, that *summons* the demons and creates the problems, crises and disasters?

Am I wrong in suggesting that G.K. Chesterton thought so? He proved the timelessness of his insights and touched a raw nerve in all of us, when he wrote of contemporary society,

"We cannot enrol people in our religion because we have not got one [so] we enrol them in our government, and if we are obliged to do that, the obvious essential is that like Roman rule before Christianity, or the English rule in India, it should profess to be impartial if only by being irreligious."

He could well have had in mind the confusion and alarm verging on panic felt by 'tolerant' and 'impartial,' and *de facto* if not *de iure* 'irreligious' secular

Western Governments, confronted by militant Islam in their cities and on their doorsteps.

They have grown so accustomed to trivializing Christianity and honouring Christian values and tradition only in the breach, and damning them with faint praise, that they risk coming to grief on the rocks of their prejudices and presuppositions.

In the West, the idea of the *separation of Church and State* has not infrequently been dumbed down in practice to the sidelining and patronising of the Church by the State. Islamists won't play that game.

Secular states are not unnaturally at a loss to know how to deal with this unexpected turn of events – especially as current wisdom would have it that Islam is a 'tolerant' and 'peaceable' religion. So what's the problem? What difference can what a person believes, make?

"It is the reverse of all reason," says Chesterton, 'to suggest that a man's politics matter, and his religion does not matter'.<sup>3</sup>

Our political masters have forgotten, if they ever knew, that one shouldn't act without carefully considering the possible long-term consequences of one's actions.

That is the point of the hoary old political adage that you should never ask a question publicly to which you don't know the answer. The present Republican administration in the USA should have taken it to heart. Our world would be the safe place they wanted it to be, had they done so.

How good this advice is was borne out centuries ago in the case of the Stoic Cato the Younger who died in 46 BC. Cato *suspected* that Julius Caesar was an accomplice of Cataline in his conspiracy. So he challenged him in the Senate to read aloud a note that had just been discreetly passed to him Caesar handed

### Plans for War in 1934

THE ENGLISH PROPAGANDA was run entirely by civilians, the German by soldiers; the latter is the wrong way, because it is not the soldier's but the psychologist's opinion that counts here. Actual methods need not be discussed in a book which is concerned with the main outlines rather than the details of the problems it discusses. Suffice it to say that good propaganda must be unobtrusive, that its object must not be apparent at all, if it is to be effectual and have a permanent and decisive influence on the mind of a nation. It needs to be planned a long way ahead and we must not expect it to bear fruit in a couple of months or even years. Hence good propaganda should begin in peace-time and operate in such a way that the country running it reaps its fruits as soon as war is declared. War-time propaganda ought to be merely the more concentrated and, of course, more vigorous continuation of peace-time propaganda. The most important points are:- setting up auxiliary centres in foreign capitals; literary propaganda, by influencing the press and also by producing books and pamphlets; the provision of effective films and broadcasting-items; the erection of public utility buildings adapted to the character of the people, e.g. reading-rooms or drinking-fountains or industrial institutes, as the case may be; finally, mouth-to-mouth propaganda with the help of native agents.

- Ewald Banse, *Germany, Prepare for War!* London Lovat Dickson, 1934, p.71. Banse was Professor of Military Science in Brunswick, Germany. This translation of Banse's book was on sale in England in 1934 and thereafter. Few read it and fewer, evidently, took it seriously.

the note to Cato without comment. The latter began to read, and it proved to be a love letter from Cato's half-sister Servilia to Caesar.

G.K.Chesterton would have appreciated the irony of the situation. He also would not have been surprised that Servilia, who caused such mirth at Cato's expense, was, if not the cause, then at least the occasion of Caesar's ruin, for rumour had it that she had surrendered her daughter Tertia to Caesar as his mistress.

At a public auction during the Civil War [50-48 BC], Caesar sold some confiscated Spanish estates to Servilia for a ridiculously low price. He punned that he did so, '*tertia deducta*,' which meant either that he had sold them at 'a third discount' or as was commonly believed, because 'Tertia has been given to him'. Tertia later on married Cassius, the prime mover in his assassination in 44 BC.

Cato's dilemma caused by his injudicious brashness and political bias against Caesar is not dissimilar to the situation of those of our religious, political and media contemporaries who, in the words of Cicero, 'defend without hesitation what they have not sufficiently perceived or understood'.

Cicero suggests that this uncritical defence of the unknown and what is not clearly defensible, [quod non satis et explorare sit perceptum et cognitum] is 'more deplorable in its rashness' [turpius temeritate] than simply 'being wrong' [falsum sentire].

Being wrong is always a possibility for us humans. However, not checking, or not bothering the check, to see whether we or others might be wrong, betrays a character flaw that has potentially very serious consequences for the individual and society.

Cardinal Newman's declaration in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, that

'there is no medium, in true philosophy, between Atheism and Catholicity ... a perfectly consistent mind, under those circumstances in which it finds itself here below must embrace either the one or the other.'<sup>5</sup>

... is reminiscent of Chesterton's equally unambiguous and prophetic challenge thrown out to the post-post-modernists of our day who are clearly at a loss to know how to react to the perceived threat of a militant Islam:

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'It is foolish for us in the West to sneer at those who kill men when a foot is set in a holy place, when we ourselves kill hundreds of thousands when a foot is set across a frontier.'<sup>6</sup>

Chesterton's famous aphorism - much quoted [at least by me] that the main problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is going to be the 'ignorance of the experts' seems borne out by media and left-wing willingness to defend Islam [not Muslims, let it be added] *by default* and against all comers, especially against criticism from without, but even from within Islam itself.

'If you had talked to a Utilitarian and Rationalist of [Jeremy] Bentham's time who told men to "follow enlightened self-interest" he would have been considerable bewildered if you had replied brightly and briskly, "and to which self do you refer: the subconscious, the conscious, the latently criminal or suppressed, or others that we fortunately have in stock?"'

Confronted by the strangeness of a religion that spreads itself by violence, and as Ibn Khaldun reminds us, is compelled by its Divine mandate to do so, we should heed the advice

Chesterton offered readers of his *The New Jerusalem*:

'Our first safety is in seeing that it is a strange country; and our present preliminary peril [is] that we may fall into the habit of thinking it is a familiar country. It does no harm to put the facts in a fashion that seems disconnected; for the first fact of all is that they are disconnected. And the first danger of all is that we may allow some international nonsense or newspaper cant to imply that they are connected when they are not. It does no harm, at any rate to start with, to state the differences as irreconcilable ... the chief danger [is] that they may be persuaded that the wordy compromises of western politics can reconcile them; that such abysses can be filled with rubbish; or such chasms bridged with cobwebs.'<sup>7</sup>

To politicians, media personalities and religious men and women who have abandoned or neglected their Catholic, Protestant or Jewish faith and are so sure that they know how to deal with the phenomenon of a resurgent radical Islam, Chesterton cautions them about

'... the violent and unexpected reactions we shall produce if we thrust our own unrealities amid the red-hot realities of the near East; it is like pushing a snow man into a furnace ... I know what a cataract it could feed!'

We have learnt to our sorrow what Chesterton intuited. He was under no illusions about the poverty of modern Western man's spiritual and intellectual arsenal were he ever to be called upon to repel assaults on his 21<sup>st</sup> citadel of Godless modernity and technology.

To lessen our unpreparedness, he recalled quaint old Chronicles that traced

'... the genealogies of English kings through the chiefs of Troy to the children of Noah. The[se] tale[s] of the Dark Ages,' he said, 'can never be proved, while the travesty of the Darwinian theory can sometimes be disproved.'<sup>8</sup>

The whole of modern doubts about the supernatural, the miracles of Jesus were, 'Chesterton reminds us, 'founded on the fixity of facts. Miracles were monstrosities because they were against natural law which was necessarily immutable law. The prodigies of the Old Testament or the mighty works of the New were extravagances because they were exceptions; and they were exceptions because there was a rule, and that was

an immutable rule ... as soon as the men of science began to doubt the rules of the game, the game was up. They could no longer rule out all the old marvels as impossible in face of the new marvels which they had to admit as possible ... their non-miraculous world was no longer watertight.<sup>11</sup>

'We never find our own religion so right as when we are wrong about it.'<sup>12</sup>

And we never find Chesterton to be so right, as when we are so wrong about him. For all his love of paradox, he was a realist who noticed palm trees and desert storms.

He was not one to dodge confrontation. He was in no doubt that the differences in this case were crucial. He would have had little patience with those amongst us who continue to point to what unites us, not what divides us; to stress the positive and ignore or play down the negative. Rather like a doctor telling patients that their hearts are in great shape, and their eyesight and hearing have never been better but out of delicacy omitting to mention the melanoma that will surely kill the patients if not treated. Differences matter; and are an important component of what make us who and what we are.

Nothing good, it seems, can be said, these days, of the Crusades, yet as Chesterton notes

'Christianity would have been entirely justified in the abstract in being alarmed or suspicious at the mere rise of a great power that was not Christian. Nobody nowadays would think it odd to express regret at the rise of a power because it was Militarist or Socialist or even Protectionist.'<sup>13</sup>

'Christianity might quite reasonably have been alarmed if it had not been attacked. But as a matter of history it had been attacked. The Crusader would have been quite justified in suspecting the Moslem even if the Moslem had merely been a new stranger; but as a matter of history he was already an old enemy. The critics of the Crusade talk as if it had sought out some inoffensive tribe or temple in the interior of Tibet, which was never discovered until it was invaded. They seem entirely to forget that long before the Crusaders had dreamed of riding to Jerusalem, the Moslems had already ridden into Paris.'<sup>14</sup>

Critics of the Crusades 'seem to forget that if the Crusaders nearly conquered Palestine, it was but a

## Nothing New Under the Sun

IT IS ALMOST a characteristic feature of the present age, at least in this country, to have harsh, unkindly, jealous, suspicious, and distrustful thoughts of God. It is not so much that men do not believe in Him, as in past times, or that they are irreverently inquisitive, as they have been in other days. Infidelity and intellectual impiety are unfortunately common enough; but they are not, as compared with other times, the characteristic sins of the day with us. We find in their place abundant admissions of the existence, and even of the excellence, of God; but joined with this, a reluctance ... to acknowledge His sovereignty. There is a desire to strip Him of His majesty, to qualify His rights and to abate His prerogatives, to lower Him so as to bring Him somewhat nearer to ourselves, to insist on His obeying our own notions of the laws of morality, and confining himself within such limits of justice and equity as are binding on creatures rather than on the Creator. There is a tendency to turn religion into a contract between parties, very unequal certainly, but not infinitely unequal, to object to whatever in God's providence betokens a higher rule than the rule of our duties towards each other, and to revolt from any appearance of exclusiveness, supreme will, and unaccountable irresponsibility, which there may be in His conduct towards us. ... the epidemics of the world are never altogether unfelt within the Church. The air is corrupted, and in some much milder form the souls of believers are affected by the pestilence which reigns without. So is it in the present case. In the difficulties through which men have to force their way, by the help of grace, into the One True Fold, in the obstacles which hinder others from advancing in the ways of holiness, in the temptations which tease, if they do not endanger faith, in the treatment of religious controversies, in the sides men take in ecclesiastical politics, in the tendencies of their theological views, and even in the common exercises of daily devotion, we find indubitable traces of an attitude towards God caught from the fashions of the day.

- Frederick William Faber, *The Creator and the Creature*, London, Burns and Oates, 1858.

return upon the Moslems who had nearly conquered Europe'.<sup>15</sup>

I have meandered happily along Chesterton's road accompanied by wisdom from his *Obiter Dicta* - my pilgrim's *Fade Mecum*. May I conclude by offering you samples of that wisdom which I suggest will send you scurrying back to the Master to sample for yourselves the intellectual Feast that Chesterton has prepared for those who care to accept his invitation:

'The king, with a few of the remaining nobles including Renaud de Chatillon, was brought before Saladin in his tent. There occurred a scene strangely typical of the mingled strains in the creed or the culture that triumphed on that day; the stately Eastern courtesy and hospitality; the wild Eastern hatred and self-will. Saladin welcomed the king and gracefully gave him a cup of sherbet which he passed to Renaud. "It is thou and not I who hast given him to drink," said the Saracen. Then he suddenly flung himself raving and

reviling upon Renaud de Chatillon and killed the prisoner with his own hands. Outside two hundred Hospitallers and Templars were beheaded on the field of battle; by one account I have read, because Saladin disliked them, and by another, because they were Christian priests.'<sup>16</sup>

'Twenty historians mention the way in which the maddened Christian mob murdered the Moslems after the capture of Jerusalem, for one who mentions that the Moslem commander commanded in cold blood the murder of some two hundred of his most famous and valiant enemies after the victory of Hattin. The former cannot be shown to have been the act of Tancred, while the latter was certainly the act of Saladin. Yet Tancred is described as at best a doubtful character, while Saladin is represented as a Bayard<sup>17</sup> without fear or blame.'<sup>18</sup>

'It may seem a paradox that there should be this prejudice in Western history in favour of [Moslem] heroes. But the cause is clear enough: it is the remains of the revolt among

many Europeans against their old religious organization which naturally made them hunt through all ages for its crimes and its victims . in this atmosphere of natural and even pardonable prejudice arose the habit of contrasting the intolerance of the Crusaders with the toleration shown by the Moslems. ...there are two sides to everything.<sup>19</sup>

Those who complain of our creeds as elaborate often forget that the elaborate Western creeds have produced the elaborate Western constitutions; and that they are elaborate because they are emancipated. And the real moral of the relation of the two great religions is something much more subtle and sincere than any mere atrocity tales against Turks. It is the same moral of the Christian refusal of a pagan Pantheon in which Christ should rank with Ammon and Apollo. Twice the Christian Church refused what seemed like a handsome offer of a large latitudinarian sort: once to include Christ as a god and once to include him as a prophet; once by the admission of all idols; and once by the abandonment of all idols. Twice the Church took risk and twice the Church survived alone and succeeded alone, filling the world with her own children and leaving her rivals in a desert where the idols were dead and the iconoclasts were dying.<sup>20</sup>

The modern or rather the Victorian prejudice against Crusaders is positive and not relative; and it would still desire to condemn Tancred if it could not acquit Saladin. Indeed it is a prejudice not so much against Crusaders as against Christians.<sup>21</sup>

1. De Officiis, ii, xx, 71. *Mala virum qui precium cogit, quam pecuniam, quae vera.*
2. C.K.Chesterton, *The New Jerusalem*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, London [undated] p.118
3. C.K.Chesterton, *op.cit.*, p.187
4. *De natura rerum* LI
5. *History of My Religious Opinions*, Longmans, Green and London 1865, p.198
6. *op.cit.*, p.186
7. *op.cit.*, p.137
8. *Ibid.*, p.118-119
9. *Ibid.*, p.117
10. *Ibid.*, p.131
11. *Ibid.*, p.138
12. *Ibid.*, p.144
13. *op.cit.*, p.187
14. *Ibid.*, p.188. On this occasion, I suspect that Chesterton, like Homer, nodded. Muslims were in Narbonne and Béziers, in Marseilles and Avignon and around London, but I don't know of their ever riding into Paris.
15. *Ibid.*, p.188
16. *Ibid.*, p.213
17. Pierre Terrail, Lord of Bayard [1473-1524] known to his contemporaries as 'The fearless and faultless knight for his bravery, gaiety and kindness.
18. *Ibid.*, p.213-214
19. *Ibid.*, p.214
20. *Ibid.*, p.216
21. *Ibid.*



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– Editor, *Annals*

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*The Perils of not Caring about the Past*

## 'NEW AGE' AND THE RISE OF THE 'HOLLOW GENERATION'

By JOHN NAVONE, S.J.



THE mankind-without-a-history syndrome has had such a deleterious effect on the Christian world that graduates of religious schools do not know the most basic Bible stories, the story of either Judaism or Christianity, the story of Western civilization and the United States, the story of art, architecture, philosophy, literature and culture. Religious and cultural amnesia leaves a vacuum that easily falls prey to the manipulation of ideological demagogues. Pol Pot eliminated persons with glasses because they might possibly be intelligent enough to question his sweeping imbecilities. It is not so easy to deceive people who have done their historical homework, and recognize the recurrence of dehumanizing, anti-social and self-destructive ideologies.

Insofar as both Judaism and Christianity are historically revealed religions, their survival is a question of knowing their story. Within the Christian community, the people-without-a-history syndrome has a New Age flavor that abstracts from the historical concreteness of the history of the community. The New Age syndrome surfaces in the stream of abstractions issuing from Catholics who studiously avoid such words as 'God,' 'Jesus,' 'Father,' 'Son,' 'Spirit,' 'Christian,' 'Church,' 'Catholic,' 'Mass,' 'sacraments,' and the like. The New Age virus has infected the Christian world no less than the rest of the cultural world. No less than Marxism, it represents another manifestation of the people-without-a-history syndrome, anonymous, hollow, rootless, homogenized people without traditions. The existence of Israel, on the contrary, bears witness to the vitality and identity of a people who,

despite centuries without a nation, have successfully preserved their identity/tradition.

Remembering one's tradition is at the heart of both the Jewish and Christian identity. Israel's remembering is essential for her continued existence as God's covenant people; forgetting God's saving acts would bring her destruction: "You shall remember the Lord your God . . . that he may confirm his covenant which he swore to your father, as at this day. And if you forget

the Lord your God . . . I solemnly warn you that you shall surely perish" (Deut. 8:18-19). Through her remembering, Israel's redemptive history continues in a living tradition in which the divine commands perdure as historical events challenging successive generations to decision and that obedience which enables Israel to share in the redemption of her forefathers.

The imperative to remember God's salvific event in the crucified and risen Christ is at the heart of Christian identity and life. The life of the Christian community is a welcoming response to the grace and call of Christ: "Do this in commemoration of me" (Luke 22:19). The eucharistic celebration re-enacts Christ's sacrifice and actively expresses the Church's remembering: "This is my body which shall be given up for you; do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24). The future of the Christian community is promising because it remembers a past of promises: "Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day" (John 6:54). Even at the purely secular level, we have no future in any field of human achievement apart from some tradition or other. Contempt for tradition as such is an implicit contempt for human development and civilization.

Traditions - social, cultural, intellectual, moral and religious - provide the resources for human development. Tradition represents the acquired and retained experience and wisdom of a community or society. In this respect, memories make the future; for there is no human development apart from the human resources enabling it.

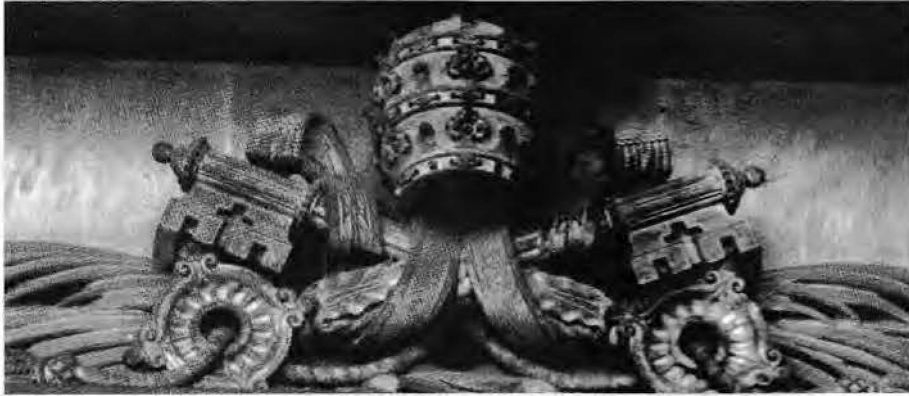


### Hollow Men

Yet what, finally, was the effect of absolute power on twelve representative men? Suetonius makes it quite plain; disastrous. Caligula was certifiably mad. Nero, who started well, became progressively irrational. . . Tacitus, in covering the same period as Suetonius, observes: 'Even after his enormous experience of public affairs, Tiberius was ruined and transformed by the violent influence of absolute power.' Caligula gave the game away when he told a critic, 'Bear in mind that I can treat anyone exactly as I please.' And that cruelty which is innate in human beings, now give the opportunity to treat others as toys, flowered monstrously in the Caesars.

- Gore Vidal, 'Robert Graves and the Twelve Caesars,' - a review of Robert Graves's translation of Suetonius's *The Twelve Caesars*, 1959.

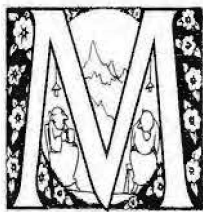
- No Tradition? No Civilization!  
Homiletic & Pastoral Review, October 2002.



Papal Tiara and Keys, set in the wall connecting St Peter's Basilica to Castel Sant'Angelo

# ST. PETER'S BASILICA

By Elizabeth Lev



ANY people who may not know the name of the present Pope, yet seem to take a gossip magazine as seriously as a history text, never fail to be taken aback by the number of people thronging St. Peter's Square today, travelling thousands of miles to see the Successor of St. Peter.

For them, it seems inexplicable that after such human frailty, the Church can still be vibrant and active 2,000 years later. For Catholics, however, this comes as reassuring, daily proof that the Holy Spirit is constantly sustaining the Church.

St. Peter's Basilica itself presents a splendid example of the gentle guidance of Divine Providence toward greatness. The (relatively) new St. Peter's took 120 years and about 10 architects to build, while vicious rivalries and disastrous setbacks colored the history of the construction. All this was recounted in the Exhibition in the Charlemagne wing of St. Peter's Square.

This stunning Exhibition, "Petros Eni," or "Peter is Within," presented the Popes, architects and saints involved in the history of this church, marking its 500th anniversary year. Ancient yellowed documents, artistic masterpieces and unique artifacts were last on display in this exhibit.

Near the entrance, the first object on display was the astounding walk-in model of St. Peter's dome designed by Michelangelo from 1559-61. It is about 15 feet high and represents the dome cut in half. It captured and thrilled the visitor from the threshold of the show and provided a glimpse into the excitement aroused by this project that propelled the work through thick and thin for over a century.

The show itself was broken up into three parts – the construction, the presence of St. Peter, and the saints the basilica has inspired. It seems appropriate that the discussion of the show follow the same pattern.

### Rifts and reconciliations

The building site of St. Peter's often became an arena for professional rivalry or self-aggrandizement. These tensions are hinted at throughout the first rooms, although we are constantly reminded of how pettiness was overcome in favor of the greatness of the project.

In 855 AD, in the last year of the Pontificate of Pope Leo IV, Ethelwulf, king of the Anglo-Saxons, who was crowned by the Pope in St Peter's, remained a year in the Eternal City with his six-year-old son Alfred, future king of England.

The exhibit opened with the busy and momentous year of 1506, when Pope Julius II decided to dismantle the millennium-old St. Peter's, built by Constantine in the fourth century, to build a newer, better church.

While the Pope may have indeed been motivated by a desire to have a fitting cornice for his splendid new tomb (being designed by the 30-year-old Michelangelo and intended to be placed on top of St. Peter's grave), the fact was that the old church was crumbling and unsafe and several architects had already called for drastic intervention.

A cabinet displayed the medal struck in commemoration of April 18, 1506, when Julius II laid the foundation stone of the new basilica. Nearby, a letter from Julius II to King Henry VIII of England proudly informs the then loyal supporter of the Catholic Church of the undertaking. Long before the completion of St. Peter's, Henry would separate from Rome and found his own church.

Julius II greeted visitors from his masterly portrait by Raphael done the year before his death. He looks wan and pensive, clearly aware that he will never see his project finished. Although spurred by a desire for grandeur, this man gave the Church some of its most lasting treasures: the Sistine Chapel, the Raphael Rooms and, of course, St. Peter's.

The early plans for St. Peter's by Bramante as well as his immediate successors were elaborate and very complex constructions. A myriad of different ideas for the basilica, from Bramante's original design to the work of Fra Gerard and Giuliano Sangallo, show a certain streak of searching for personal greatness -- to the detriment of St. Peter's role as a gathering point for pilgrims.

Some plans envisioned numerous interlocking spaces and chapels but don't allow for gathering around St. Peter's tomb. One looks like a Romanesque monastery's dream cathedral, but doesn't take into account the history and place of St. Peter's. The works fall short of the mark because they are more about the glory of the architects than the glory of God.

Bickering among architects flared regularly and the enmity between Michelangelo and Bramante was legendary. A letter from Antonio Sangallo (a cousin of Giuliano's) lists complaints regarding Raphael's work, while it is well known that Bramante was dubbed by contemporaries as "Bramante, Maestro Ruinante" for the destruction of the old basilica.

One of the amusing things in the exhibit was a satire written in 1516 by Guarna da Salerno. It imagines Bramante trying to get into heaven and St. Peter demurring after Bramante has destroyed his church. Bramante offers to rebuild heaven for him saying that he could make it more modern and functional. When Peter refuses, Bramante offers to rebuild hell which has been worn down by the flames and is in need of repair. Exasperated, St. Peter tells Bramante he can just wait outside the gates until his last building project (St. Peter's) is finished.

Raphael's breathtaking portrait of "Leo X and Two Cardinals" provided the backdrop to this period of internecine strife at St. Peter's. A masterpiece of color and ornament, it shows the Medici Pope, pausing momentarily in his examination of an exquisite illuminated manuscript. Raphael painted it in 1518, as Martin Luther was rapidly gaining ground in Germany. The battles among the workers at St. Peter's were but a faint echo of the greater disturbances further north.



Cupola of St Peter's, designed by Michelangelo. The exterior of the dome is 448 feet high; its interior is 405 feet high. Gazing up one can read in letters six-feet long, in purple blue mosaic set on a gold ground, the words, in Latin, "Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram etc." *You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.* [Matthew 16,19].



Monument by Antonio Canova [1757-1822], to the left of the principal bronze doors of the Basilica, to the three exiled Stuart princes who made Rome their home: James III [son of James II] the 'Pretender' to the British throne, and his two sons Charles Edward [Bonnie Prince Charlie] and Henry, Cardinal of the Roman Church and Duke of York.

The old church was being dismantled but nothing was surging up to take its place. A few drawings by Martin Van Heemskerck record the protective shrine that kept the rain off Peter's grave as it stood uncovered between Bramante's massive piers. Thirty years and the building had not progressed.

The turning point was reached in 1545. Titian's brilliant portrait of the forceful Pope Paul III shows neither a tired and aged Pontiff nor a pampered and delicate one but piercing eyes and hawklike features indicative of a strong will. Not a saintly man, as any papal scandal monger will be glad to recount,



Statue of St Peter holding the Keys in his right hand, and a scroll in his left

but the Pope who managed to call and assemble the Council of Trent as well as persuade Michelangelo to take over the helm of building St. Peter's.

Paul III began the process of reconstruction of the church, both spiritually and physically, aided by Michelangelo. 70 years old at the time, who also rose to the occasion with grandness of spirit.

Michelangelo retrieved the aged yellowed plan for St. Peter's of Bramante, his arch-rival, from the dozens of drawings, and modified that design. Refusing all payment, Michelangelo

gave the last 19 years of his life to the construction of the church, for the "glory of God, the honor of St. Peter and the salvation of his own soul."

**The fulcrum**

"Peter, do you love me?" Archbishop Angelo Comastri's address during the inauguration of the "Petros Eni" exhibit quoted this question Christ asked St. Peter three times. Recently, Archbishop Comastri was appointed the archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica and after his rousing and often moving talk at the opening, there can be no doubt why.

The archbishop spoke of St. Peter's profession of love even unto his crucifixion which took place almost 2,000 years ago just a few feet from the exhibition space.

The second part of the exhibit revolved around St. Peter as the fulcrum of this great church. Dominated by three exceptional paintings, this section invited viewers to reflect on the origins of the church, a simple hole in the ground where the body of St. Peter was deposited after the first of what would be many Christian persecutions.

El Greco's intense canvas of "Peter Penitent" was the first work on display and reveals the apostle alone and weeping after having denied Christ. Next, the powerful Caravaggio work, "The Crucifixion of St. Peter," confronted viewers showing the aged, yet rugged apostle doggedly accepting death just as he stubbornly followed Jesus in life. Caravaggio's light effects highlight the sense of mission in Peter's martyrdom; eager to prove his love of Christ, the apostle seems to clasp the nail driven through his hand.

In the wake of these dramatic canvases, it would be easy to overlook the little Rembrandt treasure of "St. Peter in Prison." This small oil painting presents a touching vision of Peter, old and weak, praying in his prison cell. The warm light that bathes Peter's wrinkled face and hands helps us to understand the solace that God's love brings to him.

The most extraordinary object in this part of the show was also the humblest. At first glance it appears as a tiny piece of painted plaster, scratched with ancient graffiti. But a closer look reveals the words "Petros eni." Peter is within. Poor, humble and broken like St. Peter's body, this fragment on an ancient buttressing

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wall led 20th-century excavators to the grave of the Prince of the Apostles.

**A lesson**

So what does St. Peter's Basilica mean to us today? A stop on a tourist itinerary? A holding pen for unruly pilgrims? The last room of the exhibit renders homage to three great pilgrims who came to Rome, prayed at St. Peter's grave and drew strength from his example.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux's handwritten account of her pilgrimage in 1887, St. Francis' tunic from Verna (the site where he received the stigmata) and the sandals of Mother Teresa of Calcutta were displayed around the room.

The sandals have particular meaning for Archbishop Comastri, who acknowledges himself as a spiritual son of Mother Teresa. The archpriest explains that these relics serve to remind us today that at St. Peter's we must "don the sandals of the pilgrim, and allow ourselves to be reinforced in our faith" before heading out fearlessly into the world to "love Jesus as Peter did," even unto death.

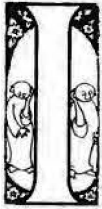
ELIZABETH LEV teaches Christian art and architecture at Duquesne University's Italian campus. She can be reached at [lizlev@zenit.org](mailto:lizlev@zenit.org).

This is a slightly edited version of an article that appeared in Zenit News Service last year. Reprinted with permission.

*Can Truth-telling spell the end of Ecumenism?*

## WHAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH BELIEVES ABOUT HERSELF

By RUSSELL SHAW



**I**GUESS CATHOLICS just think they're better than anybody else. The Catholic woman was quoting a non-Catholic friend's reaction to the new Vatican document affirming the uniqueness of the Catholic Church. Clearly, she sympathized with her friend's sarcastic comment.

Many Catholics – to say nothing of non-Catholics – were rattled by “Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church” (or, more likely, by secular media coverage of it). Yet nobody should really be surprised by this document, which was issued in early July by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

To begin with, “Responses” covers the same ground, in much the same way, as *Dominus Iesus* (The Lord Jesus), a widely discussed document published in 2000 by the same Vatican agency, which then was headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Cardinal Ratzinger is now Pope Benedict XVI. You were expecting him to change his mind?

*Dominus Iesus* was said to have been prompted by speculations of some Asian theologians that seemed to place Eastern religions like Buddhism and Hinduism on a par with Christianity. But the issues treated there and in the new CDF document undoubtedly exist in Europe and North America as well.

Practically speaking, the root of the problem is that too many Catholics naively take for granted the truth of the misinformation about the Catholic Church and ecumenism that they've been fed for many years. The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) embraced ecumenism, didn't it? So how can we claim Catholics have a lock on truth?

The confusion here is profound. In trying to untangle it, let's begin with a statement by Vatican II in its dogmatic constitution on the Church, no. 8: “This Church [i.e., the Church of Christ], constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church.”

People have been arguing for four decades about those words “subsists in.” Years ago, chatting with a prominent theologian, I hazarded the opinion that subsists in means to be fully present in. The theologian hemmed and hawed, then gave me to understand I was missing the point. Now it seems I was right.

Here's what the doctrinal congregation says: “Subsistence” means – perduring, historical continuity and the permanence of all the elements instituted by Christ in the Catholic Church, in which the Church of Christ is concretely found on this earth.”

This doesn't say Catholics are better than other Christians. That is a claim we simply can't make if “better” means more pleasing to God. And about that, who knows? God reads hearts, we don't.

Nor is it a putdown of other religious bodies. The CDF document, repeating Vatican II, readily acknowledges that “numerous elements of sanctification and of truth” exist in these.

No, the point of it is this.

Jesus bestowed many gifts – theological and moral truths, sacraments, graces, charisms, offices – on the community he established. He willed that these gifts remain intact until he comes again. If Jesus' intention has come to naught – if what he gave his followers has been dissipated and lost – his great enterprise has turned out a failure. But faith rejects that possibility. Rather, the Catholic Church, by no merit of its members, remains the repository of Jesus' gifts in their fullness because it is the community in which, as we now say, Christ's Church subsists.

The starting-point of useful ecumenical dialogue is for dialogue partners to say honestly and accurately what they believe. The Vatican's new document performs an important service to ecumenism by reaffirming what the Catholic Church believes about itself.

Unveiling the Secrets of Modern  
Media Manipulation

### Rhetoric versus Truth – I

John Henry Cardinal Newman

**I**T IS OBVIOUS, that in every contest, the assailant, as such, has the advantage of the party assailed; and that, not merely from the recommendation which novelty gives to his cause in the eyes of bystanders, but also from the greater facility in the nature of things, of finding, than of solving objections, whatever be the question in dispute.

Accordingly, the skill of a disputant mainly consists in securing an offensive position, fastening on the weaker points of his adversary's case, and then not relaxing his hold till the latter sinks under his impetuosity, without having the opportunity to display the strength of his own cause, and to bring it to bear upon his opponent; or, to make use of a familiar illustration, in causing a sudden run upon his resources, which the circumstances of time and place do not allow him to meet.

- *The Arians of the Fourth Century*,  
Longmans Greene and Co, 1908 ed. p.26

RUSSELL SHAW is a freelance Catholic writer from Washington D.C. who is a former Secretary of Public Affairs for the National Conference of Bishops/United States Catholic Conference. He can be emailed at [Rshaw10290@aol.com](mailto:Rshaw10290@aol.com).

*'Happiness in the next life stems from our actions and motivations in this one.'*

## SADNESS AND SURPRISES

Reviewed by JACINTA LIVINGSTONE



We are told that in 1841, as the ship bringing the latest instalment of *The Old Curiosity Shop* docked in America, New Yorkers called

out: "Is Little Nell dead?"

Many great authors have come along since Charles Dickens, but as one of the original Harry Potter generation I have found it a privilege to be part of a publishing phenomenon that has stopped the world – literally.

From book four onwards, mobile phones have fallen silent and computers have been deserted from 9.01am on Saturdays as children, teenagers and parents have plunged into the intriguing secrets of Hogwarts.

With 70 million readers across 93 countries for the seventh and final book alone, it would be easy to

paint the phenomenon as an overblown craze fuelled by slick marketing. Easy but very, very wrong, because this final book has more than a touch of genius and, to my mind, was close to flawless. I believe it thoroughly deserved the reception it received with endless lines of pyjama-clad "muggles", dressed-up mini-wizards and witches, not to mention a few good parties with some "magical" politicians hopping on the bandwagon as well.

In age terms, Harry and his friends are my contemporaries and my friends

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**HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS** by J.K. ROWLING  
(BLOOMSBURY, \$29.95) Available from most booksellers.

---

and I have followed their adventures since the end of Grade 3 when we first struggled through the *Philosopher's Stone*. And yes, at times we have dressed up as Potter characters, pretended to



make feathers fly and quoted spells in Latin class. But those who fear such games mean that youngsters are embracing witchcraft should rest easy – we are smarter than that. We know the difference between fact and fiction.

And along the way, we have not been uncritical of the series. Until Book 6, I thought Books 1 and 2 were by far the best, and frankly, Books 4 and more so 5 rambled for want of a good edit. The final work, however, was utterly compelling. And, as someone who staunchly defended Ms Rowling

in the face of a concerted attack by fundamentalist churchgoers last year, I am happy to say it should silence critics worried about it from a "moral" point of view.

Without revealing outcomes for those yet to enjoy the journey, heroic virtue and selflessness triumph over self-interest and death, which gives the series a sound moral basis as well as being a rollicking good yarn. The honest and the good, it emerges, have

much to look forward to after death, while those who fail to show remorse pay a terrible price in the next life, in which Rowling clearly believes.

Could Harry's final message to the evil Voldemort be any clearer: "I'd advise you to think about what you've done ... think and try for some remorse, Riddle ...". As in C.S. Lewis's *Narnia*, death does not have the final word in Harry Potter, and there is

a strong undertone that our happiness in the next life stems from our actions and motivations in this one.

While *Harry* does not have the same consistent Christian undertone as the *Narnia* series, it is secular and fictitious rather than anti-Christian. In Book 7, however, one of the most unforgettable scenes is Harry placing a cross over the grave of one of the most loyal friends who has been with him from book one.

Primarily, *Harry* is a rollicking good adventure story which draws on the worlds of magic, fairytale and even

classical mythology and literature as evidenced in some of the character's Latin names. While Books 1 and 2 enchanted my generation in mid primary school, Book 7 stretches way beyond their scope, just as the final book of the equally brilliant Narnia series goes way beyond *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*.

In parts of *Deathly Hallows*, the violence is brutal, and humour, which was important in some of the other books, is a bit thin on the ground. More than once it is impossible not to cry for innocent human lives – and other creatures – and share Harry's sadness and surprises. Tissues were an essential reading companion as more than once it was impossible not to cry for the dead and – occasionally – shed tears of mirth at Ron's attempts at mastering female psychology.

As most people know, much of Book 7 centres on a long, hazardous journey undertaken by Harry and his closest friends Ron and Hermione as they seek out objects – known as horcruxes – which must be found if the evil anti-hero Voldemort is to be defeated.

Some readers have found the squabbling along the way between the three main characters a little tedious and repetitive, but for me it just stopped short of being so because a new challenge or mystery – or the key to unlocking an old one – would come along just in the nick of time to keep the plot moving.

Before starting the book it was expected that most of the action would be set away from Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft which has been such a wonderful backdrop in the other six books. I feared that this book would lose something without Hogwarts but Rowling's skill is such that she sustains suspense until the Battle of Hogwarts begins on Page 489.

Perhaps her greatest skill is pulling together so many loose ends, large and small, and answering the plethora of questions wide open at the end of the last book. My main sadness was that Snape, one of the most fascinating characters of the entire series, one with extraordinary shades of darkness and light, perishes. If a spin-off series were ever to be sustained, this character should have been the centre of it.

## Trivializing Faith by Privatizing It

THE PERMEATION of European civilization by Christianity was never complete, and in proportion as the Church became embodied in the social order it tended itself to become secularized and to be absorbed by the world.

Consequently, when the State became once more conscious of its power, and attempted to vindicate its sovereignty over the whole of social life, it was supported not only by the politician and the business man, but by the religious reformer who wished to restore the spiritual liberty of the Church and to free it from secular influences.

Religion gradually retreated into man's inner life, and left social and economic life to the State and to a civilization which grew steadily more secularized.

A man's debt to religion was paid by an hour or two in church on Sundays, and the rest of the week was devoted to the real business of life—above all, the making of money.

Such a division of life into two compartments—and very unequal ones at that—was not the Christian solution, nor could it be permanently successful.

If religion loses its hold on social life, it eventually loses its hold on life altogether. And this is what has happened in the case of modern Europe.

The new secularized civilization is not content to dominate the outer world and to leave man's inner life to religion; it claims the whole man.

Once more Christianity is faced, as it was at the beginning, with the challenge of a world which will accept no appeal from its judgment, and which recognizes no higher power than its own will.

Indeed it would almost seem as though the prospect today was even darker than it was at the beginning.

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

But like all truly great writers, Rowling has left us wanting more, wondering about what might have been *if only* ...

Now that I have finished Book 7 I feel satisfied and won't spend the rest of my life poring over them. I might not pick them up again for years. Certainly my friends and I will look back on Harry as an important part of growing up and will have much to tell our children about how we were there when it all appeared.

Harry will entertain generations after generation of readers for as long as children and adults open a book, and his author has possibly even extended the life of the written word as we know it. More power to her – it's been a privilege and huge fun being part of the first Harry Potter generation.

JACINTA LIVINGSTONE, author of *Mr Waffles and Plum Pudding* (Connor Court Publishing) is in Year 11 at Brisbane Girls Grammar School. An abridged version of this article appeared in *The Courier Mail* in July.



*Jesus' Guide to Happy Living*

**THE BEATITUDES**

Reviewed by MICHAEL O'CONNOR



PERHAPS the most famous event in Our Lord's teaching was his Sermon on the Mount, described in St Matthew's Gospel (ch.5-7). At the outset of this sermon to a crowd of some thousands of people, Our Lord set out his guide to the way people should mould their lives. These eight principles are known as the Beatitudes and have become the focus of theologians and philosophers over two millennia.

In themselves as recorded by St Matthew, the words convey a simple but very challenging message for all peoples and times. Yet, as Our Lord continued, He insisted that He was not setting aside the old laws of Moses and the prophets but that He was completing them. Indeed, St Matthew records that later in the sermon, Our Lord bluntly directed that the Ten Commandments meant much more than a literal interpretation of the wording would suggest. In modern terminology, though, Our Lord was using the Beatitudes to reinforce the old prohibitions by accentuating their positive elements. He was telling us that, by living our lives according to the Beatitudes, the Commandments would look after themselves.

Brother Michael McMurray of the Australian order, the Confraternity of Christ the Priest, is editor and principal author of the Confraternity's small magazine, *Contact*. This small book – just 77 pages – brings together a series of reflections on the Beatitudes that first appeared in *Contact*. Brother Michael who has won several awards for his writing from Australian religious press organisations has the happy knack of expressing complex ideas in simple language illustrated by examples from contemporary life.

Sub-titled Jesus' guide to happy

*The Beatitudes*

by Br. Michael McMurray CCS  
Connor Court Publishing, Bacchus Marsh,  
softcover, \$19.95 plus postage \$3.00.

Available from the publisher,  
PO Box 967, Bacchus Marsh, 3340  
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living, chapters set the scene before embarking on reflections on each of the Beatitudes. A concluding chapter emphasises that happiness in both this

world and the next depends on living the Beatitudes. Brother Michael does not resile from the challenges that such living poses in our modern and hedonistic world. His presentation is compelling.

As with the Commandments, mere adherence to the letter of the Gospel will not satisfy. Each Beatitude calls for deep reflection on its full meaning. One might easily shrug off the term 'peacemaker' in the Seventh Beatitude believing that it applies to the policeman or soldier on a peacekeeping mission with no relevance to the ordinary person. But all people are called to be peacemakers in their daily life.

And what of the rewards that Our Lord offers? For example, peacemakers are to be called 'sons of God'. Brother Michael suggests that making peace is doing God's work of reconciliation between people in conflict so that peacemakers are entitled to enjoy that intimate relationship with God.

In his discussion of the eighth Beatitude, Brother Michael draws attention to the reality that suffering for our Faith is not something experienced merely by those who suffer physical persecution. As he notes: "If we stand up against anti-Christian and hedonistic beliefs, it won't be long before we are singled out from the crowd. We will be in line for ridicule." Tony Abbott could attest to this, but even a casual reading of the daily press would emphasise this conclusion.

Brother Michael has produced a challenging but gentle demand for the reader to understand and submit to Our Lord's centrepiece teaching in His Sermon on the Mount.

This neat little book is well laid out with a sharp clean and good-sized type. A most valuable appendix lists a number of questions arising from each chapter as a basis for our personal meditations.

Unveiling the Secrets of Modern  
Media Manipulation

**Rhetoric versus  
Truth – II**

John Henry Cardinal Newman

This was the artifice to which Arianism owed its first successes'. It owed them to the circumstance of its being (in its original form) a sceptical rather than a dogmatic teaching; to its proposing to inquire into and reform the received creed, rather than to hazard one of its own.

The heresies which preceded it, originating in less subtle and dexterous talent, took up a false position, professed a theory, and sunk under the obligations which it involved.

The monstrous dogmas of the various Gnostic sects pass away from the scene of history as fast as they enter it. Sabellianism, which succeeded, also ventured on a creed; and vacillating between a similar wildness of doctrine, and a less imposing ambiguity, soon vanished in its turn.

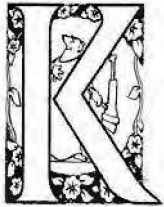
But the Antiochene School, as represented by Paulus of Samosata and Arius, took the ground of an assailant, attacked the Catholic doctrine, and drew the attention of men to its difficulties, without attempting to furnish a theory of less perplexity or clearer evidence.

*The Arians of the Fourth Century*,  
Longmans Greene and Co, 1908 ed. p.26

*Are Political Minders the Fourth-and-a-Half Estate?*

# DIAGNOSING THE ILLS OF SPIN DOCTORS

*Reviewed by* JAMES MURRAY



KEVIN RUDD (jiggling to minders from Labor premier turned bankeratchik Bob Carr's old team) plays Tweedledee to John Howard's Tweedledum.

Hence the perfect timing of this book which may not take the lid off the can of minders but does at least insert a tin-opener.

Most readers would know the title is part of Stanley Baldwin's celebrated quotation: 'What the Press seeks is power without responsibility, the prerogative of the harlot throughout the ages,' which originated with Rudyard Kipling, Baldwin's cousin, not the first nor the last ex-journalist to provide words for a polly.

Dr Anne Tiernan, a post-doctoral fellow of Criffith University's Centre for Governance and Public Policy, and the Australia and New Zealand School of Government, sets the cool, disciplined tone of her work by citing the number of ministerial staff in various Westminster political systems. Canada scores 201, the United Kingdom, 78 and New Zealand 51. Australia (reviewer's arithmetic) scored more than the three combined: 445.

The growth of this extraordinary number she sources to the Whitlam Government and goes on to quote Whitlam's ventriloquial speechwriter, Graham Freudenberg's book, *A Certain Grandeur*, specifically his blaming one of Lionel Murphy's advisers for the raid on the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, a raid he argues that seriously damaged both Murphy's and the government's reputations.

She quotes Freudenberg describing ministerial staff in general as, 'a mob of interlopers, freeloaders, ratbags and carpetbaggers who had contributed nothing to the election of the Labor government and would sooner or later

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*Power Without Responsibility*  
By Anne Tiernan  
University of New South Wales Press  
rrp \$34.95.

---

destroy it.'

Carpetbaggers is spot-on although it has to be said Freudenberg's vehemence may owe something to his own initial transfer from journalism to Arthur Calwell's staff. Perhaps romanticising an encounter in the Melbourne of the early Sixties, this reviewer has always thought Freudenberg sold his talent short by speechwriting; he could have attained a pinnacle - editor of *The Age*, Melbourne.

The Murphy adviser is unnamed, making for heavy irony in Tiernan

rightly emphasising the dereliction intrinsic to the continuing ukase against identifying ministerial staffers involved in the infamous children overboard event, a further shift in the Howard Coalition's practice of the Westminster System, according more with Peter Jay's satire, *Yes, Minister*, than convention and including Peter Reith's being awarded a lucrative overseas posting for his fortitude in refusing to accept ministerial responsibility.

Just how much irresponsible power do ministerial staffers have? Tiernan admits: 'Definitive evidence of staff exercising executive authority is hard to find, however respondents to this study were of a strong view that the scope of staff's authority - particularly chiefs of staff and other senior staff - has grown substantially since 1998.'

She quotes Australian Democrat MP Andrew Murray: 'The numbers of staff employed as ministerial advisers has exploded. As has their power. The function of some ministerial staff and advisers has changed so much over the last quarter of a century that they no longer just advise. *They act and they exercise power* [emphasis original]

'On their own judgement, and without reference to others, they may control who has access to Ministers; determine what information reaches them and in what form; regulate inter-ministerial, inter-departmental and inter-parliamentary contacts; make decisions on behalf of ministers and give directions to departments and agencies [emphasis original]. In doing these things, they are indistinguishable from an Assistant Minister or a Parliamentary Secretary.'

Except, of course, that they are non-elected though taxpayer-funded.

In this context of power what Tiernan does not mention is the nexus that has evolved between working journalists and ex-journalist minders

## Seeking Truth a Waste of Time?

As soon as it is held that any belief is important for some other reason than that it is true, a whole host of evils is ready to spring up. Discouragement of inquiry ... is the first of these, but others are pretty sure to follow. Positions of authority will be open to the orthodox. Historical records must be falsified if they throw doubt on received opinions. Sooner or later unorthodoxy will come to be considered a crime ... I can only feel profound moral reprobation for those who say that religion ought to be believed because it is useful, and that to ask whether it is true is a waste of time.

- Bertrand Russell, *Why I am not a Christian*, Allen & Unwin 1957, chapter 14.

where information is bartered for spin. It is a nexus that has helped to make minding a career choice for a significant number of journalists, a choice that does not inhibit their return to journalism, indeed often enhances that return.

It would have been fascinating to have had their current views. Perhaps the journalist who has come closest to describing the I'm-with-the-bandwagon aspect of minding is Bob Ellis, but he rates neither mention nor quote. Nor do sometime-minders Kerry O'Brien (Whitlam now ABC), Alan Ramsey (Hayden now SMH) or George Negus (Murphy now SBS).

David Barnett, Fraser minder and Howard biographer, does rate a mention but not a quote: Barrie Cassidy (Hawke now ABC) is similarly treated. Tony Abbott, John Hewitt minder (now Howard minister), scores a mention plus a quote.

And what a quote: "To work extremely hard for someone else to get the credit, to be completely frank with your boss, but utterly discreet with everybody else, to be deeply involved in politics without becoming a political player oneself, and constantly to judge not what's right so much as what's right for the minister takes a special kind of vocation."

Vocation? Avocation surely? ● way station on the road to federal parliament.

Tiernan comes to the conclusion of her work by referring to 'the weak governance framework regulating and controlling ministerial staff' and considers, 'the potential trajectories suggested by the U.S. experience?'

Her final chapter suggest reforms to the staffing system. These, including more accountability and a code of conduct, are thought provoking. They will provoke action, however, only if account is taken of the nexus that has evolved between working journalists and ex-journalist minders where information can be bartered for spin.

Reforms should also take account of three questions. First, has there ever been a journalist who crossed over to political minding, spinning or what have you for less money than he was getting in journalism? Second, why don't media organisations, which preach market forces, pay more to retain journalists? Third, why do they re-employ them

## Is the War Against Terrorism?

**I**F TERRORISM were the real enemy, non-Islamic terrorist groups such as the Shining Path in Peru would have to be mentioned by Western leaders more often than they are.

Does this mean that Muslims are the enemy? [Daniel] Pipes doesn't think so. Such a view is ahistorical: Islam has never been at such a low point as it is today. Viewing Islam as the problem also turns all Muslims into enemies, when, in fact, the West has Muslim allies. Here, Pipes mentioned the Algerians, who have been victims of radical Islamists during the last decade. In order to have achievable war aims, Pipes stressed the importance of creating secular goals. After all, the United States is not engaged in a crusade against Islam.

According to Pipes, the true enemy is not a religion but a political ideology called radical Islam. Radical Islamists believe that Islam is the answer to all the problems in the world. Put another way, radical Islam is the transformation of faith into a totalitarian ideology. Like fascism and communism before it, radical Islam seeks world hegemony. The rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan from 1996-2001 showed the nightmare that awaits the world if radical Islamists ever achieve their dream of applying Islamic law across the globe. A regime that banned the flying of kites and prevented women and girls from attending school is at odds with the principles of Western civilization. This is the reason why radical Islamists believe that a clash of civilizations is underway.

This clash is often expressed violently, whether it is through terrorism in New York or London, civil insurrection in Algeria, revolution in Iran or civil war in Afghanistan. But Pipes warned of a second wing of radical Islam that attempts to achieve its goals by working within the system. For example, the Egyptian terrorist group Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya renounced violence after its 1997 attack in Luxor which killed 57 tourists. This was a change of policy rather than a change of heart, as Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya believed it had a better chance of implementing its goals peacefully.

- 'Recruiting Soldiers Against Radical Islam,' by Aaron Hanscom, *FrontPageMagazine.com* April 2, 2007. Daniel Pipes is Director of the Philadelphia-based Middle East Forum and an expert on Islam.

usually on enhanced terms, making the cross-over a career choice for a significant number of them?

None of this is to undervalue Tierney's work, although occasionally she suffers from acronymites, e.g., referring in the text to the the Prime Minister's Office as (PMO) having provided an early Table of Acronyms. And as always with academic texts, scholarly apparatus tends to erode general readability, in this instance page references within the text have to be

linked to the post-textual bibliography.

Final thought: if journalists are The Fourth Estate, what are minders? Richard West has pre-empted The Fifth Estate for public relations people. Political minders are, perhaps, The Fourth-and-a-Half Estate, a mob who need to be watched and named as they go about their business not - to extend Kipling's thought - protected by the anonymity traditionally accorded to strumpets.

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*Anarchy and Sanctity*

## Holy Days and Holidays



THE eighteenth-century theories of the social contract have been exposed to much clumsy criticism in our time; in so far as they meant that there is at the back of all historic government an idea of content and co-operation, they were demonstrably right. But they really were wrong in so far as they suggested that men had ever aimed at order or ethics directly by a conscious exchange of interests. Morality did not begin by one man saying to another, 'I will not hit you if you do not hit me'; there is no trace of such a transaction. There is a trace of both men having said, 'We must not hit each other in the holy place.' They gained their morality by guarding their religion. They did not cultivate courage. They fought for the shrine, and found they had become courageous. They did not cultivate cleanliness. They purified themselves for the altar, and found that they were clean. The history of the Jews is the only early document known to most Englishmen and the facts can be judged sufficiently from that. The Ten Commandments which have been found substantially common to mankind were merely military commands, a code of regimental orders issued to protect a certain ark across a certain desert. Anarchy was evil because it endangered the Sanctity. And only when they made a Holy Day for God did they find they had made a holiday for men.

- G.K.Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, The Bodley Head, London, 1908, pp 107-108.

Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran

# A PRINCE AMONG AUSTRALIANS

Reviewed by PETER COLEMAN



IT WILL come as no surprise that a biography of Patrick Francis Moran should have encountered a little light turbulence during its take-off. Until now, as we all know, there has been no full *Life of* Cardinal Moran. There were excellent essays by A.E. Cahill, Patrick O'Farrell and other scholars, but no complete biography. Cardinal Pell decided to commission one. After due consideration, he commissioned Philip Ayres – the writer of well-received biographies of Mawson of Antarctica, Owen Dixon of the High Court, and Malcolm Fraser of Nareen. He would bring great scholarship and proven independence of mind to a story that has aroused, and still does arouse, strong and sometimes distorting passions.

The understanding was of course that Philip be free to interpret the archival and other data as he saw fit. The Cardinal only asked that he finish the book in a reasonable time. Philip thought three years or so should be enough.

When news of the commission became public, one or two Sydney voices were raised in alarm. Philip, they declared, came from Melbourne! He did not have the decency to be of Irish descent! He'd even been baptised a Lutheran. His three-year deadline was unprofessional! Someone had disagreed with something or other in one of his books!

It soon became apparent that his main shortcoming was none of these dreadful handicaps but the fact that Cardinal Pell had chosen him. No one selected by His Eminence would ever satisfy them. Philip's simple response was: Wait and see.

We have waited, and we can all now see what a valuable contribution he has made not only to Catholic but to Australian history.

---

*Prince of the Church - Patrick Francis Moran, 1830-1911* By Philip Ayres.  
 Publisher: The Miegunyah Press/MUP.  
 RRP \$55. Available from most booksellers.

---

It will surely breathe life back into Mackennal's statue of Moran, often seen but not pondered, on the steps of this Cathedral.

The point is that Moran belongs to the history of our country, not only to the liberal sectaries of Sydney.

This Irishman became an Australian who has influenced us all. He was first and foremost a cardinal who, as Philip puts it, "had the moral courage to defend the Church's teachings publicly in the face of hostility, whereas most archbishops prefer a quieter life."

But he was also an eloquent advocate of Federation in an age of States Rights.



He supported the early trade unions and the labour movement. He defended the Empire, distinguishing it from British imperialism. He championed Asian immigration in the age of White Australia. He spoke up for the Jews of Russia at a time of pogroms. He opposed heavy-handed censorship: When told that 2000 titles had been removed from the Index of Prohibited Books, he said that another 2000 would still not be enough. He helped shape modern Australia.

Philip's is also a portrait – warts and all. The title *Prince of the Church* seems to have been carefully chosen. It surely means more than the honorific title conventionally conferred on any cardinal.

I think he had in mind *prince* in the sense that Machiavelli used it in his *Il principe* – a bit of a despot, determined to get his own way, unable to admit errors, a manipulator with a superb intelligence apparatus, a disciplinarian who subdued his province.

To illustrate Philip's approach, let's start with Moran's political positions. Philip does not follow Fr. Patrick Ford who saw Moran as a crusading anti-Marxist, an anti-communist *avant la lettre*. But Moran was not, Philip says, a political ideologue. He was not engaged with Marxism or anti-Marxism. He simply opposed any and every doctrine teaching or tolerating political violence of any kind – from Fenianism to Parnellism to anarchism.

Philip also thinks A.E. Cahill misjudged Moran in treating him simply as a Labor Party man. He certainly encouraged the Labor Party and the trade unions. He sympathised with the working man and the economic underclass. But Philip notes that, whatever his feeling for the Labor party, Moran regularly voted *against* it in his electorate of King.

He voted for the conservative

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– Editor, *Annals*

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scourge of Labor, George Reid. (He liked to joke that the other candidates were even worse!) The point is we should construe his political statements cautiously.

It's tempting to speculate where Moran would have stood in the Labor Split of the 1950s. Tempting but perhaps foolish. After all, Moran did not live through the two world wars, Stalinism, Hitlerism and so many of the horrors of the twentieth century.

But if we had to speculate, I would say that there can be little doubt that early on he would have encouraged the Labor Right, the moderates, and opposed Dr Evatt's leadership. Would he then have been drawn to the DLP? Perhaps, and perhaps not. Whenever we think we have his measure, he will surprise us.

A second field of controversy in which Philip brings an independent judgment to bear is the O'Haran Case of 1900-1901 when a bookmaker and former Test cricketer, Arthur Coningham, sued for divorce naming Cardinal Moran's private secretary, Dr Denis O'Haran, as co-respondent.

The action failed. The jury found for Dr O'Haran. Almost every commentator or historian agrees that the jury had no choice – in the light of the evidence before it. For his part, Cardinal Moran saw it as the vindication of a Catholic hero and the defeat of a "diabolical" conspiracy. Yet many judicious observers noted from the start that the jury did not find that Coningham's allegation was wrong, only that it was not established. Philip goes further. He is the first scholar to take Mrs Coningham's side in the *furor*.

He will not convince everybody, but he is satisfied that Dr O'Haran and Mrs Coningham did commit adultery.

He relies on her private letters, particularly one to her husband in which she asserts the adultery. If we do not accept this statement, then either she was delusional, and there is not the slightest evidence that she was, or she was knowingly lying, and in the circumstances of this private letter, it is hard (I won't say impossible) to see why. Philip will not end the argument, but he has made a fresh contribution to it.

In a last example I find myself in partial disagreement with Philip. I read

the facts, which he presents so well, somewhat differently. He sees Moran as altogether too combative. He "never encouraged a cohesive Australian society at the cultural level, quite the contrary." He promoted a narrow "tribe mentality". He tended "to ghettoise Catholics" and inflame Protestant bigotry.

Moran died almost 100 years ago, in 1911. Catholic and Protestant tribalism and bigotry clearly lingered long after his life-time. I am sure there a few here who recall those distant days in Sydney when every twelfth of July (or on the nearest Sunday) a chap on a white horse would ride through city streets to celebrate King Billy's legendary victory in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 and generally to hammer the Catholics.

If you are too young to remember him, you may have heard of that amazing newspaper, *The Rock*, which each week published its wonderful revelations of slaves escaping from Catholic laundries and of all sorts of dreadful goings-on in nunneries and monasteries.

The last issue I saw denounced this very Cathedral for ringing its bells early in the mornings with the deliberate intention of disturbing the sleep of the good Protestants of Woolloomooloo.

Some incurable nostalgics may even regret the passing of that colourful era. The point is it had become a comic sideshow. The great age of sectarian bitterness had passed. There were serious debates still to come, particularly over state aid to Catholic schools. But today the main debate is over State Aid to Protestant schools, the rich ones.

How and why did this sectarianism fade and more or less disappear? It was not just the effluxion of time, the movement of world history. I believe that most assessments, including Philip's, underestimate the role that Moran played in eliminating it. He did not do it by appeasing Protestant fanatics. Indeed he enjoyed baiting and provoking them – and the public at large enjoyed his provocations and may even have encouraged them.

He undermined the bigots by his uncompromising determination to consolidate the Catholic community, strengthen its institutions, and establish it as a natural and essential constituent of the pluralist society in Australia. He may not, as some critics insist, have

[Moran] aggressively insisted on the rights of the Church and of Catholics. He demanded justice and respect and he won them.

done nearly enough to encourage the recovery of a richer theology or the renewal of scholastic philosophy. (Philip says he did more than is usually acknowledged.) But he was the great builder.

He trebled the number of Catholic schools, without state aid – an extraordinary achievement. He quintupled his religious teachers, established the seminary at Manly, and financed the completion of St Mary's cathedral. To quote Philip: "Guilds, associations, societies, confraternities, particular devotions – these are of the essence of the Moran period."

He aggressively insisted on the rights of the Church and of Catholics. He demanded justice and respect and he won them.

So I find myself drawn back to a mould-breaking essay, "The Irish and Australian History," by my old friend Patrick O'Farrell, published in *Quadrant* some 30 years ago. Bringing an outsider's eye – I can't say a foreigner's eye, but a New Zealander's – to Australian affairs, he argued that the key to the Australian character is to be found, not in the unfolding of British values or of some pioneering democratic ethos but in the very conflict and collision of our component cultures

– and the balance struck between them.

We need not agree with him that the Irish Catholics were *the* dynamic, the only dynamic, in Australian history, but they certainly played a huge role in establishing our pluralist society and its pluralist ethic. No one, I believe, contributed more to this than Patrick Francis Moran.

In these remarks I have concentrated on the Australian chapters of *Prince of the Church*. I have not discussed the sections on Rome (in the era of the Risorgimento) or Ireland (in the age of rebellion, and of the First Vatican Council). They too are enlivened as always by Philip's independence of mind and eye for telling detail. I strongly recommend them.

When Philip was researching an earlier book on ancient Rome, I believe that he prayed for help to the first century martyr and saint Flavia Domitilla. It was clearly effective and, on the basis of this precedent, prayer can be recommended to all Australian scholars and academics. I do not know to whom he prayed for help with this splendid biography. But it worked again and we can all warmly congratulate Philip on a fascinating contribution to the history of the church and the story of Australia.

PETER COLEMAN is a former editor of *The Bulletin* and *Quadrant*. He spent some years in the State and Federal Parliaments. Among his other books are an autobiographical volume entitled *Memoirs of a Shoe Learner*, and *The Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe*. This talk was given at St Mary's Cathedral Chapter House, July 12, 2007, on the occasion of the official launch of Philip Ayre's biography of Cardinal Moran.

## 'Private Morality' and the family

THERE IS A paradoxical truth underlying the very nature of the family. Not only is one not justified in thinking that religion arbitrarily introduces natural relationships into the sphere of divine realities: the opposite is the truth. One must recognize that these so-called 'natural' relationships which can never be reduced to merely empirical data, not only symbolize transcendent relationships towards which they focus our minds, but they tend, inexorably, to collapse and to dissolve in exact proportion as these same transcendent relationships are misunderstood and denied.

In other words, contrary to the illusion fostered by 'Humanism,' one must affirm that family relationships, like all human affairs, when left to themselves, present no consistency or guarantee of stability. It is only when they are referred to a supernatural order of which we can grasp only the vaguest outline, that they take on an authentically sacred character.

– Gabriel Marcel, *Homme Viétor, Prologomenes a une Métaphysique de l'Espérance*, Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1944, pp 131-132. Translation: Paul Stenhouse

*Christian Children targeted by Islamist Slavers*

**OSAMA GROUP IN SLAVE RACKET**

By MARIE COINTIN  
MURIDKE, PAKISTAN



HE slave traders came for 10-year-old Akash Aziz as he played cops and robbers in his dusty village in eastern Punjab.

Akash, still in the maroon jumper and tie he had worn to school that day, was pretending to be a "robber".

But as he crouched behind a wall, waiting for the school friend designated as the "cop" to find him, a large man with a turban and a beard grabbed him from behind and clamped a cloth over his nose and mouth before he could cry for help.

He recalls a strange smell and a choking sensation. "Then I fainted," said Akash, a delicate little boy from a loving family, who takes pride in his enthusiasm for English lessons.

Akash woke up in a dark room with a bare brick floor and no windows. The heat was suffocating. As he languished there over the next month, 19 other panic-stricken boys were thrown into the room with him.

The children, all Christians, had fallen into the hands of Gul Khan, a wealthy Islamic militant and leading member of Jamaat-ud Daawa, a group linked to the al-Qa'ida terrorist network.

Khan lives near Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, but when in the Punjab he stays at the JUD's headquarters in Muridke, near Lahore, where young men can be seen practising martial arts with batons on rolling green lawns patrolled by guards with Kalashnikovs.

Osama bin Laden funded the centre in the late 1990s.

The JUD, which claims to help the poor, says it has created a "pure Islamic environment" at Muridke that is superior to Western "depravity".

Khan's activities explode that myth. He planned to sell his young captives to the highest bidder, whether into

domestic servitude or the sex trade. The boys knew only that they were for sale.

This is the story of the misery that Akash and his friends, aged six to 12, endured in captivity; of their rescue by Christian missionaries who bought their freedom and tried to expose the kidnappers; and of the children's reunions with their families, who had thought them dead.

Last week I had the privilege of taking six of the boys home to their parents,

including Akash. The astonishment of mothers and fathers who had given up hope, and the fervent, tearful embraces made these some of the most emotional scenes I have witnessed.

That joy was a long time coming. In captivity, the boys were ordered not to talk, pray or play. Five of them were playing a Pakistani equivalent of "paper, scissors, rock" one day when the guards burst in and beat them savagely on their backs and heads. On another occasion, Akash was repeatedly struck by guards yelling: "What is in your house?"

"I kept telling them, 'We have nothing,' he said. 'I was so afraid they would go back and rob my father and mother.' It is painful to imagine blows raining down on the ribs of so slight a figure.

The guards mostly sat outside playing cards. The boys were allowed out of their room only to use a filthy hole-in-the-ground lavatory. All they could see were the high walls around the two-room building that was their prison. The other room was always kept locked.

The children were fed once a day on chapatis and dhal, but never enough.

I first saw Akash in a photograph among those of 20 boys who were being touted for sale in Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan on the Afghanistan border, notorious as a smugglers' paradise and home to fugitives of the Taliban and al-Qa'ida. He was just another black market commodity along with guns, grenades and hashish.

Unbeknown to Akash, a Pakistani Christian missionary and an American evangelist who runs a tiny charity called Help Pakistani Children, had seen the boys' photographs and taken up their cause. Neither man is willing to be identified today for fear of the consequences.

An elaborate sting was set up. The Pakistani missionary would pose as

**Saudis charged with Slavery**

Homaidan Ali Al-Turki, 36, and his wife, Sarah Khonaizan, 35, appear to be a model immigrant couple. They arrived in America in 2000 and now live with their four children in an upscale Denver suburb. Mr. Al-Turki is a graduate student in linguistics at the University of Colorado, specializing in Arabic intonation and focus prosody. He donates money to the Linguistic Society of America and is chief executive of Al-Basheer Publications and Translations, a bookstore specializing in titles about Islam. Last week, however, the FBI accused the couple of enslaving an Indonesian woman who is in her early 20s. For four years, reads the indictment, they created "a climate of fear and intimidation through rape and other means." ... The two Saudis face charges of forced labor, aggravated sexual abuse, document servitude, and harboring an alien. If found guilty, they could spend the rest of their lives in prison. The government also wants to seize the couple's Al-Basheer bank account to pay their former slave \$92,700 in back wages."

- Daniel Pipes, 'Saudis import slaves to America,' *New York Sun*, June 16, 2005. On August 31, 2006 Homaidan Ali al-Turki was sentenced to 27 years in gaol, and his wife and family were deported. The defense said many of the allegations were simply misconstrued cultural differences, or what attorney John Richilano called "cynical Islamaphobia."



a Lahore businessman named Amir seeking boys to use as beggars who would give their cash to him.

The two men would collect evidence that could be used in any police action against the kidnappers. "We knew if we just purchased the boys, the slavers would just restock. We would be fuelling the slave trade," said the US evangelist, who asked to be referred to as "Brother David".

The two men had no idea how hazardous their enterprise was until Amir used some black market contacts to engineer a meeting with Khan and discovered his links to the JUD.

"We realised we were out of our depth," Brother David said ruefully. But they persevered.

Amir played his part well. Within a week he had bought three of the boys for \$US5000 (\$6600) and put down a \$US2500 deposit on the 17 others, including Akash.

The first three were handed over on a Quetta street in April and returned to their families. But Khan wanted \$US28,500 for the lot. He gave Amir two months to come up with the money, saying he did not mind if the deadline was missed - he could earn more if he sold them for their organs, he said.

Brother David went home to the US to raise funds. Amir travelled again and again to Quetta, taking Khan to lunch. He enlisted police officers who insisted the eventual transaction be recorded with a secret camera so the evidence against Khan would be irrefutable.

Twelve days ago, Amir received a call from Khan summoning him to a meeting at a crossroads on a dirt road near the JUD's Muridke camp.

Amir finally found his quarry under a large shady tree, where he was sitting on a rope bed while an acolyte massaged his shoulders. "You have the money?" Khan asked.

When Amir handed him the cash in a black knapsack, he examined it briskly. But he broke his promise to hand over the boys there and then.

"I will check the dollars are real first," Khan said. "If your dollars are good, you will get the children." Another anxious wait ensued. Finally, a call came through from Amir's assistant in the dead of night.

Akash had just been dropped off by the side of a road 15 minutes' drive from

JUD headquarters with the remaining 17 boys.

I drove there immediately and found Akash asleep on a plastic mat surrounded by his 16 friends.

As the children awoke, the bewilderment showed in their eyes. The first task of the missionaries was to reassure them, but few seemed to believe Brother David when he said: "We will protect you. We will take you home to your mothers and fathers. The bad men who took you are gone."

Not one boy smiled. It had been too long since they had dared to hope.

Akash shook as we approached his village. I thought he would collapse. Then came a quiet, uplifting moment that brought tears to my eyes.

He had not even reached the door of his house before his grandmother, wrapped in a colourful shawl, engulfed him in an embrace in the dirt alley outside, her face lit up with delight.

Akash's mother was so strangely impassive it made me angry until I realised she was too shocked to take in the fact the son she had thought was dead was snuggling up to her. Finally, she hugged him, kissing him over and over again on the top of his head. "We were hopeless," she said. "His father searched and searched. We prayed. But we thought he was gone."

Brother David and Amir are ready to present their dossier of evidence, including the secret tape of Khan taking the money for the boys.

In almost any other country, an investigation into Khan and his work for the JUD would be automatic. It is not so simple in Pakistan. President Pervez Musharraf has announced numerous crackdowns on religious militants, but the extremists continue to gather strength.

Source: The Sunday Times, May 22, 2006

## The Persistence of Slavery in Islam

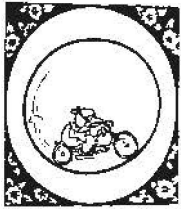
THE BBC reported in March 2007 that slave raids "were a common feature of Sudan's 21-year north-south war, which ended in 2005.... According to a study by the Kenya-based Rift Valley Institute, some 11,000 young boys and girls were seized and taken across the internal border - many to the states of South Darfur and West Kordofan.... Most were forcibly converted to Islam, given Muslim names and told not to speak their mother tongue." One modern-day Sudanese Christian slave, James Pareng Alier, was kidnapped and enslaved when he was twelve years old. Religion was a major element of his ordeal: "I was forced to learn the Koran and re-baptised 'Ahmed.'" They told me that Christianity was a bad religion. After a time we were given military training and they told us we would be sent to fight." Alier has no idea of his family's whereabouts. But while non-Muslims slaves are often forcibly converted to Islam, their conversion does not lead to their freedom. ... [Slavery] is rooted in the Qur'an and Muhammad's example. The Muslim prophet Muhammad owned slaves, and like the Bible, the Qur'an takes the existence of slavery for granted. ... The Qur'an even gives a man permission to have sexual relations with his slave girls as well as with his wives: (23:1-6). A Muslim is not to have sexual relations with a woman who is married to someone else - except a slave girl: (4:24).

- From 'The Persistence of Islamic Slavery,' by Robert Spencer, July 20, 2007

*Reflections on Medjugorje and a New Springtime for Christianity*

## ANSWER TO GLOBAL LUKEWARMNESS

By ANDREW GRACE



On the island of Patmos, St John the Evangelist, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recorded his visions. This is the *Book of Revelation* or *The Apocalypse*. In it he quotes Our Blessed Lord as saying of a particular church, "how I wish you were either hot or cold: the lukewarm I will vomit out of my mouth". Given less than five percent of Australian Catholic school graduates practise their faith one could state that the church, in this first century vision, is comparable with how it currently is in Australia. But don't blame the youth - they are not the architects of this crisis.

With an ever secular and permissive mass media constantly propagating fear driven diversional therapy, such as the almost hysterical global warming campaign, we have indeed become numb to an infinitely greater danger - that of global luke-warming. Theologians call this indifference.

Many other countries are in a similar spiritual coma. So it isn't surprising to reflect that some of the first reported words from Medjugorje in 1981 were: "I have come to tell the world that God exists."

I would love to say that my childhood devotion to Our Lady and making the Nine First Fridays, thanks to my parents' encouragement, continued through my adolescence but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the only remnant of devotion was a rusty pair of brown rosary beads strung over my bed post collecting dust. My story was hardly one of instant captivation with the reported apparitions at Medjugorje. I was so deeply entrenched in the lukewarm church that it took a great deal of reparation by my parents to free me from my spiritual indifference. It took a lot of

prayer and fasting.

Such was my superficiality that the first thing that caught my attention about Medjugorje was the visionaries' description of the Madonna as the most beautiful woman they'd ever seen. Then, scepticism gave way to curiosity. As a civil engineering student, I became fascinated by the testimonies of world renowned scientists who thoroughly investigated the six visionaries while they were receiving apparitions and concluded that science can not offer a satisfactory explanation of this phenomenon. They wisely suggested that theologians should continue this investigation. By now the message was beginning to weigh on my conscience - sobered up by Our Lady's words "I have come to call the world to conversion for the last time."

But alas, I had been well indoctrinated in the "culture of death" - particularly at school, with relativism, evolution and the denial of Hell - the errors of Russia. So I dismissed Our Lady's message of conversion putting it down as a nice story and "if it makes some people happy - then good for them." Mind you, living the life of a "party-hard-uni-student" (read - self-indulgent binge-drinking, drugs and decadence) one is gradually yet inevitably desensitised from the splendour of truth. And believe me, these scourges, together with the constant beat of rebellious music and the bombardment of immoral images through television, magazines and movies, will bind one in their disturbed state of mortal sin.

The battle for my soul continued. Even though I was kicked out of university, it took a tragedy to bring me to my knees. Two close friends stole a plane for a joy flight in the early hours of the morning. However, things went horribly wrong, they crashed and died - may their souls rest in peace. One of

them, Fred had saved my life only a few months earlier. Eight of us, had climbed to the highest point of the Sydney Opera House but on the way down I panicked. Fred brought me back to my senses and helped me down. At their funerals mortality and eternity had never seemed so real. Out of the eight, only four of us are still alive. In a sad touch of irony, one of the deceased's fathers used to call us "the death squad".

I have lost eleven Catholic friends that I used to "party" with; tragic deaths from suicides, drugs, alcohol, AIDS - to the youth of today. I plead: if you live in the culture of death, remember that all too often it ends in tragedy.

After Fred's funeral, my quest for the meaning of life led me to sincerely search for answers from the one to whom we sinners pray to help us "at the hour of our death". Our Lady's persistent but gentle motherly call to confession was beginning to affect me. Finally, I reached the crossroad point - the first secret of Fatima: the reality of Hell. As much as I wanted to deny this truth, Medjugorje reinforced it. The party was over. I had to make a choice, either for God or Lucifer. I sensed, having narrowly missed death a number of times, I was on the point of no return. My parents' years of prayer and fasting were beginning to "save a wretch like me".

About this time, while eating breakfast one morning, my concerned father, a convert who went to Medjugorje and was now an avid reader of Marian literature, said to me "I have discovered that you are the Antichrist." "What?" I exclaimed. He apologised and explained what he'd intended to say. "To receive Holy Communion without being in a state of grace is a sacrilege and to habitually do this is akin to belonging to the church of the Antichrist; a false Church built by Satan and his Masonic cohorts." It

was the shock treatment needed for a shocking life. Finally, I made the move and went to confession. The gentle priest encouraged me, saying, "The greatest sin of our modern world is that of pride. People no longer think they need this beautiful sacrament of healing." If only people knew what they are missing out on. I can not begin to describe the immense peace I felt after being reconciled with God and His Church – a feeling better than anything this world has on offer. This was the turning point of my life.

Now with the scales of de-sensitivity lifted from my eyes, in what seemed like a new state of being, I could see things for what they were. Reading the Bible was a whole new experience. At home, I began a Rosary (cencacle) prayer group which involved individual consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I fell in love with the Holy Mass. I frequented the Confessional and began fasting. I was living the message of Medjugorje – and loving it!

About a year later "the call" began, but I was in denial. The glamour of *the world* still had me. I was now enjoying a successful career in the construction industry with some lucrative investments. The lure of money was blocking me from seeking God's will. The richer I got, the more Our Lord's words echoed in my heart: "what profit a man if he gain the whole world but loses his soul?" I would always make sure I was in a state of grace, but now my concern for the salvation of souls was becoming insatiable.

My friends thought "Gracie's lost the plot." So I began evangelising using more novel methods. I offered my brother, Tim, fifty dollars to read a book on Medjugorje. Tim, a Gold Coast beach-bum, would only return home for Christmas after he'd made Mum promise not to mention "God or religion". He read the book and went to confession for the first time in fifteen years – it was October 13, the anniversary of the great 1917 Fatima miracle, a famous Marian apparition site. Tim asked me for another book, but this time he didn't want a fifty! He recently completed a degree in philosophy and theology and is very enthusiastic to talk about God and religion.

With a natural love of women in my heart I was hoping I had a call

to marriage. God had other plans. A cabbie ran a red light and my ute rolled when he crashed into me. As I climbed through the shattered windscreen I saw my Medjugorje Rosary beads lying in the gutter. The witnesses including the tow-truck driver couldn't believe I was alive. My girlfriend at the time said "I bet you'll see this as a sign from God." She was right. I began seeking the advice of holy priests. Open but somewhat afraid. In 1994, I decided to go to Medjugorje to see if I had a vocation to the labour of supernatural love.

I have never experienced a more peaceful place. The fruits of this prayerful parish were evident in abundance. I saw many young people, from all parts of the globe, experiencing life-changing conversions. Relating with them was so natural: having once also compromised the truth, we were rediscovering it in the authentic Church. Here, the most blessed of all women, the real Madonna, is

forming undivided hearts, to help gather in her Son's harvest for the eternal wedding feast. How...?

At Medjugorje, one witnesses the supernatural as a reality. People see amazing miracles, like the visionaries receiving their apparitions, rosary beads turning gold or the sun spinning and beautifully dancing (similar to Fatima). However, the greatest miracles happen in the confessional and culminate in the Eucharist becoming "the source and summit" of the pilgrim's life.

Having received a taste of this model parish of St James, I heard Our Lady's call, through the inspiring visionaries, to take this gift to all nations. A few months later I entered the seminary. Since then, I've met many priests, seminarians and religious, here and abroad, who also attribute their conversion and calling to Our Lady of Medjugorje.

In 2004 and 2006, it was a joy to revisit Medjugorje as a priest; guiding the pilgrims and providing pastoral care. Typifying the experience, an 18-year-old wrote to me "I would never know this purity of heart and soul if I wasn't in this oasis of peace, being held by the Queen herself."

At Medjugorje, the Mother of Priests seems to bring the supernatural gift of the priesthood to a new level; so they, strengthened in their thousands, can minister to the millions of pilgrims. These spiritual Fathers spend countless hours – absolving sins, leading the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary, catechising, saying Mass in their respective language and leading adoration of Our Lord truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. Indeed this parish is a foretaste of "the new springtime of Christianity". "It is impossible for us to refrain from speaking of what we have seen and heard" (Act 4:20).

Millions of Catholics await a conversion of heart. I believe this is Heaven's urgent call, for our difficult times. May Our Heavenly Mother's pure voice, echoing the Gospel of reconciliation between God and man from this wilderness, continue to ignite hearts with a renewed love for her Son, Jesus Christ, our God, our highest good, our Redeemer.

FR ANDREW GRACE was ordained for the Diocese of Wagga Wagga on October 6, 2001. He is a priest in the Administrator of the Parish of Darlington Point / Coleambally, NSW. He is also a Chaplain for the Royal Australian Air Force.

## Target the Rhetoric, or Suffer the Consequences

"Homophobia is illegal, anti-Semitism is illegal, racism is illegal, but for Islamists to call for destroying non-Muslims remains legal and I don't understand that."

"The problem is the agenda for action that they tell people to engage in, and that is what has got to be challenged and changed."

"The various groups will just change their names and set up new front groups so you have to target the rhetoric and the ideas, not the organisations. You ban the advocating of that sort of rhetoric."

Bemused by recent government calls for university staff in Britain to monitor extremism on campus, Husain says university authorities and teachers are more concerned about protecting freedom of speech than protecting people's lives.

"Since coming back to Britain last year I have approached two university authorities, complaining about this violent rhetoric in prayers and meetings, and the response from both those universities has been: 'We are awfully sorry, it is their freedom of speech, we can't do anything'."

"The enemy within": *The Australian*, June 16, 2007. Ed Husain was a soldier in the army of Islamist extremism. He explains to Peter Wilson, *The Australian's* Europe correspondent, why he walked away.



## THE SCAPULAR\* OF OUR LADY IN KIRIBATI

Albert Yelds, MSC

**I**HAD brought back with me two thousand scapulars for my Kiribati people, but they were gone in two weeks. I couldn't use them at Sunday Masses as I would have needed more than eight-thousand five-hundred. But on weekdays the children sat up close to the altar, very quiet, as I told the story of Mary giving the scapular to St Simon Stock.

Sometimes I would also tell the story of St John Vianney, the Curé of Ars, explaining to a girl in confession that her scapular saved her from the devil. He had seemed to be a well-to-do stranger, but she saw flames under his feet as he left the dance floor.

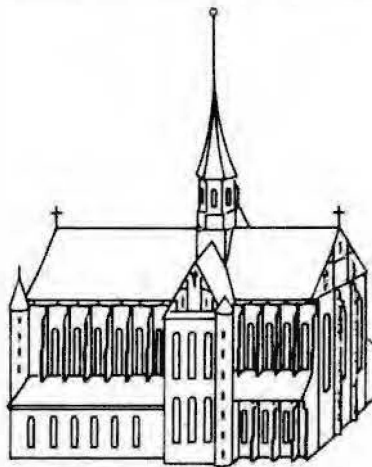
The catechist distributed the scapulars, and the people handled them very reverently. The smaller children did not know what to do with them, until the older ones with a year or more of wisdom, untied them and fitted them over their shoulders. Now I see them in class rooms and on buses and in the queues for Communion at Mass.

Sister Monica asked a Protestant man who was wearing one why he did so. He said that he needed it on the ocean when he went fishing. His catch was good when he had the scapular, and the engine gave no trouble. But if he forgot to wear it, his lines broke or the engine began to cough.

On these remote islands in the middle of the Pacific we still lose on average two boats each week: that is, six men. One of those men, a Catholic, carved a bead of the Rosary on the top edge of the canoe for each day that he was lost. By the time he was found he had carved the complete Rosary.

---

Kiribati, formerly the Gilbert Islands, consists of three widely separated main groups of southwest Pacific islands: the Gilberts on the equator, and the Line Islands farther east. Ocean Island, producer of phosphates until it was mined out in 1981, is also included in the 2 million square miles of ocean. Most of the islands of Kiribati are low-lying coral atolls built on a submerged volcanic chain and encircled by reefs. The population in 2006 was 105,000. 55% of the people are Catholic. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart have charge of the diocese, led by Bishop Paul Mea, MSC. Father Albert Yelds, an Australian MSC priest, has been there since 1989. \* St Simon Stock, sometimes called Simon Anglus, or The Englishman, Prior General of the Carmelites, in 1251 had a vision of our Lady who gave him a scapular [a garment worn over the shoulders and hanging down in front and back] with the promise that those who wore a small Carmelite scapular faithfully would save their souls.



## MONASTERIES AND HOSPITALITY

By BARRY COLDREY CFC



HERE are people who like staying in monastery or convent Guest Houses and it seems that their number is increasing in spite of the secular tone of life in Western societies. Monasteries have a mysterious yet peaceful atmosphere. They are sources of spiritual refreshment and renewal.

In Australia and New Zealand there are contemplative convents and monasteries but vast distances between them. Many Catholics have never stayed in one. Some who haven't could profit by the experience. Their faith is likely to be strengthened.

Monasticism is eighteen centuries old and one of the oldest and most revered traditions of the Church.

After the savage persecution of Christians in the Roman empire ended, a number withdrew from society to dedicate themselves completely to God, spending their days praying, studying the Scriptures, fasting and engaging in manual work.

They attracted visitors who wished to experience their life, but who had other commitments most of the time. Guest houses were built and hospitality became a treasured

monastic tradition. It still is.

However, for those who have never or rarely had the experience of staying at a convent Guest House there can be many questions:

While you do not have to be a Catholic to visit a monastery or stay in its Guesthouse, most visitors are. They wish to attend some of the daily round of seven Offices; 'chill out' from the severe pressures of modern living, go to Confession, discuss their problems with a monk or enjoy a rather austere holiday in the country.

### Reservations at a convent or monastery?

You contact them by either letter,

phone, fax or email and request accommodation for so many nights and so many people on certain dates. You can expect a prompt reply – usually affirmative – by email or letter.

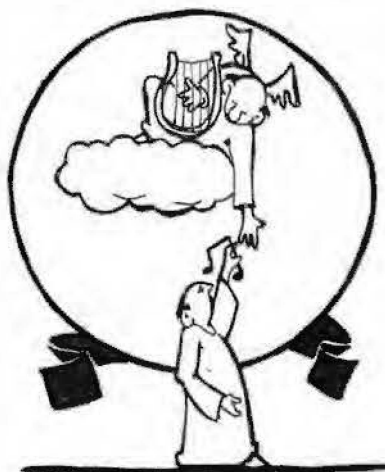
Many monasteries limit the number of days guests can stay. This is usually one week per year. Of course, this is a rule which the Abbot or Guest Master can waive; it is their house.

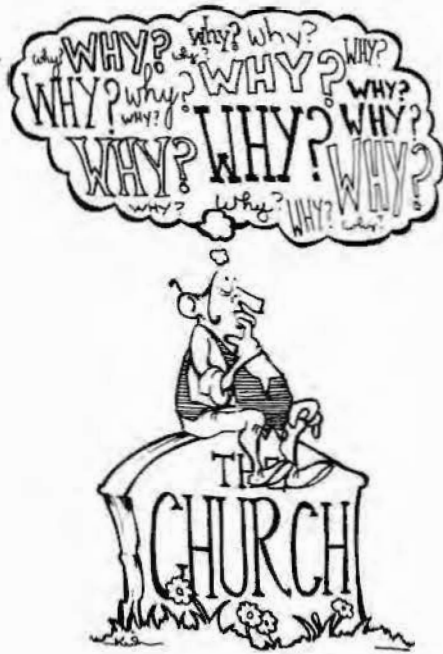
This short article hopes to assist readers in locating a monastery or convent. However, phone, fax and email numbers can change. Many monasteries have a presence on the web and it is an idea to check up-to-date details on their web sites before attempting to contact a Guest Master.

### Charging for Accommodation

In many monasteries there is no prescribed charge for visits involving overnight stays and a number of meals. The guests may be invited to make a donation according to their means. Occasionally, the matter of money is never raised.

Obviously, in all these cases, backpackers, students, the retired and those not in receipt of a wage may contribute little or nothing and those on regular and good incomes give a





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substantial donation. Most monastery Guest Houses 'break even'; that is all they wish to do.

#### Guests and Kitchen Duties

The writer has never heard of guests being asked to cook or demonstrate their culinary skills. Often assistance with the wash-up is appreciated. This might be so in small monasteries, on weekends or in exceptional circumstances. Sometimes a convent has a cook for lunch and dinner during the working week, but the community shares the weekend's meals. In these cases, guests might be invited to help in cleaning after the meal.

Here are some of the monasteries in Australia and New Zealand which welcome guests on a regular, year-round basis:

#### AUSTRALIA

##### Cistercian monks

Tarrawarra Abbey, 685 Yarra Glen - Healesville Road, Yarra Glen, Vic. 3775. Phone: (03) 9730 1306; Fax: (03) 9730 1749, email: [tarabbey@ozemail.com.au](mailto:tarabbey@ozemail.com.au)

##### Access

By car: you drive along the Maroondah Highway to Lilydale and further - well signposted - to Yarra Glen. Before you enter the main street of Yarra Glen, turn right along the Yarra Glen-Healesville road. The entrance to the monastery is on the right about four kilometres along this road.

By train: Melbourne to Lilydale station, thence Bus No. 685 to Healesville via Yarra Glen. On request, the driver will stop at the monastery gates and then it is a one kilometre walk into the property to the monastery.

##### Benedictine monks

St Benedict's Monastery, 121 Arcadia Road, Arcadia, NSW 2159. Phone: (02) 9653 1159 and Fax: (02) 9653 1883. The email is: [monks@benedictine.org.au](mailto:monks@benedictine.org.au) and the web site: [www.benedictine.org.au](http://www.benedictine.org.au)

##### Access

The monastery is in the outer northern suburbs of Sydney. There

is a train from Central station on the Hornsby/Newcastle line. Stop at Pennant Hills and then bus 638. Pennant Hills to Berrilee and this stops at Monastery Road, from which a short walk.

#### **Benedictine Sisters**

Benedictine Abbey, 695 Jamberoo Mountain Pass, Jamberoo, NSW 2533. The phone/fax is (02) 4236 0533. The email is: [abbey@learth.net](mailto:abbey@learth.net)

#### **Access**

By car: the Abbey is a challenge to reach without a car. The Guest Mistress can supply precise directions.

The abbey has extensive and well-organised accommodation for visitors.

By train: and taxi is possible. A train from Central in Sydney on the southern line stops at Kiama and from there it is a longish 17 kilometre taxi ride to the abbey.

#### **Benedictine nuns**

Lammermoor via Rockhampton Queensland. The address is 56 Old Scenic Highway, Yeppoon Qld., 4703. Phone: (07) 4933 6646; Fax: (07) 4933 7055. email: [benmonlam@CQnet.com.au](mailto:benmonlam@CQnet.com.au) Access is by car or bus from Rockhampton to Lammermoor.

#### **Benedictine nuns**

Croydon, Victoria. Their address is Benedictine Community, 14 Columbia Avenue, Croydon, Vic 3136. Tel/Fax: (03) 9725 2052.

#### **Access**

By car: from Melbourne along the Maroondah Highway (Melways Reference Map 50: G3). Otherwise there is a train from Melbourne to Croydon on the Lilydale line, then taxi.

#### **Benedictine monks**

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New Norcia is 132 kilometres north of Perth on the Great Northern Highway. Westrail buses leave from the East Perth terminal. Check time tables at the terminal.

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#### **Benedictine nuns**

Riverstone, New South Wales. Tyburn Priory, 325 Carfield Road East, Riverstone NSW 2765. Phone: (02) 9627 5171.

The convent has a Guest House with eight rooms, with facilities for male and female guests.

#### **Access**

Riverstone is in the northern outer suburbs of Sydney. By car on the M2 Sydney to Windsor Highway. Along this road from Sydney turn left into Carfield Road East. The Priory is 200 metres on the right.

By train: Central to Windsor and alight at Riverstone. The Priory is three kilometres from the station and is a 40-45 minute walk. There is no public transport.

Alternatively, one could leave the train at the major station - Blacktown, and take a taxi to the Priory.

### **NEW ZEALAND**

#### **Cistercian Monks**

Southern Star Abbey, Kopua Road, Rd 2, Takapau, Hawkes Bay, 4174, New Zealand. Tel (64) 6855 8239 and Fax: (64) 6855 8259. There is a separate 'phone to the Guesthouse: (64) 6855 8249. The email is: [kopua@xtra.co.nz](mailto:kopua@xtra.co.nz)

#### **Benedictine Nuns**

Tyburn Monastery, 100 Chamberlain Road, R.D. Bombay 1850, South Auckland, New Zealand. Tel: (09) 236 0598 and Fax: (09) 236 0398.

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- His Holiness Pope John Paul II, from his encyclical *Splendor Veritatis*

## THE RUSSIAN BEAR STRETCHES ITS CLAWS



**T**WO new manuals for teachers have been accused of glossing over the horrors of the Soviet Union and of including propaganda to promote Mr Putin's vision of a strong state.

One, for social studies teachers, presents as fact Mr Putin's view that the Soviet collapse was "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century". It describes the United States as bent on creating a global empire and determined to isolate Russia from its neighbours.

Many of those behind the second book, a history of Russia from 1945 to 2006, have close links to the Kremlin. Its final chapter is titled Sovereign Democracy, a term coined by a key Kremlin aide, Vladislav Surkov, as an ideological justification for Mr Putin's authoritarian rule.

The chapter quotes Mr Surkov repeatedly and praises Mr Putin as the man responsible for "practically every significant deed" in Russia since 2000, when he became President.

Mr Putin's most controversial actions are shown in an approving light, including the destruction of the Yukos oil company and the imprisonment of its chairman, Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The book describes this as an "unambiguous message" to business to "obey the law, pay your taxes and don't try to put yourselves above the Government", adding: "They got the message."

Mr Putin's support for Viktor Yanukovich in Ukraine's rigged presidential election of 2004 is also defended. Mass protests in the Orange revolution eventually brought his pro-Western rival, Viktor Yushchenko, to power, but the manual states: "Yanukovich was the only candidate capable of truly resisting Yushchenko. So Russia's choice was clear."

The book describes Josef Stalin as "the most successful Soviet leader ever" and dismisses the prison labour camps and mass purges as a necessary part of his drive to make the country great. The manuals are intended to serve as

the basis for developing new textbooks in schools next year, though Education Ministry officials insisted that they would not be compulsory.

Mr Putin gave them his seal of approval at a conference he hosted for teachers at his presidential dacha last month. He described Stalin's Great Purge of 1937, in which 1.5 million people were imprisoned and 700,000 killed, as terrible "but in other countries even worse things happened". Dismissing the Soviet Union's long history of oppression, he said: "We had no other black pages, such as Nazism, for instance."

Leonid Polyakov, editor of the social studies manual, told Mr Putin that Russia was "disarmed ideologically" after the Soviet collapse, leaving other countries to judge whether it was a democracy. He said: "We are developing a national ideology that represents the vision of ourselves as a nation, as Russians, a vision of our own identity."

Teachers will then be able to incorporate this national ideology, this vision, into their practical work in a normal way and use it to develop a civic and patriotic position."

Pavel Danilin, who wrote the chapter on Sovereign Democracy, told The Times that it explained the "core

transformation" of Russia under Mr Putin. "We understand that the only guarantee for our democracy is our sovereignty, our strong state, our strong army, our strong economy and our strong nation," he said. "It is not an ideology. It is just common sense. And my intention was to explain that common sense to teachers."

Mr Danilin, 30, is a projects manager at the Effective Policy Foundation, a think-tank with close links to the Kremlin. He was more blunt about his intentions on his web blog in response to criticism from teachers that much of the book was simply Kremlin propaganda. "You will teach children in line with the books you are given and in the way Russia needs," he wrote, adding that schools had to "clear the filth and if it doesn't work, then clear it by force".

Alexander Filippov, who edited the history manual, is deputy head of another research institute linked to the Kremlin. He told The Times that the book was a response to the poor quality of existing textbooks and that "sovereign democracy is not proposed as the national ideology for schools".

*Textbooks rewrite history to fit Putin's vision. The Times, July 30, 2007.*

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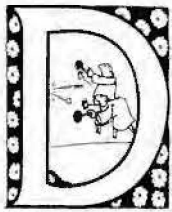
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*An atheist outlines to God his reasons for disbelief*

## REPLY TO GOD'S LETTER TO THE EDITOR

By PADRAIC MCGUINNESS



DEAR GOD,  
(or should I say,  
Dear Father, Son and  
Holy Ghostwriter, for  
I have heard from  
you only through  
your letter penned by  
your self-appointed amanuensis, Peter  
Coleman, *Quadrant*, April 2007, in reply  
to my editorial of March).

It is difficult to address a letter to a wholly fictitious figure, although many millions, and now billions, of your reputed worshippers, subjects, playthings and victims seem to have no such difficulty. Perhaps this is because, as increasing evidence indicates, they are conditioned, or hardwired, to believe in some kind of supernatural or extra powerful personage – if you did exist, I would consider this dirty pool, and contrary to any plausible doctrine of free will. Otherwise, it is merely evidence that evolution has endowed us with many strange quirks, as well as well-though uncontrollable lusts, passions and imaginations.

Either you or evolution has also endowed us with a profound capacity for evil as well as good, and we are all prone to both, and in some cases to extreme and, in both cases, sometimes horrible manifestations. As one of my Catholic priest friends speaking on his own and your behalf, put it, my use of the famous Kant remark about the “crooked timber of humanity” was just another way of speaking of Original Sin. Correct. But whence came this Sin? It is simply absurd to accuse Adam and his scapegoat Eve of having sinned so grievously at the beginning of (human) time that all humanity was somehow damned forever until, according to Christians, a bloody and obscene human sacrifice of one aspect of your supposedly perichoretic personality

### From the Editor of *Annals*

LET THE OTHER SIDE be heard'. *Audiat altera pars*. This has always been a cherished maxim of Catholic Canon Law. It echoes St Augustine's *Audi alteram partem* 'Hear the other side'. [*De Duabus Animabus*, xiv, ii] Both adages reflect a principle of Roman jurisprudence that moderns can ill afford to ignore. Based on that wise counsel, and for the sake of truth, *Annals* has striven to listen to and take account of views that it may not share, but which are held by leaders of public opinion in this country and beyond. In that same spirit we offer *Annals* readers a response by the editor of *Quadrant* Magazine, Padraic McGuinness, to the Letter from God to the Editor of *Quadrant* which we published in *Annals* 3/2007. The letter from God was written by Peter Coleman, acting as the Lord's amanuensis, in the wake of publicity given in *Quadrant* to the rebuttal, on allegedly scientific grounds, of belief in God. We note that in a STOP PRESS at the end of Paddy's article, a brief reply from God reached our office. In time for this belated August edition:

(that's for the theologians), gave a let out fur a few of them. According to some Christians, of course, like the hardline Calvinists, many are unsavable even then. So much for the sacrifice. Of course all that biblical stuff is somehow symbolic or parabalistic (parabolic?) when it gets a bit too rough in its literal meaning.

But if you were to exist, by creating Man with the capacity for evil as well as good (and quite a lot in between) and deciding to condemn to eternal punishment those who according to your not altogether clear criteria are not good enough (not just evil) you

have in effect created a multitude of people who, brought into this world often as a result of a mere spasm of somebody else's pleasure, can end up in an eternity of torture. That is a good god? If the fictitious you created Hell (in whatever its current doctrinal meaning is – I remember the Passionist fathers threatening us little boys with eternal fire and pain) then you are by my merely human standard of judgement as evil as the Hell you created, as the people you create who end up in that Hell, and you are responsible for the extremes of evil that are manifest in our world. As many people, especially Jews, asked after the Holocaust could such a god exist? Would not such a god deserve our condemnation, our contempt, and our rejection?

In any case, given your supposed grant of free will to humanity, how can you require obedience? Religious people carry on ad nauseam about our duty to love, adore, fear you, and obey your commandments. Why? Just because you say so? Worship of power and authority has never attracted me, though apparently it seems unobjectionable to large numbers of religious people. There is a certain irony in the revival of interest in that appalling hymn *Amazing Grace*, written by a reformed slave trader who obviously had fully internalised the mentality of slavery. While it has a nice tune, the words of this hymn are simply disgusting – grovelling in obeisance to power. I can only endorse the words of the great, if mad, Russian anarchist, Mikhail Bakunin: “If God existed, it would be necessary to abolish him.”

Even if there were some evidence that there was an element of “intelligent design” in our universe – these days subsumed under the delightful phrase, the Goldilocks theory: not too big, not too small, not too hot, not too cold, not

too hard, not too soft, but just right – or in our biology it would not be sufficient evidence of any kind of divine being. For all we know there might be some kind of provincial administrator, an extra-terrestrial perhaps furnished out with horns and a tail (Arthur C. Clarke's delightful notion in *Childhood's End*) who has charge of the design and oversight of this backwater of a galaxy with a super-boss somewhere else who has little interest in us or our world. The biblical god's insistence on loyalty to himself rather than other gods has always seemed suggestive of bureaucratic jealousies.

But what about Pascal's Wager? This has always seemed to me Pascal's best joke. The great Blaise Pascal, an adherent of the evil sect of Jansenism (it was the Jansenist priests who took refuge in Ireland and who perverted Catholicism there to the nasty, narrow-minded lot against whom James Joyce and many others revolted) was of course also one of the main founders of probability theory (he was trying to help out a mate who was a hopeless gambler – note the Irish connection, again), which underlies the whole of modern statistical theory as well as quantum physics. Why not bet that god might exist, or at least live as if he did and obey his rules, because if you win you get an eternity of bliss in reward, and if you lose you will at worst have only a miserable lifetime on earth? Horse, where are you now? Apart from it being pretty despicable to make such an

## To be or ... ?

**M**EN SPOKE much in my boyhood of restricted or ruined men of genius; and it was common to say that many a man was a Great Might-Have-Been. To me it is a more solid and startling fact that any man in the street is a Great Might-Not-Have-Been!

– G.K.Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, The Bodley Head, London, 1908, p.100

issue equivalent to a pub bet, to frame a bet in such terms (infinity versus a buck) would put any modern bookie in jail. Or concrete bouts. The point is that the winner of such a bet would never be able to enforce collection, and the loser would be worse off considering that the offerer of the reward is giving him a lousy life anyway, especially without the joys of sin and indulgence. And no bookie would threaten to beat you up if you didn't make his wager. So I agree with your amanuensis that the wager is a dud bet, and a poor investment.

But that does not justify his leap of logic to argue that the influence of the Church justifies all. Indeed, and I criticised Dawkins for not paying attention to this, the Church (presumably meaning Christianity), as well as many other religions has contributed a great deal to humanity – but that is only a tautology. Religion is a manifestation of humanity, which itself has a capacity for great good,

intellectual, artistic and moral. As well as great evil. So religion, not just the Christian brand, has involved much of the great art, architecture, poetry and prose of the world, because people have sensibilities which respond to the "numinous", the wonder of the world, created or not. The hardest of atheists cannot but wonder and feel in awe of the universe, or be moved by religious art which gives some feeling of this. So we have the magnificence of Egyptian art and architecture, which has nothing to do with "the Church"; of the creations of the great civilisations of China, India, Latin America; the myths and legends of all peoples of the world, not least our own Aborigines. These are all no doubt products of the inherent religious impulse in us all, but have nothing to do with any god except as a formulation of inchoate feelings.

I do not brush aside the philosophers and theologians. Too many of the great intellects of world history have devoted their efforts to these disciplines. But all of the latter, even Aquinas, end up either arguing from faith or from faulty logic. In the process, of course, the best of them have manifested intellects which only a fool would sneer at (that is one of my objections to Dawkins), but that does not make them right. It makes them noble and worthy of respect, but not of belief. By contrast, Science, with all its blind alleys and its bypaths, its pompous practitioners and its politicking for funds (global warming being only the latest form of this) nevertheless can produce evidence of having some real correspondence with the world. Theology can tell us precisely nothing. It certainly cannot help us find the fictitious you, talk to you, or tell us anything about what might lie beyond death. In fact, of course, nothing does – nobody has ever come back to tell the tale, or communicated from the other world, except through quacks and charlatans.

You, or at least your spokesman Peter Coleman, says "there must be an emotional core in faith. Religion is not entirely intellectual." True. But hardly enough for belief, despite (again) Pascal's *le coeur a ses raisons* which reason does not know. A lively phrase, but essentially meaningless. It just is not an argument to assert that reason is not enough. If it is not enough the

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only proper response is the suspension of belief, robust agnosticism (and Fred Engels once pointed out that agnostics are only shame-faced atheists), rather than wallowing in amorphous emotion. Of course we all feel emotion – that is how our bodies operate. Tickle the right spot and the emotion proceeds; tickle the godspot and we believe. Sorry – not enough.

So, as I said, despite his philistinism Richard Dawkins (and even Christopher Hitchens with his overblown eloquence and excellent political judgement) is right. But what does this mean in practical terms? The fact that humans do not agree about their gods or whether they even exist does not preclude civilised debate, nor serious discussion about moral issues. For while religion is not, despite its pretensions, about the real constitution of the universe, it is surely about how humans behave within it. A case in point is the recent intervention by Cardinal Pell in the NSW parliamentary discussion about embryonic stem cell research.

Dr Pell was surely in the right when he spoke of his church's doctrine and the fact that those who profess to be Catholics should adhere to that doctrine. The behaviour of the self-styled Catholics who voted for the Bill in the lower house and then proceeded to take communion as if they were Catholics in good conscience was, if not grubby, at least questionable. But Pell is in the wrong when he says that human life begins at conception. This is a scientific question. As Peter Singer amongst others have pointed out, when there is no existing nervous system humanity, even at its most basic, does not exist. Only the germ of humanity does. The cardinal is entitled to say that the Church teaching is that human life begins at conception, but that is not a scientific fact. It is a belief – a superstition if you like. Thomas Aquinas did not agree, and thought that the soul (whatever that is) entered the foetus only at the quickening, about the fifth month of pregnancy. In the past, the Catholic Church has often made a collective fool of itself when it confused doctrine and scientific fact. (I refrain from referring to Galileo, since the reality of this episode is much more complex than popular myth has it.)

Where the Cardinal did err was in suggesting that elected members of

## Picus and the Woodpecker

The only woodpecker I've ever seen was working away happily on a tree at Lake Wyndamere near Calgary in Alberta, Canada. The Italian name for this bird is *picchio* – so named from Picus, a king of Latium. Our English words *peck* and *beak* [which are cousins] may have a similar origin. Picus was, according to legend, changed into a woodpecker by the nymph Circe who made a habit of this – she also changed Ulysses' crew into swine, and poor Scylla, who sought her aid, into a frightful monster and finally into a rock off the coast of Sicily. Picus's troubles seem to have begun with his habit of dabbling in prophecy. He seems to have used a favourite woodpecker to utter prophecies for his subjects. Whatever be the truth of Picus and his woodpecker, the two eventually fused and Picus became the woodpecker. These days woodpeckers have been superseded by TV, radio and print – the favourite modern media for uttering prophecies to subject peoples. Could there be a danger here for unwary media owners and their pundits?

– Editor, *Annals*.

parliament should take Catholic doctrine into account in making legislation. Again, this is an area in which his church has often made a fool (or worse) of itself. In our society, parliament makes law for the whole community, including those of other faiths and no faith. The truth is that democratic communities whether they believe in one god or another have no business incorporating that into their deliberations. That is for individuals, severally and banded together in churches or other such groupings. To their great credit, a number of severely handicapped individuals have declared that their faith precludes them from seeking the consolation of hope in stem cell research. That is a principled choice.

But members of parliament are elected not by any faith groupings. They act improperly if they attempt to impose their own religion on the rest of the community. For their Church to suggest that they should do is highly improper, and deserving of a thorough kicking. If Catholicism cannot come to terms with secular democracy, so much the worse for it. But of course

you have remained, and will remain, totally mute in this controversy. How can a non-existent being do otherwise? But Dr Pell, it must be said, did not threaten excommunication (hardly a threat from my apostate point of view – I was probably automatically excommunicated anyway many years ago for transgressions which will, for now, remain nameless) but said that there would be “consequences” for them in the life of the church. This seems to me entirely proper from the point of view of doctrine (how can someone in good conscience present himself for communion when in disagreement with his faith?) but entirely improper from the point of view of secular society. So, if you, god, existed, secular society would have to abolish you.

Finally, dear god, your amanuensis saw fit to remind our readers that I am an “old Riverview boy”. Indeed, I spent four years with the Jesuits as a boarder. Contrary to some accounts, I was not expelled but left and finished my schooling at Sydney Boys’ High when my uncles, wheatgrowers, had a bad season and could not afford to continue to pay the fees; I refused a touching and generous offer by the then Rector, John Casey, to remit all tuition and boarding fees. During these years I acquired a deep respect for the intellectual traditions of the Jesuits, especially their insistence on reason and science, although of course there were some who hardly honoured those traditions. I learned that some priests deserved respect, and some only

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– Editor, *Annals Australasia*.

contempt. The latter is mainly what I feel for the modern, post-Vatican II, degenerate Society of Jesus.

But while we are appealing to past lives, I remember clearly that your amanuensis, Peter Coleman, a worthy and respected predecessor in this editorial chair, was in his youth an outspoken adherent of the philosophy of the uncompromising atheist John Anderson, and was distantly associated with the early Sydney Push and Libertarianism. There is a photograph of him striding along George street with a possibly Push girl (the photo was used as cover pic on a novel about the Push), and on her other side the late Darcy Waters, "Horse," the Adonis of the Push and a chronically unsuccessful gambler and successful bludger. Later your amanuensis wrote a bitter attack on censorship of any kind. He has since revised his opinions on this and many things, including your putative existence - not at all a reason for condemnation, but good reason for an argument.

I remain, thank God, an atheist.

Paddy.

PADDY McCUINNNESS is Editor of *Quadrant* and a columnist with *The Australian*. *Quadrant* editorial for July-August 2007 (No 96). Reprinted with permission.



## STOP PRESS

In his original *Letter to the Editor* responding to Paddy McGuinness's defence of atheism, the Almighty used Peter Coleman as an amanuensis. [See *Annals* 3 April/May 2007]. Coleman has been again drawn into service, and has made the following comment on Paddy McGuinness's "Reply to God's letter to the Editor".

Dear Paddy,

A year or two ago the English philosopher, Antony Flew, abandoned his lifelong commitment to atheism and announced that he is now a theist. (It was the argument from design that won him over.) Espousing theism or deism is not the same as converting to Christianity. But it is a step in the right direction. It is now good to

see that you too, Paddy, also a well-known atheist, are moving in the same direction.

For example, in your Letter above, you note with your usual clarity that "the hardest of atheists cannot but wonder and feel in awe of the universe, or be moved by religious art which gives some feeling of this." There is a hint of Antony Flew in this.

You go on to tell your readers of your "deep respect for the intellectual traditions of the Jesuits [pre-Vatican II], especially their insistence on reason and science."

You also support Cardinal Pell in his advice to Parliamentarians, especially "self-styled Catholics", concerning Church doctrine in relation to embryonic stem cell research.

None of these is conclusive. But in my earlier *Letter to the Editor* I said I was not without hope of your reversion to the faith. Your latest concessions encourage Me further.

I remain,  
as ever,  
God.

the United States, however, that number rose to 30 per cent.

Particular national conditions and scandals explain some of what's occurring, but the spreading dissatisfaction is 'a general pattern across the Western democracies,' say Dalton and Weldon. That dissatisfaction has spurred electoral reforms in the United States (e.g., term limits), Italy, Japan, New Zealand, and elsewhere. It's also prompting "more involvement in non-partisan forms of political action; such as citizen interest groups and referendums. And, the authors believe, it will eventually lead to louder demands for direct citizen involvement in the details of policy administration. This 'public scepticism about political parties is one piece of a general syndrome involving the public's growing doubts about representative democracy, and a search for other democratic forms.'

- Source: 'Public Images of Political Parties: A necessary Evil?' by Russell J. Dalton and Steven A. Weldon, in *West European Politics*, November 2005, quoted in 'Partied Out,' in *The Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 2006, p.79.

## Politics No Party

WHAT'S WIDELY considered essential to representative democracy, yet is looked upon with growing distrust in modern democracies? The political party. No one's writing its obituary yet, but the distrust has some unsettling implications, argue Russell J. Dalton, a political scientist at the University of California, Irvine, and Steven A. Weldon, a graduate student there.

The pervasive distrust is obvious in opinion polls. Respondents in 17 of 20 Western democracies surveyed in 2004 identified political parties as the institutions most affected by corruption. In surveys conducted between 1996 and 2000 in 13 advanced industrial democracies, only 30 per cent of those polled (38 per cent in the United States) said they believed that parties care what ordinary people think. It's not only the parties that are in bad odor with the

public. But in the European Union, the public judged political parties the least trustworthy of a long list of institutions in annual surveys between 1997 and 2004. They won the trust of only an average of 17 per cent of the EU population. Even big corporations, with the second-lowest trust level, did much better than that, passing muster with 33 per cent of those polled. What difference does the distrust make? It reduces voter turnout, for one thing. Still, most people who are cynical about political parties continue to go to the polls. Some in Denmark and elsewhere opt for far-right "anti-party" parties. (Far-left parties seem to have much less appeal to distrustful voters except in countries where there's no far-right alternative, such as Sweden.) Most distrusters tend to hold their noses and vote for an established party, usually one that's out of power. In the 1996-2000 surveys of 13 industrial democracies, only 16 per cent of the distrusters did not vote. In



# MEDIA MATTERS

By JAMES MURRAY

## New Light

Time (September 3) returned to the days of Luce (pun intended) with its cover story: *The Secret Life of Mother Teresa* on her prolonged spiritual struggles. By-lined David Van Biema, the story is based on letters released under the title, *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*, a book compiled and edited by Brian Kolodiejchuk.

Biema's summary is perceptive, balanced and compares her struggles to the classic dark night of the soul experienced by the Spanish mystic St John of the Cross.

Christopher Hitchen, who attacked Mother Teresa in his diatribe *Missionary Position*, gets space to compare her struggles with that of Communists and their disillusionment. No mention of his own disillusionment with the Communist sect, Trotskyism.

The heavier-calibre Malcolm Muggeridge, who helped to make her work known through, *Something Beautiful for God*, was one recipient of her letters.

'... The personal love Christ has for you is infinite - The small difficulty you have re His Church is finite - Overcome the finite with the infinite.' Muggeridge did, becoming a Catholic in 1982.

The summary with six runs to eight pages. Not included: the six-word paradox of the Italian-born Archbishop of Canterbury, St Anselm: 'Doubt is the shield of faith.'

## Sporting Power

The disparaging phrase, 'playing politics' is odd. Politics is a game, a great game, a serious game like cricket which it so much resembles in its mix of arcane rules, boredom, exasperation and sudden excitement.

Used by hacks, the phrase becomes even odder. Hacks after all aspire to play politics the way Australians play cricket: with devastating elan. Haplessness, however, can follow elan like a beeping mobile phone tied to Shane Warne.

Ask Michael Brissenden, Paul Daley and Tony Wright, the parliamentary gallery all stars who transformed themselves into the Three Musketeers in a Barrie Kosky adaptation of *Julius Caesar* (John Howard, Caesar; Peter Costello,

Brutus: Tony Abbot, Mark Anthony; Malcolm Turnbull, Augustus Caesar; Alexander Downer, Cinna).

That the trio dined with Costello at the Water Edge Restaurant, Canberra, but did not wine him into amnesia, has passed into Hackdom's folklore. The Water Edge was then owned by Wright's wife, Fiona.

Question for a brave reporter, Tim Palmer, now exec producer of the ABC *Media Watch*, and his presenter, the redoubtable Monica Attard. If in their overseas assignments, they had come across a similarly owned restaurant in Washington, London, Moscow, Paris or Tokyo, wouldn't they have remarked: Dinner on the house? Exes? Whose?

There again the hardest challenge for reporters is to treat home turf as if it were foreign. Above all what should follow from the episode is a realisation that hacks who play politics with sources in the parliamentary sphere may find it encourages judges to think that hacks on tougher beats have no absolute right to protect their sources, and, therefore, decide to send them jailwards.

## Spruiking Duo

As the Prime Minister John Howard decides on E for Election Day, he and his opponent Kevin Rudd are like a pair of spruikers in a shopping mall. Whatever Howard pitches, Rudd matches or, as with the nation's hospitals, turns up the volume on his loud hailer to expand on Howard.

The latter is already aware this is not an election for him and his team to win; it is one for Kevin Rudd and his team to lose. And the more Rudd echoes and prates to the electorate like a glib public servant briefing a dim minister while answering his own questions, the more he increases his chances of losing.

Thought: if Ben Chifley's bank nationalisation was his Labor socialist policy too far, Howard's AWAs are his Liberal social policy too far. But what does that make

## Rudd's AWAs II?

More fudge of the classy diplomatic kind he



displayed in responding vaguely, if not Haigly, to reports of his drinking bout in a New York dive with Col Allan while votaries of the muse Terpsichore solicited alms by performing the Dance of the Seven Cliches.

Outstanding. Sn outstanding that in a nation avid for world records, Kevin Rudd must be defined as the planet's first politician to oppose a government whose policies helped to make his wife rich while he got by on the relatively frugal emoluments of a member of parliament.

### Brother Spare a Time

The Exclusive Brethren are one of the many sects deriving from the Protestant (and fissiparous) Reformation, their most intriguing mark being that they contrive non-voting (illegal) and political funding (legal).

Originally the Plymouth Brethren, they were founded in 1827 by John Nelson Darby, a Protestant Church of Ireland minister, and Edward Cronin, a Catholic, both critical of the spirituality in their respective churches.

Sub-sects of the PBs include the Exclusives, the Kellyites and the Newtonites. Despite this, the decision of Methodist/Anglican/Liberal John Howard to meet Exclusive representatives is more democratic than the decision of Catholic/Anglican/non-denominational Laborite Kevin Rudd to refuse to meet them.

Methodism is a sect of Anglicanism, though John Wesley never formally repudiated the latter. Anglicanism in turn is a sect of Catholicism, a sect whose Sovereign Head by descent from Henry VIII, serial disposer of wives, is Queen Elizabeth II; it is a sect inflated by English nationalism and imperialism which at its apogee was defined as: 'The Tory Party at prayer.'

So where does that leave the Catholic Church? Where it was when it was founded by Jesus Christ on the rock called Peter, who denied Him thrice before going on to preach his gospel bravely and witnessed to Him in a cruel death.

### Kevin Other

The Minister for Immigration, Kevin Andrews, took buckets of ink over his appeal against the Federal Court Brisbane judgement by Justice Jeffrey Spender that his decision to withdraw Dr Mohammed Haneef's visa was wrongly based in law.

Had the court decision gone the other way, Mohammed Haneef's legal team would surely have appealed against it, and civil libertarians would have seen it as part of due process. But due process is a two-way street. Or do some interpret the separation of powers to mean the

executive cannot appeal against a pro-active judiciary?

The questioning of Haneef by Detective Sergeant Adam Simms was seen by hacks as well, ploddish, rich coming from a group whose apocrypha include the immortal query posed at Sydney's airport to a not unknown crooner: 'How do you spell Sinatra?'

In the seeming vagueness of Simms's questioning, your correspondent suggests another element at work: a shrewd cop avoiding the possibility of later accusations of leading a confused Haneef.

Unresolved at this writing: the question of how Haneef's brother Shuaib knew about the involvement of their relatives Sabeel Ahmed and Kafeel Ahmed in the London/Glasgow car-bomb plots before their identities were publicly known.

The question was raised by David Marr (Fairfax Media, Aug 25-26). Marr, no plodd, did not answer it, presumably because of an aversion to obvious rhetorical questions: did Shuaib have at least a hunch their relatives were into something dire?

### High Times

Fomer High Court judge Michael McHugh, addressing the NSW Bar Association, Sydney, regretted that the 'Golden Age of the Bar' was over, citing as evidence the fall in barrister income by comparison with other occupations.

'In most societies income is an unerring indicator of status,' he said. 'The income of the highest earning barrister is but a fraction of the income of an actor such as Nicole Kidman, a singer such as Kylie Minogue, a sportsman such as Lleyton Hewitt, an announcer such as Alan Jones or a banker such as Alan Moss.'

Reporting this, Michael Pelly (*The Australian*, August 25) did not say where McHugh's tongue was in relation to his cheek. He did report that McHugh's address contained a summary of how civilian lawyers emerged from Henry VIII's ban on the practice of canon law.

Cue for a movie storyline: a tough, well-pensioned, veteran judge sees the need for an order of clerical lawyers (*Motto: Pro Bono*) to prove, as clerics have done in agriculture, education and medicine, that money is not the unerring indicator of true status. The order's founder is played with barrister brio by Michael McHugh, hailed as the new Chips Rafferty.

His climactic speech (in a case about the exploitation of special-visa workers by a mean employer, played against type by Nicole Kidman) closes with the line: 'When money becomes the

measure of all things, humanity is nothing.'

### Bushy Puzzle

The opening by President George W Bush of Gulf War II in Iraq was a military lunacy. At the time, some critics compared it to the lunacy of Vietnam. The term 'quagmire' rather than the more apt 'quicksand' became the metaphor de jour.

But when Bush compares the consequences of a retreat from Iraq to those of the Vietnam retreat, he is howled down despite a consensus that the Americans (and the heroic South Vietnamese) won the war on the ground but lost it on home-front television.

As Americans say: Go figure, bearing in mind that Osama bin Laden was triggered to action by the pull-out of US forces in Somalia after they took their Black Hawk casualties.

### Right Oh

The Right to Know Coalition is a fair offspring of Freedom of the Press and Free Speech: it includes such major organisations as News Limited and Fairfax Media.

One of the most effective baffles against the Right to Know is 'National Security'. But there is an even more effective baffle: 'Commercial in Confidence', a baffle that indicates corporate power has supervened over the power of elected government.

Using it, businesses, including media businesses, obfuscate on matters of public interest rather than setting an example to governments by opening up themselves, say about their overseas tax-shelter operations.

Prospectuses? Annual reports? Forms of literature that can make James Augustus Aloysius Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* seem like a model of clarity. That said, your correspondent sighted no open advertisement for the chair of the Right to Know Coalition or its AWA terms.

Nonetheless, he was impressed by the balance of Irene Moss, the chair who emerged at a Right to Know Coalition dinner in Sydney (The Australian, Chris Meritt, August 30): 'Institutions,' she said, 'need to be more open and media needs to be more responsible.'

For his dinner, the Anglo-Australian Geoffrey Robertson QC sang an old-song about a Bill of Rights without reference to its potential as a lawyer's feast. No reported suggestion as to institutions that should set the gold standard of openness.

Federal and state governments? Telstra and Optus? Banks, specifically the nation's most successful, global operation: Macquarie Bank?

### Boomerang Empire

Barring regulatory veto, he's got it. Rupert Murdoch has: Dow Jones and its Koh-i-Noor, *The Wall Street Journal*. But ironically the more an empire expands - Roman, British, Ottoman, French, Fairfax - the more it risks break-up.

And the Bancroft family, owners of Dow Jones for more than a century, have shown what can happen when a Samson brandishes a jawbone of cash: enough Phillistines succumb to ensure victory.

Murdoch is a mighty swagman to whom your correspondent was happy to give directions, when needed, in London. But how does he create immunity to a situation where the break-up value of his empire to his heirs becomes greater than the whole, a situation not beyond death, market forces in general and the strategems of Liberty Media's John Malone in particular?

No doubt *Vanity Fair* columnist Michael Woolf, commissioned by Doubleday to write a new biography will try to find out. Murdoch has reportedly offered co-operation. Which does not mean the biography will be definitive as Doubleday suggests. Despite Right to Know, definitive biographies of the likes of Rupert Murdoch are possible only if posthumously (eg. Paul Barry's new, updated biography of the late Kerry Packer).

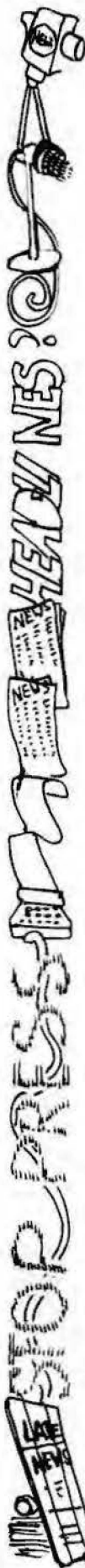
### Benedictine Marists

The motto *Laborare est Orare* - To Work is to Pray - inspires orders other than the Benedictines - a thought proved by a visit (family marriage) to The Hermitage, Mittagong, NSW, a cattle, vineyard, pumpkin and orchard property of Benedictine beauty and order run by the Marist Brothers.

The Hermitage is a centre for retreats of all kinds. The Marist Food & Wine Festival Dinner is being held there on Saturday 29 September (RSVP Friday 7 September, too early perhaps for readers of this issue).

But as the Guide Michelin might say: Worth the detour for the cellar-door wines, jams and eggs. Or a diary entry. Contact details: (02) 4872 1911, mbwines@hinet.net.au or www.maristbrotherswines.com.au

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*Pope Benedict XVI leads the Way*

## THEMES FOR CATHOLIC LIVING

ROBERT TILLEY discusses his new book



HERE are several facets to my book *Benedict XVI and the Search for Truth*. It's an introduction to the writings of Benedict; it's a bit of a history;

and it's an overview of sorts of some of the major controversies in which he's had a role to play, notably those dealing with theological liberalism. It even has an explanation of his now well-known speech at Regensburg.

But the book is more than this; it's also an argument. Let me explain.

First and foremost, the book is a thematic overview of Benedict's philosophy and theology, and, perhaps more importantly, it's about how these two disciplines mesh together. For how they mesh together explains the way Benedict thinks and the methods he uses. In fact, it explains much about Catholic theology proper. In essence, Benedict's is a *hierarchical* way of thinking – one that serves to explain not only how philosophy and theology fit together, but also what the nature of the relationship is between the Catholic Church and Protestantism, as well as between Judaism and other religions. In sum, just as theology perfects philosophy, so too does Christianity perfect all religion.

As moderns we often balk at the mention of hierarchy, but what this book sets out to show through a careful exposition of Benedict's works, is that a hierarchical way of thinking is a *truly inclusive* way of thinking. A way of thinking that preserves otherness and difference yet not at the expense of truth. A way of thinking, in fact, that *perfects* otherness and difference. As Benedict notes, one does not preserve difference as one might preserve exhibits in a museum, rather is it the case that only that which is perfected is truly preserved.

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*Benedict XVI and the Search for Truth*  
by Robert Tilley

St. Paul's Publications, Sydney, 2007.  
Available from Pauline Books and  
Media. Also from Borders.

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How this reasoning works itself out in inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue, as well as in the political arena (notably in reference to Liberation Theology which is also treated of in the book), is something Benedict has set himself to explain throughout the course of his religious career. The thing is Benedict's output has been, to put it mildly, enormous. The aim of my book is to distil and systematise his thinking, making his work accessible to a far wider audience than might otherwise be the case.

One of the major problems Benedict has confronted is that liberalism has laid claim to being the defender of difference and inclusion. Thus, having

been seen to be a critic of liberalism, Benedict has routinely been presented as being intolerant, non-inclusive, and power-mad. In short, the usual clichés employed by a simplistic media. But, as we see in the book, the logic of liberalism has, despite its often good intentions, ended up reducing *all* religions to what can be described as a rather bland, and sometimes even inane, stodge (if, that is, stodge can be inane). Liberalism has ended up reducing both philosophy and theology to just another easily digestible, because bland, consumer item.

My book is an argument in favour of Benedict's position, but it is not, I hope, a hectoring or overbearing argument. The book, one might say, is a conservative theological attempt not only to explain Benedict's works but also to engage in a dialogue – an argument in the good sense of the term – with theological liberalism. The aim is to show that a number of the major

### Looking on in 'Helpless Horror'?

GOOD-NATURED, unambitious men are cowards when they have no religion. They are dominated and exploited, not only by greedy and often half-witted and half-alive weaklings who will do anything for cigars, champagne and motor cars and the more childish and selfish uses of money, but by able and sound administrators who can do nothing else with them than dominate and exploit them. Government and exploitation become synonymous under such circumstances, and the world is finally ruled by the childish, the brigands and the blackguards. Those who refuse to stand in with them are persecuted and occasionally executed when they give any trouble to the exploiters. They fall into poverty when they lack lucrative specific talents. At the present moment [1921] one half of Europe, having knocked the other half down, is trying to kick it to death, and may succeed: a procedure which is, logically, sound Neo-Darwinism. And the good-natured majority are looking on in helpless horror, or allowing themselves to be persuaded by the newspapers of their exploiters that the kicking is not only a sound commercial investment, but an act of divine justice of which they are the ardent instruments.

– George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), *Back to Methuselah*



concerns in liberalism are, in fact, better served by Benedict than they are by many liberals themselves.

The book covers not only the issues of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, but also Benedict's critique of late-capitalist consumerism, his engagement with many of the major anti-religious philosophers of the modern period, his contributions to contemporary discussions on the nature of personhood, issues in hermeneutics, and, perhaps most intriguingly of all, how visions of Our Lady work to undermine the modern dominance of a soul-destroying pragmatic way of thinking.

In the first third of the book the relationship and continuity between the thinking of John Paul II and Benedict is brought out, especially in relation to what the former termed the Culture of Death. Are we, as both John Paul and Benedict have argued, living in a culture that is, incipiently, a late-modern form of totalitarianism, the chief expression of which is rampant consumerism? Has consumerist thinking become so powerful that not only do we now define the value of human life by market forces, we even use them to define the very nature of what it is to be a self, which is to say a person?

As the book progresses these themes are expanded upon in relation to the issues mentioned above. The book concludes by bringing all the themes together by reference to Benedict's encyclical *God is Love*. It does so, eschewing the rather sentimental readings of the encyclical in order to show how love, properly understood, is the perfection of all that has gone before.

The book is, I hope, an engaging read, one that has a conversational tone though not at the expense of the scholarship therein. The argument unfolds like a plot and this, I believe, carries the reader on, just as a good plot does in a novel. As noted above, it's not just a work of description; it is a work that wants to persuade, to convince and to win over, but not, I hope, in a blustering or heavy-handed manner.

Robert Tilley has a Ph.D from the University of Sydney. He lectures in Adult Education on Philosophy, Theology and History of Ideas. roberttilley7@yahoo.com.au

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– Editor, *Annals*

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## Into the Wild

Christopher McCandless, 22, graduated from college in the 1990s. Instead of taking the expected, gold-brick, career path, he chose the wilderness trails of America. His choice was the subject of a best seller. Not the journal he kept but a book by Jon Krakauer.

From that book writer/director Sean Penn has crafted a road movie that mixes the sad and the dazzling, forgiveness and love, separation and reconciliation while giving a part he could have played himself (with a little Vaseline on the lens) to Emile Hirsch.

The cast includes Marcia Gay Harden and William Hurt as bereft parents, and Catherine Keener as a vintage hippie. Hirsch not only acts them off the screen but also a grizzly bear and a pack of wolves.

Alaska was McCandless's ultimate destination. Zig-zagging towards it, he worked in the South Dakota wheatfields, wintered in a derelict bus, canoed the rapids of Colorado River and lived on the edge of the ramshackle Slab City, California.

He was following a trail blazed by Jack Kerouac and earlier by Jim Tully, greatest of hobo writers. And someone else.

Such is the subtle, reconciliatory power of Penn's movie that it takes you a while to realise who that someone else was: the man who went into the desert for forty days and forty nights before going on to redeem the world.

M★★★★SFFV

## Once

Written and directed by John Carney, simple but not artless, this romance brings together in Dublin a busker (Glen Hansard of the Frames, with whom Carney played bass guitar) and a flower seller (Marketa Irglova, a pianist from the Czech Republic), not flash, Euro Dublin but the Dublin of sidestreets, lanes, terraces and pubs, the Dublin of the diaspora transformed into the Dublin of refugees from Ireland's spiritual imperium throughout the world.

The romance of the busker and the flower seller (shades of Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights*) does not end in the accustomed cinematic bed end. It

## MOVIES

By JAMES MURRAY

opens to a future of music.

One caveat: Hansard sings in the nasal, style of rock-'n'-roll that makes it difficult to understand his lyrics. When read (in the production notes) they show true poetry and would have benefited from a touch of John McCormack clarity.

Take this sinking boat and point it home

We've still got time.

Raise your hopeful voice you had a choice

Falling slowly sing your melody

I'll sing along

M★★★★NFFV

## After the Wedding

Writer/director Susanne Bier gives us Jacob (Mads Mikkelsen) once gone to pot but risen to running an orphanage in India. He returns to Denmark intent on raising funds from a tycoon Jorgen (Rolf Lassgard) and is invited to the wedding of his daughter Anna (Stine Fischer Christensen), where he meets his wife Helene (Sidse Babett Knudsen).

Predictable? Scarcely. During and after the wedding, Bier adds elements that speak to eternal verities.

Mikkelsen's bleak charm is matched by Knudsen's worn beguilement and both are overwhelmed by the bluff power Lassgard's Jorgen brings to having his way. But it is not the expected way

M★★★★NFFV

## The 11th Hour

Although it piles ice-cap cataclysm on carbon dioxide catastrophe, this is not merely another doom-gloom documentary. Its talking heads - Americans displaying the national ability to talk sense under wet cement - do offer a range of ingenious measures to beat pollution and global warming.

Leonardo DiCaprio is the chorus leader but modestly and effectively leaves the best and closing lines to more than 50 experts, among them Mikhail Gorbachev, Stephen Hawking and ex-CIA boss James Woolsey.

TBA★★★★NFFV

## Stardust

Director Matthew Vaughn mines Neil Gaiman's book for this fantasy; mixing flying pirates, wicked witches and duelling goblins in the village of Wall, so called because it is protected from a parallel magical universe by a wall.

Hard to say who has the most fun. Charlie Cox and Sienna Miller play star-crossed sweethearts, their star being Claire Danes. Peter O'Toole is the loony king of Stormhold whose heirs await his dying. Ricky Gervais plays a shady trader and Michelle Pfeiffer a witch intent on eternal beauty.

Robert de Niro rollicks on as a pirate king in a style which appears to derive from watching too much Barry Humphries/Dame Edna Everidge.

PG★★★★SFFV

## Fur: An Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus

Unforgettable is the obvious description. Diane Arbus was a hunter with a camera, a sympathetic hunter whose subjects were those disabled or marginalised in some way or other.

Nicole Kidman plays Arbus and moves into the sunambulist mode she adopts for her serious acting roles. Lionel Sweeney (Robert Downey Jr) a sufferer from chronic hairiness plays Beast to Arbus's Beauty

Unfortunately, director Steven Steinberg imaginary portrait seems to be stronger on his imagination than on the facts of Arbus's life: the result is a clever movie that moves at the pace of a fox with a wooden leg.

MA15+★★★★NFFV

## Next

Cris Johnson (Nicholas Cage) is a conjuror working in Las Vegas under the name Cadillac. His shabby act conceals an ability to foresee the future. Not the distant future but a punch before it is delivered, a bullet on the way or a plot twist.

This makes him a person of interest to FBI agent Callie Ferris (Julianne Moore, kind of reprising her role as Clarice Starling in *Hannibal*). This time round she is dealing with a nuclear-armed group of terrorists (non-Middle Eastern appearance but possibly Chechneyans).

Director Lee Tamahori's talent

for pace and crash-bang thrills helps to conceal the fact that writers Gary Goldman, Jonathan Hensleigh and Paul Bernbaum are light years from the original sci-fi short story, *The Golden Man* by Philip K Dick.

Cadillac and Callie must prevent the destruction of Los Angeles. Does success lead them to a final clinch under the benign gaze of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger playing himself in a cameo?

No way. The cliché of the final clinch goes to Liz Cooper (Jessica Biel), a teacher of poor children in a Latino township, precipitous, natch, to allow for cliff-hangers.

M★★★NFFV

### Year of the Dog

No dog but a quietly hilarious, suburban comedy, written and directed by Mike White. Molly Shannon stars as Peggy who has to put her life together again when her beloved Beagle, Pencil, dies mysteriously.

There for her are best friend Layla (Regina King), brother Pier (Tom McCarthy), his wife Bret (Laura Dern) and canophile (Peter Sarsgaard).

More ambivalent in his intentions is Al (John C Reilly) her next-door neighbour. White draws from his past performances that treat the material with a seriousness in which satire glints.

M★★★NFFV

### Inside Paris (Dans Paris)

Not Gay Paree but a grim suburb where Paul (Romain Duris) has broken up with his girlfriend Anna (Joanna Preiss). His younger brother Jonathan (Louis Garrel) seeks to cheer him while both eke out a sad relationship with their father Mirko (Guy Marchand) divorced from Communism and his wife but uncertain which was more important.

All the players bring conviction to their roles. So does director Christophe Honoré. He sees his movie as a tribute to the New Wave, now as old as the Rolling Stones. Others may take a different view: Youth is wasted on the young who spend it paying superfluous homage to the old.

M★★NFFV

## Official Classifications key

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

## Annals supplementary advice

SFFV: Suitable For Family Viewing;  
NFFV: Not For Family Viewing.

### No Reservations

If you have seen *Mostly Martha*, your appetite for this Hollywood cover version may be dulled, despite the best efforts of director Scott (Shine) Hicks to add zest. Catherine Zeta-Jones is sherry fine in the part of Kate dedicated *chef de brigade* as is Abigail Breslin playing the niece who seems set to spoil the perfect pie of her life. Aaron Eckhart's *sous chef*, Nick, is so wooden you could use him to get juice from lemons.

Needed a soupçon of Latino charm, say Antonio Banderas, who co-starred with Jones in *Zorro*.

PG★★★SFFV

### Die Hard 4.0

The original *Die Hard* was based on a novel LAX which had a strong plot. This sequel is based on a magazine piece about the absolutely real dangers of computer terrorists shutting down an economy.

The plot tends to hover between ramshackle and flimsy so that John McLaine (Bruce Willis) can drive a truck through it, and does when the joint directors Mark Bomback and David Marconi think the movie needs gee-whizzing.

Teamed with McLaine is a computer super nerd Matt Farrell (Justin Long) who has the potential to outhack the terrorist gang led by an ace, ex-government agent Thomas Gabriel (Timothy Olyphant), furious that his superiors would not listen when he

warned of the dangers of computer terrorism. (Echoes here surely of FBI agents whose field reports were not coordinated at HQ pre 9/11).

Not only does McLaine have to save the world, but also his rebel daughter Lucy (Mary Elizabeth Winstead).

For all his travails Willis, at 52 looks as fit for effective action in any city as his avatar John Wayne was to gallop a horse in any western prairie. No doubt, when he has recruited a fresh team of stuntmen and fleet of cars to wreck, he'll be into the mayhem of *Die Hard 5.0*. (Trivia note: The original *Die Hards* were members of Britain's Middlesex Regiment who fought a two-front action in Egypt entitling them to wear front and back cap badges).

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### Black Book

The longer it takes for a war story to reach the screen, the more like triple distilled spirit it becomes as Paul Verhoeven's take on World War II in Holland shows. At a time when mainly British and Canadian forces were slogging through the flooded lowlands to Amsterdam, members of the Dutch resistance were in action.

But the resistance was riven with treachery, a treachery that suffuses Verhoeven's take on a Jewish cabaret singer gone blonde for safety (Clarice Van Houten) meeting an urbane SS officer (Sebastian Koch).

Their fated interaction drives the movie through scenes of orgiastic partying, murder, bombing, torture. Nor does Verhoeven spare the ordure.

M15+★★★NFFV

### The Simpsons Movie

For those who have not watched Homer Simpson, his missus Marge his son Bart and siblings on television, director David Silverman creates a chance to assess the reasons for the show's popularity. For those who have watched, he tables a concentrated serve of zany plotting, sight gags and a daffy ending.

Obligatory viewing only for journalists whose wages may have been paid by the profits that have flowed to 20th Century Fox and Rupert Murdoch.

PC★★★SFFV

## Hairspray

Exuberance beats banality from the opening scene of director Adam Shankman's and writer Leslie Dixon's vintage musical in which Tracy Turnblad (newcomer Nikki Blonsky) dances, bounds and bounces through her native city singing, 'Good Morning, Baltimore!'

Such is her vitality that John Travolta playing her Mom in a fat-suit and frock, and Christopher Walken playing her beanpole Pop, have the desperate air of seniors trying to remember, not their steps, but where they left their Zimmer frames.

No Zimmer frames for Michelle Pfeiffer and Queen Latifah playing duelling producers of white and black TV musical shows. Amanda Byne does a clever turn as Tracy's pal, Penny Pingleton. Not so sure about the business of her Mom (Allison Janney) using rosary beads as a comic prop.

PG★★★SFFV

## I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry

Adam Sandler is like the little girl with a curl. When he's good, he's very, very good; when he's bad he's horrible.

He is, playing Chuck to Kevin James's Larry. Both are macho New York firemen who go through a form of homosexual union. Odious comparison have been made with *Odd Bedfellows* starring Paul Hogan and Michael Caton.

Director Dennis Dugan does vary the basic plot. The reason Chuck and Larry get hitched is not for a tax break but to ensure Larry's pension passes to his children. And that's the movie's nadir: children being subjected to playing in a farce where creepiness, banality and the obvious collide like garbage trucks in a fog.

M★NFFV

## The White Planet

Directors Thierry Ragobert, Thierry Plantanida, Jean Lemire and their camera crew display the largely undiscovered Arctic in all its splendour as it changes from darkness to brief perpetual light, ice cliffs crashing into the sea where polar bears hunt seals and penguins frolic.

They give us the birth of a polar bear cub and its first steps as well as the

## The Catholic Church in conflict with the Roman Empire

The idea of separation of Church and state came into the world first through Christianity. Until then the political constitution and religion were always united. It was the norm in all cultures for the state to have sacralty in itself and be the supreme protection of sacralty. This held true for the prehistory of Christianity in the Old Testament. In Israel the two things are initially fused. Only when Israel's faith emerges from the people and becomes the faith of all peoples does it become detached from identification with politics and prove to be an element that stands above political divisions and differences. That is also the real point of conflict between Christianity and the Roman Empire.

- Pope Benedict XVI, writing when Cardinal Ratzinger, in *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium*, Ignatius Press, 1997, pp.239-240.

fate of a caribou calf caught up in the planet's highest terrestrial migration.

G★★★SFFV

## Evening

Director Lajos Koltai delivers a melodrama freighted with laughter, tears and stars, ancient and modern. The former are Vanessa Redgrave, Eileen Atkins, Meryl Streep and Glenn Close. The latter are Claire Danes, Tony Colette, Natasha Richardson (daughter of Vanessa) and Mami Gummer (daughter of Meryl).

Against this lustrous regiment, Claire Danes, Patrick Wilson and Hugh Dancy particularly have a tough time time sparkling. But they try, like zircons against diamonds, as the movie shifts between present and past - a wedding, sailing and generalised frolicking - while the music swells to the shining of the moon.

If Michael Cunningham was not credited with the script, you would swear it had been disinterred from the F Scott Fitzgerald Hollywood archive.

M★★NFFV

## In the Land of Women

Meg Ryan returns but in doleful mode not comic. Writer/director Jonathan Kasdan casts her as Sarah Hardwicke, a housewife in a suburb where the lawns are green with schmaltz, and she has cancer.

Enough already? Not quite. She

also has a faithless husband, and two daughters, the elder, Lucy (Kristen Stewart) wayward, the younger Paige (Makenzie Vega) wise beyond her years.

The catalyst for change in her life and theirs is Carter Webb (Adam Brody), taking time off from being a porn scriptwriter to look after his frail but feisty grandma (Olympia Dukakis).

If nothing else, the movie proves that stardom, unlike kryptonite, is not a shield against disaster.

M★★NFFV

## Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer

As if to demonstrate his prodigious talent - or possibly to pay off his mortgage - Ioan Gruffudd again takes the lead, this time as Mr Fantastic in this Marvel Comics sequel playing alongside co-heroes Sue Storm, the Invisible Woman (Jessica Alba), the Human Torch (Craig Evans) and The Thing (Michael Chiklis).

But the hokum honours go to a Vegemite Kid, Julian McMahon, playing Dr Venom. Great fun. But couldn't be noisier if the soundtrack were composed a massed band of jackhammers and tanks.

As mentioned here before, the effect cannot be positive for children and could wreck the hearing aids of their elders.

PG★★★SFFV

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# Help keep Christianity alive in the Holy Land and Middle East

Moved by the desperate plight of Christians in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East, the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) has been supporting the country's beleaguered Christian population.

Sadly, due to ongoing violence and oppression, the proportion of Christians in the Holy Land has plummeted from 20 percent to as little as 1.4 percent in the last 40 years.

ACN is helping to keep faith and hope alive throughout the region by providing urgent aid to priests, religious and lay people, offering subsistence help to refugees and building and repairing churches and convents. Please help us strengthen and rebuild the Church in the land of Christ's birth.

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*Little Trinity Angels [LTAs] and prayers in honour of the Holy Trinity*

# WHAT A MYSTERY!

By JAMES MUHREN, MHM



HEY say that 13 is an unlucky number. What nonsense. The angels know better. There is the 1 of the One God and the 3 of the Three Blessed Persons in God. It surely is a blessed number.

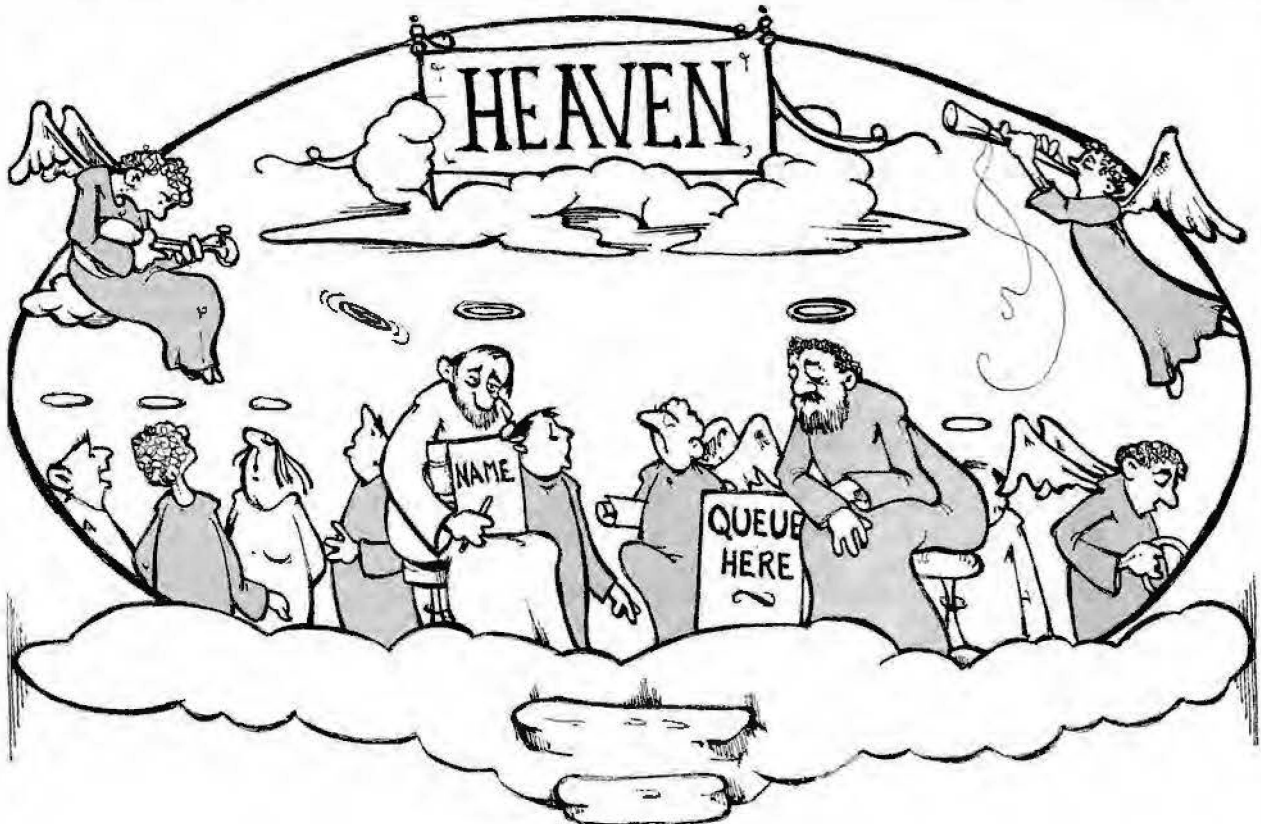
It is a mystery that even the archangels cannot comprehend. There were the Augustinians so called after St Augustine, who liked to invite the Blessed Mother to allow her son to play once more in the sand of one of the beautiful beaches of heaven. They wanted to re-enact the story of the boy making a little hole in the sand and explaining to a learned doctor that he was pouring the ocean into his little hole. When Jesus was more free, his Blessed Mother would allow him, but not too often, to play along.



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.

What a delight it was, as all the angels and archangels would be allowed to look upon the scene. They could hear the sweet sounding voice of the Child explaining to the learned doctor, that the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity can never be contained in a created mind, even as the whole ocean could not possibly be poured out in the little hole in the sand.

Adoring the Mystery is the greatest joy of heaven. The Holy Holy Holy resound continuously from cloud to cloud and the countless choirs of angels and saints cannot get enough, as it were, from praising the Mystery of the Divine Three in One. They know the weak human description of how the Son descends from the Father and how the link between the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit. This Mystery is so divine and so profound that angels and



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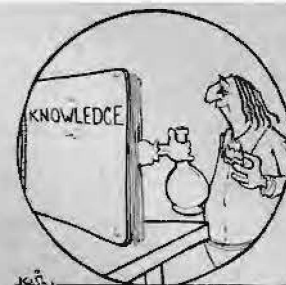
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saints have a whole eternity to ponder and be inflamed in love by it.

Meanwhile on the Little Trinity Angels' [LTA] cloud, excitement runs high when Blessed Trinity Sunday comes near. That is their day. That is their honour. All the various computerized calculators are checked and rechecked. Their settings are compared and compared again. There may not be a mistake. It is all for the

glory of the Blessed Trinity. They are tuned in, directed to the earth below. Mostly they go to the traditional Catholic countries. But also some Protestant areas are included depending on how closely they are still linked with the traditions of the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Little Trinity Angels must admit that the number has greatly decreased in the last decennia. People seem not to pray so much any



## Spin Doctors Take Note

American historian Steven Shapin, in his forceful exploration of the basis for scientific knowledge in the seventeenth century, links the origins of English experimental philosophy with the cultural importance of truthfulness – 'the gentlemanly constitution of scientific truth,' as Shapin puts it. He argues that our personal knowledge of the world depends to a large degree on what others tell us. Our understanding therefore has a moral character, based as it must be on trust. In constructing a body of reliable individual knowledge, trustworthy people are crucial. In the seventeenth century, the concept of the gentleman embodied these notions of trust. 'Honor' was the key to believing someone's testimony. Lying was seen as incompatible with a civilized society.

- *The Dawn of McScience*, by Richard editor of *The Lancet*, a weekly medical journal based in London and New York.

more, and if they do, it is less formal. Still they must be ready. They want to be as accurate as possible. There are two categories. There is the Sign of the Cross and the Glory be. On Trinity Sunday how often is the Lord God almighty honoured and praised: *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. How often will they hear recited: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit?*

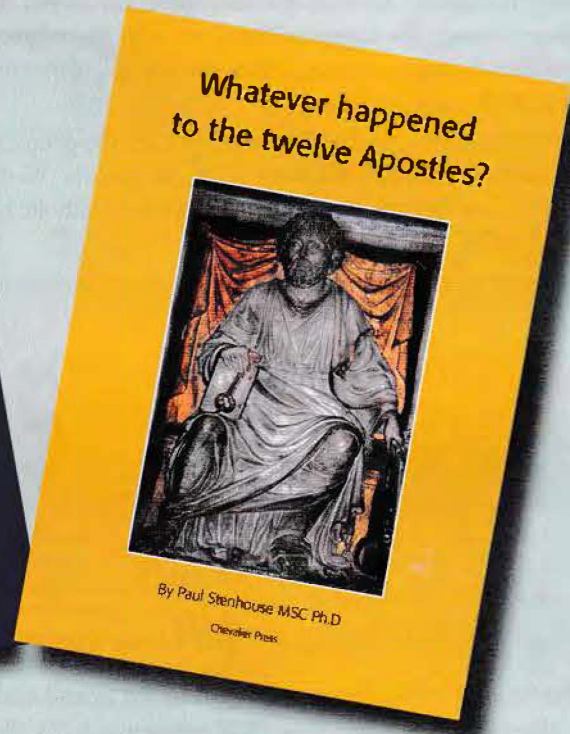
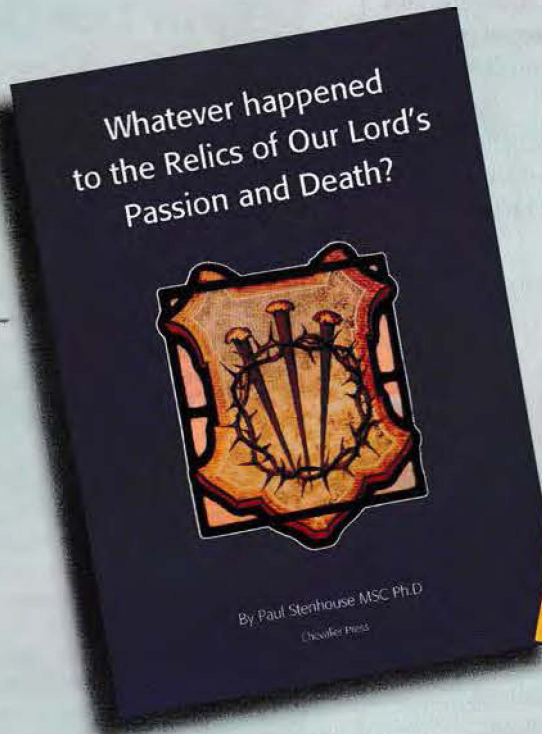
Will it exceed last year's total, or will perhaps the declining trend continue? The LTAs all hope that it will be the former. Happily they check, happily they pray for a marvellous outcome.

FATHER JAMES MÜHREN is a Mill Hill Missionary who has devoted his life to working among the people of Borneo, principally in the Parish of St Mary in Sibiu. He is now retired and living in Holland.

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