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Australia's Oldest Catholic Magazine

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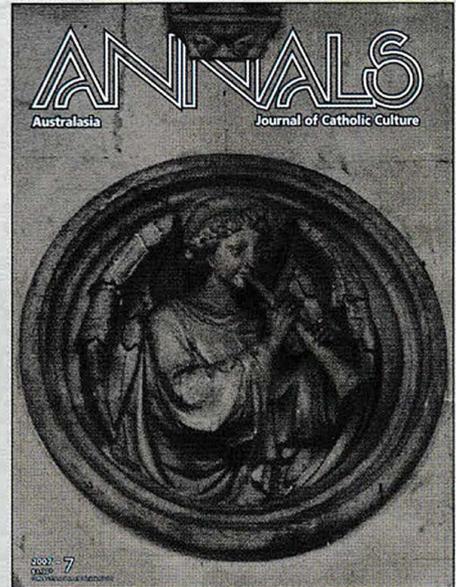
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Front Cover: One of many carvings of angelic figures playing a variety of musical instruments that delight the eye and raise the minds of visitors to God as they enter the Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist, in Bath. Entering the Church one's eyes are naturally drawn to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel to the right of the Sanctuary, and to the spandels between the arches of the nave where numerous angels play their flutes, trumpets, violins and harps to God's honour and glory. The architect of St John's was Charles Hansom, brother of Joseph Aloysius Hansom the designer of the popular horse-drawn cab that bore his name.

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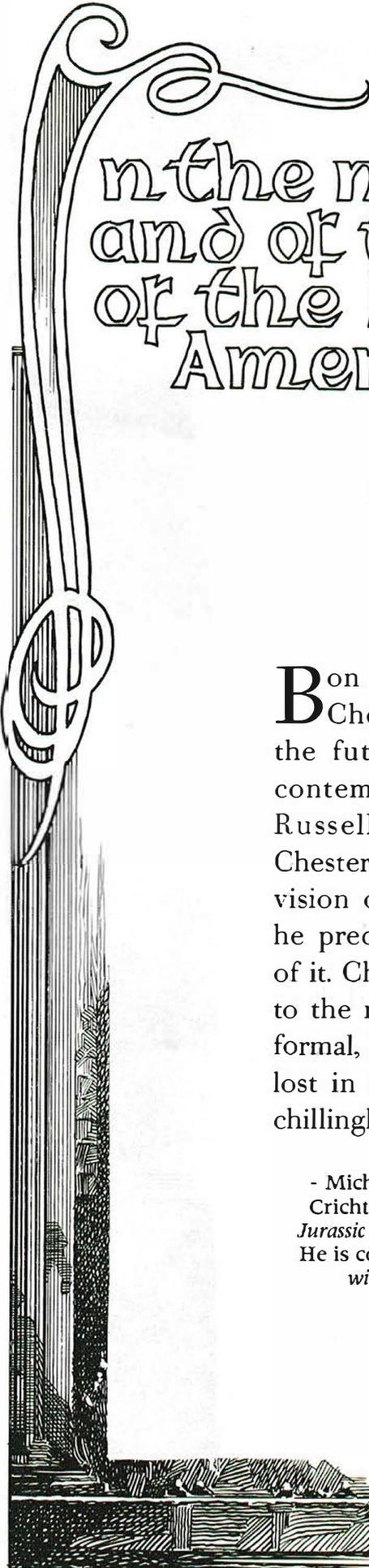
Those Who Dishonour Religion
Ts it I whom they hurt?
- it is the Lord who speaks -
Is it not, in fact, themselves, to their own confusion?
- Jeremiah the Hebrew Prophet. [born c.650 BC] vii.19.

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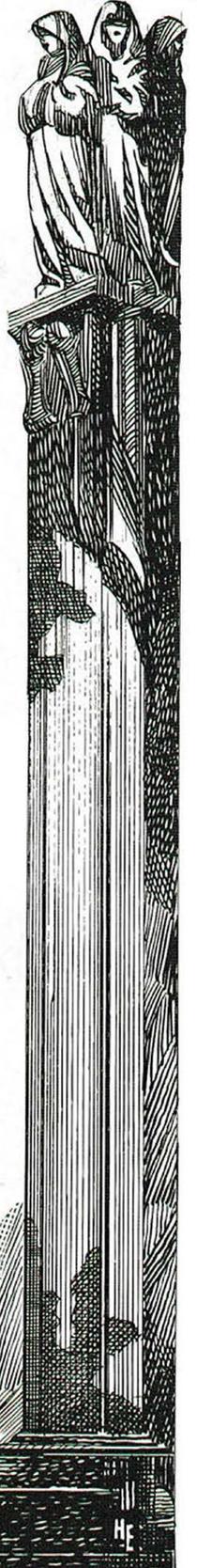


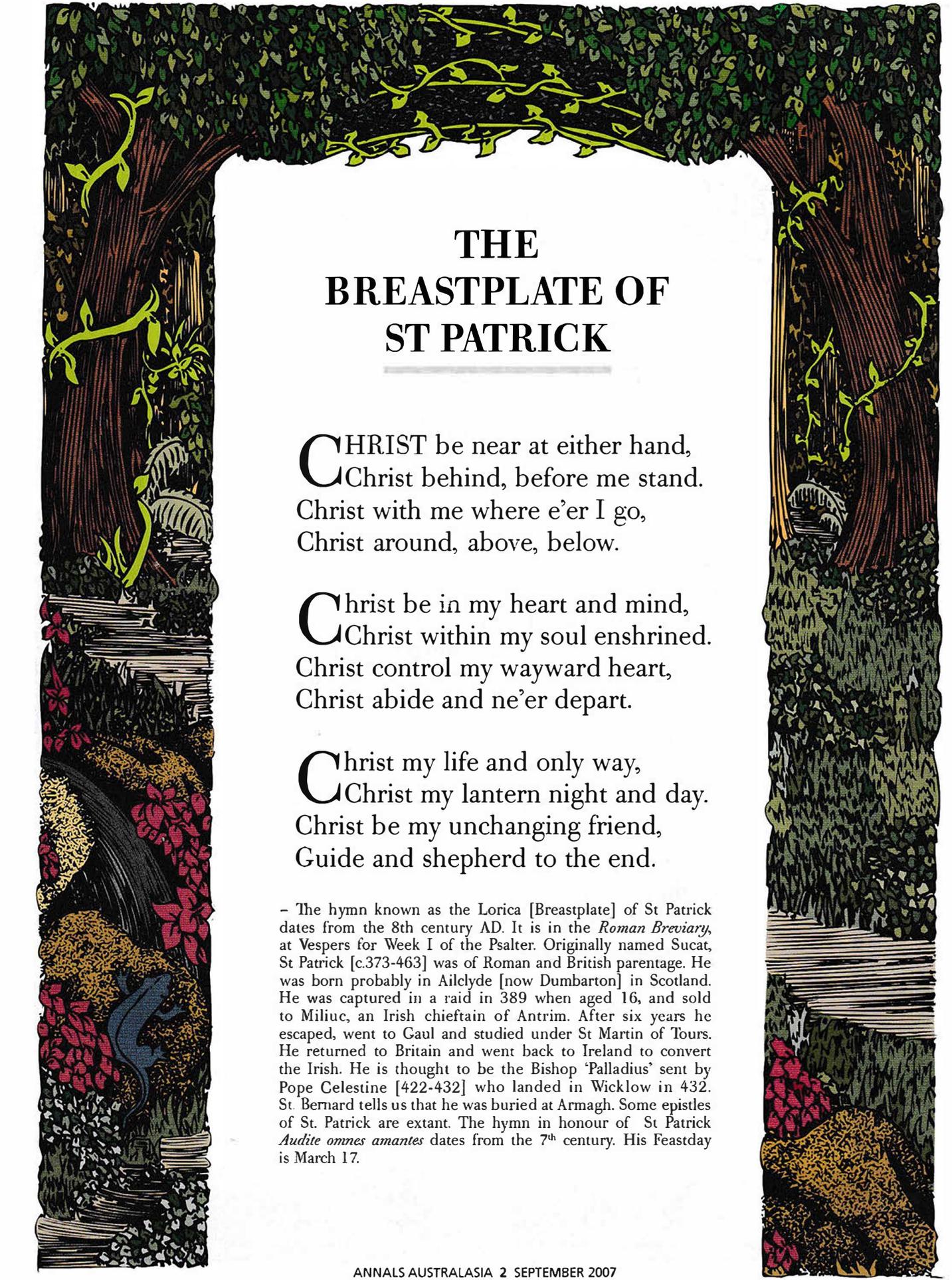
n the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and
of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

CHESTERTON WAS RIGHT

Bon vivant, wit, and tireless author, Chesterton lost the debate about the future direction of society to his contemporaries H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, and George Bernard Shaw. Chesterton saw the implications of their vision of twentieth-century society, and he predicted exactly what would come of it. Chesterton is not a congenial stylist to the modern reader; his witticisms are formal, his references to contemporaries, lost in time. But his essential points are chillingly clear.

- Michael Crichton, *Next*, Harper, 2007, p.506.
Crichton is the author of, among other works,
Jurassic Park, *The Andromada Strain*, *The Lost World*.
He is commenting on Chesterton's *What's Wrong
with the World*, first published in 1910.





THE BREASTPLATE OF ST PATRICK

CHRIST be near at either hand,
Christ behind, before me stand.
Christ with me where e'er I go,
Christ around, above, below.

Christ be in my heart and mind,
Christ within my soul enshrined.
Christ control my wayward heart,
Christ abide and ne'er depart.

Christ my life and only way,
Christ my lantern night and day.
Christ be my unchanging friend,
Guide and shepherd to the end.

- The hymn known as the *Lorica* [Breastplate] of St Patrick dates from the 8th century AD. It is in the *Roman Breviary*, at Vespers for Week I of the Psalter. Originally named *Sucat*, St Patrick [c.373-463] was of Roman and British parentage. He was born probably in Ailclyde [now Dumbarton] in Scotland. He was captured in a raid in 389 when aged 16, and sold to Miliuc, an Irish chieftain of Antrim. After six years he escaped, went to Gaul and studied under St Martin of Tours. He returned to Britain and went back to Ireland to convert the Irish. He is thought to be the Bishop 'Palladius' sent by Pope Celestine [422-432] who landed in Wicklow in 432. St. Bernard tells us that he was buried at Armagh. Some epistles of St. Patrick are extant. The hymn in honour of St Patrick *Audite omnes amantes* dates from the 7th century. His Feastday is March 17.

Debates in the Public Interest or That's Debatable!

ARGUING THE POINT, OR MISSING IT?

By PAUL STENHOUSE MSC



WITH an election within months, Australians have much media hype in store for them as their political minds are made up

for them by their media mentors. Talk-back, or Talk-around radio as it should be called, will run hot. TV cameras will be omnipresent, as we prepare for the media event of the year: the TV debate between the candidates.

There have also been calls from some interested quarters for a public and, if possible, TV, debate on Islam in Australia – is it peace-loving? is it compatible with democracy? is it a threat to Western Civilization? should Islamic immigration to this country be stopped?

This flurry of possible media events raises other questions that concern the value and even the possibility of fruitful

public debate on important issues in our electronic age; and the possible threat posed by TV debates to the democratic principles that permit the debate to occur.

Needless to say I am not speaking, in what follows, of school debates. They may, and often do, serve a useful purpose. They may even drive more motivated students into a continuing and rewarding search for the elusive nature of thought, and of the logic that underlies it, and the language through which it is expressed.

However, where once school curricula would have included classes in logic, or the history of thought, and students would have been shown how to take the steps necessary steps properly to inform themselves on controversial matters, we find many children being encouraged today to debate and discuss an historical,

religious or political point without adequate background knowledge – usually blunting or missing the point in the process.

Without the necessary tools and encouragement, how can young people ever learn to submit alleged documentary and other evidence to impartial scrutiny? Students from an early age are issued with computers and internet access and introduced to a virtual world in which 'documentaries' – too often little more than superficial and biased presentations – are as close as they will ever come to a 'document'. Students under pressure have been known to make do with the first item found by a search-engine. With predictable consequences.

That's Debatable

Modern debates – TV or otherwise – claim to centre on 'facts': one side argues that God does exist; the other side argues that he doesn't; one side argues that democracy is a viable political system; the other side argues that it isn't. Or, as in the present case, one side argues that Islam is compatible with democracy; the other side argues that it is not. And so on, endlessly.

The ancients were wiser. They never jumbled up topics for debate as if all issues were appropriate subjects for discussion. They knew what could be debated, and what couldn't. And they stressed the latter not out of a desire to block intelligent enquiry, but because they knew that that was the doorway to nothingness.

They knew, for instance, that self-evident facts are not debatable – *contra factum non valet argumentum* – 'one cannot argue against a fact'. Not that one can't *verbally* argue against it; but one can't argue *rationally* against it.

Such arguments are illusory and very misleading.

That the world exists independently

Finding Christ

WHAT DO I care about the controversies and quibbles of the doctors? In the name of science they can deny the miracles; in the name of philosophy, the doctrine; and in the name of history, the facts. They can cast doubt on His every existence, and through philological criticism throw suspicion on the authenticity of the texts. It even pleases me that they should succeed in doing so, for my faith in no wise depends on that. I hold this little book [of the New testament] in my hand, and no argument either suppresses it or takes it away from me; I hold it fast and can read it when I will. Wherever I open it, it shines in quiet divine fashion, and anything that can be brought against it will do nothing against that. This is where Christ escapes the very ones who have come to lay hold of him, and not through cunning or force; and where they, back among the chief priests, when the chief priests and Pharisees ask them: Why have ye not brought him? – reply: *Nunquam sic locutus est homo* – Never man spake thus – like this man. (John, vii, 46.)

- Andre Gide, 1869-1951. A complex and morally perplexing figure, Gide came from a family of Protestants and converts to Catholicism. His religious beliefs were far from clear, and his views on the after life were ambivalent, but his faith in Jesus seems unquestionable.

of me is a self-evident fact. Ergo it is not debatable. How I relate to the world, on the other hand, is but one of many fit topics for discussion and argument.

That I exist is a self-evident fact. Denying it leads to madness. Descartes, for all his mathematical genius, had to abandon his methodic doubt and accept his existence on faith – God couldn't let him be deceived about it – or descend into solipsism by denying it.

When an atheist calls for a debate on the existence of God he is generally claiming that his reason forbids him to accept God's existence; and he has evidence to prove it.

Gabriel Marcel, the existentialist philosopher, maintains that the atheist's claim that his disbelief is the result of a reasoning process based on strong evidence is spurious. He has not arrived at this conclusion, says Marcel, by logic, or rational argument, but by choice. He wishes not to believe in God. This is a position that he takes up. He wants others to share his disbelief. He says to others: Do you believe in God? Well, I don't.

Confronted by a self-evident fact, one may accept it or refuse to accept it. The atheist chooses to disbelieve; he is not compelled by his reason or cogent arguments to do so, no matter how plausibly he may claim this to be so.

Islam and Democracy

Turning to Islam, we contend that the religion of Muhammad is incompatible with democracy; and that this is a self-evident truth. We say this not to be argumentative or dismissive; but because no amount of discussion – were discussion permitted – could make it other than it is.

Why, then, you may well ask, do so many non-Muslims these days hold an opposing view? Myriad factors come into play here, and one would need to be a telepath to fathom them. They belong in a different realm from the one ruled by reason; a realm in which many well-meaning adventurers have lost their way; a realm of frustrated hopes and dashed dreams.

Islam's politics and social theories are, in modern terms, flawed. They are demonstrably incompatible with Western culture and democratic structures because they are derived from a seventh

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century AD agricultural and nomadic Arabian life-style that has become locked in a time warp; and because they are based on a flawed theology adapted from the pagan cults of Mecca in the time of Muhammad.

Despite their atheism, the Greeks and Romans tolerated religious views, but they never based their political systems on religious foundations. Had they done so they would have encountered similar problems to the ones that faced Muhammad's followers after his death, as they tried to rule, as if it were one Arabian tribe, the vast empire their religious zeal had won them at the point of the sword.

Not that these tried to build their political entity – their *ummah* – on religious foundations. Their politics was their religion – with the sole important proviso that just as there could only be

one sheikh for the tribe, there could be only one God for the Islamic *ummah*, and Allah brooked no competition.

Islam was a paradigm of the seventh-century Arab social and political nomadic structure familiar to Muhammad and his earliest followers. Allah, having lost his consort Allat, became, under Muhammad's fateful 'inspiration,' the almighty and unique sheikh and warlord, the omnipotent and despotic ruler of his people – in whom mercy and pitilessness co-existed – and who rewarded his faithful warriors with material blessings in this world and the next, and obliged them to eliminate by brute force any who attempted to resist them or attempted to escape from the *ummah* after entering it.

I say that Islam is not compatible with democracy. This is a self-evident fact. It is clear from the nature of Islam, and from the nature of a democracy.

Just as Allah tolerates no companion, no equal, neither does he tolerate any authority other than his. No authority – no secular judge or mayor or premier or prime minister or president, or political system – can be allowed to usurp the unique authority of Allah or exist alongside it. There can be no Opposition Party – loyal or otherwise – to Allah.

Civil law, Western Constitutional law not based on *Shari'a* Law, can have no binding power for Muslims who observe the *Qur'an*.

Those who follow Allah's 'way' – *the sabil as-saif*, 'the way of the sword' – accept this or face the consequences.

No Muslim faithful to the clear meaning of the *Qur'an* that Muhammad bequeathed to them, can doubt this. Or could truthfully deny it, if required to do so by swearing an oath by Allah, or by Muhammad's honour. This is not debatable.

Political Debates

Where party politics is concerned nothing leaps to the mind as a possible self-evident truth. But as debates, like so much else of modern life, are not what they seem, one wonders about the

Christianity is bound to protest against any social system which claims the whole of man and sets itself up as the final end of human action, for it asserts that man's essential nature transcends all political and economic forms. Civilization is a road by which man travels, not a house for him to dwell in. His true city is elsewhere.

– Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1935, Introduction p.xv.

wisdom of subjecting political leaders to the Big Brother ethos, with votes being cast by the 'discerning' viewing audience, based on looks, humour, dress-sense, poise and 'popular appeal' – usually a euphemism for sex-appeal.

Debates may be presented as rational discussions, or arguments, but they are really an opportunity for one or other side to please a crowd – a more tasteful form of gladiatorial contests. The very origin of the word 'to debate' means to 'do battle'. And 'argument' finds its origin in a word mean 'to assert,' or 'to accuse'.

A football or cricket match between the two parties would, we suggest, be as effective as a TV debate.

Our electronic age has ushered in a world unknown to, and undreamt of, by our ancestors. The Gladiator has metamorphosed into the Imagator; the *sword* [gladius] has been superseded by the much more seductive *image* [imago]. And those who play this Imagatorial Game, play it for keeps.

It's a deadly game, with impossibly high stakes. The winner will be the darling of the masses, but slavery is still the lot, even of the winners. These games have no interest in truth for its own sake. They are a show. The modern equivalent of the ancient Roman ploy to please the masses and control them – bread and circuses – is tax-reduction and Imagatorial games.

For these, and a host of other reasons, I think that TV, talk-back radio and the daily press are not appropriate vehicles for handling in-depth discussion of serious matters.

Even less is TV debate an effective way to arrive at the truth, or to judge the merits or demerits of the participants. Politicians take part in them because their spin-doctors [who come out of the industry] encourage them to do so. That they are a poisoned chalice countless better candidates whose image failed them, can testify.

Did anyone notice that the former controversial editor of the News of the World, Andy Coulson, was named recently as the new communications chief of the Conservative party?

'It was an appointment which took both Westminster and Fleet Street by surprise. ... There seems little doubt that the new man's appointment is intended to bring the Tories closer to the Murdoch empire: Coulson remains a close friend of Rebekah Wade, the

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Sun's editor, and is said to have had an excellent working relationship with Rupert Murdoch.¹

Who better to advise the future leaders of a country how best to serve the interests of the real power in the country – the media?

Playing the Game?

Television is by definition 'seeing at a distance'. We could cope with 'writing at a distance' [telegraph] and even 'speaking at a distance' [telephone] because we seemed still to be in touch with reality – hearing a familiar voice, or reading familiar words. There seemed to be just one medium between us and the person writing or speaking.

But TV has exponentially increased the number of media between us and the audio-visual objects being presented to us.

Circumstances outside the control of most of us have distanced us so far from what is real, that we are in danger of distancing ourselves from the truth – which is ultimate reality. At this point, if we cease to care, we will have lost the Game.

If we choose wisely not to play the game, then we need to sharpen our critical faculties, read or otherwise inform ourselves widely in a discerning fashion, and, yes, scan the past regularly to see what we're missing.

1. Ian Cobain, *The Guardian*, Saturday June 2, 2007

Martyred under Marcus Aurelius, around 165 AD

ST JUSTIN AND HIS COMPANIONS

A contemporary account of his martyrdom, based on court records



AFTER the saints had been taken prisoner, they were led to the Roman prefect, whose name was Rusticus. When they had been brought before the court, Rusticus the prefect said to Justin: 'Believe in the gods above all things and obey the princes.' Justin replied: 'We cannot be blamed or condemned for obeying the commands of our Saviour Jesus Christ.'

'What doctrine do you hold?' asked Rusticus. Justin answered: 'I have tried to become acquainted with all doctrines, but I have adopted the true doctrines, those of the Christians, even if they are not acceptable to those who hold false beliefs.'

The prefect then said: 'So those are the teachings which you accept, you wretch?' To which Justin replied: 'Yes, I follow them according to the right rule of faith.'

The prefect asked: 'What is this rule of faith?' And Justin answered: 'That which we profess concerning the God of the Christians, whom we believe to be from the beginning the one and only Creator and Maker of all creation, of things visible and invisible; and concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose coming among men was foretold by the prophets as the herald of salvation and the teacher of the blessed disciples. I realize that I am a mere man and that what I say is insignificant compared with the infinite greatness of God; but I recognize the force of prophecy in what I affirm, since the coming was foretold of the one whom I have called the Son of God. And I know that the prophets in times past foretold his coming among men.' At this Rusticus said: 'So you are a Christian then?' And Justin replied: 'Yes, I am a Christian.'

The prefect then said to Justin: 'Now

listen to me. You are said to be a man of learning and you think you know which teachings are true. If you are flogged and executed, do you believe that you will go to heaven?' Justin replied: 'I hope to receive God's gifts if I bear these sufferings. For I know that all who have lived good lives can look for the divine grace that is stored up for them until the end of the whole world.'

The prefect said: 'So you imagine that you are going to heaven and will receive some appropriate reward?' To this Justin replied: 'It is not a case of imagining. I know; I am certain.'

Rusticus said: 'Let us come to the essential point, to what you must do. You must all sacrifice to the gods together.' And Justin said: 'No one in his right mind is going to turn away from the worship of the true God to worship false gods.'

The prefect insisted: 'Unless you do as you are told, you will be tortured without mercy.' Justin said: 'We have

prayed that we may suffer for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ and in this way be saved. This will give us confidence and assure our salvation when we come to the judgment seat of our Lord and Saviour, who presides over a universal court more formidable than yours.' And all the other martyrs said the same: 'Do what you like to us. We are Christians and we do not sacrifice to idols.'

The prefect then passed sentence: 'These men have refused to sacrifice to the gods and to obey the Emperor's commands. Let them be taken away and flogged, and then put to death in accordance with the law.'

The holy martyrs went out to the usual place of execution glorifying God. There they were beheaded and so won their martyr's crown professing their faith in the Saviour.

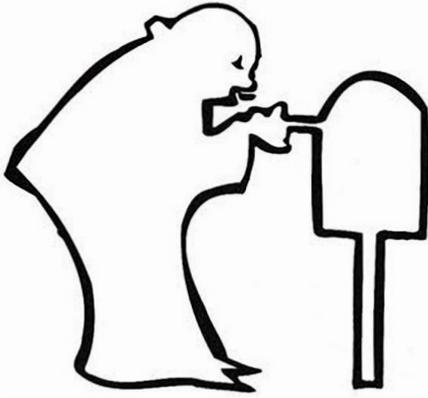
- The Acts of the Martyrdom of St Justin and his companions, chapters 1-5, from the Roman Breviary, Second Reading at Matins, for the Feast of St Justin, June 1.

Forced Conversion to Islam

Slaves faced pressure to convert to Islam. In an analysis of Islamic political theories, Patricia Crone notes that after a jihad battle was concluded, "male captives might be killed or enslaved... Dispersed in Muslim households, slaves almost always converted, encouraged or pressurized [sic] by their masters, driven by a need to bond with others, or slowly, becoming accustomed to seeing things through Muslim eyes even if they tried to resist." Thomas Pellow, an Englishman who was enslaved in Morocco for twenty-three years after being captured as a cabin boy on a small English vessel in 1716, was tortured until he accepted Islam. For weeks he was beaten and starved, and finally gave in after his torturer resorted to "burning my flesh off my bones by fire, which the tyrant did, by frequent repetitions, after a most cruel manner."

- The Persistence of Islamic Slavery by Robert Spencer, FrontPageMagazine.com July 20, 2007.

LETTERS



Australians' Life Expectancy

In *The Sydney Morning Herald* of September 8, 2007, a letter writer broached the subject of indigenous Australians' life expectancy which is lower than that for non-indigenous Australians. Or is it? Every year, close to one hundred thousand non-indigenous Australians don't reach even the age of nine months since they are arbitrarily removed from their mothers' wombs.

And what is our Federal Government's response to that bloody onslaught? With taxpayers' money it subsidises the killing of this large number of 'under-age' persons. Surely, one cannot simultaneously expect such a government to be *genuinely* concerned about the low life-expectancy of this country's indigenous citizens.

Beacon Hill NSW 2100

HENK VERHOEVEN

Flexible retiring age for an MSC Priest

During 2007 the ex-students of Sacred Heart Primary School Rabaul are holding a reunion in Brisbane. One of those invited, (but unlikely to be able to attend) is my highly respected friend who was our Mission (Parish) Priest at Sacred Heart Church in Rabaul in the early 1950s, the Reverend Father Stephen White, MSC with whom I am still in contact over fifty years on.

That news was conveyed in our most recent contact, his phone call at 2 a.m. in the morning our time, from his current posting in Texas. His opening query was 'What time is it there John? On being given the answer, the response in the Irish accent, still as broad as the day he left the small white washed, thatched roofed family 'picture book' cottage just outside Killarney over seventy years ago, was 'My God, I have done it again!'

Post World War II, in 1952, he was the only Irish priest in the German Vicariate of Rabaul, with headquarters at Vunapope. The German Bishop Leo and his countrymen priests, quite understandably, were keen not to offend the Australian administration so soon after the war, even though they too had suffered severe privations while incarcerated during the Japanese occupation. Father Stephen's rather forthright Irish approach, even when shrouded with his quirky sense of humour embellished with a deep throated laugh, had the potential on occasions to ruffle some feathers of some bureaucrats, and even of a bishop. So, in the interests of harmonious church state relationships, the Bishop thought it wise for Father Stephen to exercise his missionary talents a little farther afield, firstly at Vunakanau, still on the Gazelle Peninsular. There, I spent several pleasant weekends with him on his Mission Station. His two-hour Sunday Mass included an hour's instructional type sermon in the local 'Gunantunan' language, a language skill the farm boy from Limerick had acquired 'on the job'. The first two post-war New Guinea born priests, Father To Bata (later Bishop) and To Paivu, were from the Gazelle and no doubt

acquired their basic knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith from similar sermons.

Every time Father Stephen has phoned in recent years, it has been about the same time in the morning our time, afternoon time in Texas. However he is doubly excused this time as he has just returned to the priest's home in San Antonio after four months in hospital following a stroke. He would be at least 88 years of age and has still been doing locum work there among the Mexican migrant community. Fortunately, his voice sounded as if he could still belt out a sermon for an hour without stopping to catch his breath as he was wont to do over fifty years ago - and still include plenty of real instruction and guidance, not mealy-mouthed platitudes. When asked about retirement, his response was 'Why would I retire when I have the strength and the will to continue to do the Lord's work, even in a small way?'

Flexible retiring age, and some!

St Ives, NSW 2075

JOHN FLETCHER

Doubt about 'harmlessness' of contraceptive

In Daniel C. Vock's article 'Pharmacists in the Crossfire' (July 2007), Mr Vock ends his article by stating that 'emergency contraception will have no effect on an embryo that has already attached to the uterus.'

This agrees with the information given in the literature (Australian Medicines Handbook 2007).

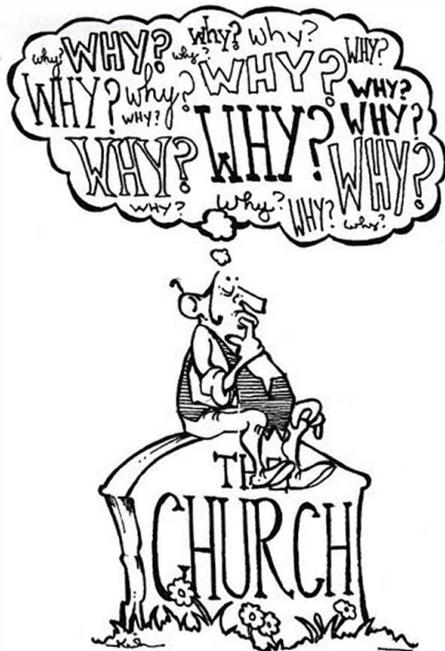
I disagree that this claim of 'no harm' to the attached embryo has been positively established. The 'emergency contraceptive tablet' or 'morning after pill' is recommended by the manufacturers to be taken as a single dose of two pills containing an amount of synthetic hormone (levonorgestrel) which is *fifty* times greater than the amount of the same synthetic hormone taken on a *daily* basis in the well-tested contraceptive 'pill'.

There is a sad precedent for women taking large amounts of the synthetic hormone, (diethylstilboestrol) or DES, in order to bring about miscarriages. The use of DES was totally discredited when this use of synthetic hormone as an abortifacient, was found years later, to cause cancer in the daughters

Optimism and Pessimism

WHEN I was a boy there were two curious men running about who were called the optimist and the pessimist. I constantly used the words myself, but I cheerfully confess that I never had any very special idea of what they meant. The only thing which might be considered evident was that they could not mean what they said; for the ordinary verbal explanation was that the optimist thought this world as good as it could be, while the pessimist thought it as bad as it could be. Both these statements being obviously raving nonsense, one had to cast about for other explanations. An optimist could not mean a man who thought everything right and nothing wrong. For that is meaningless; it is like calling everything right and nothing left. Upon the whole, I came to the conclusion that the optimist thought everything good except the pessimist, and that the pessimist thought everything bad, except himself.

- G.K.Chesterton, Orthodoxy, The Bodley Head, London, 1908, pp 103-104.



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of a proportion of those women who, having used it, failed to miscarry and consequently brought their daughters to birth. While the two drugs discussed here are not identical, they belong to the same category of synthetic female hormones.

As a pharmacist, I am concerned that as long-term studies on the possible adverse effects of the wide-spread use of the 'emergency contraceptive tablet' are still in the future, evidence-based claims of its safety should be re-considered.

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CLAUDE RIGNEY

Invaluable Confessors and Friends

I noted with interest a letter by Chris Hohnan, mainly commenting on Medjugore in the June Annals. He questions the adequacy of Father Peter Murphy and Father Peter Joseph as Spiritual Directors.

I have known both these priests for the past sixteen years. They were ordained for the Diocese of Wagga Wagga in 1992 after extensive study in Rome where they completed their Licentiate. They went on to do a Doctorate in Rome several years later, lectured at Vianney College seminary, and both have held the position of vice-rector. They have given many retreats and written for various periodicals and journals. Father Joseph has updated Archbishop Sheen's classic 'Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine'.

I have known many people who have found them invaluable confessors and friends. Both of them are proud of the Catholic Faith and practise it in and out of season. They are not dissidents who court the secular media. These priests are only interested in the truth.

Ganmain NSW 2702

PAUL CHIGWIDEN



'Depending on who the candidate is, that mightn't be good news for the Church.'

CATHOLIC PRESIDENT IN THE USA?

By RUSSELL SHAW



COULD a Catholic be elected president? Forty-seven years after the election of John F. Kennedy, and with a gaggle of Catholic candidates seeking the nominations of both political parties, that may sound like the kind of question Rip Van Winkle would ask. But hold on. There's a lot more here than meets the eye at first.

Start with the fact that John Kennedy's much-discussed Catholic problem was actually a problem with non-Catholics whose bigotry caused them to mistrust a politician belonging to the Roman Church. In the eyes of Catholics, by contrast, Kennedy could do no wrong. Here was a glamorous coreligionist who'd married (once) in the Church and had a handsome family, who visibly went to Mass, and who didn't overtly flout the teachings of his Church. What more could a Catholic voter ask?

Kennedy was lucky as well as smart. His famous talk to the ministers in Houston got him off the hook with many Protestants. True, he said in effect that religion wouldn't influence his conduct in office, but at the time that was what many people wanted to hear.

On the Catholic front, he was fortunate in having no compelling need to confront issues—aid to nonpublic schools being a notable exception—that were likely to place him seriously at odds with his Church.

Plainly, that would not be true today. Now he would have to take a stand on sensitive matters like abortion, fetal stem cell research, and same-sex marriage. And what would he do then?

In fairness to Kennedy, it must be said that there's no answering a what-if question like that one. But, granting that's so, it is not unfair to imagine an updated scenario paralleling today's political scene in which Kennedy, as a

moderate-to-liberal Democrat, would part company with the Church on issues like the ones mentioned above. After all, his youngest brother, Ted, has done that for years.

Now, let's further imagine that Kennedy had faced off with the Church on comparable issues back in 1960. In that case it seems probable that his support among Catholics—a whopping 78%, as it turned out—would have taken a hit. And if that had happened, the setback might very well have cost him what was in fact a very close election. Imagine the Catholic vote for Kennedy had come in a few percentage points lower in the key state of Illinois: not even Mayor Daley might have been able to close the gap, and Kennedy would have lost.

That (hypothetically) was then. And today? Even though splitting with the Church might have cost John Kennedy the election in 1960, it's hardly clear a Catholic candidate would pay the same price now. Indeed, several of the current Catholic contenders are already engaged

in doing so, at no visible cost to their candidacies.

That has more to do with changes in the Catholic electorate than in Catholic politicians. Catholic voters now fall into three very large categories — those who practise their religion, those who don't, and those who waver back and forth somewhere in between. (It's the same situation you find in baseball — avid fans, those who couldn't care less, and people who ignore the regular season but follow the World Series.)

Some see this seismic shift as the maturing of American Catholics, others as a sign of a sharply eroded Catholic identity among large numbers of the faithful. Could a Catholic be elected president today? Certainly. But depending on who the candidate is, that mightn't be good news for the Church.

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.

Lincoln's Advice to the First US Ambassador to the Holy See [II]

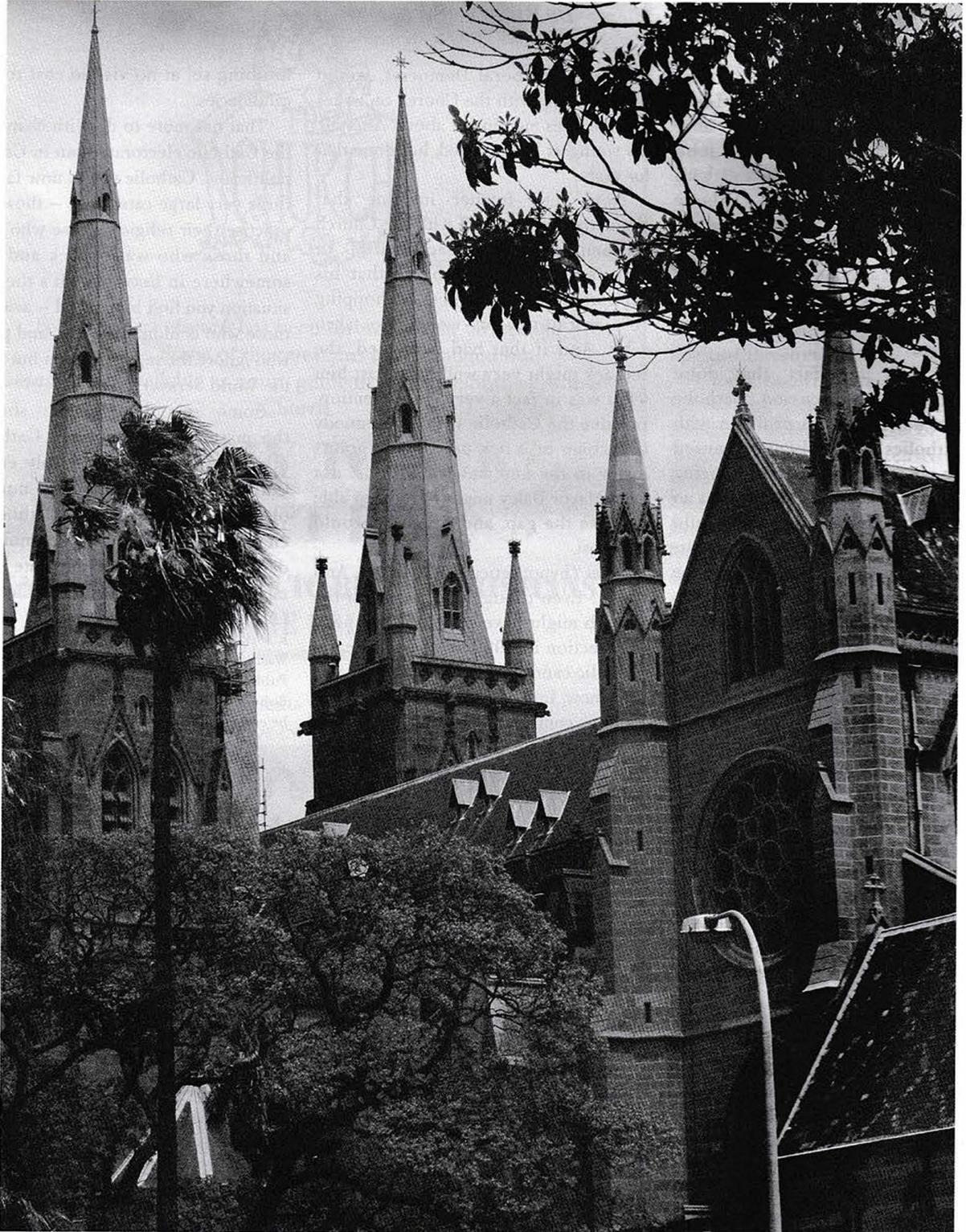
And you will further assure him [the Pope] that the United States constantly preserves a kindly remembrance of the very generous and liberal manifestations they had received of his goodwill and friendship, and that he may confidently rely upon them for the practice of all the duties which grow out of the relations of the two countries as independent members of the family of nations. You will find Rome a resort, and a temporary residence of intellectual persons from all parts of the world. Among them are many who in various degrees exercise an influence upon the opinions, and, perhaps, in some cases, upon the policies of nations. It will be a pleasing duty for you at this happy moment when our unhappy domestic conflict is a subject of universal discussion, to vindicate the justice, the wisdom and the moderation of the Government and loyal people of the United States.'

- American Archives, State Department. Seward to Blatchford, quoted in *Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1929, p. 501

CATHOLIC CULTURE

125th Anniversary of Sydney's Catholic Cathedral

ST MARY'S BASILICA



By GEORGE CARDINAL PELL, ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY



THIS WEEKEND in our beautiful Cathedral is somewhat unusual, principally because we celebrate the 125th anniversary of its opening, but also because yesterday I ordained two young priests for our Archdiocese (making a total of five for this year). We don't have such ordinations celebrated on every weekend.

Otherwise, however, it was business as usual with the daily Masses on Saturday, Sunday Masses, confessions and weddings and today we have the First Communions and Confirmations of some of our choirboys. A cathedral, even more than the usual parish church, is a spiritual powerhouse where the one true God is worshipped, the fruits of Christ's unique redemptive activity are made available to us and the Church, the Body of Christ, continues to renew herself through the nourishment of her members in the various sacraments.

In the first reading we heard about the dedication of the first temple in Jerusalem, Solomon's Temple, about 950 years before the Lord's birth. It is the prototype of all our great cathedrals and was a building loved by Christ himself as He wept over its future destruction.

But we, unlike Solomon, no longer sacrifice innumerable sheep and oxen; nor is the Holy of Holies empty except for the tablets of the Law given to Moses at Mt. Horeb. Our worship of the one true God (identical of course with the God worshipped by the Jews) is centred on the life and redemptive death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and in our holy of holies, the sanctuary with the main altar, we make present again Christ's unique sacrifice through the celebration of the Eucharist, when we eat Christ's Body and drink His Blood.

It is the conviction in faith of the importance of the activities we perform in this Cathedral, a conviction shared by generations of clergy and people, which explain its magnificence and also explain our determination to complete the interior renovation of the Cathedral so that its external beauty is at least equalled internally.

We all know that this is not the first chapel or cathedral on this site; that Governor Macquarie laid the foundation stone for the first church in 1821, when the site was on the eastern fringe of Sydney Town, next to the convict barracks of Hyde Park and on a steep hill above the Woolloomooloo basin. This miserable site reflected the social position of the Irish Australian Catholics.

However even Vicar General Ullathorne when he arrived in 1833, reported that Father Therry's still roofless church was "a solid noble building, the finest in the colony", which was completed for the arrival of the first bishop, John Bede Polding, in 1835.

Disaster struck on the night of June 29th, 1865 when the first Cathedral was burnt down. We know from his letters that Archbishop Polding enjoyed his misfortunes. Already in a "sea of troubles", he explained that he was "prostrate, stunned at first by the blow". Eventually, however, he was "almost glad" that the "dreadful calamity" had occurred because of the widespread support outside the Catholic community which Catholics received and because of the new opportunities which now lay open.

Some months later on October 6th, 1865, he commissioned William Wardell, who had already designed St. John's College at Sydney University and was the finest architect in New South Wales and Victoria, to design a Gothic Cathedral in "any plan, any style, anything that is beautiful and grand, to the extent of our power".

Wardell warned Polding that it would be "a comparatively costly work", a prophecy which remains true today, because he was building "not for today, but for all time" and "the supreme consideration is not what is cheapest, but what is best". God's house deserves no less.

Today with modern technology and finance available through development funds or banks, we are used to completing huge building projects in some years. In the Middle Ages cathedrals were usually only completed in many generations, sometimes across a century or more. St. Mary's Cathedral falls between these two extremes as the work was substantially completed in three stages, with the official opening of the first stage, the northern section by Archbishop Vaughan on September 8th, 1882. Next in 1902 Cardinal Moran provided a permanent roof, the stained glass windows, the central

Missing the Point?

REMEMBER, however, that to be breakable is not the same as to be perishable. Strike a glass, and it will not endure an instant; simply do not strike it, and it will endure a thousand years. Such, it seemed, was the joy of man, either in elfland or on earth; the happiness depended on *not doing something* which you could at any moment do and which, very often, it was not obvious why you should not do. Now, the point here is that to *me* this did not seem unjust. If the miller's third son said to the fairy, "Explain why I must not stand on my head in the fairy palace," the other might fairly reply, "Well, if it comes to that, explain the fairy palace." If Cinderella says, "How is it that I must leave the ball at twelve?" her god-mother might answer, "How is it that you are going there till twelve?" If I leave a man in my will ten talking elephants and a hundred winged horses, he cannot complain if the conditions partake of the slight eccentricity of the gift. He must not look a winged horse in the mouth. And it seemed to me that existence was itself so very eccentric a legacy that I could not complain of not understanding the limitations of the vision when I did not understand the vision they limited.

- G.K.Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, The Bodley Head, London, 1908, p.86

Cardinal's Tower and one bay of the nave, while Archbishop Kelly erected the Southern section with the façade and basis of the two towers in 1928. We all know that the beautiful spires on these towers were constructed in the Jubilee Year 2000.

All in all our Cathedral was finished in one life time as Archbishop Redwood of Wellington, New Zealand, who even remembered the old St. Mary's and preached at Archbishop Vaughan's ceremonies to mark the opening in 1882 was also present, as a ninety-year-old at the 1928 completion ceremony.

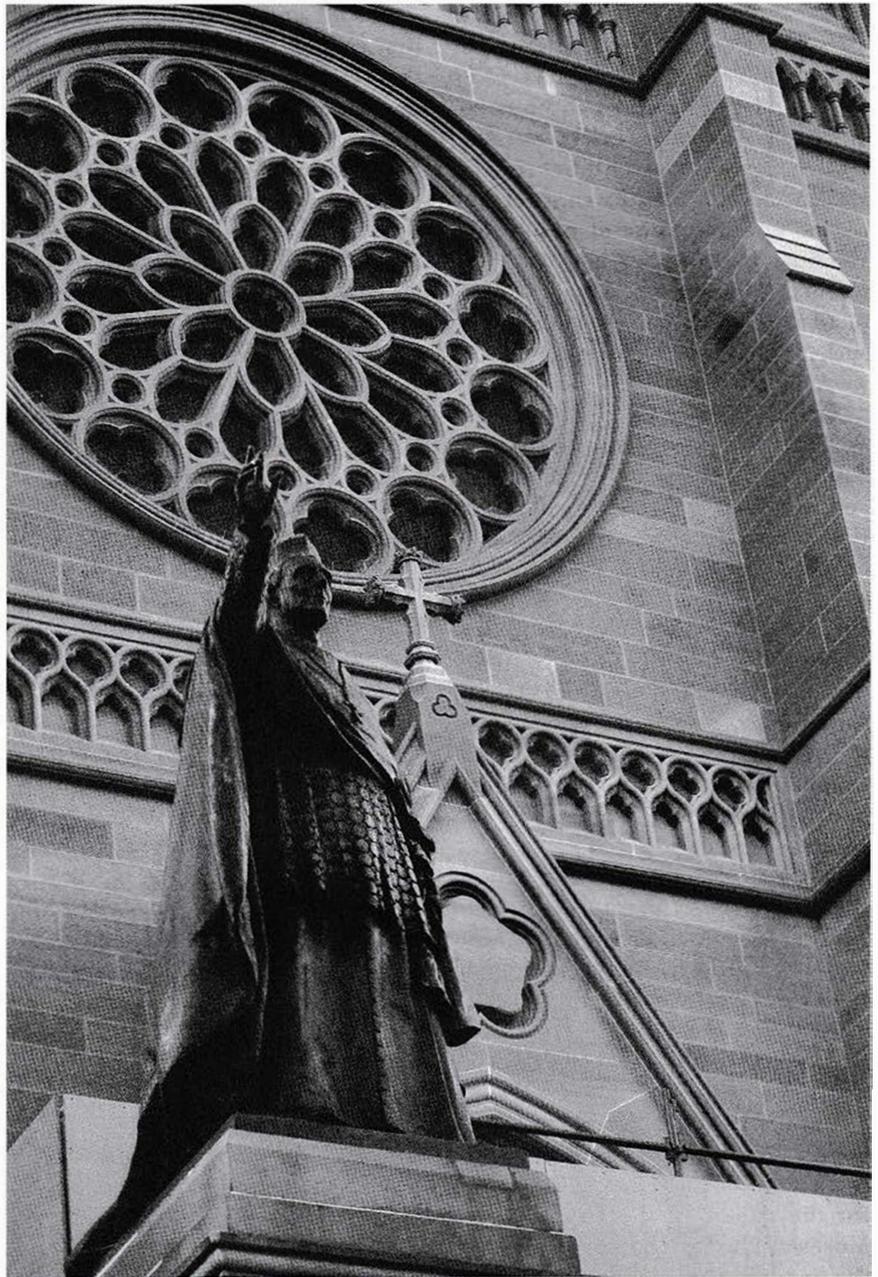
Well might we say with the psalmist "How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, mighty God" and "Here God lives among his people". Our duty, the duty of all of us who love this building and worship here, is to ensure that this house of God our Father remains as a house of regular prayer and does not degenerate simply into a museum visited by largely uncomprehending tourists.

I am pleased to claim, in truth and humility, that the Cathedral is now used for worship more frequently than at any time in its history. We have a larger population than earlier generations and transport is also easier. Christ remains our only true foundation and the physical stones in this building remain at the service of the Spirit and the many living stones, individuals of every age and race, who come here to pray.

Extravagant claims have been made for our Cathedral. In 1928 the New South Wales premier Thomas Bavin, the son of a Methodist minister, described it as "the most beautiful Cathedral which has been built in the world during the last two hundred years". I have friends in Melbourne and New York who would hear this claim with some scepticism!

But Premier Bavin was completely correct in two other claims. First of all that St. Mary's is "the possession of all of us, no matter what class or creed we belong to" and that "it stands as a sermon in stone, silent but eloquent witness to the truth that men do not live by bread alone".

Archbishop Vaughan, more than anyone else, deserves praise as the founder of this Cathedral. He



Cardinal Moran greets his adopted city from the steps of St Mary's.

personally wrote 1466 letters asking for money and 1000 personal "thank you" replies in raising the finance to complete the first phase.

He claimed that this Cathedral

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- Editor. *Annals Australasia*.

would speak to later generations of the faith of the generation which built it. He was correct.

Today, when many inside the Church, as well as a larger number outside her, can only muster a faith that is uncertain and weak, or even non-existent, we need to ponder these stones, their beauty and their order and strive to hear what they are saying.

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

Homily preached by his Eminence, George Cardinal Pell on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the opening of St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, on September 8, 1882.

Turkey in 1935

KAMAL ATATURK'S MODERN SECULAR STATE



HERE is, moreover, a third type of dictatorship which we are apt to overlook in considering these problems, but which is perhaps the most significant of all. This is the new regime in Turkey which emerged with such dramatic suddenness in 1922 and perhaps did more to destroy the prestige of Western democracy in the world at large than any other single factor.

The new Turkish state stands, in more than one sense, half-way between Russian Communism and German Fascism. It has always cultivated friendly relations with Soviet Russia, even in the days when the latter stood entirely isolated and friendless.

It resembles Russia in its drastic attempt to destroy the influence of religion and to remould the national culture on purely secular lines. Like Russia it is attempting to introduce Western standards of efficiency and organization and the external forms of modern Western culture, while violently opposing the political and economic influence of the Western Powers.

... it resembles the new regime in Germany in its fanatical nationalism and militarism and in its appeal to patriotic sentiment against the Peace Treaties and the post-war settlement of Europe.

Above all it possesses similar ideas of racial superiority and racial purity. It has attempted to purge Turkish culture of all non-Turkish elements in a far more drastic and far-reaching way than anything that has been done in Germany, and it has dealt with its non-Turkish minorities, whether Greeks, Armenians or Kurds, even more ruthlessly than the Nazis have dealt with the Jews.

Moreover, the Turkish dictator, Kamal Ataturk, corresponds far more closely than Mussolini with the Nazi ideal of dictatorship.

- Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, Sheed and Ward, London 1935, pp.14-15.

Smoke and Mirrors on the Levantine Stage

LEBANON BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

By Paul Stenhouse, MSC PhD



ON TUESDAY, February 13, 2007, three people died and many were injured when a bomb exploded on a bus travelling from Bteghrine to the Lebanese Maronite Catholic mountain village of Ain Alaq. A second bus following behind stopped, and then a bomb on that bus exploded. The atrocity occurred less than a mile from the Christian village of Bikfaya, the hometown of the former president, Amin Gemayel.

On June 13 this year another MP, Walid Eido, a Sunni Muslim, and anti-Syrian, was killed along with his eldest son Khaled, and eight other people, in a car bomb explosion near the popular sea-front in Muslim West Beirut.

As I write, an anti-Syrian Maronite Catholic MP, Antoine Ghanem, a member of the Phalange party headed by former President Amin Gemayal, was assassinated on September 19, in the Sin-el-Fil neighbourhood of East Beirut – not far from Amin Gemayal’s residence.

As we go to press we learn that the Presidential Elections in Lebanon have been postponed until October 23rd. Few things are as they appear in Lebanon. Annals attempts to identify some of the players and their motives in this deadly serious exercise in nation building. The West needs to pay close attention as its turn may well come, unless wiser counsel prevails. Ed.

A few days after the assassination of Maronite Catholic Industry Minister Pierre Gemayal, son of the former President Amin Gemayal, on November 21, 2006, an article by H. Varulkhar entitled ‘Lebanon on the Brink of Civil War’ appeared in MEMRI, [a Middle East media translation and analysis service].

The unknown group that claimed responsibility for the assassination of Pierre Gemayal called itself ‘Fighters for the Unity of Bilad ash-Sham [Greater Syria] and its Liberty’.

Lebanese Christians [majority Maronite Catholic], represent around 40% of the population – the largest

percentage of Christians existing in any Muslim majority country today. And of the Muslims in Lebanon, the Shia in the south of the country are acknowledged by all to be more numerous than the Sunni.

I am reminded of an earlier, bloody, so-called ‘civil war’ in Lebanon, from 1975 until 1990. It was clearly orchestrated from Syria but no one – especially the US – wanted us to believe it. On the contrary, we were told that Syria was the saviour of Lebanon. Syria was invited to form the largest contingent of the infamous Arab League ‘peace-keepers’ that did nothing to stem the bloodshed. Its pillaging and despoliation of Lebanon is a matter of grim record.

One is reminded, too, of Russian troops who in the 90s were posted on the border of their ally, Serbia, allegedly to keep the peace, during the horrific so-called ‘civil war’ in the former Yugoslavia. The war was orchestrated by the now deceased Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic; and his Bosnian fellow-Serb nationalists Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic who remain at-large.

This time we have another civil war mooted. For a change we are being told that the provocateurs are Syria and Hizbollah.

However - counter-indications exist that would lead to other less politically-correct conclusions.

For instance, an ever-present factor in the equation is the legal status of the Sunni-Muslim Palestinian refugees. These fled to Lebanon, some what was then British Palestine in 1948 and others from Jordan in ‘Black September’ 1970. They set up a State within a State in the south from which they dragged their host-country unwillingly into their fight with Israel.

Islam and Violence

It is vital to grasp that traditional and even mainstream Islamic teaching accepts and promotes violence. Shariah, for example, allows apostates to be killed, permits beating women to discipline them, seeks to subjugate non-Muslims to Islam as dhimmis and justifies declaring war to do so. It exhorts good Muslims to exterminate the Jews before the “end of days.” The near deafening silence of the Muslim majority against these barbaric practices is evidence enough that there is something fundamentally wrong.

- Tawfik Hamid, The Wall Street Journal, Tuesday, April 3, 2007.
A onetime member of Jemaah Islamiya, an Islamist terrorist group,
Dr Hamid is a medical doctor.

Worthy of notice, too, are the persistent 'voices' that link the resolution of Lebanon's financial woes amounting to billions of \$US, to the granting of citizenship to the Palestinians in Lebanon. This would conveniently increase the number of Sunni Muslim 'Lebanese' confronting the Shi'ites in the south.

Since 1975 the US has viewed Lebanon as a possible alternative 'homeland' for the displaced Palestinians. Both Israel and Saudi Arabia – for different reasons – would conceivably view such a move with favour.

Lebanon has many similarities to Belgium, with its French and Dutch speaking citizens, for centuries an unwitting buffer between the competing empires of France and Germany.

Lebanon with its fertile valleys and soaring snow-covered mountains, its mediterranean climate and its safe harbours has been fought over and traversed for millennia by Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Hebrews, Romans, Crusaders, Turks, Europeans of every stripe, and more recently Syrians and Israelis.

Its Christians have been and remain, literally and metaphorically, a buffer between Alawite-controlled Syria, Lebanese Muslims, and mainly Sunni Palestinian refugees – more than 500,000 of them – and Israel; and between Lebanese Sunni and Shia – surrogates of the Saudis and the Iranians.

Lebanon is a buffer and a link between Israeli and Arab, between Jew and Muslim, between the West and the Arab world, between the Christian world and Islam.

Lebanon's sufferings have seldom been entirely of her own making. The Maronite Catholic Christians - by some miracle still a significant factor in Lebanese life – had been well-established in Lebanon for centuries when Islam was in its infancy, saw it evolve into a violent horde that decimated empires, kingdoms and other religions, and witnessed its centuries-long decay and its latter-day militant renaissance led by the Saudis and their literal-minded partisans.

Who stands to gain most from further destabilizing Lebanon? The

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regional *bête-noir*, the aged Syrian lion, is licking its wounds and awaiting with dread the findings of the UN-backed International Tribunal investigating the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Its Lebanese drones, led

by President Emile Lahoud, vainly seek to defend it [and themselves] by opposing the Tribunal.

Syria can no longer play the US against Russia as the wily and unscrupulous Hafiz al-Assad did for decades. Just how bereft of friends it is, was made clear when Bashar al-Assad's offer [L'Orient le-Jour, Beirut, Feb 7, 2007] to mediate between America and the parties in conflict in Iraq was met with a curt dismissal: 'There are certain things they can do,' said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack, 'and they can do them without trying to extract concessions from the United States or from anyone else.'

The doomed Alawite minority that controls Damascus may be insanely hoping to provoke a military response by Lebanon against Syria to justify an all-out attack on Lebanon by Damascus. This seems unlikely.

Perhaps, as some think, the Syrians regard the exposure of their involvement in Rafiq Hariri's assassination to be inevitable and that they have nothing to lose. Perhaps they have embarked on the revenge killing of government [mainly Christian] MPs opposed to them as a way of bringing down the government and destabilizing the country. While they may well wish to bring this about, I doubt that even the Alawite minority that controls Syria would be so brazenly contemptuous of world opinion and indifferent to their own best interests.

On the other hand, somebody is orchestrating the murder of anti-Syrian MPs. Could they be hoping to provoke the Shi'ite and Christian

Forced Conversion to Islam

Slaves faced pressure to convert to Islam. In an analysis of Islamic political theories, Patricia Crone notes that after a jihad battle was concluded, "male captives might be killed or enslaved...Dispersed in Muslim households, slaves almost always converted, encouraged or pressurized [sic] by their masters, driven by a need to bond with others, or slowly, becoming accustomed to seeing things through Muslim eyes even if they tried to resist." Thomas Pellow, an Englishman who was enslaved in Morocco for twenty-three years after being captured as a cabin boy on a small English vessel in 1716, was tortured until he accepted Islam. For weeks he was beaten and starved, and finally gave in after his torturer resorted to "burning my flesh off my bones by fire, which the tyrant did, by frequent repetitions, after a most cruel manner."

- The Persistence of Islamic Slavery by Robert Spencer.
FrontPageMagazine.com July 20, 2007.

coalition constructed by Presidential candidate and former Prime Minister Michel Aoun? Were this provocation to succeed, the armed Palestinian militia might come to the defence of their Sunni brethren against the Shi'ites in some bloody 'civil war'. Such a war would be as phoney as the one that ravaged Lebanon from 1975 until 1990.

This may well be the case. The killings of anti-Syrian MPs and others bear the hall-marks of the all too-familiar ploy of the villain playing the victim - anti-Syrian factions in Lebanon, supported by Wahhabi/Saudi money and weapons crying 'foul' and provoking a civil war. Were the Sunni to win, this would redress the Shi'ite dominance in Lebanon which parallels the Shi'ite dominance in Iraq - so worrying to the Saudis and their dwindling supporters in and outside the Middle East.

Discrediting and toppling the Alawite dominated regime in Damascus would almost certainly see Hamas and the Muslim Brothers filling the vacuum. They are standing in the wings as I write. This would have to give the Israelis cause for alarm; and it may well add to the grief of the indigenous and neglected Maronite Catholic Community who are more and more marginalized in their Phoenician homeland.

The French who kept a politically correct distance during the so-called civil war of the 70s and 80s, were, in

Benefits of New Technology

BUT... there are many [benefits to today's technology revolution]. Anyone familiar with children who have Down syndrome - or other people with physical or developmental challenges - soon sees that technology can have a transforming effect on the way they learn and communicate. .. Moreover, despite today's information overload, we should acknowledge that the new communication tools have increased public discussion and access to knowledge in dozens of ways... Finally, we can't overlook the fact that some elements of this revolution have the capacity for genuine beauty. Da Vinci and Michelangelo used oil and brushes. Today those brushes are software programs ... and the preferred canvas is charged electrons. But the results - ingenious beauty - can often be the same.

- Charles J. Bishop Chaput, *Deus ex Machina: How to Think About Technology*, 16 CRISIS 18, 18-22 (Oct. 1998).

the person of Jacques Chirac, President Sarkozy's predecessor, much involved in puzzling agitation for the survival of the Fouard Siniora government.

Questions had been asked about the siphoning of billions of \$US to Syria, and Siniora, as Treasurer under Rafiq

Hariri, was under a cloud. That cloud appears to be lifting. Cynics suggest that Chirac was, along with the Syrians, a beneficiary of Hariri munificence.

Whatever the truth of the matter, Lebanon was once again the loser. The truth remains buried under tons of turgid media reporting that betrays ignorance of Lebanese realities, and prejudice against the embattled mainly Catholic minority which remains the meat in the Sunni and Shi'ite sandwich.

Both the US and France seem anxious to avoid the audit of pre-2005 Government finances demanded by General Aoun who returned from exile in May of that year.

A civil war between Sunni and Shi'a would drain the energies and resources of those interested in combatting corruption and bringing true peace at last to tiny Lebanon. And the Alawite Lion in Syria would always be on the sidelines waiting to pick the bones - assuming, of course, that Hamas, now a force to be reckoned with in Syria, was willing to stand idly by without intervening. Can any of the players take such a risk?

Some might be tempted. But were this to be the scenario, Israel could well find herself hemmed in by a hostile Hamas/Muslim Brothers-dominated Syria, a vulnerable Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, Sunni-dominated Lebanon and Hamas-controlled Gaza - with the Fathah-controlled West Bank an uncertain card in the pack.

Add to this gloomy prospect the likelihood that the Muslim Brothers and Hamas may yet fulfil Sayyid Qutb's dream and topple Mubarak's wobbly regime in Egypt - the Egyptian leader must have nightmares about the fate of the Shah of Persia - and the future looks bleaker still for Israel and for the Lebanese Christians.

Whatever reservations one might justly harbour concerning the Assad family and their cronies in Syria, peace and justice will not be well served by toppling the Alawites while Hamas and the Muslim Brothers are waiting in the wings. Nor is it in Israel's best interests for Lebanon to be destabilized or for her indigenous Christian population to be further depleted and the region to fall under the malign spell of the puritanical Hanbali/Wahhabi Saudis.

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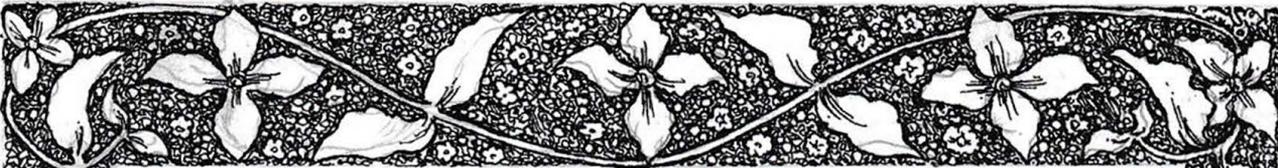
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THE ISLAMIZATION OF THE ARABIAN TRIBES



PRECEDED by the fame of his victories and his cruelties, Khâlid marched against Museilima, the prophet of Yemâma, who had just defeated two Moslem armies in succession. The conflict was terrible. At first the rebels gained the upper hand, and penetrated as far as Khalid's tent. The general, however, succeeded in driving them back to the plain which lay between the two camps. After several hours of stubborn resistance the insurgents were worsted on all sides. "To the garden! To the garden!" arose the cry, as they retreated to a spacious orchard, surrounded by a thick wall, and provided with massive gates. Drunk with slaughter, the Moslems pursued them. With unexampled boldness two of them clambered astride the rampart and let themselves drop within the enclosure in order to open the gates. One of them, riddled with wounds, instantly fell dead; the other, more fortunate, snatched the key and hurled it over the wall to his comrades. The gates flew open and the assailants entered in a torrent. A horrible massacre ensued in this arena, whence escape was impossible. Within "The Garden of Death" the rebels, to the number of ten thousand, were slain to the last man.

Whilst the fierce Khâlid was thus quenching the insurrection in Central Arabia with rivers of blood, the other generals were doing like deeds in the southern provinces. In Bahrein the camp of the Bakrites was surprised during an orgy, and they were put to the sword. A few, however, who found time for escape, reached the sea-coast and sought safety in the island of Darin. But the Musulmans were soon upon their track, and slew them all. The like carnage took place in 'Oman, in Mahra, in Yemen, and in Hadramaut. Here, the remnant of the forces of al-Aswad, after having in vain implored the Moslem general for quarter, were exterminated; there, the commander of a fortress could only obtain as the price of surrender the promise of an amnesty for ten persons — all the rest of the garrison being decapitated; in yet another district an entire caravan route was for a long time rendered pestiferous by exhalations from the innumerable decaying bodies of the rebels. If the Arabs were not altogether convinced by these torrents of blood that the religion preached by Mohammed was true, they at any rate recognised in Islamism an irresistible, and to some extent a supernatural, power. Decimated by the sword, overwhelmed with terror and amazement, they resigned themselves to becoming Moslems — at least ostensibly; and the Khalif, that they might have no time to recover from their dismay, forthwith hurled them against the Roman Empire and Persia — two nations ripe for conquest, because for many years rent by intestine discord, enervated by slavery, and cankered by all the vices of decadence. Boundless wealth and vast domains compensated the Arabs for their submission to the Law of the Prophet of Mecca. Apostasy was unknown, it was unthinkable, it meant death — upon this point the law of Mohammed is inexorable — but sincere piety and zeal for the faith were almost equally rare. By the most horrible and atrocious means the outward conversion of the Bedawin had been effected; that was much; it was indeed all that could fairly be looked for on the part of these unfortunate people, who had witnessed the death of their fathers, brothers, and children beneath the sword of Khalid or the other pious executioners who were his rivals.

- *Spanish Islam*, Reinhart Dozy, London, Chatto & Windus, 1913, p.21ff.

Religious women in a time of conflict and change

A HISTORY OF CONVENT LIFE

1450-1700

Reviewed by KEVIN HILFERTY



IN the year 1620 the nuns of the Poor Clare convent in Toledo, Spain, commissioned the artist Velazquez to paint a portrait of Mother Jeronima de la Fuente. At age 66, Mother Jeronima was about to leave to found the new convent of Santa Clara de la Concepcion in Manila, The Philippines, a perilous journey of at least 18 months. The nuns in Toledo knew they would not see their Mother and her three companions again and wanted the portrait to eternalise her presence in their convent.

The young Velazquez painted Mother Jeronima in Seville as she waited for her ship to sail; it was his first public portrait. He depicted Mother Jeronima as an austere figure standing in an empty space in habit and veil, with a large crucifix in her right hand and a prayer book in the other – spiritual weapons for winning souls and meeting the challenges of her new life. The wording on the painting said it celebrated Jeronima and her three sisters as missionaries and “very important women” suited for “such a high calling.”

The mission to Manila was part of the Church’s response to one of the great needs of the time: to create a new Catholic-influenced society in what was then called the New World and to offer education to the local people and the children of the European colonists. Spanish and Portuguese nuns founded convents in Central and South America and Asia while French nuns sailed for the wilds of Canada.

In the turbulent 250 years covered by Silvia Evangelisti’s history of nuns, 1450-1700, the Catholic Church lost most of northern Europe to the Protestant Reformation. Wars and

NUNS: A History of Convent Life
1450-1700 by Silvia Evangelisti.

Oxford University Press.

Recommended retail price, \$59.95.

Not available from Chevalier Press



Mother Jeronima

invasions ravaged cities and nations. But these times also saw a growth in new orders of religious women who were to leave a significant impact not only on the Church but also on society in Europe and the New World.

Dr Evangelisti, lecturer in Early Modern History at the University of East Anglia, has published widely on women and gender history, looking especially at female religious life in the early modern period.

Nuns, she reminds us, had been part of the Church from its earliest days and by the time this history opens convent

life was well established and regulated even to their architecture, especially gates, walls, doors, grilles, curtains and the parlour.

They came from across the social spectrum. Those from a noble or wealthy background became choir nuns while women from humble origins often entered as servant nuns and performed domestic service or manual work. The convents provided shelter and stability for widows, abandoned or battered women or ex-prostitutes willing to reform. Superiors or abbesses were drawn from the choir nuns; they used their connections to network with princes, kings and politicians and lobby on behalf of their convents or orders.

Their convents were often quite grand, sometimes being former palaces, and were fitted with all the comforts choir nuns were used to at their family homes. But all observed a fixed routine of prayer, penitence and work: administration, management and finances for superiors, cooking, gardening and household chores for servant nuns.

The families of choir nuns paid a dowry to convents for accepting their daughters, but this was often only ten per cent of what was being demanded by the families of prospective bridegrooms. For some girls entering a convent was a way to escape from an unwanted arranged marriage. An ugly side of this system was that tyrannical fathers often paid convent dowries then forced their daughters to take the veil.

But for the most part, the nuns found their lives behind convent walls to be spiritually and socially fulfilling; they seized the opportunity for education and many took up serious writing or copying manuscripts, others developed their talents as musicians and singers.

Convents and the Reformation

The Reformation and the accompanying political upheavals brought turmoil and disaster to nuns and their convents in those countries in which the rulers opted for Protestantism. One of their first moves was to seize convents and monasteries and expel the nuns and monks, sometimes returning their dowries or paying them derisory pensions (from convent funds).

In England those nuns who did not accept the new State church were expelled from the country and became refugees in France or Flanders. The first female English martyr was a visionary and former domestic servant, Elizabeth Barton from Kent. A nun with a reputation for holiness, Barton gained a reputation for her prophecies which were critical of Henry VIII's divorce. She was executed without trial in 1534.

In Lutheran states in Germany, nuns fought harder than monks to defend their churches and convents. They armed themselves with pitchforks or locked the doors, setting fire to old slippers to force the Protestant preachers off from their property, while monks simply walked away. (This opposition to State seizure of Church property was repeated nearly three centuries later in revolutionary France, again with nuns more prominent than monks in the resistance.)

The rule of Enclosure

Enclosure of nuns had long been the rule in many orders and had been made compulsory in a papal bull of Pope Boniface VIII in 1298. In this the Pope claimed that physical segregation would enable nuns "to serve God more freely, wholly separated from public and worldly gaze, and occasions for lasciviousness having been removed, may most diligently safeguard their hearts and bodies in complete chastity."

Three centuries later the Council of Trent in 1563 reinforced the enclosure rule as "the primary obligation for nuns." This meant that religious such as Tertiaries who often lived unenclosed and performed social work caring for the sick and aged had to switch to a different form of life, becoming enclosed and contemplative.

Enclosure cut off many nuns from



English Ladies convent M

contact with the communities in which they lived and created financial problems. Nuns were not allowed to go out to beg for alms or to do charitable work in hospitals. Unable to engage in trade, some orders began boarding schools for girls in their convents teaching reading, writing, sewing and good behaviour to bring in some revenue, carefully isolating the pupils from contact with nuns other than their teachers.

The enclosure rule made life particularly difficult for refugee nuns from England and other countries under Protestant control, trying to establish themselves without financial support from families and friends. Raising money became a key priority for them. As well as opening schools, engaging in needlework and craftwork which they could sell, they sometimes turned to other industries such as brewing, malt-making, watch-making or laundries. But spiritual assistance was one of their most effective tools. They would pray for their families, founders and benefactors and in return receive alms and gifts such as artworks and household goods.

Dr Evangelisti is even-handed about enclosure, quoting nuns who opposed it and those who saw it as beneficial, notably the Spanish St Teresa of Avila (1515-82). Born into a wealthy family of Jewish *converso* origin, she initially joined the Carmelite community of La Encarnacion in Avila, which had a relaxed approach to enclosure and

nuns were allowed to receive visitors or spend time with their families and friends. At age 40 and having spent 25 years at La Encarnacion, Teresa underwent a radical spiritual conversion and became a rigorous reformer, joining the Discalced Carmelite convent of San Jose with four other women. She was determined to ensure that in her new convent enclosure was respected.

She recommended that nuns should limit contact with relatives, friends, confessors and doctors and refuse conversations about worldly matters. Her first justification for enclosure was that it guaranteed the fulfilment of chastity – a pillar of nuns' existence. Secondly, it guaranteed the most important form of freedom: autonomy from social obligation and particular interests, making it possible to dedicate oneself to God. Cloistered nuns, therefore, enjoyed more freedom than those who engaged with society. In Teresa's interpretation, enclosure could have a liberating effect.

Teresa was determined that her nuns, though cloistered, would fight for the Church against its attackers through their prayers and spiritual exercises. She often left her convent, travelling widely to establish new Discalced Carmelite convents in Spain, France and the Low Countries (now The Netherlands and Belgium).

She wrote a number of mystical works including *The Interior Castle*, *The Way to Perfection*, *The Book of Her Life* and *Meditations on the Song of Songs* as

well as numerous letters which were all published: an extraordinary level of public impact for a cloistered nun. Teresa also had her critics who resented her ideas about monastic reforms, spirituality and forms of contemplative prayer, which were seen as too close to Protestant practices. The Inquisition examined her works and seven years after her death theologians urged that they be burned. In spite of this, she was canonised in 1622 and in 1969 was proclaimed Doctor of the Church.

Teresa was not the only nun of these times to attract severe criticism. The Council of Trent not only imposed enclosure, but saddled convents them with male superiors (in orders with male and female members), spiritual directors and confessors with bizarre ideas about women. As Dr Evangelisti puts it, nuns were often psychologically crippled at the hands of ruthless priests who regarded women with mistrust bordering on misogyny.

The confessor of the Spanish mystic Maria de Jesus de Agreda (1602-65) claimed that "writing is not women's work" and ordered her to burn the only copy of her spiritual and intellectual masterpiece, *The Mystical City of God*.

Years later a subsequent confessor ordered her to rewrite it. In spite of her difficulties with confessors, Maria was amazingly prolific, writing her autobiography, spiritual works and a collection of her correspondence over 22 years with King Phillip IV of Spain.

The confessor of Maria de San Jose (1656-1719) from Puebla, Mexico, commanded her to write during every minute of time she had free, sleeping for only an hour each night. Then he ordered her to give up the books in her cell and took away all her writings.

Even nastier was the confessor of the Italian Capuchin Clare, Maria Maddalena Martinengo (1687-1737), author of a tract on humility, poetry, letters and advice for her sisters. He burnt her autobiography.

Despite problems such as these, nuns produced a vast amount of spiritual and mystical writings. These literary nuns came from a variety of religious orders: Poor Clares, Capuchins, Carmelites, Dominicans, Ursulines and Vistandines. In Spain alone 113 nuns wrote spiritual autobiographies by the end of the

sixteenth century and the middle of the seventeenth century.

Theatre, Music and Poetry

Recreation was important in convent life. By reciting rhymes together and staging their own plays often accompanied by guitar music, nuns were (in the words of a contemporary, Sister Ana de San Bartolome, "able to laugh, cry, sing, dance, act, speak and dress in costume." Convent plays had an educational role as well as spiritual learning.

A notable author of such plays was Marcela de San Felix, (1605-87), a Discalced Trinitarian from the convent of San Idelfonso in Madrid. Maria was the illegitimate daughter of the playwright Lope de Vega and had contact with her father's friends from the world of the theatre before taking the veil. In her *Death of Desire*, Maria used food to satirise monastic life in a comic vein, highlighting the harsh conditions and focusing on the tightfistedness of the cellaress:

DESIRE: I suddenly have quite a longing to eat two sweet pastries.

When will you make meatballs?

SOUL: Hush now, you've gone mad.

Sacred music permeated all aspects of nuns' daily lives; singing in the choir was an act of prayer. Musical skills and beautiful singing voices were so valuable that convents could even discount the dowries of gifted nuns. Nuns taught



Angelique

vocal and instrumental music and dance while some composed music.

The trials of Mary Ward

Mary Ward (1585-1645) was born in Yorkshire into a family of English Catholic gentry. But life was not easy for Catholics under the Tudors, so Mary chose to join in 1606 a community of Poor Clares at St Omer in Flanders.

She wanted to create a school at which Catholic girls from England could be educated in the faith so with some companions in 1609 they opened their school, with the support of the local bishop.

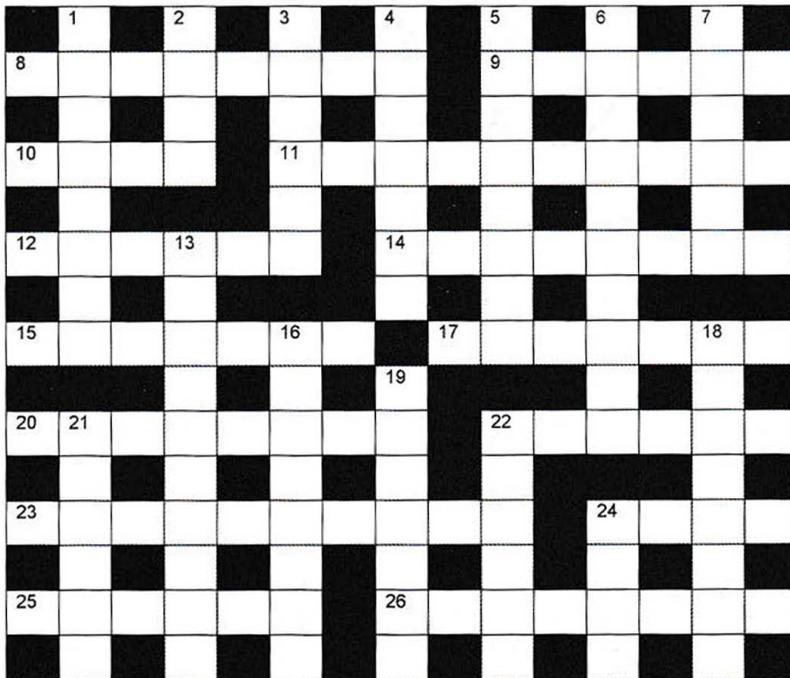
The school became known as that of the English Ladies and the concept spread across Europe. But trouble arose over Mary's wish that her sisters not be subject to enclosure; this, she felt, would hamper their missionary role. She also wanted to model her proposed order on the rule of the Jesuits, which again created difficulties.

Although Pope Urban VIII personally admired Mary, the critics had their way and in 1631 he ordered the abolition of the English Ladies and the dissolution of all communities founded in their name. A month after the harsh order Mary, who was in Munich opening a school, was declared "a heretic, a schismatic and an obstinate rebel against Holy Church" and sent to jail. Instead of being put in an ordinary prison, she was confined for two months in the convent of the Poor Clares in Munich. On her release she went to Rome and resumed teaching before returning to England where she died in 1645.

The English Ladies continued to pursue their teaching activity and opened more schools; in the eighteenth century the church approved the Institute of the English Ladies in its secular form and it became known as the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (widely called the Loreto sisters). They were founded in Australia from Ireland in 1874. Belatedly in 1908 Pope Pius X raised Mary to full honours as its Foundress.

Another great order to begin at much the same time as the English Ladies was the Daughters of Charity. Their role was to serve the sick and poor, using a concept developed by St Vincent de Paul (1581-1660). The founder of the order was Louise de Marillac whose

ANNALS CROSSWORD No. 48



ACROSS CLUES

8. Follower of Christ (8)
9. To immerse, plunge, bury or swallow up (6)
10. Assert (4)
11. Founder of Christian Brothers in Ireland (6,4)
12. Historical records; what you are now reading (6)
14. The birth of our Lord (8)
15. Leading clerics (7)
17. Wolverine; greedy person (7)
20. One time Bishop of Lyons, feast day 28 June (8)
22. see 1 down
23. Sanctify (10)
24. Leader (4)
25. To read or examine with care; study (6)
26. Followers of John Wycliffe (8)

DOWN CLUES

1. and 22. across. Lay name of Pope Leo X (8,6)
2. Mark of a wound; blemish (4)
3. Overturns; distresses (6)
4. Homilies (7)
5. Regarding a newborn child (8)
6. Made worse or more severe (10)
7. Evoke (6)
13. One time Bishop of Alexandria, feast day 2 May (10)
16. Clergyman (8)
18. Areas of land for the cultivation of fruit trees (8)
19. Violent attack (7)
21. Greek port visited by Paul on his last journey to Palestine (Acts 21:1) (6)
22. In a compliant manner; humbly (6)
24. To restore or be restored to health (4)

motto was "The charity of Christ needs us." The rules of the company were drafted by Louise and re-written by Vincent de Paul in later years. They were not classified as nuns but as devout sisters engaged in religious life and managed to avoid enclosure, gaining papal approval in 1668.

An important difference from orders of nuns was that the Daughters of Charity recruited and trained women from the lower and middle social classes for professional careers in the care of the needy. In time they became the largest order of female religious.

Dr Evangelisti has provided us with a massive amount of information on the role of nuns in difficult times. She writes with the dry touch of an

academic and does not disclose what her own beliefs are. Those interested in the subject will find it a rewarding read.

A nun for our times

Most of us will probably be of the



view that religious orders are in decline and new orders are no longer founded. So let me share with you the story of Mother Mary Garson, as told in the obituaries column of the London *Daily Telegraph* on March 24 this year. The daughter of a merchant navy captain, Mary Sunniva Garson was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland on October 3, 1921. She was educated at Invergordon Academy and read psychology at Aberdeen University before being commissioned in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force during World War II. She was assigned to testing procedures for RAF recruits and was seconded to the Army to work on diagnostic testing of soldiers returning from Burma.

After the war Mary Garson became an industrial psychologist then an education psychologist in Sussex. As a convert to Catholicism in her early 30s, she became a member of a lay group in Brighton whose chaplain was anxious to help the elderly in his parish; many were lonely and living in appalling conditions.

When she visited a half-blind woman who was looking after her bed-ridden blind sister and an elderly friend, Mary Garson became convinced that wider action was needed. When she worked out that she would need 800 pounds to obtain a mortgage on a house, the priest told her that he had just received a donation for exactly that amount.

One house grew into another larger property. As the organisation expanded the group grew in spirituality and eventually introduced bluer habits, then veils and crucifixes and formally adopted the Rule of St Benedict.

In 1974 the congregation spread overseas, beginning with a house for old people in Sri Lanka then a large complex embracing a convent, hospital, crèche and craft centre for young people which was the first of five foundations in India. In Kenya they opened a convent followed by a home for the destitute and elderly and another in Uganda where the sisters are engaged in schools, nursery education and parish work. Mother Garson retired as prioress-general in 2005 and died in March this year.

Sydney Journalist KEVIN HILFERTY became interested in English Catholic history when based in London as correspondent for an Australian media group. He regularly writes for *Annals*.

Harry Potter and the Search for Meaning

HOGWARTS AND ALL THAT

By GEORGE CARDINAL PELL



THE Harry Potter phenomenon is big; in fact bigger than any other publishing event. The series of seven books has been translated into 66 languages with sales of 400 million copies. Publicists claim that the final volume "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" will have 70 million readers in 93 countries and almost 574,000 copies were sold in Australia on the first day. Not even Charles Dickens enjoyed sales like these.

Although I had read the first volume and seen a couple of the films, my Potter-wise friends told me that I was at a disadvantage approaching volume seven through not reading the intervening novels.

In fact it was a struggle to enter into the storyline and I must confess my reluctance to give up the time to read any book of 600 pages. However, the magic eventually worked on me as I was caught up into the chase, the succession of violent encounters as Harry, Hermione and Ron flee for their lives and squabble with one another before the final confrontation of good and evil.

Why is Harry Potter so popular among all types of young people and many parents? Does this popularity explain much about young people today?

Harry Potter not only has many readers but a large number of enthusiastic and loyal followers who do not like him being criticized. This is particularly true of those who have grown up with him, his peers who have read each volume and stuck with him to the very end; the first Harry Potter generation.

We should remember that young people today are so used to the marvels of technology that magical fantasies

are less exceptional for them than for their parents and grandparents. As always most children love entering the world of magic, fairy stories, escaping the limits of normality (I wasn't one of these) and readers love a fast moving tale, especially when the adventures are exotic, the trumpets are calling the good to battle and the narrative is strong and racy.

Through television and computers young people know much more than their predecessors, but often only at a surface level. They are encouraged to be curious, provided the curiosity is not costly or demanding and many have an itch for novelty, a fascination with technological marvels, the mysterious

and abnormal, especially if they are ignorant of genuine religious traditions.

Many of this last group are restless and rootless, seeking limits, yearning for a good cause and more than happy to identify with the victims of injustice, with those who bravely confront evil and loyally stick with one another.

Harry Potter fits their bill as a hero, although he also appeals to good young Christians.

The series deserves to be widely read, but I am unsure why it is so hugely popular. We live in an uneasy, somewhat empty time of change.

It is also my suspicion that future generations will wonder why we made such a fuss of Harry Potter.

The 'World' – and the 'World To Come'

As Israel had stood against the kingdoms of the Gentiles, so the Church stood against the world. Secular civilization, embodied in the Roman State, ruled the present age by its own law, which was the law of force. The Church was the society of the world to come. It was its function to permeate mankind like a hidden leaven, to separate the living elements from the dead, and to reorganize them in a spiritual order which should be the foundation of a new world. To contemporaries primitive Christianity must have seemed an absurd attempt on the part of a handful of oriental fanatics to defy the forces of civilization and progress. It had against it all that was strongest in the ancient world – the power and authority of the Roman State, Greek science and culture, the civic life of the ancient city and the religious traditions of the ancient East. Nevertheless, these mighty forces were powerless to resist the spiritual energy of the new society. Christianity conquered. It actually created a new world. It supplied the spiritual impulse which was the formative element in European culture.

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



MEDIA MATTERS

By JAMES MURRAY

Paddy Whack

Always instructive to graze on the southern slopes of a PP McGuinness leader (to borrow a phrase once current about JL Garvin, legendary editor of *The Observer*, London). In the October issue of *Quadrant*, McGuinness inveighs against trade unions, their Australian Labor Party links and their unplanned obsolescence while contriving this neat jab: 'Will the unions be destroyed? Not overnight, of course, like religions, unions will not die in our lifetime.'

Nor in the life-time of our descendants. Unions are innate to the social instincts of human beings which is why they have always been defended by the Catholic Church in their mediaeval guild origins and their modern manifestations.

Reform is needed, McGuinness writes. Spot on. But what kind of reform? A start would be getting rid of the organisational obesity that overtook the unions (or was foisted on them like jumbo burgers or steroids) during the Hawke-Keating era.

And what better union to show the way than the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance? It should return to its component parts, the key part being the Australian Journalists Association.

Mal de Mer

Subliminal joke of the year: the Minister for the Environment, Malcolm Turnbull, on the cover of a magazine, its title running across his forehead. The magazine: *The Beast*, a freebie that

circulates in Sydney's beachside suburbs. With Turnbull is his wife. Lucy Hughes. Beauty, of course.

Prez Trend

Whatever else they are doing, major party federal election strategies are preparing the nation to become a republic. Never have the party leaders strutted so much quasi-presidential stuff.

Okay, Bob Menzies was no shrinking thistle. Cough Whitlam was the ego who landed looking like the presidential candidate from central casting and Bob Hawke could work a room like a combination of Presidents John F Kennedy and William Jefferson Clinton

But even Menzies, Whitlam and Hawke were relatively modest operators compared to the master of cover-drive photo-ops, John Howard, and the prince of sound-byte backflips, Kevin Rudd.

So far has this trend gone that your correspondent heard a reporter on the wing remark that the 'Treasurer Peter Costello

called Howard, 'First among equals' as if the dictum were Costello's own coinage and not part of the disappearing Westminster System.

Suggestion: ballot papers should include a box enabling voters to opt for the prime minister of their choice. Which, of course, might mean Rudd getting up as Prime Minister while the Liberal-led Coalition won a majority of seats and thus formed a Government with him as PM.

Who could tell the difference?

Fruitful Failures

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

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

Never Lose Hope

AN OBJECT LESSON IN 2007

by THEODORE DALRYMPLE

The nearest [Stefan Zweig] came to denouncing the Nazis was in one of his brilliant historical studies (his accuracy always won praise from professional historians), published in 1936: *The Right to Heresy: Castellio against Calvin*. Castellio was a French humanist and scholar, more or less forgotten until Zweig resurrected his memory. In a book entitled *Treatise of Heretics*, Castellio denounced Calvin's totalitarian suppression of free opinion in sixteenth-century Geneva in the name of a theological doctrine. In the book, the parallels between Calvin's Geneva and Hitler's Germany are unmistakable, though Zweig, true to his literary method, lets the reader draw them for himself. For example, Calvin not only burned books but drew strength from his initial expulsion from Geneva after his first, failed, attempt to dominate the city, just as Hitler drew strength from his imprisonment after the beer-hall putsch, his first, failed, attempt to reach power in Germany.

Zweig saw himself in the role of Castellio:

In wars of ideas, the best combatants are not those who thrust themselves lightly but passionately into battle, but those who hesitate a long time before committing themselves, and whose decision matures slowly. It is only once all possibilities of understanding have been exhausted, and the struggle is unavoidable, that they enter the fight with a heavy heart. But it is precisely they who are then the firmest, the most resolute. Such was the case with Castellio. As a real humanist, he wasn't a born fighter. Conciliation suited his peaceful and profoundly religious temperament better. Like his predecessor, Erasmus, he knew the extent to which all earthly and divine truth was multiple, susceptible to many interpretations. . . . But if his prudence taught him tolerance of all opinions, and he preferred to remain silent than involve himself too quickly in quarrels that did not concern him, his ability to doubt and his constant questioning did not make him a cold sceptic.

Of course, it was not so easy to dismiss the Nazis. The contempt of a fastidious aesthete would not defeat them: far sterner measures were necessary. But Zweig, born in the pre-ideological age, did not want to live in a world where the only alternative to one ideology was what he thought would be a counter-ideology. When Zweig committed suicide in Brazil, in despair at the news from Europe, and cut off from all he valued or any hope of ever again having an audience in his native language, Thomas Mann, among others, criticized him sharply. Zweig's suicide, Mann said, was "a dereliction of his duty, an egotistical disdain of his contemporaries," that would give comfort to "the enemy."

That Zweig's death would give much comfort to the Nazis seems doubtful to me, but Mann was alluding to every man's duty to do whatever he could, be it ever so little, to defeat the barbarism that threatened civilization. That Zweig was egotistical was true (though an odd accusation, coming from Mann): he did not want to live in a world where the price of freedom was submergence in a vast collective effort whose outcome he regarded, in the event wrongly, as uncertain.

- 'A Neglected Genius,' by Theodore Dalrymple, *City Journal*, Winter, 2004. Hitler was defeated three years after Zweig's suicide.

BOOK REVIEW

How the Internet is Killing our Culture

THE PERILS OF CYBERSPACE

By R.J. STOVE



FIFTY YEARS AGO, the United States' best-selling non-fiction authors included Vance Packard. A typical Packard book would have a brilliant title – *The Hidden Persuaders*,

The Status Seekers, *The Waste Makers*, *The Naked Society* – and would be filled with laboriously compiled statistics, presented in crystal-clear prose. Whether his particular target happened to be manipulative advertising, planned obsolescence (a phrase he did not invent, but certainly popularised), the myth of a classless America, or governmental threats to privacy, he did commendable work in puncturing his countrymen's bent towards Panglossianism. Judging by *The Cult of the Amateur*, Packard's mantle seems to have fallen on Andrew Keen, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur who aims to give us a salutary fright about where the Internet in its current, post-dotcom-crash form – “Web 2.0”, he calls it – has already taken us. For writing *The Cult of the Amateur*, Keen has endured almost incredible abuse from his enemies, who have delighted in publicly upbraiding him as “disgraceful”, “fascist”, “communist”, “Luddite” (he owns four computers), “control freak”, and even, do you mind, “monarchist”. It is hard to resist the claims on one's attention of any pundit with so varied a nomenclature. Yet several other reasons exist to read this volume with respect and heedfulness.

Keen deals with the Internet horrors most often publicised: cyberspatial porn in general, cyberspatial child-porn in particular, and credit-card-related identity theft. He includes one especially chilling tale about a modestly successful Oklahoma website developer whose credit card details had been secured by an identity thief, and who thus was assumed to be running a wickedly

The Cult of the Amateur: how today's Internet is killing our Culture
By Andrew Keen
(New York City: Currency, 2007).
Hardback: 228 pages.

expensive New York brothel. (Only one identity thief in every seven hundred is hapless enough to get caught.) For this reviewer, though, Keen's most valuable insights comprise his laments over a less dramatic, much less often discussed problem: the way in which the Internet has gravely weakened – perhaps beyond repair – the whole notion of artistic copyright and, indeed, the wider concept of intellectual property.

Why, it might be asked, would anyone *want* to eliminate copyright and intellectual property? The answer lies in one magic noun: “democratisation”. Whenever two or three utopian nerds are gathered together, Pavlovian drooling over “democratisation” is in the midst of them. Keen includes bloodcurdling

recollections of attending a 2004 male-bonding utopian nerd get-together – with the improbable name of FOO Camp – in northern California's Sonoma Valley. “Democratisation” dominated the proceedings to the exclusion of all other factors, including sanity. Keen's account reads like a primal-scream session for cashed-up Chinese Red Guards with West Coast accents. Forget about scholarship, experience, standards: all that boring old stuff is just sooooooooooooo twentieth-century. “Today”, Keen sadly reflects, “on a Web where everyone has an equal voice, the words of the wise man count for no more than the mutterings of a fool” (p. 30). The trouble is, utopian nerds like it that way, and reveal no qualms about telling us so.

Readers of sanguine temperament, inclined to disbelieve Keen, should be assured that all of the libertarians whom he condemns have, in fact, said what he says they said. Far from denying plagiarism, they rejoice in it. William Gibson, the American sci-

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fi novelist credited with inventing the word “cyberspace” (unless that too was plagiarised), bumbled with evident approval in July 2005: “Our culture no longer bothers to use words like *appropriation* or *borrowing* to describe those very activities [that is, stealing others’ artistic work]. Today’s audience isn’t listening at all – it’s participating” (p. 24). Likewise, presumably, Ronnie Biggs did not rob a train: he was merely *participating*, albeit somewhat violently, in British Rail management. The Bangkok street vendor with his boxful of pirate DVDs is also, no doubt, simply *participating* in cinema’s annals. It gets much worse. Lawrence Lessig, professor at Stanford Law School, wants intellectual property abolished through something called the Free Culture Movement. Most embarrassing of all is one Kevin Kelly of *Wired* magazine, who dreams of something called the “universal book.” “Kelly [argues] we can no longer protect intellectual property from piracy, so all texts should be available for free. It is a bit like saying that because our car might get stolen, we should leave it unlocked with the keys in the ignition and the driver’s-side door open” (p. 116).

How much of such an attitude is mere hypocrisy, and how much is active psychosis, can be legitimately disputed. What cannot be legitimately disputed is the virulent impact the attitude has had on millions of Internet users who would not know Gibson from Gibbon, Kelly from Krushchev, or Lessig from Lassie. The result: “Web 2.0 technology is confusing the very concept of ownership, creating a generation of plagiarists and copyright thieves ... Our kids are downloading and using ... stolen property to cheat their way through school and university, passing off the words and work of others as their own in papers, projects, and theses. A June 2005 study by the Center for Academic Integrity (CAI) of 50,000 undergraduates revealed that 70 percent of college students admitted to engaging in some form of cheating; worse still, 77 percent of college students didn’t think that Internet plagiarism was a ‘serious’ issue” (p. 143).

Wikipedia, the ultimate democratised reference work – it calls itself “the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit” – alarms Keen because of its lack of

In defence of Catholic Symbols

Those who resisted the successful movement to have crucifixes put in the classrooms at Georgetown University argued that the presence of crucifixes would offend the sensibilities of members of the academic community who do not profess the Catholic Faith. A Georgetown undergraduate spoke on behalf of the campaign for crucifixes, identifying herself as a non-Catholic not even sure of the existence of God. She exposed the flaw in the multicultural argument against Catholic symbolism, saying that she realised on enrolling at Georgetown that she would be attending a Catholic university and expected its Catholic commitment to be made evident not least in the various symbols that reflect it. She added that to assume that non-Catholic members of the Georgetown community would be provoked by such symbolism at a university that calls itself Catholic, is offensive, for such an assumption inevitably implies that they are intolerant.

– Peter Ryan, S.J., ‘Gateway to a Uniquely Georgetown Education,’ in *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly*, 22[1999/2] p.15.

accountability. Its chief editors operate under pseudonyms; nobody has an incentive (financial or otherwise) to fact-check anything or to bar purloined material; and Walter Mitty types exuberantly flourish. That it has any virtues at all is surprising. Founder Jimmy Wales had his brain napalmed at college through reading Ayn Rand, which circumstance might itself lead to questioning of his morals by anyone who has outgrown adolescence. (One star Wikipedia contributor who bragged

of being “a professor of theology with four academic degrees ... was in fact a twenty-four-year-old high school graduate from Kentucky.” Of this deception, Wales commented, “I don’t really have a problem with it” [pp. 40-41].) But Keen unleashes some of his choicest, and most justified, invective against the now-ubiquitous blog.

“Blogging”, he writes (p. 3), “has become such a mania that a new blog is being created every second of every minute of every hour of every day. We are blogging with monkeylike shamelessness about our private lives, our sex lives, our dream lives, our lack of lives ... there are fifty-three million blogs on the Internet, and this number is doubling every six months. In the time it took you to read this paragraph, ten new blogs were launched.” On such blogs, in a predictable extension of Gresham’s Law, the most verminous illiteracy reigns. Even those few bloggers who can themselves spell, and can construct grammatical sentences, usually fling their commentary sections open to – in plain talk – the scum of the earth. Some very mild examples of the prevailing discourse levels occurred in the pseudonymous commentary boxes maintained by the ostensibly “conservative” Sydney blogger Tim Blair (10 March 2005): “You pretentious p***k ... Do you wear glasses? I can imagine you as the fat kid in *Lord of the Flies* ... [you] puke.” Blair’s own contributions to literate debate have included calling (on 14 October 2002) Robert Fisk, reporter for Britain’s *Independent*, “the f***ing dumbest dumb f**k of them all”.

Not all blogs are worthless, but as Keen stresses (p. 32): “Trawling through the blogosphere ... for the one or two blogs or songs or videos with real value isn’t viable for those of us with a life.” Alas, a life is precisely what the average blogger does not have. He is generally underemployed, often unemployed. Internet addiction is as well-attested a malady as – if less discussed than – poker-machine addiction. Many bloggers, according to Keen, have the audacity to call themselves “citizen journalists”, although given their propensity to sit at home in their pyjamas, “citizen fantasists” would be a better description. Cyberspatial independence? Forget it. “Multinationals like IBM, Maytag and



General Motors all have blogs that, under an objective guise, peddle their versions of corporate truth to the outside world ... where independent videographers, podcasters, and bloggers can post their amateurish creations at will, and no one is being paid to check their credentials or evaluate their material, [users are] vulnerable to untrustworthy content of every stripe – whether from duplicitous PR companies, multinational corporations like Wal-Mart and McDonald's, anonymous bloggers, or sexual predators with sophisticated invented identities" (pp. 18-19).

In truth, naturally, owning a Net-capable computer "doesn't transform one into a serious journalist any more than having access to a kitchen makes one into a serious cook" (p. 47). Sadly, no-one would guess that from the blogosphere's self-congratulation. Keen avoids any party-political agenda. Right-leaning and left-leaning bloggers alike feel his lash. He simply is not interested in giving unlimited time to yahoos. Nor should we be.

The belief that majoritarian considerations deserve to trump all others is no more convincing to Keen than it is to anyone else who has spent five minutes thinking about the matter. "History has proven", Keen notes (p. 96), "that the crowd is not often very wise", and that its enthusiasms are apt to include much active unwisdom: "slavery, infanticide, George W. Bush's war in Iraq, Britney Spears."

There are three, and only three, possible objections to Keen's conclusions: or rather, two genuine

Democracy and Reason

The type of democracy which condemned Socrates and Anaxagoras in Athens is slowly reappearing in the West and perhaps in North America too. Only the struggling, predominantly liberal democracy of relatively 'small elites' - so the facts already teach us - is an ally of science and philosophy. The democracy now dominant, and finally extended to women and half-children, is not the friend but rather the enemy of reason and science.'

- Max Scheler, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft* [1926] p.89. Quoted, Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, The Bollinger Library, 1953, p.2.

objections and one devil's-advocate-style objection. The devil's-advocate-style objection is this: that in scrapping intellectual property, we are merely reverting to the attitude of earlier and happier periods, where art (and, above all, literature) was made by genteel amateurs. It is perfectly true that, for instance, sixteenth-century English poets mostly considered it vulgar to write for money. Yet anyone who imagines that we can re-create so distant a mindset by an effort of will, and get decent creative results, is talking pure moonshine. Turning society's clock back to the cultural values of 1957 is hard enough; how likely are we to

turn it back to the cultural values of 1557? Too much has happened in the intervening centuries, and too many individuals – Dickens, Trollope, Mark Twain – fought desperately to obtain the copyright protection in use nowadays, for a combination of unpaid authorship with sustained artistic standards to be possible, even assuming that it were desirable.

A more serious objection is that Keen might well overrate both the legitimacy of mainstream newspapers, and the extent to which the Net has damaged them. The greatest freefalls in newspaper circulation long predated Internet technology. New York had fifteen daily papers in 1900; by 1968 it had only three. Similarly, the great downturns in Australian newspaper publication occurred not in the Internet era, but in the 1980s and early 1990s, when Australia lost all its evening papers (and only its evening papers). Besides, it is hard to reconcile solicitude for *The New York Times'* fate with that journal's protracted record of appeasing Stalin, Tito, Castro, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao. (While Keen points out [p. 77] that at least *The New York Times* did dismiss its mega-fraudster Jayson Blair when his lies became too outrageous to be further borne, he fails to explain why – other than morbid terror of seeming "racist" – *The NYT* tolerated Blair for so long.) As for the ethics of Australia's national newspaper scene, polite language fails anyone forced to contemplate them. Surely Keen, rather than mourn the perils now allegedly facing newspapers, would have done



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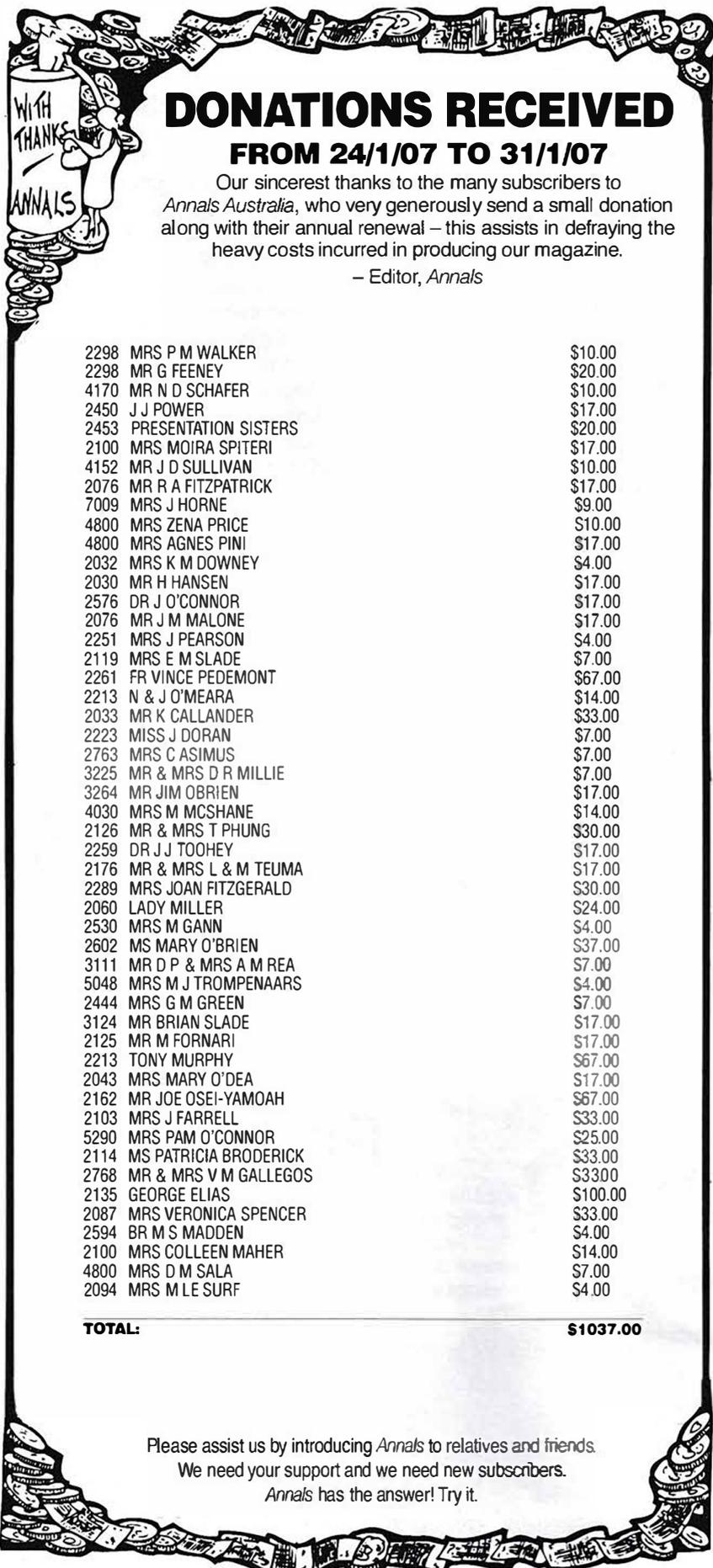
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better to bemoan the cyberspatial threat to America's intelligent print magazines; but those, curiously, he seldom mentions. (Shortly before this review was written, the religious periodical *Crisis* announced that it had shut down its print operations, and would be supplying its contents on the Net for free.)

One might also carp that Keen's is very much an Americocentric view of the world, evident mainly in his lament for such wonderfully well stocked US stores as Tower Records, defeated through online competition proffered by the likes of Amazon. All a mere Australian can say about Amazon is that its range of CDs and books has been a miracle, far surpassing – in variety and efficiency – anything that Australia's own shops have ever offered.

These, nonetheless, are small points. Keen makes his readers think, and he makes his readers worry: two useful services. He suggests practical methods of cracking down on the most objectionable cybersmut. Few of such methods would require extra legislation. Merely applying the legislation already in force would greatly lessen the social problems. Online gambling in America, unduly prevalent though it continues to be, has tailed off in the wake of serious police action. Still, that serious police action must take place. Anybody who has ever been persecuted by cyberstalking knows that the law (both in America and in Australia) is overwhelmingly on the victim's side, but that the average policeman is far too busy attending "sensitivity training" seminars, and otherwise propitiating power-crazed ethnic and erotic minorities, to throw the book at cyberstalkers the way the law allows him to. Where law officers cannot or dare not act, societal pressure must. If the plagiarist, the cyberstalker, and the sewer-mouthed blogger became as totally ostracised as are the paedophile and the wife-beater, then the Internet could be cleaned up tomorrow. "[C]overnment intervention", Keen admits, "can only go so far ... Let's use technology in a way that encourages innovation, open communication, and progress, while simultaneously preserving professional standards of truth, decency, and creativity" (pp. 200, 205). Does anyone have a better solution than that?



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EAST TIMOR UPDATE

by Michael O'Connor

EAST TIMOR'S parliamentary elections have come and gone with no one political party winning a majority. The former ruling party, Fretilin, remains the largest party with 21 seats out of 66. A coalition government comprising Xanana Gusmao's CNRT (18 seats), the ASDT-PSD (11) and the Democratic Party (8) rejected President Ramos Horta's suggestion for a coalition with Fretilin.

This was hardly surprising. Fretilin has been a disruptive influence in East Timor ever since the Portuguese abandoned their colony in 1974. Fretilin began life as a Marxist revolutionary party and has behaved as one ever since. Its drive for power stimulated the 1975 Indonesian invasion and its rise to power after the Indonesian left was supported by well-armed and aggressive gangs of party activists. Fretilin has yet to learn that losing a democratic election is not the end of the world but should be a stimulus to better performance in the future.

The election results clearly show that a majority of East Timorese has had enough of the internecine warfare but Fretilin's better party organization and solid base in the country's east has ensured its ability to continue the disruption. Whether this base can be sustained will depend heavily upon the ability of the new coalition government to provide a sound basis for the economic development needed to overcome East Timor's underlying poverty. That in turn will depend upon the government's ability to stimulate the sort of investment that creates real jobs.

In the meantime, the Australian-led Stabilisation Force of soldiers and police will remain but may have to take a more active role than at present. Fretilin have 'warned of' – a euphemism for threatened with – more mob violence, especially in the capital Dili. But the troops appear to be operating under very restrictive rules of engagement. In a recent incident, an Australian patrol was confronted at a burning tyre barricade by rock-throwing youths. Instead of dealing forcefully with their assailants and removing the barricade, the troops withdrew with their spokesman boasting that the soldiers were not hurt. In other words, they ran away from the confrontation. That sort of pusillanimity, as any policeman knows, merely encourages disorder.

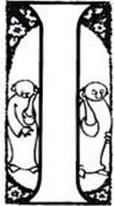
In part, the apparent Australian passivity may be driven by Fretilin threats to target Australian-owned businesses. It does suggest that Fretilin will try to portray the government of prime minister Gusmao as an Australian puppet. Australia cannot afford to withdraw its troops and police for fear that the Timorese government lacks sufficient power itself to deal with what is in effect a low-grade Fretilin-driven insurgency. Even if the Australians do stay, the prospects for a peaceful, prosperous and democratic East Timor are not promising.

MICHAEL O'CONNOR is executive director of the Australian Defence Association. A former patrol officer in Papua New Guinea he also served in the Royal Australian Navy as an intelligence officer.

Apologia for the Liberal Arts

A DA VINCI INANITY

By ELIZABETH LEV



IGUESS that silliness never takes a vacation. Benedict XVI retreats to the Alps, French Prime Minister Nicholas Sarkozy sojourns in New Hampshire, but tabloid headlines keep churning out inanities.

During a long-awaited vacation the last week of July, I foolishly checked my e-mail. My box was liberally peppered with questions regarding the “new Da Vinci discovery.”

For those fortunate enough to have missed this flurry of discussion, Slavisa Pesci, an Italian computer analyst, took a picture of Leonardo Da Vinci’s “Last Supper” and digitally superimposed a reverse image of that famous painting on top of it. He claims that the result showed a new composition with additional figures.

One “hidden” figure seemed to be a knight while the other – surprise, surprise – appeared to be a woman holding a baby. Any resemblance to the plot of Dan Brown’s novel “The Da Vinci Code” is probably not coincidental. Readers of that pseudo-historical potboiler will recall that in it, Leonardo is portrayed as having included Mary Magdalene in the “Last Supper” because she was really the wife of Jesus.

If Pesci had seen Mickey Mouse there would have been no worldwide publicity. Now, how an office worker misuses his coffee break is his prerogative, but the attention granted by all the major press agencies to this “discovery” borders on the irresponsible. Alarming, too, was the digital stampede of Web-surfers. So many people flocked to the site to view these images that it crashed.

More disappointing than people’s passing curiosity with the latest gimmick, is the credulity of otherwise serious individuals. An astonishing number of people think that this picture provides

some kind of evidence to support Dan Brown’s fictional theories. (I spent a family picnic dodging a relative who fervently believed that I had been recruited by the Church to cover up this terrible secret!) It seems like a high-tech version of seeing the Virgin Mary in a pie crust!

Art historians wasted no time dropping-kicking this theory to the nonsense abyss from which it sprang – Leonardo didn’t have digital imaging, the painting is too damaged to conduct this kind of experiment, no drawings indicate that he ever composed paintings this way, etc. – but one is left with the lingering fear that the world has succumbed to the Dan Brown School of the Liberal Arts.

This brief, easy program teaches aspiring students who unfortunately skipped world literature in high school, slept through CCD classes or eschewed majors in the humanities for more job-friendly fields, how to understand art, history or theology without ever having to open a nonfiction book.

The Brown method starts with a conspiracy theory regarding a major institution (the Catholic Church is a perennial favorite). Then one takes a big-name (and long-dead) thinker, artist or scientist who knew a scandalous

secret, but out of fear only revealed it through secret codes, hidden figures or ambiguous writings.

After rewriting a few historical episodes to fit the theory, one can then sit back and let experts do the work of unravelling. It’s a guaranteed laugh all the way to the bank. In this respect, it makes for a very successful business school.

Moreover, people will often choose to believe the simplistic sound-bite version of the facts over the more complicated, thoroughgoing explanations. But the discipline of the humanities is exactly that: a discipline. It requires extensive study and accumulation of knowledge. There are no shortcuts.

In art history, those who specialize in iconography (not symbology!) – the study of the meaning of images – have to learn the history of each particular image from the Annunciation to the Last Supper. They must study placement, function and technical execution as well as the specific artist’s whole body of work and the prevailing artistic considerations of his time and place.

It is a long process to understand a work of art insofar as it can ever be completely understood. The same love and attention that one puts into discovering the many facets of a friend must be also given to a painting.

But art history, a relatively new discipline, has been dismissed as a sub-science ever since it was dubbed “art in the dark” in colleges. Other areas of humanistic studies have suffered the same fate.

Perhaps the discipline that has most suffered from Dan Brown deconstruction is theology, once known as the queen of the sciences, and one of the oldest and most respected disciplines.

Richard Dawkins, in his book “The God Delusion,” typifies the problem when he refuses to accept theology as a science. If you can’t look at it under

CATHOLIC FAITH

‘You are built upon the foundation stone laid by the Apostles and the Prophets; and Jesus Christ Himself is the Key Stone.’

St Paul of Tarsus, Epistle to the Ephesians 2,20

a microscope then it must not exist. Both Brown and Dawkins take a pretty reductive view, if you'll forgive the pun.

Catholic theology is the systematic study of God by the light of both natural reason and divine revelation. This science looks to the prophetic wisdom of the Old Testament and to the fullness of God's self-revelation through his son Jesus Christ in order to deepen in its knowledge of God.

It also benefits from and enriches its understanding of sacred Scripture through 2,000 years of continuous study. Some the greatest intellects in the history of mankind have contributed to theological knowledge, from the Church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Athanasius and Augustine to the great contemporary contributions of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac, John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Language, history and geography are but a small part of theological studies. In the rigorous ecclesiastical system, prospective theologians must first complete an intensive program of philosophical studies lasting a minimum of two years before even opening a theology textbook. It takes at least seven more years of university study before one can call himself or herself a Catholic theologian.

For comparison's sake, in medical school, nine years are required for a medical degree, just as for a theologian. Just as it takes many years of preparation before one is entrusted to heal the body, so many are required before caring for souls.

Faith and prayer, things that Brown and Dawkins do not understand, play a large part in theology as well. Seeking God's help in understanding him and asking to serve him better, presuppose a humility that is often scoffed upon by secularists.

When Dan Brown blithely suggests that the Gospels can be mixed and matched at will because in his mind Church history is written by the victors, he mocks the hard work and enormous sacrifice and commitment that theological training presupposes.

So to all of you who are preparing for another semester of ecclesiology, Christology or biblical Greek, keep up the good work. To the purveyors of time-wasting publicity ploys, give it a rest!

Well Worth It

R.J. Stove

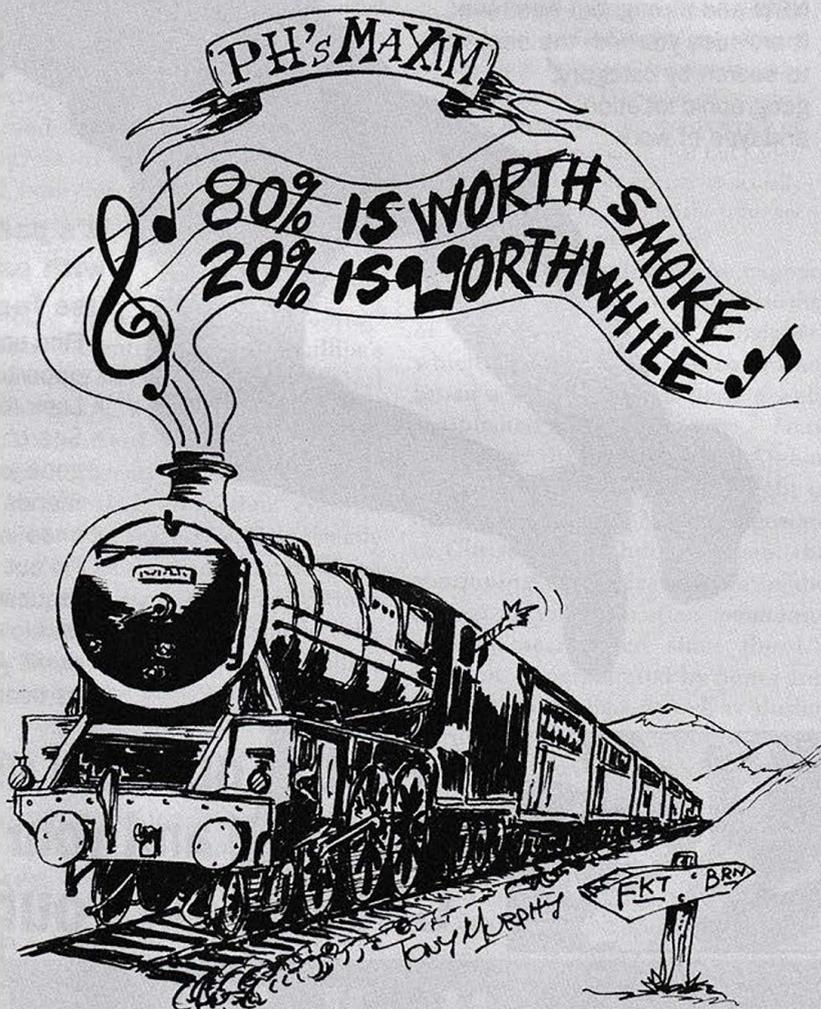
The eminent German composer Paul Hindemith [1895-1963] was nothing if not industrious. He wrote the entire final movement of a violin sonata on a train journey between Bremen and Frankfurt.

In 1936, while visiting London, he heard of King George V's death and was inspired to compose a piece of funeral music for viola (he played the viola himself) and strings. He finished the composition, called *Trauermusik*, in a scarcely believable three hours.

The following anecdote comes from the period Hindemith spent teaching music at Yale, after he had fled the Nazis:

'He [Hindemith] remarked to [his American colleague] Otto Luening [1900-1996] once, "I've written a lot of music, you know, and eighty per cent of it is bad." When Luening asked, "Why did you write it, then?" Hindemith replied, "Because if it had not been for the eighty per cent there would not have been the twenty per cent".'

- Opus Magazine, New York, April 1988.



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Christian apologists for Islam with a predilection for suicidal myths

SWORD SWALLOWING TO OBLIVION

Reviewed by ANDREW G. BOSTOM



HIS past December, 2006, a British radiologist, and the executive director of the Sword Swallowers Association International, published a fascinating survey which evaluated, “information on the practices and associated ill-effects of sword swallowing.” The respondent sword swallows typically required extended daily practice for months or years to appropriately desensitize their gag reflex,

...sometimes by repeatedly putting fingers down the throat, but other objects are used including spoons, paint brushes, knitting needles, and plastic tubes before the swallower commonly progresses to a bent wire coat hanger. The performer must then learn to align a sword with the upper esophageal sphincter with the neck hyper-extended.

Not surprisingly, such “desensitization” training does not spare sword swallows from the predictable hazards of their chosen profession, including serious morbidities – perforations of the pharynx or esophagus and associated neck abscess or aspiration, pneumothorax, pleurisy, pericarditis, and intestinal bleeding, ranging from melena (frankly bloody stools), to blood-transfusion-requiring hematemesis (vomiting blood) – and even death.

Robert Spencer’s sobering new book, *Religion of Peace?*, reveals how the prevailing multicultural orthodoxy in the West – rooted in self-hatred, uncritical, blanket pacifism, and complacency – negates the profound differences between Judeo-Christian and Islamic civilization, obfuscating the existential threat posed by Islam’s enduring, central institution: the jihad. This corrosive mentality is disseminated by the avatars of immoral equivalence,

Religion of Peace? – Why Christianity Is and Islam Isn’t, Robert Spencer, Regnery, 2007, 246 pp. Available from booksellers, and on Amazon

“elite” sword swallows for jihadism who have foisted their own self-destructive desensitization to this genocidal institution upon a general public sadly ill-informed about Islamic doctrine and history.

Throughout the first four chapters, Spencer analyzes a spate of books that appeared in 2006 – whose authors were oblivious to reams of daily, concrete evidence, and reason – which warned not about the real global progress of Shari’a (both violently and non-violently imposed), but the supposed imminent threat of Christian theocracy in the United States, and the export overseas of this religious zealotry by a modern “Crusading” military adventurism. Kevin Phillips’s *American Theocracy* was prototypical of this genre, which by waves of the hand, dismissed obvious foreign and domestic threats of jihad terrorism, while ignoring altogether cultural jihadism – the aggressive, if transiently “peaceful” methods of Islamic dawa – and their long term implications for truly theocratic, i.e., Islamic rule, including, within the West. Phillips insists that the post 9/11 incursions into Afghanistan and Iraq were merely “the war whoops of militant Protestantism...,” the apotheosis of a “biblically stirred foreign policy,” willing to use force to achieve its ultimate end: broader Christian missionary activity in the Islamic Middle East, another shameful Crusade. Spencer eviscerates Phillips’s “analysis” of George Bush’s October 2001 speech (outlining the President’s proposed military response to the cataclysmic attacks of 9/11),

which epitomizes the counterfactual, and bizarre, if not frankly paranoid argumentation of the “Christian-ist conspiracy” mongering authors.

Despite the fact that Bush had refrained from invoking religious language – in stark contrast to Osama bin Laden – Phillips

...resorted to claiming that the president used “double coding,” through which he “signalled attentive Bible readers that he shared their private scriptural invocations – using phrases from the revelation of St. John (6:15 – 17, about the wrath of the lamb) and Isaiah (about evildoers hiding in caves and the lonely paths of the godless).” Never mind that Bush never used the words wrath or lamb, and never mind that bin Laden and other al-Qaeda operatives actually do hide in caves. Why let the truth get in the way of a great theory?

As Spencer continues, he exposes the full-blown preposterous absurdity of Phillips’s putative “insights”, which, depressingly, enjoy rather broad acceptance, regardless of well-established contradictory facts, including: the Sharia-based Afghan and Iraqi constitutions; the plight of unassuming Afghan Muslim “apostate to Christianity” Abdul Rahman; the continuing tragic destruction of the ancient Assyrian Christian community in Iraq, accelerated since the US invasion, as perpetrated by Sunni and Shi’ite Arab Muslims, as well as Muslim Kurds, and taking place within a larger overall context of the attrition of *all* the indigenous Christian communities of the Islamic Middle East oppressed by resurgent jihadism, beginning after World War I, and increased since the culmination of the Western European colonial era, following World War II.

He [Phillips] describes Bush as an “evangelical Christian missionary,” influenced by “heady talk about bringing liberty and freedom to

Valid Criteria for what is True

THE ENEMIES OF Christianity take a malicious pleasure in indicating this very fact [of the failure of Christianity] as the capital objection against Christianity. They repudiate Christianity because it did not succeed on earth. This is a criticism capable of quite a different import and interpretation. It is true that Christianity shared the collapse of every other historical process. Two thousand years have not sufficed to realize the ideals of Christian faith and consciousness. They will never be realized within the framework of human time and history. They can only be realized by a victory over time, by the transition from time to eternity, by the triumphant passage from the historical to the super-historical process. But the failure of Christianity can no more be used as an argument against its higher truth than the failure of history can be taken to imply the aimlessness and emptiness of history.

The failure of history does not mean that history is devoid of necessity or relevance. Similarly the failure of Christianity does not mean that Christianity is not the highest truth. Historical success and achievement do not constitute a valid criterion of the true. The nature of history and all that it contains is such that nothing perfect can be realized in time. The profound significance of historical destiny and experience does not depend on any realization. It exists beyond the limits of history. The failure, so painfully clear within the framework of historical time and terrestrial reality, does not imply limitation and failure outside that framework. It rather goes to prove that the destiny of man reserves a higher realization for his potentialities than any to be achieved in his purely historical experience.

- Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, George Reavey, New York and London, 1936.

new shores." But maybe, just maybe, Bush's real mission was not biblical at all, but an attempt to defend America from a second September 11, and he was seeing the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the replacing of their tyrannies with democracies as part of this effort. Phillips and his ilk certainly have to stretch to portray Bush's policies in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of a Christian missionary enterprise; the constitutions of both countries give a privileged place to Islam, and the Bush administration has taken no special measures to halt the persecution of Christians in post-Saddam Iraq.

...the constitution of the new, post-Laliban Afghani regime stipulates that "no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam." Abdul Rahman's case showed that Islam's traditional classification of apostasy as a capital crime would be included in this. The prophet Muhammad regarded apostasy from Islam as a supreme evil, and one of the main reasons the punishment is so severe is because

apostates were once Muslims but "turn renegade." Muhammad decreed that no Muslim could be put to death except for murder, unlawful sexual intercourse, and apostasy. He said flatly: "Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him." This is still the position of all the schools of Islamic jurisprudence, although there is some disagreement over whether the law applies only to men. Thus it was not at all surprising that the Afghan government, constituted so that no law could be made that



contradicted Islamic law, put Abdul Rahman on trial. Yet Western analysts seem to have trouble grasping the import of Rahman's case... After an international firestorm, Abdul Rahman was released, and asked for asylum in Italy, which was swiftly granted. However, the Islamic law provision in the Afghani constitution remains today. But if this episode made anything clear, it was that the Bush administration had no interest whatsoever in defending the rights of a Christian prisoner in an Islamic state. American officials did nothing, after all, to prevent the approval of the constitution, despite its stipulation about Islamic law. If the American incursion into Afghanistan represented a modern-day Crusade or an exercise in evangelical Christian wish fulfilment, it was a singularly inept one.

In Iraq, likewise, the dire predicament of Christians facing jihadist persecution after the fall of Saddam Hussein demonstrated this point. If spreading Christianity was what Bush was after, he was doing a decidedly poor job of it... In Iraq, half the nation's prewar 700,000 Christians have fled the country since the fall of Saddam Hussein... Christian communities throughout the Middle East that date back to the dawn of Christianity are decreasing so much that they are on the verge of disappearing from the area altogether... Overall the Middle Eastern Christian population has dropped from 20 percent in 1900 to less than 2 percent today.

Spencer completes the first third of his book by highlighting another commonplace immoral equivalence espoused by assorted non-Muslim and Muslim apologists for Islam: comparing Pat Robertson and other Christian evangelical leaders, "despite the fact that they have killed no one and have no organization equivalent to Al Qaeda," and the handful of abortion clinic bombers, or murderers of physicians who perform abortions, to the *legions* of mass murdering global jihadists. The author contrasts the unequivocal, powerful denunciations of such isolated attacks on abortion clinics and their personnel, made by all major mainstream Christian denominations and their leaders, to the equivocal, elusive, and vaguely worded statements by Islamic organizations

Saint Mary's Basilica, Sydney

To celebrate the Promulgation of
His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI's
Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*

Pontifical Latin Mass at the Throne

will be celebrated by

His Eminence, George Cardinal Pell

at 10 a.m.

Saturday November 3, 2007

All Welcome

or religious bodies, and their clerical elites – domestic and international – who consistently refuse to condemn *by name* major Muslim entities responsible for heinous acts of murderous jihad terrorism, including Hamas, Hizbollah, and even Al Qaeda.

The remainder of this engaging, essential, and remarkably compendious work illuminates the profound theological (and philosophical) differences between the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions, and civilizations. With the same erudition, wit, and lucid, didactic presentation style characteristic of his previous books, Spencer adduces convincing contemporary and historical evidence to support the following main arguments:

- Based upon its earliest inception by Muhammad – an unabashed 7th century military and political leader, the antithesis of the pacifist proselytizer Jesus – through the present, jihad has been central to the thought and writings of prominent Muslim theologians and jurists. The precepts and regulations elucidated in the 7th through 9th centuries are immutable in the Muslim theological-juridical system, and they have remained essentially unchallenged by the majority of contemporary Muslims. The jihad is intrinsic to the sacred Muslim texts, including the divine Koranic revelation – “the uncreated word of Allah”. The Old Testament sanctions the Israelites’ conquest of Canaan – a limited domain – it does not sanction a permanent war to submit all the nations of humanity to a uniform code of

religious law. Similarly, the tactics of warfare are described in the Old Testament, unlike the Koran, in very circumscribed and specific contexts. Moreover, while the Old Testament clearly condemns certain inhumane practices of paganism, it never invoked an eternal war against all of the world’s pagan peoples, as, for example enjoined by Koran 9:5.

- In opposition to the Judeo-Christian conception of God as a God of reason, the Koran (5:64) makes clear that Allah’s hand is unfettered

– he was not bound to govern the universe according to consistent and observable laws – which has had profound implications for the (arrested) development of the natural sciences in Islamic societies, and Islamic ethics.

- Spencer cites Professor Rodney Stark’s observation that Islam lacks “a conception of God appropriate to underwrite the rise of science... Allah is not presented as a lawful creator, but is conceived of as an extremely active God who intrudes in the world as he deems it appropriate. This prompted the formation of a major theological bloc within Islam that condemns all efforts to formulate natural laws as blasphemy in that they deny Allah’s freedom to act.” Not surprisingly leading historians and sociologists of science have concluded “...it is indisputable” that modern science – an organized, empirically directed effort to explain natural phenomena through theory construction and testing–“emerged in the seventeenth century in Western Europe and nowhere else”.
- Moreover, even notions about supposed Islamic contributions to pre-modern science and philosophy

A Different View of Church/State Relations

HAIL, ANULINUS, most highly esteemed by us. Whereas from many incidents it is abundantly clear that whenever the religion, by which the supreme reverence due to the Divine Majesty is guarded, has been held in contempt, the greatest perils have overtaken the State, and whereas this religion, when it has been duly accepted and protected, has, through the goodness of God, conferred the highest prosperity on the Roman name and has given their chief benefits to all human affairs – We have resolved that those men, who with due piety and careful observance of this Law, have given their service to the divine worship, should receive the recompense for their labours, O most esteemed Anulinus.

Wherefore it is our will that those men called Priests, who within the Province entrusted to your care serve this most holy religion in the Catholic Church over which Caecilian presides, shall be held totally exempt from all public, offices, to the end that they may not, through some mistake or sacrilegious deviation, be drawn away from the service which is due to God Most High; but may be free to serve their own Law without any disturbance. For through their showing supreme reverence to God, the very greatest advantage will accrue to the Commonwealth. Farewell, my most esteemed and beloved Anulinus!

- A letter of the Emperor Constantine [died 337 AD] written in 312/313 AD to the Pro-Consul Anulinus in Carthage. In it he orders that all those holding office in the Catholic Church in Carthage, where Caecilian was Bishop, should be exempt from all civil duties. See Eusebius Bishop of Caesarea, [260-340 AD] *Historia Ecclesiastica*, x.7.

Half-hearted against an Unreal Enemy

THE DEFINING characteristic of the dogmatic Left is that they will align themselves with any movement that has as its aim the destruction of Western civilization. The Left proved themselves a significant fifth column during the Cold War, less from open advocacy of Communism than from rearguard activity that eroded Western cultural and institutional integrity. The Left are instinctively sympathetic to Islam primarily because they can use it today as a battering ram against the West much as they once used Communism. ... Significantly – and sadly – it has not only been the Left who have been guilty of intellectual laziness on this issue. Many of the Right have similarly declined to give Islam a hard look. The phrase “war on terror” is an example of this tendency to avoid serious examination of the origins of Islamic violence. A “war on terror” is a war with the primary object of not hurting anyone’s feelings; it is a half-hearted war against an unreal enemy. While the Left fail to see Islamic imperialism as a threat to the freedoms they ostensibly cherish, the bias of much of the right is to see “religion” as a natural conservative force in the world and therefore resurgent Islam as a natural ally. Such conservatives are fighting the last war: they correctly diagnose the secular Left, but they fail to realize that Islam is a far older, more determined, and ascendant enemy. They are committing the same error as many Leftists by refusing to draw the necessary distinctions between cultures. The hope of a “new world order” in which conflict of all sorts will happily melt into the past has blinded many to the irreducible hostility of Islam toward the non-Muslim world.

- Gregory Davis, in an interview with Front Page’s Jamie Glazov. Davis is author of *Religion of Peace? Islam’s War Against the World*. He received a Ph.D. in political science from Stanford University. He is the managing director of Quixotic Media and producer of the feature documentary *Islam: What the West Needs to Know* – which has just been released on DVD.

– fostered by the triumphalism of the jihad conquests – are purely mythical. Despite taking credit for the invention of algebra, the Arabs did no more than copy the treatises of Diophantus of Alexandria, who lived in the fourth century. The numerals commonly referred to as Arabic, and the system of notation which bears the same name, derive from Hindustan. The Arabs themselves called arithmetic “Indian reckoning,” and geometry “Indian science” (*hendesya*). Arab knowledge of botany was obtained either from the treatises of Dioscorides, or from Hindu and Persian works. In chemistry, or rather alchemy, they were the pupils of the Alexandrian school. Djeber and Rhazes, the latter an Islamized Persian, did no more than copy the works of Alexandrian Hermetism. There is the same absence of invention regarding medicine. Greek physicians, from the third century of the Christian era, made their way into Persia, where they founded a celebrated school which

soon became the rival of Alexandria. But earlier it was especially at Alexandria that Greek medicine emerged from empiricism and assumed a truly scientific character. Aaron, a Christian priest who lived at Alexandria in the seventh century, compiled and translated into Syriac the treatises of Galen, under the name of *Pandects of Medicine*. This Syriac version was translated into Arabic in 685, becoming a major source used by Arab physicians, most notably Serapion, Avicenna, Albucasis, and Averroes – whose own *Koulliyat* is merely a translation of Galen. Rhazes’ best known work, the *Kanoun*, is a compilation of the treatises of Galen, from the Syriac versions. And the Arabs left the doctrines of Aristotle (and of the Jewish and Christian philosophers) just as they were transmitted to them by various non-Muslims – reproduced, but neither invented nor improved

- Finally, the unique persistence of chattel slavery in Islamic societies, and both the brutal oppression

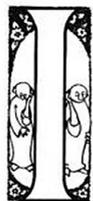
of Muslim women (including widespread polygamy, wife beating, honor killings, and clitorrectomy/genital mutilation), and non-Muslim minorities, are living testimony to the continued failed paradigm of “Islamic ethics”, as sanctioned by the Shari’a – a seemingly immutable obstacle to modern conceptions of human rights, which evolved exclusively in Judeo-Christian societies.

Sword swallows – even when not suffering serious morbidity or death from their weird, dangerous vocation – are prone to throat soreness, “sword throats”, if their performances are oft-repeated. Abstinence from swallowing is the mainstay of treatment. The same therapy – complete abstinence – should be applied to contemporary sword swallows for jihadism, so that they and the larger public who celebrate their performances finally awaken to the existential dangers posed by desensitization to the global jihad, and gag, collectively. Because, as Robert Spencer warns, it is indeed,

...but to state fact – a fact that many Muslims cheerfully and proudly avow. Christianity is a religion of peace, and it is a religion without a jihadist movement. Islam is a religion of the sword and there are, by even the most conservative estimates, more than one hundred million active jihadists seeking to impose sharia not only in the Islamic world, but in Europe and ultimately in the United States. And they will succeed, in time, if Westerners continue to delude themselves that Western civilization is uniquely responsible for the evil in the world, that Christianity is just as inherently violent as Islam, that all cultures are equal in their capacity to inspire magnanimity, nobility, generosity, and greatness of soul. This is a suicidal myth.

Whether one believes in Christianity or not, it is necessary now for all lovers of authentic freedom to acknowledge their debt to the Judeo-Christian West, to the Judeo-Christian assumptions that built Europe and the United States, and to acknowledge that this great civilization is imperiled and worth defending.

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It may seem a dull way to begin talking about beauty by referring to the metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas – but then again that which is beautiful is often set in less dazzling stones so as to make it all the more splendid. The three basic givens of “being” are: goodness, truth, and unity. Simply put, without them nothing can exist. Now, common to them all, is beauty. Beauty is the very principle by which they give

themselves to be known, and because of this we might say, if in a philosophical mood, that *being shines*. Being itself is splendid.

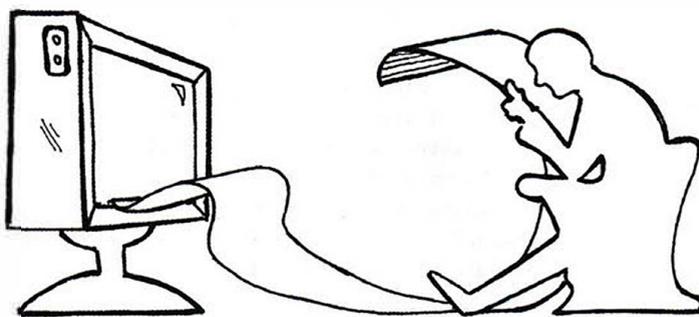
So it is that when we see a thing of beauty there’s a feel of something refreshing about it: something crisp and sparkling. For in, and through, beauty we see and experience something of the fullness of being. Now, art is one of the principle means by which we can be taught to see, and to comprehend, beauty. Well, that’s the ideal anyway, and, like any ideal this side of the beatific vision, its approximation lies more in its orientation than in its fulfillment.

We might, then, when talking of beauty keep to more this-worldly and temporal things: for instance, to art prizes.

It’s a strange thing, but whenever the Blake Prize for Religious Art comes around for some unfathomable reason a certain principle comes to mind. Whether the two are connected is not for me to say, but the principle goes like this: *in the absence of talent make a statement*.

Making a statement is an easy thing to do, and if one wants to call it art all one needs to do is provide some graphics. Art becomes mere illustration, pictures that serve a rather obvious, although ostensibly clever, point. When art lacks talent it also lacks substance, and thus it either gives up on beauty and focuses instead on messages, or it becomes mere sentiment and kitsch. Of course, the two currents blend into each other pretty quickly, the best example of this being the propaganda art of totalitarian regimes. Another example can be found in our world of consumerism and advertising. You might like the dazzle of the commercial world and the pomposity of dictators, but neither of them is easily confused with beauty.

Every artist wants their work to be profound, to move people. Cleverness, like vulgarity and violence, is an easy



BEAUTY AND TALENT

By ROBERT TILLEY

some rare exceptions but it’s all big-breasted sex vixens, bulging biceps, and manga-monsters. Whatever cyber-world is it’s not a place of great imagination, which must be a source of comfort for today’s would-be artist. And, for that matter, for those who judge their works. When there’s status and money involved things get very serious indeed, so it’s nice when things come so neatly and precisely packaged.

Thus, all a judge needs to do is see whose work has the most controversial graphic and the cleverest message, and which best affects to challenge and provoke. Albeit, not provoke so as to start a riot and risk being charged under our new anti-terrorist laws, or, worse still, offend Bishop Spong.

When art is standardised and fashionable what is lost in beauty is made up for in glamour and ease. The interesting thing is that these two gains can also serve to describe what is evil.

Perhaps this should come as no surprise, for it is easier to portray evil than what is good, and, as beauty has to do with the good, then beauty is a very hard thing to portray indeed. Which is why it’s easier to paint a picture of the Devil than it is of God.

Goodness and beauty require training, evil requires nothing very much except, I suppose, one’s soul.

One can pander to judges and get the prize, but talent...well, talent strives for something more. It strives for something that money can’t buy but always wants to possess: for something cleverness cannot reach and thus pretends doesn’t really exist - talent strives for that which is not easy, for something that is altogether splendid. Which is why true talent is a beautiful thing.



ROBERT TILLEY is a regular contributor to *Annals*.

The War on Democracy

This work is being promoted as John Pilger's first documentary for cinema. It opens powerfully with a pre-title sequence of revolutionary street action and counter-action before Pilger appears to introduce his work.

Fair enough. He is one of the great reporters, a Jedi Knight of Fleet Street or possibly, despite his anti-imperialism, a *Boys Own* hero of ubiquitous courage (ex-Bondi and Sydney Boys High School) who has made more the 50 television documentaries.

Yet sometimes *fair enough* morphs to *enough already*. Instead of relying on his impressive array of interviewees, starting with President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, Pilger not only narrates the documentary but inserts himself into it big time by way of two-shots and the curse of docos, idle noddies.

In some of these, his white suit, shirt and multi-coloured silk tie are inadvertently funny, giving him the air of a *gringo* extra in a re-make of Graham Greene's *Travels with My Aunt*.

The late Auberon Waugh invented the verb 'pilgerise' to cover Pilger's style of reporting. Unfair and unnecessary. Waugh himself bron'd up any number of stories. The term 'burke' already existed, meaning to avoid, smother or hush-up. And a number of times Pilger does *burke*.

For a start, he fails to provide the historical context of the Monroe Doctrine under which the United States, like any number of other polities including the Soviet Union, created a cordon around what it deemed to be its sphere of interest which included South America.

In turn, during a survey of South American nations other than Venezuela, he *burkes* first the world crisis triggered by Fidel Castro's decision to provide bases in Cuba for Soviet ballistic missiles were not figments of Cold War paranoia or CIA conspiracies. It was stand-off time between Nikita Krushchev and John F Kennedy. And it was not Kennedy who blinked.

Second, a quiet revolution. Along both banks of the Rio Grande, there is an evolving intermingling of cultures. Called Tex-Mex it is in fact more Mex than Tex as Latinos begin to outnumber *gringos* in the regions that were once Spanish but became American during

MOVIES

By JAMES MURRAY

its period of Manifest Destiny.

Third, in a final wind-up to camera, instead of leaving the last eloquent word to Hugo Chavez, Pilger bangs on about America's threat to a number of countries including 'perceived enemies in Iran and Iraq'.

He *burkes* Osama bin Laden, al Qa'ida, the Taliban and the shocking event known as 9/11, an event that for them signalled the possibility of a renewed caliphate which would make the US what it still is: the last, best hope of the world; despite the plutocratic stupidities of its military-industrial complex, America's constitution has fail-safe elements, not least a free press.

M★★★★NFFV

Death at a Funeral

Director Frank Oz and writer Dean Craig's comedy moves so rapidly there's only time for quick breaths between the laughs.

Okay, there's a slight implausibility, plus a degree of bad taste, about a funeral service being held in the drawing room of a beautiful country house. That apart, this is a movie in the spirit of Alfred Hitchcock's, *The Trouble with Harry* (screen rights acquired by Hitchcock personally for 50 pounds from Jack Trevor Storey who had to borrow the cab fare to get to Claridge's Hotel, London).

Briefly, a coffin full of hoots. In a marvellously adept cast, Matthew MacFadyen, as Daniel, son of the late lamented, is buttoned down to explosive point as everything that can go wrong does, including a startling revelation about his father's secret life with Peter (Peter Dinklage) and the drug-induced antics of Simon (Alan Tudyk), doing a fair to hilarious imitation of Mr Bean.

M★★★★NFFV

Conversations with My Gardener

Writer/director Jean Becker, working from Henri Cueco's book, conveys us to rural France and into the lives of two great characters, the Gardener (Jean-Pierre Darroussin) and the Painter (Daniel Auteuil)

Daroussin and Auteuil draw out the subtle differences of the old schoolmates, reunited after the Painter hires the Gardener to tend the land round his country house.

Salt of the earth meets the sophisticated froth of life. And transforms it, though it would have been good to see at least a reference to the redeemer who came up with the idea of the salt and the dangers of it losing its savour.

M★★★★NFFV

Eastern Promises

Director David Cronenberg's thriller, scripted by Steve Knight, takes us into the dark heart of a Russian *mafya* family living in London.

Among them is Nikolai Luzhin (Viggo Mortensen) ostensibly a driver for *mafya* boss Semyon (Armin Mueller-Stahl) and his toughnut son Kirill (Vincent Cassell). They become involved with a midwife Anna Khitrova (Naomi Watts) anxious to trace the father of a baby born to an abused mother, her only clue a diary written in Russian.

The plot is colder than a Lubyanka dungeon and blacker than death-certificate ink. The players are terrific in both senses. Cronenberg shoots a sequence of hand to hand combat in a Turkish bath house. Its naked, scaring, slashing violence make *The Godfather* and TV's *The Sopranos* appear relatively benign.

TBA★★★★NFFV

The Brave One

Erica Bain (Jodie Foster) is a radio talk-show host savvy about the delights of New York yet daft enough to go walking late at night in Central Park with her fiancée David Kirmani (Naveen Andrews) and their pooch.

No prize for guessing the immediate outcome. As a result, Bain acquires a pistol and takes the subway called vengeance. Some may detect in this echoes both of Foster's turn as Special Agent Clarice Sparrow in *Silence of the Lambs* and of the late Charles Bronson's vigilante movies. Enriching the mix: detective Sean Mercer (Terrence Howard) who befriends Bain before realising what she is up to.

Director Neil Jordan and writers Roderick and Bruce A Taylor do,

however, serve a wrap-up in which Foster and Howard demonstrate their skill by talking fast to avoid laughing at the desperate ludicrousness of the plot resolution.

MA15+★★★NFFV

4 Months 3 Weeks 2 Days

Two students Otilla (Anamaria Marinca) and Gabita (Laura Vasiliu) prepare for a journey in the Romania of the 1980s, a Romania where petty black-marketing of cigarettes and toiletries abounds and life is lived in a perpetual dim-out physically and morally.

The key to the nature of the journey lies in the enigmatically precise title: the term of the natural life of a foetus about to be aborted in a desolate hotel room by Mr Bebe (Vlad Ivanaov) whose currency is sexual favours.

Writer/director Cristian Munglu's movie at once compelling and repelling. You may wish to see it once but not twice.

MA15+★★★NFFV

Death Proof

Quentin Tarantino wrote and directed this thriller. He also puts in a Hitchcockian appearance. Yet neither subtlety nor originality is the name of Tarantino's game. He is into the sincerest form of flattery: imitation.

In this case he imitates *el cheapo* grind-house (read fleapit) movies. Those with more exact memories will recall the Burt Reynolds sub-genre that began with *Smoky and the Bandit*.

For its good ol' boys, Tarantino substitutes a bevy of good ol' gals played by the likes of Sydney Tamila Poitier, Rosario Dawson and professional stuntwoman Zoe Bell who are more foul-mouthed than the good ol' boys.

Add Kurt Russell as the homicidal Stuntman Mike who uses a stunt vehicle as a killing machine and what have you got? Emetically violent kitsch

MA 15+★NFFV

Evan Almighty

Occasionally sequels are superior to their originals. This one is definitely superior to its original *Bruce Almighty* which starred the manic Jim Carrey. Morgan Freeman reprises his role as God as reverently as if he were in a mediaeval morality play rather than a

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.

modern satire directed by Tom Shadyac.

Steve Carrell replaces Carrey as the human through whom God acts. In this case, He needs Carrell, playing neophyte congressman, Evan Baxter to re-build the ark and ensures he does so by taking him out of executive suits and putting him into Noah robes.

The ark-building sequences are a wonder of computer imaging, the gathering of the animals, two by two, superlative and the flood when it comes awesome.

G★★★SFFV

The Heartbreak Kid

Not a remake of the Neil Simon play and movie. more a a demolition job by director/ scriptwriters Bobby and Peter Farrelly who go for their wrecking-ball humour.

Executive producer Ben Stiller, who also stars in the title role, does little to restrain them.aided by his father Jerry Stiller.

TBA★★NFFV

The Nanny Diaries

Directors Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini frame their comedy of manners (and lack of them) cleverly and set it in that enclave of privilege New York's Upper East Side It stars Scarlett Johansson, gone brunette to play Annie the Nanny to Laura Linney's elegant, blonde icicle, Mrs X, her tycoon husband, Mr X (Paul Giamatti) and their offspring, Grayer X (Nicholas

Reese Art).

Based on a best-seller by Emma McLaughlin and Nicola Kraus, the movie falters. Unlike *Mary Poppins*, whose brology it borrows for fantasy sequences, it cannot decide whether it really is a comedy or an anthropological treatise and a sub-plot involving Annie with Harvard Hottie (Chris Evans) merely adds stale marzipan to the cake.

Yet the players bring the game jauntiness of great professionals to the material that makes it watchable to the not entirely predictable end.

M★★★NFFV

Hot Rod

Enough to say that Will Ferrell is not the star of this knock-about comedy. More effectively he is executive producer and introduces Andy Samberg (like Ferrell an alumnus of *Saturday Night Live*) as the titular fall guy who takes the bumps, Ferrell realises he can no longer do 24/7

Isla Fisher (whose husband Sacha Baron-Cohen played opposite Ferrell in *Tallbudgera Nights*) plays Hot Rod's muse.

Sissy Spacek does not get enough to do as Hot Rod's Mom. Ian McShane makes a tooth-baring snack as his wicked stepfather. All noisy fun, the guffaws signalled by director Akiva Schaffer and writer Pam Brady like the revs of a trail bike at full throttle.

TBA★★★SFFV

Bratz

Director Sean McNamara's is not the first nor the last comedy based on toys, this time the dolls of the title. As it turns out the humans cast to replicate the dolls Nathalia Ramos, Janel Parrish, Logan Browning and Skyler Shaye are innately charming though burdened with bits from every campus movie since Rudy Vallee was a boy, including the inimitable Reese Witherspoon's *Legally Blonde*.

Warning: The sound track is industrial strength.

G★★★SFFV

December Boys

Charm is difficult to transpose from print to film. Director Rod Hardy does not make the task easier by shifting the period of Michael Noonan's novel

Tribal Warfare among Muslims

In the years to come [after Muhammad's death] it [the conflict between the descendants of the Yemeni Muslims and the Northern Arabian Muslims] would drench Spain and Sicily, the deserts of Atlas and, the banks of the Ganges, with blood. Ultimately this strange antipathy determined the fate, not only of conquered nations, but of the Latin and Teutonic races as a whole, for it alone arrested the Moslems in their conquering path at the moment when they menaced France and all Western Europe.

Although throughout the whole extent of the Musulman Empire the two races were at strife, that empire was so vast, and cooperation between tribes was so imperfect, that no widespread conflict broke out directed towards predetermined ends. Every province had its own intestine war, and the names of the opposing forces, borrowed from those of the two tribes who happened to be locally the most numerous, everywhere differed.

- *Spanish Islam*, Reinhart Dozy, London, Chatto & Windus, 1913, p.68

from the Great Depression to a time-zone where vintage cars combine with modern music and mores.

On a beachside holiday from their outback Catholic orphanage, three of the December Boys, Spit (James Fraser), Misty (Lee Cormie) and Sparks (Christian Byers) are finely and instinctively realised.

Odd boy out is Daniel (Harry Potter) Radcliffe playing Maps in what is designed to be a rite of passage movie. Awkward truth to tell, Radcliffe, 16 when the movie was shot on South Australia's Kangaroo Island, is at once too old for Maps and too young for a cave seduction involving Lucy (Teresa Palmer), a scene scriptwriter Marc Rosenberg inserted into Noonan's narrative.

Jack Thompson and Kris McQuade play Bandy McAnsh and Skipper, hosts to the boys. Fearless (Sullivan Stapleton) is their hero on a motorbike and his wife Teresa (Victoria Hill, again showing her entralling versatility) is the charmer who wants to adopt one of them.

Frank Gallagher comes on as a priestly mentor. Religious visions are seen and as a result Maps takes the road less travelled. Max Cullen narrates, and in a final cameo appearance lifts the whole shebang as only a powerful character actor can.

PG★★★NFFV

The Bourne Ultimatum

Director Paul Greengrass takes over the Bourne franchise and seems to channel Jerry Bruckheimer going for

smashing fun, crashing vehicles of all descriptions. Matt Damon reprises his role as Jason Bourne, rogue CIA agent on the run through more cities than the travel editor of *The Australian*, Susan Kurosawa.

Joan Allen also reprises her role as a cool CIA operative suspicious of a colleague played by David Strathairn who smokes the brand called Saturnine. Albert Finney meets his mortgage repayments with an enigmatic cameo. Neat end twist reveals not only Bourne's true identity but the faith of his fathers.

Supposedly the last of the franchise. But tell that to James Bond whose box-

Things I might write about Rome

I might describe the delightful Irish abbot, hidden in an almost subterranean Italian church, with whom I discussed all my Dublin friends in a dark crypt before an altar of Mithras; and in whom I proved again the mysterious truth that every Irishman is silently laughing at every other Irishman; I never can imagine why, when they have the English to laugh at. Or I might speak of the English lady who assumed that I believed in Reincarnation because I was an Englishman; or the lady journalist, also an ornament of my country, who had never heard that Parliamentary politics are corrupt.

- G. K. Chesterton, *The Resurrection of Rome*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1930 p.34.

offiice rival Jason Bourne now is.

MA★★★NFFV

Forbidden Lies

Central to the documentary is an irony. Norma Khouri is a fantasist who created an artificial pearl for which Transworld Publishing (part of Random House part of Perleemann, publishers of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*).

At the heart of the latter is a farrago; at the heart of the former is a truth: honour killings do take place among Muslims.

It would've strengthened the documentary if its maker Anna Broinowski had resisted the temptation to come out from behind the camera and engage Khoouri in a private chat. Far better to have given Malcolm Knox, who broke the story exclusively in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, the opportunity to confront Khouri.

Knox, a formidable journo and a talented novelist, would have brought to the interview the knowledge that more than factual journalism, fiction can convey real truth

And honour killings will continue to take place until there is a seismic conscience shift in the culture that perpetrate them.

M★★★NFFV

Lady Chatterley

Slower than the last waltz, this is a deferential French treatment of DH Lawrence's *John Thomas and Lady Jane*, an alternative version of his more notorious *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Marina Hands, Hyppolyte Girardot and Jean-Louis Coulloc'h deliver impeccable performances in the triangle of lady of the manor, crippled husband and gamekeeper. But there is a wry irony in the way the French locations contrast with what are supposedly north-country English locations.

Obviously the script can make nothing of the further irony that Lawrence, who abhorred 'sex in the head', became a kind of stepfather to the world's pornography industry which has as one of its collateral outcomes obscenities beyond any horror of child labour in any coal mine by those who for profit are ready to exploit freedom of expression.

M★★NFFV

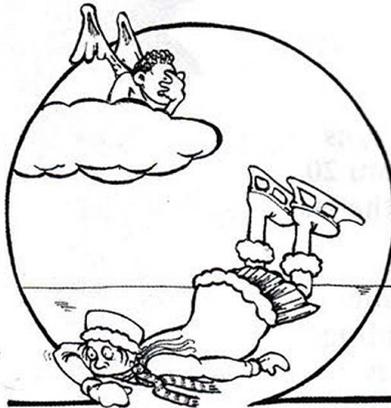
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THE BLESSED FALL

By JAMES MUHREN, MHM

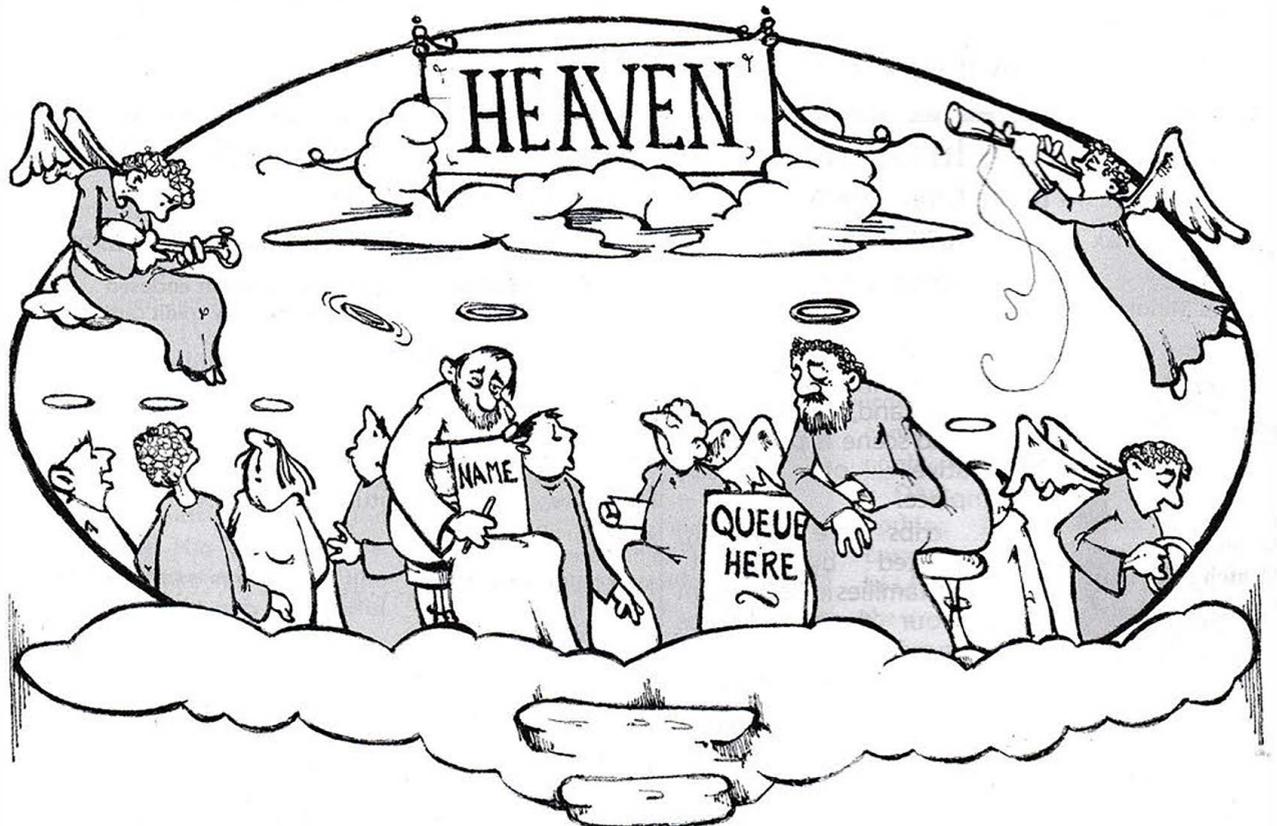


HE angels were well aware of what had happened on that cold November night a few centuries ago. In heavenly time is not important. For everybody lives in the Eternal Now of the Almighty. If some of the clockmaker saints revel in making some intricate and complicated all-weather clocks, invariably the hands of the clocks will revert to Now! If they insisted on giving a time, terrestrial or earthly, the clocks would hum or sing out or whistle with a nice melody: "Now! Now! Now! So this was a cold November night on earth, not in heaven. No. 1 - there is no night in heaven; and No. 2 it is never cold, to the great delight of those archangels and angels who have really chilly bodies or you might say are cold as a fish.



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Back to this November night. Because it was such a nice cold night with millions of stars blinking at the firmament, some of the angels had been allowed to go down and do some skating on the nicely lighted skate rink in the town. How delighted they were to mix with a big bunch of sturdy boys and some fine looking girls, all heavily clothed with jumpers and ice hats and some with genuine fur-lined comforters to keep their hands warm. Still greater the delight of the angels to swirl over the ice, to outdo the boys in speed and the girls in figure skating. For angels, skating is no problem. Even champion skaters would be left behind if they competed with the angels. From young they glide from cloud to cloud, even when a heavy snow fall is expected and the clouds are really slippery and cold.



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Then a message is received and secretly passed on from angel to angel: "Watch out! That sixteen-year-old girl with the woollen mittens and the red cap is a saint in the making. She is going to fall and, break a rib in her right side! You are not to interfere. That is an order from the Mother of God, whose miraculous image she has venerated and prayed to from young. Guardian angels may join her personal angel on a

voluntary basis. Just keep an eye on her and readily bring her prayers to heaven. Further information will follow when required."

A big "Ohhhh..." was heard all round when the girl made a beautiful figure eight and then was tripped up by a clumsy girl not so experienced as she. The fall was heavy. The sensitive ears of the angels heard the crack as her rib broke. A cry of pain, and people came

Serve the Poor

THE SERVICE of the poor is to be preferred to all else, and to be performed without delay. If at a time set aside for prayer, medicine or help has to be brought to some poor man, go and do what has to be done with an easy mind, offering it up to God as a prayer. Do not be put out by uneasiness or a sense of sin because of prayers interrupted by the service of the poor: for God is not neglected if prayers are put aside, if God's work is interrupted, in order that another such work may be completed. Therefore, when you leave prayer to help some poor man, remember this - that the work has been done for God. Charity takes precedence over any rules, everything ought to tend to it above all; since it is itself a Great Lady, what it orders should be carried out. Let us show our service to the poor, then, with renewed ardour in our hearts, seeking out above all any abandoned people, since they are given to us as lords and patrons.

- St Vincent de Paul, [1581-1660]
Epistle 2546.

crowding round. They lifted her up and angels sadly accompanied her to her home. There for thirty eight years she suffered terrible pains with great fortitude and patience.

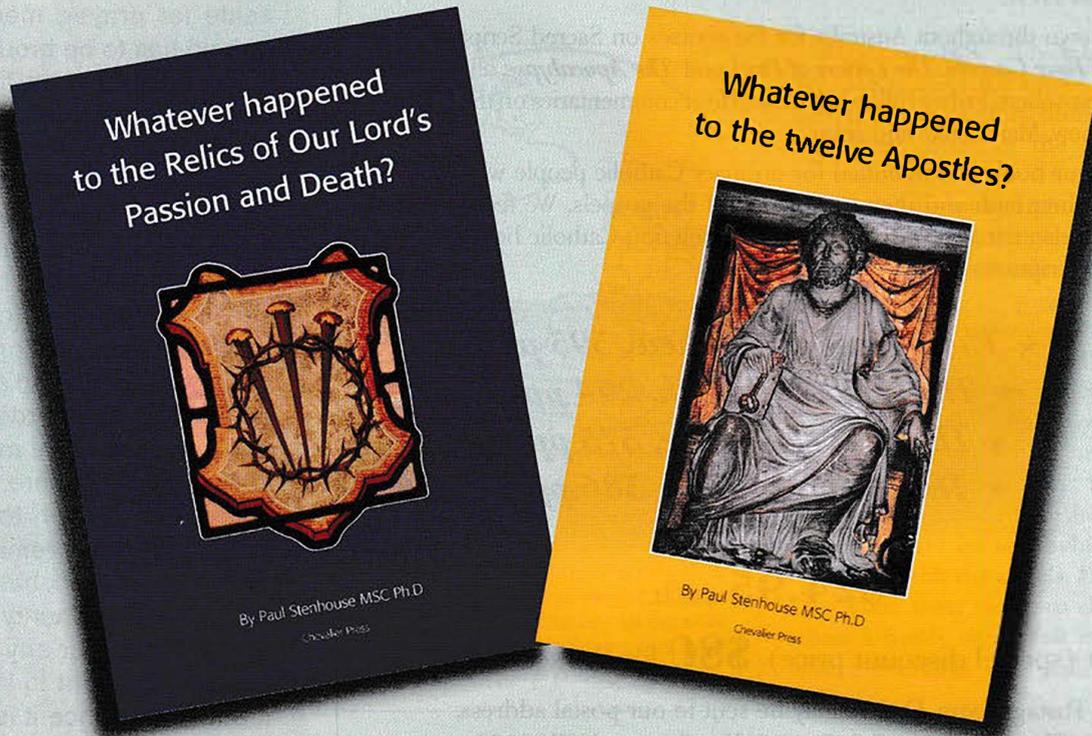
How great the joy of the angels when on an Easter morning they led her gloriously into heaven! It was the year of the Lord 1433 A.D. and her name was inscribed in the list of saints as Lidwina of Schiedam, Holland.

FATHER JAMES MUIREN 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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