



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

- NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
- BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS



The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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A blessed Holy Week to all our readers

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"There were some Greeks among those whose practice it was to come up to the feast. Now these came to Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and made a request to him. 'Sir,' they said, 'we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them: 'The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. This is the truth I tell you – unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains all by itself alone; but, if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life is losing it; but he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone will serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there will my servants also be.'"* – Gospel of John, Chapter 12.

THE AMAZING PARADOX from William Barclay's commentary:

The Fourth Gospel was the one written to present the truth of Christianity in a way that the Greeks could appreciate and understand; and it is natural that in it the first Greeks to come to Jesus should find a place.

Hardly any passage in the New Testament would come with such a shock to those who heard it for the first time as this. It begins with a saying which everyone would expect; and it finishes with a series of sayings which were the last things anyone would expect.

"The hour has come," began Jesus, "when the Son of Man should be glorified."

It was clear that things had been building up to a crisis and that crisis had now come. But Jesus' idea of what that crisis involved was quite different from anyone else's. When he talked about the *Son of Man*, he did not mean what other people meant. To understand the shocking nature of this short paragraph we must grasp something of what the Jews understood by Son of Man. That term took its origin in *Daniel 7:13*. In that passage the Authorized Version mistranslates. It has it that one like unto the *Son of Man* came to the Ancient of Days, and received a kingdom, a glory and a dominion that were to be universal and for ever. The correct translation is not *the Son of Man*, but *a son of man* as the Revised Standard Version has it.

Symbols of world powers: The point of the passage is this. In *Daniel 7:1-8* the writer has been describing the world powers which have held sway, the Assyrian, the Babylonians, the Medes and the Persians. They were so cruel, so savage, so sadistic that they could be described only under the imagery of wild beasts – the lion with the eagle's wings, the bear with the three ribs between its teeth, the leopard with the four wings and the four heads, and the terrible beast with iron teeth and ten horns. These were symbols of the powers which had hitherto held sway. But it was the dream of the seer that

IN THIS ISSUE: • *Thought for the Week* • *The Amazing Paradox* • *The Golden Age Of 'Spin'* • *The Truth Is Different Where Does It End?* • *Just A Little Homely Celebration*

into the world there was going to come a new power, and that power was to be gentle and humane and gracious, so that it could be depicted under the symbol, not of a savage beast, but of a man. This passage means that the day of savagery would pass and the day of humanity was coming.

That was the dream of the Jews, the golden age, when life would be sweet and they would be masters of the world. (emphasis added).

But how was that age to come? It became clearer and clearer to them that their nation was so small and their power so weak, that the golden age could never come by human means and human power; it must come by the direct intervention of God. **He would send his champion to bring it in.** So they thought back to the picture in the book of *Daniel*, and what more natural than that they should call the champion the *Son of Man*?

The phrase which had once been merely a symbol came to describe a person. Between the Old and the New Testament there arose a whole series of books about the golden age and how it was to come. Amidst their troubles and their sufferings, in their subjections and their slaveries, the Jews never forgot and never gave up their dream. One of these books was specially influential – the *Book of Enoch* and it repeatedly speaks about *that Son of Man*. In *Enoch* The Son of Man is a tremendous figure who, as it were, is being held in leash by God. But the day will come when God will release him and he will come with a divine power against which no man and no kingdom will be able to stand, and smash the way to world empire for the Jews.

To the Jews the Son of Man stood for the undefeatable world conqueror sent by God. (Their Messiah...ed.)

So Jesus says: "The hour has come when the Son of Man must be glorified." When he said that, the listeners would catch their breath. They would believe that the trumpet call of eternity had sounded, that the might of heaven was on the march, and that the campaign of victory was on the move. But Jesus did not mean by *glorified* what they understood. They meant that the subjected kingdoms of the world grovel before the conqueror's feet; by *glorified* he meant *crucified*.

When the Son of Man was mentioned they thought of the conquest of the armies of God; he meant the conquest of the Cross.

The first sentence which Jesus spoke would excite the hearts of those who heard it; then began a succession of sayings which must have left them staggered and bewildered by the sheer incredibility, for they spoke, not in terms of conquest, but in terms of sacrifice and death. We will never understand Jesus nor the attitude of the Jews to him, until we understand how he turned their ideas upside down, replacing a dream of conquest with a vision of a Cross. No wonder they did not understand him; the tragedy is that they refused to try."

THE GOLDEN AGE OF 'SPIN' by Jeremy Lee:

The latest incredible portrayals of falling statues, ecstatic crowds of liberated Iraqis and humble western politicians is a modern mixture of Aesop's Fables and Hans Christian Anderson's fairy stories.

Gradually, the whole emphasis of the war has been shifted from "weapons of mass destruction" to "liberation". It's only a matter of time until the leader of 'the three musketeers' (George Dubya) makes the grand journey to Main Street, Baghdad, to stand with one foot on a fallen statue of Saddam, and one of the "li'l chil'ren" of liberated Iraq in his arms, from whence he will regale us all once more about how he stands for "peace 'n freedom". And, of course, the other two musketeers (Tony and John) should be in close attendance, heroes of the hour, with disclaiming smiles of denial on their honest faces as they acknowledge the plaudits of the world (and of course, the "li'l chil'ren" of Iraq).

If you wonder sacrilegiously what the final statistics are on the number of people dead or missing, the families destroyed, the injured in hospital, the homes in ruins, you've missed the whole point. All the damage was a necessary part of the liberation, and was kept to the minimum! Besides, the more damage, the fatter the contracts for global reconstruction companies already jostling for post-war contracts in Iraq. Didn't you know? Big wars and massive collateral damage are good for the economy!

And Saddam Hussein? Has he already entered the land of legends? There is intense speculation on his whereabouts – blasted into thin air, hiding in an underground bunker, or spirited away across some border – Iran or Syria, or perhaps even Libya – which means, of course, he will have to be followed to ensure the "peace 'n freedom" of the countries sheltering him.

Future foreign policy, of course, needs its rogues' gallery for sustaining the cause of "peace 'n freedom'. The Saddams and Osamas of this world, with the odd Kim Jong Il are the necessary demons to galvanize "the forces of good" into action.

How long can this propaganda pageant be sustained? Of course, it's what the mums and dads round the world want to see. They want to know the game is over, with a clear-cut home victory; and they are not eager for anything that might mar such a comforting image.

"I am not going to use the "V-words" ('Victory' and 'Vindication')," quoth our venerable Prime Minister. "But we have won, and were right to send our troops," he added.

His obedient and compliant party members breathing collective sighs of relief, the Opposition rendered inconsequential by the plaudits of the moment, and the peace demonstrations – again for the moment – having melted away, Prime Minister Howard has every reason to be satisfied. As the last of our Hornets fly south, and our troops – who have carried out a hard, dangerous and distasteful job superbly – safely home again, what a time for a Federal election! But then, the Liberals and the Nationals are far too lofty to take advantage of their momentary popularity to 'cash in' – aren't they?

THE TRUTH IS DIFFERENT: Without the global monopoly media 'rah-rah-ing' every bomb and crater, this story would not prevail. Indeed, there are signs that the more experienced journalists find it all a little too much. Veteran Paul Kelly (*The Australian*, 11/4/03) commented wryly: *"... This was the moment, so Howard took it. He compared the upheaval to the implosion of the Soviet empire, a false but effective analogy. The demise of Iraq's tyranny is the point of maximum support for a war that was divisive in its inception and will be divisive in its aftermath."*

"We wish the people of Iraq well for the future," Howard said. He did not mention the civilian deaths, the hospital toll, the humanitarian crisis.

Nor did Howard lay claim to victory. He had another purpose - to seek moral justification for a war seen by many as an illegal act of aggression and to which he had committed Australia without UN sanction.

Howard wants the image of celebrating Iraqis, not mothers weeping over dead children, to frame this conflict in history's lens and Australia's memory"

So engrossed has the US become with its own moral and military superiority that it is already talking about further wars. The leading front-page article in the same *Australian* proclaimed: *"After sweeping away three decades of Saddam Hussein's brutal regime in just three weeks, a buoyant Bush administration yesterday warned other rogue states it was prepared to repeat the 'spectacular' success of its blitzkrieg in Baghdad"*

To "bring peace" and liberate "li'l chil'ren" of course.

Peter Hartcher (*The Australian Financial Review*, 11/4/03) offered this sobering assessment: *"...How many Middle Eastern countries are ruled by tyrants, or harbour terrorists, or both? Only Israel is a democracy. All the others – including US friends such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt – are ruled by autocrats. And several, most notably Iran, Syria and Lebanon, harbour terrorists. Cheney is calling for nothing short of region-wide revolution"*

All indications are that the toppling statues of Hussein mark the beginning of a long and difficult new American revolutionary project for the remaking of the Middle East and an early phase of World War Four – the war on terrorism, according to former CIA director James Woolsey, a tireless advocate of war on Iraq.

That is a much less reassuring thought. And that is just how America's neo-conservative cheerleaders – who support the Bush administration from the outside, and have written the script for its foreign policy to date – want it."

Just a little amplification: While Israel is a multi-party State, its other claims to democracy are illusory. Its Arab-Palestinian peoples are, in essence, second-class citizens, denied many basic rights that potential Jewish immigrants have before they even arrive. It has all the hallmarks of apartheid.

For "neo-conservatives" in America, read "dual loyalty, Israel-oriented Zionists". It contains the 'movers-and-shakers in Bush's war cabinet. Israel's dominance over US foreign policy is so complete that Israel increasingly emerges as the real victor.

Without deploying any of its own troops it has seen a major threat and financial supporter of the Palestinians brought to its knees. Syria and Lebanon, major thorns in Israel's side, are now under direct threat from the US. Israel, it seems, has only to point a finger and a blind and suppliant Caliban, in the form of the US, is only too keen to send its own sons and daughters to fight and die in the Israeli cause. Under the global distraction with the fighting in Iraq, Israel has busily continued its destruction of Gaza and the West Bank. More than anything, this has been Israel's war.

WHERE DOES IT END? Besides the nations already mentioned, there is Yemen, to Israel's south; Somalia and the Sudan, just across the Red Sea; Gaddafi's Libya, hardly a friend of Israel or the West but a major supplier of oil to France; Afghanistan, where the Taliban is increasingly reasserting its dominance; the Islamic regions in the south of what used to be the Soviet Union, which straddle oil-rich areas; the Philippines, where terrorists and US troops have already clashed; and of course, the biggest Islamic country in the world, Indonesia, where fundamentalist Islam maintains and increases its presence throughout the archipelago. Meanwhile, America's 'friends', such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, are mesmerized by the growing fundamentalist anger within their own populations.

Add to this the fact that Britain, the US, Europe and Australia have shortsightedly built sizeable Islamic minorities within their own borders who will prove a constant thorn in their sides – and we can all take heart for a future filled with Dubya's "peace 'n freedom".

JUST A LITTLE HOMELY CELEBRATION: A venerable Australian law firm will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in mid-April. Katherine Towers (*The Australian Financial Review*, 11/4/03) described it thus: "*Few law firms in Australia can boast a list of guests for their 50th birthday celebrations that includes the Prime Minister, Richard Pratt, Solomon Lew and Chris Corrigan.*"

But then high-profile tax lawyer Mark Liebler would be the first to acknowledge that Melbourne law practice Arnold Bloch Liebler has plenty of friends in high places. Mr. Liebler's connections in the tax office are no secret, but how does a relatively small boutique law practice attract, at a time of war, the leader of the nation to a birthday bash?"

How indeed?

Towers went on to say that besides the Prime Minister, the celebration would be attended by federal ministers, opposition members, Federal and High Court judges, state government representatives, academics and barristers.

Among those expected were Rino and Bruno Grollo, Richard Pratt, the ACT's Greg Combet, former HIH CEO Ray Williams, Peter Garrett, one-time lead singer with Midnight Oil, Steve Vizard, former Governor-General Zelman Cowan, retail magnate John Gandel, Sussan's Mark Besen, and Gina Rinehart.

Towers concluded by saying: "*... Many of those clients are the fourth generation of the original penniless Jewish refugees who first sought out the firm's founder, Arnold Bloch, after World War II.*"

A real family occasion! Mark Liebler is, of course, brother to Isi Liebler of the World Jewish Congress, noted among other things for his remark that multiculturalism, while suitable for Australia, would never do in Israel.