

THE GARGOYLE

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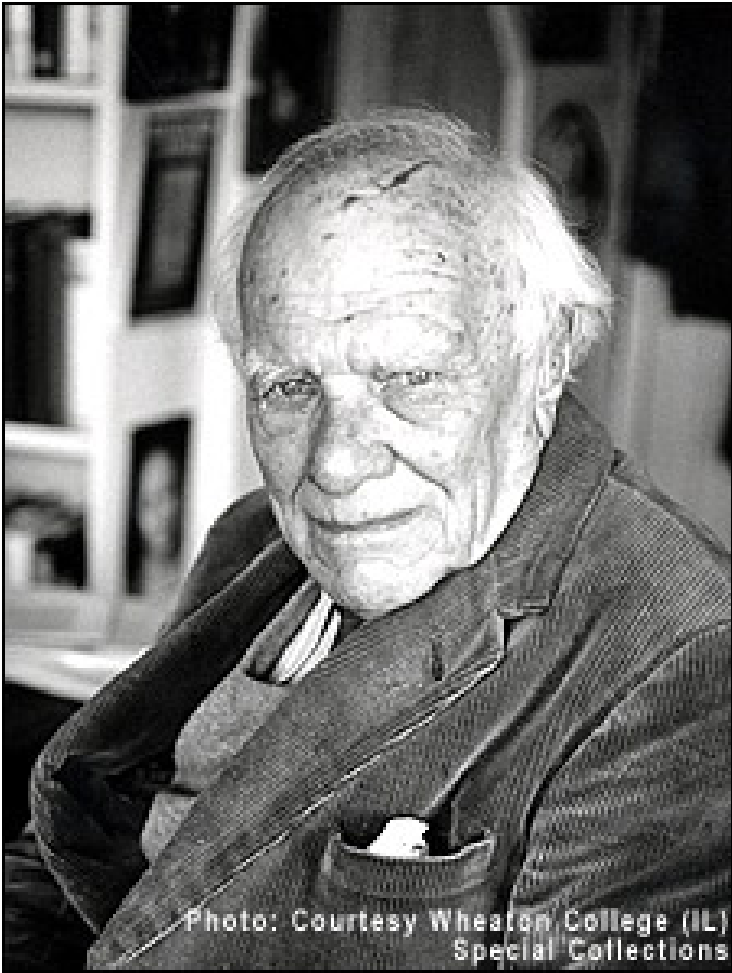
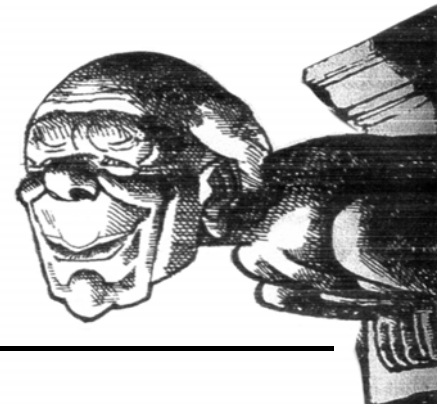


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“Cathedrals need both steeples and gargoyles. The steeple is this beautiful thing reaching up into the sky admitting, as it were, its own inadequacy - attempting something utterly impossible - to climb up to heaven. The gargoyle is this little man, grinning and laughing at the absurd behaviour of men on earth, and these two things are both built into the building to the glory of God.

(Malcolm Muggeridge
Firing Line 1980)

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The Malcolm Muggeridge Society
Pilgrim's Cottage
Pike Road, Eythorne
Dover, Kent CT15 4DJ England. Tel:+44(0)1304 831964
Gargoyle Editor: David Williams

All with an interest in the work and the varied life of Malcolm Muggeridge are invited to join the Society. The aims are listed on page 16. Join by mail, sending full name, address and email address and subscription, or via the Society's website:

www.malcolmmuggeridge.org

The Gargoyle is published quarterly and contributions are welcomed by the Editor on any aspect of Malcolm's diverse life.

Letter from the President of the Society

Once again we include a variety of excellent articles and observations from both sides of the Atlantic about Malcolm Muggeridge that really deserved a new airing. Whilst I am conscious that some of the same biographical ground will inevitably be covered by different writers, each brings a distinct perspective and their own style of writing. Enjoy!

There is a little piece of domestic sadness to report in this issue. This has to do with the car originally purchased new by Malcolm in May 1981 at his local Robertsbridge Garage. Now, if it were a Jaguar, Aston Martin or such like, we would have probably felt the incentive to preserve it for posterity. Alas, despite deriving by that time a very comfortable income, Malcolm (and presumably Kitty) went out and bought a Ford Fiesta, a small economical hatchback. Not for them the comfort, extra power and extravagance of the top of the range 'Ghia' model, but instead a very basic 'Popular', devoid of any chrome or other unnecessary adornment. Curiously chosen in startling 'Terracotta' Orange colour, and intriguingly with 'Indian' trim, no doubt the car fitted their adopted ascetic lifestyle perfectly. Well, 23 years on and the car, annoyingly reliable, still remains in the family, having been happily adopted by my father for some 12 years until his own death in 2001. But end of life now beckons too for the little Fiesta and this remaining link to Park Cottage will soon have to go. But as a final tribute, I am including an article by Katherine Field Stephen in which the car touchingly receives mention. Being driven by Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge is an experience, I have gathered, not easily forgotten!



As well as being the longest day, 21st June 2004 also heralded a special occasion, the 80th birthday of Wally Fawkes, better known to us as Trog. I was particularly delighted that he had attended the Centennial lunch at the Garrick Club, so a year on an eclectic gathering of friends and fellow cartoonists gathered at the Cartoon Art Trust to help him celebrate. I re-introduced Wally to the cartoon he made to celebrate Malcolm's 80th, twenty one years ago. Indeed, this was just one of very many of 'St. Mugg' by Trog, including a new cartoon produced for the centenary. And of course, our front cover Gargoyle is also by Trog, adopted with Wally's very kind permission. We congratulate Wally and pass on our best wishes for a long and happy retirement – if, that is, he gets round to starting it!

Any members who would like to organise activities for the Society, have ideas for events, or wish to assist the Society in other ways, should feel welcome to contact me – I will provide every encouragement and lend my full support.

Kind regards

Sally Muggeridge
President
sally@malcolmmuggeridge.org

A Command Performance

By Alistair Cooke

[Editor's Note: Born 20th November 1908, Alistair Cooke was some five years younger than Malcolm Muggeridge but in many ways a contemporary – following Malcolm to Cambridge in the 1920's and also regarded as one of the outstanding journalists, writers and broadcasters of the 20th Century. For 58 years, Alistair Cooke's weekly "*Letter from America*" has been required listening, monitoring all aspects of life in the United States and relaying its strengths and weaknesses. His last letter was broadcast on 20th February 2004, discussing the growing confidence of the Democrats under Presidential candidate John Kerry. Alistair Cooke died 30th March.

This article by Alistair appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* in the furor following the controversial publication of "*Does England Really Need a Queen*" in the *Saturday Evening Post* during the Royal State visit to the US in 1957. It is republished here as our tribute to the brilliant journalistic style of Alistair Cooke.]

Like a proconsul summoned to Rome to explain the riots in East Anglia, Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge flew into New York last night to account for his views on the British monarchy to Mike Wallace, the public prosecutor of American television.

Strong men have quailed and wept when exposed to Mike Wallace's cross-examination. Fast women have stuttered and stumbled.

Mr. Wallace came at Mr. Muggeridge like the Hound of the Baskervilles, and Mr. Muggeridge said there, there. Mr. Wallace bayed to heaven to bear witness to Muggeridge's lèse-majesté, to his "carefully designed attempt to create a sensation". Mr. Muggeridge said not so and mocked him with a roguish smile. Mr. Wallace leaped to his full height to maul the abominable no-man, and Mr. Muggeridge tugged his ear. No matter how threateningly Mr. Wallace shifted his inflections, narrowed his eyes, drained smoke from his nostrils, he still was adorable as a puppy to Mr. Muggeridge. In the end he was eating out of the enemy's hand.

Come now, Muggeridge, he began, how do you justify your attack on the Queen at the very moment she appears in America? A few pleasant cracks appear in Muggeridge's granite face. "An attack?" He had never attacked anybody. He had accepted a commission from a conservative family magazine, long before the Queen's visit was planned, to write "a considered piece on the present state of a popular monarchy". He could think of "nothing more useful in connection with the Queen's

visit". Mr. Wallace tossed at him the three or four wounding phrases isolated by the news agencies from their context. Mr. Muggeridge quietly pointed out this routine dishonesty and confessed to having attempted only "a sincere, genuine analysis" of an institution that had its faults but had also many advantages, not least that provided by "the image of a happy, virtuous family" with which the Queen had endowed it.

How about that crack, Muggeridge, that duchesses thought her "dowdy, frumpish and banal?" No attack here? "Not at all," said Muggeridge, simply a proof of his theory that "criticism of the Queen came rather from the upper echelons than the lower."

Mr. Muggeridge paused occasionally and fixed on his chubby accuser the glittering, kindly eye of a patient, old headmaster. It was a splendid thing, he seemed to think, to have boys of such fire and impulse, even if they could not distinguish an adjective from an idea. Every time Mr. Wallace tossed him an insult to defend, Mr. Muggeridge would show it was no insult but a thoughtful item in a thesis. He addressed his pupils attention to the general idea that "free speech is an admirable thing in free societies...and the benefit of living in one is that you say what you think". You think "that Britain is a free society", barked Mr. Wallace. Suspecting for a moment the wiliness of youth, Mr. Muggeridge pretended to be wrestling with Plato. Let's put it this way he said: "I like to think it is." Well, snapped the young man, if it's so free "why were you fired as a columnist for the *Sunday Dispatch*" and cancelled by the BBC? "Ah," sighed Mr. Muggeridge, "those are episodes for which I blush and do indeed reflect on the freedom we claim." It was an interesting reflection on American freedom, he thought, that the Washington station had banned this interview. Very interesting, said Mr. Wallace.

This was as close as they came to an equal exchange. Mr. Wallace always has in front of him a stack of "Research", a body of knowledge as inflexible as a crib, a neat list of leading questions expecting snappy answers. And what does this character offer in reply? Philosophy, ideas, speculation, the unsatisfying sound of grave good sense. All right, then, he would try one final four-square tack. OK, Mr. Muggeridge, you are a very smart cookie, but if the monarchy is in such a bad way, what are you going to do about it? Mr. Muggeridge was afraid he was "much too modest to offer a complete solution", but he would dare to pose the problem: "Insofar as the monarchy is identified with an obsolete class structure the object should be to detach it from that

structure.” This was Greek to Mr. Wallace, but he thought Mr. Muggeridge might like to volunteer for the job. “I’m much too old, nor do I think it very likely it would be offered me.”

Mr. Wallace fell back on his reserves, which include the Astors, no less. Mr. Michael Astor, he noted, wrote this past week in the *New York Herald Tribune* that “you have a pathological contempt for your fellow human beings”. How about that, Muggeridge?

No chance for evasion there, eh? “If my fellow human beings were all Astors, there might be some truth in it.”

Mike Wallace had been tearing around in circles after his own tail. It was 25 minutes past 10. The Queen was unscathed and Muggeridge was not even breathing hard. Better try for some quick Muggeridge-type insults. How about Churchill, Mister M? Answer: “In the period when the Germans occupied the Channel ports, he fulfilled a role as great as any in our history....Without him we might well have collapsed. I will honour him for that as long as I live...” Unfortunately “he is an appallingly bad politician who held on to power long after he should have gone...his post-war administration was a disaster.”

The present Prime Minister, Mr. Macmillan? “A very interesting man,” Mr. Muggeridge mused, “who achieved supreme power too late, as politicians so often do.”

How about Sir Anthony Eden? Answer: “The most disastrous Prime Minister in our history, and I’m not forgetting Lord North.”

There was no scaring Muggeridge on the home front. With two minutes to go, it might be possible to have him shed a sneer on the local heroes. Or would he dare? Mr. Muggeridge cocked a formidable chin and kept his eyes unblinkingly on Wallace. He is obviously a man beyond daring or caring for the television audience or any other crowd in the great beyond that suffers from frequent bouts of middle-class morality. He is therefore easily assailed but unassailable by the ordinary strategy of spite, malice or popular uproar. He positively nestled for the kill into Mr. Wallace’s embrace.

Mr Dulles? Mr. Muggeridge hesitated, seeming actually to be choosing his words. “I do not think he is equipped – by nature – to deal with the situation in our world. He strikes me as portentous, sincere, honest, and rather stupid.”

Mr. Wallace unveiled his last idol and, short of Lincoln in his memorial, it could not have been a figure more sacrosanct in American life. It was none other than Eisenhower himself. Mr. Muggeridge did not stir.

He took a long pleasurable pull on his cigarette-holder and said: “He did the most marvellous job in the war, not a military job but a public relations job when it was essential to have a public relations job done.” But (the inevitable, the delicious but) “like Macmillan, his power came too late. I do not think he is on the wavelength of the dreadful time we live in.”

Wallace was bewitched, bothered, and bewildered.

Mr. Wallace lifted one limp paw and yielded his last tiny bone. Wasn’t there a great amount of anti-Americanism in Europe, and how did he explain that? Yes, there was, and it was “simply that Americans are very rich and very powerful. People always loathe the rich and powerful. The difference seems to be that in the 19th century the English liked being loathed, whereas the Americans rather dislike it.”

Mr. Wallace looked wistfully into the camera. All but brainwashed by now, he could only thank Mr. Muggeridge for coming and exercising the freedom of his speech.

ENDS

This article first appeared in the Manchester Guardian on 21st October 1957, two days after the Mike Wallace interview took place. It was rerun in The Guardian on 15th November 1990, the day after Malcolm’s death.



Beneath the Carapace

By Christopher Booker

If the legend of 'St. Mugg,' worldly and witty cynic turned Christian ascetic, seemed too good to be true – well, it was, as it wasn't.

I first came across the name of Malcolm Muggeridge when, at the age of 12, I pulled down from my father's shelves his book on the Thirties. Written in a wonderfully funny, beguiling style, it recreated the decade when Europe had been sleepwalking toward war as a kind of pageant of the absurd – and I was so haunted by this shrewdly mocking way of looking at the personalities and events which make up contemporary history that if there was any one book which made me want to become a writer it was this.

A year or two after I had read his book, Muggeridge became much more widely known when, in 1953, he became editor of *Punch*, the long-established humorous magazine to which, for four years, he gave an edge and a sparkle it was never to know again. In 1955 an irreverent article he wrote for the *New Statesman* on the Royal family, "Royal Soap Opera," was a further shock to the sensibilities of that rather grey, deferential time. By the late Fifties, through his quizzical, world-weary performances on television, he was already on the way to becoming a national institution. And when, in 1961, I became the first editor of a new satirical magazine, *Private Eye*, so far as I was concerned it was Muggeridge's *Punch* that had been the inspiration.

In 1963 I at last met my hero, at a dinner party in Chelsea, and we at once became friends. I began to make regular visits to the beautiful Sussex valley, sixty miles from London, where he lived with his wife, Kitty, in a delightful cottage at the end of a rutted farm track, surrounded with orchards and wooded hills. My chief memory of those happy days is of the endless hours of talk - I came to think that, good as Malcolm was as a performer on television, he was even better as a writer, but he was best of all as a conversationalist. Discourse with him was always charged with a tremendous energy, so that it could roll on for hours without a pause - on long walks through the surrounding woods, sitting at the kitchen table over simple meals, continuing through games of chess or Malcolm's endless games of patience. Always the themes were the same, a gossipy, half-serious, half-uproarious, always mocking ramble round the absurdities of the public drama of our time- what he called the "legend"- the self-deceiving follies of politicians and intellectual figures, as our poor old civilisation struggled on toward what he saw as its inevitable doom. How, in his derisive drawl, he liked to roll around his tongue such phrases as "the whole show is over"; such-and-such a thing (the monarchy, the BBC,

the United Nations, Communism) "is all washed up"; some much-praised book of the moment was "pitifully thin stuff"; some famous writer was "irredeemably mediocre." He seemed to have known or at least met everyone, and spoke of them all in the same half-affection, half-scornful tones – "the trouble with poor old Lawrence was that he was impotent," "poor old Mailer - his trouble is that he is a rabbi manqué," "poor old Churchill – in the end he was just a power-crazed maniac like the rest of them." It was delivered with such gusto and good humour that it elevated us all – indeed, some of the best and driest lines came from Kitty. I recall how, over lunch one day, she coined what was to become one of the most famous of all Muggeridgisms, when she observed of my old friend David Frost, then ascending to some dizzying height in the world of television talk shows, "I suppose you could say of Frost that he has risen without trace."

A Handful of Heroes

Nevertheless, running through the mockery, there would always be references to his heroes – William Blake, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Cervantes, Dr. Johnson – that little handful of great men whom he honoured as having seen through the follies of the ego and earthly striving to something altogether deeper and eternal beyond. And then I remembered the day in 1966 when he came in from his study and asked me, rather diffidently, to read something he had just written for the *New Statesman*, an article headed "Why I Believe," in which he made a heartfelt declaration of his belief in that ultimate reality that was God.

His article startled me, partly because it seemed so far removed from the cynical, irreverent Muggeridge the world had come to know through his public persona, and partly because, although I had not told him, I had recently come to the same conviction myself. In a way, this brought us to the happiest years of our friendship, when I was able to discuss with him the same sense of spiritual awakening, and when at last he seemed to share with his literary heroes – Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Dr. Johnson, and the rest – a common religious foundation.

Publicly Malcolm did not always find it easy to adjust his old mocking persona to his new-found religious position, as he turned dramatically into the scourge of "pot, porn, and the pill" – all the fantasies of the permissive society then in full swing around us in the

late Sixties. He enjoyed the combative side of it - he had always enjoyed battling with the perceived unwisdom. But there were also times in his newly exposed position when he felt very lonely – and I suppose I was not altogether surprised when he became increasingly concerned to seek out those he took to be of a like mind to himself, the path which led him into alliance with evangelicals, Moral Re-Armers, Christian crusaders of all kinds, and ultimately, a decade or so later, into the Roman Catholic Church.

Polishing Up the Cover Story

During the last decade of his active writing life, the main theme of most of his writing was autobiographical as, through books, articles, and television programmes, he told and retold the story of his own life. We came almost to know by heart how, from his “Socialist childhood” in Croydon, he had travelled through his disillusionment with all the collective utopianisms of our time and with all the wearisome vanities of personal egotism, up to the moment of the final apotheosis when he had been so dramatically transformed into Mugg the Christian ascetic, waiting joyfully, as he so often told us, for the release of death. The images, the anecdotes, the phrases in which this story was couched became so familiar that, as I once put it, with its “protestations of humility, confessions of weakness, eagerness for the joyful release of death and all” it began to read “just a little too much like a carefully prepared cover story.”

But then I shall never forget the shock of reading his last major work, his private diaries, when they came out in 1981 under the title of *Like It Was* – because the real inner story of his life that they revealed was so much more interesting and moving than the endlessly polished-up version he had come to present to the world in later years. Much more intensely and vividly than in his later autobiography *Chronicles of Wasted Time* (or even than he had revealed in his semi-autobiographical novel of 1934, *Winter in Moscow*), they showed how it was the shock of coming face to face with the nightmarish reality of Stalin’s Russia, when he had gone there as correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* in 1932, which had first converted him to a truly religious view of the world – and how, privately, for several years after that he had tried to battle with the demons of his “insatiable ego” to remain true to that inner vision.

But somehow, he had then lost touch with the core of mystical religious conviction, as he launched out

into the decades that were to bring him such success and fame on the stage of the world, culminating in the late Fifties and early Sixties in his emergence as one of the major television personalities of the age. By the time his religious impulse finally welled up again in the late Sixties, he had become so used to playing his part in the public “legend” that, like a carapace, his ego-based persona was too strong to be dismantled – and it was this which often made his declarations of his new-found faith and humility seem just a little too glib, dogmatic, and sentimental to carry complete inner conviction.

It was this, and the fact that Malcolm became increasingly isolated from the world by the debilities of age, which gave Malcolm’s life ultimately a rather melancholy, even tragic pattern, an impression which not all one’s grateful memories of his extraordinary generosity and the endless fun of his conversation can ever quite efface.” I remember how his favourite Shakespeare play was *King Lear*. I also remember how one of the most cherished of all his maxims, from his old friend Hugh Kingsmill, began with that central article of Malcolm’s secular creed through most of his life, “The attempt to externalise the kingdom of heaven in temporal shape must end in disaster.” It went on, in words which Malcolm so often repeated to me in the first years of our friendship: “Those who seek for it alone will reach it together, but those who seek it in company will perish by themselves.”

ENDS

This article first appeared in the National Review in December 1990, an edition which commemorated the life of Malcolm Muggeridge who had died the previous month.

Christopher Booker is a well-known and popular journalist, contributing to many publications including The Spectator, the Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph. He has written many books, including The Neophiliacs and The Seventies, each chronicling life during decades of change.

Another King.....

A Sermon given by Malcolm Muggeridge

[The High Kirk of St. Giles, Edinburgh has been the site of many controversies over the years. This sermon, preached by Malcolm in January 1968 to the students of Edinburgh University in his capacity of Rector perhaps consequently engendered more heated media discussion than most. But here in Malcolm's own words is a statement of his belief, a confession of faith more enduring ultimately than the issue of resignation as Rector which hit the headlines at the time]

Nowadays when I occasionally find myself in a pulpit – one of those bad habits one gets into in late middle age – and never, by the way, in a more famous pulpit than this one, I always have the same feeling as I look around as I do now at your faces; a deep, passionate longing to be able to say something memorable, to shed some light.

'I am the light of the world,' the Founder of the Christian religion said. What a stupendous phrase! And how particularly marvellous today when one is conscious of so much darkness in the world! 'Let your light shine before men', he exhorted us.

You know, sometimes on foolish television or radio panels, or being interviewed, someone asks me what I most want, what I should most like to do in the little that remains of my life, and I always nowadays truthfully answer, and it is truthful, 'I should like my light to shine, even if only very fitfully, like a match struck in a dark cavernous night and then flickering out.'

How I should love to be able to speak to you with even a thousandth part of the certainty and the luminosity of St Paul for instance in Thessalonica, when he and his companions were, in the most literal sense, turning the world upside down by insisting, contrary to Caesar's decrees, that there was another king, one Jesus. Golden words, a bright and shining light indeed. Now something had happened to him, as it had to Christ's disciples, transforming them from rather inarticulate cowardly men who ran away for cover when their leader was arrested, into the most lion-hearted, eloquent, quick-witted, yes, and even gay evangelists the world has ever known. Irresistible in their oratory, indomitable in their defiance, captivating in their charm; overwhelming in the love which shone in their faces, in their words and in their deeds. Well, what had happened to them? We can call it what we like as far as I'm concerned—'the Holy Ghost descending,' 'Damascus Road conversion,' 'speaking with tongues,' anything you like, I don't mind. The point is that, as they said themselves, they were reborn. They

were new men with a new allegiance, not to any form of earthly authority but to this other king, this Jesus. Ever since their time, with all the ups and downs, confusions and villainies of institutional Christianity, this notion has persisted, of being reborn, of dying in order to live, and I want to consider whether such a notion, as I understand it the very heart of the Christian religion, has any point or validity today.

In the boredom and despair of an expiring Roman civilisation, with all the inevitable accompaniments of permissive morality, addiction to vicarious violence, erotic and narcotic fantasies, it offered a new light of hope, a new joy in living, to one and all, including, perhaps especially including, the slaves. In our uncannily similar circumstances, has it anything to offer today? That's my question. Of course I can't answer it as St Paul and the disciples did. They were the beginning; we are the end. I, too, belong to the twentieth century, with a twentieth century sceptical mind and sensual disposition, with the strange mixture of crazy credulity in certain directions, as for instance in science and advertising (if you happen to cast an eye through the advertisements in your colour supplements you will see displayed there a credulity which would be the envy of every witch doctor in Africa) and equally crazy scepticism, so that illiterate schoolboys and half-baked university students turn aside with contemptuous disbelief before propositions which the greatest minds and the noblest dispositions of our civilisation—Pascal, say, and Tolstoy—accepted as self-evident. That is our twentieth century plight. Let me then, in true twentieth-century style, begin with a negative proposition—what I consider to be the ineluctable unviability and absurdity of our present way of life.

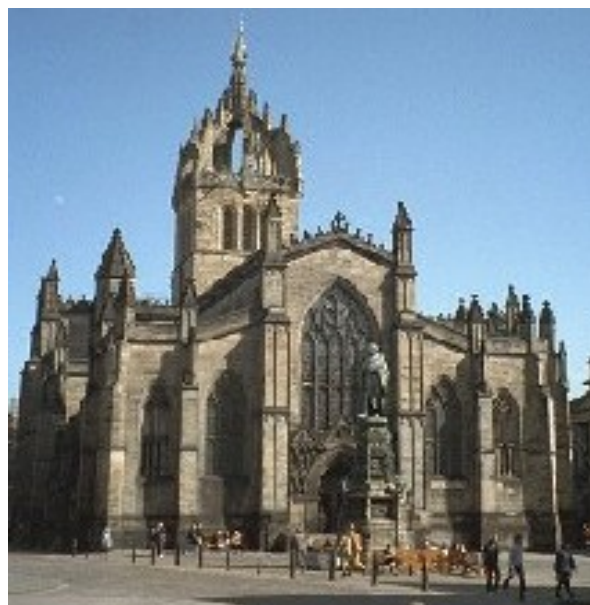
How can anyone, apart from an occasional 'with-it' cleric, provost of King's or Hungarian economist, seriously believe that by projecting present trends into the future we arrive at enduring human felicity—producing more and more and consuming more and more year by year under the impetus of an ever more frenzied persuasion by mass-communication media, and at the same time watching the rest of mankind get hungrier and hungrier, in ever greater want; growing ever stronger, with the means at our disposal to blow ourselves and our earth itself to smithereens many times over, and at the same time becoming ever more neurotic about the imminence of global nuclear war; moving ever faster and farther afield, exploring the universe itself, and pursuing happiness, American style; 'grinding out our appetites,' as Shakespeare so elegantly put it, ever more desperately,

with physical and even moral impunity, and spiritual desolation. It is a state of affairs at once so bizarre and so tragic that I alternate between laughing hilariously at it and looking forward eagerly to my departure from the scene, quite soon now—in at most a decade or so. This year, at sixty-five years old, I move into the N.T.B.R. (Not To Be Resuscitated) bracket, when some high-minded, highly skilled doctor will look me over and decide in his infinite wisdom and humanity whether I am worth keeping alive. As I have said, I alternate between a sense of the utter absurdity of it all and a desire to get out of so nonsensical a world.

May I, moving from general things to more particular ones, consider for instance the situation in this ancient university, with which through the accident of election I find myself briefly associated. The students here in this university, as in other universities, are the ultimate beneficiaries under our welfare system. They are supposed to be the spearhead of progress, flattered and paid for by their admiring seniors, an elite who will happily and audaciously carry the torch of progress into the glorious future opening before them. Now, speaking for myself, there is practically nothing that they could do in a mood of rebelliousness or refusal to accept the ways and values of our run-down, spiritually impoverished way of life, for which I shouldn't feel some degree of sympathy or, at any rate, understanding. Yet how infinitely sad; how, in a macabre sort of way, funny, that the form their insubordination takes should be a demand for Pot and Pills; for the most tenth-rate sort of escapism and self-indulgence ever known! It is of one of those situations a social historian with a sense of humour will find very much to his taste. All is prepared for a marvellous release of youthful creativity; we await the great works of art, the high spirited venturing into new fields of perception and understanding—and what do we get? The resort of any old slobbering debauchee anywhere in the world at any time—Dope and Bed.

The feeling aroused in me by this, I have to confess, is not so much disapproval as contempt, and this, as you may imagine, makes it difficult, in fact impossible, for me as Rector to fulfil my functions. Here, if I may, I should like to insert a brief word of personal explanation. I, as Rector, and Allan Frazer as my Assessor, find ourselves as you know responsible for passing on to the university authorities the views and requests of the student body as conveyed to us by their elected officers, and as set forth in their magazine *Student* for whose conduct they are responsible. Their request concerning the handing out of birth pills is as it happens highly distasteful to us, as we have not hesitated to let it be known. The view of the S.R.C. officers as expressed by some of them, and not repudiated publicly by any of them, is that the Rector and his Assessor are bound not only to pass on but to recommend whatever

the S.R.C. may decide. This is a role which, in my opinion, no self-respecting Rector, or Assessor, could possibly countenance, and I have therefore asked the Principal to accept my resignation, as has my Assessor.



ST. GILES CATHEDRAL, EDINBURGH

So, dear Edinburgh students, this is likely to be the last time I address you, and this is what I want to say—and I don't really care whether it means anything to you or not, whether you think there is anything in it or not. I want you to believe that this row I have had with your elected officers has nothing to do with any puritanical attitudes on my part. I have no belief in abstinence for abstinence's own sake, no wish under any circumstances to check any fulfilment of your life and being. But I have to say to you this: that whatever life is or is not about, it is not to be expressed in terms of drug stupefaction and casual sexual relations. However else we may venture into the unknown it is not I assure you on the plastic wings of *Playboy* magazine or psychedelic fancies.

I have recently, as you might have heard, been concerned in making some films for B.B.C. television on the New Testament, and it involved, along with much else, standing on what purports to be, and, unlike most shrines, may well be, the Hill of Beatitudes where the most momentous of all sermons was preached some two thousand years ago. It was rather marvellous standing there looking down on the Sea of Galilee and trying to reconstruct the scene—the obscure teacher and the small, nondescript, mostly illiterate crowd gathered round him. For the Christian religion began, let us never forget, not among brilliant, academic minds, not among the wealthy, or the powerful, or the brilliant, or the exciting, or the beautiful, or the fascinating; not among television

personalities or leader writers on the *Guardian*; it began among these very simple, illiterate people, and one was tremendously conscious of them gathered there.

And then those words, those incomparable words, which were to echo and re-echo through the world for centuries to come; even now not quite lost! How it is the meek, not the arrogant, who inherit the earth. How we should love our enemies, and do good to them that hate us. How it is the poor, not the rich, who are blessed, and so on. Words which have gone on haunting us all even though we ignore them; the most sublime words ever spoken.

One of the Beatitudes that had for some reason never before impressed me particularly this time stuck in my mind and has stayed there ever since. It is: *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God*. May I commend this Beatitude to you as having some bearing on our present controversies and discontents. To see God is the highest aspiration of man, and has preoccupied the rarest human spirits at all times. Seeing God means understanding, seeing into the mystery of things. It is, or should be, the essential quest of universities like this one, and of their students and their staff. Note that the realisation of this quest is achieved, not through great and good deeds, nor even through thought, however perceptive and enlightened, certainly not through sensations, however generated, nor what is called success, however glittering. The words are clear enough— 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.'

To add to the macabre comedy of our situation, into the ribald scene of confusion and human inadequacy that I have been talking about there break idiot voices prophesying a New Jerusalem just round the corner. One always, I find, underestimates the staying power of human folly. When poor old H. G. Wells breathed his last, having produced in *Mind at the End of its Tether* a final repudiation of everything he had ever said or thought, I fondly supposed, and said to myself, that no more would be heard in my time of men like gods. How wrong I was! A quarter of a century later a provost of King's, Cambridge, was to carry the same notion to an even higher pitch of fantasy. No doubt, long after I am gone someone will be saying on some indestructible programme like 'Any Questions?' that a touch more abortion, another year at school, and birth pills given away with the free morning milk, and all will be well.

What are we to do about it, this crazy Gadarene slide? I never met a man made happy by money or worldly success or sensual indulgence, still less by the stupefaction of drugs or alcohol. Yet we all, in one way

or another, pursue these ends, as the advertiser well knows. He offers them in Technicolor and stereosound, and there are many takers. The politician likewise, often with a nondescript retinue of academic and clerical support, offers the same package in collective terms. Underneath, we all know how increasingly hollow and unconvincing it is— the Great Society, mankind coming of age, men like gods, all the unspeakable cant of utopians on the run. Our very art and literature, such as they are, convey the same thing—the bad dreams of a materialistic society. Bacon and Pinter tapering off into the sheer incoherence of a Burroughs and a Becket, with the Beatles dancing on our grave, and Allen Ginsberg playing his hand harmonium, and that delectable old Hindu con-man the Maharishi, throwing in his blessing. Communist utopianism produced Stalin; the pursuit of happiness, American style, produced Richard Nixon, and our special welfare variety has produced Harold Wilson. If that doesn't put paid to all three nothing ever will. As for the scientific utopia looming ahead, we have caught a glimpse of that, too, in the broiler houses, the factory farms and lately the transplant operations, with still warm bodies providing the spare parts for patching up others, and so *ad infinitum*.

So I come back to where I began, to that other king, one Jesus; to the Christian notion that man's efforts to make himself personally and collectively happy in earthly terms are doomed to failure. He must indeed, as Christ said, be born again, be a new man, or he's nothing. So at least I have concluded, having failed to find in past experience, present dilemmas and future expectations, any alternative proposition. As far as I am concerned, it is Christ or nothing.

To add a final touch of comic relief (because you know an ex-editor of *Punch* cannot help, even in the most gruesome situations, looking around for something comic), I might add that what I have just said is, I know, far more repellent to most of the present ecclesiastical establishment than any profession of scepticism or disbelief.

I increasingly see us in our human condition as manacled and in a dark cell. The chains are our mortal hopes and desires; the dark cell is our ego, in whose obscurity and tiny dimensions we are confined. Christ tells us how to escape, striking off the chains of desire, and putting a window in the dark cell through which we may joyously survey the wide vistas of eternity and the bright radiance of God's universal love. No view of life, as I am well aware, could be more diametrically opposed to the prevailing one today, especially as purveyed

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Ah Yes. You are Radio.

By William F Buckley Jr.

Last year, I was asked by Sally Muggeridge to come up with a keynote 'happening' for the 100th Anniversary Celebration at Wheaton College. Sally, who had been almost two years devising the strengths of those two days was no doubt preparing to countenance their weaknesses, about to begin with what the attendees would have that evening from this speaker. Anyway, I told her I would do the best I could but that it would not prove enough to pay Malcolm what we all owe him....

I meant by that that Malcolm deposited, so to speak, in my little network, an enormous body of work. I cannot compete with Greg Wolfe, his fine biographer, but Malcolm did no fewer than seven Firing Line programs; in London, in New York, in Robertsbridge. And then we had extensive collaborative hours in Rome.

It was always required, on those programs, to introduce Malcolm, my guest. This was easy to do in that the formal itinerary of his life was distinct. Hard to do, if one sought to capture its meaning or its imagination. Here he was his own best presenter. It is for that reason that his two autobiographical books were received with such acclaim, praised especially for their stylistic and historical achievements.

We know that his father was a dominant figure who sought the improvement of the world through socialism. And then Malcolm married the lovely Kitty Dobbs, who sprang from the loins if less than directly, of Beatrice and Sidney Webb. They were, like father Muggeridge, certain that a world fostered by socialism would bloom into paradise on earth.

Bear that background in mind when, as a young journalist Muggeridge arrived in Moscow, setting out to see for himself how human life was faring under socialism. He was of course stunned by what he saw. He reported on mass starvation effected as ideological discipline on the kulak class. Over four million starved in order to punish an agricultural class for bourgeois productivity.

Seventy years after this genocidal expression of Communist faith it strikes us as obvious that the excesses of Leninism and Stalin could have been penetrated even by deaf mutes, but of course it was not so. During the period in question, Walter Duranty was informing the *New York Times* that all was well and promising in the Soviet world, and the legion of enthusiasts for the



socialist experiment did not quickly forgive Malcolm for that special sin of premature acuity of vision.

I needed, in introducing him, to give some skeletal notice of his career after leaving Moscow. Muggeridge, writing for the *Guardian* and the *Observer*, influential and consecratedly leftist. He went to British military intelligence during the war and did work in Mozambique, where in a moment of despair, he set out on what he intended should be a suicidal swim into the ocean. A mile out to sea, he turned back, resolved to re-engage his life. After the war there was the period when he was editor of *Punch*, the great satirical weekly which didn't entirely engross him. Then, while spurning in print the popular medium of television, he nevertheless harnessed it to his interests and concerns.

There was a special nature to his appeal on television. The character of his skills made him a great star on the media, challenging contemporary idols with unmitigated derision, but always, I thought, with a human concern that put his mayhem into a special perspective. Some of his followers would acknowledge this as a Christian perspective which, in time, he would so specifically associate himself with. It was during that time that he, so to speak, 'discovered' Mother Teresa, wrote his book about her, turning the proceeds from its huge success over to her for use in her work. And it was during that period that he did his documentaries on historical origins of Christianity, writing also, my chosen book, *Jesus Rediscovered*.

It was in 1980 that we undertook the Vatican shows. A resourceful and extraordinarily well-connected Canadian, immigrated from Roumania, and a discoverer soon after landing of plutonium, approached me via an intermediary. He had got from the Vatican an unprecedented favour; the private use of the Sistine Chapel for 24 hours. The Canadian entrepreneur asked me to superintend two half-hour programs, making such use as I saw fit of that august site in the Vatican, on the ceiling of which Michelangelo depicted the bestowal of life to man by God, the room where the cardinals assemble, as the need arises, to name a successor pope.

I asked Malcolm to serve with me in my project, which was to examine two parables; that of the Prodigal Son and that of the Good Samaritan. I proposed to explore with three senior theatrical presences, namely, Princess Grace of Monaco and the veteran actors David

Niven and Charlton Heston. The program was a failure as television fare and was never released. But several features of it, one of them comical, another sublime, stay in the memory.

Malcolm had telephoned me from Sussex, a week or so before our rendezvous in Rome. He told me that in his long lifetime, he had reached 77, he had met “practically every famous person who occupied a national stage.” He had regretted almost all of these encounters, he said, because they were mostly disillusioning. But, he went on, notwithstanding, he wanted very much to meet Pope John Paul when we did our program in Rome. Perhaps between the two of us, using our combined resources, such a meeting might be effected?

It was duly effected; and the encounter was not so much disillusioning, as inexplicable. The saintly Pope appeared in his private audience room, coming up from three hours spent addressing a thousand pilgrims in St. Peters Square, speaking and answering questions in six or seven foreign languages. He was visibly tired. Presented by the Lord Chamberlain to Malcolm Muggeridge – the two of us with David Niven – the Pope said to Malcolm in his workable English: “Ah yes. You are radio.”

There was then, as now, 23 years later, no devisable answer to that question that would make any sense; not even if it had been directed not to Muggeridge, the foremost Christian apologist in the English-speaking world, but to Don Imus. All Malcolm could do was to smile benignly (no-one’s smile in the history of smiles was more radiant). He stammered out that yes he had indeed done....some....work....on the radio. Whereupon the Pope turned to David Niven. “Ah, you were the great student of my predecessor.” David Niven had to use all his resources as a professional actor to devise some kind of answer, to conform with the implied premise, that he had any special knowledge of Pope Paul VI. Now it was my turn. I thought to make a desperate effort to signal to the Holy Father what it was the three of us were doing in his Sistine Chapel. But His Holiness’s bewilderment was not to be dispelled. He summarily ended the private audience by motioning to the photographer, who memorialized the scene. The Pope gave us a blessing, wished us Godspeed, and departed.

There can never have been greater hilarity than in the Vatican elevator that brought us down to earth. What had happened, we reconstructed, had to be the consequence of a Vatican bureaucracy that had prepared the Pope to meet three postulants completely unrelated to us – perhaps Marconi, who could certainly have said that Yes, he was radio, and a contemporary biographer of Pope Paul. For weeks, when Malcolm called on the

telephone, he would announce himself, “Bill, this is Radio calling.” Malcolm Muggeridge did not let go by any opportunity to find amusement, and to revel in it. But then, when I visited at his home a year later and scanned his bookshelves, I saw there, along with photographs of his family, a photograph of Malcolm Muggeridge, standing solemn, with perhaps a trace of a smile alongside Pope John Paul.

As I’ve said, the television drama was not satisfactory for general viewing, but thoughts were spoken which I recall. There were parables of Malcolm’s own, captured in segments of the Vatican tape. How skilfully Malcolm played us, an important component of his histrionic art. He spoke of what a caterpillar, in ugly desuetude, might have been expected to have in mind upon reaching old age, anticipating its disappearance as a creature on earth. He spoke also of King Lear and of the brilliance of his suffering, examining a favourite line of Shakespeare; “*Come,*” says Cordelia, the faithful daughter to the bereft, blinded king, “*Let’s away to prison, and take upon us the mystery of things.*”

I remember especially his eloquence in one of our exchanges, in which he spoke self-reproachfully of his own spiritual narrative as an inchoate Christian. Much has been written, by biographers and critics, about Malcolm Muggeridge’s earlier decades in life, and of his pursuit of sensual pleasure. Now, in Rome at age 77, he was long since the ascetic, the spartan vegetarian. The only self-denial he abjured being any forfeiture of amusement or of the tonic of laughter- these he indulged uncurbed. Indeed I think they were nourished by his other privations. And you could see it all in his face and manner. I quote a recent depiction of that face by his friend Bob Tyrell, from *The American Spectator* (March/April 2003 pp 62-65) “Beneath heavy brows, his eyes were crystalline blue and sparkled. His hair, retreating steadily from his wide forehead and providing a thin thatch across the massive dome of his head, was snow-white. He had a thick, rounded nose, big and fleshy ears, and a wraparound mouth from which resonated a drawling, exquisitely accented English. The skin on his face seemed thick, browned from gardening, creased across the forehead and at the corners of his wide mouth and eyes (perhaps) from prolonged bouts of despair and insomnia. Little pebbles of brown discoloration and minute toadstools made the face of a caricaturist’s playground. It was an immensely friendly face, but (something) suggested the troubled interior.”

That trouble I think he disclosed when, in Rome, he touched down on the call of the Cross. Malcolm wanted to tell of his dereliction, of his failure to have acted upon an early epiphany. “I can remember the first time my eyes rested on lines by Blake and the extraordinary feeling I had of some unique distillation of

understanding and joy, a unique revelation of life's very innermost meaning and significance".

"I find it now" – he spoke these words standing, dressed in his heavy black overcoat, guarding against the midnight cold in the Sistine Chapel that day in March – "I find it more difficult to recall and recount the feelings I had about the Cross even before it meant anything to me as such. It was, I now know, an obsessive interest; something I avidly sought out, as inflamed senses do erotica. I might fasten bits of wood together myself, or doodle it, this symbol, which was considered to be derisive in my home but which was also the focus of inconceivable hopes and desires – like a lost love's face, pulled out and gazed at with sick longing".

"As I remember this, a sense of my own failure lies leadenly upon me. I should have worn it over my heart, carried it, a precious standard never to be wrested out of my hands, even though I felt still borne aloft (by Blakes words). It should have become my cult, my uniform, my language, my life. I have no excuse. I can't say that I didn't know. I did know, from the beginning, and turned away. The lucky thieves were crucified with their Saviour. *You called me, and I didn't go* - those empty years, those empty words, that empty passion."

The self-reproach for putting off his subservience to the Cross and its meaning brought with it his startling conclusion, that suffering is the singular font of learning and of joy, such suffering as he endured, on reflecting on his failure, for so long, to be guided in his life by the Cross.

The critics of Malcolm Muggeridge make tirelessly, again and again, however various the angles from which the shafts are loosed, the contrast between the earlier revelry and the later self-discipline. Mostly they acknowledge his skills. As a writer and journalist he had few peers, his wit was abundant and lacerating, "Anthony Eden is a bore and he bores for England" he famously observed. And those who suffered from it, or were friendly to his targets, even servile, as with Mr. Richard Dimbleby, never really forgave him.

But the restiveness one feels in coming to terms with Malcolm Muggeridge on his 100th anniversary isn't satisfied by the smirks one can have by contrasting early and later deportments in his life. They issue, I think, from something deeper. After a while, a long while, calling attention to these discrepancies brings critical lockjaw – is he perpetually to be remembered for having lived a past he learned decades before his death so eloquently to reject? How often do those who want to know St. Augustine need to hear about his early saturnalia?

What Malcolm faced, and what his reputation will face on into the future, is a bewilderment that impels denunciation and even fear in some who are made uncomfortable by the totality of his vocation. It is, at the very least, discomfiting to hear professed the thought of Mother Teresa, in the language of the high table at All Souls. To hear him say it is unendurable for those who scorn his conclusions, yet perhaps are tempted to yield a non-public moment to wonder whether they might not some day pause, to take upon themselves the mystery of things. It is safer to drop into the critical pool one more stick of dye, which colors, as it is designed to do, the whole of the biographical critique, with such condescension as safely removes the reviewer from any suspicion that he is touched spiritually by the light of Malcolm Muggeridge.

Better to confine one's praise to his manifest contributions to his trade, and to linger on his quaint, even if potentially disruptive understanding of the meaning of our lives on earth and our destiny when we have left that life, as Malcolm did, on November 14th 1990. He has left us with a great legacy.

ENDS

Erudite, stylish and respected, William F Buckley Jr. is well known in the US as the founder and editor in chief of the conservative magazine "National Review." He was also presenter of "Firing Line", a serious television discussion program that ran for many years with Bill as a skilled interlocutor, thus becoming a broadcasting institution. He is also the author of numerous significant and best selling books, including the many Blackford Oakes spy thrillers. He is an accomplished sailor and harpsichordist. In 1989 he wrote "I am a younger man than Malcolm Muggeridge (though not by much), and I cannot reasonably aspire to his eloquence or learning. But I feel for him, as for a few other men and women I have known, a sense of gratitude that I have always found inexplicable, save through language that transcends the vernacular in which favours are recorded, and obligations acknowledged."

Portrait of a Pundit -1982

By Kathy Field Stephen

He stands at the far end of the platform, indistinguishable at a distance from the small swarm of people who get on and off the train at the village of Robertsbridge. In his navy blue jacket, baggy trousers, and oldish shoes, he could be a railway worker. But his cap is pulled down at a sharp angle in a possible attempt to shield his instantly recognisable face.

It is, of course, Malcolm Muggeridge, once the world's most mischievous pundit and Britain's most ubiquitous broadcaster, now transformed into the committed Christian thinker and resident sage of Robertsbridge.

In the station parking lot his bright orange hatchback is waiting with the passenger door open. "You get in there," he commands, pointing firmly. Seconds later the car is speeding along the road towards the Tudor country cottage that has become as much part of the Muggeridge mythology as Tolstoy's home, *Yasnaya Polyana*, was to his reputation.

The house itself – Park Cottage – is situated close to a cluster of other houses, not isolated as one might expect. The Muggeridges receive a steady stream of visitors there, many uninvited, who come to see for themselves how much of the myth survives in the man himself.

Inside the cottage the effect of English country cosiness is total. Nothing is fancy, but everything is comfortable. "It's terribly difficult to find simple things," says Kitty, his wife of 54 years.

Before seating himself in an oversized pink armchair, Muggeridge stirs and pokes the wood fire as his wife works in the kitchen. It all might seem a little too quaint if one didn't realise how the Muggeridges have arrived at what seems to be a real-life picture of contentment.

Their story is detailed in Muggeridge's diary, excerpts of which have been published in the United States under the title "*Like It Was*" (New York: William Morrow & Co.). The diary, published in 1981 in Britain, was praised for its honest portrait of a man whose exciting career was counter-balanced in his private life by despair at the world and an eventual realisation that Christianity was the only way of life for him.

January 5, 1954

Bad night full of dark fears. While shaving suddenly thought with infinite longing how, of all things, I'd most love to live a Christian life. This is the only wish

now I'd ever have. And yet other satisfactions, known to be spurious, still pursued. ("Like it Was," p 457)

This, in a paragraph, is his private story. There is also the story of the man who wanted to be a great novelist, like Tolstoy, but instead became a supremely successful journalist; a man who attracted the wrath of the public in his youth and the adulation of that same public in his old age; one who never quite attained the respect of most of the "loftiest" minds, but became a broadcaster who communicated serious ideas to a wide public with outstanding effectiveness.

He isn't a Tolstoy – he doesn't pretend to be: but he is for many people a serviceable symbol of the kind of intellectual and spiritual warmth that Tolstoy expressed. He leads a simple life, as Tolstoy tried to do; he is a vegetarian who neither smokes nor drinks. In the biography of him by Canadian academic Ian Hunter, Muggeridge is referred to as "the most influential lay exponent of Christianity since C. S. Lewis."

"I've had a very good life," says Muggeridge, reclining in his armchair. "I mean I've been fortunate in having a very delightful wife and children and grandchildren, and things I like very much. But still, life is intrinsically unsatisfactory. I think I've always had a religious temperament. It never seemed to me that what is available for one in materialistic terms is enough."

This distrust of worldly success and pleasure – he's had a great deal of both in his life – has been one cause of suspicion for Muggeridge's critics. Many of them would also consider that any claim Muggeridge might have to being taken seriously as a thinker is invalidated by his wide association with television. Muggeridge doesn't mind. Having been so outspoken for so long, he is used to criticism and responds well when it is constructive.

He concedes, for example, that his critics are right when they say he has sometimes taken controversial stands for controversy's sake. "Perhaps I am too hard on people," he says. "I love human beings, but I couldn't love them if I wasn't aware of their inadequacies, follies, and vanities." He would certainly include himself on any list of people covered by that description.

Though in person he seems the embodiment of elderly moderation and good sense, a Muggeridge trademark has always been stating things in extreme terms. He blames this partly on the nature of the media, which demands that you exaggerate in order to get things printed or broadcast.

He has publicly stated many times that he detests television as a medium; and yet his reputation was made by it to such an extent that many people – particularly in Britain – were asking themselves, just why *is* this man so famous?

It is a reasonable question to ask of a life that has a rather structure-less quality to it, almost as though success found Muggeridge rather than the other way around.

The turning point in his life was probably when he and his wife went to live in Moscow in the 1930's. She was the niece of socialists Beatrice Webb. He was the child of a socialist upbringing and a Cambridge education.

Though they were full of hopes when they went to Moscow – as many intellectuals were – they became radically disillusioned with leftist politics. To this day he finds the faintest whiff of liberalism abhorrent.

“Carrying out the liberal ideal has very often produced the exact opposite of what it purported to produce. Russia being a good example, and our welfare state here in Britain,” he says in his curiously drawling English accent.

“Don't mistake me,” he says. “I'm not against improving society, but I am against political dogma of every kind. Do you know any good governments?” he impishly inquires.

At many stages of his life, Muggeridge has seemed to be a sceptic who doubted that any kind of improvement was possible. A long tradition of humour has saved him from becoming, at times, an extremist prophet of doom. He has publicly held a belief – which he still holds – that the 20th century is heading in the wrong direction. But he has often turned these negative views into amusing comments on our time.

He admits: “It's much easier to be funny through denigration. It's rather difficult to make people laugh in a positive sense.”

It is not difficult to compile a seemingly endless list of things Muggeridge is passionately against. Many applaud his current forceful stands against abortion, permissiveness, pornography, and euthanasia. But during his life he seems at some time to have been against almost everything: anti-monarchy, anti-technology, anti-tourists, anti-modern literature, anti-women's liberation, and anti-Picasso, to name a few.

But it is this comically philosophical Muggeridge, now mellowed, that is the most appealing:

the televised prophet with a wide grin in place of the usual shaggy beard.

The prophet has been most interesting when he has associated himself in his writings and documentaries with the world's greatest thinkers: Blake, Kierkegaard, Cervantes, and Tolstoy, for example. Though he continually denies that he is of their stature, he has nonetheless been a conduit through which their ideas have been brought back into modern circulation. He has produced books and film on the lives of Jesus and the apostle Paul, and a highly praised movie of Mother Theresa's work in India.

Muggeridge's autobiography, “*Chronicles of Wasted Time*” has been described as the 20th-century equivalent of Rousseau's “*Confessions*” or “*The Education of Henry Adams*.” Though the two volumes in print detail the external events of his interesting life up to 1945, including his encounters with many of the best-known figures of the century, it is his spiritual development – often at odds with the events – that makes the books memorable.

He is now working on the third and final volume of his autobiography and confesses that it is not easy: I find the third volume – which I've been working on for a long time – hard to get just right. You want to say something positive – and that's important, particularly now, I think.”

It is as though the first two volumes of his autobiography, subtitled “The Green Stick” and “The Infernal Grove” have been a kind of long drum roll leading up to the third volume.

He plans to call the book “The Right Eye” after a phrase he came across in an old theological book: The left eye sees time and the creatures; the right eye looks out onto eternity.” He adds, “As I want this book to be rather about looking out onto eternity, it suits me as a title.” (Nominally an Anglican, Muggeridge says his commitment is to Christianity and not to a specific church.)

Muggeridge mentions that a friend, the portraitist Graham Sutherland, once said that when he was studying a face to paint a portrait, he would always notice that the two eyes of his subject were different: “He said it's true that one eye is a contemplative eye while the other is a worldly eye. I've been writing in a way about the worldly one; I would like to do this last volume more in regard to the other eye.”

The book will also complete the description of the chronology of Muggeridge's life: going to America

for the *Daily Telegraph*, his editorship of the humour magazine *Punch*, and his years with the BBC.

But one of the most important ideas he plans to discuss in the book is his contention that the world is full of parables if one only has the eyes to see them.

Darkness takes over the beautifully melancholic Sussex fields behind the cottage, and Muggeridge explains: This world which journalists are concerned with I'd come to feel was a sort of theatre of the absurd. It is in fact a different sort of theatre which I call the 'Theatre of Fearful Symmetry' – one of Blake's phrases. In other words, beneath the fantasy of the world there is a meaning. It's like a very poor soap opera, but it's a soap opera related to a reality. And in fact it's full of things which really are about how God is speaking to His creation.

"A favourite ironic topic of mine was the richest man in the world dying of malnutrition: Howard Hughes. I mean that's a perfect piece of fearful symmetry. The point is that wealth is nothing, that Howard Hughes with the greatest amount of wealth was in the same position as the people who are carried in starving from the streets of Calcutta."

He gets up to stir and poke a bit of life into the fire. It's a typical Muggeridge pronouncement, the kind

he claims, with typical wit, he got into the habit of making when he worked as a tour guide in Belgium during a university vacation.

As to whether these pronouncements have made him a true success or not, and how to adept he is as a seer of parables, perhaps the third volume of the autobiography will show.

Regardless of that result, Muggeridge is fixedly philosophic about his own estimation of his life: The difference between one life and another – it seems to be dramatically different – but in actual fact you're covering the same sort of ground, really."

It was time to catch a train back to London. On the way to the station in that incongruous orange hatchback, a hare suddenly darted from the darkness and leaped magnificently across the glare of the headlights into the country beyond. It seemed some sort of parable, but Muggeridge wasn't saying what it meant.

ENDS

This article originally appeared in The Christian Science Monitor on March 25th 1982. Katherine Field Stephen lives in the US and writes for The CSM and other publications.

Another King... Continued from page 9

in our mass-communication media, dedicated as they are to the counter-proposition, that we *can* live by bread alone, and the more the better. Yet I am more convinced than I am in my own existence that the view of life Christ came into the world to preach, and died to sanctify, remains as true and as valid as ever, and that all who care to, young and old, healthy and infirm, wise and foolish, with or without 'A' or 'O' levels, may live thereby, finding in our troubled, confused world, as in all other circumstances and at all other times, an enlightenment and a serenity not otherwise attainable. Even though, as may very well prove the case, our civilisation like others before it soon finally flickers out, and institutional Christianity with it, the light Christ shed shines as brightly as ever for those who seek an escape from darkness. The truths he spoke will answer their dilemmas and assuage their fears, bringing hope to the hopeless, zest to the despairing and love to the loveless, precisely as happened two thousand years ago and through all the intervening centuries.

I finished off my filming in the Holy Land by taking with a friend the road to Emmaus. Those of you who still read the Bible will remember the details – how, shortly after the Crucifixion, Cleopas, some sort of

relative of Christ's family, and a friend were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus and inevitably talking as they went along about the Crucifixion which had happened so recently.

They were joined by a third man who fell into step beside them and shared in their conversation. When they arrived at their destination in Emmaus, since it was late they pressed him to come and eat supper with them. The story, you know, is so incredibly vivid that I swear to you that no one who has ever tried to write can doubt its authenticity. There is something in the very language and manner of it which breathes truth. Anyway, they went in to eat their supper, and of course when the stranger broke bread they realised he was no stranger but their Saviour. As my friend and I walked along like Cleopas and his friend, we recalled as they did the events of the Crucifixion and its aftermath in the light of our utterly different and yet similar world. Nor was it a fancy that we too were joined by a third presence. And I tell you that wherever the walk, and whoever the wayfarers, there is always this third presence ready to emerge from the shadows and fall in step along the dusty, stony way.

ENDS

The Malcolm Muggeridge Society

*If you have enjoyed reading this issue of **THE GARGOYLE** and have not yet joined the Society, we would invite you to do so now. The Society seeks to provide a focus for all worldwide who have a continuing interest in his life as journalist, author, broadcaster, soldier-spy and Christian apologist.*

The aims of the Society are:

- To provide a source of information for those interested in researching his life and works.
- To keep his writings in print and encourage the publication of new critiques and scholarship and to provide a forum internationally for admirers to meet and discuss Muggeridge's work.
- To publish a regular newsletter or magazine, and to encourage republication of his books and publication of unpublished material.
- To maintain a relationship with those media organisations (e.g. the BBC) who hold extensive archive material worthy of preservation and re-broadcast.
- To provide and encourage linkage with other societies and associations where mutual interest exists (e.g. PG Wodehouse Society, GK Chesterton Society, CS Lewis Society, Ukraine Society etc)
- To increase awareness of the papers, writings and memorabilia held in the Malcolm Muggeridge Collection at Wheaton College, Illinois.
- To provide a web presence with linkages and a sharing of information.
- To organise periodical social and literary events.

The Malcolm Muggeridge Society

Membership Fee: £10.00 (US\$20.00*)

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The Malcolm Muggeridge Society

Pilgrim's Cottage

Pike Road, Eythorne

Dover, KENT

ENGLAND CT15 4DJ

Tel: +44 (0)1304 831964

Address: **THE GARGOYLE**, The Malcolm Muggeridge Society, Pilgrim's Cottage, Pike Road, Eythorne, Kent, CT15 4DJ, UK

Telephone: +44 (0) 1304 831964, www.malcolmmuggeridge.org, e-mail to: sally@malcolmmuggeridge.org

The Malcolm Muggeridge Society

President: Sally Muggeridge, Patrons: Lord Black of Crossharbour, Sir David Frost, William F. Buckley Jr., Richard Ingrams,

Treasurer and Editor: David Williams

The Malcolm Muggeridge Archives & Special Collection: Wheaton College, 501 College Avenue, Wheaton, IL 60187-5593, USA

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