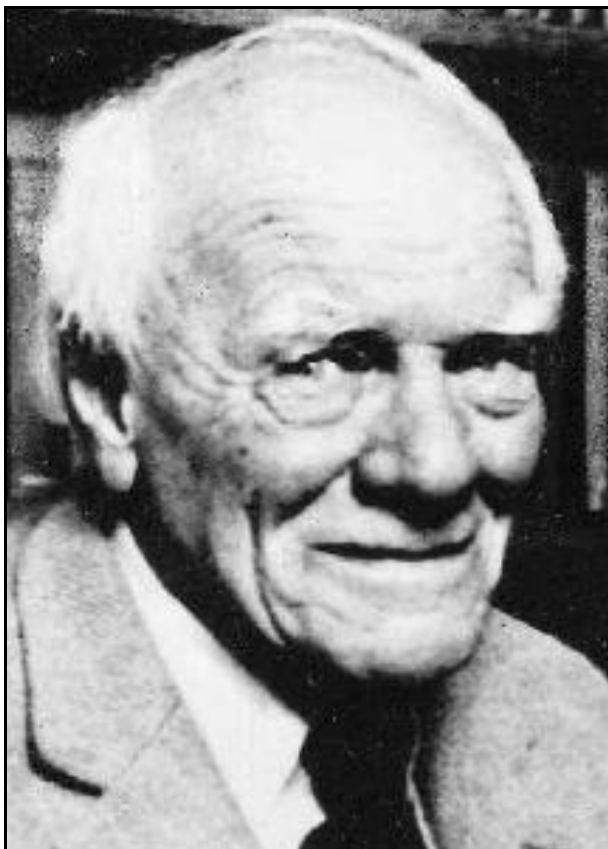
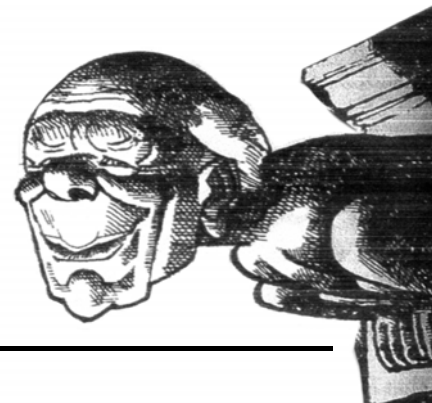


THE GARGOYLE

THE JOURNAL OF THE MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE SOCIETY
ISSUE No. 4

OCTOBER 2004



Muggeridge was The Gargoyle.

He was there just in case the steeples of human endeavour - whether religious, political, economic, or cultural - were ever seized by the delusion that they really had reached to heaven.

The gargoyle will always be needed, for human beings are almost always taking themselves too seriously.

(Richard John Neuhaus
- *National Review* 1990)

THE GARGOYLE

- Page 2 Letter from the President
Page 3 Malcolm Muggeridge's Journey - Roger Kimball
Page 7 The Great Liberal Death Wish - Malcolm Muggeridge
Page 12 A Great Father - John Muggeridge
Page 13 Muggeridge: the long road from agnosticism to faith
- B. A. Santamaria
Page 15 A Chronicle of Time - Ronald W. Nikkel
Page 16 The Malcolm Muggeridge Society

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

All with an interest in the work and the varied life of Malcolm Muggeridge are invited to join this Society. See details on page 16 or join 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 and times.

Letter from the President of the Society



*I*n August I had the rare pleasure of seeing my cousins John and Leonard together – John lives in Toronto, Canada, Leonard in Dunstable, England. They were about to set off to visit their sister Valentine (Val) in Utrecht, Holland to help her celebrate her seventieth birthday. And indeed they did with style. However, it was a great shock to hear that she suffered a serious stroke during dinner with her brothers just two days later and died shortly afterwards. I know a lot of members will want to pass on their sympathy to John and Leonard. It turned out to be a somewhat traumatic time for them both in Holland.

In this issue we have included a transcript of a lecture delivered by Malcolm in 1979 'The Great Liberal Death Wish' from a series of lectures entitled 'The Humane Holocaust'. The subject clearly pre-occupied him. He drew a direct parallel between the German Holocaust and the movement he perceived in Western Society towards accepting embryo research, spare-part surgery, abortion and euthanasia. Always prophetic, we can perhaps imagine his views about today's gene manipulation and so-called 'Designer babies', the latest manifestation of the onward march of science. His voice is missed.

I want to draw member's attention to Lord Deedes new book 'Brief Lives' in which a chapter has been devoted to Malcolm. Bill, a nonagenarian, was of course present at the Centenary Lunch in London last year and contributed with considerable humour.

Plans are well advanced for our Muggeridge event in Cairo on March 10th, and I am delighted that indefatigable Peter Stockbridge is planning to attend with his Mugg Shots one man show. If you feel that a visit to Egypt and its many fascinating sights is overdue, why not plan to catch this Muggeridge 'happening'. We would love to have you join us.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Sally Muggeridge'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a horizontal line.

Sally Muggeridge
President
sally@malcolmmuggeridge.org

Malcolm Muggeridge's Journey

By Roger Kimball

I came to Carthage, where I found myself in the midst of a hissing cauldron of lusts. I had not yet fallen in love, but I was in love with the idea of it, and this feeling that something was missing made me despise myself for not being more anxious to satisfy the need. I began to look around for some object for my love, since I badly wanted to love something.

—St. Augustine, *Confessions*

Diversion is the only thing that consoles us in our wretchedness, and yet diversion is itself the greatest of our miseries. For it is diversion above all that keeps us from seriously taking stock of ourselves and so leads us imperceptibly to perdition.

—Pascal, *Pensées*

The ‘Thomas,’ which Thomas Malcolm Muggeridge never used, was after Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle’s fulminations against modernity, the ‘cash nexus,’ materialism, etc., greatly impressed Muggeridge père, a factory clerk and earnest Fabian reformer in Croydon, south of London. H. T. Muggeridge was the overwhelming influence on Malcolm’s early life, and so it was only natural that Carlyle’s animadversions should greatly impress him, too. The third of five boys, Malcolm once claimed that Carlyle was the greatest influence on his literary style. I doubt that. But Muggeridge did become an accomplished fulminator, sometimes of conspicuous, even Carlylean, gloominess. If he never produced anything to equal Carlyle’s great historical works, he did rival the sage of Chelsea in the ferocity of his denunciations—also his enthusiasms—and may have outdone Carlyle in the deployment of gleefully deflationary wit. He certainly wrote more digestible prose.

Muggeridge is not much of a presence today, though his centennial in 2003 sparked a minor recrudescence of Muggeridgiana. A painstaking and informative biography by Gregory Wolfe, originally published in 1995, was re-issued with a brief new preface last year. (Richard Ingrams’s shorter, more sprightly *Life*, also published in 1995, is unfortunately out of print.) Sprouting here and there are panels, symposia, and conferences devoted to ‘St. Mugg’—as the cartoonist Wally Fawkes (‘Trog’) once denominated him—as well as sundry essays with titles like “Malcolm Muggeridge’s Journey.”

I suspect it will prove to be a brief and haphazard revival, however, and more’s the pity. Muggeridge is a tonic force, well worth resuscitating. He

could be crankish. Sometimes he was downright absurd. But, at least until the last decade of his life, when his powers guttered, he was rarely merely crankish. Often he was incandescently perceptive. Above all he provided an intelligent admonitory voice, a voice against the grain of received opinion, urging caution, broadcasting unwelcome truths, nudging his interlocutors beyond the warm circle of their self-absorption.

In his heyday, which stretched from the 1930s through the 1960s and into the 1970s, Muggeridge was a formidable figure. He commanded prodigious literary and rhetorical gifts. He knew everyone: the infamous as well as the famous. He travelled everywhere: teaching in India and Egypt as a young man, on assignment in Moscow, Washington, New York, Berlin, Tokyo... In World War II, Muggeridge was a spy with MI6, stationed in Mozambique. He was, according to one biographer, an “outstanding secret agent,” through whose ministrations a German U-boat was captured. Muggeridge was also a nimble public performer, quick with a comeback, heedless of sacred cows. His enemies (never in short supply) belaboured his inconsistencies, his “contradictions”; he gloried in them.

Over the course of his long career (he died in 1990 at eighty-seven), Muggeridge published a clutch of novels. In 1931, his play, *Three Flats*, was performed in London. (George Bernard Shaw, who had already read the work, was in the audience opening night.) “From earliest childhood,” Muggeridge noted, “it always seemed to me that the only thing worth doing in life was to write.”

But Muggeridge was not really Muggeridge in his purely literary efforts. His best work was in the realm of journalism, taking that term in its highest and broadest sense. He wrote about virtually every signal public event and personality from around 1930 through the 1970s. And yet he invariably interwove description with introspection. Reporting the news was part of assembling his autobiography. By the same token, his autobiographical writings—published are a volume of diaries and *Chronicles of Wasted Time*, a two-volume memoir that takes Muggeridge through World War II—are instinct with the news and personalities of the day.

Muggeridge seems to have written for just about every important English paper and journal, including *The Spectator*, *Encounter*, *The Listener*, *The New Statesman*, *The Manchester Guardian* (where he became chief leader writer at twenty-seven), *The Telegraph* (where he was deputy editor for a spell), and *Punch*, which he edited for

nearly five years in the 1950s. Muggeridge also wrote for many American publications. He had a column at *Esquire*—a publication that once mattered—and his work would regularly turn up in *The New Republic*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and other illustrious venues. By late 1940s he was a familiar figure on BBC radio. By the late-1950s he was ubiquitous on BBC television, where his cantankerous wit, oddly patrician appearance (replete with cigarette-and-holder for histrionic effect), and braying, Cambridge-trumps-Croydon accent transfixed audiences. A patent of his celebrity came in 1968 when his wax figure was unveiled at Madame Tussaud's, sharing a room with Elizabeth Taylor, Charles de Gaulle, Alfred Hitchcock, and the Beatles, among others.

In his prose, Muggeridge tended to proceed by imbrication, layering his analysis of appearance, character, and achievement—the whole set firmly in the context of world events—to produce memorable, often devastating, portraits. In 1956, after the Suez crisis, Muggeridge had this to say about Prime Minister Anthony Eden:

“His somehow slightly seedy good looks and attire, his ingratiating smile and gestures, the utter nothingness of what he had to say—did it not all provide an outward and visible manifestation of an inward and invisible loss of authority and self-confidence? Yes, it was entirely fitting that this tedious, serious Etonian, on whose lips were the last dying echoes of the late nineteenth-century concept of progress without tears, should have had his moment in the middle of the turbulent and cruel twentieth century. He was a Disraeli hero who had moved into a service flat. . . . As has been truly said, . . . he was not only a bore, he bored for England.”

Has Eden's essential fecklessness ever been more piquantly sketched? Can anyone who has heard of the man who not only “bored, but bored for England” forget the characterization?

Deflationary finales were one of Muggeridge's specialties. After World War II, he went to Tokyo and witnessed a public appearance by the Emperor: a “nervous, shy, stuttering, pathetic figure, formerly God.” There was a large streak of the contrarian in Muggeridge. If all good society were united in believing “X,” he was likely to give “not-X” a sympathetic airing. It was part of his lifelong campaign against high-minded earnestness—which is not, I hasten to add, the same thing as a campaign against seriousness. Sometimes, it is true, Muggeridge was merely impish. It was part of what made him an effective television performer. An interview with Salvador Dalí began with this exchange:

MUGGERIDGE: I know we're supposed to discuss modern art, and I expect we shall, but first of all may I say I'm fascinated by your moustaches. Might I ask what happens to them at night?

DALI: They droop.

When the evangelist Billy Graham replied to a question by saying that “Only God could answer that one,” Muggeridge instantly interjected: “And we haven't got him in the studio, or”—casting his eyes upwards—“have we?”

Muggeridge was a complex, many-sided creature. He was a driven man, plagued by insomnia, night fears, and nameless yearnings for surcease. His joking, bad-boy antics were played partly for laughs, for ‘ratings.’ But they also, I believe, had a more serious purpose. In the mid-1950s, when the scandal about Princess Margaret and Group Captain Townsend was fresh, he wrote a couple of exasperated pieces about the royal family. The title of the first, ‘Royal Soap Opera,’ epitomizes his point.

Muggeridge's criticism seems anodyne by today's standards. But it caused a furore at the time. The BBC banished him (temporarily) from its airwaves. The *Sunday Express* thundered that Muggeridge had “earned the contempt of all Britain.” A stranger spat at him in Brighton; his cottage at Robertsbridge was defaced with slogans by empire loyalists; a neighbour told him he was no longer welcome to walk across his fields: the wages of candour. In the United States, Muggeridge was interviewed by Mike Wallace. He dispensed his usual quota of pleasantries. Wallace quoted the British MP Michael Astor's remark that Muggeridge's “genius is for disliking [his] fellow human beings.”

“Well, if my fellow human beings were all Astors, there might be some element of truth in that, but fortunately for us all, the Astor family is a large one, but not so large that it's occupied the whole human race.”

That sort of thing keeps people entertained. But Muggeridge also went on to make this serious point.

“The essence of a free and civilized society is that everything should be subject to criticism, that all forms of authority should be treated with a certain reservation, and . . . that once you have produced . . . a totally conformist society in which there were no critics, that would in fact be an exact equivalent of the totalitarian societies against which we are supposed to be fighting a cold war.”

It is worth noting that in suggesting that “all forms of authority should be treated with a certain reservation,” Muggeridge is not denying the legitimacy of authority—what we might call the authority of authority. On the contrary, he hoped that constructive criticism would help bolster the claims of authority. He knew too well what happened when authority collapsed. It is one of the main themes of *The Thirties* (1940), perhaps his most comprehensive piece of social observation. Reviewing the book, George Orwell described this tart moral and political portrait of the decade as “brilliant and

depressing.” Like many readers, Orwell thought the book too negative—a sobering judgment from the author of 1984—but he subscribed to its main lesson, that “We are living a nightmare precisely because we have tried to set up an earthly paradise.”

Muggeridge was weaned on well-scrubbed attempts to set up an earthly paradise. It was a main plank of the Fabian creed: to dispense with the burdensome scaffolding of the past, its selfish institutions, its superstitions, its allegiance to outmoded vices like competition and greed. Love, harmony, brotherhood—an end to the depredations of inherited wealth, inherited ... anything. Onwards, upwards, unfettered progress, forever and ever. Not only was Muggeridge raised in that creed, he also married into it. Kitty Dobbs was the beautiful, freethinking niece of Sidney and Beatrice Webb; in marrying her, he noted many years later, he was marrying into “a sort of aristocracy of the Left.”

Muggeridge’s great gift as a political commentator was a nose for spurious idealism. Like nearly every right-thinking (which meant left-leaning) person, the young Muggeridge regarded the Soviet Union as the first chapter of the new utopia. When he went there as Moscow correspondent for *The Manchester Guardian* in the early 1930s, disabusement was almost immediate. As a leader writer, Muggeridge had tapped out “Many an uplifting sentence ... expressing the hope that moderate men of all shades of opinion would draw together, and that wiser counsels might yet prevail.” In Moscow, he discovered that “moderate men of all shades of opinion had a way of disappearing into Lubyanka Prison, never to be seen again.” Muggeridge saw the future, and—unlike Lincoln Steffens a decade earlier—he saw that it was hell on earth. Russia, he understood, was in the process of becoming “a huge and centrally organized slave state.” It wasn’t long before he was writing to his aunt-by-marriage Beatrice about his

“overwhelming conviction that the [Soviet] Government and all it stands for, its crude philosophy (religion if you like) is evil and a denial of everything I care for in life... .

Why should uncle Sidney say ... “I indignantly repudiate the slander that there is forced labour in the Soviet Union” when every single person in Russia knows there is forced labour ... ?”

A glimpse of Stalin’s Russia spurred Muggeridge’s political awakening. It is to his everlasting credit that he had the wit to see through his Fabian “ideals” and the courage to broadcast the horrors going on around him. In the beginning, at least, he was almost alone. Western intellectuals flocked to the workers’ paradise that Stalin had created and “they were one and all utterly delighted and excited by what they saw there.” Clergymen walked serenely and happily through the anti-god museums, politicians claimed that no system of society could

possibly be more equitable and just, lawyers admired Soviet justice, and economists praised the Soviet economy.

As for the Webbs and their starry-eyed ideal of universal brotherhood, Muggeridge summed it up in a dismissive BBC broadcast after their deaths. Comparing Beatrice to Don Quixote, he wrote that “she finished up enmeshed in her own self-deception, adulating a regime [the USSR] which bore as little relation to the Fabian Good Life as Dulcinea del Toboso to the Mistress of Don Quixote’s dreams.”

Muggeridge was one of the first—perhaps he was the first—Western journalist to expose the awful brutality of Soviet totalitarianism. He was equally prescient about Hitler, early on warning against the British policy of appeasement. In addition, Muggeridge had the rare perspicacity to understand that left-wing tyranny is no less murderous than the right-wing variety. Reporting from Berlin in 1933, he wrote that “It’s silly to say that the Brown terror is worse than the Red Terror. They’re both horrible.” It is one thing—an important thing—to proclaim the bestiality of Communism or Nazism. It is quite another to discern the ways in which liberalism itself nurtures unfreedom.

By the 1950s, Muggeridge had come to believe that liberalism is “the destructive force of the age.” In part, his criticism was reminiscent of Tocqueville’s. *Unchecked*, the impulse to equality became an impulse to homogeneity: the drive for democracy involved a democratic despotism that did not, as Tocqueville put it, so much tyrannize as infantilize. “The welfare state,” Muggeridge observed, “is a kind of zoo which provides its inmates with ease and comfort and unfits them for life in their natural habitat.”

But Muggeridge’s brief against liberalism went deeper. Liberalism, he thought, illustrated the paradox of good intentions, whereby the opposite of what was intended comes to pass. Consider education. Scratch a liberal, and he shouts “Education!” Whatever social or political problem society confronts, good liberals huddle together and decide “What’s needed is more and better education.” (Obligatory codicil: “And the money—i.e., your money—to pay for it.”) Is crime a problem? Education is the answer. Poverty? Education is the answer. War, violence, sickness, unkindness, death? Education, education, education. If only, the liberal muses, everyone were awakened to his or her own true interests, all the world’s problems could be solved. But this notion, Muggeridge saw, is an illusion. Liberalism proposes what is unattainable:

“that we little men and women should live in amity together on our minute corner of the universe for the few score years vouchsafed us, of our own volition seeking one another’s good and sharing equitably in

the material things which satisfy our needs and desires. This is a fantasy. This, in human terms, cannot be. Therefore, the effect of believing in it is constantly tearing the world to pieces.”

On the question of liberalism, as indeed on much else, Muggeridge’s thinking was close to that of Dostoevsky, one of his favorite authors. He understood that some men (and women) do nasty things not because they are ill-informed but because they are nasty. Evil is not something an especially plush government program is going to eliminate. Evil is irremediable. The liberal’s cheery vision of universal brotherhood is false because it is based on an abbreviated view of human nature. “If,” Muggeridge wrote, “you envisage men as being only men, you are bound to see human society ... as a factory farm in which the only consideration that matters is the well-being of the livestock and the prosperity or productivity of the enterprise.” Liberalism is like utilitarianism in proposing to superintend happiness. But the happiness on offer is the blunt palliative of animal satisfaction: satiety, not joy.

In 1938, Muggeridge published *In a Valley of This Restless Mind*. It was commissioned to be a survey of contemporary religious ideas. What turned out was an odd but powerful sort of spiritual autobiography, a portrait of existential anguish and bewilderment that begins “Looking for God, I sat in Westminster Abbey and watched sightseers drift by.” Pascal, another Muggeridge favorite, characterized the human condition as bounded by “inconstance, ennui, inquiétude”—fickleness, boredom, and restlessness. Restlessness was Muggeridge’s constitutional affliction, boredom his overpowering fear. *Valley* is an sly acknowledgment of that fact, part ventriloquising credo, part disaffected satire.

“What are you interested in?” asks the literary editor. I said I was interested in Lust and in Money and in God.

“I’ve seen a book lying about that might be suitable. Short notice if worth it.”

In a favourable review of the book, Evelyn Waugh noted that “what Mr. Muggeridge has discovered and wishes to explain is the ancient piece of folk-wisdom that Lust and Love are antithetical and that Lust is boring.”

Muggeridge’s life is an illustration of the Pascalian insight that restlessness is a secret friend of boredom, feeding on what it abominates in order to sustain itself. Which is to say that what is boring may also be addictive.

Today, to the extent that he is known at all, Malcolm Muggeridge is more notorious than famous. He is remembered less for the truths he communicated than for the life that he led. He is the Libertine Who Found God, a latter-day St. Augustine who lingered in the flesh

pots before turning to denounce them and embrace religion. Muggeridge lingered longer and more assiduously than most. He was an ambitious smoker, heavy drinker, and tireless adulterer. (His wife Kitty, it is worth noting, also pursued numerous adulterous liaisons; her last child, Charles, was fathered by one of her lovers.) According to Richard Ingrams, by the 1960s Muggeridge’s behaviour towards women

“had become embarrassing and frequently outrageous. BBC colleagues called him “The Pouncer.” Patricia, [his friend] Claud Cockburn’s wife, compared him to a Russian peasant, describing an incident when during a dinner party she went upstairs to make a phone call and was pursued by Malcolm who began to assault her. Outraged, Patricia struck out at him with the telephone, knocked him down and flew into a panic, convinced that she had killed him.”

By the mid-1960s, Muggeridge had said goodbye to all that, giving up smoking first, then booze, then womanizing. Plagued by digestive problems, he also became a vegetarian. In 1982 he entered the Roman Catholic Church. His enemies, and even his friends, were not edified. They saw in him the aging reprobate who, stymied by flagging appetite, rails against the sins of his youth and cravenly turns to religion. The fact that Muggeridge launched Mother Teresa as a celebrity in the late 1960s, devoting a television show and book to her life and work, seemed to underscore the divide between Muggeridge the worldly wit and Muggeridge the retiring ascetic.

What this familiar criticism overlooks is the extent to which Muggeridge had always been a deeply religious character, a “pilgrim.” As an adolescent, he would secretly read the Bible—secretly, because he knew his father would not have approved. At Cambridge, he seriously contemplated a religious vocation. His diary is full of entries minuting his religious fears, cravings, and exaltations. Muggeridge understood that the merely human is at best the nearly human. At the same time, his revulsions are at odds with the amplexness of the faith he proclaimed. In an interview from the 1960s, Muggeridge said that he “saw life as an eternal battle between two irreconcilable opposites, the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit.” Yet “God made the world and saw that it was good.” It seems a pity that this robust soul should have mistaken affirmation for indulgence.

ENDS

Roger Kimball is Editor of The New Criterion Magazine. This article was first published in The New Criterion Vol. 21, No. 10, in June 2003.

The Great Liberal Death Wish

A lecture by Malcolm Muggeridge - March 1979 Hillsdale College, USA

In the atmosphere of this delightful college, I want to have a shot at just talking about this notion of "The Great Liberal Death Wish" as it has arisen in my life, as I've seen it, and the deductions I've made from it.

Later on I want to say something about this 'Humane Holocaust', this dreadful slaughter that began with 50 million babies last year, and will undoubtedly be extended to the senile old and the mentally afflicted and mongoloid children, and so on, because of the large amount of money that maintaining them costs. It is all the more ironical when one thinks about the holocaust western audiences, and the German population in particular, have been shuddering over, as it has been presented on their TV and cinema screens. Note this compassionate or humane holocaust, if, as I fear, it gains momentum, will quite put that other in the shade. And, as I shall try to explain, what is even more ironical, the actual considerations that led to the German holocaust were not, as is commonly suggested, due to Nazi terrorism, but were based upon the sort of legislation that advocates of euthanasia, or "mercy killing," in this country and in western Europe, are trying to get enacted. It's not true that the German holocaust was simply a war crime, as it was judged to be at Nuremberg. In point of fact, it was based upon a perfectly coherent, legally enacted decree approved and operated by the German medical profession before the Nazis took over power. But I'm going to deal with that later. I want first of all to look at this question of the great liberal death wish.

I want to throw my mind back to my childhood, to the sitting room in the little suburban house in South London where I grew up. On Saturday evenings my father and his cronies would assemble there, and they would plan together the downfall of the capitalist system and the replacement of it by one which was just and humane and egalitarian and peaceable, etc. These were my first memories of a serious conversation about our circumstances in the world. I used to hide in a big chair and hope not to be noticed, because I was so interested. And I accepted completely the views of these good men, that once they were able to shape the world as they wanted it to be, they would create a perfect state of affairs in which peace would reign, prosperity would expand, men would be brotherly, and considerate, and there would be no exploitation of man by man, nor any ruthless oppression of individuals. And I firmly believed that, once their plans were fulfilled, we would realize an idyllic state of affairs of such a nature. They were good men, they were honest men, they were sincere men. Unlike their prototypes on the continent of Europe, they were men from the chapels. It was a sort of spill over from the

practice of nonconformist Christianity, not a brutal ideology, and I was entirely convinced that such a brotherly, contented, loving society would come to pass once they were able to establish themselves in power.

My father used to speak a lot at open air meetings, and when I was very small I used to follow him around because I adored him, as I still do. He was a very wonderful and good man. He'd had a very harsh upbringing himself, and this was his dream of how you could transform human society so that human beings, instead of maltreating one another and exploiting one another, would be like brothers. I remember he used to make quite good jokes at these outdoor meetings when we had set up our little platform, and a few small children and one or two passers-by had gathered briefly to listen. One joke I particularly appreciated and used to wait for even though I had heard a hundred times ran like this: "Well ladies and gentlemen," my father would begin, "you tell me one thing. Why is it that it is His Majesty's Navy and His Majesty's Stationery Office and His Majesty's Customs but it's the National Debt? Why isn't the debt His Majesty's?" It always brought the house down.

Such was my baptism into the notion of a kingdom of Heaven on earth, into what I was going to understand ultimately to be the great liberal death wish. Inevitably, my father's heroes were the great intellectuals of the time, who banded themselves together in what was called the Fabian Society, of which he was a member - a very active member. For instance, Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Harold Laski, people of that sort. All the leftist elite, like Sydney and Beatrice Webb, belonged to this Fabian Society, and in my father's eyes they were princes among men. I accepted his judgment.

Once I had a slight shock when he took me to a meeting of the Fabian Society where H. G. Wells was speaking, and I can remember vividly his high squeaky voice as he said - and it stuck in my mind long afterward - "We haven't got time to read the Bible. We haven't got time to read the history of this obscure nomadic tribe in the Middle East." Subsequently, when I learned of the things that Wells had got time for, the observation broke upon me in all its richness.

Anyway, that for me was how my impressions of life began. I was sent to Cambridge University, which of course in those days consisted very largely of boys from what we call public schools, and you call private schools. Altogether, it was for me a quite different sort of milieu, where the word socialist in those days - this was

in 1920 when I went to Cambridge at 17 - was almost unknown. We, who had been to a government secondary school and then to Cambridge, were regarded as an extraordinary and rather distasteful phenomenon. But my views about how the world was going to be made better remained firmly entrenched in the talk of my father and his cronies. Of course, in the meantime had come the First World War, to be followed by an almost insane outburst of expectations that henceforth peace would prevail in the world, that we would have a League of Nations to ensure that there would be no more wars, and gradually everybody would get more prosperous and everything would be better and better. That rather lugubrious figure Woodrow Wilson arrived on the scene, to be treated with the utmost veneration. I can see him now, lantern-jawed, wearing his tall hat - somehow for me he didn't fill the bill of a knight in shining armour who was going to lead us to everlasting peace. Somehow the flavour of Princeton about him detracted from that picture, but still I accepted him as an awesome figure.

My time at Cambridge was a rather desolate time. I never much enjoyed being educated, and have continued to believe that education is a rather overrated experience. Perhaps this isn't the most suitable place in the world to say that, but such is my opinion. I think that it is part of the liberal dream that somehow or other - and it was certainly my father's view - people, in becoming educated, instead of on Sundays racing their dogs or studying racing forms, or anything like that, would take to singing madrigals or reading *Paradise Lost* aloud. This is another dream that didn't quite come true.

Anyway, from Cambridge I went off to India, to teach at a Christian college there, and I must say it was an extremely agreeable experience. The college was in a remote part of what was then Travancore, but is now Kerala. It was not one of the missionary colleges, but associated with the indigenous Syrian Church, which you may know is a very ancient church, dating back to the fourth century, and now there are a million or more Syrian Christians. In its way it was quite an idyllic existence, but of course one came up against naked power for the first time. I had never thought of power before as something separate from the rest of life. But in India, under the British Raj, with a relatively few white men ruling over three or four hundred million Indians, I came face to face with power unrelated to elections or any other representative device in the great liberal dream that became the great liberal death wish.

However, it was a pleasant time, and of course the Indian nationalist movement was beginning, and Ghandi came to the college where I was teaching. This extraordinary little gargoyle of a man appeared, and held forth, and everybody got tremendously excited, and shouted against Imperialism, and the Empire in which at that time the great majority of the British people firmly

believed, and which they thought would continue forever. If you ventured to say, as I did on the boat going to India, that it might come to an end before long, they laughed you to scorn, being firmly convinced that God had decided that the British should rule over a quarter of the world, and that nothing could ever change this state of affairs. Which again opened up a new vista about what this business of power signified, and how it worked, not as a theory, but in practice. We used to boast in those days that we had an Empire on which the sun never set. Now we have a Commonwealth on which it never rises, and I can't quite say which concept strikes me as being the more derisory.

That was India, and then I came back to England and for a time taught in an elementary school in Birmingham, and married my wife Kitty. (I wish she were here today because she's very nice. We've been married now for 51 years, so I am entitled to speak well of her.) She was the niece of Beatrice and Sydney Webb, so it was like marrying into a sort of "Aristocracy of the Left". After our wedding, we went off to Egypt, where I taught at the University of Cairo, and it was there that the dreadful infection of journalism got into my system. Turning aside from the honourable occupation of teaching, I started writing articles about the wrongs of the Egyptian people, how they were clamouring, and rightly so, for a democratic setup, and how they would never be satisfied with less than one man one vote and all that went therewith. I never heard any Egyptian say that this was his position, but I used to watch those old pashas in Groppi's cafe smoking their hubble-bubble pipes, and imagined that under their tabooshes was a strong feeling that they would never for an instant countenance anything less than full representative government. That at least was what I wrote in my articles, and they went flying over to England, and, like homing pigeons, in through the windows of the *Guardian* office in Manchester, at that time a high citadel of liberalism. That was where the truth was being expounded, that was where enlightenment reigned. In due course I was asked to join the editorial staff of the *Guardian*, which to me was a most marvellous thing.

I may say that the work of teaching at Cairo University was not an arduous job, essentially for three reasons. One was that the students didn't understand English; the second that they were nearly always on strike or otherwise engaged in political demonstrations, and thirdly they were often stupefied with hashish. So I had a lot of leisure on my hands. Incidentally, to be serious for a moment, it seems to me a most extraordinary thing that at that time you wouldn't have found anybody, Egyptian or English or anybody else, who wasn't absolutely clear in his mind that hashish was a most appalling and disastrous addiction. So you can imagine how strange it was forty years later for me to hear life peeresses and people like that insisting that

hashish didn't do any harm to anybody, and was even beneficial. I see that in Canada it is going to be legalized, which will mean one more sad, unnecessary hazard coming into our world.

Anyway, these were the golden days of liberalism when *The Manchester Guardian* was widely read, and even believed. Despite all its misprints, you could make out roughly speaking what it was saying, and what we typed out was quite likely, to our great satisfaction, to be quoted in some paper in - Baghdad or Smyrna as being the opinion of our very influential organ of enlightened liberalism. I remember my first day I was there, and somehow it symbolizes the whole experience. I was asked to write a leader - a short leader of about 120 words - on corporal punishment. At some head-masters' conference, it seemed, words had been spoken about corporal punishment and I was to produce appropriate comment. So I put my head into the room next to mine, and asked the man who was working there: "What's our line on corporal punishment?" Without looking up from his type-writer, he replied: "The same as capital, only more so." So I knew exactly what to tap out, you see. That was how I got into the shocking habit of pontificating about what was going on in the world; observing that the Greeks did not seem to want an orderly government, or that one despaired sometimes of the Irish having any concern for law and order; weighty pronouncement tapped out on a typewriter, deriving from nowhere, and for all one knew, concerning no one. We were required to end anything we wrote on a hopeful note, because liberalism is a hopeful creed. And so, however appalling and black the situation that we described, we would always conclude with some sentence like: "It is greatly to be hoped that moderate men of all shades of opinion will draw together, and that wiser councils may yet prevail." How many times I gave expression to such jejune hopes! Well, I soon grew weary of this, because it seemed to me that immoderate men were rather strongly in evidence, and I couldn't see that wiser councils were prevailing anywhere. The depression was on by that time, I'm talking now of 1932--33. It was on especially in Lancashire, and it seemed as though our whole way of life was cracking up, and, of course, I looked across at the USSR with a sort of longing, thinking that there was an alternative, some other way in which people could live, and I managed to manoeuvre matters so that I was sent to Moscow as the *Guardian* correspondent, arriving there fully prepared to see in the Soviet regime the answer to all our troubles, only to discover in a very short time that though it might be an answer, it was a very unattractive one.

It's difficult to convey to you what a shock this was, realizing that what I had supposed to be the new brotherly way of life my father and his cronies had imagined long before, was simply on examination an appalling tyranny, in which the only thing that mattered,

the only reality, was power. So again, like the British Raj, in the USSR I was confronted with power as the absolute and ultimate arbiter. However, that was a thing that one could take in one's stride. How I first came to conceive the notion of the great liberal death wish was not at all in consequence of what was happening in the USSR, which, as I came to reflect afterwards, was simply the famous lines in the Magnificat working out, "He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek," whereupon, of course, the humble and meek become mighty in their turn and have to be put down. That was just history, something that happens in the world; people achieve power, exercise power, abuse power, are booted out of power, and then it all begins again. The thing that impressed me, and the thing that touched off my awareness of the great liberal death wish, my sense that western man was, as it were, sleep-walking into his own ruin, was the extraordinary performance of the liberal intelligentsia, who, in those days, flocked to Moscow like pilgrims to Mecca. And they were one and all utterly delighted and excited by what they saw there. Clergymen walked serenely and happily through the anti-god museums, politicians claimed that no system of society could possibly be more equitable and just lawyers admired Soviet justice, and economists praised the Soviet economy. They all wrote articles in this sense which we resident journalists knew were completely nonsensical. It's impossible to exaggerate to you the impression that this made on me. Mrs. Webb had said to Kitty and me: "You'll find that in the USSR Sydney and I are icons." As a matter of fact they were, Marxist icons.

How could this be? How could this extraordinary credulity exist in the minds of people who were adulated by one and all as maestros of discernment and judgment? It was from that moment that I began to get the feeling that a liberal view of life was not what I'd supposed it to be - a creative movement which would shape the future - but rather a sort of death wish. How otherwise could you explain how people, in their own country ardent for equality, bitter opponents of capital punishment and all for more humane treatment of people in prison, supporters, in fact, of every good cause, should in the USSR prostrate themselves before a regime ruled over brutally and oppressively and arbitrarily by a privileged party oligarchy? I still ponder over the mystery of how men displaying critical intelligence in other fields could be so astonishingly deluded. I tell you, if ever you are looking for a good subject for a thesis, you could get a very fine one out of a study of the books that were written by people like the Dean of Canterbury, Julian Huxley, Harold Laski, Bernard Shaw, or the Webbs about the Soviet regime. In the process you would come upon a compendium of fatuity such as has seldom, if ever, existed on earth. And I would really recommend it; after all, the people who wrote these books were, and continue to be regarded as, pundits, whose words must be very, very seriously heeded and considered.

I recall in their yellow jackets a famous collection in England called the Left Book Club. You would be amazed at the gullibility that's expressed. We foreign journalists in Moscow used to amuse ourselves, as a matter of fact, by competing with one another as to who could wish upon one of these intelligentsia visitors to the USSR the most outrageous fantasy. We would tell them, for instance, that the shortage of milk in Moscow was entirely due to the fact that all milk was given to nursing mothers - things like that. If they put it in the articles they subsequently wrote, then you'd score a point. One story I floated myself, for which I received considerable acclaim, was that the huge queues outside food shops came about because the Soviet workers were so ardent in building Socialism that they just wouldn't rest, and the only way the government could get them to rest for even two or three hours was organizing a queue for them to stand in. I laugh at it all now, but at the time you can imagine what a shock it was to someone like myself, who had been brought up to regard liberal intellectuals as the samurai, the absolute elite, of the human race, to find that they could be taken in by deceptions which a half-witted boy would see through in an instant. I never got over that; it always remained in my mind as something that could never be erased. I could never henceforth regard the intelligentsia as other than credulous fools who nonetheless became the media's prophetic voices, their heirs and successors remaining so still. That's when I began to think seriously about the great liberal death wish.

In due course, I came back to England to await the Second World War, in the course of which I found myself engaged in Intelligence duties. And let me tell you that if there is one thing more fantastical than news, it is Intelligence. News itself is a sort of fantasy; and when you actually go collecting news, you realize that this is so. In a certain sense, you create news; you dream news up yourself and then send it. But that's nothing to the fantasy of Intelligence. Of the two, I would say that news seems really quite a sober and considered commodity compared with your offerings when you're an Intelligence agent.

Anyway, when in 1945 I found myself a civilian again, I tried to sort out my thoughts about the great wave of optimism that followed the Second World War - for me, a repeat performance. It was then that I came to realize how, in the name of progress and compassion, the most terrible things were going to be done, preparing the way for the great humane holocaust. There was, it seemed to me, a built in propensity in this liberal world-view whereby the opposite of what was intended came to pass. Take the case of education. Education was the great mumbo--jumbo of progress, the assumption being that educating people would make them grow better and better, more and more objective and intelligent. Actually, as more and more money is spent on education, illiteracy

is increasing. And I wouldn't be at all surprised if it didn't end up with virtually the whole revenue of the western countries being spent on education, and a condition of almost total illiteracy resulting there from. It's quite on the cards.

Now I want to try to get to grips with this strange state of affairs. Let's look at the humane holocaust. What happened in Germany was that long before the Nazis got into power, a great propaganda was undertaken to sterilize people who were considered to be useless or a liability to society, and after that to introduce what they called "mercy killing". This happened long before the Nazis set up their extermination camps at Auschwitz and elsewhere, and was based upon the highest humanitarian considerations. You see what I'm getting at? On a basis of liberal-humanism, there is no creature in the universe greater than man, and the future of the human race rests only with human beings themselves, which leads infallibly to some sort of suicidal situation. It's to me quite clear that that is so, the evidence is on every hand. The efforts that men make to bring about their own happiness, their own ease of life, their own self-indulgence, will in due course produce the opposite, leading me to the absolutely inescapable conclusion that human beings cannot live and operate in this world without some concept of a Being greater than themselves, and of a purpose which transcends their own egotistic or greedy desires. Once you eliminate the notion of a God, a Creator, once you eliminate the notion that the Creator has a purpose for us, and that life consists essentially in fulfilling that purpose, then you are bound, as Pascal points out, to induce the megalomania of which we've seen so many manifestations in our time - in the crazy dictators, as in the lunacies of people who are rich, or who consider themselves to be important or celebrated in the western world. Alternatively, human beings relapse into mere carnality, into being animals. I see this process going on irresistibly, of which the holocaust is only just one example. If you envisage men as being only men, you are bound to see human society, not in Christian terms as a family, but as a factory-farm in which the only consideration that matters is the well-being of the livestock and the prosperity or productivity of the enterprise. That's where you land yourself. And it is in that situation that western man is increasingly finding himself.

This might seem to be a despairing conclusion, but it isn't, you know, actually. First of all, the fact that we can't work out the liberal dream in practical terms is not bad news, but good news. Because if you could work it out, life would be too banal, too tenth-rate to be worth bothering about. Apart from that, we have been given the most extraordinary sign of the truth of things, which I continually find myself thinking about. This is that the most perfect and beautiful expressions of man's spiritual aspirations come, not from the liberal dream in any of its

manifestations, but from people in the forced labour camps of the USSR. And this is the most extraordinary phenomenon, and one that of course receives absolutely no attention in the media. From the media point of view it's not news, and in any case the media do not want to know about it. But this is the fact for which there is a growing amount of evidence. I was reading about it in a long essay by a Yugoslav writer Mihajlo Mihajlov who spent some years in a prison in Yugoslavia. He cites case after case of people who, like Solzhenitsyn, say that enlightenment came to them in the forced labour camps. They understood what freedom was when they had lost their freedom, they understood what the purpose of life was when they seemed to have no future. They say, moreover, that when it's a question of choosing whether to save your soul or your body, the man who chooses to save his soul gathers strength thereby to go on living, whereas the man who chooses to save his body at the expense of his soul loses both body and soul. In other words, fulfilling exactly what our Lord said, that he who hates his life in this world shall keep his life for all eternity, as those who love their lives in this world will assuredly lose them. Now, that's where I see the light in our darkness. There's an image I love - if the whole world were to be covered with concrete, there still would be some cracks in it, and through these cracks green shoots would come. The testimonies from the labour camps are the green shoots we can see in the world, breaking out from the monolithic power now dominating ever greater areas of it. In contradistinction, this is the liberal death wish, holding out the fallacious and ultimately destructive hope that we can construct a happy, fulfilled life in terms of our physical and material needs, and in the moral and intellectual dimensions of our mortality.

I feel so strongly at the end of my life that nothing can happen to us in any circumstances that is not part of God's purpose for us. Therefore, we have nothing to fear, nothing to worry about, except that we should rebel against His purpose; that we should fail to detect it and fail to establish some sort of relationship with Him and His divine will. On that basis, there can be no black despair, no throwing in of our hand. We can watch the institutions and social structures of our time collapse - and I think you who are young are fated to watch them collapse - and we can reckon with what seems like an irresistibly growing power of materialism and materialist societies. But, it will not happen that that is the end of the story.

As St. Augustine said - and I love to think of it when he received the news in Carthage that Rome had been sacked: "Well, if that's happened, it's a great catastrophe, but we must never forget that the earthly cities that men build they destroy, but there is also the City of God which men didn't build and can't destroy." And he devoted the next seventeen years of his life to

working out the relationship between the earthly city and the City of God - the earthly city where we live for a short time, and the City of God whose citizens we are for all eternity.

You know, it's a funny thing, but when you're old, as I am, there are all sorts of extremely pleasant things that happen to you. One of them is, you realize that history is nonsense, but I won't go into that now. The pleasantest thing of all is that you wake up in the night at about, say, 3 a.m., and you find that you are half in and half out of your battered old carcass. And it seems quite a toss-up whether you go back and resume full occupancy of your mortal body, or make off toward the bright glow you see in the sky, the lights of the City of God. In this limbo between life and death, you know beyond any shadow of doubt that, as an infinitesimal particle of God's creation, you are a participant in God's purpose for His creation, and that that purpose is loving and not hating, is creative and not destructive, is everlasting and not temporal, is universal and not particular. With this certainty comes an extraordinary sense of comfort and joy.

Nothing that happens in this world need shake that feeling; all the happenings in this world, including the most terrible disasters and suffering, will be seen in eternity as in some mysterious way a blessing, as a part of God's love. We ourselves are part of that love, we belong to that scene, and only in so far as we belong to that scene does our existence here have any reality or any worth. All the rest is fantasy - whether the fantasy of power which we see in the authoritarian states around us, or the fantasy of the great liberal death wish in terms of affluence and self-indulgence. The essential feature and necessity of life is to know reality, which means knowing God. Otherwise our mortal existence is, as Saint Teresa of Avila said, "no more than a night in a second-class hotel."

ENDS

This lecture has been edited in length and content for The Gargoyle.

Full speech published in Imprimis, the monthly journal of Hillsdale College. May 1979, Vol 8, No. 5. (www.hillsdale.edu)

For further reading, see also Malcolm's renowned essay "The Great Liberal Death Wish"

A Great Father

By John Muggeridge

John, the second son of Malcolm, presents an intimate picture of family life as a young child in the Muggeridge household in Whatlington, Sussex.

I think I should begin by stating Malcolm Muggeridge to be a family man. For one part of him loved domesticity. He revelled in presiding over dinner tables crowded with children, and when we had a roast on Sundays, he would sharpen the carving knife with a professional flourish. His big joke on such occasions, which he never tired of, was to cut off the butcher's string and pass it down on an empty plate. Years later, when he had become a vegetarian, he delighted in taking his grandchildren to McDonalds where he would marvel at the quantities of French fries, hamburgers and soft drinks they were capable of consuming. On one such occasion we ran into one of his journalism students, who said with a gasp: "I don't believe what I'm seeing."

What strikes me in retrospect is Dad's amazing patience with us. Remember, he had recently left a lucrative job at the *Evening Standard* to freelance in the country. He had four children and a wife to support. Our home, Mill House, was admittedly a bargain. The previous owner had committed suicide in it, which made the real estate agent glad to get it off his hands for £800. Dad still had had to take out a mortgage. Above all, he needed peace and quiet, and those commodities should have been available to him in his bright spacious study on the second floor over the kitchen. Except for us. We and our friends had the run of the house. Dad had bought an unbroken collection of the Times from 1930 to 1939 to provide him with material for *The Thirties*. The pile was just low enough for us to peep over the top of, and it became the parapet of our fort. Then there was his most beautiful wicker chair. It had a recess under its seat with ample room for a child to hide in, and he found himself having to make sure it wasn't inhabited before sitting down on it.

We invaded his sanctuary not only by land but also by air. Mill House had two attic rooms. One was my brother Len's, the other mine. Between them was a landing which provided a convenient arena for pillow fights. At the back of my room was a door leading into an unfloored, unlighted space between the second floor ceiling and the roof tree. There we smoked, cigarettes when available but more often blotting paper and dried leaves. One thing you had to be careful about there, of course, was the absence of a floor. Stick to the joists and you were OK. One day I wasn't OK. Amid a shower of plaster and lathe, the bottom half of my body appeared some four feet above my father's desk where he was

putting the finishing touches, no doubt, to his column for *Time and Tide*. Poor man. As my brothers pulled me to safety, I heard him sigh and get back to his typing.

Soon after this incident, he decided to retreat to the garden. There was no garden at the back of Mill House, only a cobbled yard. In our day the garden was across the road next to a ruined mill. Here Dad put up what came to be called "The Hut", a structure that he acquired from his brother-in-law, and which my artistic grandmother had decorated with a frieze of alpine sketches. Into it he moved a desk, chair and typewriter to the thundering of which we listened, perched on various branches of an old apple tree. Occasionally he would come to the door of the hut and shout over to us: "Why don't you boys find something to do?" And I couldn't help thinking "But we are doing something".

Then there was Gerald Reitlinger's Jaguar. Reitlinger was the neighbour who had put Anthony Powell onto Dad. He lived in a manor house at Beckley, a village a few miles from Whatlington. In accordance with the so-often repeated order that we do something, we were somewhat self-righteously playing cricket at the time of his visit, next to his state of the art Jag parked in the track beside our house. My brother Charles hit a six, or rather, what would have been a six, had it not landed in the middle of Reitlinger's windscreen, turning it into an unseeable spider's web. This was 1938 when Britain's switch to rearmament had already turned windscreens of civilian vehicles into precious commodities. Reitlinger took the blow like a man. Dad, however, in a show of force, sent us to bed without supper. This stratagem never worked because Mum always brought up something on a tray, fearing that we would otherwise starve to death. Incidentally, I blame Sally's father, my uncle Jack for this ennui. He it was who had given us the bat and ball in the first place.

But as we all know, there was another side to Dad's character. Born and bred in suburban south London, the favourite son of a high-minded socialist father who believed that capitalism belonged to the devil and Christ worked on earth through the Labour Party, MM went up to Cambridge at seventeen where he encountered the fallout from a sexual revolution in comparison to which the later one in the sixties looks like a mere aftershock. He was alone and unprepared. He succumbed. The morality, the manners and even the dialect of Bloomsbury became his.

Nowhere was this more evident than at his wedding which took place in 1927 to another thorough-going Bloomsbury, Kitty Dobbs. His intended was the niece of Beatrice Webb, but perhaps more importantly the daughter of Mrs. Webb's notoriously bohemian younger sister, Rosalind. At my parent's Registry Office wedding they vowed to tolerate each other's infidelities till another more compelling relationship did them part. And they kept that vow through sixty-three years of jealousy, betrayals, finger-pointings, and threatened departures. In his dotage, Dad was still at it, making eyes at a young woman in the village with my mother pretending not to notice.

Why did they stay together? They loved each other passionately. Ingrams notices how sickly and despairing my father became after being too long separated from his wife. And I remember him having driven home from Lime Grove television studios through north London and along an as yet undivided A21 with heaven knows how many double scotches on board, going up to their bedroom, and she bounding up the stairs shedding garments after him. That was after thirty years of marriage when they were already in their middle fifties.

Then there was us. Their family, the fruit of their love. Not out of propriety, which meant nothing to them, but for our sakes they chose to lead double lives rather than to separate. Because they loved us. Children have no trouble detecting hypocrisy. We knew we were wanted. Nothing else mattered. We accepted with amused delight the jaunts to pantomimes in Tunbridge Wells, courtesy of Hesketh Pearson, our mother's wartime lover. On Christmas Eve, Pearson used to don a Father Christmas outfit and heap the ends of our beds with boy's classics. We enjoyed the novels without once suspecting that his presence in our home on that occasion might simply have served as a pretext for spending the night with his mistress.

For us, then, our parents were unfallen idols. In particular, I hero worshipped my father. In the late

forties on most days I was home for the holidays and we used to set out on foot towards each other – I from our flat in Regent's Park, he from the Daily Telegraph building on Fleet Street. Sometimes we met at Temple Bar, sometimes at Trafalgar Square, sometimes as far on his way as All Souls Langham Place, and at least twice, when late breaking stories delayed his departure, in the tiny office he shared with J. C. Johnstone. Nothing I relished more than our talk through the London streets.

People have accused Dad of monopolising conversation. Orwell complained that he couldn't get a word in edgewise at their monthly lunches. But in my case, he always listened attentively to what I had to say. And I shall never get over the rush of pride on finding a snippet or two from it in his published diaries. Once, as we passed the London Library in St. James Square, he turned to me and in a more solemn tone than usual wanted me to know that we were on our way home to the person he loved best in all the world.

Years later, long after the news could possibly touch off in me a childhood trauma, I discovered from the biographies that it must have been about this time when he had confessed to me his great love for my mother, that he began an affair with Pamela Berry, his boss's wife.

Whatever else can be said for him, he was a great father.

ENDS

Editors note: Malcolm and Kitty had four children, Leonard 1928, John 1933, Valentine 1934 and Charles 1935 (Kitty's son by Michael Vyvyan).

*Charles died April 1956 in a skiing accident
Valentine died August 2004 following a stroke*

Muggeridge: the long road from agnosticism to faith

By B.A. Santamaria (1988)

It would be pretentious of the writer to claim any special friendship with Malcolm Muggeridge. Although he did write the preface to my book, *Against the Tide*, in 1981, it is quite conceivable that among the galaxy of distinguished friends, associates, and opponents who have claimed his attention on almost

every continent, he would barely recall the three or four occasions on which our paths actually crossed.

The first time was when he interviewed me on one of the Sydney TV channels in the midst of all of the troubles of the Australian Labour Split of the Fifties. The second came soon after, in my office in Fitzroy, when we

had a bite of lunch together. The third was a walk along the seafront at Albert Park, Victoria. The last was at his own home, the small but comfortable farmhouse in Robertsbridge, Sussex, at the beginning of 1978 when I happened to be visiting Britain on the occasion of my son's marriage.

My reflections now are evoked by two almost simultaneous occurrences - his eighty-fifth birthday (in March 1988), and his reception into the Catholic Church. The story of that odyssey is told in his latest and perhaps last work, *Conversion: A Spiritual Journey*. These few reflections relate one or two episodes in our short personal acquaintance to that last event. To him, although not to me, they might have been so inconsequential that he does not even recall them.

An Australian journalist, Deborah Smith, wrote that his ostracism in Britain, after his criticism of the Royal Family in October 1957, was almost complete until, in the following year, he was invited to tour Australia by the *Sydney Morning Herald*. During that tour he interviewed a number of public personalities on that paper's Channel Seven.

Since it was still High Noon here among the events consequent on the Labour Split, he asked me to appear which, against my better judgement, I did. The film of that interview still exists. I wish it didn't. A provincial handicapper should not measure his speed against the most seasoned weight for age performer of his time. Muggeridge once interviewed Brendan Behan, when the latter was so drunk that he could barely put two words together, and yet managed to emerge triumphantly from the 'interview'. Perhaps I should have known better.

At the subsequent lunch in my office, Muggeridge amused himself by asking what could possibly have persuaded me to devote so many years to fighting Communists, particularly in the Australian labour movement. To which I replied that, unwittingly of course, he had been partly responsible.

Rummaging in a suburban library in 1934, I had come across his description of the horrors of the Soviet collectivisation of the peasantry, and I had been even more deeply impressed by his personal experience of the outright and conscious lying as to the nature of Soviet Communism among his colleagues in the Western press corps in Moscow. In that litany of infamy, I remembered particularly the name of Walter Duranty. His description had made so great an impression that I held him partly responsible for my subsequent troubles!

His reply: "As you know, I am an incurable agnostic, and cannot quite understand your choice. Even

though I saw and wrote about what you have only read, we agnostics are no match for the Marxists. They go through us like a knife through butter. Perhaps you need an absolute creed to resist an absolute creed."

What he said about agnostics has since turned out to be far from universally true, since some of Communism's most able opponents have been religious agnostics, but that statement about himself in 1958 is worth recording.

By the time Muggeridge next returned to Australia his situation had changed - radically. His own statement is that it was while he was filming *A Life of Christ* in 1967 that he visited the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and there felt the first stirrings which ultimately resulted in his conversion to Christianity. Out of this encounter, he wrote his *Jesus Rediscovered*, which became a best seller.

His meeting with Mother Teresa in 1969 - whom he introduced to the world - represented another critical turning point in the road from his agnosticism to Christianity. From this meeting he wrote *Something Beautiful for God*, the earnings from which have all been given to Mother Teresa. Walking along the seafront with him at Albert Park at seven o'clock in the morning, I recalled his "incurable" agnosticism, and asked, more or less innocently, if having travelled part of the way, he should not now complete the journey by embracing Catholicism.

He has written elsewhere that a far more likely advocate, Mother Teresa herself, had often suggested the same. It was not, of course, a propitious moment: we had just been discussing the alleged renewal of Catholicism after the Second Vatican Council, and especially the internal disintegration of so many of the religious orders. He stopped in his tracks, and said with explosive force: "Have you ever seen a rat joining a sinking ship?"

But Muggeridge was no 'rat'. No 'rat' could ever have attracted and, for over fifty years, kept so beautiful a helpmate as his wife Kitty - and the Catholic Church, although still caught in the storms of the Roaring Sixties, has proved to be no 'sinking ship', although it often gives that impression. And so, in 1984, the 'rat' did join the 'sinking ship', but without optimism or intimations of imminent resurgence.

The final lines of his recently published *Conversion* demand both some knowledge of the history of Christianity as the universal faith of Europe, East and West, as well as an effort of the imagination to savour their significance. Muggeridge repeats - with full agreement - the remark made to him by the great American preacher, Fulton Sheen, who visited Australia in 1948, and became Bishop of Rochester before his

death in 1979. Sheen said to Muggeridge: "Christendom is over, but not Christ".

George Hill of the London *Times* asked Muggeridge why he concluded his book with Sheen's statement. "Well," replied Muggeridge, "most of the heads of the Church - churches of all denominations - are today agreeing to things being done, which deny everything the Bible suggests ...".

"As Malcolm's biographer", wrote Richard Ingrams of *The Spectator* and *Private Eye*, "I have to face the fact that I am dealing with a man whom many people may well have forgotten by the time my book is published after his death. Yet this slow eradication of the TV personality makes it easier to disinter the Muggeridge

who will not be so easily forgotten - Muggeridge the journalist, the auto biographer and, above all, the diarist who emerges as a true representative of 20th century man."

ENDS

*Reprinted with kind permission from AD2000
Vol 1 No 3 (June 1988), p. 10*

A Chronicle of Time

By Ronald W Nikkel

Do you ever wonder if you are missing out on something?

Does it sometimes feel like life is passing you by?

Do you scarcely have time to see and experience all the things you've dreamed of?

These kinds of feelings have become particularly acute for me during the past few weeks in the aftermath of a neighbour's sudden death and the serious illness of two friends. The last few years have gone by far too quickly. I no sooner crossed the threshold into a new millennium than I find myself now, well into the first decade of that millennium. Time stands still for no one!

Few people experienced a life as interesting and rich as Malcolm Muggeridge. Before rising to the world stage as a celebrated British journalist and broadcaster, he had served as a teacher and journalist in Egypt and India, as a spy based in Mozambique during World War II and as a news correspondent in Washington, Moscow and Manchester. As a young man of caustic wit, incisive intellect and insightful perception he approached life with incredible zest and insatiable curiosity. He always sought the widest and deepest experiences that life had to offer. His writings reflect both that passion for life and relationships as well as an uncanny insight into the realities behind the façade of social customs and institutions.

Ever the sceptic and social critic, it was not until he reached middle age that Malcolm began wrestling with the deeper questions of his life's purpose.

Ultimately he came to embrace a profoundly personal faith in Jesus Christ. Writing his autobiography years later, he reflected on his life as "*Chronicles of Wasted Time*", the story of a man so captivated by the sound, fury and variety of human experience that he didn't hear the still small voice. Life experience became more than a destination for him, it became the staging ground of faith.

I am reminded as I read Muggeridge's autobiography that my own time is not a commodity to be used up like a budget, or to be filled up with activities and accomplishments in the pursuit of success and significance. Time is a priceless gift. I cannot redo or undo the experience of time that has passed, for it is gone. Nor can I seize the time yet to come. It may not be mine to seize. The only time I have is now.

It has been observed that time consists in two perspectives - 'kronos' and 'kairos'. 'Kronos' is time experienced as the measurable, continuous progression of moments, one-thing-after-another time. The flow of minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years that we tend to take for granted. For some people time is precious and for others it is a burden. In this realm of time, life is often experienced as either the pressure of too much to do without enough time, or as an endless emptiness of wandering, dissatisfaction and meaninglessness.

'Kairos' is time experienced as a significant point of opportunity, the decisive "now" of life and the purpose for living. This category of time is the one referenced when we speak of timing, or that the time is right. In the context of faith, 'kairos' is the divine

present, the staging ground of knowing and responding to God.

Like Malcolm Muggeridge, I've experienced far too much of my life as a chronology of wasted time, compressed by routine and responsibility and spent in pursuit of selfish experience, rather than as the 'kairos' time of being attuned to the "still small voice" of the Lord. I still feel like time is moving far too quickly. But I also know that now is the only time you and I have and the Lord is present in it. Can you hear Him?

ENDS

"There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot... a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance... a time to be silent and a time to speak... I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end... I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him."

(Ecclesiastes 3:1-15)

This article first appeared in Prison Fellowship International magazine in 2003 which reserves all rights.

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 the life and work of Malcolm Muggeridge - 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) that 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*)

(*includes exchange and negotiation charges)

Make Cheque/check payable to: The Malcolm Muggeridge Society

Payment may also be made electronically through Paypal on www.malcolmmuggeridge.org

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
www.wheaton.edu/learnres/arcsc