

## “Shonky”

### "LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS"

**CHRIST IS RISEN** — and death hath no more dominion over Him.

**Cheer up, faint hearts! Sursum corda!**

Sure, things are crook in the world, and often things are crook within the Church! But not everything in the Church and world... The Church herself is without blemish, the immaculate Bride of Christ: it is her members lay and clerical who are often "shonky".

Seemingly, Adam fell little by little, beginning with a failure in his duty to look after Eve, and to guard her from the Devil. So the Devil got Eve and then Adam, and crash! bang! down they fell, from grace into mortal sin, the original sin for us all...

This is why things are so often shonky.

Ever since this Fall, salvation history has been a sorry record of how God has worked with defective material, just like a carpenter using blunt and worn out tools, and helped only by mainly lousy apprentices.

This background in salvation history helps us to cope, to understand why things go wrong so often: and why the short-term triumphs of the Devil, original sin, and our own many sins and imperfections.

### GOD, MAN & SIN

**SHONKY**, our title, is in the 2004 *Macquarie Essential Dictionary* as a colloquialism in Australia and New Zealand for dubious integrity or honesty; or mechanically unreliable.

**In dealing with sinful man, God seems to expect that He will have to work with extremely unreliable material, shonky material.**

**We must expect to do the same.**

**It was always so.**

True, the Church is the Bride of Christ, and totally without stain. Her members, however, are striving to live up to their calling. They often stumble in their shonkiness.

### CHURCH PROBLEMS IN New Testament

**RATHER** than being daunted by our imperfect selves, or our fellow Catholics, family, relatives, neighbours and friends, or the world generally and the Church in particular, we need to **toughen up our expectations** with some New Testament hard facts.

A bracing douche of icy-water puts realism into our understanding of what God puts up with, from mankind generally and Christians in particular.

**Just consider:-**

- The Apostles squabbling over who is greatest;
- Lack of intellectual effort to understand Our Lord;
- Their proposal for sending the little children away;
- Calling down fire on the Samaritans;
- 'Our Lord mixing it with 'publicans and sinners';
- Human respect of St Peter in denying Our Lord;
- The irksome presence of Judas Iscariot;
- Rampant egotism: I am for Paul or Apollo or Christ;
- Judaizers circumcising converts — or else;
- Rows over Judaizers: St Paul withstood St Peter! "

- Yet circumstances alter cases... i.e. Timothy/Titus;
- Pharisaic outbursts over eating with the pagans;
- Scruples over Jewish unclean foods generally;
- Moral subtleties over meat sacrificed to idols;
- What to do with the liturgical feast days of Judaism;
- Rows among saints like Paul over Mark & Barnabas;
- Bickering women — appeals by St Paul;
- Directives on pushy women from St Paul;
- Sexy men: incest, sodomites, pedophiles;
- Accusations against priests;
- Money-grubbing clergy;
- Fornication & adultery such as not among heathen;
- Greed/deceit over donations to the Church;
- Domineering clerics: St Peter's warning;
- Uncharitableness: strictures;
- Lists of virtues and vices: exhortations to be noble;
- Gluttony/vanity at agape (Communion breakfasts);
- Rowing over handouts for widows;
- Excommunications of *vitandi* in St John, also St Paul
- "Philosophy-&-vain deceit": use or not in apologetics?
- Evangelization of the sophists in Athens;
- Doctrinal disputes over Faith and Works in St James;
- St Paul on justification in Romans and Hebrews;
- Wisdom of serpents setting Saducees on Pharisees.

N.B. Check the texts for yourself. Use a computer with a hypertext Bible, or a concordance.

### FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

**HERE ON EARTH**, the Church militant is like the driftwood washed up on a beach, plus the flotsam and jetsam of struggling humanity after shipwreck. It might even include leading laymen, and bishops, priests and nuns. (Note: Tertullian said the Sacrament of Penance as "the second plank after shipwreck".)

Those who struggled ashore from the human shipwreck built a big gonyah to house their own inadequate selves. But the gonyah kept falling down. So they rebuilt it, over and over again. Satan seemingly has kept up his endless production of new ideas for wrecking it, the work of God's servants for God.

And *that* is the history of the First Chosen People. It is also the history of the Church.

### NOT PESSIMISTIC

Is it a sign of a pessimistic personality? Not at all!

**The bottom line is, God Himself puts up with it.**

**Therefore so must we.**

**As the saints did.**

So rather than dismay at how much goes wrong, we should be amazed that anything good is achieved at all. And it is! Miracles of grace are happening in so many lives all the time! Be glad, be grateful.

So cheer up! Out of the encircling gloom we burst forth with God-given Faith, Hope and Charity, seeking forgiveness, and handing it out to our fellow sinners.

## BAG SNATCHING

The shrewd old parish priest, who had seen too many people live and die to be daunted by any human respect for academics, media stars, or other rich, powerful or popular people, had no unreal expectations left. As he loved to explain to prospective converts:

"It is only in a Catholic church that a woman will get her handbag stolen while she's in the Confessional — and *that* proves it's the one, true Church.

"Light-fingered folk do not seem to front up in a Protestant church. Neither do they go to Confession.

"Putting it another way, statistics seem to show that the most popular religions for prisoners in gaol are Catholic and Salvation Army (they get more visitors)

— because they believe in the forgiveness of sins."

## THE GREAT REALITIES

LET US START from where we are, the backdrop of God, man and sin, and our common humanity, and not from somewhere else.

As the Greeks reckoned long ago, man is a **rational animal** or, as Cardinal Newman shrewdly nuanced it in the light of hard experience, a **thinking, feeling contemplating animal**. In simpler terms, man is half-angel, half-animal so to speak, as the saucy son tells his father, *Bush Boys and Bush Rangers* p. 85.

**What is Man here for?** Recently invented irreligious answers like saving the planet beg the question — for what is the planet being saved?

There is no one so lost in life as an atheist. He is not a complete man, not until he honours his Creator. As the Irish put it so neatly and compassionately with a knowing tap of the forehead, "There's a lack!"

An atheist does not know why he is here on earth. So he does not know who he is. He's in a mess. He's in a maze, in a quagmire, in quicksand. And the Devil made this mess.

N.B. Resist the feminist take-over of our language. In traditional English, males share their words "man" and "he" with females. These words are still generic, and context usually shows where they are not.

## TIDYING UP OUR SHONKINESS

**FACE UP to the Great Realities:**

**God, Man, Sin, Satan and Selfishness.**

And lurking in the background: **original sin.**

Spiritual guides suggest we train ourselves to make ourselves do what's right, even when:

- we don't feel like it;-
- it's unpopular.

They also suggest we act from a sense of our own:-

- dignity
- duty
- destiny

These include the dawning realization that by our Christian faith and hope and charity we are privileged to believe in, and understand, the Great Realities.

The benighted modern heathen of a shonky pretence at civilization lack these privileges.

## SOME SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

- have a **set time for rising** to pray before breakfast;
- therefore we get ourselves **go to bed early** enough;
- hold our tongues and avoid **crudities and cruelties**;
- sensitize ourselves to the needs of others;
- **don't take offence**: that is God's prerogative;
- **suffer hurts**: no resentments or revenge, like Christ;
- **in sufferings**, offer God hymns and psalms of praise;
- **don't be bossy** (we might not even know we are);
- instead, **encourage** others and bring out their goodness;
- help them build up their **talents**, don't denigrate...
- don't deaden God's use of our sense-powers: rather, mortify them: therefore do not indulge the sense of taste in too much and too many gourmet delights of table, or the **senses of sight and sound** by much TV, computers (games, internet), radios and recordings (in which noise/sound/music are promoted to the level of an always-and-everywhere narcotic.

The above can free us from our "moral softness" for

- **silent recollection** with God and
- **listening with reasonable concentration to others.**

**THIS EXPRESSION "moral softness"** was coined by Arnold Lunn (the Catholic converts) and Garth Lean (the continuing Anglican) in their trilogy published years ago as P/Bs by Blandford Press:-

- **The New Morality 1964**
- **The Cult of Softness 1965**
- **" Christian Counter-Attack 1969.**

They'll be available second hand on the internet. And worth any asking price — well, within reason!

## SUMMARY *FERVERINO*

N.B. a *ferverino* is a confessor's "pep talk"

**Acceptance + Adjustment + Achievement**

(This is an Alcoholics Anonymous plan of action)

- **ACCEPT** the shocking truth about shonkiness
- **ADJUST**: scrub human respect, favour God's "opinion"
- **ACHIEVE** in spite of shonkiness: in self, in others too.

## Restore Beauty

For instance, we have let ourselves become **conditioned to ugliness** — within ourselves and in our environment, music and architecture (especially church music and church architecture), and we stifle our sense of the beautiful by a surrender to untidiness, chaos and rubbish littering our landscapes.

## Restore Goodness

It is beauty in morals. Beauty in other things will both rebuke and encourage us towards "Be perfect..."

## Restore Truth

It is beauty in knowledge, in facts and in fact. Self-knowledge can starve to death our sinful pride and *opinionatedness* (but be kind to the opinionated).

Knowledge of the world will prompt our praise of its (and our) Creator: "Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest!"

## Restore God

We must imitate the God we serve. Imitate His making of things. Make things go better when we can .