

The light still shines

The curtain is about to be drawn on the Twentieth Century, as well as the much-touted "Millennium" and, though much less publicized, the first two thousand years of the Christian Epoch.

Christianity came swiftly. After enduring, with a shining grace and dazzling humility, the sword of Nero, then of Trajan, the Church became acquainted with the other, kinder face of secular power—a face that



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Altar of an Unknown God

Two thousand years ago, give or take a bit, a child was born who grew to be the most amazing Man history has ever seen. Some called Him a Teacher, some called Him a Prophet, some called Him a blasphemer—and there were some who called Him Savior.

Two thousand years ago, this Man was put to death. Two thousand years ago, His followers claimed they had seen Him alive once more. And two thousand years ago, these followers went out into the world to proclaim this Man's message of liberating truth and conquering love.

So where have we come from there? Unfortunately the degeneration of

proved the deadliest of all.

That is, under Emperor Constantine, Christianity was rendered both legitimate and official, and thus became an oxymoron and, arguably, an abomination: a spiritual movement vested with a physical authority.

And thus began the Church's woes. All the lions and crucifixes in the Roman Empire could not slay that against which "the gates of Hell shall not prevail." But in the birth of the Holy Roman Empire was forged the sword with which the Church would slay itself. For when love and kindness are replaced by ambition and cruelty, the result is an entity that can hardly be called "Christian" at all.

So where have we come from there? The crimes of the Church are many. There was the Inquisition;

there were crusades; there were witch trials; there were religious wars of all varieties. And through the confusion of philosophy with doctrine, science and inquiry have been held under the Church's dread sway.

So where have we come from there?

There have been shafts external as well as poisons internal loosed against the truth of God. There has been the satire of Voltaire, the Deism of Jefferson, the materialism of Marx and—with G.W. Hegel's system of "thesis-antithesis-synthesis," whereby opposing propositions are reconciled into a non-contradictory whole—an assault on Truth itself.

But a kernel of Truth has persisted through all these assaults—the immutable Word of God, the Word that became Flesh, the Word "full of Grace and Truth." That kernel, against which Hell prevailed not, survives unto this day to find its way into my heart, and to be proclaimed to you. It will live on, when you and I have passed from this mode of life, to find its way into yet another heart that seeks after God.

Two thousand years later, the Light still shines. May it shine on you.

I show you a more excellent way.

Victims victimized twice

Pardon me if I don't believe that victims have rights, because I was stabbed not once, twice or even three times, but seven times—and the offender is free and I know it's only because she's a juvenile.

myself down and began to hyperventilate. I blacked out. I woke up as I was being carried to my car. My friends got in and drove me to the nearest house where they called 911. It was busy. They then

drove me to the Molalla Police Department. There were county, state and local cops. They said they got the suspect. She was a 15

year-old girl. The ambulance came and took me to the OHSU Trauma Center. They stitched me up and showed me my back through a mirror. She stabbed me seven times, six in my back and once in my arm.

We went to court about eight months later. Her defense was that she feared for her life because I was bigger and stronger than she was. Yet as we came to find out from her testimony, she had the knife pulled when she was arguing with the first girl. Instead of attempted murder, she was charged with Assault 4, a misdemeanor.

Her sentence was restitution, 40 hours of community service, and counseling. That's all she got and she will forget about this act of violence long before I do. I have seven scars to remind me, daily. I experience severe pain in my back on any given day. I have endless sleepless nights. But that wasn't good enough for them. I begin to wonder if I would've been better off if she had killed me—maybe, just maybe there

would be justice.

We were set up for mediation, which is where the victim faces the offender. She agreed to pay restitution of \$1,592. At the mediation she threatened me and all they did was say, "Now, we shouldn't have to remind you: no threats." The next day she wanted to back out of the deal. She felt I didn't deserve that amount. That was it, the last straw. I finally broke. For months they had asked how she felt, if the date scheduled was all right with her, never me. I felt as though I was being treated as the offender rather than the victim, just because I was older than she was. Of course, what could I expect? We were working through the juvenile system. I said, "No, I'm sorry—if she backs out I'm taking her to court and holding her mother responsible for her actions."

The mediator basically said I shouldn't expect so much from a 15 year-old girl. However, they didn't take into consideration that she had 27 misdemeanors on her record as well as four felonies.

What I learned from the system is that Measure 11 and victims' rights laws can work for the victim as long as the offender is not a juvenile. However, it is nice to know there are places that will help victims when no one else will.

I'm here to say victims' rights? Hah! I wish, because from where I'm sitting we don't have any.

For more information for victims' services call Victims' Assistance at (503)655-8616.

Questions, comments or ideas contact at ext. 2309 or e-mail me at salenadelacruz@netscape.net.



Letter to the Editor ...

Dear Editor,

Your last month's article (Oct. 13, 1999, p. 4) "Abandoned Bunnies fend for life," caught my heart. As a community gardener at gardens located near the ELC, I have delighted in these fat-looking rabbits. During the heat of summer they find sun and shade under my large zucchini leaves. These rabbits roam free, visit with each other, and (up until now) did not fear people. They have added to the ELC. Plus, they seem to be considerably less hungry than the many ducks and geese who beg for bread and all but attack me for more food at times. Let's keep the bunnies too.

I understand the ELC's need to keep bunny populations un-

der control. They seem now to be corralling them in the Orchard Society's secured area. However, I don't see that the bunnies had it "pretty rough." At least not while they were free in the ELC area. With leftover lettuce, etc., they have lots to eat in our large, abundant gardens, as do other worthy locals, like birds.

Martha McKay

P.S. For anyone interested in a community garden space, call Janice, Recreation Department. (Cost is \$15 a plot per year, with automatic watering in summer. This must be the best deal in town.)



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