



CRONIN

2004

ORWELL REDUX & REVISED

BY MICHAEL McCUSKER

"The capacity of the human mind for swallowing nonsense and spewing it forth in violent and repressive action has never yet been plumbed."

~ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

"If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping a human face — forever."

~GEORGE ORWELL

GOD IS WATCHING YOU!

The apparition appeared suddenly in front of Winston Smith at his computer in the Ministry of Truth. As often as he had been confronted with the specter, he cringed inwardly as the brief flash of light disappeared. Holographic bursts appeared everywhere in the city like dust devils at any time day or night, inside or outside, office or home. Each time a sudden swirl of bright silver and gold lights from which boomed a sepulchral voice warning of eternal celestial surveillance.

Everyone in Evangelica, which was shorthand for the Holy Evangelical Empire, was watched all of the time, or at least thought they were, which was much the same thing. Every personal computer was hooked to an empirical web that was capable of monitoring everyone without human observation. Television was the main spy, however. More to the point, the masses who were terrified of the Grand Inquisitor's thought police were pacified by media control. The omnipresent screen looked back at its viewers who maintained perpetually pious expressions lest they be suspected of mental impurity or heresy.

Winston Smith lived in a world in the ever recurring present. The past was evil; the future belonged to God. Life was immediately now, everlasting, occupied in service to God's Holy Order, the high priests who ruled Evangelica. There were contradictions of course, corporeal aging for one, but only a very few were close enough to the heart of the Order's administration

to realize it and at that point doublethink was a necessary reflex, the mental agility to make oneself believe that the most blatant lie was not only absolute truth but had always been true. Doublethink averted heresy and subsequent liquidation.

Winston was an auxiliary member of the priestly Holy Order that ruled, a lay functionary equivalent to a Catholic altar boy. The Ministry of Truth in which he held a minor post controlled every bit of information disseminated within Evangelica and was responsible for external propaganda as well. (The use of the word *ministry* was itself recaptured from its former bureaucratic misuse and reapplied for the same purpose.) There were millions like Winston, antlike creatures who carried out the will of the Order, not allowed to think or feel for themselves, subjects of an iron theocracy that tolerated no question of its authority or power.

If Winston had a window in his airless cubicle in the Ministry of Truth he would have seen the large city massed below, dilapidated hovels that surrounded for miles around each of the four huge ministries of Evangelica as were the gothic cathedrals in medieval times. (The other three ministries were Peace, Love and Joy, successively headquarters for the military, thought police — the God Squad — and social administration.) The streets swarmed, with police particularly evident, though as usual priestly limos carried important clerics about their sacred duties. Buried deeply within the giant cathedral of the Ministry of Truth, Winston was shielded during working hours from the incessant shrieks of sirens as the Grand Inquisitor's God Squads swept down upon heretics, blasphemers and traitors, raided homes and suspected meeting places of outlawed sects.

Winston's pious drudgery was interrupted several times each day by a loud fanfare of trumpets followed by excited voices shouting from video screens positioned on every wall of the huge room in which he performed his nugatory duties. The announcements always proclaimed the hosts of God had smitten the Axis of Evil a mighty blow. Video visions of gleaming missiles shot from shining white jet bombers filled the screens. The evil strongholds appeared to be nondescript shanties from which erupted fleeing darkskinned persons, many of whom fell or were vaporized in explosions. (Winston's nagging uncertainty was that these might actually be indigenous minorities ghettoized and obliterated.) Following that triumphant declaration of vanquishing evil once again, a voice might say the wine ration at daily compulsory worship services, the only sanctioned alcohol use, would be cut by a third simultaneous with requisite higher surcharges for its consumption from employee wages. A tremendous hosanna of trumpets and voices would end the newflash. Winston knew that by the next day the media would proclaim that wine rationing had actually been increased without mentioning the higher tax. He might himself be given the assignment to revise the numbers.

Winston's job at the Ministry of Truth was to slightly alter selected portions of Holy Scripture, in particular to ensure past prophecies be brought into line with contemporary reality, itself subject to perception and change. His job was reality control. At all times the Order was to be perceived as the rock of absolute truth and clearly the absolute could never be incompatible with the present truth. The concept of divinely inspired gospel had been altered to fit evangelitical needs, which made it critical to proffer each scriptural revision as though it were truth evermore until replaced by another temporarily operable truth. The real unchanging truth adhered to as gospel by the reigning theocrats was that whoever controls the past dominates the future, and control of the present necessarily manipulates the past.

Knowledge of history was confined to what appears in the Bible, though it had been so tampered with Winston was unaware both of its original gospels and that they had been altered despite the fact he made a dozen or more small changes every day.

History was portrayed as perpetual religious war between good and evil, waged against the Great Satans or Pagans who occupied the other two-thirds of Earth. Everything since the Crucifixion was rendered into ecclesiastical dogma. History thus made sacred was also made to conform to the current iron rule of the High Priests. An example of this was that the Old Testament was revised to not only justify the emergence of the ruling theocracy but to purge it of any connection to Judaism. Jews were instead reviled as a satanic cult that murdered Jesus, son of God, affixing his sacred body to a cross like a common criminal. Latter day Jews continued to be persecuted for the ancient murder and for the fact that complete extermination had never yet been successful. Though any reference to the Holocaust of the Second World War of the 20th century had long been erased — following a period of denial — Adolf Hitler's idea of a final Jewish solution had been resurrected. Success was limited because Jews not caught in the first pogroms went underground to live disguised lives within the mainstream while secretly reviving an oral tradition of teaching the Torah and Judaic culture.

Terra tres parts est. Winston thought, enlarging upon Caesar. At least he thought the world was divided into three parts. The other two parts were referred to as only Great Satans and Pagans. His part, Evangelica (the Holy Evangelical Empire), was eternally at war with either or both simultaneously, although he was never certain as a result of ever changing revisions by the Ministry of Truth. He manipulated information enough to have formed a hazy recollection of which antiChrist Evangelica was at war against, and when, but his own part in the processing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

On The Air

Making Waves

**NORTH COAST
TIMES EAGLE**

A JOURNAL OF ART & OPINION
PUBLISHED IN ASTORIA, OREGON
757 27TH STREET 97103
MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER
EDITOR & PUBLISHER