

## **‘Mary Most Holy’ Statue: Reversing the Reformation**

Chapter 8 of Bishop J C Ryle’s book **‘Warnings To The Churches’** was first published as part of another of his books titled **‘Knots Untied’** in 1877. This chapter 8 is titled **‘Idolatry’** and the scripture reference cited is **“Flee from idolatry” [1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:14]**. The opening lines of this chapter [p142] read as follows -

**‘The text which heads this page may seem at first sight hardly needed in England. In an age of education and intelligence like this, we might almost fancy it is waste of time to tell an Englishman to “flee from idolatry”. I am bold to say that this is a great mistake...I believe that idolatry is near us, and about us, and in the midst of us to a very fearful extent. The second commandment, in one word, is in peril. The ‘plague’ is begun.**

It would seem that what Bishop Ryle referred to as a **‘plague’** is set to become an **‘epidemic’**. In the **‘Introduction’** to a book called **‘The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Early Modern Germany: Protestant and Catholic Piety, 1500-1648’** by Bridget Heal we read –

**Building on the Christian humanist critique of man’s propensity to focus on external rites rather than on inner spirituality, reformers such as Zwingli argued that if images survived men would inevitably be drawn to worship them. For, Zwingli wrote in his *Brief Reply Given to Valentin Compar (1524/25)*, ‘man falls by his nature on the thing that is placed before his senses’.**

Zwingli perhaps had in mind the Israelites and their use of a **‘Golden Calf’**, an incident that Bishop Ryle refers to on pages 143-144 in these terms –

**‘The children of Israel never thought of renouncing God when they persuaded Aaron to make the golden calf...the feast in honour of the calf was kept as “a feast unto the Lord” [Exodus 32:4-5]...But...a great sin was committed. The honour due to God was given to a visible representation of Him. The majesty of Jehovah was offended. The second commandment was broken. There was, in the eyes of God, a flagrant act of *idolatry*’.**

One of the **‘by-products’** of the Reformation was that as a result of the recovery of Biblical truth regarding the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, nationwide, many of the idolatrous **‘trappings’** of the false religion of Roman Catholicism were dismantled and removed. Such purgative actions would certainly not be permitted in today’s multifaith/multicultural **‘politically correct’** United Kingdom but the actions then were I believe motivated very much by a desire to honour the God of Heaven who declared in **Isaiah 42:6** **“I am the Lord; that is my name; and, my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images”**.

Slowly but surely the Church of Rome has been seeking to reassert its influence and power in England as in former pre-Reformation days and a further example of its success in this respect has come with the announcement concerning the plans of an ecumenical grouping known as **‘the Art and Reconciliation Trust’** to erect a large statue of Mary at a cost of £1.25 million at the side of the river Thames – a statue that is due to be unveiled on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

In the **Catholic Herald** of **9 May 2008**, Simon Caldwell wrote the following –

**Plans have been unveiled for a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary to stand in London in reparation for the destruction of the medieval Catholic shrines during the Reformation.**

The work will be called "Mary Most Holy" and will stand on land alongside the River Thames at Chelsea's Embankment Gardens that was once owned by St Thomas More, the Lord Chancellor who was beheaded in 1535. It has been commissioned by the Art and Reconciliation Trust, a charity set up to promote awareness of the negative affects iconoclasm can have on culture. It will cost in the region of £1.25 million. The sculptor is Paul Day, whose previous work includes a 2002 memorial of the Battle of Britain on the bank of the Thames in central London; the Meeting Place at St Pancras station, London, and a memorial to the Queen Mother outside Buckingham Palace in the Mall. The proposed work, a bronze triptych on a granite plinth, will feature a statue of a "beautiful" Virgin Mary holding up the Child Jesus against the backdrop of ruins. One of two side panels will show iconoclasts beheading the statues of saints - one cradling the head of the Virgin Mary - while the other panel depicts reformers mocking a crucifix. Unveiling a model for the sculpture at the Charterhouse in London last week, Mr Day said that its purpose would be "to recall events in Chelsea's local history that were of national importance and whose effects can still be powerfully felt in present day Britain". "The destruction of England's medieval shrines and devotional images, conducted by Thomas Cromwell, was part of Henry VIII's programme for reform," he said. "In the summer of 1538 Cromwell was ensconced at Chelsea Manor to conduct his affairs because of an outbreak of the plague in central London. "From there, he ordered the most important Marian shrines in England be brought to Chelsea so that he could witness their destruction. The dissolution of the monasteries and destruction of popular pilgrimage sites heralded an end to the traditional expression of Christianity as passed down through the Middle Ages in England and Wales. "It is therefore hoped that this sculpture may be sited on or near to the location where the foremost Marian shrines were burnt." Mr Day said he also wanted his sculpture to express the "supremely negative impact" of iconoclasm *[the destruction of religious images or objects]*... "Iconoclasm seeks to destroy the objects that define a community by beliefs," he added. "History shows that it can, under certain circumstances, be followed by a desire to efface that very community from existence altogether, leading to genocide." Mr Day said that the sculpture would create a place for faith communities to reflect on reconciliation by confronting the truths of the past. A total of 84 shrines were destroyed in England and Wales during the 16th century and hundreds of statues of the Virgin Mary were burned... **Frances Scarr, chairman of the trust, said** the idea for a statue came after a pilgrimage by a group of Catholics and Anglicans to the sites of the shrines destroyed during the Reformation. Mrs Scarr said that erecting the sculpture would be an act of reparation for the destruction of the ancient shrines and might, she added, help to reconcile people of different faiths. **"I hope that when we come before this monument we will ask for God's forgiveness and through the intercession of Mary Most Holy we will pray that she will help us put behind our turbulent past and lead us forward in unity, peace and reconciliation,"** she said.

Mr Caldwell's article also included a picture of part of the model representing what the sculpture should look like – the portion including Mary and the "child Jesus" –



In the extracts quoted from Simon Caldwell's article I have highlighted in red some particular aspirations expressed by the chairman of the Art & Reconciliation Trust, Mrs

Frances Scarr. In these aspirations we see the unscriptural nature of Roman Catholicism that God graciously exposed to the light of His Word at the time of the Reformation, rearing its ungodly and idolatrous head once more. Mrs Scarr said –

**‘When we come before this monument’** – Bishop Ryle rightly identified Roman Catholic idolatry as ‘flagrant’ and a breaking ‘the second commandment’. We read of that commandment first in Exodus 20:4-6. Later in Deuteronomy chapter 4 Moses proceeds to ‘flesh out’ that commandment from God in these words – **“Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves...lest ye corrupt yourselves and make you a graven image, the similitude *[likeness]* of any figure, the likeness of male or FEMALE...Take Heed unto yourselves lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image of the likeness of ANYTHING which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee. For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God”**. Just as a husband or wife would be rightly jealous if their spouse to whom they have given their undivided and undying love started to ‘flirt’ with another, so God, who has given His undivided and undying love to His people [The bride of Christ] is likewise moved to jealousy and the ‘consuming fire’ of this jealousy was displayed in the ‘Golden Calf’ incident when we read in Exodus 33:20 **“And he *[Moses]* took the calf which they had made and burned it in the fire”**. Perhaps this action by Moses prompted the similar 1538 action taken in the burning of Marian shrines at Chelsea as mentioned in Simon Caldwell’s article.

Mrs Scarr went on to say –

**‘we will ask for God’s forgiveness and through the intercession of Mary Most Holy’** – What delusion, to believe that people can, in what constitutes a ‘flagrant’ act of idolatry [coming before a statue of Mary], ask for God’s forgiveness on other unrelated issues that fail to take into account the exceedingly sinful and God-angering manner of this very method of petitioning. Then we also see the usurping by Rome of the unique intercessory role in heaven of the Lord Jesus Christ [see 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:24-25; 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9 & 2:1] as they place Mary on a par with Christ as a second heavenly ‘intercessor’.

Finally Mrs Scarr said –

**‘we will pray that she will help us put behind our turbulent past and lead us forward in unity, peace and reconciliation’** – again I turn to the words of Bishop Ryle to respond here to Mrs Scarr –

**‘idolatry is a natural product of man’s heart. It is a weed...which the heart is always ready to bring forth...we read of the constantly recurring idolatries of the Old Testament Church - of Peor, and Baal, and Moloch, and Chemosh and Ashtorath – of hill altars...and images...Does it surprise us when we read in history how idolatry crept in by degrees into the Church of Christ...until in Canterbury men offered more at the shrine...of the Virgin Mary than at that of Christ...I for one am not surprised at the quantity of idolatry existing both in the world and in the visible Church. I believe it perfectly possible that we may yet live to see far more of it than some have ever dreamed of...Romanism in perfection is a gigantic system of Church-worship, Sacrament-worship, Mary-worship...image-worship...in one word, a *huge organised idolatry*...idolatry has decidedly manifested itself in the visible Church of Christ and nowhere so decidedly as in the Church of Rome...the Church of Rome is walking amongst us with renewed strength...I offer some practical safeguards against idolatry... (1) Let us arm ourselves...with a thorough knowledge of the Word of God...if we once leave that for any by-path...we must never be surprised if we end with worshipping images... (2) Let us arm ourselves...with a godly jealousy about the least portion of the Gospel...Let us beware of tampering with anything of a Romanising tendency. It is foolishness to play**

with fire... (3) Let us arm ourselves...with clear, sound views of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the salvation that is in Him...Christ rightly known, Christ truly believed and Christ heartily loved is the true preservative against ritualism, Romanism and every form of IDOLATRY' [pages 148-149; 158-159; 167-170].

How sad that the Church of England no longer possesses men with the scriptural awareness and application of Bishop Ryle but instead is currently led by Rowan Williams who earlier this year visited the Marian shrine at Lourdes as you will see in the picture [from the British Church Newspaper of 10<sup>th</sup> October 2008] at the end of this article. Clearly Mr Williams is living proof of the observation quoted earlier by the Reformer Zwingli - 'man falls by his nature on the thing that is placed before his senses'. Unlike some wise men of old who "when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary, his mother, and fell down and worshipped HIM" [Matthew 2:11] Mr Williams and many of his flock are certainly hastening the Reversal of the Reformation and the very public re-emergence of Idolatrous Romanism.

Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries – 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2008

## APPENDIX

### 'Mary Most Holy' fails to get planning permission

Some months after I posted this article to our web site a further article appeared in **The Catholic Herald** and it can be viewed on <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/articles/a0000504.shtml>

This is the article and I have emphasised some portions in red. Thanks should be given to God that this planned idolatry is being restricted to an existing site of idolatry and therefore will not be further inflicted on the general public as had been the original intention with the Thames-side location.

# Statue to commemorate destruction of shrines

By **Simon Caldwell**  
20 March 2009

One of Britain's leading sculptors is to erect a statue of Our Lady and the Child Jesus on the site of London's medieval Marian shrine. Paul Day will spend a year creating the work, called Mary Most Holy, **outside the front entrance of the Church of Our Lady of Willesden, north London**. It will commemorate the Marian shrines destroyed during the Reformation. **The sculpture was**

**originally intended to stand on land alongside the River Thames at Chelsea where King Henry VIII ordered the statues taken from 64 Marian shrines to be burned on huge bonfires in 1538. But Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council denied planning permission at the last minute, forcing the Art and Reconciliation Trust, the charity that commissioned the work, to look elsewhere.**

Brent Borough Council has now formally approved the plans. **"As we couldn't have Chelsea the next obvious place was at Willesden,"** said Frances Scarr, chairwoman of the trust, which was set up to promote awareness of the negative effects iconoclasm can have on culture. **"It is a medieval shrine dating back to 939,"** she said. **"It is one of the original shrines. It was the only shrine to Our Lady in London at that time. It even pre-dates Walsingham.**

"We now all agree actually that where it is going is more appropriate and will also foster a great deal more prayer. If it had been at Chelsea it would have been in a garden with a lot of other statues but now it is outside a church and a very active church at that.

**She said that she was seeking £500,000 in donations to help to pay for the work. "If all goes to plan Paul Day will start on the memorial this September,"** she said. **"It will take about a year. When we get started I will be able to think of a date and I would like it to be on a feast of Our Lady. It is too early to start thinking about that yet."**

Previous works by Mr Day includes a memorial of the Battle of Britain on Victorian Embankment, Westminster, and the Meeting Place at St Pancras Station, London. His latest work was a statue of the Queen Mother unveiled in February on the Mall outside Buckingham Palace.

The proposed statue of the Virgin and Child will be a bronze triptych on a granite plinth. A "beautiful" Virgin Mary holds up the Child Jesus against the backdrop of ruins and two side panels show reformers beheading and smashing up the statues of saints and destroying a crucifix. When he first unveiled a model of the statue Mr Day explained that the "ruined setting evokes rather than represents the dissolved monasteries of England".

He said: "The setting must be contemporary. Ruins mean war and the destruction that we have caused to our world, the broken world into which Christ came and the broken nature of the relationship between God and mankind."

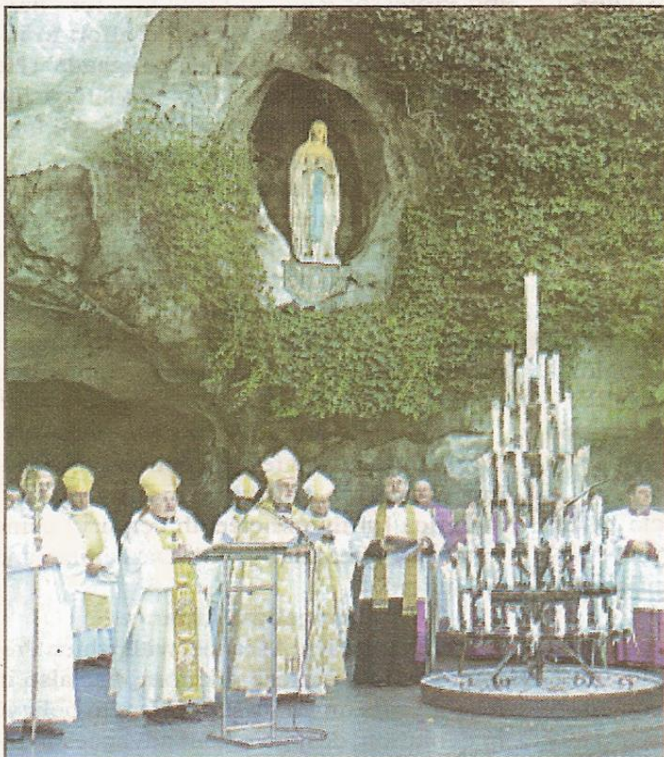
**Devotion to Our Lady at Willesden can be traced back to the late Anglo-Saxon period. Willesden means "spring at the foot of the hill" and there was a well with supposedly miraculous properties. The well and the Marian shrine that grew around it were connected to the Church of St Mary that was mentioned in a 10th-century royal charter. By 1249 there were two statues at the shrine, one of which was a Black Madonna encrusted with gold, silver and precious jewels. During the medieval period pilgrims travelled in their thousands to pray at the shrine. St Thomas More was a**

regular visitor and made a pilgrimage just months before he was arrested for refusing to take an oath attached to the Act of Succession. Willesden became an active shrine in the late 19th century following the establishment of a Catholic mission at nearby Harlesden. A replica Black Madonna was made and blessed by Cardinal Herbert Vaughan in 1892. The Romanesque - now Grade II-listed - church was opened in 1931. When Pope Pius XII declared in the "Marian Year" of 1954 that every diocese should have a Marian shrine, Willesden was chosen as the centre of Marian devotion for the Archdiocese of Westminster. For most Catholic Londoners the Marian Year culminated in a Mass at Wembley Stadium in which 94,000 people saw Cardinal Bernard Griffin crown the Black Madonna. A total of 60,000 pilgrims visited the Willesden shrine that year.

In 1958 the shrine would also be visited by St Josemaria Escrivá who reconsecrated his organisation, Opus Dei, to the Virgin Mary at the church on the August 15 Feast of the Assumption in 1958.

Mrs Scarr will appear on Eternal World Television Network (EWTN) on March 19 and 25 to discuss the project.

## ABC joins in Lourdes Jubilee



Archbishop Rowan at the Grotto in Lourdes with Cardinal Kaspar on his right. Photo: ACNS/Rosenthal

The Archbishop of Canterbury, seven Anglican bishops and some 60 Anglican priests joined in a concelebrated Anglican Eucharist in the Upper Basilica of the main church in Lourdes (BCN 26 September).

The Anglican group had a warm welcome from shrine officials. The Archbishop preached to over 20,000 people at the International Mass, with Cardinal Kaspar of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Christian Unity as the celebrant.

However the *Daily Telegraph* quoted the Rev Jeremy Brooks of the Protestant Truth Society as saying: "Lourdes represents everything about Roman Catholicism that the Protestant Reformation rejected, including apparitions, mariolatry and the veneration of saints. At a time when our country is crying out for clear Biblical leadership, it is nothing short of tragic that our supposedly Protestant Archbishop is behaving as little more than a papal puppet."