

29-07-2013 Feast of St Martha

Canonisations

The recent announcement that Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II are to be canonised, the former without any miracle in his favour, merely increases one's anxiety regarding the modern process of canonisation. There appears, at least to this simple layman, an undue haste and a lack of due examination of the reasons why such persons might not be canonised – an examination which used to be undertaken by the devil's advocate, (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01168b.htm>) an office which was abolished by John Paul II in his Constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister* in 1983. It appears today that favourable acclamation is sufficient to begin and sustain the whole process with gainsayers as popular as a fox in a henhouse. Would one be entirely cynical to suggest that, in these cases, the canonisations are not only directed at the pontiffs concerned as towards the fruits of their labour, the Second Vatican Council and the Post Conciliar Church? Saint Vatican II is perhaps also the purpose of these canonisations – as a device to sanctify Vatican II when perhaps a different process is more appropriate. We do not intend to list here the whole litany of issues which would have formerly been directed to the Devil's Advocate by concerned Catholics regarding these canonisations – these have already been listed elsewhere in petitions and, as far as we are aware, wholly ignored.

But we have reproduced here *Approaches* articles concerning both pontiffs which concern matters which in any other age of the Church would at least have merited investigation. These articles concern the Rome- Moscow Agreement which related to the pontificate of John XXIII and to the Church's relationship with the Jews which relates to the pontificate of John Paul II. We have also reproduced our own *Apropos* article concerning John XXIII's "inspiration" to call the Second Vatican Council.

[The Rome-Moscow Agreement](#)

[Rome-Moscow Agreement confirmed](#)

[Postscript to Rome-Moscow Agreement](#)

[The Jewish Question in the Church](#)

[Vatican II – Inspired by God?](#)

Maurice Baring on War and on Dostoyevsky

As some European and American politicians continue to '*beat the big drum and appeal to St. Jingo*', as Baring would have put it, in support of intervention in the Middle East, we would draw our readers' attention to the essay by Dr Robert Hickson concerning [Maurice Baring's observations as a war correspondent in pre-revolutionary Russia and in the Balkans.](#) Baring's salutary warning regarding

modern warfare as *'an insensate abomination'* was clearly ignored by those who conducted the World Wars and modern wars which were to follow. Nevertheless, while describing the terrible misery of warfare, Baring also describes the nobility, love and charity which can be found even in the most awful circumstances – especially that which existed among enemies: the *'many noble things and innumerable small forgotten acts which were beautiful, and among these perhaps the most precious are the unexpected surprises in men, the "self-sacrifice of the indifferent, the unworldliness of the worldly, the unselfishness of the selfish.'*

But, now, as Dr Hickson observes:

It appears to be the case that a coarsening and brutalization started to take deeper root in the West during, and especially in the vengeful aftermath of, World War I. As irregular and revolutionary warfare became more widespread, so did the phenomenon of Total War, or "Unrestricted Warfare." Now in warfare we have more and more impersonality, anonymity, and unaccountability—in part, because of advanced and remote technologies and various forms of trust-breaking deception and "perception management."

In his second essay Dr Hickson continues to discuss Baring's attributes as a war correspondent and his disdain for the corruption of language, a disdain which might help us identify the sophistry and prejudices of the mass media today. But the greater part of the essay concerns [Baring's appreciation of the great Russian author, Dostoyevsky](#). For those of us who also value Dostoyevsky's writings, Baring's incisive insights help us to understand more fully the Russian author's grasp of human nature and whose *'books do not leave us with a feeling of despair; on the contrary, his own "sweet reasonableness," the pity and love with which they are filled are like a balm.'*