

WHEN THE WATTLE TURNS TO GOLD

As he left hospital in Sydney to return to Hobart in 1976, Australian Catholic poet, James McAuley, wrote the following verses. His early death, he had learnt, was inevitable.

So the word has come at last:
The argument of arms is past.
Fully tested I've been found
Fit to join the underground.

No worse age has ever been—
Murderous, lying, and obscene;
Devils worked while gods connived:
Somehow the human has survived.

Why these horrors must be so
I never could pretend to know:
It isn't I, dear Lord, who can
Justify your ways to man.

Soon I'll understand it all,
Or cease to wonder: so my small
Spark will blaze intensely bright,
Or go out in an endless night.

Welcome now to bread and wine:
Creature comfort, heavenly sign.
Winter will grow dark and cold
Before the wattle turns to gold.

McAuley died, aged 59, on the Feast of St Teresa of Avila, Friday, 15th October 1976.

Thirty four years have passed and the horrors have compounded beyond belief. The ravaging of Christ's Church has proceeded apace, a consequence of that ill founded Council whose chief effect has been the opening of the Church's sacred doors to the pernicious influence of the secular. We have, I suggest, a better perspective than McAuley of the evils of the age: we have seen their appalling detail; we have lived with them longer. But, also, we have access to a greater hope. I offer the following verses as supplement to his last poem.

Yet turn to gold the wattle will;
For whatever dark, or chill,
Winter's blight may bring to earth,
Spring will follow in its berth,

And the brown shall turn to green,
And the sun again be seen,
For no evil can outweigh
The good it bids to overlay.

And so the evil ravaging
Of Christ's Church, and the savaging
Of greater, lesser and the least
With the markings of the Beast,

Is numbered—and its days approach
An ending—lest these ills encroach
The guarantee of peace and rest,
God provided for the blest.

This evil (like the plagues of old)
Marks the epoch Leo told:
*The Devil shall be given scope,
One hundred years to lame the Pope;*

*Destroy the Church that God has made;
And bring to nought the Saviour's trade—
The purchase at unreckoned price
Of mankind by His sacrifice.*

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This evil has its metes and bounds:
St Michael checks them on his rounds.
His distant thunder starts, and spurs,
The Hellhound and his fellow curs

To action twenty times expounded;
To expedite the unconfounded.
The time is short, and growing shorter,
For the gate of hell's Dark Porter.

When that day arrives, the day
The Pope lifts up his voice to flay
The folly of the Godless minds
Who argue blindly—*Nothing finds*

*Itself in need of cause, or good,
Or need for essence understood:
Or argue—Nothing is contingent,
Or dependent, or exigent...*

Then a tremor shall be hurled
Rippling through the underworld,
Shaking from his pedestal
Prophet, priest and lowly thrall

Of the kingdom of the damned,
Who proclaimed athwart the land
Damnation's wisdom; worldly wise
Prophecies, solutions, lies!

Each rooted in the Devil's curse
That marks materialism's hearse.
Their blind opinion, ruled and netted,
Ensured the blind were bound and fettered.

But no longer! For the hundred year
Approaches, and the term is near.
Winter's lease soon will be told
When the wattle turns to gold.

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The Prince of darkness goes his way
Inevitably. But who shall say
Or soon? Or late? Or fast? Or slow?—
It is not given us to know.

We only know the truth assuring;
Christ shall conquer long perduring;
Christ shall rule the nations ever;
Christ shall reign as King forever.

Michael Baker

31st October 2010—*Feast of Christ the King in the Missal of Pius X*