

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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A writer's progress

WELL, THE TWO Welshmen playing at being a pope who went to Hollywood hoping to collect an Oscar both returned empty-handed. *The Two Popes* was also nominated for best adapted screenplay; writer Anthony McCarten wasn't given a chance to make a fool of himself making an acceptance speech either, but at least he also got a free dinner out of it.

No such luck for Frank Cottrell Boyce. Although McCarten's screenplay for the Netflix movie version had been given a thorough scrub by the Liverpoolian, now as well known as a children's novelist as he is as a screenwriter, he does not get a credit – and there was no sign of him at the Oscar ceremony. Cottrell Boyce is unusually relaxed about taking credit for his screenwriting. In 2005 he cheerfully declined to be named as the co-creator of one of the great feats of filming the unfilmable: *Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story*, directed by Michael Winterbottom.

The Two Popes was adapted by McCarten from his stage play, *The Pope*, which had its premiere in Northampton in June last year. McCarten had previously worked on *The Theory of Everything*, *Darkest Hour* and



Bohemian Rhapsody, and *The Two Popes* was his third Oscar nomination as a screenwriter. Whether he's featuring the Pope Emeritus, Stephen Hawking, Winston Churchill or Freddie Mercury, McCarten's supple screenplays tend to privilege drama over documentary realism.

"I honestly doubt I'd be a writer if it were not for the Catholic Church," McCarten told Mark Lawson last year in an interview for *The Tablet*. "It gave me a schooling in drama, high rhetoric and poetry, and metaphor, and asking the big questions. It shapes you in a

very profound way, and, even when you stop practising, it's still there."

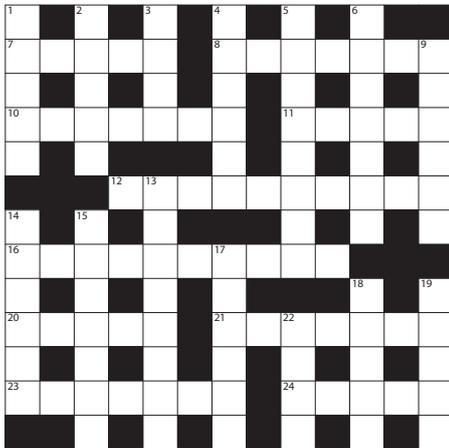
ARTHUR JONES, another Liverpool-born scribbler, served an apprenticeship with a northern newspaper chain and had a stint in the RAF before travelling to the United States in 1958 when he was 22. He worked for several years for glossy New York magazines while occasionally dabbling in Catholic journalism. Peter Jay, when economics editor of *The Times*, likened Jones to "a Venetian whose working both sides of the canal between God and Mammon". In 1985, he took up the *National Catholic Reporter's* offer to make an honest man of him. He edited the paper with courage and elan.

Now retired, after 15 books of non-fiction the irrepressible Jones has turned to writing a novel. *The Jesus Spy's* hero is a shrewd, camel-riding Zoroastrian from Persia, sneaking into Judea to set up his network as Pontius Pilate's espionage chief. Among the Zealots, magicians and would-be messiahs is a mysterious and compelling Nazarene. Will the spy become a disciple? Jones keeps us guessing to the final pages.

The Jesus Spy is published by Capparoe Books, and is available from Amazon for Kindle and suchlike.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 694 Enigma



Across

- 7 ----- Montague, Shakespeare's tragic hero (5)
 8 Legendary founder of Mycenae (7)
 10 Large, found in Africa, Asia, Oceania, the Americas; the ----- lizard (7)
 11 River, north-west Germany, formed by confluence of rivers Fulda and Werra (5)
 12 Sacerdotalis -----; encyclical by Pope Paul VI (10)
 16 George Whitefield was prominent in their history (10)
 20 Jocular word for illness or bug, originated in 1954 in "----- strikes Britain" (*Goon Show*) (5)
 21 Regency romance by Georgette Heyer (1958) (7)

- 23 Seven successive fourteenth-century popes presided here (7)
 24 Broadway musical and film about an orphan, music by Charles Strouse (5)

Down

- 1 ----- in Inish (Lennox Robinson); first performed Abbey Theatre, Dublin, 1933 (5)
 2 Chief duty of Roman augurs was to observe these, given by birds (5)
 3 In common law a civil wrong that harms someone (4)
 4 Title of English version of French crime series, *Engrenages* (6)
 5 *Myotis Lucifugus*, commonly called the little ----- (5,3)
 6 Mass per unit volume of a substance is its ----- (7)

- 9 A ----- test monitors the heart rate in increasingly strenuous exercise (6)
 13 Inhabitants of a volcanic archipelago in the Tyrrhenian Sea (8)
 14 Christian name of actress playing Dolores Umbridge in *Harry Potter* films (6)
 15 Organic compound sometimes misused by athletes (7)
 17 Town, Orange County, California, shares its name with one in Ayrshire (6)
 18 "Too long a sacrifice" makes this of the heart (Yeats) (5)
 19 Edouard ----- nineteenth-century French painter (5)
 22 Archaic word for an ox or cow (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 1 February, *The Tablet*, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk, with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on Augustine, Christianity and Thomas Aquinas – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random on Friday 28 February. The answers to this week's puzzles and the crossword winner's name will appear in the 7 March issue.

SUDOKU | Tough

	3		8			6		
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Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

7	1	5	4	8	3	9	2	6
6	9	2	5	7	1	4	8	3
3	8	4	2	6	9	7	1	5
8	4	7	3	5	2	1	6	9
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2	6	9	8	3	7	5	4	1
4	7	1	6	2	5	3	9	8
5	3	8	1	9	4	6	7	2

Solution to the 25 January puzzle

Solution to the 25 January crossword No. 691

Across: 1 Ma'am; 3 Aperitif; 9 Drama; 10 Propose; 11 Archaic; 12 Trepid; 13 Byway; 15 Props; 20 Manic; 22 Spornan; 24 Auditor; 25 Unite; 26 Syracuse; 27 Best. **Down:** 1 Madman; 2 Anarchy; 4 Papacy; 5 Rooster; 6 Troop; 7 Fields; 8 RADA; 14 Ascetic; 16 Porcine; 17 Emmaus; 18 Usurps; 19 Ingest; 21 Nadir; 23 Opus. **Winner:** Gerard Staunton, of Knocknacarra Cross, Galway.

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