

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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The doubters who won the war

THEY WERE allies in wartime, and often acerbic adversaries in peace, who, the occasional dig aside, came to deeply admire each other. But for all their differences in political outlook and temperament, Clement Attlee and Winston Churchill shared remarkably similar doubts about Christianity.

Leo McKinstry's new joint biography, *Attlee and Churchill* (Atlantic Books), retells the story of a fading Attlee's determination to attend Churchill's funeral at St Paul's. Churchill had not feared death; nor was he a fervent believer. As he famously said, he saw himself as supporting the Church as a flying buttress on the outside rather than a pillar from within.

Lord Moran, his doctor for 25 years, wrote that Churchill "did not believe in another world, only in eternal sleep". His friend, Violet Bonham Carter, wrote that Churchill had told her that "eternal life seemed a nightmare possibility". His friend and ally, Bob Boothby, complained of how with Churchill, "Thou shalt have no other gods but me" has always been the first, and the most significant, of the Commandments".



Churchill's insouciant attitude to eternal life largely matched Attlee's religious outlook. Attlee came from a family of committed Anglicans. His eldest brother was a clergyman and a sister went to South Africa as a missionary. But though Attlee appreciated the "ethics" of Christianity, he told friends that he eschewed the "mumbo-jumbo". Never a chat show's idea of an ideal guest, when asked if he was an agnostic, Attlee replied crisply: "I don't know." To the question as to whether there might be an afterlife, he kept it even shorter: "Possibly."

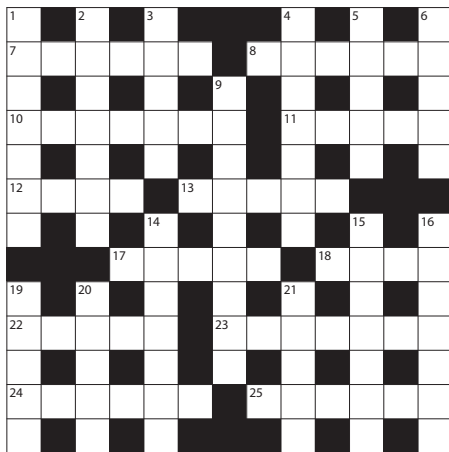
AT MIDDAY ON Friday the occupants of the Theology section in the Bodleian's Lower Reading Room slightly raised their heads to exchange a wry approving smile as the thumping, drumming, shouting of the children-led global climate strike pounded the street immediately outside their window. "You'll die of old age - I'll die of climate change" and "I'm not going back to school unless breathing underwater is on the curriculum" read the placards.

A few hours later another group of Oxford theologians were waiting for Fr Ian Ker - the author of an acclaimed biography of John Henry Newman - to show up at the Dominican house of Blackfriars to give a lecture on his hero.

Ker had been held up - not by the demo but by trouble with his car engine. When he arrived, he delighted his audience with extracts from Newman's work, showing the cardinal's skills as a satirist as well as an apologist, preacher and letter-writer. An interesting detail was that after his conversion Newman was careful to take a copy of the Douay version of the Bible into the pulpit with him, in case he might be led from memory to quote from the Authorised Version, which would have scandalised his Catholic listeners.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 676 | Enigma



Across

- 7 ----- Cordillera; Spanish mountain range, extends from Estepona to Cape Gata (6)
- 8 Surname of golfer winning British Open 1961 and 1962 (6)
- 10 Pierre-Simon -----, (1749-1827) French physicist, researched stability of solar system (7)
- 11 Surname of singer who played Grizabella in film *Cats* (5)
- 12 Sir George Houston -----, prime minister of Australia 1904-05 (4)
- 13 In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge thus described the buckets (5)
- 17 Eighth-century scholar saint, lector of Clonmacnoise, feast 20 February (5)

- 18 In the Crimean War, the British and French won the Battle of the ----- (20 September 1854) (4)
 - 22 The shape of a thundercloud is compared to that of this object (5)
 - 23 Hans Hartung was a practitioner of this style of painting in post-war and 1950s Paris (7)
 - 24 World's second-largest country (6)
 - 25 "-- -----, no morning star can shine" ("My life belongs to you" [Ivor Novello]) (2, 4)
- Down**
- 1 Peter -----; (1079-1142) French theologian known for an unhappy love affair (7)
 - 2 German city above junction of rivers Pleisse, Parthe and Weisse Elster (7)
 - 3 Irish saint, first Bishop of Lindisfarne (5)

- 4 Aquatic creature; a polliwog is better known as this (7)
- 5 "Non ----- moriar" phrase with which the poet Horace consoled himself (5)
- 6 First international satellite, 1962 (5)
- 9 Man's full-skirted, short-waisted, double-breasted overcoat; 18th/19th centuries (9)
- 14 Surname (pseudonym) of creator of Pinocchio (7)
- 15 *Invisible Man* was the only novel of Ralph ----- (7)
- 16 Red pigment obtained from cochineal (7)
- 19 A *Christmas Party* (Georgette Heyer) was originally entitled *Envious* ----- (5)
- 20 Pertaining to sheep (5)
- 21 Melodic style of early Byzantine liturgical chant (5)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 28 September, 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 Saints, Monasticism and Philosophy of Religion - from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random on Friday 11 October. The answers to this week's puzzles and the crossword winner's name will appear in the 19 October issue.

SUDOKU | Challenging

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

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

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

Solution to the 7 September crossword No. 673

Across: Across: 7 Sotto; 8 Lay eggs; 10 Amateur; 11 Trier; 12 Fence; Posts; 16 The Last Day; 20 Frail; 21 Rallies; 23 Yucatan; 24 Rupee. **Down:** 1 Ushaur; 2 Straw; 3 Voice; 4 Cleric; 5 Dystopia; 6 Against; 9 Stress; 13 Emails to; 14 Stuffy; 15 Penance; 17 Tyrant; 18 Wimps; 19 Usher; 20 Lyre. **Winner:** Mrs J. Horton, of Tilehurst, Reading.

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