

# WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

diary@thetablet.co.uk

## What ho, Jeez?

IN A RECENT column, Melanie McDonagh challenged readers to come up with an imaginative presentation of the Atonement in response to Richard Dawkins' well-polished lampoon of the doctrine: "To just forgive the sins of humankind would be too simple. Too obvious. God decided that nothing less would do than to subject his son, Jesus, to torture and agonising death." That's a coarse parody, but it stings. Denise Cottrell Boyce brilliantly takes up the gauntlet with a riposte in the style of P.G. Wodehouse:

"What ho, Pater?" said Jeez.

"What ho, my boy?"

"Any original ideas on how to expiate the sins of the World, O Immutable One? You wouldn't just forgive them? I mean that would seem the most obvious solution to a simple soul like me."

"Aha, Sonny Boy, that's precisely why you're only Second Person in this Trinity, while I still retain First Posish. To those of us with our omniscience about us, there are still one or two wrinkles in the old table cloth."



Jeez could feel a paradox coming on. Experience had shown him that indivisibility was not to be taken lightly. If the Pater had something on his mind, Jeez had something on his mind. Whether he liked it or not.

"Fire away then Aged P," he cried.

"Well then, you'll know that when a chap or chapess sins, there's nothing I like better to do than forgive 'em."

"Nothing you like better in the world, Father. When I think of the parties we've had up here every time a lady of the night gets a day job. Or when a hedge-fund

manager buys a domestic-sized chain saw and puts a small ad in the paper ..."

"Yes, yes, but it's not enough is it? What about the Johnny who got the wrong end of the deal, eh? All very jolly forgiving the adulterer but what about the spouse in the case? The sin was a real action with real consequences, real pain, dash it all. And some sins can never be put right. Not much rejoicing there what?"

Jeez could see his point.

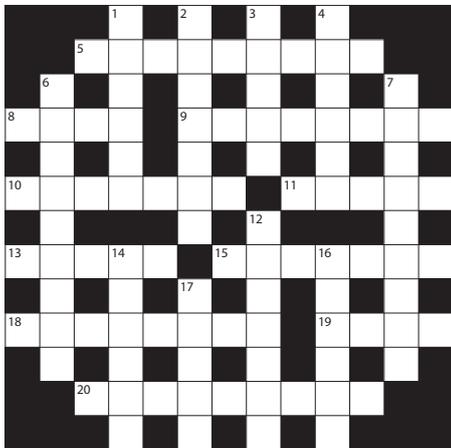
"No, my Boy, my Divine Mercy must be meted out in equal measure to sinner and sinned against. Someone must pay for the pain otherwise it just doesn't go away."

"Someone?" said Jeez.

Denise adds a precis in "proper theology": the division between Father and Son is the false premise on which Dawkins rests his summary of Christian doctrine. "The Wrath of God", she explains, "is His hyper-empathic howl of agony at the pain of the sins of the world – not His anger at the sin itself – which He can only feel through the Incarnation. This pain can only be fully acknowledged through his reciprocal pain." Denise "actually is a saint", according to the dedication in scriptwriter husband Frank's first novel. And not a bad theologian, either.

## PUZZLES

### PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 678 | Axe



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 12 October, The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: [thetablet@thetablet.co.uk](mailto: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 Paul, Theology and Christian Ethics – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random on Friday 25 October. The answers to this week's puzzles and the crossword winner's name will appear in the 2 November issue.

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### Across

- 5 Citizen of a toparchy at the time of Christ whose administrative centre was Shechem (9)
- 8 Scottish island where Columba landed in 563 (4)
- 9 One of a group of Semitic people inhabiting parts of Mesopotamia from the eleventh to the eighth century BC (8)
- 10 Movement of world Jewry that arose in the nineteenth century with the aim of creating a Jewish state in Palestine (7)
- 11 Unnamed biblical queen, Balkis or Bilkis in the Qur'an (5)

- 13 Organisation of cult people who practise, or are involved in, a form of witchcraft (5)
  - 15 Beatific (7)
  - 18 Roman martyr and Deacon of Rome (d. 528) (8)
  - 19 Jezebel's husband (4)
  - 20 Martyr who, sentenced to being shot by archers, recovered only to be clubbed to death (9)
- Down**
- 1 Loosely, ancient Palestine (6)
  - 2 Faith of Tibetan Buddhists (7)
  - 3 Prophet of Isaiah's time and an O.T. book (5)

- 4 Syrian city base of King Tou (6)
- 6 Roman Catholic friar wearing a black mantle (9)
- 7 Samaritan persistent in opposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls (9)
- 12 Ancient units of weight or currency featured throughout the N.T. (7)
- 14 Group of mountains where the priests of Baal were defeated by Elijah (6)
- 16 Son or grandson of Benjamin who shares a name with a leprous Syrian general (6)
- 17 Jewish high priest, father of Caiaphas (5)

### SUDOKU | Challenging

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

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

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

### Solution to the 21 September crossword No. 675

- Across:** 5 Mesopotamia; 7 Acts; 8 Shadrach; 9 Bezalel; 11 St Ado; 13 Abgar; 14 Mission; 16 Vitalian; 17 Joel; 18 St Augustine.
- Down:** 1 Isis; 2 Opus Dei; 3 Ittai; 4 Amorites; 5 Michel Baius; 6 Archdiocese; 10 Aramaean; 12 Zionist; 15 Kings; 17 Jain.
- Winner:** Liam O'Briain, Prestwich, Manchester.