

Finding the Missing Peace



By Stephen G Baker

Well, here we are. Christmas is just around the corner! How have your preparations gone? I hope you achieved what you set out to do. I'm nearly there.

It's always a rush at this time of the year. Whether it's getting as up to date as possible with your job, buying presents, or getting the food ready for Christmas, it gets hectic. I have the added task of running a series of Carol Services and Christmas related events. Why go to all the bother?

For one very good reason. Christmas is special. It's special because you get time to sit down (maybe not if you are the cook in your house), you spend time with your friends and family (the latter can be a problem depending how well you get on with your family), you give and receive presents and the food is good (hopefully!). But, what is the real reason that makes the season special? Excuse the corny rhyme but 'what is the reason for the season'?

The answer is: JESUS

The clue is in the word Christmas – it's the CHRIST part that is important. This is Jesus' official title. The title Christ means the anointed one. For generations the Jews had talked about the promised one as the Messiah. He is the one all the prophets spoke about (see Hebrews 1:1,2) when they announced God's promise that one day He would send His Son into the world. The prophet Isaiah said, 700 years before Jesus was born, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace". Isa 1. 1.

When Jesus' disciples realised who Jesus was, they were thrilled. John records Philip as saying, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph". John 1. 45.

Yes, Jesus is the promised one. His birth was predicted, as was His death. Unlike us He came to die. We are born to live, but Jesus came to die. The Bible explicitly states that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". He knew this was His primary reason for coming as He is recorded as saying "...for this cause I came into the world". John 18. 37.

So let me end with a personal question – do you really get it? Do you understand the reason for the season? Have you ever benefitted from what Jesus did? You can: if you turn from your sin, repent and trust Him to save you.

May I wish you a very happy festive season. May this Christmas be a really special one for you.

Listen, watch or read more on my webpage,
www.findingthemissingpeace.co.uk



Award-winning Wirral novelist, **Margaret Murphy**, who pens thrillers as **A.D. Garrett** and **Ashley Dyer**, recommends two books per month, across a range of styles and a mixture of new and old.

THE CRAFTSMAN by Sharon Bolton
Trapeze, £7.20
ISBN-10: 9781409174134



The Craftsman opens in August 1999, the hottest day of the year. Assistant Commissioner Florence Lovelady attends the burial of Larry Glassbrook, a coffin-maker. He's also the convicted serial killer whom she arrested thirty years earlier. A master carpenter and funeral director, Larry imprisoned his victims – alive – in caskets he made himself. Clay effigies entombed with their bodies suggested a motive beyond the worst human depravity.

Sharon Bolton's mysteries have always leaned towards the Gothic, and *The Craftsman* is no exception: Glassbrook's burial is witnessed by families and friends who mourn his victims, reporters hoping to wring one final headline from the tragedy – and the dead. High on the Lancashire moors in the shadow of Pendle Hill, The Pendle Witch Trials, secret covens, and the dark arts act as a chilling backdrop to the murders of teenaged children in this gripping and suspenseful story.

Assistant Commissioner Lovelady built her career on Glassbrook's arrest and conviction, and she's still haunted by those deaths, so when Lovelady finds an effigy of herself, she begins to question if she was wrong all those years ago, and fears she is the next target. Bolton packs the story with clever misdirections and false leads, yet always plays fair with the reader and this unconventional story will keep you guessing to the end.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF PHILOSOPHY by Alain de Botton
Penguin, 1997
Kindle, £7.99 ASIN: B002RI9DM4



What is philosophy for? The end of the year, traditionally a time for reflection, is as good a time as any to ask the question. Until 1997 I'd considered the subject too esoteric, too abstract, for a science-trained bod like me. Then I attended an author reading of *The Untouchable*, by John Banville. Alain de Botton was second billing. Banville gave a superb reading – and I do recommend *The Untouchable*: for its wit and wickedly funny commentary on snobbery and social

class as well as for its serious and often deeply poignant moments in the story of Victor Maskell, Keeper of the Queen's paintings, and Cambridge spy. But I digress... When Alain de Botton stood to read, he seemed diffident, even a little gauche, yet his humorous, self-deprecating style won the audience over in an instant. I bought *The Consolations* on the strength of it and was charmed by his understated irony, and his honesty. His clear, uncluttered prose sets out the philosophies of Socrates, Epicurus, Seneca, Montaigne and Nietzsche, among others, offering consolations for the unpopular, the poor, the frustrated, the inadequate, and even the broken-hearted from these great thinkers' lives and teachings – and many philosophers had difficult lives and brutal endings. Is it perverse to be consoled that even the deepest thinkers don't have alchemical access to the state of bliss? Perhaps, but there *is* consolation in de Botton's accessible, witty book, and in his conclusion that: "A virtuous, ordinary life, striving for wisdom, but never far from folly, is achievement enough."

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