

An Analysis by Frits Albers, Ph.B.
of Damien Mackey's article
"The Hard 'God' of Fundamentalism",
which appeared in the October 1999 'MATRIX'.

In order to understand the way of Damien Mackey's thinking, it is necessary that we thoroughly understand the way in which the great G. K. Chesterton so vividly describes for us the mortal battle St. Thomas Aquinas fought with Siger of Brabant. From his inimitable book "*Saint Thomas Aquinas, 'The Dumb Ox'*" I take up the story where the author writes:-

"After the hour of triumph came the moment of peril. It is always so with alliances, and especially because Aquinas was fighting on two fronts. His main business was to defend the Faith against the abuse of Aristotle, and he boldly did it by supporting the use of Aristotle. He knew perfectly well that armies of atheists and anarchists were roaring applause in the background at his Aristotelian victory over all he held most dear. Nevertheless, it was never the existence of atheists, any more than Arabs or Aristotelian pagans, that disturbed the extra-ordinary controversial composure of Thomas Aquinas. The real peril that followed on the victory he had won for Aristotle was vividly presented in the curious case of Siger of Brabant; and it is well worth study for anyone who would begin to comprehend the strange history of Christendom. It is marked by one rather queer quality, which has always been the unique note of the Faith....It is the fact symbolised in the legend of Antichrist who was the double of Christ in the profound proverb that the devil is the ape of God. It is the fact that falsehood is never so false as when it is very nearly true. It is when the stab comes near the nerve of Truth that the Christian conscience cries out in pain. And Siger of Brabant, following on some of the Arabian Aristotelians, advanced a theory which most modern newspaper readers would instantly have declared to be the same as the theory of St. Thomas. That was what finally roused St. Thomas to his last and most emphatic protest. He had won his battle for a wider scope of philosophy and science; he had cleared the ground for a general understanding about faith and enquiry, an understanding that has generally been observed among Catholics, and certainly never deserted without disaster. It was the idea that the scientist should go on exploring and experimenting freely, so long as he did not claim an infallibility and finality which it was against his own principles to claim. Meanwhile the Church should go on developing and defining about supernatural things, so long as she did not claim a right to alter the Deposit of Faith which it was against her own principles to claim. And when he had said this, Siger of Brabant got up and said something so horribly like it, and so horribly unlike it that (like Anti-christ) he might have deceived the very elect.

Siger of Brabant said this: the Church must be right theologically, but she can be wrong scientifically. There are two truths, the truth of the supernatural world and the truth of the natural world which contradicts the supernatural world. While we are being naturalists we can suppose that Christianity is all nonsense, but then, when we remember that we are Christians, we must admit that Christianity is true even if it is nonsense. In other words, Siger of Brabant split the human head in two and declared that a man has two minds, with one of which he must entirely believe and with the other he may utterly disbelieve. To many this would at least seem like a parody of Thomism. As a fact, it was the assassination of Thomism. It was not two ways of finding the same truth: it was an untruthful way of pretending that there are two truths. And it is extraordinary to note that this is the one occasion when the Dumb Ox really came out like a wild bull. When he stood up to answer Siger of Brabant, he was altogether transfigured and the very style of his sentences is suddenly altered. He had never been angry with any of the enemies who disagreed with him. But these enemies had attempted the worst treachery: they had made him agree with them”.

Here lies expressed what is at present under investigation. In his latest Matrix article, “*The Hard ‘God’ of Fundamentalism*”, Mackey makes the Pope agree with him, with his own questionable ideas on ‘culture’. He needs this semblance of an ‘alliance’ as the most unassailable opening to, and the most secure footing for, his totally erroneous ideas on ‘prophecy’. However, as we heard Chesterton declare: “It is always so with alliances”. Someone can either side with authority and submit his own judgement to it, or there is the great peril that he makes out that authority sides with him and subjects the Pope to his own private judgement to the extent that, if possible, even the Elect will be deceived. With this we have outlined the two parts into which this article naturally divides itself:-

- a critique of Damien’s ideas on ‘culture’, and
- a critique of Damien’s ideas on ‘prophecy’.

But before delving into details, we shall listen a bit longer to Chesterton’s description of St. Thomas’ battle with Siger of Brabant. It is enormously illuminating for AMAIC’s struggle with Damien.

“Those who complain that theologians draw fine distinctions could hardly find a better example of their own folly. For a fine distinction can be a flat contradiction. It was notably so in this case. St. Thomas was willing to allow the one truth to be approached by two paths precisely because he was sure there was only one truth. Because the Faith was the one truth, nothing discovered in nature could ultimately contradict the Faith. Because the Faith was the one truth, nothing really deduced from the Faith could ultimately contradict the facts. It was in truth a curiously daring confidence

in the reality of his religion and though some may linger to dispute it, it has been justified. The scientific facts which were supposed to contradict the Faith in the nineteenth century, are nearly all of them regarded as unscientific fiction in the twentieth century. His was specifically and supremely a confidence that there is one truth which cannot contradict itself. And this last group of enemies suddenly sprang up to tell him that there are two contradictory truths. Truth, using a medieval phrase, carried two faces under one hood, and these double-faced sophists practically dared to suggest that it was the Dominican hood”.

And again, in our case, Mackey dares to suggest that the capitulation of the Pope to his own private judgments is present under the mantle of the Australian Marian Academy as being symptomatic of that Academy’s submission to the Pope’s authority. “A case of two faces under the same Blue Mantle”.

So, in his last battle, and for the first time, he fought as with a battle-axe. There is a ring in the words altogether beyond the almost impersonal patience he maintained in debate with so many enemies.

“Behold the refutation of the error. It is not based on documents of faith, but on the reasons and statements of the philosophers themselves. If then anyone there be who, boastfully taking pride in his supposed wisdom, wishes to challenge what we have written, let him not do it in some corner nor before children who are powerless to decide on such difficult matters. Let him reply openly if he dare. He shall find me there confronting him, and not only my negligible self but many another whose study is truth. We shall do battle with his errors or bring a cure to his ignorance”.

The ‘Dumb Ox’ is bellowing now, like one at bay and yet terrible and towering over all the baying pack. We have already noted why, in this one quarrel with Siger of Brabant, Thomas Aquinas let loose such thunders of purely moral passion. It was because the whole work of his life was being betrayed behind his back by those who had used his victories over the reactionaries. The point at the moment is that this is perhaps his one moment of personal passion save for a single flash in the troubles of his youth, and he is once more fighting his enemies with a firebrand. And yet, even in this isolated apocalypse of anger, there is one phrase that may be commended for all time to men who are angry with much less cause. If there is one sentence that could be carved in marble as representing the calmest and most enduring rationality of this unique intelligence, it is a sentence which came pouring out with all the rest of this molten lava. If there is one phrase that stands before history as typical of Thomas Aquinas, it is that phrase about his own argument: It is not based on documents of faith but on the reasons and statements of the philosophers themselves”. At

the top of his fury, Thomas Aquinas understands what so many defenders of orthodoxy will not understand. It is no good to tell an atheist that he is an atheist, or to charge a denier of immortality with the infamy of denying it, or to imagine that one can force an opponent to admit he is wrong on somebody else's principles, but not on his own....We must either not argue with a man at all, or we must argue on his grounds and not ours”.

That will have to do as an introduction to this analysis of Damien Mackey's entrenched opinions on 'culture' and 'prophecies'. And just as Siger of Brabant thought himself exempt from having to produce the principles and reasons for his own fallacious 'theses' simply by claiming that he had St. Thomas on side, so does Damien do away with the necessity of spelling out the details of his own aberrations by the simple expedient of claiming to have the Pope on side. Spelling out those details would quickly reveal that, like Siger, he is in an untenable position. And what is worse, by *merely claiming* to have the Pope on side of his aberrations, it becomes a very easy matter of 'showing' in any future articles that, whoever is against Damien Mackey is against the Pope. And just as Siger of Brabant left it to St. Thomas to show how untenable his position was from his own reasons and principles, so does Mackey leave it to us to prove him wrong from his own standpoint.

This extract from the life of St. Thomas serves to show that even a great Saint had no hesitation to *expose* and *counteract*, with all the spiritual, intellectual and moral forces at his disposal the fundamental untruths that were masquerading under the guise of truth And for what purpose? *To either do battle with his errors, or provide a cure for his ignorance.*

And now for the details.

In his article "*The Hard "God" of Fundamentalism*" Mackey makes out that he bases himself squarely on an address that the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, gave in 1993 to members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission at the occasion of the presentation of their latest document on exegesis to the Holy See. I not only have a copy of that address as received and distributed in Australia, but I also have it scanned into my computer so as to be in a position to more easily *copy and paste* parts of it into any article that may be in need of quoting from it verbatim.

It is to be noted that the Holy Father used the word *fundamentalism* only once in his fifteen-page address, and only in passing. He was of course keenly aware that he was speaking to experts in the field of exegesis, and so he used the word in a purely technical sense: warning those exegetes who would disregard any scientific research in exegesis and would merely cling to a spiritual (and so to a uniform) meaning of words used in Sacred Scripture. He also knew that his address would almost certainly *not* be read by 99% of the faithful who would be struggling to receive spiritual nourishment from the "*Word of God incarnate in human languages before He became incarnate in the flesh*". And so the gentle Pope would never ever offend the vast majority of his flock

by calling fundamentalists those, who are thirsting for a spiritual meaning of the word of God without any knowledge of scientific subtleties. And he certainly would not condemn them to live under the tyranny of a hard ‘God’ who does not exist. To make matters worse, Mackey, in his polemic against ‘fundamentalists’, completely disregards the *one* reason the Holy Father had to use the scientific term *in context*, and instead spells out what *he himself* thinks are fundamentalists.

So, if Mackey did *not* get his erroneous ideas on “the hard god of the ‘fundamentalists and of fundamentalism” from the Holy Father, where then did he get them from?

Without telling any of us that he is “changing horses in midstream”, Mackey surreptitiously abandons the pretence of giving to his readers the mind of the Holy Father. He switches off completely from the papal address of 1993, and switches on to an article produced by the PBC in 1994: “*The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*”. In his Foreword to this document Cardinal Ratzinger stated categorically: *The Pontifical Biblical Commission, in its new form after the Second Vatican Council, is not an organ of the teaching office....* So it has no standing. And rightly so! For this document was written by Catholics who no longer keep it a secret that they have thrown overboard the Church’s age-old teaching of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and that they no longer believe in the historical value of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. It is important to note here that out of 19 participating contributors four voted against the idea, and four abstained from voting on the idea that, *the present essay hopes to have made some contribution toward the gaining, on the part of all, of a clearer awareness of the role of the Catholic exegete.* Obviously, the long article had not even managed to convince 8 participants *of having made the role of the ‘Catholic’ exegete any clearer.*

From the fact that Mackey refused to identify his new source, but kept it a closely guarded secret, we may conclude that he was ashamed of it. So he knew that the information was spurious, that it had no standing in the Catholic Church and that it would not go down too well with even his one eyed readers. And it is from this scurrilous article, unconvincing for nearly half of the nineteen participants, that the non-exegete Mackey plagiarised verbatim nearly two pages which contain what is to now follow.

As far as Mackey and the 11 authors of the 1994 submission are concerned, fundamentalists are those who adhere to the fundamentalists’ “five points”: (One should clearly keep in mind that *nothing of what follows was said by the Holy Father in his address*).

- (i) the verbal inerrancy of Scripture;
- (ii) the divinity of Christ;
- (iii) the virginal births;
- (iv) the doctrine of vicarious (?) expiation; and
- (v) the bodily resurrection at the time of the second coming of Christ.

I am sure the Holy Father, with all the previous Popes and with all of Tradition, with the Fathers and Doctors of the Church together with all Her Holy Martyrs, strongly believes in these Articles of Faith. Thus, according to Mackey and his 11 ‘advisers’, the whole Church from its beginning has been ‘*fundamentalist*’, standing condemned by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II, being quoted here as being *on side* with Mackey. Here we have the modern example of Siger of Brabant’s *two truths*.

According to ‘Siger PBC’ and ‘Siger Mackey’, the above “five points” can be true in one sense, and (using Siger of Brabant’s own words) *nonsense* in another (scientific?) sense, or they would not have quoted them as examples of fundamentalism.

It starts to become clear from the above that, what Mackey and the PBC claim to be ‘*fundamentalists*’, are those who disagree with Mackey and Co’s ‘exegesis’ because they most certainly disagree neither with the Holy Father, nor with the whole Church. But Mackey is *not* an exegete. He never ever trained as one.

As already said before, Mackey is reticent to elaborate on his own ideas of ‘*fundamentalism*’, ‘*culture*’, *prophecy* and ‘*exegesis*’ for fear of giving himself away. And just as Siger of Brabant left it to the just anger of St. Thomas to expound on his (Siger’s) erroneous ideas, so is it left to us in the Marian Academy to uncover what is *really* in Mackey’s mind. That this is not a very difficult job can be gauged from two facts:

- One, from the revelation of who are his ‘advisers’: the 11 members of the PBC; and
- Two, that Frank Calneggia and I have been at it for more than a year to try to bring our friend Damien to a better frame of mind. To do that we must have had access to Damien’s thoughts as no other in the Marian Academy had.

What Mackey has done in the Oct. 1999 ‘Matrix’, is identical to what St. Thomas accused Siger of Brabant of doing: he placed his distorted ideas before ‘children’ and in dark corners without any explanation as to *why* he holds the ridiculous concepts of the non-existing ‘duality in truth’ by which the Divinity of Christ, the virginal births etc. can be both true and not true; be true in one sense, and be not true, but fundamentalist, (and so condemned) under the glare of some other ‘light’. According to St. Thomas this is impossible because there is only *one* truth.

These dogmas have been clearly defined by the Church so that any possibility of ambiguity has been eliminated for all times and for all ‘cultures’. Only straight-out denial can be raised up against them, not shades of sense. Here Mackey is far removed from the Holy Father’s use of fundamentalism as a technical term in the context of exegesis. Devout Catholics were excluded from this context in the papal allocution: they do not partake in exegesis so defined. And the denial of the ‘five points’ raised by Mackey would be most far removed from their minds as they do not see them as part of

exegesis but as articles of Faith emanating from the Apostolic Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church. Thank God there is still a minority in the PBC who sees it this way.

Mackey's ideas on prophecy came chronologically before his ideas on culture. But since of late his cultural input has come more prominently to the fore, it might be necessary to deal with this first and then to show that his cultural ideas grew organically from his earlier extreme ideas on prophecy.

I. Mackey's strange ideas on *culture*.

It is obvious that, if one is to contrast an author's ideas with those he quotes as being in agreement with him, the quoted expressions must be dealt with first. For this it is necessary to bring out what the Holy Father has said about *culture* in his 1993 address to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and more importantly, what he did *not* say about it. This must be done because, (i) in hiding from us the true source of his aberrations, Mackey makes out that he has the Pope on side. And (ii) as we heard Card. Ratzinger declare, the PBC has no standing in the teaching authority of the Catholic Church.

The Holy Father uses the word '*culture*' only once during his allocution, and the word '*cultural*' a mere two times. He did not elaborate on either word. Obviously, he was not preoccupied by the words, meaning that within the technical context of his talk, he did not want anyone to get the wrong mileage out of their use.

So, in what context did the Holy Father use them? In the context of the Incarnation of the Son of God. In a most beautiful way Pope John Paul II dwelt at length on the Catholic idea that the Word of God became incarnate first in the language of Sacred Scripture of the ancient Jews before He became incarnate of the Blessed Virgin Mary and became Man. Because of this first Incarnation in human language, the Word of Scripture truly became the Word of God. And just as He became man in anything *but sin*, so also in Sacred Scripture did the Word of God become incarnate in human language in anything *but error*. But Mackey is bringing *error* into this whole beautiful cohesion, this glorious synthesis, and so cannot possibly claim to have the Holy Father on side.

Now the languages of the human race not only are an expression of their diverse cultures, but also help to shape them. And so when the Holy Bible is truthfully translated into these languages, the cultures they represent become invaded by the Word of God. God becomes 'incarnate' in those cultures. Thus, according to the Pope, it is out of deference and reverence for this linguistic Incarnation of the Word of God that exegetes spend much time on the study of ancient languages and the cultures they helped form. And for what reason? So that all cultures and their languages may come under the sweet dominion of the Incarnate Word of God, the Word of God made man. It is far from the Holy Father's mind to hold up to the Pontifical Biblical Commission and

to the whole Church that the cultures and their languages must be studied for their own sake. They must be studied in exegesis for only one purpose: to find the most expeditious way in which *souls*, the *members* of those cultures, can all be brought to the Supernatural Culture of the Kingdom of God, but each with their own cultural characteristics.

The Holy Father is fully aware that English football louts are indistinguishable from Dutch football louts, that an American mass-murderer is indistinguishable from an Australian one, and that French abortions are indistinguishable from Irish ones. Why? Because reckless wrecking and murderous exploits are *not* inspired by a God-oriented culture, but by a 'culture' in whose language the Word of God is *not*, or is no longer, incarnate due to the rejection of Sacred Scripture as an infallible guide for that culture. And that is also the reason why the Holy Father is not afraid to call Western 'civilisation' by its proper name: "*a culture of death*", a 'culture' that is no longer a vibrant and living culture, but a monotonous sameness of graveyards across boundaries.

On the other hand, a French Saint is different from a Spanish one, and a Polish Saint is different from a Rwanda one, because in sainthood these human individuals have brought their national characteristics to perfection in the Kingdom of God that allows for these almost infinite varieties.

After his magnificent exposé of the double incarnation of the Word of God in human history and after stressing the need of exegesis to include in its studies the interplay between Sacred Scripture and ancient and modern cultures, "*to arrive at a completely valid interpretation of words inspired by the Holy Spirit*" the Holy Father Pope John Paul II sounded an urgent warning with these words:-

"Nevertheless, this study is not enough".

And with that the Holy Father founded the freedom of exegetical research on the most solid foundation that exists: fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church and to Catholic Tradition, in the context of which he used the following words:-

"Being faithful to the Church in fact means resolutely finding one's place in the mainstream of the great Tradition that, under the guidance of the Magisterium, assured of the Holy Spirit's special assistance The Second Vatican Council asserted this again:

"All that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the Church, which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the Word of God". (Dei Verbum, n. 12).

Thus they will avoid becoming lost in the complexities of abstract scientific research which distances them from the true meaning of the Scriptures". (Nos. 10,11).

No wonder the Holy Father has never recommended "PBC 1994" to a wider readership within the Catholic Church. It is more than likely that the 8 members who

refused to vote in favour of the document may have thought the other 11 ‘*had become lost in the complexities of abstract scientific research*’....

With this we have arrived at the unpleasant task of showing beyond doubt why Mackey refuses to divulge his ideas on ‘*culture*’ to the members of the Australian Marian Academy. They are incompatible with the central theses as expressed by the Holy Father in this 1993 address to the Pontifical Biblical Commission. So it is now left to others to do what he refuses to do. It is all very well for him to think that, because *he* uses the word ‘*culture*’ and the Holy Father uses the word ‘*culture*’, that both are talking about the same thing, making it appear that whoever is against Mackey’s ideas, is automatically against the Holy Father’s doctrine, and so abysmally has reduced himself to being an abject ‘*fundamentalist*’.

It is obvious from the foregoing that the Holy Father sees things in the right perspective. To him, the Incarnation of the Word of God in human language is more important than the human cultures themselves, and he knows that these cultures are subject to this Incarnation just as all things Divine transcend all things human. He says precious little on cultures but did spend pages on this magnificent idea of a *proto-Incarnation*. He encourages the study of cultures in exegesis *not for their own sake*, that is done in other studies, but to arrive at a better understanding of what meaning may be given to a word in the Bible. How eminently sensible and rational all this sounds!

If now we turn to Mackey we are sold a different package but handed to us under what he wants us to believe are papal wrappings.

Mackey is obsessed – there is no other word for it – with the great prophet Isaiah who is far from great by the time Mackey is not even half finished with him. Mackey’s great, in fact insurmountable, obstacle is that the Assyrian culture under which Isaiah lived is so alien to the Roman culture under which Our Blessed Lord lived, that Isaiah could not possibly understand what he was predicting from his point of view 700 years up the track, as any meaningful communication between members of the two cultures was impossible. We can clearly see that Mackey is making here the fundamental, even fatal, mistake of letting culture (a mere human thing) have the final say and control over the Incarnation of the Word of God in the Jewish language, a Divine thing. So, again according to Mackey, the literal fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecies could not take place in Our Lord’s day and age under Roman culture, but had to take place in Isaiah’s own time during the life of the Assyrian culture.

Here is one example in which Mackey himself reveals what is going on in his mind. It is taken from an article, “The Bride and the Reject”, which he intended to publish in a Matrix last year (1998) but was prevented from doing so by the Executive of the Australian Marian Academy of the Immaculate Conception, AMAIC for short. Where stress is being used, it is done so by Mackey.

When we read Isaiah's prediction that the "virgin" will give birth to a child, "Immanuel", we immediately think of Mary and Jesus. And this is as it should be. But there is more to it than that. What is not so well known is that this Isaian prophecy was actually fulfilled *literally* at the time of Isaiah. Then, 700 years later at the time of Christ, it was fulfilled *symbolically* - but perfectly. Whilst Isaiah, in the Holy Spirit, 'prophetically foresaw' the Blessed Virgin and Jesus, his reference was, for himself and his contemporaries, a far more down-to-earth and immediate one. Isaiah was about to marry a "virgin" in Jerusalem and she would bring forth a boy-child whom the couple would name "Immanuel". Remember that Immanuel's birth was meant to be "a sign" from God to King Ahaz with whom Isaiah had been conversing at the time outside the walls of Jerusalem (Isaiah 7:11). ***But what sort of sign for Ahaz and his contemporaries would have been the virginal birth of Jesus Christ, 700 years later!*** No matter that this wicked king of Jerusalem rejected the sign.

Whilst the point of this "sign" for us, with the hindsight advantage of the New Testament, is Salvation - the miraculous birth of the God-Child Jesus Christ - the point of it from Isaiah's perspective was very much a chronological one. What the prophet was telling Ahaz and the people of Jerusalem was that even before his little Immanuel would reach the age of consent, "to refuse evil and choose good", the Assyrian armies will have swept away Jerusalem's northern enemies. Immanuel was not the only one in Isaiah's family to serve such a symbolic purpose. "I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are signs and portents in Israel" (8:3,18), the prophet tells us. Then, in the next chapter, he goes on to say that he "went into the prophetess [i.e., the former virgin, now his wife], she conceived and gave birth to a son". This boy-child too would be a sign for Jerusalem regarding the progress of the Assyrian armies.

Thus, in Isaiah's mind, there would have been nothing miraculous about the birth of Immanuel. The virgin and Immanuel were of his own family. The prophecy was *literally* fulfilled in Isaiah's day, but figuratively in Jesus' time. For the Virgin Mary's Son was not actually called "Immanuel", but "Jesus" (Luke 1:31); quite a different Jewish name. However "Immanuel", meaning "God is with us" can be applied to Our Lord as a most fitting title; and indeed it is far more fitting for Jesus, the God-Child, than for Isaiah's son.

There are of course innumerable objections the vast majority of Christians will make to such a crude example of shackling the Word of God to cultural straightjackets. According to this type of 'exegesis', which on his own word Mackey learned from the 1994 PBC article mentioned above, the great prophet could not possibly understand what he was talking about because of the distance in time and because of the clash

between the Assyrian ‘culture’ (murdering and dominating people) of Isaiah’s own time and the Roman ‘culture’ (murdering and dominating people) of Our Lord’s time.

For a start, all this is in severe contradiction with express Church teaching on scriptural inspiration:

“Another conclusion to be drawn from the teachings of the Magisterium is that God’s action is present *at the very start* of the writing of *each and every one* of the sacred books, and *lasts throughout the entire period of their composition*. Thus Pope Leo XIII wrote in “***Providentissimus Deus***” (1893):

‘For, by supernatural power, [God] so moved and impelled them to write - He was so present to them - that the things which He ordered, and those only, they first rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth. Otherwise, it could not be said that He was the author of the entire Scripture’”.

This precludes that Isaiah’s imaginary son Immanuel was the *literal* fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy: it simply was **not** ‘an infallible truth’.

The Word of God did **not** become incarnate in human language to be hamstrung by whatever whims and meanings of private interpretations, but to liberate and ennoble the cultures that produced those languages. Here we have a prima facie case of private interpretation. Its faulty character is immediately evident to whoever takes time off to go over it properly. It is born from the language of what the Holy Father has castigated as *the culture of death*. A culture **not** transformed by the Incarnation.

For more than a year Mackey refused to enlighten us on the exact meaning of what he keeps on referring to as “*the literal sense*” of Scripture. So it is reasonable to conclude that he has only a hazy (i.e. a most confused) idea of that sense himself. But in practice, the literal sense of Old Testament prophecies is, according to him, always literally fulfilled in the culture in which it has been pronounced. So, in the case at hand, Isaiah’s prophecy ‘*the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son*’ had to be literally fulfilled in Isaiah’s time. That is exactly what he wrote in the above quote. This of course leaves the way wide open for nonsense. Nowhere does Scripture tell us that Isaiah married a virgin; that the virgin was still a virgin after conception and birth. Nowhere does it tell us that Isaiah called this miraculously conceived and born son Immanuel. Instead, St. Matthew tells us when Christ was conceived by and born of the Virgin Mary, that

“All this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: The Virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son and they will call Him Immanuel, a name which means God-is-with-us.

(Matt. 1:22-23).

There is only one Woman in the whole wide world and in the whole of Scripture who, as a Virgin, conceived and bore a Son. Since this is the unique fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, it can be nothing else but the literal fulfilment.

Our Lord underscores this on the road to Emmaus. Of that incident St. Luke tells us:

“Then, starting with Moses, and going through all the prophets, He explained to them the passages throughout the Scriptures that were about Himself”. (Lk. 24:27).

He himself was the literal fulfilment of all the Messianic prophecies. In no way was He going to share any fulfilment with anybody else, least of all conceding the *literal* fulfillment to Isaiah's fictitious son so that for Himself and for His Church there would only be left over a *second-rate* fulfilment, a *symbolic* fulfilment, a *figuratively-speaking* fulfillment as we heard Mackey declare, inspired by PBC 1994.

To Mackey and his 11 friends in the PBC who signed their distortions of biblical exegesis, this is of course rank fundamentalism which must be rooted out by hook or by crook. Nevertheless, that is what, under inspiration, St. Luke wrote what Our Lord had said to His two disciples and over their heads to the whole Church. The Messianic prophecies were *about Him* and about nobody else who was not in the same Decree of Predestination with Him (Pope Pius IX, 1854, and Pope Pius XII, 1950).

In order to maintain his rage, Mackey had to falsify Scripture. After Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, we heard Mackey declare:-

Remember that Immanuel's birth was meant to be “a sign” from God to King Ahaz with whom Isaiah had been conversing at the time outside the walls of Jerusalem. And further on:-

What the prophet was telling Ahaz and the people of Jerusalem was that....

Both these statements are *untrue*. After Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, Isaiah clearly showed that he was finished with him. Instead, raising himself up to his full height, the prophet thundered:-

*“Listen now, **House of David**....”*

Under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the great prophet Isaiah has switched off from Ahaz and is addressing *the House of David*.

Now, after Ahaz died, the *House of David* still existed. After Isaiah had died by being sawn in half, the *House of David* still existed. The prophecy extended for as long as the *House of David* was in existence right up to the time of Joseph who went to Bethlehem for, as we are told, he was from the royal House of David. And it was to Joseph that the Angel said in a dream not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, for what was in Her was the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. How simple, really....

So the whole sentence of Mackey - “*But what sort of a sign for Ahaz and his contemporaries would have been the virginal birth of Jesus Christ 700 years later!*” - comes crashing down like the Berlin wall, that great and malicious divide. Isaiah was no longer addressing Ahaz and his contemporaries; but *the House of David* right across all ‘cultures’, and right up to the time of Christ and beyond for as long as the Word of God is incarnate in the New Testament, and in all its authentic cultural translations....

II. Mackey’s strange ideas on Prophecy.

Enough has been said to show how intricately Mackey’s ideas on prophecy are interwoven with his strange ideas on ‘cultures’. There is no escape from it. No matter to where he makes us turn, his ideas on both are always erroneous.

I will deal here with two of his cases.

In the first example I can be brief. The second example will take much longer.

A. Isaiah and Uzzias.

Damien is infatuated with the *Book of Judith*, and with its principal character. Unfortunately there is no other word that can be used here to describe the state of his mind, for there is so much twisting and falsehood interwoven with his attempts to glorify his heroine, that they can only be explained by the ‘blindness’ of tunnel-vision.

According to the book, Judith lived in Betulia, a city in Palestine, that is never mentioned anywhere else in the whole of the Old Testament. Betulia was surrounded by Assyrians who had turned off the city’s sole water supply. Also in Betulia lived a Jewish elder by the name of Uzzias. Now this Uzzias and his council had decided to give God five more days to come to their aid before the town would surrender to the Assyrians. Judith is rightly indignant with this ultimatum addressed to the Almighty and tears strips off Uzzias. Now in order to enhance the status of Judith in our eyes, Mackey is determined to ‘prove’ that this Uzzias character is none other than the great prophet Isaiah. For would it not really be something if it could be shown that Judith rebuked so great a man as Isaiah for his lack of faith in God?... One is referred here to the *Book of Judith* itself to read how within those five days, our heroine went to the camp of the Assyrians on several occasions, befriended the commander-in-chief, Holofernes, without so much as a blemish to her purity, and eventually succeeded in cutting off his head.

Enter the great Isaiah. The prophet foretold how God had revealed to him what was about to happen.

“And the Assyrian shall fall not by the sword of a man, and the sword not of a man shall devour him, and he shall flee....” (Is.31:8).

Now here is a case-in-point of why the Church encourages exegetes to study ancient languages, and the cultures that produced them. Isaiah's prophecy falls completely flat if it is only read in the English translation. We see here that Isaiah twice uses the word *man* in his prophecy of what is about to happen. In *Hebrew* Isaiah uses two different words, *ish* for the first mention of *man* and *adam* for the second occurrence. Now *ish* is used in Hebrew to contra-distinct *man* from *woman*. *Ish* therefore must here be translated in English as meaning *male*: "the Assyrian (singular) shall fall by the sword not handled by a male", (but by a woman, Judith). In the second case, Isaiah uses the word *adam* which contra-distinguishes *man* from *God*. "And the sword not handled by a *human* shall devour him, and he shall flee...."

How much more did Isaiah know *and foretell*?

A bit further on (37:36) the prophet wrote down in his own book word for word what is also written in 2 Kings, 19:35 as follows:

"And the Angel of the Lord went out and slew in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and eighty-five thousand...."

So there is the fulfilment of the second part of Isaiah's prophecy: "*not by man's hand* in the sense of *not by human hand*".

When I confronted Mackey with the fact that, because of the clear evidence of Isaiah's detailed knowledge of what was going to happen around Betulia and elsewhere, he could not possibly be the elder Uzzias in that city who had clearly displayed by his actions that he did not have a clue of what was going to happen, all that Mackey could write back was: "Sounds reasonable, but...." He never explained that "*but*". He remained as unconvinced as ever and just as determined to "prove" that Uzzias is Isaiah.

"I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do" (Lk. 10:21).

"...*mere children*..." Who would have ever dreamt that there would come a time when "*mere children*" would be hounded by the learned and the clever as fundamentalists.

B. Mackey and the Apocalypse.

This, the final section of the above analysis, has been re-cast as a stand-alone document carrying the title: A Critique by Frits Albers, Ph.B. of Damien Mackey's Paper on St John's Book of Revelation: "The Bride and the Reject". This Critique is now available in the AMAIC's Apologetics Section immediately after our publication of Mackey's paper: "The Bride and the Reject".