

## The Gospel, according to Harold.

### *The Temple of Baal, and the Philistines.*

In the sixteenth year of the reign of Elizabeth The Eternal, who begat Charles, who begat William and Harry, when the Inberlites called unto themselves a great assembly, and therein did they decide to build a temple to house the Golden Calf, their false god, Baal, and to cause this temple to rise up towards the heavens and beyond, even unto a second storey, reaching no less than twenty cubits above the firmament.

In the fullness of time this temple was built, stone upon stone, storey upon storey, and it was a place of great beauty and strength and the Inberlites named it The Temple of Baal and so too did they name it The Baaling Club.

And this temple was built next to two pastures already well established, and these two pastures were named the Baaling Greens.

And there was rejoicing in the land of the Inberlites for they were playful folk, much given to the consumption of healing ales, and to the sins of the flesh, in memory at least.

And at the extremities of the temple did they place two great cess-pits, one for the men of Inber and another for their wives and concubines, and on the second floor, they did build Hell's kitchen, although it was their custom to eat on the first, and on the first floor they did build a dispensary for the decanting of wines and spirits and strong liquors, and cold storage for many firkins of ale. The cess-pits stinketh much, but were placed next to the Kitchens of Bev and the Bars of Neil, for the design of this temple was the work of a committee, with all that this implieth.

When the temple was finished the people rejoiced, and worshipped the false god Baal with great vigour, outside on the Baaling Greens, and also within the temple, where they spoke in Tongues when the hour was advanced, and turned much wine into water. This they did for decades, unto the sixtieth year of the reign of Elizabeth The Unsinkable, happy and glorious, and long may she reign over us.

But the Lord was angry with His Chosen People, and cried out "Inberlites, my Inberlites, why hast thou forsaken me, and switched thy allegiance to the false god, Baal." Receiving no answer, The Lord swore unto Himself that He would punish the Inberlites for their perfidy, and send plagues and pestilence, as was His wont, in times of stress.

The Lord then visited upon the Inberlites a fearsome drought which lasteth a decade and more, causing much distress to the people and to their Baaling Greens, which cried out for water, and water was in short supply, but Greens custodian John ensureth that his greens died not of thirst, and watered them with great vigour, and they thrived. The Lord be praised.

Then He visited upon them three years of flood, and the greens now craveth sunshine, which He denied them, especially on the Saturdays of Pennant, and the temple itself was sorely tried by these plagues, and cracks and fissures opened up and the heaven-sent rains droppeth often on the floors below, causing the temple carpets to decay, and a great stench arose, and the Baalers of Inber feared for their health.

And then didst the Lord send a plague of lemmings, allowing them to enter the temple through the cracks and fissures, and these lemmings were much attracted to the cess-pits and the kitchens, wherein they found much comfort and sustenance, distressing the high priestess, *Beberley* and her hand-maidens. And the Inberlites took great care to eat not anything which looketh like raisins, or capers or peppers.

So baits of hemlock were laid out for the lemmings, who eateth unto their heart's content, but smelleth in death even worse than in life, and the Lord above smileth quietly unto Himself, mindful of all that He had wrought.

But the wrath of the Lord knoweth no bounds, so He sent unto the Inberlites the greatest pestilence of all, an army of Philistines from *Sod'em* and *T'morrah*, wherein there were many pillars of salt.

And these Philistines were determined to cast the Inberlites from the Promised Land, and reclaim it for themselves, for purposes not named. They claimeth unto themselves ownership of the sacred land on which the Temple was built, in the name of the Crown.

Thou hast built thy temple on Crown Land, saith the Philistines, and this Crown Land doth belong to she who wears the Crown, *Elizabeth*, our Noble Queen, and all her heirs and successors, especially the Crown Princes *Charles* and *William* and *Hooray Harry*, and all their wives and concubines, and all their heirs and successors, as and when they turn up.

And these Philistines thwarted all plans to rebuild the Temple, which was old and sorely distressed, saying that the land was urgently needed for other purposes, not yet named, so the Inberlites must be cast out into the Wilderness of *Thompson*. The Inberlites were sorely trougled and cried out, saying they had no wish to leave their land of milk and honey. But the Philistines sought to confuse them, saying there was wilk aplenty across the road from the Reserve of *Thompson* and honey in abundance at the house of *Dom*, but the Inberlites bought it not, and there was wuch weeping and wailing and gnashing of gums at the *Baaling Club*.

So it came to pass that three wise men were elected to do battle with the Philistines, and these three were *Jack the Miller*, *Neil the Scribe* and *John the Pharisee*, and they girded their loins, or what remained of them, and sallied forth to do battle with the Philistines who were many in number, for their funding was generous. Many times did they sally forth, and great costs were expended in the preparation of plans for a new temple, which they did sorely need, but the Philistines fobbeth them off, for they had other plans, not yet clear, for the site.

Finally, and in great frustration, did the three wise men take leave of the Philistines, and go to the Counting House wherein they stored their savings, said to number one thousand times three hundred shekels, and took unto themselves a decision to extend and renovate the Temple sufficient for a score or more of summers, and to tell the Philistines to go forth and multiply, or words to that effect.

There was rejoicing anew in the land of the Inberlites, who looketh forward to the arrival of new cooking houses, free of lemmings, and new dispensaries for the decanting of strong liquors, and new cooling houses for the storage of healing ales, and new furnishings to attract visitors from foreign lands, with their precious shekels, which were much coveted by the *Baalers*, for their coffers

runneth low, and they were pokies-free, by the grace of God.

And most of all did the Inverlites look forward to the provision of new cess-pits, for their need was great.

So, homage to Baal lived on in the land of Inver, and Lawn-Baaling grew in size and numbers, an abomination to The Lord, but a comfort to members of advanced years, with their pasts of great length, but futures somewhat shorter.

Forgive us, Lord, they beseeched, for our days grow short and Baaling is our only vice, as Thou knowest all too well. Call off Thy Philistines, and allow us to refurbish the temple, and send us not to the Reserve of Thompson, sharing with those men of soccer which we cannot see and understand even less.

Thus endeth the gospel of Harold.

*Go in peace.*