
Australia: Who Killed Azaria? Adventists On Trial, Part II

by Lowell Tarling

What follows is the second and concluding installment of an article which began in Spectrum, Vol. 15, No. 2. Written by Lowell Tarling, a writer and ex-Seventh-day Adventist who attended Avondale College, the article originally appeared in the Australian edition of Rolling Stone (April, 1984). It is the story of the Chamberlain case, the most publicized criminal case in the history of Australia, and of Michael and Lindy Chamberlain, Australian Seventh-day Adventists convicted of murdering their two-month-old daughter, Azaria.

Australian Adventists, in the face of what they consider a flagrant miscarriage of justice, have united to support the Chamberlains, although many of the same people had previously been fighting both the Adventist Church and each other. In the meantime, Lindy Chamberlain is behind bars and sentenced to hard labor for the rest of her life.

—The Editors

Seventh-day Adventism

One of the reasons why the public tended to favor the dingo above Lindy was because the dingo wasn't a Seventh-day Adventist. Lindy and Michael weren't even ordinary Seventh-day Adventists, they were ideal. Lindy was the daughter of an Adven-

tist pastor, Clifford Murchison, and she married another pastor, Michael. He was well-known to his Mount Isa parish, having a radio program aimed at encouraging people to quit smoking, give up the bottle, and improve their diet. The Chamberlain family are a living example for the healthy life. They all have good looks, composure, and physical fitness. The day before Azaria's disappearance, Michael climbed to the top of Ayers Rock three times (the first time, running all the way). It takes most people an hour or so to do the climb, and some take three. Michael took only twelve minutes, unofficially equalling the record to the summit.

Everybody loves a hero—their hero—someone who represents their cause and wins. However, Michael Chamberlain was running for the other team. Says author James Simmonds, "The average red-blooded townsman knew you couldn't trust a bloke who spoke out against good honest booze."

The classic piece of misinformation about the Chamberlain's church was the rumor that the name Azaria meant "sacrifice in the wilderness." This was scotched by the first inquest, yet the media lost no credibility for printing such a howler. If the Australian press misrepresented politics, as they do

many religious minorities, there'd be all hell to pay plus legal costs.

Says sociologist Dr. Stanley Cohen, author of *Folk Devils & Moral Panics*, "The repetition of obviously false stories, despite known confirmation of this, is a familiar finding in studies of the role of the press in spreading mass hysteria. These stories are important because they enter into the consciousness and shape the societal reaction at later stages." He takes his examples from the Mods and Rockers "wars" at English seaside resorts in the early and mid 1960s. Using press exaggerations of the incidents, he asks how a town can be "beseiged?" Or how many shop windows have to be broken to constitute an "orgy" of destruction? Likewise, Geoff de Luka from Adelaide, writing for Sydney's *Daily Mirror*, headlined with "Azaria, Police Seize 'Blade'" How was this blade "seized" by police, who were permitted by the Chamberlains to freely search their premises? Six months before the trial, the Illawarra *Mercury* used the misleading headline "Mother Killed Azaria." In smaller letters were the words, "QC tells inquest." In December 1981, the *Daily Telegraph* led out with "How Azaria Died" in large lettering, but in the opening paragraph explained that this was how Azaria "probably" died. The list could go on. It is tiring and disillusioning.

There are two reasons why "sacrifice in the wilderness" seemed to offer a neat solution. The first is that it put the whole problem back into the religious world where it somehow seemed to fit best—shades of the spirit dingo and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The religious angle may have been so overpowering that the public might not have been ready for a secular explanation which denied them a rare glimpse into the world of the gods.

The second, more fundamental reason, is that Australians frequently make the same mistake themselves. The average Australian probably couldn't verbalize the difference between a Seventh-day Adventist and a Jehovah's Witness, and yet, to the members

of these groups, their eternal salvation rests on those very points. Australians don't consider this to be essential information. Wrong facts about Mormonism, the Hare Krishnas, the Children of God, the Church of Scientology, and Seventh-day Adventism are not usually considered to be mistakes of the same caliber as whether or not Greg Chappell (a famous cricket player) was really out.

In 1973, market researcher Dr. Peter Kenny surveyed community attitudes towards Seventh-day Adventism. He concluded that Australians had a complete lack of understanding as to the nature of the church. When asked what the church taught, responses wrongly included "They don't believe in blood transfusion," "They don't wear underclothes," "They don't vote," and "They don't believe in doctors." Considering the extent of the church's health ministry, the last point is striking, and not at all flattering for their public relations department. The truth is that the Seventh-day Adventist community is similar to the most conservative Baptist communities, and far from slaughtering their infants, they are among the most staid and boring people in Christendom.

Seventh-day Adventists are doubly alienated from the secular world. Not only must they avoid eating and drinking like the rest, but they are locked away for one day a week.

A 1977 sociological study published a survey on Seventh-day Adventist attitudes towards the outside world, and the world's attitudes to the church. Not including the new so-called "cult" religions, Seventh-day Adventists indicated the strongest feelings of hostility to the outside world. The world reciprocated; whereas 25 percent of the sample group disliked Mormons, 27 percent disliked Seventh-day Adventists. Methodists, Baptists, Anglicans were disliked by 4 percent to 8 percent, and Jews, Southern Bap-

tists and Quakers scored 12 percent to 15 percent. If this is true, what can one conclude about the mild-mannered Seventh-day Adventist who lives down the street? Perhaps he feels the most rejected of all.

I hazard this explanation. Seventh-day Adventists are doubly alienated from the secular world. Not only must they avoid eating and drinking like the rest, but they are locked away for one day a week. They call this "the Sabbath" and their keeping of it is based on a literal interpretation of Exodus 20:8-11. Seventh-day Adventist school children at state schools have a hard time because of this Sabbath. They must not play sports on Saturday, nor can they watch sports on television or at any sportground. They can't be disciplined by Saturday-morning detentions, and if the school fete or carnival is on the Sabbath, they don't participate or watch. Only lax Seventh-day Adventists would allow their children to attend the school dance on *any* night, but Friday night is always impossible because, like the Jews, the Adventists take their Sabbath from sunset to sunset.

To the papers, and all their readers, Seventh-day Adventism was never a church in its own right, but always "The Chamberlain's Church."

Seventh-day Adventists go through the rest of their lives as outsiders. They drink tomato juice in pubs. For 24 hours each week they miss all the news and sports results. They're not allowed to eat bacon and eggs, nor garlic prawns. They'd prefer it if you didn't light a cigarette in their lounge rooms. Most Seventh-day Adventists in Australia are educated and socialized in Adventist institutions. They can go to a Seventh-day Adventist primary school, high school, college, then they can come back and work for the church. This all helps to take the sting out of their contact with the rest of the world.

The writer of the Australian feature films *Newsfront* and *Fatty Finn*, Bob Ellis, says that he was raised in Adventism. He described the faith in the introduction to his play, *The Legend of King O'Malley*: "As Seventh-day Adventists, we children believed in the last great Persecution, when the Catholics would take over the earth, would fight on Armageddon Hill; and the astral descent on a cloud of 10,000 angels of Jesus Christ himself, in time to save the faithful from the knife-points of the ungodly; and our coming millennium in heaven, standing on the sea of glass and singing before the throne the song that only the chosen of the Most High Lord could know; and the final triumphant return to earth, with Jerusalem the Golden floating down the corridors of Orion, like a bride adorned for her husband, to touch down on the Mount of Olives itself, to be attacked by the hordes of Satan in their last great kamikaze throw, to be saved by the invincible cavalry of heaven, again in the nick of time; and to watch the ungodly burn up in the Last Great Holocaust; and to live forever and kneel in adoration at the feet of the Almighty."

The point not often seen is, the Chamberlain's are thought to believe that. Is it any wonder that they were immediately considered suspect?

Seventh-day Adventists see God's hand in the universe as all-powerful, yet he may be challenged by demonic forces who urge him *not* to protect His own, but to "test" them. Like Job, their reward will come later, despite the difficulties of their present situation. Without a doubt Lindy Chamberlain believes that any indignities suffered by her and her family, in this present life, will be rectified in the after-life. This gives her the strength to continue without breaking down. The media effect of this is Lindy's apparent lack of concern for Azaria, her son Reagan who suffered a serious eye-accident, and her own imprisonment.

This convinces many that she is guilty and "hard." One often-heard remark is, "I knew they were guilty when I saw them so com-

posed on television, after Azaria's death.' Agnostic Australians counted the Chamberlain's tears, and when they cast their final verdict, they reckoned it wasn't enough. However, what most people don't realize is that Channel 10 and other media do have adequate footage of Lindy and Michael Chamberlain broken-hearted over the death of their daughter. These have yet to be screened, but they will be shown—and even now there is a slow release of material keeping pace with changing public opinion.

Shortly after the "sacrifice in the wilderness" publicity, the church released a four-page tract entitled "What *do* Seventh-day Adventists Believe? The cover photograph featured Chamberlain look-alikes, the message being to portray Seventh-day Adventists as a relatively normal bunch. It suited middle-class Australia to a tee. Shortly afterwards the major papers ran lengthy articles on what the church "really" stood for, and most of these were reasonably accurate although far from incisive. They tended to run when there was little else one could write about the case.

To the papers, and all their readers, Seventh-day Adventism was never a church in its own right, but always "the Chamberlain's church," hence those very words headlined a *Sun-Herald* article, by Debra Jopson, on the church itself. An even more pointed example was a published story on Seventh-day Adventist "heretic," Dr. Desmond Ford. While it ran in *Newsweek*, January 1981, without any mention of the Chamberlains, Sydney's *Sun* entitled their piece, "The Chamberlain Teacher Who Split the Church." The link with the Chamberlain issue was a no-news story, with the journalists admitting the only connection between Ford and Chamberlain was the fact that Michael once sat in Dr. Ford's classes. The piece was embellished by a photograph of Lindy Chamberlain's back, a mention that she now had a new hairstyle, and wore a red cardigan on that particular day. One could be forgiven for thinking that Seventh-day Adventism only had a membership of

two, plus kids.

The Ford issue was nevertheless an important story, and although not directly relevant to the Azaria case, it was an underlying feature of Seventh-day Adventist consciousness of the time. Seventh-day Adventism was clearly a church in crisis. Not only had they sacked Ford, their most popular the-

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ologian, but others followed suit, resulting in more than 100 sackings and resignations from teachers, lecturers, and ministers. To compound problems, United States leaders were accused of "influence peddling" and the authority of the prophetess was under serious question. As a result, many of the laity also resigned. The *Daily Telegraph* ran a two-part series on the church's difficulties, based on a recent master's thesis by a Melbourne sociologist, Robert Wolfgramm. His statistics reveal the high level of dissatisfaction among church members: 27 percent stopped paying tithes (one-tenth of earnings normally given to the church), 15 percent gave less, 65 percent believed the leaders to have mishandled current crises, and 70 percent believed the leaders were holding out on information.

Now, the members were divided as to whether or not Lindy was guilty of murder. Could the wife of one of their ministers commit such a crime? If not, to what extent should the church openly support the Chamberlains—over and above the judicial system of Australia? If the church backed the Chamberlains, could future Seventh-day Adventist "murderers" look to the church for the same kind of support? Ministers of the church were asked these kinds of questions on talkback radio, and they answered with great difficulty.

At first, the church was cautious in their dealings with Michael and Lindy, but by mid-1983 they were openly lending them money totalling \$143,000 of which \$120,000 is not considered to be repayable. The rest has been raised as donations from friends, church members, and members of the public. A great deal of support for the Chamberlains comes from their church; however, this support is certainly not exclusively, nor even mostly, from Seventh-day Adventists. Many others feel threatened by the guilty verdict.

One aspect which is extremely troubling is that the testimonies of the witnesses at Ayers Rock on the fateful night corroborated the explanations offered by Michael and Lindy. This was all overridden by circumstantial evidence, put together by "leading experts" who were not present at the Rock, and who have made mistakes before. Says investigator Don McNicol, "I can't find any case that has set a precedent in respect to this sort of circumstantial evidence. And this is a dangerous precedent to set. It can affect you and I [sic], our children, and everybody else in Australia."

Nevertheless, for the Chamberlains, the support of their church was well-deserved. As far as Seventh-day Adventism is concerned, they have shown exemplary behavior, trusting in God through hard times, and smiling at the prosecutor when others might have been tempted to throw a brick at him. Furthermore, the church owes the Chamberlains something for being "persecuted" on the church's behalf. One feels had they been Baptists, Methodists, or members of some orthodox faith they would not have been treated so harshly by the press, the public, or the courts. For a start, when a minister of religion swears an oath on the Bible, that minister is usually thought to be telling the truth.

One curious aspect of the Azaria case has been the high profile given to the Chamberlain's church, which as an institution had nothing to do with the case. Interestingly, Adventists other than the Chamberlains

have been involved. The first and second inquests involved two other practicing Seventh-day Adventists, Stewart Tipple, the Chamberlain's friend and solicitor, and Dr. Kenneth Brown, a dentist who heads a forensic laboratory at the University of Adelaide whose forensic investigations prompted the reopening of the case. Of course, Phil Ward, an Adventist publisher, has involved himself by paying for his own investigation of the case.

To the horror of many Seventh-day Adventists and sympathizers, Brown took the stained jumpsuit—which was not his to take—to London, where he consulted with world-class forensic experts. They concluded that there was a small adult handprint on the garment, and a blood-flow pattern which indicated that Azaria may have been decapitated. Although Brown obviously went above and beyond the call of duty in ensnaring the Chamberlains, his findings and those of Professor Cameron do not necessarily lead beyond Barritt's conclusions of "human intervention." Brown's evidence may be essentially correct, and a dingo may still have been involved. It is the blood tests done in the Chamberlain's car—not Brown and Cameron's contribution—which are currently being held to ridicule by scientists and newspapermen.

However, with the onset of the trial, the church became visibly involved on an administrative level. Initially there was nothing more in it than the fact that one of their employees and his wife were facing a murder charge. But then came the feeling that Seventh-day Adventism, perhaps even Christianity, was on trial with the Chamberlains. Members were brought face-to-face with the realization that after almost 100 years of having an Adventist presence in the country, secular Australians saw nothing inherently trustworthy or respectable about the Seventh-day Adventist Church, thus ending, once and for all, the myth that Adventist wowsership is a thing respected by the rest of the world.

The trial saw much behind-the-scenes

work done by church folk. Money was raised, much of it negotiated at Union Conference level. Further backstage activities included the finding of a non-Seventh-day Adventist spokesperson who could refute the fetal blood tests made by Mrs. Joy Kuhl. This was quietly organized by science lecturers at Avondale College. The person chosen to speak on their behalf was Professor Barry Boettcher, Professor of Biological Science at the Newcastle University. Religious prejudice was such that Dr. Eric Magnusson, a former president of Avondale College, and lecturer at the Australian National University, would not count as an objective witness. The defense strategy was quite correct in making certain that all practicing members of the church remain well away from the firing line.

On closer questioning, Chamberlain admitted that he has changed his mind repeatedly on the question of human intervention and cover-up.

Once the "guilty" verdict was heard, all that changed. Radio announcers, journalists, ordinary Australians, wept alongside members of the church. Seventh-day Adventists became increasingly militant. An interview with Lindy's brother, Alex, appeared on the front page of the *Daily Telegraph*. Lindy's parents, Pastor and Mrs. Cliff Murchison, appeared on television, in the dailies, even in nonnews publications like *TV Week*. Michael and Lindy's sons, Reagan and Aidan, could likewise command prime media space, and after two years of silence, Michael Chamberlain allowed himself to be interviewed.

Perhaps provoked by Steve Brien's *Azaria, The Trial of the Century*, a sensationalized account of the case, Michael Chamberlain demolished Steve Brien's strange accusations. Continuing the theme that there was something sinister about the Seventh-day

Adventist religion, Brien concentrates on the bizarre. He says that the Chamberlains had a tiny white coffin in their house, "reserved for Azaria." Brien also claimed that the murder of Sisera, underlined in the family Bible, formed the blueprint for the alleged murder of Azaria. Chamberlain denied these charges. However, for once, he had the media on his side. The *National Times* denounced Brien's book as a "most tawdry account of the Azaria Chamberlain saga." Days later Michael Chamberlain appeared on Channel 7's Willessee program. The interview won him much public sympathy.

Another Seventh-day Adventist loyalist is Phil Ward, a former pastor who now publishes leading Australian newsletters on business and health. Another of his publications, the independent *Adventist News*, has given a blow-by-blow description of the Chamberlain case since its inception. He says that he has spent \$100,000 of his own money to pay for his investigations. Time after time Ward has scooped the news on the case, leaving major media to steal stories from *Adventist News*. More recently he and a fellow Adventist lawyer, Don McNicol, have investigated the case for themselves. Many think that theirs is the best explanation for what happened to baby Azaria. Despite this, Ward's relationship with Michael Chamberlain has sometimes been strained. Commenting on this, Chamberlain says this is so "because of the legal ramifications of a private prosecution, which I never wanted, because I personally do not think that anyone was involved in the disposal of the body. However that does not mean that I don't think there's been a cover-up of some kind." On closer questioning, Chamberlain admitted to me that he has changed his mind repeatedly on the question of human intervention.

Church representatives have been interviewed on the media, including Australian division officers Ron Taylor, secretary, and Russell Kranz, director of communications, to name just two. Others, like Avondale lecturer Dr. Noel Clapham, have contributed

to the public debate through writing letters to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Still others have published or circulated private publications. Pastor George Rollo's *The Azaria Mystery* considered the psychological aspects of the case. Peter Hodgson and Dr. Glen Rosendahl have prepared manuscripts dealing with the inaccuracies of Joy Kuhl's evidence. The list of Seventh-day Adventists goes on and on. Many have been involved in Chamberlain lobby groups, the gathering of signatures for the petition given to the Governor-General, and, almost an evangelistic "effort" under another name, the Azaria rallies, frequently held during Sabbath hours.

Strangest of all is the involvement of former members of the church, some of whom are quite hostile to the church on other issues. They include investment advisor A. James Ward, who served for a little time as media advisor to Michael Chamberlain; Dr. Genna Levitch, chairperson for the pro-Chamberlain support groups in the Newcastle area; Dr. Weston Allen, who works in a similar capacity in the Brisbane area; and, yes, Dr. Robert Brinsmead, who used his *Verdict* mailing list to gather support for the Chamberlains. In the words of Dr. Levitch, "I didn't do it for the church. I only did it for Mike." All the same, welcome home, boys.

I fall into this same category of supporters. This article first appeared in *Rolling Stone*, a rock 'n' roll tabloid that frequently runs articles on political and social issues. This list of supportive church members and former church members is by no means exhaustive, nor is it intended to highlight people who are of pre-eminent importance to the case. I have listed only a few examples of Adventist support; in terms of importance, perhaps two non-Adventists are most prominent. They are a Member of Parliament, Mrs. Betty Hocking, and Guy Boyd, a Melbourne sculptor. They have channeled much pro-Lindy support into audible and coherent social protest groups.

Alice Springs

Alice Springs is where the Chamberlains were committed for trial after the second inquest into the disappearance of their daughter, Azaria. Although the actual Chamberlain trial was held in Darwin, most of the law which saw the case through was from Alice. In Alice Springs, the dingo is subconsciously treated like it is guilty, even though the blame overtly rests on Lindy. The dingo image is seldom seen. Souvenir shops sell scores of felt koalas, wooden wombats, "I Climbed Ayers Rock" T-shirts, and various toy snakes. Kangaroos and kookaburras aplenty, but by November 1983, the dingo image was down to four: two spoons, a keyring, and a postcard. Even the hippopotamus does better than that.

Likewise, aboriginal artists tend to avoid the "dingo dreaming" theme, whereas butterfly and witchetty grub dreamings aren't a problem. The whites are no more forthright. Popular subjects by artists at the Alice Prize 1983 included Pine Gap and Ayers Rock. Dave Stagg seemed to sum up the mood of the place by painting an owl-like visage entitled, "I'll Paint a Dingo Next Time." More to the point was Graham Sorrelle's painting of the Rock: it dripped blood and got my vote.

Alice Springs is the town closest to the center of the continent. It has a population of 20,000 and also supports 200,000 tourists per year. The area around Alice Springs and Ayers Rock is largely defined by the drivers of the tourist buses. They are the authorities when it comes to telling tourists what goes on about the place, what should be seen, and what is best avoided. Says aboriginal community advisor Jeannie Scollay, "The bus driver is a very powerful person in this part of the world. People just accept the word of the driver, who is usually ill-informed, from the city, knows nothing about the blacks and imparts this gung ho attitude of knowing it all." The obvious

exceptions, according to Jeannie, are those who were born and bred in the Territory.

The effect of the bus driver syndrome is that certain scenes are seldom or never witnessed by the tourists, who may include royalty, international celebrities, or courtesans to a royal bed. Sooner or later most of these will find themselves in the care of the bus driver, who may then impart the attitudes picked up from a limited experience in the locality. I saw this effect at Ayers Rock, where I was surprised to learn that two Swiss tourists had no idea of the appalling living conditions of the aborigines half a mile away. This aspect of the outback is something the tourist industry seems anxious to avoid.

Wherever possible, the aboriginal presence is minimized. There is an unspoken apartheid in which aborigines know their places and there they remain. For example, they don't bother trying to catch the free tourist bus. They know that they won't be welcomed, even though no law forbids them. While I was in Alice, in November 1983, a carload of West Australians harassed three aborigines who were drinking a flagon of moselle in the dry Todd River. Aboriginal Willy Young tried to take down their car number, but was too drunk to get it together. Nor would he have known how to register an official complaint at the local police station.

It's easier for a white person to break the Alice Springs law than it is for a black to stay on the right side of it. That's because many laws are specifically framed to modify the behavior of aborigines. The best example is the two kilometer drinking law, where one must drink alcohol within two kilometers of the place of purchase, but not in public places. Locals are candid in saying that the only reason for such a law is to keep the "coons" from drinking in the dry Todd River. As this is what Willy Young was doing, the West Australian lads probably felt that they could attack him with a clear conscience.

Aboriginal advisor and filmmaker, Clive

Scollay, had this to say about the two kilometer law: "It's to stop blackfellas sitting in circles in the riverbed. Whitefellas think in squares—hence square paddocks, square buildings, town squares. But blackfellas sit in circles. They think in much more organic shapes."

Despite the fact that many aborigines live in conditions that would shock many whites, if they ever saw them, aboriginal culture is gradually showing signs of growth and acceptance. The aboriginal population is far from resented: apart from anything else, it accounts for almost one-third of the Northern Territory's economy. It also gives the whites something to draw on tea-towels. The aborigines have a quiet acceptance of their lot. In Alice, you probably won't get into a fight unless that's what you're after. Like drugs, if you're looking for a fight, you've got to go to the right places.

The Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association has a cassette service which offers only aboriginal music, talks, stories, and ideology. This is one of several creative outlets available to aborigines. Another is the Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Centre, which encourages local artists. In the main, it is difficult for whites to differentiate between the best and the mediocre in the aboriginal arts. The works are not usually approachable by European methods. It is probably easier for a creative aborigine to make a name than for a whitefella. Furthermore the Warumpi Band is a strong point of identification. A surprising amount of passing aborigines reckon they play guitar in that band. Among the very young, the hope of attaining such heights is a slight deterrent against petrol sniffing, a habit which is common from the age of seven.

In Alice, the whites talk as if aborigines are perpetually drunk. This has never been tested. Clive Scollay suggests that it could be that—like the shearers—Alice has become a service town, with blackfellas coming in for a regular binge from any of the 14 outlying camps. Or it could be that the same crowd is always drunk. We just don't

know Furthermore, whites have a strong sense of "shame," tending not to burp, strip, have sex, or get outrageously out of it in public. The aborigines understand very little of this. So, whereas the drunken behaviour of the whites is done behind closed doors, the blacks do it in the road. Again, we just don't know. . . .

These things may explain a little of the feeling of Alice Springs. However the most influential factor, behind what appears to be the most fascist legal system in Australia, is the existence of Pine Gap, only 20 km south west of Alice. Recently, 600 women, representing Women's Action Against Global Violence, converged on Pine Gap. Jenny Brown, of Brogo, New South Wales, was one. She described Pine Gap like this:

Working on the premise that dingo attacks were rare, reporters baited the public hoping someone would explain what it all meant. This is a problem peculiar to the whites. Aborigines understood that wild things will behave wildly, whereas whites tend to suppose that the area's wildlife would behave as if it was in a zoo.

"It's a top secret spy installation sitting in the middle of Australia, but Australians are not entitled to know anything about it. It seems that it's going to play a really key part in any nuclear exchange, either offensive or defensive."

Rosemary Beaumont, of Cobargo, New South Wales, also among the 600, had this to say: "It's like a trigger to World War III sitting just outside Alice Springs. Anything that happens to set off a nuclear exchange anywhere in the world has to involve Pine Gap. It's the key link with all the spy satellites going around the globe, and they're an integral part of the whole American defense

and offense system. The satellites are equipped with sophisticated electronic equipment which goes beyond imagination." Even though Jenny and Rosemary were among the 111 women who broke into Pine Gap during the 1983 Women's Anti-Nuke Demonstrations, and even though they have both read extensively on the subject, their main fear with Pine Gap is the unknown. Australia is pro-American by default, meaning that the people have never really been asked. Australians see Pine Gap as just another example of American imperialism. If Seventh-day Adventism became a force, it would be another. So we have Australia identifying with Pine Gap, a headache to Russia, certainly implicating Australia in any nuclear attacks leading to war. This is much resented, as Australians do not know what Pine Gap is. What is known is that it would cost the United States \$1 billion to replace it. The lease is renewable every 10 years. Former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was sacked shortly before his signature was required. The lease is up for renewal in 1986. And under the Defense (Special Undertakings) Act, which is Commonwealth Law, one can be locked up for up to 10 years without a proper trial, with respect to Pine Gap.

Alice Springs is the meeting place of the most sophisticated and the most primitive cultures in Australia. The geography speaks as much about an atomic age as about the Dreaming. While driving through the desert near Docker River, Wayne Howard and five aborigines actually found the Blue Streak Rocket, which came crashing down near the aboriginal camps in 1964, dashing the high hopes of the joint Australian and British venture which was to transform Woomera to the rival of Cape Kennedy in the space race. Wayne Howard found that rocket, told me about it, even showed me the pieces lying around his yard. He reported it to the army who asked him not to talk about it on the media. On the level of co-existence, Pine Gap meets the Dreaming with great difficulty. Both have their secrets.

The Case Against the Chamberlains

While the searchers were still looking for the body of Azaria, Michael and Lindy were both sure that their daughter was dead. Michael told me that he asked ranger Derek Roff how long Roff expected Azaria to have lived. Roff said, "It'd be all over in a minute mate. She won't have felt a thing." For that small mercy, Michael was relieved.

Yet the public thought that Michael and Lindy accepted Azaria's death too quickly. Michael was accused of having been indifferent to all but the early stages of the search. For him, it was more important to pray. Hearing the sounds of Christian music coming from a tent, he burst in, and in a shocked voice told the couple, "If you have a torch, please come out and search. If you haven't, please pray."

He had always been a man of prayer. At the Seventh-day Adventist College, Avondale, he would sit quietly during the chapel service, listening intently and constantly flicking back and forth through his Bible. He was also neat, his Bible color-coded to assist him in finding texts on such subjects as justification, the Sabbath, the Sanctuary, and the Mark of the Beast. At the college he was well-liked. He met Lindy when she was dating another blond ministerial trainee, Sandor Gzszik. Gzszik was Chamberlain's roommate but seemed to take his loss of Lindy sportingly.

From the moment Azaria was missing, Michael seemed to be in a state of despair. The incident had so confused him that he searched with a "pathetically inadequate" torch, instead of a 100-watt spotlight rendered unusable because he could not find the key to turn on the accessory switch in the Torana. He was a man in a trance.

Not having passed through such an experience themselves, the public imagined what they would have done. Many judged Chamberlain harshly for not continuing with the

search-party and for "wasting time" in prayer.

They were again mystified by the grizzly prospect of a father returning to the fated site and taking black and white photographs for the *Adelaide News*. That Michael should be so co-operative must have puzzled that newspaper's reporter, Geoff de Luka, the first journalist onto the case. He didn't accept that the Chamberlains were anxious for others to learn from their experience. He could not believe that a couple could lose their baby without also losing their dignity. Unless the Chamberlain's were implicated, how else could they be so certain as to their daughter's fate?

In this way, the *Adelaide News* started a campaign which the other media followed. Circulation figures showed that when a Chamberlain story was splashed across the first page, sales would rise dramatically. For this reason, every development, no matter how speculative, was usually the lead story. Some accounts not written by the Chamberlains were wrongly accredited to them, and the public strove to make sense of what may be considered an absurd accident.

In describing the Kennedy killing, Stanley Cohen, author of *Folk Devils & Moral Panics*, describes the media's response, which may just as easily fit the Azaria case or any incident which evokes a strong public reaction. He says, "They wanted an explanation of the causes of the murder, a positive meaning to be given to the situation, and a reassurance that the nation would come through the crisis without harm. All these things the mass media provides by reducing the ambiguity created by cultural strain and uncertainty. In the case of mass delusions, a significant stage in the diffusion of the hysterical belief is the attempt by commentators to restructure and make sense of an ambiguous situation. In such situations, theories arise to explain what cannot be seen as random events." Strangely, public reaction to Jackie Kennedy was exactly the opposite to that of Lindy Chamberlain. For exhibiting the same

response to a tragedy, Jackie Kennedy was described as "stoical" while Lindy Chamberlain was "heartless."

Azaria's death was just as meaningless to Australians as the Blue Streak Rocket must have seemed to the aborigines of Docker River. People just had to know why, and so began this "trial by media," but not a trial in the sense of a vendetta against the "much-hated" Chamberlains. They were not hated as much as misunderstood. Working on the premise that dingo attacks were rare, and that the Chamberlains ought to be bursting into tears every time a camera was pointed at them, reporters threw indiscriminate baits at the public, perhaps hoping that someone out there could stand up and explain what it all meant. This was a problem peculiar to the whites. The aborigines understood that wild things sometimes behave wildly, whereas whites tended to suppose that the wildlife around Ayers Rock would behave as if they were in zoo conditions.

Some may feel that there is nothing new about a "trial by media." What was different about this was that the Chamberlains found themselves quite unexpectedly subjected to the sort of treatment reserved only for the very famous. The Chamberlains were seriously disadvantaged by not having developed a means of protecting themselves. To them, the media was something new. At first, getting onto national television might have been a thrill, had it not been marred by bizarre circumstances. It was certainly an

Constable Fogarty admitted at the second inquest that she received no formal forensic criminology training and that she failed to observe important blood stains.

opportunity to share their faith, which they dared not pass up. Here, the church showed its complete failure to communicate with the ordinary member. It wasn't the Chamberlain's fault that they accepted so many T.V. interviews. Their message to Australia was

the very thing their church had taught them to say. But few understood it; it was esoteric, unbelievable and almost irresponsible.

They never developed an adequate strategy for handling the press. When following their own inclinations, the Chamberlains have usually been over-friendly, and when acting under advice, they've been inaccessible. They've paid a high price for both.

As far as the Chamberlains were concerned, the most damaging aspect of the first inquest was not what was said about them (they were vindicated) but what was said about the forensic science section of the Northern Territory police. Constable Myra Fogarty, of this branch of the Territory's police force, admitted at the second inquest that she had received no formal training in forensic criminology and she failed to observe important blood stains. She agreed that the blood stains she had failed to notice on the tent was likely to be the strongest evidence to support the Chamberlain's story. Although Coroner Denis Barritt chastised Constable Fogarty, he went on to lay the real blame on her supervisor, Detective Sergeant Sandry, who erred in expecting the most junior person in the force to handle what some have called "the case of the century."

Barritt went on to say, "No meaningful liaison appears to exist between members of the forensic science section and the police in the field. From my observations of the operation of this section in this inquiry and other cases in the past, I recommend that consideration be given to it being re-established on a proper forensic basis." He said they had been "negligent in the extreme." Three-and-a-half months later, Constable Fogarty resigned from the force. After this she told the press that she had been made the scapegoat in the Azaria case. Twice, she had asked a senior police officer if she could attend a six-week forensic course run by the South Australian police. Both times she had been told it would be too expensive to have her properly trained.

Barritt did not close the case. His inquest simply summarized what was known to

date. One statement which virtually ensured the re-opening of the case was his admission of human intervention. He accepted that the sprays on the tent were fetal blood, that dingoes were seen in the area, that Lindy Chamberlain was not a homicidal maniac, that the Chamberlains were accountable for their movements, that Nipper Winmatti's tracking ability was sound, and that a dingo took and killed Azaria Chamberlain on Aug. 17, 1980. But Barritt went on to say that "*some intervention* occurred before an opportunity arose for the dingo to otherwise maul the body of the child."

Commenting on this point, author James Simmonds says, "For those who could cut through the officialese in which his findings were couched, it was evident that he really did believe a dingo had taken Azaria and that someone knew exactly which dingo it was. The implication was that the dingo in question was well-known to someone living in the vicinity and that person had taken steps to protect the animal." Was Barritt inferring that this could be Cawood's dog, "Ding?" Nipper Winmatti said it was. He followed Ding's tracks to Cawood's house.

Flashing in and out of the action were several physicians, experts, and a couple of professors. Having spent a month arguing about obscure topics, even the judge found the going tough.

Barritt also stated, "It is not unreasonable to infer that the inclination of many at Ayers Rock to protect dingoes could provide a motive to conceal Azaria's body."

Not surprisingly, the suggestion of "human intervention" was unsatisfactory to those who wanted the mystery to come to an end. Why was the jumpsuit, found and photographed first "in a ravaged condition," later folded, and reported by the press as having always been folded? Anyway, whose was the handprint on the jumpsuit, if indeed it was a handprint? Who cut the jumpsuit with the "scissors?" In an

attempt to affirm the dingo theory, might even a policeman cut the jumpsuit, thereby hoping to compensate for the failure of their three-week trained forensic department?

Lindy Chamberlain would have none of this, and perhaps this was why people wondered what it was that she wasn't prepared to face? She felt that there had been no human intervention, and that the "scissor cuts" could have been caused by birds pecking at the clothing. Others were not so easily satisfied. Sensing this, the Territory's Chief Minister, Mr. Paul Everingham, instructed the Solicitor-General, Mr. Brian Martin, to re-open the case.

This was a black day for the Chamberlains. Everingham was putting his career on the line by ordering a second inquest. It was just that important that he show progress.

Politically, he could not afford to spend another \$500,000 of public money and come back with the same verdict. Michael Chamberlain told me, "We haven't won a round since that second inquest." He might well bemoan his plight; all the stakes had been raised. Responsibility had shifted from Head Ranger of the Ayers Rock National Park to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory.

Everingham appointed Mr. Jerry Galvin to head the second inquest. Galvin was said to be a "no-nonsense coroner." No more televising of the findings—from now on, the front stage and the back stage were to be kept separate. The forensic department was not to be again disgraced. Furthermore, Mr. Jerry Galvin had a sound record as a "hanging judge." While the findings were not for television, Galvin more than compensated by giving the press every opportunity to photograph and publicize the Chamberlain's car. He was also quite prepared to break convention in order to squeeze them all into the crowded courtroom. For a while, the press were invited to occupy the seats normally filled by the jury. The Chamberlain lawyers protested, claiming that this gesture, at least visually, turned the second inquest into a courtroom. Galvin conceded

the point.

The forensic criminologists made their memorable comeback, proving beyond doubt that the Australian public has faith in the unseen if it is packaged as science and not religion. The result was a clear-cut finding of fetal blood all through the family Torana. It hadn't even flaked off from under the dash.

Obviously the Chamberlains are finding it difficult to account for the blood. Only a

It was as though people had had their excitement during the trial, but were appalled by it It wasn't Jack the Ripper being sentenced, but an attractive mother of two living children.

brave man would step into the witness box and suggest that it may have been a set-up. Yet when I suggested to Michael Chamberlain that it might have been a plant, he genuinely didn't think it was. He believed that it must have been the blood of car accident victim, Keyth Lenehan. I have yet to ask Michael to explain the syringe plunger, the fact that the blood was sticky, and why the car was not impounded until it was out of his care. Here's a body, a motive and an opportunity. Mr. Jerry Galvin committed the matter to court and on Oct. 29, 1982, Lindy Chamberlain was convicted of murder, and Michael Chamberlain as an accessory to it.

Court was held in Darwin, the capital of the Northern Territory. Justice Muirhead was Judge. For the prosecution, Ian Barker; Des Sturgess, Queen's Council; and Tom Pauling. In the other corner, John Phillips, Queen's Council; Andrew Kirkham; Peter Dean; and Stewart Tipple. Flashing in and out of the action we then had several physicians, many experts, and a couple of professors. Having spent a month arguing about obscure topics, such as the pH content of the soil, even the judge found the going tough. So the whole matter was

handed over to three housewives, two clerks, three public servants, a builder, plumber, mechanic, and a surveyor, who unanimously found Lindy Chamberlain guilty. She's virtually been in jail ever since.

Her only respite was when she was released to give birth to Kahlia. Again the Chamberlains were heavily criticised. When Lindy told the press that she had toyed with the idea of calling her daughter Azaria II, the movie industry started to get excited. Many were openly revolted by the idea, and the Chamberlains settled for Kahlia. After "sacrifice in the wilderness," Michael and Lindy were sick of the meaning-behind-the-name. They picked Kahlia, which means nothing at all. "She's only doing it for the sympathy," was a frequent comment on Lindy's pregnancy, and, "She thinks they won't send a pregnant woman to jail." Around the time of the first inquest, Lindy had told the press that all her pregnancies had been planned—Kahlia too?

Yet the point that was missed is that, in making his wife pregnant with "Azaria II," Michael Chamberlain was telling Australia that Lindy had been OK with Azaria I. It's almost unthinkable that a normal, clean-living, clergyman and justice of the peace could not only cover up for a wife who had massacred his daughter, but then give her more to carve up. Just the opposite, here Michael Chamberlain was trusting his wife with more of the same. This was his strongest testimony and something that could not register even one point in the judicial system of the nation. Furthermore, you might suppose that after three years a man might tire of covering-up for his daughter's murderer, but Michael Chamberlain has done the very opposite, appealing to higher and higher courts, asking for more—not less—investigation. He just doesn't seem ashamed.

Writer of *The Dingo Didn't Do It*, Jim Oram, neatly summarized public feeling after the verdict: "It was as though people had had their sport, their excitement during the trial, but were appalled at the ver-

dict It wasn't Jack the Ripper who had been sentenced. It wasn't a sexual pervert or a mass murderer or a multilator who had been sent to Berrimah Jail on the outskirts of Darwin, but an attractive, dark-haired woman with far-away eyes, a 34-year-old mother of two living children."

Then, flying in the face of all sensitivity, along comes Dave Hansen and cartoonist Mark Trounce. Their production *Dingo Lingo* was a kind of instruction book on 101 ways for a dingo to kill a baby: you can toast it, mince it, turn it into hamburgers or shish kebab. There was also a tea-towel, and a few T-shirt manufacturers, all trying to earn a living to tide them through the recession and into an age when the print medium can afford to be more scrupulous.

The Defense

During the Chamberlain trial, the defense was always tame. They seemed to adopt a "we'll go quietly" attitude, almost hoping that their clients would be let off if the defense adopted a sufficiently low profile. They had their problems: a main one was credibility. There were two points on which the Chamberlains and Stewart Tipple were all alone. Even friends and supporters couldn't go along with them.

As previously mentioned, the idea that "a person or persons, name unknown" was involved in the disposal of Azaria's body has been virtually accepted by the Australian public as FACT. The prosecution believe these "persons" to be the Chamberlains, but in their defense the Chamberlains have shied away from theories of human intervention. They're virtually all alone in that thinking, the involvement of the third party being the heart of the mystery. It explains anomalies such as the "scissor" cuts, the missing matinee jacket (perhaps removed because it contained key evidence). It also explains the sudden appearance of Azaria's clothes 15 meters from a dingo lair, and it

makes sense out of Brown's and Cameron's evidence.

A second defense-backed improbability is the identity of the dingo that took Azaria. Perhaps deceived by those involved in the cover-up, Tipple's defense team has consistently blamed the wrong dingo. They claimed the dingo carrying Azaria went south, whereas it is becoming increasingly obvious that it moved in a westerly direction. True, a second dingo went south, but it was not carrying Azaria.

The defense was fraught with problems, not the least being a curious reversal: instead of the thrust of the case being a prosecution attempting to establish guilt "beyond reasonable doubt," it was the defense who found themselves with the unexpected task of having to prove the absolute innocence of the Chamberlains. How did things get so about-faced? Simply, the prosecution had a comprehensive explanation for the events of Aug. 17, while the defense could only offer a jig-saw puzzle explanation, with many key pieces missing.

Furthermore, the prosecution latched onto a major flaw in the Australian legal system: a jury will usually vote in favor of a speaker who is interesting and charming, in preference to one who may be right. The prosecution had this area all sewn up, leaving the defense to resort to dissertations from highly-qualified intellectuals. Enter prosecution witness Joy Kuhl—entertaining, not what you'd call good-looking in Sydney, but worth six out of 10 in the outback.

For the Northern Territory Police Force, Joy Kuhl was a real pleasure to deal with. She went out on dates with key prosecution witnesses Constable James Metcalfe and Detective Sergeant Graeme Charwood. In fact, she was so popular with the force that they offered her a permanent position in the Territory which she accepted in 1984. She was an instructress in court, simplifying where the defense was intent on doing the opposite. One observer described Kuhl as a "theatrical actress." Jill Bottrell, of the *Centralian Advocate*, summarized Kuhl's court

performance like this: "Joy Kuhl had the court wrapped around her little finger. How could they misunderstand? She was going out of her way to prove to them that what she was saying was completely and utterly correct. There were no two ways about it, and she kept on asking, 'Now do you understand?' 'You understand this, don't you?'" and they're all going 'Yeah'."

Attorney McHugh argued that it was highly unlikely that a woman who had just murdered her baby would be involved in playful frolic right after committing the murder.

In February 1983, the Chamberlains launched their first appeal. Mr. Michael McHugh for the Chamberlains told the court that the case in favor of innocence was overpowering. His vital points included the "extraordinary" fact that Lindy Chamberlain had asked someone to have her track-suit pants drycleaned. These were the pants said to have been splattered with blood. McHugh also presented evidence to show that children had also bled in the car. He added that there was tremendous significance that not one of the loops of material in the car were bloodstained, that the bloodstained chamois found in the car had been used to clean up blood from accident victims, and that it was "hardly consistent" that a woman who had just murdered her baby would be involved in a race with her son Aidan, right after committing murder. Judges Sir Lionel Bowen and Sir William Forster concluded that, "We are quite unable to say that the jury was wrong." And the first appeal failed.

Shortly beforehand, publisher Phil Ward handed a lengthy dossier to one of the Chamberlain legal team. In this brief was indeed some material which may prove to be of tremendous significance. Ward and lawyer Don McNicol, along with another Seventh-day Adventist, Arthur Hawken,

turned into super-sleuths and succeeded in producing an alternative explanation to the Azaria story.

The Ward-McNicol Private Prosecution

Phil Ward arrived on the scene too late to make anyone feel comfortable. He's got all the bad habits of Colombo, with an erratic temperament which may only lead to genius or total failure. He's unconventional, petulant, and he'll go broke if he has to, just to prove a point. That's why he can't be shaken off the path. He's thrown away the rulebook. Although he's a Seventh-day Adventist, it's not the church that he's trying to vindicate, but the Chamberlains.

He and Michael were in the same theology classes at Avondale College, but whereas Michael went on to become a minister, Ward has pursued a successful career in publishing. He is the owner of the Business Newsletters Group, and his mini-empire includes ownership of *The Small Business Letter*, *The Investment Advisor*, *Health '84*, *Time Talk*, and *Adventist News*. The latter is exactly what it sounds like—a newsletter for Seventh-day Adventists. In many ways this publication is the most representative of the real Phil Ward.

Ward is capable of carrying superlative workloads. Rather like the idealized American businessman, Ward bursts into his office and writes all his editorials, plus a string of other pieces, plus correspondence, and then he may devote the afternoon to the Azaria case. Work accompanies him wherever he goes.

Don McNicol is getting paid for it. He doesn't make any bones about that. Ward initiated McNicol's involvement, he didn't. Initially he feared that Lindy Chamberlain might be guilty, but after going through the

evidence accumulated by Ward and Arthur Hawken, McNicol was convinced. Although very different in temperament from Phil Ward, both seem to attract audiences from out of nowhere; each will make himself known to a roomful of strangers, and each is seldom anonymous, even when trying to be. In the course of their investigations they have had their luggage searched, snooping equipment and cassette tapes stolen, and have received two death threats.

Arthur Hawken is an older Seventh-day Adventist living in Cooranbong, the village which surrounds Avondale College. He began his own independent investigations but teamed up with Ward and McNicol. Hawken specializes in communicating with the aborigines. After working with Ward and McNicol for three months or so he left the team after "constant harassment by rangers and police."

Ward and McNicol plan to have their evidence tested in a private prosecution of certain people who, they claim, "covered the thing up." Their only other alternative is a Judicial Enquiry, which is unlikely because Paul Everingham would not want it. What follows is their explanation for the events surrounding the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain. This is how Don McNicol explained it to me:

Azaria Chamberlain's predator was the dingo named "Ding," "Scarface," "Kulpunya." His photograph appeared in the front cover of Sydney's *Daily Mirror* July 20, 1983, with the headline, "This Dingo Took Azaria." In favor of this argument is the fact that Nipper Winmatti and wife Barbara which identified the tracks as Ding's because Ding had a limp in his left foreleg. These tracks moved away from the camp, to a place where the trackers claimed they saw marks which indicated that the bundle was temporarily put down. The tracks then doubled back and led to the Cawood's house, where they became too obscure for tracking. The next day, a second tracker independently returned the same findings.

On the other hand, park ranger Ian

Cawood claims to have shot Ding eight weeks beforehand, after Ding had gone for the throat of another small child. Don McNicol and Phil Ward believe that Ding wasn't shot. He was re-located. Says McNicol, "The unusual thing is that Ian Cawood said he shot this dingo, but never

Despite assurances from the Seventh-day Adventist clergy, the laity can plainly see that people do not respect them for their faith.

before in the history of this park had troublesome dingoes ever been shot, ever. They had been taken away and were re-located. That was standard procedure. There was no need, with such a vast country, to kill healthy animals. They could be taken away and be expected never to return. They shot dingoes that had mange and that were sick, or got down near the sewer pits and couldn't walk any further. They never shot a good dingo, but here, Ian Cawood said he shot this one.

"Three days after Azaria disappeared, the aborigines saw Ding near the British Petroleum station and Ininti Store, and they knew it was Ding that took the baby. They ran and got Cawood to come and shoot the dingo. The reason they went and got Cawood was because three men were appointed to shoot all dingoes for stomach analysis; Frank Morris, John Beasey, and Ian Cawood. The aborigines told me that Cawood then shot a bullet past his nose, and missed. Now Derek Roff told us that Cawood was a crack shot with a gun. Besides, if he'd wanted to shoot Ding, Ding was so much of a pet that Cawood would just go up and put the gun in his ear and pull the trigger, which is exactly how Ding died later on, two or three days later when Ding turns up in front of the police station, just along the road between Cawood's corner and the police station. Morris saw him, raced out, put the gun in his ear, pulled

the trigger—bang. Dead. It was in the middle of the day, and fortunately there were two witnesses, white people who saw this happen and were very upset because Ding was a pet, and they didn't understand why he had to be shot.

“So we asked Constable Frank Morris if he knew what Ding looked like. He did, it was the big red one with the white collar. No problem. But when we asked him ‘Did you shoot him?’ He said ‘No. You’ve got your facts wrong there.’ Anyway, we had a look at the Conservation Commission reports, the police reports where all the dingoes that were shot were supposed to be recorded, the time they were shot, where they were shot, by whom, etc., and how many bullets were expended. But this particular shooting incident, I couldn’t find at all. So he shot a dingo in a National Park and he did not record it.”

There are also many inconsistencies in the Cawood’s story of their movements on the night when Azaria became missing, and as no rangers ever searched the yards, this part of the case is still a mystery. McNicol feels that the many footprints which obliterated Ding’s tracks around the Cawood house are unusual. They alone show a lot of movement in an area where the searchers had not yet come.

Says McNicol: “We have a witness who puts Val Cawood, daughter Debbie, and another lady by the name of Lynne Beasey—wife of the mechanic for the Conservation Commission—in the yard at 11:30 p.m., in the backyard with torches. They thought it unusual. We have another witness who actually went over and spoke to them in the yard, and the three women were in the yard at 2:30 in the morning, still with torches. As this fellow said, ‘I had a very strange feeling that I wasn’t wanted there.’ Val said that she was looking underneath buildings because aboriginal dogs often have their puppies under houses, but the interesting thing is that there is no ‘underneath’ to the Cawood’s house. It’s built on a concrete slab.” After this, McNicol claims that all

three ladies gave variant accounts of their movements, including “having a cup of coffee outside,” which McNicol felt was strange around 2:00 a.m. in a temperature of minus 2 degrees. McNicol claims that Val Cawood burned the slacks she wore that night.

Motive? Coroner Denis Barritt suggested one in the first inquest, words not often resurrected! “It is not unreasonable to infer that the inclination of many at Ayers Rock to protect dingoes could provide a motive to conceal Azaria’s body.”

Conclusion

The Azaria case has proved to be an embarrassing one for Australians. Whether or not the Chamberlains are innocent, there are those who now fear that Lindy’s innocence would make such a farce of the whole judicial system, that it would be best to let things stand. The status quo is at stake, with the question no longer one of innocence, but of disruption. Says one, “Personally I’ve had a gut full of this Chamberlain travelling circus. Let them accept the decision of the referee no matter how painful.” That’s almost like saying, “If you let us scapegoat the Chamberlains, we’ll promise never to use that reagent again.”

The disquieting feature of the Chamberlain case is that it somehow keeps putting the finger on the pulse of Australian prejudices. The first is racial. Nipper Winmatti, who should have been a key witness for the defense, has never been used to his fullest potential. He stated, perhaps a dozen times in the first inquest, that the dingo that took Azaria went west. This was ignored—not challenged—ignored! The inquest proceeded as if he was in agreement with white witnesses who’d said the dingo moved south. An interpreter was not enough to make Winmatti understood.

Another strange characteristic of the case is the willingness on the part of Australians to believe a woman killed her baby. On one hand some feminists are reckoning that there is something normal about a mother wanting to murder her baby, and Lindy, religion aside, is normal in Australian terms. But others are piqued that Lindy should be seen as a murderer, whereas Michael appears as a mere accomplice. In the finish, Australia identified the person they wanted to punish for murder. It was a woman, not a man, much less a dingo.

Finally, the Azaria case has highlighted the issue of religious prejudice. The results have been so harsh that no one stands to gain by talking about it. Despite the assurances from the Seventh-day Adventist clergy, the laity can plainly see that people do not respect them for their faith. But in bringing this out, the secular world also stands accused for misunderstanding Seventh-day Adventism just as surely as they misunderstood the blacktracker. In Australian legal history, the closest parallel case is that of the bombing of the Sydney Hilton. A religious group, the Ananda Marga, were blamed for the terrorism, but many who have closely examined the case believe that they, like the Chamberlains, were falsely blamed.

In Australia, the Chamberlain situation is becoming more and more obviously a case

of victimization. Apart from the racial, religious, and sexist overtones, the death of Azaria Chamberlain is what the people laugh about. Azaria jokes are a national obsession, alongside Irish jokes, Wog jokes, elephant jokes, and jokes about the physically handicapped. How do Australians cope with this? Easy. The secular press assures the people that Lindy is coping well in jail, even though privately Michael says she's not. Every so often the Seventh-day Adventist Church circulates a morsel from Lindy, likewise giving an assurance that her religious faith is sacrosanct.

Perhaps the last word belongs to Michael Chamberlain, who this year resigned as a pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Three months before the official resignation, I asked him whether he would continue with pastoral work. His answer was simply, "Who'll let me?" Summing up his current situation, he said this: "The last four years have certainly changed my approach to life. As a minister looking back, I see myself as being quite naive about certain aspects of life. A realism in the horror of our situation has caused me to become a great deal more pragmatic, and at times even cynical. However, I remain a spiritual person, and while I am perfectly willing to be judged and criticized, it will only be by God and history."