

Preface

It is a great pleasure to write a brief introduction to this modest little pamphlet. My first task is to insulate my old friend Xavier Hegel-Buber from the charge of crass commercialism which has followed the popularity of his *Revelations* since they first began to circulate on the Internet in the autumn of 2006. I am myself responsible.

It never occurred to me that placing a single copy on my own web-site¹ could possibly lead just five years later to a thriving if still nascent religion; nor that a healthy internet business (of which X-HB is largely unaware; he still uses a typewriter) would be in the making. It is certainly the case that the exegesis accompanying the `official tenets' is no longer all of Xavier's making.² Nor does he own any shares in X-HB press.

I confess that I am still not entirely sure whether Xavier actually is poking fun at us in his understated English way, or if rather he truly believes himself to be the literal vessel of Larry. In any event, the genie is out of the bottle and *Larryism*, like *Scientology*---but so far with no apparent malignancy---is being taken entirely seriously.

¹ At <http://users.cs.dal.ca/~jborwein>

² Sadly, the original was lost when a Dalhousie University file server was stolen in 2009, so it will be left to future digital historians to untangle events.

In such he perhaps follows in the fine tradition of Dublin's legendary Dean Swift, when he wrote his satirical *Modest Proposal* three centuries ago.³

"As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years, upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of our projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. It is true, a child just dropt from its dam, may be supported by her milk, for a solar year, with little other nourishment: at most not above the value of two shillings, which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps, by her lawful occupation of begging; and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner, as, instead of being a charge upon their parents, or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding, and partly to the cloathing of many thousands.

There is likewise another great advantage in my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children, alas! too frequent among us, sacrificing the poor innocent babes, I doubt, more to avoid the expence than the shame, which would move tears and pity in the most savage and inhuman breast."

Swift was the author of *Gulliver's Travels* in 1726. Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin since 1713, should not have been entirely unaware of how such prose would be received.⁴ He concluded his pamphlet:

² Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal for preventing the children of poor people in Ireland, from being a burden on their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the publick*, 1729 (<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1080>).

⁴ "The satirical intent of *A Modest Proposal* was misunderstood by many of Swift's peers, and he was harshly criticized for writing prose in such exceptionally "bad taste." He came close to losing his patronage because of this essay." (Wikipedia)

"I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the publick good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children, by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing."

Xavier likewise is entirely without personal interest. Though, I have recently started a collection on his behalf. It was not entirely easy to have him add just one contemporary paragraph to his *Revelation*. Dr Hegel-Buber is happy spending his declining years---may they be many---with his books and his beloved wife Zipporah ('Zippy' to Xavier), and, when they happen, in his chats with Larry who never ceases to surprise Xavier.⁵

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Halifax, Nova Scotia
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⁵ Xavier told me that, in one of their last chats of 2006, Larry said he had just read a "God vs. Science" debate in *Time* between Richard Dawkins (atheist evolutionary biologist) and Francis Collins (who ran the Human Genome project and is a practicing Christian). Larry said they were both wrong---after all Larry exists---but Dawkins was much less wrong (see *Time Magazine* of November 13th 2006, www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1555132-3,00.html).