LETTERS FROM SOLITARY

Letters from Mordechai Vanunu to David Smith
written during his 11 years of solitary confinement

Edited and annotated by Samuel H. Day, Jr.
with forward & afterword by Rev. David B. Smith

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To obtain such permission, write to:

Rev. David B. Smith  
c/11 Herbert Street, Dulwich Hill  
New South Wales, Australia  2203

Fax: 61-2-9569-1220  
Email: Father-Dave@death-star.com
Preface
by Sam Day

St. John’s Anglican Church of Darlinghurst presides over a shady courtyard in a seedy neighbourhood of Sydney called King’s Cross, best known for its strip joints, gay bars, prostitutes, drug addicts, and down-and-outers. The church preaches and practices a social gospel, which includes a daytime drop-in centre and evening hospitality for the poor.

It was into this setting that a man carrying a knapsack wandered in late May, 1986, on one of his first evenings in Australia. He had travelled long and far. He was hungry and thirsty and in search of someone to talk to.

Attracted by the light and the sound of voices, the stranger walked into the courtyard and found tables and chairs set out on the front lawn, as if for a garden party. Someone gave him a sandwich and a cup of coffee. A young assistant pastor, in charge of hospitality that evening, noticed the newcomer and stepped over to introduce himself. Their handshake, casually offered and casually received, would mark the beginning of a unique anal of Christian martyrdom in the nuclear age.

The man who wandered into St. John’s that evening was Mordechai Vanunu, then 31, an Israeli who had left his home six months earlier in search of answers to troubling questions about his duty to family, religion, and country. The man who welcomed him, David Smith, was a student pastor who, over the next four months, would help him resolve those questions in a way which lifted him from obscurity and shook the Political world.

Vanunu, one of 11 children of deeply religious orthodox Jewish parents who had emigrated with his family from Morocco to Israel in 1953, had worked for nine years as a mid-level technician in Israel’s secret nuclear weapons factory at Dimona while taking courses in religion and philosophy in nearby Beersheba. At the university he met Arab students, became committed to their cause of an independent Palestine, and grew increasingly uncomfortable about his role as a nuclear weapons worker. Thinking that he might some day wish to tell his fellow citizens about the secret factory, he succeeded in surreptitiously taking photographs inside the plant.

Late in 1985 Vanunu had quit his job and left Israel on a voyage of self-discovery. With the undeveloped film rolls in his backpack, along with his books, shirts, and underwear, he had wandered through Russia, India, and Southeast Asia. Now, on that May evening in 1986, he found himself in earnest conversation with a kindred spirit - the young cleric about his own age who had studied the same religious subjects as he and even fancied the same theologians- Soren Kierkegaard, the brooding Danish precursor of modern Christian existentialism, and Friedrich Nietzsche, the Nineteenth Century German apostle of “will to power” as the chief motivating force for individuals and the state. It seemed a miracle. Drawn to David Smith and others at the church, most notably its ebullient rector, John McKnight, Mordechai Vanunu began hanging out at St. John’s, working at odd jobs, joining a Bible study group, and taking part in discussions of world social problems, including the spectre of nuclear war. He seemed like a driven man.
Barely two months after his arrival in Australia, on a Sunday in late July, at the St. John’s baptismal font, Mordechai Vanunu accepted Jesus Christ as his lord and saviour, taking the Christian name of John Crossman. Weeks later, in a Sydney hotel room, meeting with a reporter from the London Sunday Times, he crossed another fateful bridge by agreeing to go public with his nuclear secret.

In early September Vanunu flew to London with Sunday Times reporter Peter Hounam. His story and photographs, given without pay, were checked and double-checked by reporters and by experts from the British nuclear weapons program. The information showed that tiny Israel had become a major nuclear weapons power, with 100 to 200 warheads of advanced design. But even before the Sunday Times could go to press with its blockbuster, Israeli agents had tracked Vanunu to London and set a trap for him.

On September 30 a female agent posing as an American tourist persuaded him to fly with her to Rome for a holiday. There he was set upon by other agents, drugged, transported in a crate to a waiting freighter, and returned in chains to Israel, where he would be kept in unremitting isolation.

Six weeks later, without acknowledging the kidnapping, Israeli authorities announced that Vanunu had been detained and would be charged with espionage and treason for revealing state secrets. Vanunu’s first letter to David Smith followed a few months later.

The letters that follow were all written by Mordechai Vanunu from his solitary confinement cell in Israel over an eight-year period to the David Smith, now an Anglican priest in Sydney, Australia. They have been edited for purposes of clarity. Blackened areas denote-words or passages deleted by prison censors. The letters are reprinted by permission of Mordechai Vanunu and David Smith.

Samuel H. Day, Jr.
Madison, Wisconsin, April, 1998
I first met Morde late on a Friday night. We were running a little coffee-shop-type setup outside the church building in Kings Cross and Morde just wandered in.

I loved the work at Kings Cross and I loved manning the coffee stand on a Friday night. I was working with a good team and felt like I was on the cutting edge. I enjoyed meeting new people in this setting, be they street workers, back-packers or locals, and I enjoyed the opportunity to meet Morde.

Morde had coffee, he walked around the church building, and we talked. His English was not terrific, but we managed some pretty serious conversation at our first meeting. Morde had recently completed studies at university. I had completed university just before entering seminary. Morde had been studying philosophy. I had just completed my honours degree in philosophy! Morde’s interest had been in existentialism. Mine had been also! Morde’s chief figure of interest was Nietzsche – the belligerent German atheist. Mine was Kierkegaard – the eccentric Christian preacher. Morde had read Kierkegaard, and my first introduction to Kierkegaard had been in a course comparing him to Nietzsche. We found we had plenty to talk about.

It was a curious scene that developed that night. Two figures in the middle of the Cross, locked in passionate discussion about theories of meaning and existence. In Morde’s broken English we managed to discuss Nietzsche’s concept of ‘staring into the abyss’ of your life and embracing your despair, and Kierkegaard’s optimistic alternative – throwing yourself into the abyss and finding that the abyss is God and is able to support you.

It was never a purely academic discussion for either of us. At the time my own faith was deeply intertwined with these concepts. For Morde though, I don’t think I realised exactly how much was at stake in his thinking until much further down the track.

Some months later Morde would embrace the Christian faith, and let go of much of his former life. At an academic level he was also very self-consciously embracing Kierkegaard and rejecting Nietzsche. This is significant, for Kierkegaard was always on about taking ‘risks’, or ‘leaps of faith’, as he would call them.

The one complete work of Kierkegaard that had been translated into Hebrew, and which Morde had read, was his eulogy on Abraham, entitled ‘Fear and Trembling’. In it Kierkegaard reflects on Abraham’s call to go and sacrifice his son Isaac. How can this be right, when it seems to be a betrayal of his family, and is contrary to his reason and even to his conscience? Yet Abraham knows that this is what he has been called to by God, and so he sets out upon his task, albeit with ‘fear and trembling’.

Morde would make his own leap of faith. He would come to the front of St John’s church and say out loud ‘Now I give myself to God. Now I do what I must do.’ True to the Kierkegaardian spirit, Morde made his decision alone. When he left for the airport, he had a message sent to me during one of my lectures at seminary. He was sorry that he had to leave to England before the first meeting of our ‘Kierkegaard Society’, which we had organised together for that coming weekend. He wanted to assure me that he would be back in time for the second meeting. I thought little of it at the time. We are yet to have that second meeting.
II

I didn’t know much about nuclear weapons. I tried to participate in the peace march each year, and would try to encourage others to do so, but I found it hard to get excited about the whole process of political lobbying etc. My social conscience was more tied up with third world poverty and homeless kids in Sydney – issues that seemed more tangible and human. It was Morde who gave the nuclear issue a human face for me.

It came up one day after our weekly Bible study group meeting. I had been leading a series of studies looking at passages in the Bible that dealt with issues of poverty and social injustice. I had called the study series ‘Following Jesus in a Suffering World’. I had asked other group members to volunteer to lead one of the studies on a social justice issue that was close to their own heart. Morde volunteered to lead a study on the ‘nuclear issue’.

‘I used to work in a nuclear factory’ Morde said. ‘It was a secret factory’ he said. ‘Right’ I said, not knowing what else to say. Morde went on to tell me about some photos he had taken, and he suggested that he might put on a slide presentation for the group, and show us exactly what this secret factory of his looked like. This sounded like a great idea to me, though I was admittedly more keen about having Morde involved in one of the studies than I was about going over pictures of his mysterious factory. I suppose I didn’t know how seriously to take it all. You meet a lot of unusual people in the Cross. I had learnt over time to nod my head agreeably to the most outrageous of stories.

I didn’t know what to think of Morde’s story, but I had grown to like Morde very much, and I was heartened by his interest in the issues of peace and disarmament. As we spoke, it became clear that these were very much ‘human issues’ for Morde, not just political platforms. The possibility of a nuclear war was clearly something that disturbed him deeply. ‘Perhaps you can make some special contribution in this area’ I suggested. ‘Perhaps God can use you in some special way to help in the peace process’. I had no idea at the time how much thought he must have already given to these very basic questions.

After Morde’s kidnapping I struggled with feelings of guilt over whether I had helped to push Morde into risking his life for the sake of the peace process. Looking back, I remember more the way in which Morde isolated himself in order to make these decisions. ‘To know is to be responsible’ Morde would later say. Morde, in the Spirit of Kierkegaard, was a man who took full responsibility for his own decisions.

We never had that slide show. Ironically it was only because of Morde’s poor grasp of English that we abandoned the idea. One of the other young guys in the parish, Billy, who also had an interest in nuclear disarmament, was going to take the session jointly with Morde. When Billy pulled out so did Morde. He didn’t feel capable of leading the session by himself. Morde was always a shy man.
It’s funny the regrets you carry when you lose a person. When loved ones die you always seem to think of things you wished you had said or done. Morde didn’t die, but he did leave a lot of loose ends when he disappeared. What sticks in my head is the promise I made to him that we would go walking over the Sydney Harbour Bridge together. It was a promise I never seemed to get around to fulfilling, and probably now never will.

Morde was a man of simple tastes with few ambitions. This was one of the striking things about the man – he was so unremarkable in his hopes and dreams.

I remember one day Morde telling me quite excitedly of his hope that one day he might act as a ‘server’ in the Sunday worship service (our version of the ‘alter boy’). It seems ridiculous to recall this now, but it was said with much sincerity at the time. As a young Christian convert this seemed to be about as far as Morde’s ambitions extended! Morde was certainly never somebody who hankered after a public profile. Indeed, in the time I knew him, the only other hope for the future he ever mentioned to me was the thought that perhaps he might find some nice Australian Christian girl and settle down near by.

It has been extraordinary to read and hear some of the things people have said about Morde – that he was a ‘professional spy’, a ‘trained terrorist’, a ‘brilliant con-man’. How much time did such people spend actually trying to get to know the guy? ‘For God’s sake’ I feel like shouting ‘this man is my friend. You obviously don’t know him at all.’

As clever as Morde was (and is) at an academic level, when it came to the subtle art of spying, Morde was downright naive! I’ll never forget the incident at the airport where Morde misplaced the bag with the entire collection of Dimona photos! Where had he put it? It was found at the top of the escalators, where he had left it when he went to check in! Not exactly the behaviour of a professional secret agent.

The naivete was evident too in the matter of the money he was supposed to be paid. ‘They say they are going to pay me something for the photos’ he told me one Sunday morning. He added ‘I will give the money to the church here and it will help in the ministry’. ‘Morde’, I said, ‘if all this is as serious as I’m hearing it is, perhaps you will need the money to help set up a new life for yourself.’ Morde seemed to dismiss the idea. Did Morde, in those early days, really understand how much danger he was in?

Did he think perhaps that somehow the story could be published without his name being mentioned and without him being even remotely implicated? It is hard to know. Certainly, by the time he left for England, he was quite aware of the sort of risk he was taking. But this did not make him any more ready to take on the Mossad.
27th February 1987

Dear David,

Thank you very much for your great letter. For me here it is a happy day when I am reading your letter. I am remembering the first Friday night when we were in the church and we spoke about Kierkegaard, and this conversation opened my mind to a new life. I want to thank you for this honour, and I pray for you to succeed to use Kierkegaard’s philosophy to praise the religious life and faith in Jesus Christ.

This period in the prison I want to use to develop my knowledge and my faith in Christianity, because now I know that my task in this world is to devote myself for working and helping other people, and my task here in Israel is to show that I was born Jewish but I find that JC is our saviour. This will not make my life easy here but this faith will keep me strong and make my suffering bearable.

Do you remember this phrase, follow JC in this suffering world? Now I know what it means and I know that not only I am suffering in this world. By God’s will I’ll be free, and I want to come to St. John’s church and stand in the church on Sunday morning and pray and speak to all the people and to open their hearts for the love of God.

You now can say, in every circumstance don’t lose your faith in Jesus. And you can say, these are my words to all the parish. Yet I am not allowed to see a priest. They cannot succeed to take from me one of the most important human rights in a democratic country.

I wrote a letter to the Bishop Samir Kafity (Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem) and I asked him to send me one of the priests and some books about Christianity. You can recommend other books if you would write to him.

I am very happy to hear Kim is pregnant. God heard her prayers. I know Rob prayed very well, and as God heard their prayers he will hear my prayers. I want to say thank you, Kim and Rob, for your helping me. I hope to see you and your children, and we can listen again to Beethoven’s 6th Symphony.

I also want to say goodbye to Rob’s mother. I remember all my friends, every one is in my mind. I miss you and I miss the Sunday morning praying, the songs, the organ, the trumpet, and the spiritual help that I received in the church.

David, I know you work very hard. I wish you success in your study and your helping John in the parish. Please continue your preaching. You do it well.

Next week is the trial. I am not worried or afraid because I know what I did and I know who I am. I believe that what happens to me is God’s will, and I will wait for my release.

I don’t know a lot about what is going on outside the prison because they keep me isolated. Even my lawyer I see only one time a week, and my brothers every two weeks for one half hour.

My parents came to see me one time; they didn’t like my faith. I think someone sent them to me because I know my parents. I am a Christian; they will not come to see me again. I have sorrow for them, but as Jesus said, who wants me must leave his parents and follow me.

My brothers are not concerned about my faith. Everyone wants to know why I became a Christian and I send them to learn of Kierkegaard’s philosophy. There I find love and Jesus, and everyone has to open his heart to find this love, and then Jesus will be wherever we might be.

I want to thank everyone for helping me. If you and John, Guy, or Steve have any advice on how to use my time here to study and to pray, you can write to me. I wish you well. May the grace of our Lord JC be in your spirit. Amen.

Yours in peace from your brother in Christ.

John Crossman
Three months later, in a letter from a new isolation cell at Ashkelon Prison, a maximum security facility south of Tel Aviv, Vanunu signs off with a name combining his new Christian first name of John with his old nickname, Morde. He asks about Frs. John McKnight, rector of St. John’s, and Steven Gray, the assistant rector who had officiated at his baptism, and other old friends. And he mentions his first encounters with Brother Gilbert Sinden, librarian at St. George’s Anglican College in Jerusalem, who, as a priest allowed to visit the prisoner, would leave a profound impression on Vanunu. The trial Vanunu had hoped would speedily vindicate him had been postponed from March to September and would be postponed again.

5 June 1987

Please send your letters to my new address:
Ashkelon Prison

Dear David Smith,

I received your letter No. 3. I didn’t receive No. 2. Did you receive my letters? Did Father John receive all my letters? I wrote also to Steve, Francis, Gill, Marj, Bill, Rob and Kim, and Guy. But I didn’t receive their letters. Can you send me again your letter No. 2 about Kierkegaard? I received the books of Kierkegaard, one philosophical and the other Either/Or.

Last Sunday I met Brother Gilbert for the second time. We prayed together and he brought me four books about Christianity and the Bible. I am thanking you for your words; they encourage me and give me a hope about my future. Yet my prison condition is the same. My trial will be in September. I have a good lawyer and I pray that the sentence will be just and that I can soon be free.

I am spending 24 hours every day alone in a cell reading the Bible and other books. Praying every morning and evening, and trying to know more of God’s words. Here I am alone in my faith, but by reading the New Testament I feel encouraged, and it gives me strength. The life of the Lord JC is the way I am following, and his words to the Jews are what I can say to the Jews here today. I think the letters of St. Paul fill me with a lot of love toward him and faith in the Lord Jesus. I find many very interesting, such as, ‘whoever does not have the Spirit cannot receive the gifts that come from God’s Spirit’.

I feel that the spirit of God is with me all the time, and now here he keeps me alive and gives me the power to stand in this country, and to say the Lord JC is the truth and he is our saviour.

And to you, my brother, I know you are good in your study and you will have a great future in the church. I’ll remember you all the time, and I’ll pray to meet you again. Say goodbye to your wife, and to all my brothers and sisters at St. John’s parish.

“Join me in praying fervently to God, pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to God’s people there, and so I will come to you full of joy if it is God’s will.” Romans 15:30

I hope to receive more letters from my friends, and from many believers in the Lord JC from other churches until my release, to keep my faith alive. The letters are my communication with the outside.

May God, our source of peace, be with all of you. Amen.

Your brother in Christ,

Anti Nuclear Weapons.

John Morde
Six weeks later an accusatory tone toward his captors creeps into Vanunu’s letters for the first time. But he remains faithful and hope-filled.

In a letter written about the same time though, Brother Gilbert Sinden (Mordechai’s visiting priest) warned Smith of a looming danger:

“One thing concerns me: he really does seem to think that he will be acquitted at his trial, or at worst given a very light sentence. I would just love to be called ‘one of little faith’ and be proved entirely wrong, but I sense the atmosphere of this land, I find that very hard to believe. I feel it is important to build him up to be ready to receive a very harsh sentence. If he does receive such (which may God forbid), we shall have proved ourselves better friends to him by helping him to be ready to face it, than if we buoy him up with purely human hope which proves to be illusory.... He is spiritually very strong, and I’m just praying for wisdom for us all to help him continue so.”

Would Vanunu’s overconfidence prove to be his undoing?

23 July, 1987

Dear David Smith,

I hope you received my letters. I’ve received only two letters from you. I know that you sent more letters but as you know, the unbeliever people here want to separate me from our Lord JC and I will do all that I can to keep my faith alive until my release.

Until my coming again into St. John’s to praise the Lord, please keep writing to me and tell Father John to keep writing. He can send the same letter every week until he gets my reply. I am waiting to receive some articles from you about Kierkegaard. Now I have few books. I am OK. My spirit is good and I believe that all my suffering will be ended soon. My faith and the words of St. Paul keep me strong, and my prayers give me power to wait for my freedom, and you helped me to know Christ.

I always give thanks to my God for you because of the grace he has given you through Christ Jesus, for in union you have become rich in all things. Jesus loves us.

Peace and love from Christ,

John Morde
A hand-drawn cross and peace symbol adorned Vanunu's next letter from Ashkelon, written just 19 days later. The drawings depicted a growing fusion of Christian faith with his dedication to a world free of nuclear weapons. As Brother Gilbert had feared, he seemed blissfully confident that the courts and the people would understand and support his action, and blissfully unaware of the devastating effect of government and media propaganda on his public image. The roof was soon to cave in on Mordechai.

11 August, 1987
From St. John’s Prison Church, Ashkelon

Dear David Smith,

Thank for your letter and the tape. It was a great and marvellous thing to hear you and to hear your sermon. It gives me great encouragement. Your words and your faith are here with me. All that you say is the real love of God. With your words about the love of God and the union with Christ, I can keep my spirit well and high, and like you I have the love of God in my heart.

This is our binding with Christ. It is going through our heart, and if I and everyone would have the love of the Lord Jesus in his body and in his mind, the spirit of God will walk with him and will be with him in any danger.

I feel that the Lord Jesus is with me here all the time, and I don’t think about my suffering here. I concentrate on my faith and I think about the future. We are in the right way; we are following God and paying the price for doing something good. That is the way of God’s love.

For me, I am happy that God gives me the chance to know Him more. My faith is growing in this suffering and this is the way God treats his sons. I feel this because I am not alone in this cell. God is with me all the time.

God is with everyone who wants him. He is with those who seek him. My words are that the love of God is in our heart and we have to open our mind to it.... If we have the love of God all that we will do is what God wills. This is my faith, my belief, my feeling.

Thank you for your letters. Hello to your friends Wendy, Rowena, Jim, and Michael. It gives me strength to hear from other brothers and sisters. No one can say what will happen, but by God’s will everything will be all right, and I’ll be free soon.

I think that many people understand what I have done. They support it because they know the perils of nuclear arms. I could not deny my obligation to the human race. I believe that we have to do our best for making this world peaceful. God wants us to live in peace and to love one another.

Nuclear weapons are the prohibited arms that they are not allowed to test. Because a nuclear is the end of all the human race. It is not only we who would be going out from this earth; it is also human kind’s future. Everyone can work against the nuclearization of this world without suffering, but I am suffering now because I had the knowledge and I knew of the danger of nuclear holocaust.

I have now received five books of Kierkegaard and I’ll be an expert on his philosophy. One day we will speak as we did before about his philosophy. Say hello to all my friends in St. John’s parish. God guided me to St. John’s and God will help me to come again. However, what I get from the church no one can take it from me.

“Happy is the person who does not feel guilty when he does something he judges is right.” All that I have done is based on faith and humanitarianism.

God love you and help you to act from the love of the holy spirit.

John Morde
Vanunu’s trial, held behind closed doors, had opened and gone into recess when he wrote his next letter, three months later. Campaigning to raise public support for Vanunu, Frs. John McKnight and Steven Gray of St. John’s Church had flown to Israel in a futile attempt to attend the trial and visit their parishioner. Meanwhile, Mordechai’s prison reflections continued to link his conversion to Christianity with his decision to go public with Israel’s nuclear secret.

November 27, 1987

St. John’s Church in Askelon prison

“The God is My Rock and My Refuge” Psalm 9

“When I’m weak then I am strong for this is God’s great gift.”

Dear David Smith,

I received your letter with other letters from John and Steve and pictures from the demonstration in Sydney. I am very sad because they didn’t let me meet Father John and Steve, even without speaking, as I am meeting with Br. Gilbert. But now I know that all that they want is to break my faith, my soul, to separate me from my brothers in Christ. So I have to be more concerned about what they are doing. And be stronger in my faith and keep my faith deep in my heart with me here in my small cell. Jesus is with us all the time in all the world. His spirit is with us and his love strengthens us all the time. Now I have many books about Christianity and about the New Testament and the cassettes. I think that your father brought them to Br. Gilbert. I am reading and listening to those cassettes. It reminded me of St. John’s and I can feel that I am in St. John’s every day. So I can tell you that the spirit of Jesus is with me until we will meet again and we will praise the Lord. I enjoy to hear your sermons. I’ll be happy to receive more cassettes with other prayers and songs. They will keep my mind with Jesus. You or John can send them to Br. Gilbert - Registered.

I heard that you’re going to leave St. John’s next year. What are you going to do and I hope you can keep writing me. Did you finish your study?

I am waiting for next month to resume my trial. Yet we don’t know what that will be but I think that will be good. My prison conditions are yet very bad but the love of God is helping me to bear this hard time.

It was good for me to receive the Holy Spirit in St. John’s and to meet you. I remember our discussing about Jesus Christ. You told me in your house ‘Jesus died for you.’ This message was new for me, but now here I am understanding what it means. This is the ‘love of God’, by his death, by his giving his life for us. This brought to us his love, his spirit, to be with us all the time. By his death he became our saviour. My salvation was to understand this message and to feel it. This is to know HIM. To follow HIM and he dwelling with us. You know all this very well, but I feel it for it is real. God called me to know him and to be his servant and I accept his mission. All what I have done is from my conscience, for I believed all the time I was a believer. Some time I can see myself like Kierkegaard and now I am in the ‘religion stage’. But I started my life with the Jewish religion, but it is the true faith and to the new covenant with Christ. From the beginning I wanted to be a religious man, but I didn’t accept the Jewish religion.

Now I am happy that I found my way back to Jesus, my Father, my God and my strength. I chose to become a Christ believer or God called me. What I want to say is that I did my decision alone by the voice of God who called me in my heart. And the same thing happened with my action against nuclear weapons. From the beginning it has come to me from my belief from inside - my values, my respect for the human being and the human right. And of course everyone knows and understands all about nuclear weapons - the new holocaust that is hanging over our lives. Now after all that happened I can keep carrying my cross and follow Jesus until my freedom day.

I want to thank you and all my sisters and brothers in St. John’s parish for all that you are doing for me and for God. My prayers will be with you all the time. My prayer is ‘since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, live in union with Him, keep your roots deep in Him, build your lives on Him, and become stronger in your faith as you were taught and be filled with thanksgiving.’ Colossians 2:6-7

I hope to receive more letters and cassettes. Say and goodbye to Guy and his wife, Rod and Kim, Gill, Pamela, Marty, Sandy, Francis, Simon, Billy, Francis, Kay and to all whom I forget their names. My regards to all of St. John’s parish. Say goodbye to Alen your wife.

Peace and love from Christ.

Yours in faith,

John Morde
More than a year would pass before David Smith again heard from Vanunu. Now the trial was over. Vanunu had been found guilty of espionage and treason and faced a sentence of 18 years in prison. Nevertheless, he seemed confident that the conviction would be reversed or the sentence greatly reduced on appeal. Yet his writing had begun to take on a tone of resignation. And he missed Brother Gilbert, his priest of two years, who had left Jerusalem to take up another assignment.

28 January, 1989

Dear David and Aline,

Thank you very much for your letter. I was very happy to receive your Christmas card. I hope you had received my letter. I hope you feel good and you have enjoyed your holiday and have moved to the new parish in Miranda.

I feel good and my faith, hope and spirit are very well and strong. Nothing has been changed in my life here. It means that I am succeeding to keep my faith, the love of God and the Holy Spirit is with me and he is with all who believe in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now I am mature in faith. Most of my time here I am using to be very strong in my faith, by reading the New Testament every day in a loud voice and praying and hearing the cassettes that you had sent. I enjoy hearing your sermons about the Holy Spirit, the love of God, and the mission of God. In this way I am the same man you had met and knew. You are in my mind all the time as are all my friends from St. John’s. I am remembering you with great joy and my hope and prayer is that we will meet again in St. John’s church. I know that you are thinking and wanting to help me but the only thing you can do for me is to keep writing and sending letters and cassettes and tell others to do the same.

Now I am waiting for my next appeal to the Supreme Court. I believe that there will be the justice. The judge will say the truth about my case and my sentence will be easier because I was not a spy. And the people here and in all the world have the right to know what their Government has been hiding from them in the nuclear issues. I am not guilty. I did my duty. If I did not have this information, I could not publish it, but God chose those who will do his mission. I believe that I served God’s mission to save the world, to do peace, to make the people aware of the nuclear holocaust. So it does not matter my suffering or what the judges said. No one can change this truth and no one can change my faith and my mind. We have the Lord Jesus whom we have to see and to follow. So be happy because you helped me to know and to be a Christ believer. Jesus is my light, my teacher, my Father, my strength, my saviour, my LORD. I did my job very well. Now I have to keep my faith, to keep my strength and my spirit.

Brother Gilbert has left Jerusalem and now I am waiting to meet the new priest. Gilbert has helped me very well in the last two years. He brought me many good books and cassettes.

Say goodbye to your father, brothers, and all my friends at St. John’s. I’ll keep writing to all my friends, and I hope that they also will keep writing to me.

I would like to receive letters and pictures and cassettes from you, from St. John’s. Write about the new parish and if you want me to write you about anything you may want to know, you can ask.

“Keep on praying for us. We are sure we have a clear conscience because we want to do the right thing at all times. And I beg you even more earnestly to pray that God will send me back to you soon.” My love and my prayer.

Your brother in Christ,

John Morde
Two months later the prisoner remained sure of himself and hopeful of sympathetic treatment by the Supreme Court. He still missed Brother Gilbert.

25 March, 1989

My address: Vanunu M.J., Ashkelon Prison, Ashkelon, ISRAEL

Dear David and Alen,

Thank you very much for your letter, the first letter from your new church. This is my second letter to you to this place. It is very good and great time for me to receive every letter from you. I am not receiving many letters. I hope you feel very well in this new church and God helping you and Alin in all your work. At least you are a free man, not like me. I can and want to do much but I cannot do all that I want to do. My task and my goal now is to succeed to keep my faith and strength in this hardship life. And thanks be to God. I feel very good and my mind and spirit are very well. All this is because I made a decision from my first day in prison that it does not matter what will happen to me or when I'll be free. I want to keep my faith in Jesus Christ and my belief that my action against the nuclear perils in this area was good and worthy. It was not easy until now but I find that if we love Jesus then he loved us. If we want to follow Him, Jesus is with us. Jesus is helping to carry my cross and follow him. And now I am very sure that no one can separate me from Jesus. I have many things to say and write but yet I am not free to express my thoughts. Not about my faith and all that is going on with me here and not about nuclear weapons or about their terrorist action against me. Now I am waiting for the Supreme Court. I hope that the judge there will have the courage to do the justice that the people here and in all the world have the right to know what Israel is doing in the nuclear issue. And that my actions were not spying. I believe the Supreme Court will change all that the first judges said.

I am happy to hear that you are using my case and my letters as an example how to follow Jesus. I want to say that I am an ordinary man but when I understood my mission, I was like the prophet Jonah. I ran away. I wanted to find who is my God and my Lord. Then I found Jesus Christ and when I accepted Him and became Christ’s body, I said here I am. I will follow you and decided to tell to all the world about the things that are going on in Israel, to warn them of the possibility of a nuclear war in the Middle East. First point is that I succeeded in my mission. Second, is that to follow Jesus to believe and to obey his command is not easy. Part of it is suffering, to deny oneself, and in all this to remember all the time that God is with us, never leaves us alone. Because we are Christ’s body, then God’s love and the Holy Spirit is with us.

Now I am talking about my experience, about things that I became aware of in my solitary prison and loneliness. My life in Christ makes me strong and his love gives me comfort, and I am very sure that I can overcome all things until my freedom. This day will come and we can meet again to pray and praise God, with all my friends at St. John’s church.

It will be very good for me to receive cassettes from you because to hear your voice and your thoughts - it will bring me back to St. John’s and to the time that we had there together. John McKnight didn’t send me any cassette since September, ’87, only Br. Gilbert helped me very much. I hope you will meet him. I hope to meet him again.

Say goodbye to your father and your brothers and to Andrey. I have his voice on a cassette from Steve. Keep writing and send cassettes.

God’s love and peace be with you.

With my love,

John Morde
Ten months elapsed, and still there had been no Supreme Court decision. Vanunu remained confident that the outcome would be favorable. In the meantime he would see no visitors except his lawyer and, if he should return, Brother Gilbert. Vanunu was evidently having difficulties with Father Ray, the substitute priest.

28 January, 1990

Dear David and Alen,

I have received your letter with the Kierkegaard sermon, the first one. I was waiting for your Christmas card and the news about your child, but until now it didn’t arrive. I hope you have received my last letter with the Christmas card. I hope you and Alen are well. I feel good. Everything here is the same yet no news about the Supreme Court decision. As you know, I am very optimistic and believe that the justice will be done and I’ll be free. But in spite of it I am here, I am free, free to follow Jesus, free to keep my faith and pray, and to grow in spirituality -things as I wrote to you in the beginning. I can say it again. No one can be able to separate us from the love of Christ.

About Fr. Ray. I did not want to meet anyone until the Supreme Court decision. I am not meeting any one, only my lawyer. Br. Gilbert had met me three times when he was here again.

I enjoy reading the Kierkegaard sermon and I hope you will send more from the book. As I wrote you before, I am not interested only in Kierkegaard but also with other philosophers like Kant, Wittgenstein, Hume, Berkeley, Nietzsche and about Christian minds, Christian faith.

I would like to hear from you more often and to receive more encouragement from you. I’ll never forget you. You are in my mind always and I am praying for you. I think you have done many things for me, but here the thing that I need are letters, books and cassettes. But I will never forget that you have helped me to know and follow Jesus so be happy that I am praising you before Jesus Christ. Without my faith my life can be unbearable. Without Jesus I’ll not have joy, peace and love.

I want you to be good, I want to show you the right way so keep writing and pray for me. My release will be soon and we will meet again to praise God at St. John’s church. Say goodbye to them - your father, brothers, friends. With my love and prayer,

John Morde
Vanunu’s next letter followed two months later. No recent word from the high court, or even from David. But the good news was that Brother Gilbert would be rejoining him soon for Easter prayers.

25 March, 1990

Dear David,

How are you? I hope you are very well and Alen and Veronica. Thank you for the picture and my greeting for your new born baby. I hope she is very well.

This letter is only to tell you that I am very well and nothing has been changed in my life here. I am yet waiting for the Supreme Court decision and thanks be to God his presence is with me by the Holy Spirit. Jesus has never left me, my strength to follow Jesus is always growing. I am praying and reading and doing exercises but what about you? Where are you? I am waiting for your letters. Your last letter is from last December, and you wrote that you were going to send more letters with books and copy from the book by Kierkegaard. I think, even you are very busy yet you can find half an hour every week and write a letter. Just to know that even though we are far away, yet we are one in spirit - that “the Christ in you reigns as the Christ in me.” I’ll keep writing to you and to all my friends. Next month Br. Gilbert will see me and we will pray on Easter day.

Pray that by the holy trinity - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, I’ll be free soon and that justice will be done in my case.

With my prayer and love,

John Morde
Pleased with his first letter from David since December, and joyful over this Easter reunion with Brother Gilbert, Vanunu wrote again in early May, still anxiously awaiting the Supreme Court decision. It was about to come.

10 May, 1990

Dear David,

I have received your letter with your essay on Kierkegaard. Thank you very much. This is your first letter in this year that I have received. I hope you will keep writing me.

I hope you and Aline and Veronica are very well, and you enjoy your work in Miranda.

It is good to know that you have organized a prayer for me with all my friends. I am waiting to receive the cassette of this prayer. Br. Gilbert visited me on May 1.

I feel very well. Yet in isolation. Yet in the same prison’s conditions. More than three and a half years waiting now for the Supreme Court decision. I believe that they will do justice in my case and I’ll be free soon and we will meet again at St. John’s church. You don’t have to come to see me here. Just wait for the Supreme Court decision. I am the same man as you know and remember. Nothing has been taken to change my faith and my belief. I only become more strong and bolder in my faith and love to My Lord Jesus Christ. He is very real here with me, by the Holy Spirit and his love, Jesus is helping to carry my cross. Every day I am living by faith. If Jesus is with me, then no one can be against me. Even my enemies become my friends and my helpers.

Because Jesus said love one another and forgive one another so no matter what will happen, no one can be able to separate us from the love of God. This is my experience here - that even though I lost my freedom, I didn’t lose my spirit, my faith and my belief that I did the good action that a man can do in the nuclear field. To tell to all the world the truth about the dangers of a nuclear war in this country. So I did my job and I succeeded to keep my faith. I hope that you also will keep your faith in me and all my friends and keep writing and sending books on philosophy and theological subjects.

Say goodbye to all my friends and to all who pray for me and ask them to write me.

You and others are in my prayers and my mind every day. Say my greeting to your father and brothers and to Aline.

God’s love be with you always.

With my prayer and love Your brother in Christ,

John Morde
Next, a bomb shell. A bitter Mordechai writes that the Israeli Supreme Court has upheld his conviction and 18-year sentence, rejecting his contention that the Israeli public needed to know about the government’s secret nuclear weapons program. Despite the blow, the prisoner reaffirms his faith in Jesus.

3 June, 1990

Dear David,

I have received you letter No. 1. Thank you very much. I am writing after the Supreme Court decision. They didn’t change anything in my sentence. It is not only that I have received 18 years, but they say that everything is good in the nuclear issue in this country, that the people here don’t have to know anything about nuclear issues. It is not only that they condemn me in spying but said that all my actions were not necessary, and no word about their unlawful action in the way they brought me here. This is the injustice of this democratic country.

All that I can do now is to keep my faith, my strength and hope that one day the justice will be done. I have no doubt that I did the right thing. I believe that as I have succeeded until now to keep my belief in all the hard life, I’ll succeed also in the future. No one can separate me from my faith in Jesus, and no one can change my mind. I believe that Jesus loves me and all who are loving HIM and HE will be with me until the end of my life. I have done the right and Jesus is with me.

Keep writing and pray for my release. Say goodbye to Alen, your Veronica and father, brothers

God’s love be with you.

John Morde

P.S. You can use the letters as you think.
Another blow. Brother Gilbert is dead. Mordechai’s light seems to have gone out. In a letter dated six months later he signs off for the first time with his Jewish birth name.

8 December, 1990

Dear David,

I hope that you have received my Christmas card. I am just writing you to share with you the very, very bad news that Br. Gilbert has died a few days ago. I was very sad to hear about him. He was a real good man, a real true Christ believer and now he has gone. He helped my very much during the years when he has been here. It is real bad news for me, but this is the life. Please pray for him and write me what you did hear about him.

I hope to hear from you soon and receive more books and cassettes.

I include with this letter letters to Pamela Hyde and a letter to Rod and Kim. I don’t have their addresses.

How is your Veronica? I hope you and Aline are and enjoy the Christmas holiday.

Say my greeting to all your friends in St. Luke’s church and to my friends in St. John’s.

God’s love and Grace be with you.

Your brother in Christ

John Morde

Vanunu Mordechai
Just a few weeks later, a new Mordechai Vanunu seems to be emerging from the loss of his appeal and the death of Brother Gilbert. In a New Year’s Day letter he writes disparagingly of Israel as a “religious apartheid” state and promises a legal battle against prison censors, who have refused to let him reveal details of his kidnapping from Italy. He calls himself “the discoverer of the truth.”

1 January, 1991

Dear David Smith, Aline and Veronica,

I have received your Christmas card. Thank you very much. I am receiving all your letters and I am here in the same faith and love in Jesus as in the beginning so now and forever. No one can separate us from the love of Jesus. My faith keeping me very well in this solitary confinement. Here, only my faith is the thing that no one can take from me. Jesus is with me, giving me strength and power to carry my suffering, my isolation. I want you to know that I received 18 years, not because I harmed the security of this country but because they cannot accept in the Jews’ country that a Christian man can do a good thing. My action has to be honored and be an example to all the people, but here first is the religion. It is a country of a religious apartheid, but this unjust verdict cannot change what I have done and what I have published has given it merit. My revelation helped to bring the end of the cold war.

I cannot write more because I am yet in solitary, but my revelation speaks for itself. It will speak until I come again to Sydney.

I feel very well and I am doing sports and reading. I thank you very much for not forgetting me and keeping on praying and writing. I hope you are very well and Aline and Veronica. Say my greeting to your father and brothers. Keep writing me and ask others to write me.

Now I am waiting for an appeal to let me publish my truth about how they brought me here and to change my prison conditions. I hope I’ll write more in the future.

With my prayers and love

The discoverer of the truth

Your brother in Christ

John Morde
A month later, Vanunu remained as defiant, as God-fearing, and as anti-nuclear as before.

26 February, 1991
Nuclear Weapon is not for human hands.
It is God’s weapon.

Dear David,
I hope you are receiving my letters. I’ll keep writing you and my hope is that you are very well and doing well in your work and ministry. Say my greeting to Aline, Veronica, and your father and brothers.
I feel very well, keeping myself in good mind and body and with Jesus Christ every thing can be very good. Here almost four and a half years in solitary confinement and yet the same man. No matter what had and what will happen. This is my way. This is the proof that I know what I did and who I am. I am a Christ believer and a man of and for peace, and no matter what they have done to me here I will keep my way. The unhuman and unjustice that they did until now, doesn’t change the truth in what I published. I am writing the same thing all the time for four years.
You can and have nothing to do for my release. All that you have to do is to keep writing and praying until we will meet again at St. John’s church. Together we will praise and give thanks to Jesus Christ for his love and his spirit that is helping us in every way to find our way for doing good for all the world and for ourselves. I have many things to write and to say but now I am waiting that my life here will be changed soon or be free. I’ll write more in the next letter.
Say goodbye to all my friends and write about everyone.
The great message that I have for you is
“that no one can separate us from the love of God, that is in Christ Jesus”
Your brother in Christ,
John Morde
Vanunu Mordechai
A month later, Vanunu seems to have settled into his life of prison isolation. He writes about eventually taking up a religious career in Australia, expresses mixed feelings about a recently published book on his case, “Trial and Error,” written by his friend John McKnight, rector of St. John’s Church. Meanwhile, David Smith has made another move, accepting the rectorship of Holy Trinity Church in Dulwich Hill, a Sydney suburb.

8 March, 1991

Dear David,

Thank you very much for your last letter, 15 Feb. It is very encouraging to know that you are praying for me and remembering me very well, and that you want to help me in this solitary confinement. Yet I am in the same conditions, not able to write all that I want to say, but I am succeeding very well to keep my faith and my mind very strong. This is my way to teach those who are trying to silence me and separate me from all the world. I hope you feel very well, and that Alice and Veronica are enjoying the new place in Dulwich Hill. I hope you will like it.

I would like to receive a cassette with the full Sunday service, and to know more about your work at the university. I have received a letter from Jennifer Lumsden. She wrote me that you will be in her class in the university. Tell her thank you for her letter.

How did you know that my Christmas card came from Virginia Houston? I didn’t hear from her for two years and I don’t know who she is. I didn’t receive anything from her about “doing a licentiate in theology in prison.” It will not be possible at all, but I would like to receive books and anything that can help me to prepare myself to be a priest or to study theology when I am free. I am very interested to learn theology and other subjects when I am free. So, the good thing to do now is to send books and papers and cassettes that I can learn and develop my knowledge and prepare myself for the time when I come back to Australia.

I have read the book by John. It is not bad, but it could be better. There is much disinformation about me. The good thing is that he published part of my letters. If you have read it, write and tell me what you think about it. Say goodbye to all my friends, your father and your brothers. Did my letters get to Rod and Kim, and Pamela? Keep writing and typing letters. I’ll write again soon.

If you can, send me cassettes with Christian music and songs.

Your brother in Christ,

John Morde
A month later, Vanunu still clings to his Christian faith and remains confident of winning his legal battle against prison censorship and for better prison conditions. Returning to an earlier practice, he signs off with both his original name as well as the Christian-Jewish compound, “John Morde.”

5 April, 1991
By the cross I broke this solitary.

Dear David and Alan,

I hope you have received my letters, and I hope that you are very well, that Alice and Veronica are well, and that you are enjoying your work in the church and your study in the university. How are your father and brothers? I hope to hear more from you about all the things that have changed in your life in the last months.

I feel very well, and my spirit, mind, and body are very strong as in the beginning. I am keeping my faith and love in Jesus every day by prayer and reading the gospels and doing exercise. I am running every day but am still in solitary. There is no change in my prison condition, but I am stronger than ever in my belief, and my faith is very deep in Jesus Christ. I am waiting for the Supreme Court to give the freedom of speech, then many things will be changed. Now I am meeting the priest here, Ray Barakloff. He took the place of Gilbert, praying with me on Sunday and bringing me holy communion. Have you read the book by John McKnight? Are you receiving letters from him? I am not receiving his letters.

I want to tell you that the most important thing for a man is his faith, his belief. No matter where we are and what conditions there will be, if we have faith and believe as I have in Jesus Christ, all that others do or any problem will be broken on our faith, on our prayers, on the cross of Jesus. This is my strength, my encouragement every day. I cannot write all that happens to me in this letter. The point is, after all, that I am the same man with the important things that I have, and always I am giving thanks and praise to Jesus Christ for helping me, through you and others, to become a believer in Christ. So you can sleep well because Jesus Christ is hearing good words about you from me. If there is no more you can do for my release, you could send Christian music, books, and anything else you want to send.

So goodbye to all your friends, and, my friend, send a Sunday morning prayer for me from the new church. Jesus said, “I’ll not leave you alone. I’ll be with you to the end of the age.”

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Your brother in Christ,

John Morde, Vanunu Mordechai
The letter David Smith received two months later was the last that would come in three-and-a-half years. It gave no hint that Mordechai was about to go into a deep, self-imposed seclusion.

8 June, 1991
In solitary with Jesus

Dear David,

I hope you have received my last letter. I have received all your letters. I want to write you more frequently, but there are yet Problems because I am still in solitary confinement with no change. The judge will give his verdict soon; things must change sooner or later. The most important thing is that I have not changed. I am the same man whom you knew from St. John’s Church. Now I am even more strong in my faith, in my belief, and very sure in what I have done. In my time here I have learned more and more about my revelation and that it was very important for all the world. Not many people can realise and understand how these revelations are most crucial for the end of the cold war and the beginning of a new era. When I am free I’ll explain to you and others all the implications of this story. Now I am trying to keep myself knowing and learning more about the gospels and the way of Jesus. I am praying and reading the gospel every day, keeping myself in the love of Jesus.

I am meeting Reverend Ray every fourth Sunday. He told me he has received a letter from you. I have not received any letters from John or Gill. Give my thanks to Bill Lawton for publishing my letter in the ‘Crossway’. I wrote him a few letters but have not received his letter. I hope you, Alice, and Veronica are very well I want to hear more from you about your life in the parish and your studies. I want you to send more cassettes of Sunday prayers and hymns. Give my greeting to your father and brothers. I want to write more but I can wait until my prison will change.

With my prayers and love, your brother in Christ,
John Morde, Vanunu Mordechai
5 February, 1995

Dear David Smith,

I have received all your letters and heard about your marriage again. I am happy for you, and hope that now your life is again going very well. I don’t think that it is a coincidence that you, Steve, and John had separated from your former wives.

About me there is no change. Everything is the same, except that my belief and faith has suffered a great weakness. I am not practicing any religious things, and am no longer interested in faith and religion. This life in prison cannot make a man more religious. The hard life here sends a message to believe only in material things and to be more earthly. However, I am still a Christian. This is my identity.

Please send my greetings to Francis; I have received his letters, and I am still waiting to come back to meet you. Please keep writing.

Yours in peace,
Vanunu Mordechai, J.C.

What did “J.C.” mean? The initials stood for John Crossman, the Christian name Vanunu had assumed in Australia in 1986. His new still there for identification, but now it had been reduced to an appendage to the more famous name by which much of the world had come to know him. It wasn’t just the name that had changed.
19 April, 1995

Dear David Smith,

I have received your letter and your book. Thank you. As I wrote you in my first letter this year, I have decided to concentrate only on the subject of those who sentenced me as a spy. After more than 3,000 days in this solitary confinement, I am still living in a grave, waiting and waiting for this state to do justice, to give me back my human rights. I am waiting for Israel to reveal that truth that I was not a spy. Israel itself is a (CENSORED) state and the Archspy is Mr. Peres, the man who received last year the Nobel Peace Prize. Peres is the man who was Prime Minister when he authorized the (CENSORED) so Peres is the criminal and the man who should be put in jail for all his life; for all the crimes that he has committed in the last 40 years. These are the subjects that interest me now, to reveal the truth about (CENSORED) Peres. He is the man who (CENSORED) from the U.S. by a Jewish spy Pollard. That is what he has done from the beginning when he built the Dimona nuclear reactor, and when I (CENSORED) not only the (CENSORED) but also the (CENSORED) and put me in solitary confinement.

The real reason for this solitary is to make me into a fundamentalist religious man like all the Islamic groups here in the Middle East. Peres and Israel’s security service are those who are to blame for the rise of Khomenism in Iran, and they created the Hamas and Jihad movements to export the Islamic terrorism to the U.S., to convince the Washington politicians that the only democratic country is Israel. Their main allies are Israel, and by keeping me in solitary for revealing this truth is undemocratic; by not signing the N.P.T. [Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty] Israel is not democratic. (CENSORED) is a criminal dictatorship state, and those criminals Peres and Rabin want to silence me by engaging me with religious prayers, the same as their are doing to all the Arabs. They portray them as religious fundamentalists, while the truth is that the Jews here in Israel are the real religious fundamentalists. They still believe that they are a superior race here in Israel, and that the Arabs are second class. The Arabs don’t have equal rights. This is the reason why Israel doesn’t want a real peace, because they don’t want to give equal rights to the Arab peoples. That is the reason for Israel wanting to keep its racial superiority by force over all the Arabs. And to justify it they need Islamic fundamentalism.

So I stopped being interested in religion, and I stopped reading religious books. I also revealed that more than 50 per cent of the church establishment is working with the security service.

Mr. David Smith, don’t be afraid. This is very true and this is the heritage from the Cold War, from the war against Communism.

The security services in all the world are controlling and guiding all the religious organisations. You must face this truth. At least they don’t send Anglican Christians to commit terrorist acts like here in Israel. They use the religious groups for the most atrocious actions.

You can keep on praying and preaching, but not me. I need to preach my good news against the nuclear weapons, to reveal the truth about the holocaust of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Another war crime was done by the U.S.: they tested nuclear weapons at the end of the war on human life. They wanted to know the results of uranium and plutonium on human beings, and the result of this successful testing is the spread of nuclear weapons to the major powers and other poor countries like India and Pakistan, Brazil, Argentina, by the security services of the U.S., England and France, not by Russian Communists.

These things are my concern now and in my freedom, I want to write to you more about these subjects, and more about security services using religious people in their games....

I wish you and Veronica and Angela health and happiness.

(Y include a letter to Meir and make a copy of this letter for Meir)

Yours in peace,

Vanunu Mordechai J.C

* Jesus rose from the grave after 3 days, : have lived in this grave 3,003 day plus.

** There are more security service people inside the church than there are lesbians and homosexuals. The security services are the enemy of the democratic system and the enemy of the church!
No longer the humble student, Vanunu had turned the table on his old friend and mentor, lecturing him about the ways of the world, goading him with accusations, even mocking church teachings. He now saw the church he once loved as the pawn of insidious ‘international security services’. But that was just the beginning. A few months later came a letter bristling with speculation about betrayal, assassination, and other conspiracies. It was as if Smith were hearing from a stranger.

19 July, 1995

Dear David Smith,

I hope you have received my previous letter and you have understood it, and that it helps you to understand more about my case and about the security services who are controlling our lives. I include here a letter to Meir. I have received a letter and book from Francis. The book is ‘War and Peace’. I have received this book four times, and a letter from Meir.

Nothing here has changed. I am still in solitary and now, after nine years in solitary they still don’t want to set me free. Instead they play games. They allow me to use the phone to my family only once a month. This doesn’t give me anything, so I decided not to use any phone until I am out of this solitary.

I wanted to have a computer. They allowed me to use one of their computers but not my own. So I am not dealing with this authority on anything.

About the French nuclear test, one of their main reasons is they don’t need any nuclear tests; all they want is to send to Australia all the anti-nuclear activists from Europe so they are far away. All the world is dismantling their nuclear weapons, and there is no use for nuclear weapons because all the enemies have disappeared, and no one is producing any nuclear weapons. So it is only another game by the cartel security services.

About faith and religion: I stopped reading and praying, but I am still keeping my identity as a Christian. My faith became weaker since the death of Father Gilbert, my first priest here. I believe that he and David Penman, the Melbourne Archbishop, had been murdered by the cartel security services. Their specialty is to cause heart disease and heart attack. That is what they are trying to do to me during the last nine years, and what they have succeeded in doing to my prosecutor, Ozzy Hason. Last year he died from a heart attack. It may be because he cooperated with the security service in cheating and lying to the court, my judges.

I don’t want to hurt you, but I have to share with you some of my thoughts: that John McKnight and Ray Baraklow and your Father Bruce and your brother Andrew are cooperating with the security services cartel. This is the truth. I am very confident of it. Do you know that John McNnight was not so enthusiastic to baptize me in spite of my readiness to be a Christian so Steve did it? Only you were eager to explain and answer my questions about the Christian faith.

Your father was not very interested in me when you presented me to him in St. John’s when he had come to St John’s one Sunday to preach. I think that they had received some false information about me from the security services cartel, such as that I am a Communist, or that I am a double spy. Some false information that they weren’t sure about was my sincerity and my simple interest in the Christian faith. I want you to ask your father and ask him to tell you only the truth about all of this.

This year I am writing to express what I have in my mind, and I still have many things to say about all that happened to me since my story began in this matter. The security services are involved. I am not saying anything bad about your father and your brother but that is the truth, and there are many who work for security services, and they don’t know that they are harming others, and sometimes they believe that they are helping them. But the reality is that they are harming others, like those who helped Gilbert Sinden have a heart attack.

I want you to know more about the real world in the nuclear age, or the real democratic state. What really has happened is that the book “1984” by George Orwell is real and here now, and not in any Communist regime that has disappeared. The security services are the real government and they use the media to control the masses. It is not easy to explain all this in a few lines.

At least I hope you are happy and enjoying your life, and I’ll be very glad to be in your wedding, but make sure that she is really loving you! What happened with your ex-wife Alice? Where is she? Has she married again? Is she still in Australia?

I want you to write me about my brother Meir, only things you know and see about him. When I am free, I’ll come to see you but I am not going to live in Australia. I’ll live in the U.S....

Yours in peace,

Vanunu, Mordechai J.C.
Who was this stranger? And what had happened in those three-and-a-half years of silence to shake his faith so utterly? Or had Mordechai merely found a new straw to clutch in his desperate resistance to the torture of unending solitary confinement? David Smith wrote back, hoping somehow to retrieve the old bond.

19 November, 1995

Dear David Smith,

I have received your letter and I am very happy to hear from you and to know that there are others in Australia who are interested in my fate. I read about Suzanna York visiting Australia; my brother Meir now has left for the U.S. Now after nine years in solitary confinement there is yet no change and my life is the same.

As I wrote in my previous letters I am less interested in religious things, but I am keeping my identity as a Christian. I am more interested in reading and writing on the nuclear weapons proliferation around the world, and about the real role of the security services in this age. As I wrote you before, I am still under very heavy psychological brainwashing by Israel’s security services with all the media and with the help of England’s and France’s security services, by the BBC and V.O.A. [Voice of America] radio.

There is too much suffering and too much psychological brain washing, and no one can help me, and no one can understand why all this is happening, and the church has lost its power to do anything that is not according to the security services who are the real power, who govern the church, like all the peace organisations. At least those who are working in the church like you must know and understand where the church is now standing.

All that the church can now do is, if not to influence the events, at least to understand them, to preach the truth about those who are the real power in this age, those who are controlling the masses by their control of all the media; and the truth about the use of this power is not for peace and not according to any moral code. It is not the journalists or the workers in the TV news, but those behind the scenes. These are the ones responsible for the brain-washing, those who are also controlling the church and those who are now preaching the good news, not the church.

So if the church wants to exist in the future and have anything to do, it must start revealing those truths about the rule of the security services in controlling the media and to start preaching against all the security services with its secrets. They have no right to exist after the end of all the wars and the disappearing of all the enemies, and the church must preach against and lead all the world against nuclear weapons in every state, to put a plan out with a timetable for this task, with all the churches around to achieve it, and to ban nuclear weapons as unlawful weapons.

To take this power from the hands of that evil security service, not just to preach but to succeed in a reasonable time to free the world from the hostage of the nuclear weapons poised against all the world. Without nuclear weapons, no security services would need to exist, and the world could be free to make peace and prosperity.

If I am in prison and kidnapped and yet there is no peace in the Middle East, it is a result of the help Israel received from other security services like England, France and even Australia. They are cooperating with Israel; in this age with all the satellites and technology it is very easy. They are working like a world government, but because all their work is in secret, they are cheating each other and no one knows the truth, who is cheating whom.

Like all that had happened during the Cold War, when England, France and Israel cheated Germany, Japan and even the CIA, and if they did this, why not cheat also the church? Until this day is there any priest who knows all their work? NO. Can the church work as a spy organisation? NO. The world has been changed many times, and many things have been invented that are dealing in influencing the mind, the brain of a human being. The world is in change all the time, and the religious people must find new answers to this problem.

This is a very big question that I don’t know how to answer. So I have become more interested in the nuclear weapons proliferation and security services’ dirty works, with all their secrets, and in human rights and the democratic system, and understanding the real history of the last 50 years, the Cold War. Those things I can deal with. I can try to contribute from my experience of nine years under the minds of those spies who are the real government of this age.

I want to wish you a very happy new year, and merry Christmas, and for an end of my punishment here, to be free again.

Yours sincerely,
Vanunu Mordechai J.C.
Postscript

by Sam Day

Well into his 12th year of solitary confinement at this writing, Vanunu continues to inveigh against nuclear weapons and against sinister conspiracies woven by the global security services cartel and its infiltration into every aspect of human life. He writes no more about the gospel, or the power of prayer, or his faith in Jesus Christ. But a cross still adorns a wall of his lonely cell, as it has from the start.

David Smith did not receive another letter from Vanunu for almost two years – a lengthy tome written in the same vein as before. He has not received another letter from him since. Smith though persists in writing to Vanunu, and intends to continue writing on a monthly basis until he is finally released.

In October, 1996, at an international conference chaired by British physicist Joseph Rotblat, 1995 Nobel peace prize laureate, in Tel Aviv. nuclear weapons experts from the United States and Britain testified that release of Mordechai Vanunu could not conceivably threaten Israeli national security because what information he may still have is minimal, obsolete, or already well known.

Mordechai Vanunu has himself been nominated for the Nobel peace prize on an almost yearly basis since his kidnapping. Indeed, he has been embraced as a hero by numerous high-profile peace activists including Daniel Ellsberg (whose leaking of the Pentagon papers he ped stop the Vietnam War), Grahame Green, Harold Pinter, Susannah York, and the band U2.

Organisations who have been calling for the release of Mordechai Vanunu on humanitarian grounds include Amnesty International, the European Parliament, the International Peace Bureau, the Federation of American Scientists, a human rights task force of the American Physical Society, the American Friends Service Committee, the Jewish Peace Fellowship, and the Episcopal Peace Fellowship.

In April 1998, after years of international pressure, Mordechai Vanunu was allowed out of solitary confinement to mix with the normal prison population. According to his family, he has been having a fair degree of difficulty adjusting to ‘normal’ social life, and it is not clear at this stage whether he will ever be restored to full emotional and psychological health. He still has another 6 years of his prison sentence left to serve.

U.S. CAMPAIGN TO FREE MORDECHAI VANUNU
2206 Fox Avenue
Madison, WI 53711
Phone/fax 1 608 257 4764

AUSTRALIAN CAMPAIGN TO FREE MORDECHAI VANUNU

c/St John’s Kings Cross
120 Darlinghurst Road
Darlinghurst
NSW 2010
Afterword

by David Smith

Morde’s early letters always carried a resounding tone of triumph. He had completed the mission that God had given him to do. He had ‘fought the good fight, run the good race’, etc. His suffering was very real, yet the depth of his conviction - that he had fulfilled God’s calling upon him - was something that gave him tremendous strength.

Unfortunately the other side of that tremendous confidence was Morde’s blatantly naïve belief that God would make clear to the whole world the value and the validity of what he had done. Morde would therefore be found innocent at the trial, and would be allowed to return home to his friends and Christian family who were waiting for him in Sydney.

I do believe in miracles, and I was indeed praying constantly at the time for such a miraculous outcome to Morde’s trial. Twelve years later I’m still praying. Still, no miracle. Morde though, it seems, has stopped praying. In his own words: ‘This life in prison cannot make a man more religious.’ This seems a fitting, if somewhat understated, summary of the effects of prolonged isolation on the human soul and psyche.

It has been twelve years since I first met the man, and shared coffee and philosophy with him in the church yard in King’s Cross. It has been almost that long since he was kidnapped and taken to an Israeli prison. Over that time a lot has happened to me.

I moved on from the church at Kings Cross of course. I completed my studies. I was deaconed and then priested. I was moved from one church to another. For the last eight years I have been working as a Parish Priest in Dulwich Hill - one of Sydney’s inner-western suburbs. Over that time I have lost most of my old acquaintances. I have made plenty of new ones. I have been through a marriage breakdown. I have been divorced, and, more recently, remarried. I have two daughters now – Veronica, who is nine, and Imogen, who has just turned one.

My time nowadays is mostly taken up with church and family and working with young people with heroin problems, which is pretty much the norm for teenagers in this area. As a part of that work I teach young people to box and to wrestle. Indeed, in the last few years I have done plenty of boxing and wrestling myself. I have fought for a title in kickboxing. I have boxed professionally to raise money for our Youth Centre. I have met some amazing people through this and have had some incredible experiences.

My point is simply this: over the ten year span represented by these letters, my life moved forwards. Surely it was turned upside-down, twisted and tossed around, and terribly painful at times, but it was full. When I think of Morde, the opposite is true. In those ten years his life went nowhere. For all those years Morde lived exactly the same life in exactly the same little cell all day, every day - day in and day out! Nothing ever changed. He could write of things that had happened ten or twelve years earlier as if they had happened yesterday because for him they had happened yesterday. The present and the past just merge into one painful blur. I cannot begin to imagine what this has been like. I can only see the effect - that it has destroyed much of the man I once knew.

Now, of course, Morde has finally been released from his isolation, but he is far from free. Not only is his body still in prison, but all reports thus far are that his mind appears to still be thoroughly ‘confined’. Ten years of solitary had to take its toll. I have no idea whether Morde will ever be capable of a full physical, mental and spiritual recovery.

I yearn for you Morde my friend, as a man yearns for his lost brother. How I wish I could be with you. How I wish you could be here with me! I continue to pray for you my friend. May God grant you now that which we have been praying for over these many years –your freedom and peace.
How Can I support Mordechay, and prisoners of conscience world-wide?

1. **Write to Mordechay**  
   Mr Mordechay Vanunu  
c/Ashkelon Prison  
Ashkelon, Israel

2. **Write to the authorities in Israel, asking for Mordechay's release**  
   Prime Minister Ehud Barak  
3 Kaplan Street  
Hakirya, Jerusalem 91007  
Israel

3. **Make a donation to the international Vanunu support Group**  
   U.S. Campaign to Free Mordechay Vanunu  
2206 Fox Avenue,  
Madison, WI 53711  
U.S.A.

4. **Join your local Vanunu support group**  
   Contact the Australian group through me: Father-Dave@death-star.com  
For the U.S. group, or find out about other national bodies, contact Sam Day:  
samday@chorus.com or visit the website: www.nonviolence.org/vanunu

5. **Join Amnesty International**  
   Start with their website: www.amnesty.org