



# laetus in praesens

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15 April 2019 | Draft

## Trial of Julian Assange – Who is the Pontius Pilate of Easter 2019?

### In dramatic anticipation of emergence of a Church of Julian

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Produced to commemorate the arrest and indictment of Julian Assange (London, 11 April 2019). The subsequent development of the argument is presented separately (*Crowdsourcing Just Punishment for Julian Assange -- in faithful Christian retribution for daring to speak truth to power*, 2020) with a separate indication of web resources (*Extradition and Trial of Julian Assange: web resources*, 2020).

### Dramatisation?

The ejection of [Julian Assange](#) from his refuge of seven years in the Embassy of Ecuador in London in the Easter week of 2019, followed immediately by his [arrest by UK authorities](#), offers the occasion for extensive commentary. Many will celebrate that event in terms of [due legal process](#), many will deplore it as inappropriate -- given the truths of global significance whose dissemination he enabled through [WikiLeaks](#) (*Explainer: what charges does Julian Assange face, and what's likely to happen next?* *The Conversation*, 12 October 2019; John Pilger, *The Assange Arrest is a Warning From History*, *CounterPunch*, 12 April 2019; Ylenia Gostoli, *What the 'pursuit of Assange' means for press freedom*. *Al Jazeera*, 13 April 2019; *The Observer view on extraditing Julian Assange*, *The Guardian*, 14 April 2019).

How better to complement these more conventional commentaries than with a reflection on the drama of the situation in the light of the inspiring story for Christians associated with Easter -- with which the arrest has been so coincidentally timed? One justification for that framing is offered by the perspective of an international lawyer ([John Whitehead](#), *From Jesus Christ to Julian Assange: when Dissidents become Enemies of the State*, *Information Clearing House*, 17 April 2019). The argument here is also supported by the view of Church leaders (Patsy McGarry, *Current attitudes to truth are similar to those of Pontius Pilate, church leaders say*, *The Irish Times*, 10 April 2017).

How then to consider the dynamics of the situation as a drama? Who is taking on the Easter roles -- as periodically considered in [Oberammergau](#), known for its 380-year tradition of [Easter Passion Plays](#) every ten years, and for its [NATO School](#)? Could Assange's legal difficulties in Sweden be understood to derive from a "passion play"? Who are then the [dramatis personae](#), as in any play? Clearly in revisiting the original Christian drama, there is a case for imaginative creativity and poetic licence. The elements of the narrative, and its actors, call for reinterpretation, however controversial -- to engender a new story with elements as offensive to the practice of human values as that of Easter.

**Pontius Pilate?** If it is Julian Assange who is the focus of the legal process, who then is to be understood as taking on the key role of [Pontius Pilate](#) in service to that process? Potential Christian candidates positioning themselves for that role, are the following -- especially in light of the comments they have already made:

- [Donald Trump](#) (President of the USA):
  - *I know nothing about WikiLeaks; US Seeks Assange Extradition* (*Voice of America*, 12 April 2019)
  - Zoe Daniel: *Donald Trump, who praised WikiLeaks 141 times, now has 'no opinion' on Julian Assange* (*ABC News*, 12 April 2019)
  - Rebecca Hill: *Uncle Sam charges Julian Assange with conspiracy to commit computer intrusion* (*The Register*, 11 Apr 2019)
  - *Trump washes his hands like Pontius Pilate on Assange "I was joking, I never meant I love Wikileaks"* (*European Union Times*, 15 April 2019)
- [Theresa May](#) (Prime Minister of the UK):
  - *I am sure that the whole House will welcome the news this morning that the Metropolitan Police have arrested Julian Assange... This goes to show that in the United Kingdom no one is above the law.* (*Julian Assange: what happens next?* *Brisbane Times*, 12 April 2019)
- [Lenín Moreno](#) (President of Ecuador):
  - *Julian Assange evicted from Ecuadorian embassy for 'spoiled brat' behaviour, President Lenín Moreno says* (*ABC News*, 12 April 2019)

- Dan Collyns: *'Rude, ungrateful and meddling': why Ecuador turned on Assange* (*The Guardian*, 12 April 2019)
- *Mr. Assange has violated the agreement we reached with him and his legal counsel too many times* ( Kevin Sieff, Arelis R. Hernández and Gabriela Martínez, *In Ecuador, Assange's expulsion reflects desire for better relations with the U.S.*, *The Washington Post*, 11 April 2019)
- *Mr. Moreno accused Mr. Assange of installing electronic distortion equipment in the embassy, blocking security cameras, confronting and mistreating guards and gaining access to security files without permission.* (Nicholas Casey and Jo Becker, *As Ecuador Harbored Assange, It Was Subjected to Threats and Leaks*, *The New York Times*, 12 April 2019)
- Prime Minister of Australia (Scott Morrison, Julia Gillard, Kevin Rudd):
  - Paul Gregoire: *The Australian Government Abandoned Assange Long Ago* (*Lexology: Sydney Criminal Lawyers*, 26 April 2019)
  - *He'll get that consular assistance as you'd expect him to, but he will have to make his way through whatever comes his way in terms of the justice system there* (Michael Koziol and Latika Bourke, *Julian Assange "won't get any special treatment": Scott Morrison* (*The Canberra Times*, 12 April 2019)
  - *It's got nothing to do with us, it is a matter for the US* (*Aust govt opposes Assange death penalty*, *The Senior*, 12 April 2019)
  - *Australian prime minister dismisses renewed calls to defend Julian Assange* (Mike Head, *World Socialist Web Site*, 8 November 2018)
  - *Gillard does a 'Pontius' on Assange* (*Cleaves*, 3 February 2011)
- Pope Francis:
  - No comment, as yet -- faced as he is by the multitude of forms of **sexual abuse by the clergy** worldwide, and the consequence for the credibility of the faithful (*Petition to Pope Francis for Julian Assange*, *Indymedia Ireland*, 34 August 2018; *Free Julian Assange: an ill prisoner who has no rights*, *Change.org*)
- Hillary Clinton (US Presidential candidate):
  - *Julian Assange must answer for what he has done* (*The Guardian*, 13 April 2019)
- Marianne Ny (Director of Swedish Public Prosecution Authority):
  - Consideration is being given to re-opening the case against Assange regarding rape allegations
- Michael Snow (Westminster District Judge):
  - Simon Murphy: *Assange branded a 'narcissist' by judge who found him guilty* (*The Guardian*, 12 April 2019)
  - Shafi Musaddique: *UK judge calls Julian Assange 'narcissist' as journalists pack court room* (*The National*, 11 April 2019)
  - Alistair Smout: *Out of the embassy, straight into custody: Assange's court hearing* (*Reuters*, 11 April 2019)
  - *Impartial trial? UK judge brands Julian Assange 'narcissist' in courtroom* (*RT*, 11 April 2019)

**Rhetorical framings as a drama:** From the start, others have referred rhetorically to WikiLeaks events as a "drama", but without framing its dimensions as such:

- *Julian Assange: Dramatic details of WikiLeaks founder's arrest* (*The Daily Mail*, 13 April 2019)
- *Assange stressed as embassy drama unfolds* (*Illawarra Mercury*, 6 April 2019)
- *A New Twist in the Assange Drama* (*The New York Times*, 22 May 2017)
- Kyle Smith: *Wikileaks drama a dreary focus in 'The Fifth Estate'* (*New York Post*, 17 October 2013)
- John McCallum: *Drama of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange loses its way in a play within a play* (*The Australian*, 4 July 2011)
- Andrew Hough: *WikiLeaks: how the Julian Assange court drama has unfolded* (*The Telegraph*, 15 December 2010)
- Bill Brenner: *The WikiLeaks drama: a timeline* (*CSO*, 9 December 2010).

**Exploration as a psychodrama?** Previous reflections in more specific dramatic terms, to elicit more fundamental learnings, include:

- *WikiLeaks and the First Global Condom War: political awakening through asymmetric psychodrama: US versus Assange* (2010)
  - Myth and psychodrama
  - Cast and plot
  - Secrecy vs. Freedom of information
  - Confidence domination: "condom"
  - Confidence domains and psychoactive debate
  - Dramatic intercourse
  - Dramatic claims for justice
  - Prejudgement, revenge, assassination and conspiracy
  - Dramatic doublespeak
  - Espionage and emasculation of office
  - Dramatic mirroring and enantiomeria
- *Would Jesus Now be Prosecuted by US? As a law-breaker -- like Manning, Assange and Snowden -- Yes we can!* (2013)
  - Legality of the trial of Jesus
  - Controversial interpretations of justice
  - Precedence of property protection over emergence of truth
  - Embodiment of transcendental truth
  - Achieving simplicity in a world of complexity
  - Disclosure of truth as endangering lives
  - Recognizing the unknown and the unimaginable
  - Whistleblowers: responsibilities and persecution

- Historical legacy of Barack Obama: Pontius Pilatus XXI?
  - Extraterrestrial and extratemporal challenges of the future?
- *Mirroring Global Moral Equivalence: US contra Julian Assange versus China contra Liu Xiaobo* (2010)

As previously argued, myth provides a degree of coherence for many which "rational" discourse can no longer provide for any but the few (*Relevance of Mythopoeic Insights to Global Challenges*, 2009; *The "Dark Riders" of Social Change: a challenge for any Fellowship of the Ring*, 2002; *Enacting Transformative Integral Thinking through Playful Elegance*, 2010). Understanding the fall of the USSR merits exploration in dramatic terms (*Gorbachev as Dramaturge: lessons on social transformation for international organizations*, 1992).

**Justification from an imperial perspective?** As with Imperial Rome, the USA proudly defends many disputed official initiatives as being lawful. These include [extraordinary rendition](#), [imprisonment without trial](#), [enhanced interrogation](#), [targeted assassination](#), and [invasive surveillance of privacy](#). They are all framed as legitimate measures of self-defence.

Their legitimacy has been questioned from a wider perspective, notably by Larry Siems (*The Torture Report: what the documents say about America's post-9/11 torture program*, 2012) and by Philippe Sands (*Lawless World: America and the Making and Breaking of Global Rules*, 2005; *Torture Team: Rumsfeld's Memo and the Betrayal of American Values*, 2008). The matter has been considered before the [Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Tribunal](#), based on the Nuremberg Charter (Deborah Dupre, *Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld war criminals verdict Enforcement Phase begins US War Crimes*, *Examiner.com*, 15 May 2012; Yvonne Ridley, *Bush Convicted of War Crimes in Absentia*, *Foreign Policy Journal*, 12 May 2012).

Given the possible fate of Julian Assange within the US legal system for having allegedly endangered the lives of agents worldwide, it is appropriate to compare that eventuality with the [house arrest](#) of [Lieutenant William Calley Jr](#), the only person convicted for the *My Lai Massacre* in Vietnam. Between 347 and 504 unarmed people were killed by a U.S. Army platoon.

The previous effort to imagine the *Historical legacy of Barack Obama: Pontius Pilatus XXI?* (2013), as mentioned above, considered how Barack Obama was embodying the role of Pontius Pilate in the ongoing drama regarding the higher truths to which Manning-Assange-Snowden appeal and give expression. Given that Donald Trump might now be understood to have taken on that role, he can clearly best play out the role of Pilate by maximizing the sense of injustice through emphasizing the legality of the proceedings deployed. The vindictive pretrial initiatives with respect to each of them already makes ever more clearly evident the vacuous nature of the appeals to the letter of the ("Christian") law by which it is hoped to prosecute them -- if their assassinations are not otherwise ensured.

**Envisaging other elements in the dramatic tale?** Given its potential global symbolic significance, possibilities might include:

- dramatic possibilities of profound significance are of course offered by the cultivation of any symbolic confusion between "Assange as Jesus" and "Assange as Judas" -- the systemic function of which he is accused in the USA
- a new dramatic twist to the rape accusation currently reframed by [Elisabeth Massi Fritzi](#) about which the Swedish Public Prosecutor has been so attentive? (Adam Taylor, *"I'm fighting for her rights to be remembered": Lawyer for Swedish woman who accused Assange wants case reopened*, *The Washington Post*, 12 April 2019). Such possibilities are all the greater given the lobbying of UK MPs (*Julian Assange 'must face Swedish justice' if country asks, say MPs*, *BBC News*, 13 August 2019; Jessica Elgot, Jon Henley, Matthew Weaver and Owen Bowcott, *Give priority to Julian Assange rape claim, home secretary urged*, *The Guardian*, 12 April 2019).
- inspired by the iconoclastic approach of *Monty Python*, and given the origins of the Biblical tale culminating at Easter, could "Mary" then be framed as having been "interfered with", non-consensually, by the Holy Ghost -- now widely featured as an internet meme? (Katie Yoder, *No, God Did Not Rape the Virgin Mary*, *Catholic Vote*, 13 December 2018; Holly Scheer, *God Raped Mary, and other insane reactions to Christmas this year*, *The Fedralist*, 12 December 2018; Leah MarieAnn Klett, *Robert Jeffress blasts professor's accusation that God raped Mary as 'blasphemous babble'*, *The Christian Post*, 8 December 2018; Karen Swallow Prior, *'Let It Be': Mary's Radical Declaration of Consent*, *The Atlantic*, 24 December 2012). Could cultivation of the tale of such interference be interpreted as an archetypal Christian influence on the status of women (Mark Townsend, *Failure to extradite Assange to Sweden would endorse 'rape culture', say women's groups*, *The Guardian*, 13 April 2019).
- careful consideration could be given to exploration of the significance at Easter 2019 of the dramatic challenge to the Pope, as its leading celebrant -- given the many clergy engaged in that celebration who are variously accused of complicity in sexual abuse of the faithful (as noted above). Any parallels between that Catholic emphasis and the Lutheran culture of Sweden (in which Assange is accused) clearly require attention.
- highlighting associations to the renowned Biblical tale of [Cleansing of the Temple](#) (*Matthew 21:12-17*, *Mark 11:15-19*, and *Luke 19:45-48*), given the higher truth exemplified by that act of Jesus. There is no lack of reference to the truth which Julian Assange has disseminated globally via WikiLeaks. Predictable commentary from an Australian perspective is consistent with his effects on the Temple of that time (Ellen Whinnett and Sarah Blake, *How Julian Assange became a global wrecking ball*, *Herald Sun*, 12 August 2019)
- the [US Grand Jury](#), which has worked so assiduously over years to ensure the trial of Julian Assange, might usefully be built into the tale by comparison with the iconic role of the [Sanhedrin](#) as originally portrayed (Ed Pilkington, *WikiLeaks: US opens grand jury hearing*, *The Guardian*, 12 May 2011). In that respect, some consideration could be given to the UK Houses of Parliament, or even those of Australia (of which Assange is a citizen).

- any trial to which Assange is subjected in the USA (or elsewhere) offers paradoxical, and potentially humorous possibilities, with respect to the [sworn testimony](#) required as a witness in a case calling into question the revelation of the truth of which he is accused. How indeed are any present to bear witness to his required oath: *Do you solemnly swear that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?* Dramatically presented, would Assange then be free to add: *But is it not that for which I am charged, Your Honour?*
- the stages in the anticipated trials and convictions of Assange in various countries could be symbolically framed through reworking the "[Stations of the Cross](#)" -- potentially with dramatic exploitation of "cross" as the anger of either those appalled by his revelations of the truth, or by those appalled by authoritarian efforts to suppress it (or both). With respect to those stages in the legal proceedings, some consideration could be given to rethinking "station", given the association with "train" ("[The Legal Train](#)" *through the EU legislative system*, YouTube, 1 August 2018)
- there is the possibility of adapting the symbolic function of Assange's room in the Embassy of Ecuador to being a form of "[Holy Sepulchre](#)" -- within which he has been effectively buried and from which he has emerged. A commemorative plaque is called for prior to any imaginative redesign of the Embassy as a "Church of the Holy Sepulchre". Can "truth" be fruitfully associated with "sepulchre" from a theological perspective?
- by comparison with the [Easter Bunny](#), the iconic cat which has been the sole companion of Assange in his solitary confinement, would appear to offer far greater symbolic possibilities in the drama -- given the media attention to its existence [Social media moniker, *Embassy Cat*, with more than 30,000 Twitter followers, and 6,000 on Instagram, self-described master of "counter-purrveillance"]. The fate of *Embassy Cat* has been questioned, once beyond the protection of Assange (Matthew S. Schwartz, *The Mystery of Julian Assange's Cat*, NPR, 12 April 2019; Harmeet Kaur, *Whatever happened to Julian Assange's cat?* CNN, 11 April 2019; *The arrest of Julian Assange has thousands asking about the safety of his cat*, News.com.au, 13 April 2019). More possibilities are obvious from the accusation of Ecuador ("[Surreally idiotic](#)": *Ecuador's suggestion Assange used CAT FOR SPYING triggers WikiLeaks response*, RT, 13 Apr, 2019). As with the Easter Bunny, there is obviously scope for more meaningful commercial tie-ins to any dramatisation (Deborah Underwood, *Here Comes the Easter Cat*, 2014; *Easter Filled Chocolate Cat*; *Easter Limited Nestle Kit Kat Mini Chocolate*).
- given that Jesus is alleged to have had a degree of relationship to animals, primarily celebrated in parables -- and through the actions of [St Francis of Assisi](#) -- careful thought could be given to this in a period in which the role of animals is so challenged in a human world. Could Assange's cat be usefully compared with [Schrödinger's cat](#)? Appropriate to the mystery of any dramatisation with theological connotations, it has already been speculated that: *Embassy Cat* is simultaneously with Assange's family, in a shelter, in hiding, and dead (Adi Robertson, *Four theories about Julian Assange's cat*, *The Verge*, 13 April 2019).
- similarly, by comparison with the [Easter Egg](#), the drama could give far greater meaning to such an egg as a powerful integrative symbol of "the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" -- the preoccupation of WikiLeaks. A particular advantage could be cultivated through the manner in which the egg is "decorated" and "hidden" -- for children to find. This offers powerful echoes to the manner in which the truths held by authority are both decorated by public information (and propaganda) and hidden -- for journalists and hackers to find.
- the [Crown of Thorns](#), and its symbolism, offers major design opportunities for any special affects consequent on the trial (*Implication of Toroidal Transformation of the Crown of Thorns: design challenge to enable integrative comprehension of global dynamics*, 2011)
- as with the Holy Sepulchre, and the Christian values so intimately associated with it, there is then the dramatic possibility of associating an emergent "Church of Julian" with however Assange is "crucified" by the US legal system or by the covert initiatives of any [Deep State](#). Consideration could be given to the phonetic possibilities of a "Church of Jewlian" -- in the spirit of *Monty Python* -- although that would now run the risk of attracting the particular wrath of Israel.
- framing Julian symbolically in this way also enables a dramatic allusion to be made to the former [Julian Calendar](#), perhaps giving focus to the predicted crisis of crises potentially leading to eminent global collapse. Possibilities for such a non-linear calendar are suggested by the [Doomsday Clock](#) of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientist*. The related possibility of appropriate hymns -- as sung on the sinking R. M. S *Titanic* -- clearly merits exploration, especially if the "wrath of God" is variously highlighted therein.

**Requisite iconic "special effects"?** As considered in greater detail in the earlier argument, in the light of the universal Christian appreciation of the [cross](#) as an appropriate symbol of the pain inflicted by authority on Jesus as a truth-teller, the question is **what contemporary technology could now best embody the official attitude of the USA to emergent truth**. Use of an electric chair might be seen as resembling too closely iconic images of the seated Abraham Lincoln. Some configuration of needles used in that mode of execution might resemble too closely a daily habit of too many American voters.

Inspiration for the central symbol of environments in which truth is celebrated in the future might be more imaginatively associated with a combination of the iconic imagery of the popular *Star Wars* series and the use of [waterboarding](#) -- as a seemingly painless preferred modality in the official quest for truth in the USA. As with Jesus on the cross, a degree of elegance needs to be embodied in the imagery for purpose of display.

A basis for reflection on the possibility is offered by the character [Han Solo](#), appropriately described by *Star Wars* creator [George Lucas](#) as: *a loner who realizes the importance of being part of a group and helping for the common good*. The series is widely known for its celebration of a transcendent "Force" -- a binding, metaphysical, and ubiquitous power. The widely known *Star Wars* drama has been used by John Ringland in a tabulated comparison as reproduced below

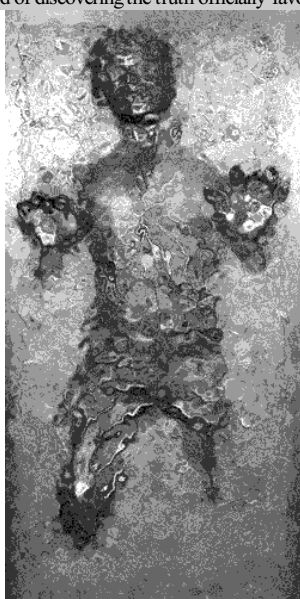
<i>Two Perspectives on the US / Assange Issue</i> (2019) (reproduced with permission from John Ringland)	
<i>Truth Wars: the Empire strikes back</i>	<i>Security Wars: protecting the Homeland</i>
There is a disturbance in the Truth!	There is a disturbance in our Security!
The Empire has launched operation Neo McCarthyism and dispatched Darth Trump to destroy Julian FactLeaker and the order of the Wiki Knights.	The Homeland has launched operation Restore Order and dispatched Emperor Trump to neutralise the threat from Julian Traitor and the Espionage Cult
The whole galaxy is in peril!	The galaxy will be restored to order!
Our hero has been captured by minions of the Empire on a compliant planet called Neo Britannia.	The criminal has been detained by friends of the Homeland on an allied planet called Neo Britannia.
Soon their arcane rituals will be complete and he will be delivered into the clutches of the Empire and a dire fate.	Soon their due process will be complete and he will be delivered into the custody of the Homeland and brought to justice.
The Wiki Knights and the scattered Resistance fight valiantly against great odds.	The Espionage Cult aid scattered dissidents will not remain a threat for long.
All noble beings everywhere steel their resolve and renew their connection to the Truth - their integrity.	A minority of dissidents are stubbornly recalcitrant and remain a security threat -- the fanatics.
It will take great integrity to push back the lies -- the dark side -- and re-establish Truth throughout the galaxy.	The most fanatical amongst them generate fake news -- conspiracy theories -- undermining legitimate authority throughout the galaxy.
Can they succeed? Will the people of the galaxy rise to the challenge or will they succumb to operation Neo McCarthyism?	Will they get away with this? Will the fanatics attack us or will operation Restore Order bring them to justice?
Stay tuned for more ...	Stay tuned for more ...

In the *Star Wars* drama, under the orders of [Darth Vader](#), Solo is captured and sealed in [carbonite](#) for delivery to [Jabba the Hutt](#) -- a process somewhat reminiscent of that desired by US authorities with respect to Assange and Snowden. Manning could already be understood to have long been placed in a form of stasis in anticipation of his show trial. Through incarceration, permanent stasis is now vigorously sought for all three. The practices of the [Guantanamo Bay detention facility](#) are also indicative of a form of painful legal stasis officially favoured by the US -- a form of living death -- contrasting strangely with the values embodied in a widely known song (*Guantanamera*) in celebration of a woman from that area.

The "triumvirate" of Manning-Assange-Snowden could be embodied in a single image, resembling that of Han Solo sealed in carbonite (as in a tombstone). This could be appropriately and elegantly displayed under a flow of water in centres in which truth is celebrated in the distant future --- echoing the enhanced interrogation to which the triumvirate are likely to be subjected under the orders of Pontius Pilate XXI.

**Focal animation of future symbolic celebration of transcendental truth?**

(tentatively based on an iconic image from *Star Wars* of Han Solo in carbonite, embellished by a water feature, recalling a method of discovering the truth officially favoured in the USA)



Animation developed from [iconic image](#) in *Wookieepedia: the Star Wars wiki*

**Addenda** (many with multiple comments)

The items that have been progressively accumulated in this addendum in 2019 have become so numerous that they have justified their transfer to a separate document (*Extradition and Trial of Julian Assange: web resources*, 2020). Further references will be added there as they become available.

As noted above, given the probability of his extradition, trial and conviction in the USA, a further document has been produced to offer Christians the possibility of collectively determining his punishment -- in the spirit of that dramatisation (*Crowdsourcing Just Punishment for Julian Assange: in faithful Christian retribution for daring to speak truth to power*, 2020).



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