rather politically and journal tricully rather politically politically politically politically as would ask as recruspy, and not ble so dul as who are recruspy and not ble so dul as who are the content of the duling such journalism should comfort the afficient the amountement Lord Jones is dead and tracreating to people who never knew Lord attention to provide the content of the

re a respected journalist on the Evening
I. Why didn't you stick with that
It may have been a wiser choice,
two with journalism, but maker like you
we with gift you know you won't marry,
to a driving ambition. My long-term
will houghts were probably always on
I Vernamm on and off for a year — during
86 — and I got some genet stories, but,
I remember trudging through some awampning, with a lot of other journalists in their
in my 26x and I leave I would rather be
influencing events when I got into my
r than reporting them.

that you found God during your downgreeted rather sniffly in some quarters
edia. How do you feel about that;
ye daw do have that the sniftly in the reported finity and cynteally. But you do you do have that feel about that if I was the different era I would feel maher cyntail we colleague who had agot non trouble and found God and was now preaceful and do foun't warry about it because, if you believe we withink there is an all-knowing.
God and He will know if anyone is re honey. I hope to please the audience or the media or other audience.

# conference

Journalism has always been a vital thread in Jonathan Aitken's life. His "Uncle Max" was none other than Lord Beaverbrook, who gave him advice when he was a teenage reporter, and Aitken went on to be something of a star hack during seven years on the Evening Standard from the mid-1960s. And of course some keeps

And, of course, some keen journalism brought the former Cabinet Minister's soaring political career crashing to the ground in the '90s after his ill-fated libel action against The Guardan and Granada's World In Action. The small matter of who paid his £900 Paris Ritz bill forced him to not so much fall on his sword of truth, but do a glorious Fosbury Flop onto it, with that trusty shield slamming onto his head for good measure. Seven months of portige for perjury, public disgrace, bankruptcy and divorce all helped Aitken find God and, ultimately, contentment. Now 63, the father of four has happily married again, to Elizabeth, the late actor Richard Harris's exwife. He now earns a good living as an author, freelance journalist and an ardent deliverer of 'out-reach' talks — speeches with a spiritual message. He gives more than 100 a year, mostly for free, to a cross-section of audiences.

I meet one of our most famous penitents at his modest office in the lodgings block of a church a short stroll from the Houses of Parliament. Aitken presents a keen line in self-deprecation through stuttery, posh tones and a crooked smile. The only visible residue of his long-forgotten political vanity and propensity to tell porkies is his incongruously burnished aweep of hair that has clearly enjoyed a deep dunking in an unholy font of dye.

### Jonathan, do you mind me asking where your sword and trusty shield are these days? Oh, I'm glad to say they are safely thrown awar row. When I see mv "sword of the safely thrown awar row."

In very reason about.

It was to take — apart from telling a lie was to take if the Guardam allegations) seriously dto get all uper in a very aggressive and prideful by it links if had just said. "I really don't think ybody who is not on The Guardam's editorial saff livers that I am a pimp or an arms delete." I could we left it at what I cell a dignified denial and nor transpare and furrious and made a great remement.

d of truth" speech on TV,
s that arrogant berk up there?"
no doubt always be with me,
tituary and there is nothing
ave had endless jokes, but
ut it.

## "I was the wrong person, on the wrong battlefield, with the wrong weapons, and the wrong facts — and an untruth — to charge off in that particular way"

You've had a mix of fortunes at the hands of the media, where do you stand with it all now? I very much cito a timous remark made by Faxoch Powell. "Foliticians who don't like the ser are like sea caparats who don't like the ser." The press has a waves, strange currents, wonderful sunshine and terrible sorms. I have had wonderfully favourable articles and I ve had wonderfully favourable articles and I ve had the nastices articles imagnable. I look back on It all quite precedilly and cheerfully. People sometimes at first am histories free zone. I just think, in a curious work of the product of the production of the product of the production of the produ

How do you get along with the press generally and, in particular, The Guardian?

I have no problems anywhere, as far as I know. I have good relations with The Guardian. Very friendly, very Portrait
Phil Adams

retry good sign.

I also went to the launch party of the Berliner.
didn't actually talk to David Leigh [the key avestigations journalist in Aitken's downfall], but

# Alan Rushrigher and I — and I think this was Alan Rushrigher and I — and I think this was not a connoidence — both were up in Haryon-We less summer for The Glaundium Herrary festival, and we were in the same guesthouse, in adjoining comen. We had very pleasant chairs, breakfast orgether, a fermone tea, and he invited me to The Glaundian party, It was like the entrannee of Banquio's phost But it felt rather good and people were worderful. All sensible people want closure to long ago quarries. I have no feelings of bitterness womads The Glaundian, that's genuine, but how do two actually say that TW dell' frou are earting with the editor and you go to their parties, that is a territy and sen

would be the Fantasy Hearing yourself?

Airken Back in Belmarsh!". It was not so bad, but I certainly wouldn't want to o back there.

### Any personal question invading the private and emotional life of a member of my family. would you most like to interview? question would you ask? Christ. And I would ask: "When are

# What headline would you like to appear on your obituary? "He found peace after politics"

### ked to his wife. I sort of nodded at him, but he ed away. I think with him it may have got very onal, but I may be maligning him. Certainly, one to ill will towards him. It was a fight I am that got bitter and personal, but it is long ago to wash as far as I am concerned.

Sou famously said that there was a "cancer of puber and evisited journalism" in this country. It was all vary deamatels, but what are your lives all vary deamatels, but what are your ways nevel; we shall not have all vary deamatels, but what are your ways nevel; when there actually is a cancer of bent and law were in all kinds of invented sories. The plant in the hant truth — it I can sage a bout it — is The Chardran were wong on their principal allegations. They were right about their lesser allegations. They were right about their less are allegations. They were right about their lesser allegations. It is made and the service would easily an arther emotive word — sol would rake that aways. Ease bent and owned your benefit did with the wrong person, on the words particular ways. Descher and owned your particular ways. Descher and ware greaten, on the words watered your did not any to the words and an arther morties word. — sol knowers, was the wrongs person, on the words guarded, with the in the wrong person, on the words guarded, which the in the wrong person, on the words guarded, with the in the wrong person, on the words guarded, which the words person and alternative the state of the words and a state of the words and a state of the words of the words of the words and the words of the

You started out as a journalist and all these years on you are freedancing, so I imagine you year on you are freedancing. So I imagine you have some affection for the business. See The South S

Lard Beaverbrook was your great uncle
(Aliken's grandfather's younger brother).
What are your valued memories of him,
journalism wise?
I was very close to him in the last years of his life
while! was at Oxford [University]. He was in his
8%. He was a trofife characte, with a capital 'C'
Even in old age he kept a religimate by his
armchiar and a hotline to the Dady Exposs. He
would read something, then pick up the photoe

### AITKEN'S NEWS SCHEDULE

Newspaper

In all a neesgaper junkle
Every mening I red the Doily
Mail Heald Tibuse. If the Cliff I four, I fave
Register in Time . They
are if oblivered and pick up
are all oblivered and pick up
are if oblivered and pick up
are if oblivered in the control
Standard during the day and early
Standard during the day
and happing read a red top if
I see one. I have gue a
journalists curvoys and just
with I had more time to red.
to its depth and density of world
to its depth and density of world

BYPCLIVION Probably, my favourite good Bork in Commandation the week are The good reads for the week are The good and the commandation were forwarded and the week and the forwarded to the commandation of th

Television and Radio
My wife tends to like Sky, but I prefer the BBC. I drive
less and less these days, so I don't seem to listen to
the radio much. I hardly use the web at all, except
for exact

# More than a few journalists will choke on that coming from you. What are you referring to specifically? The newest thing than above a many in the property of the property of

was alpaneur.
And towards the end of my sentence, prison
And towards the end of my sentence, prison
And towards the end of my sentence, prison
And towards the end of end a tabloid
and some inmates and tepresentatives of a tabloid
and some inmates and tepresentatives of a tabloid
was wayener talking. They had been offered £40,000 to
the me Robatpmool, then me in feel made with
other prisoner; take a photo and say Atiken is gay.

to the prisoner; take a photo and say Atiken is gay.

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by Rob McGibbon