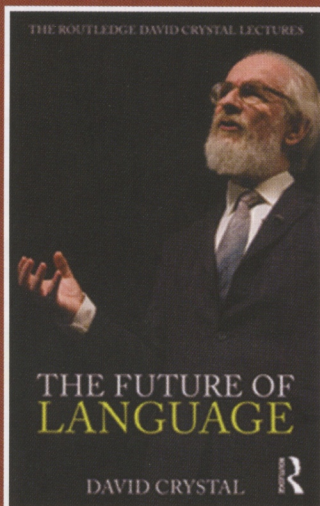


Professor David Crystal is a world authority in the field of linguistics and has written over 100 well regarded books on the subject, many of which have won prizes. His most well known works are *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language* and *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language*, which were published to huge acclaim. He has presented several television and radio programmes, which deal with our language and he is currently Honorary Professor of Linguistics at the University of Wales. Professor Crystal is also a highly gifted speaker and his performance of a dramatic reading of the Gospel of St John was made into a CD. He received an OBE for services to the English language in 1995 and was made a Fellow of the British Academy in 2000.



Professor Crystal was born in Lisburn, Northern Ireland in 1941 to Samuel and Mary Agnes and he was educated at University College, London. He was first married to Molly Irene Stack, who died in 1976 and with whom he had four children. He is now married to Hilary Frances Norman with whom he has one son. At the moment, he is editing the poetry of John Bradburne and lives with his family in Holyhead, North Wales.

## 10 MINUTE INTERVIEWS WITH PROMINENT CATHOLICS: Professor David Crystal

What is your Confirmation Name? Have you a particular reason for choosing that name?

My Confirmation name is Bernard and I chose it because it was the name of my best friend at the time.

Do you have a special affinity with any particular saint?

No, but I do have an affinity with someone whom I confidently expect will be a saint before too long and that man is John Bradburne. He was a Franciscan lay missionary who was killed in 1979, while looking after lepers in what was then Rhodesia and is now called Zimbabwe. He was born in 1921 and converted to Catholicism in 1947, making a private vow to the Virgin Mary that he would remain celibate. When the war in Rhodesia was at its height, he refused to leave the leper colony and he and a priest, Fr David Gibbs, were the only men who remained to look after the afflicted. He was abducted, tormented and shot in September, 1979. His last act was to fall to his knees and pray. His cause is now in progress. He spent most of his time in a place called Mtemwa, which is in North East Zimbabwe, and it is now a local Lourdes. I've been editing his poetry over the past 15 years, so I do feel that I have come to know him very well. Although his work is not particularly well known yet, he is the most prolific poet that the English language has ever seen. Several selections of his work have been published through the John Bradburne Memorial Society. (If readers want to sample the excellent poetry of this devout man, they can do so by visiting: [www.johnbradburnepoems.com](http://www.johnbradburnepoems.com))

What is your favourite reading from the Bible?

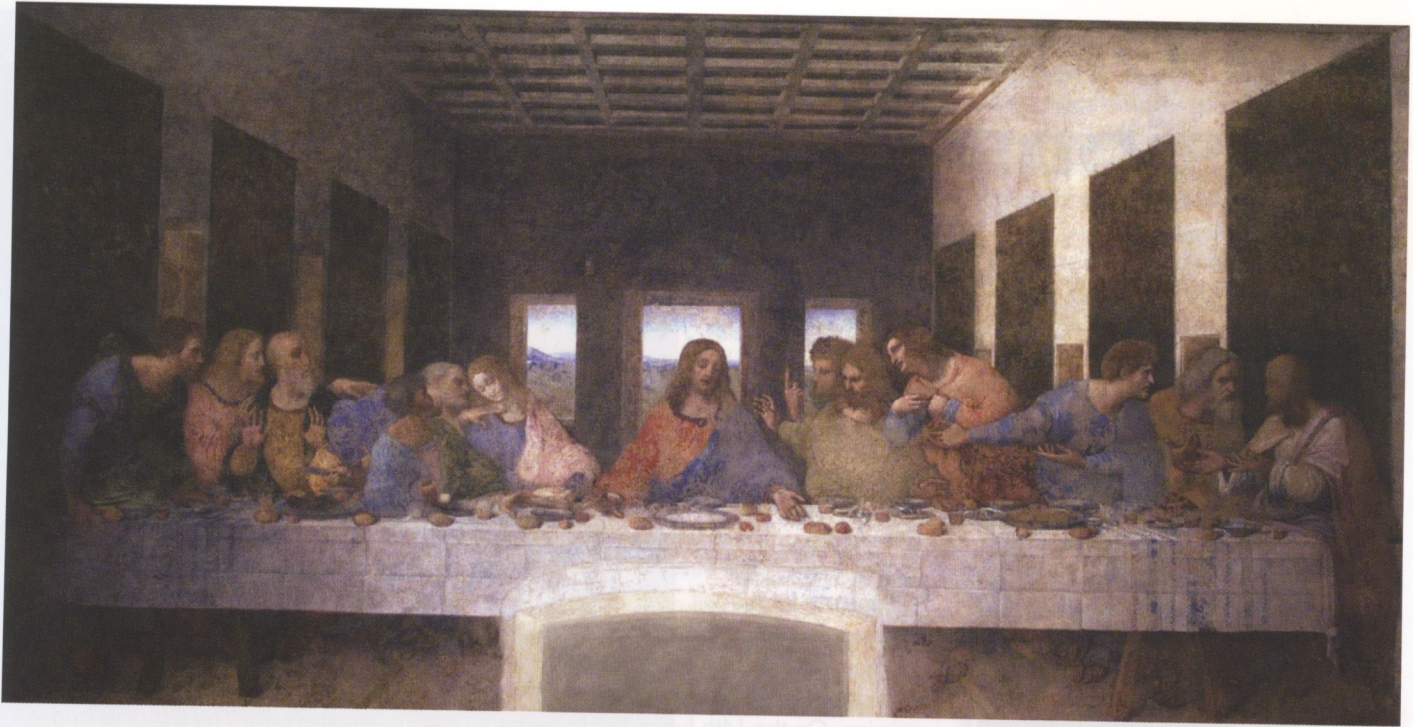
The John Gospel. As part of my performance work, I presented a dramatic reading of this Gospel in words and music. I did this because I believe that reading aloud is a great way of getting inside the meaning of the Bible. I would have to say that my favourite part from this is the sequence: "I am the way, the truth and the life." (Chapter 14)

What Catholic figure, either historical or living, do you most admire?

I'd like to say William Shakespeare; notwithstanding the fact that we have no certain knowledge of what his religious beliefs were and some people argue that he was a Catholic and others argue that he was a Protestant. My son, Ben, and I compiled a Shakespeare Miscellany, in which, as part of our research, we had to weigh up all these arguments. This research led us to the conclusion that the arguments for his Catholicism are the more compelling ones and so it is reasonable to assume that he was indeed a Catholic.

Do you have a favourite Church or Shrine?

Yes: The basilica of Santa Maria del Mar in Barcelona. I especially like the small chapel behind the main altar. It has one of those rare spiritual



atmospheres which hits you as soon as you walk in.

Do you have a favourite piece of church music?

I particularly enjoy *The Monteverdi Vespers*. Monteverdi was an Italian composer who was born in Cremona in 1567. He wrote these in 1610 and dedicated them to Pope Paul V.

Is there any religious art that you would like to own?

Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, which is currently on the wall of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan (see above). I suppose, if it were possible, I could manage to find a space for it at home somewhere!

How do you use your talent to reflect your faith?

Mainly by writing, editing and speaking. I've written a lot on language and religion, as well as a couple of books on devotional poetry. My work editing John Bradburne has made use of my literary and linguistic background.

On the speech side, I've done a lot of dramatic readings and I also run liturgy courses for readers.

The Vatican recently introduced a modern list of 'new' mortal sins: environmental pollution; genetic manipulation; accumulation of excessive wealth; inflicting poverty; drug trafficking; debatable experiments and the violation of basic human rights. Which of these do you think is the worst 'sin' and is there any that you would like to see added to the list?

To my mind, there is nothing more fundamental than the violation of basic human rights. I would hope that this motion would include such 'domestic' situations as bullying, road rage and anti-social behaviour.

If you had the opportunity to ask the Pope one thing, what would it be?

I would ask him to read about John Bradburne and promote the cause for his canonisation at the earliest opportunity.

