

By **Daniel E. Slotnik**

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David Yallop, an investigative journalist who wrote popular books about true crime and conspiracy, including a best seller asserting that Pope John Paul I was murdered as part of a complex Vatican plot, died on Aug. 23 in London. He was 81.

The cause was complications of pneumonia, his wife, Anna, said.

Mr. Yallop's books railed against what he saw as corruption and miscarriages of justice. They often stirred up controversy because of their explosive allegations, based on what some critics saw as inadequate evidence or vaguely sourced reporting.

"In God's Name: An Investigation Into the Murder of Pope John Paul I" (1984) was perhaps the most controversial of all. It delved into the death of John Paul I, who was found dead at 65 in his chambers on Sept. 28, 1978, only 33 days after assuming the papacy.

John Paul was seen by some Roman Catholics as an earnest figure, perhaps ill prepared for the political machinations that faced the leader of the church. He had a history of health problems, and the official cause of death was a heart attack.

Mr. Yallop, who described himself as an agnostic Catholic, said he discovered something more sinister during several years of reporting: He argued that John Paul had been poisoned by a cabal connected to a secret Masonic lodge that had infiltrated the church and the Vatican Bank.

The Vatican, which had fueled rumors of conspiracy by issuing conflicting statements shortly after the pope's death, called Mr. Yallop's claims "[absurd fantasies](#)."

"It is shocking and deplorable that anyone could so much as think, let alone publish, theories of this kind," a New York Times article quoted the [Vatican press office](#) as saying in 1984.

[Paul Hofmann](#), the author of "O Vatican! A Slightly Wicked View of the Holy See" and a longtime foreign correspondent for The New York Times, reviewed "In God's Name" in 1984. He

[took issue with Mr. Yallop's reliance](#) on sources who were “generally nameless or dead” and his fly-on-a-wall recounting of private conversations he had not witnessed.

“Everything that seems to fit into Mr. Yallop’s neatly constructed puzzle is — to use one of his pet phrases — abundantly clear,” Mr. Hofmann wrote. “It is hard to share his certitude.” But “In God’s Name” spent 15 weeks on The Times’s best-seller list and won the Crime Writers’ Association’s [Gold Dagger award](#) for nonfiction in 1984. According to news reports and a foreword to a recent edition, the book has been translated into more than 30 languages and has sold more than six million copies.

David Anthony Yallop was born in South London on Jan. 27, 1937. His father, George, left him and his mother, Una Stanton, when David was only 18 months old, and his mother worked at different office jobs to keep them afloat.

He left high school at 15 and took a low-level job at a newspaper before two years of compulsory military service in the Royal Air Force. When he got out he worked odd jobs, eventually landing at a television station, where he became a floor manager and studio director before he started writing.

He married Anna Rutherford in 1977. In addition to her, he is survived by two daughters, Kim and Lynn Yallop, from an earlier marriage, which ended in divorce; a daughter, Lucy Yallop, and a son, Fletcher, from his second marriage; six grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Mr. Yallop first wrote for television and returned to the medium over the years. He made headlines in the early 1990s because of a public dispute with the BBC, who he said owed him back pay for many scripts for the long-running BBC soap opera “EastEnders.” He filed a lawsuit against the BBC, and in 1992 a judge awarded him more than 68,000 pounds, the equivalent of more than \$175,000 today.

Mr. Yallop’s other books include “Deliver Us From Evil” (1981), an investigation into the Yorkshire Ripper murder case, and “[Tracking the Jackal: The Search for Carlos, the World’s Most Wanted Man](#)” (1993), about Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, the Venezuelan terrorist better known as Carlos the Jackal, in different parts of the Middle East.

Mr. Yallop took on the Catholic Church in two more books, “The Power and the Glory: Inside the Dark Heart of John Paul II’s Vatican” (2006) and “Beyond Belief: The Catholic Church and the Child Abuse Scandal” (2010).

But he remained best known for writing about John Paul’s death — a subject several other writers have since revisited, including the Vatican journalist Stefania Palasca, who published a [book about it last year](#). The historian and journalist John Cornwell carefully examined John Paul’s death, with the Vatican’s cooperation, in “[A Thief in the Night: The Death of Pope John Paul I](#)” (1989), for which he interviewed Mr. Yallop and important figures who had not spoken with him.

Mr. Cornwell said Mr. Yallop was helpful with his research, but stood by his writing and refused to “rerun the ballgame.” He wrote that he found little concrete evidence for a murder plot, but

became convinced that “the Vatican ignored, and continues to ignore, the dimension of human responsibility in the death of John Paul I — not only in the actions and omissions of those who surrounded him, but in his own acquiescence in the face of a death that might have been avoided.”

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/14/obituaries/david-yallop-dead.html>