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Michael Gove **A truly Lenten** **epiphany chez Paul**

At the age of 39 I had thought that there were no truly sublime pleasures left that I could taste for the first time. I'd experienced the joy of the woman I love saying "I do", witnessed the miracle of childbirth and watched Aberdeen FC win a major European trophy (albeit 24 years ago). But in the past month I've discovered a pleasure that ranks alongside, at least, the third of those. And it costs only £1.60.

It all started when I gave up coffee (bad for my health and, given my intake, a genuinely significant Lenten sacrifice). I was determined to stick to my resolution, but found that at some points in the day I needed a hot drink, just to give me a little lift through the next few hours. So, passing through South Kensington, I stopped at the French bakery chain **Paul** and bought a hot chocolate as a treat. And what a treat: Paul's hot chocolate is to other hot chocolates as Krug is to Babycham. It tastes so incomparably better — richer without being cloying, more intensely chocolatey without seeming like a chef's sauce, perfectly balanced between sweetness and cocoaness — that I'm amazed that it sells for less than a bog-standard Starbucks cappuccino. It's like finding gold on the market selling, ounce for ounce, at less than wood shavings. There are so many other good things about Paul that I could mention, but even if its bread were made of soot, the hot chocolate would still make it the best bakery I know.

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