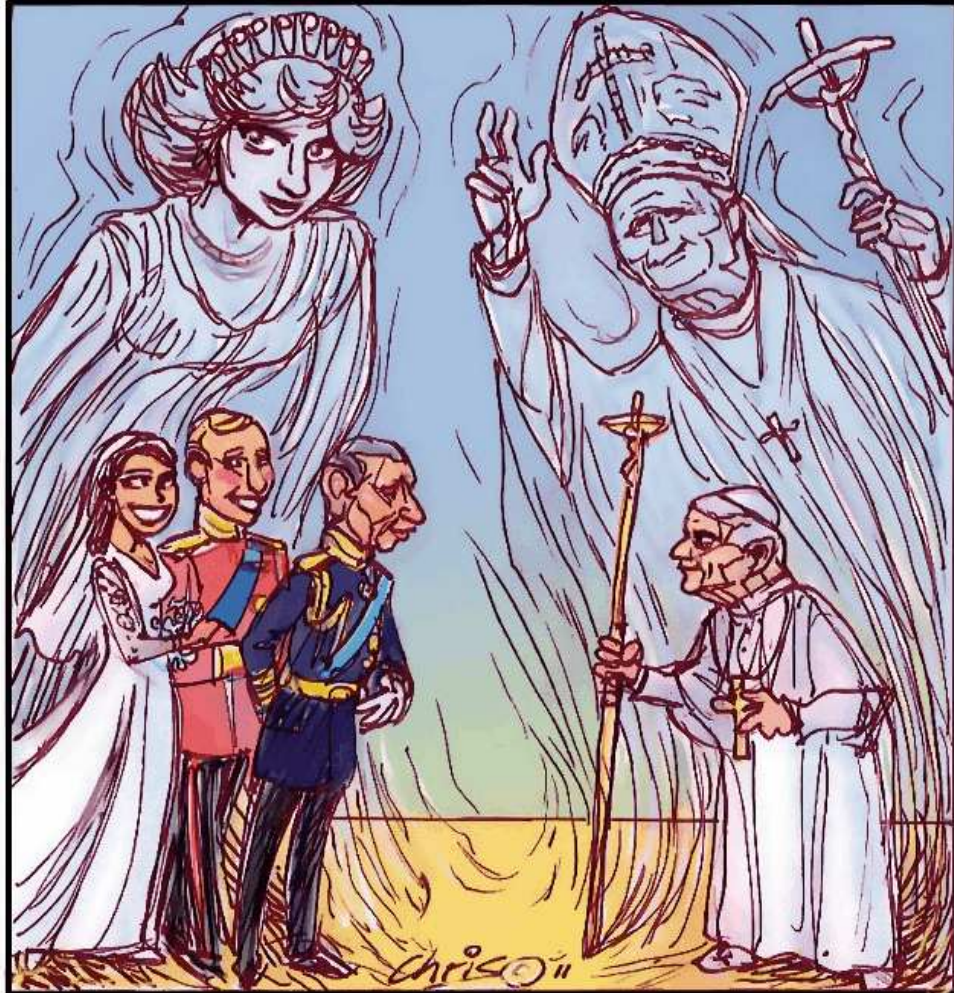


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Let's talk about rape

MEDIA

Jen Vuk

One can only imagine what terror flashed through the mind of CBS journalist Lara Logan the moment she was torn away from her producer and bodyguard by an angry mob while on assignment in Cairo.

One minute she was reporting on the fall of Hosni Mubarak's government in Tahrir Square, the next she was encircled by as many as 300 men who tore at her clothes, beat and subjected her to unfathomable sexual torture.

'There was no doubt in my mind that I was in the process of dying,' she said in a US *60 Minutes* interview which aired in the US earlier this week. 'I thought not only am I going to die, but it's going to be just a torturous death that's going to go on forever.'

Logan estimates the attack went on for an unbearable 40 minutes before she was rescued by police and a group of civilians. As she [told](#) *The New York Times* in a separate interview, what struck her most about her attackers was how her 'pain and suffering' egged them on to further violence.

Logan's account makes for harrowing reading. To find yourself at the mercy of a pitiless crowd is the stuff of nightmares. Coming forward and talking about such a terrifying episode is courageous, but her nerve doesn't stop there. As she told the *Times*, she was adamant that 'this' not 'define' her.

It's fair to say Logan chose her words carefully. Rape is insidious and its effect, long-lasting. Survivors often speak about feeling disconnected; cut off, at least for a time, from those who can, and desperately want to, help. The act not only takes away free will. Its legacy is to strip away a person's defences and build around them a wall of connotation and innuendo.

Writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2008 on the aftermath of her rape at knifepoint in 1999, Sydney woman Helen Kauppi [said](#) she was 'called a slut, whore, prostitute, c-nt, dog, bitch and any other word of abuse you can ascribe to a woman'. Worse, she felt incredibly vulnerable and, to her eternal despair, struggled on silently.

It's no surprise that victims of rape were once so conspicuously absent from public debate. Indeed, our constitutional law suppresses their identities to protect their privacy, but this does little to remove the stain of their shame.

Certainly, this is one reason why women such as Logan are now entering the fray and baring their souls, and why this need to reclaim — or redefine — lives carries with it a palpable sense of urgency.

In Australia, recent high-profile cases such as the gang rape of Sydney teen Tegan Wagner, who waived her right to anonymity and whose heartrending testimony led to the prosecution of two of the Ashfield gang in 2006, attest to this.

In the US, there is arguably no greater public arena than *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Last September, Sarah Kostovny sat on the couch beside Winfrey and relived the night she was tied up and raped by a stranger after her ex-boyfriend posted a lewd ad about her on Craigslist.

Acknowledging that the attack was something she will ‘always remember’, Kostovny — now a self-appointed advocate for rape survivors — next echoed Logan, telling Winfrey that she, too, refused to let it ‘define the person’ she is.

Yes, language is a powerful thing. Despite the sunny assurances of the popular nursery rhyme about ‘sticks and stones’, words can indeed hurt, especially when used to defame or deny. Conversely, when harnessed, the right words can remove huge emotional barriers — brick by brick.

Speaking so candidly about such experiences offers a lifeline to others looking for a way out of the darkness, and encourages greater, more open dialogue. Mostly, though, these women’s gut-wrenching accounts wrest us out of our complacency. Only when we step down as spectators can we bare witness to the shift in their world view.

As a long-standing war correspondent, Logan thought she stood safely behind her impartiality and objectivism. It took an unpredictable moment and a volatile outcome to change all that, but there was one thing she could still rely upon — her indignation. For 40 interminable, unimaginable minutes, Logan had been rendered silent. Little wonder when finally she spoke it came out like a roar.

Conversation with a gay priest

VIDEO

Peter Kirkwood

On the surface, there's nothing unusual about the talk featured in this video — a Catholic priest speaking in a church to a group of Christians. But the shirt worn by the priest gives a clue that it's an extraordinary event: embroidered discreetly on its black fabric in rainbow colours is the word 'Priest'.

Since the 1970s the rainbow has been adopted by homosexuals around the globe as a symbol of gay pride and identity. This priest, British-born [James Alison](#), is openly gay, and he's speaking here to a group of gay and lesbian Christians at Paddington Uniting Church in Sydney's eastern suburbs.

The fact that he's openly gay, and supports the legitimacy of a homosexual lifestyle, puts him at odds with Church teaching, which he argues is outmoded and no longer tenable.

The Vatican has consistently upheld its 1986 teaching that the homosexual 'inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder', and its instruction of 2005 that the Church 'cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practise homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called "gay culture"'.

If Alison was a rabble-rouser or a noisy activist, he wouldn't be taken so seriously. But far from being a rebellious troublemaker, he is softly-spoken, eloquent, reasoned and reasonable in what he says. And he is deeply spiritual and devoted to the Catholic Church and to the priesthood.

He's also a scholar of international standing, a leading exponent of the philosophy of Rene Girard, and much in demand around the world to speak about the work of this French philosopher. Girard is famous for his insights into the [causes of violence](#), and the link between religion and violence.

Alison was born in London in 1959. He was brought up in a staunchly evangelical Protestant family, but in his late teens converted to Catholicism. He studied at Blackfriars College at the University of Oxford, and gained his bachelor's degree and doctorate in theology from the Jesuit Theology Faculty in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

He has lived in the United States and a number of South American countries, and now resides in Sao Paulo. He belonged to the Dominican Order from 1981 till 1995, but now calls himself a 'freelance theologian', working around the world as an itinerant preacher, lecturer and retreat giver.

In 2010 he led the prestigious John Main Seminar, the annual retreat and major

international gathering of the [World Community for Christian Meditation](#) . Previous seminar leaders have included spiritual luminaries such as the Dalai Lama, Raimon Panikkar, Bede Griffith, Joan Chittister, William Johnston, Jean Vanier and Rowan Williams.

With regard to homosexuality, Alison explains that over the last 50 or 60 years, science and psychology have uncovered evidence that being gay is merely a ‘non-pathological, regularly occurring minority variant’ in the human condition. In other words, science is telling us that rather than being a disorder, homosexual orientation is part of the normal spectrum of variation among human beings.

He argues these recent scientific revelations are part of the unfolding natural law that challenges negative attitudes and beliefs regarding homosexuality, and the basis for official Church teaching, that being gay is ‘an objective disorder’.

Alison is a prolific author, and his books include *Raising Abel; The Joy of Being Wrong; Faith Beyond Resentment: Fragments Catholic and Gay; On Being Liked; Undergoing God* and, most recently, *Broken Hearts and New Creations: Intimations of a Great Reversal*.

Papal power in Toowoomba

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

The forced retirement of Bishop Bill Morris raises many questions.

Some questions concern the facts of the case — why the Bishop's pastoral strategies and his reflections on ways of addressing the shortage of priests in rural dioceses were found to be inconsistent with Catholic values. These questions cannot be usefully discussed because the evidence against him and the evaluation made of it have not been publicly disclosed.

Even more significant questions concern the process that culminated in his retirement. An understated paragraph of the pastoral letter in which Bishop Morris communicated to the Toowoomba Church his decision to take early retirement raises the question sharply. He says:

I have never seen the Report prepared by the Apostolic Visitor, Archbishop Charles Chaput, and without due process it has been impossible to resolve these matters, denying me natural justice without any possibility of appropriate defence and advocacy on my behalf. Pope Benedict confirmed this to me by stating 'Canon Law does not make provision for a process regarding bishops, whom the Successor of Peter nominates and may remove from Office'.

Outside observers used to the English legal system are likely to see this lack of due process and of natural justice as scandalous. They would notice the parallel with the non-statutory process by which asylum seekers on Nauru had the claims for protection assessed. It resulted in a morass of arbitrariness, and was experienced by its victims as abusive of their human dignity. In Australia, it is the case that where there is no statutory review there can be no confidence in justice.

Of course the legal system of the Catholic Church is not based on English law. It goes back a long way further than that. So it may offer assurances of justice that the outside observer might miss. But the gap makes even Catholic observers ask why the Pope should see the denial of due process as demanded by his position. And they might also muse whether the received Catholic understanding of the papacy must really exclude due process.

To understand the Pope's claim, you need to go back to the Gospels. The place of the papacy in the Church is based on the position of Peter among the 12 disciples whom Jesus chose. The Bishop of Rome is understood to stand in the same relationship to the other Bishops as did Peter to the Twelve. Peter is one of the Twelve, but is given by Christ a primacy among them. He is to strengthen his brothers in living and preaching the Gospel.

Encouraging others in faith naturally included the soft means of encouragement and example. But it has also embraced the hard responsibility to resolve disputes about faith and

order when asked to do so, and also uninvited when necessary.

The analogy between the Pope and Peter suggests that the powers of the Pope are personal to him, and do not depend on the consent of the other bishops.

Over the centuries attempts were made to limit papal power by subordinating it to imperial power, to the authority of Church Councils and to the consent of other bishops. These limitations were successfully opposed on the grounds that they minimised the commission that Christ gave to Peter, and so to the Pope, to strengthen the unity in faith of the universal church.

Pope Benedict's statement that he may name and remove bishops without judicial process reflects this long defence of papal primacy in the Western Church. The personal character of Peter's powers means the Pope is not subject to church law when exercising them. This view is adamant. Such is the volume of water that has gone under this bridge that we are unlikely to see it flowing back again.

But even if the right of the Pope to remove bishops in extraordinary circumstances is conceded, it remains in both his interests and those of the Church he serves that this be done in ways which encourage unity in faith. Such encouragement will increase or diminish according to the extent to which Catholics are confident that the Pope exercises his powers wisely and responsibly.

Confidence in any governance, including that of the Church, is weakened where there is a lack of transparency and of due process in the making of decisions that cause harm to people. Lack of accountability injures the human dignity of the people affected. Confidence grows when there is due accountability.

In received Catholic theology, the Pope is directly accountable only to God when he acts to strengthen the faith and order of the universal church. But that is perfectly compatible with a process within which his final decision is made only after a review of the reports and recommendations made by his officers. The person whose future rests on the decision should have the right to see the report and evidence upon which it is based, and to argue his case. The review of the case would thus contribute to the Pope's final decision, and not overturn a decision already made.

Modern societies rightly put much weight on transparency. Its absence is taken to discredit the institutions in which it is lacking. After the forced resignation of Bishop Morris it will be even harder for Catholics to win a hearing on issues that affect the public order.

Aboriginal mad bastards

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

It was, says actor Dean Daley-Jones (pictured, right), a sight to behold: ‘brother boys going outside the cinema in Broome, pretending to have a cigarette but really just getting emotional because of the story’.

‘They were Kimberley mad bastards,’ he explains; ‘black cowboys, hunters and gatherers; physically built and strong men; beautiful men in the soul, but wild fellas. Natives. And they were coming out of the cinema choked up.’

The reason for this show of masculine emotion was *Mad Bastards*, a new film starring Daley-Jones and directed by Sydney filmmaker Brendan Fletcher.

It’s not a documentary, although it does draw heavily upon the real-life experiences of the Indigenous men and women, including Daley-Jones, who contributed to its writing and who appear in it as actors.

And judging by the emotion on display outside the cinema in Broome, it’s fair to say *Mad Bastards*, fiction or otherwise, doesn’t so much touch on truth as drag it, reluctant and brooding, onto the exposed surface of a parched mudflat, to be examined and better understood.

Through a fictionalised story of violence and redemption, the film explores a concept Fletcher describes as ‘mad bastardry’ – a ‘masculine energy’ that, he says, is too often either expelled through violence, numbed by alcohol – or both.

Central character T.J. (Daley-Jones) has struggled with alcohol and aggression throughout his adult life, and has now returned to his home town to try to reconnect with his estranged son, Bullet (Lucas Yeeda). The boy himself has been in trouble with the law and, in addition to his tumultuous reunion with his father, the film charts his participation in a program for adolescent offenders that sees them camping in the wilderness and learning traditional wisdom and skills.

The film also follows T.J.’s antagonistic relationship with Texas, the boy’s grandfather and the tough but big-hearted town cop. Texas is trialling his own solution to male misbehaviour, by hosting regular support group meetings that invite participants to diffuse their anger through listening and sharing.

There’s no doubt the film has struck a chord with Kimberley locals. This was evident in the emotional response of the men outside the cinema in Broome, and was also apparent during a screening in the remote northern town of Wyndham (where the film was shot); some 80 per

cent of the population showed up, and many were forced to peer over the perimeter fence after the venue filled to capacity.

Of course, screening the film in remote areas for audiences who have a personal connection to the subject matter is one thing. Showing it to audiences in trendy inner-city cinemas is quite another. Fletcher and Daley-Jones hope audiences will enjoy the film on its own terms (after all 'We are artists,' says Daley-Jones), but that they might also take time to unpack its deeper themes.

'Not everyone can go up there and experience that country,' says Fletcher. 'All they see is the current affairs segment, the newspaper article, all the bad stuff. No one ever hears the good stuff. They don't hear the stories of inspiration, of redemption, of people fighting these demons and winning.'

'We hope the film starts to really give audiences a feeling of what it's like up there, so that they can understand some of what's behind the newspaper articles, some of the issues and generations of crap that they're trying to slowly disentangle.'

The murder of Osama Bin Laden

POLITICS

Moira Rayner



'When thy enemy shall fall, be not glad, and in his ruin let not thy heart rejoice.'
Proverbs chapter 24, verse 17.

We have not achieved justice, as US President Obama announced, by acting unjustly.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Eleanor Roosevelt, widow of another Democrat President of the United States, brought to magnificent life on 10 December 1948 provides that:

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

The US adopted the UDHR, and it has not ratified any significant international human rights treaty since. It committed itself morally, if not in domestic law, to outlawing the kind of extra-judicial killing that mars the public lives of governments in Africa, South America, parts of Europe and other 'advanced' countries that have presidents, parliaments, and coups and under-classes.

These are killings not authorised by courts and judges after a fair trial. Extra-judicial killings are, as Osama bin Laden's death was, murder. Bin Laden was not brought to justice. His execution by agents of the sovereign people of the United States was a fundamental breach of Article 10 of the UHDR.

Even the Israelis — not renowned for their embrace of the internationally recognised human rights of Palestinians — acknowledged this distinction when, more than 40 years ago, they put Adolf Eichmann on trial in Jerusalem, after kidnapping him in South America, to face formal charges that he had planned and facilitated horrendous crimes against humanity.

We have slipped, politically, far from the objectives of both the International Court of Justice in The Hague — where Bin Laden could have been tried — the domestic tribunal that tried (then ordered the execution of) Eichmann, and the extraordinary nobility of the aims of the Nuremberg trials.

It was the US and their second world war allies who set the extraordinary precedent of providing independent courts of justice to address the massive crimes against humanity carried out in Europe by Nazis against their own and others' citizens: not only murder, but genocide; torture, retaliation killings of citizens in response to unrelated partisan atrocities;

retrospective laws and politically partisan 'courts' that sent men and women to horrible deaths after travesties of 'hearings'. All of it condemned, and all of it challenged by the concept of justice for all, no matter who wins the war.

I do not argue that Obama is an international criminal, but that the laws of civilised behaviour must apply to every actor in every circumstance. Killing Bin Laden, rather than capturing him and putting him on trial, was obviously the objective of the attack on his retreat, so let us not pretend otherwise.

Politically, Obama had every reason to do what he did, but in the process he committed his people to a legal and ethical mistake which will be a continuing obstacle to the West's integrity in its pursuit of freedom and democracy, internationally recognised standards of justice and human rights, and lasting peace.

The author of Proverbs speaks for every one of us who respects the Book that is the common heritage of men and women of goodwill who are Jewish, Christian and Muslim, and every good and humane leader whether or not she is committed to an organised or institutionalised faith. A quote commonly attributed to Martin Luther King sums up my sentiments most precisely:

I mourn the loss of thousands of precious lives, but I will not rejoice in the death of one, not even an enemy. Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.

When I was admitted to practice I committed myself to the rule of law, because without order and predictability and an agreed limit to power there can't be any self-control, room for liberty to flourish or confidence to grow that an individual can safely lower their guard and share with strangers, which we need to move away from the comforting cage of family, tribe, village and city and nation.

We are still faltering over at the frightening realities of the global village and the global economy, and genuinely scared about the responsibilities that come with the globalisation of human rights (look at how we treat refugees).

But what are now UN-initiated 'universal human rights' had their genesis in so-called natural or divine laws, and an effort to make us see that our deities aren't shaped by particular human culture, and wrongs have unintended long-term consequences.

There may be exceptions to a particular rule of the law, which is a living instrument, but the regulation of revenge was what made local customs 'common', and nations grow. Both law and spirituality define revenge as an outlawed reason for any act, no matter how brave and skilful or how great the provocation.

Coming clean on cluster munitions

THE MEDDLING PRIEST

Frank Brennan

Australia is one of the 108 countries that signed the UN Convention on Cluster Munitions (CMC) which came into force on 1 August 2010. The states which are party to the convention are 'determined to put an end for all time to the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions'.

Cluster munitions are, basically, bombs containing lots of smaller bombs, which indiscriminately land over vast areas, usually causing loss of life and limb to civilians. Given that up to 30 per cent of cluster bombs do not explode on impact, they pose a long term threat.

Under the convention, each state undertakes 'never under any circumstances to use cluster munitions'. never to 'develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer to anyone, directly or indirectly, cluster munitions', and never to 'assist, encourage or induce anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a state party' under the convention.

The state parties are 'determined to work strenuously towards the promotion of (the convention's) universalisation and its full implementation'.

Australia is yet to ratify the convention. All major political parties agree that Australia should ratify the convention. Once we have ratified the Convention, we will be required to take 'all appropriate legal, administrative and other measures' to implement it. In particular, we will be required to have in place criminal laws imposing penal sanctions to prevent and suppress 'any activity prohibited to a state party under this convention undertaken by persons or on territory under its jurisdiction or control'.

Ever since 1996 when the Howard Government was elected with a mandate for ensuring better parliamentary scrutiny of executive government decisions to enter into treaties, the Australian Parliament has been equipped with a Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT).

JSCOT is required to report on all treaty actions proposed by the Government before action binding Australia to the terms of the treaty is taken. In August 2009, JSCOT recommended that the Government take binding action in relation to the CMC.

Before ratifying the treaty, the Government wants the Parliament to put in place the necessary penal sanctions required for compliance. The Criminal Code Amendment (Cluster Munitions Prohibition) Bill 2010 has passed through the House of Representatives and been reviewed by the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. This month it will be presented to the Senate.

The Government has assured the Parliament the proposed bill does all that the treaty would require. Ministers Rudd, Smith and McClelland have even put their name jointly to a letter saying as much.

The highly reputable Australian Network to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions (ANBLC) is not convinced, and they have some heavy backers like Malcolm Fraser and Paul Barratt, ex head of the Defence Department. Fraser says the draft legislation 'is scattered with alarming loopholes which directly undermine the very spirit and intention of the Convention'.

Barratt says, 'Regrettably, the Bill ... is at odds with these obligations. It permits us to facilitate the continued use of cluster bombs by non-signatories. It specifically permits foreign forces to base their cluster bombs here or to transit them through Australian territory. It also permits members of the ADF to assist in the use of cluster bombs in joint operations with foreign forces.' They're right.

There are two key disputed issues.

First, critics of the Government's bill point out that penal sanctions should apply to actions prohibited under the convention in two discrete situations — when the act is committed by a person under the jurisdiction or control of Australia, or when the act is committed on Australian territory even if the act is committed by a person not under the jurisdiction or control of Australia.

The Government's bill deals only with the first situation, and not the second. For example, a US plane or warship carrying cluster munitions could land in Australia while on a mission to use, transfer or stockpile cluster munitions. The Americans have no intention of signing the convention. They have no intention of surrendering their stockpiles of cluster munitions at this time.

In 2009, New Zealand, proud of its David Lange tradition and not so constrained by US alliance demands, legislated in very clear terms. Its Cluster Munitions Prohibition Act 2009 provides: 'This Act applies to all acts done or omitted in New Zealand.'

For strict compliance with the convention, our Parliament should do the same. Instead the Government's bill specifically provides that the stockpiling, retention or transfer of cluster munitions in Australia by 'a member of the armed forces of a foreign country that is not a party to the convention' using a base, aircraft or ship in the course of military operations with the ADF will not be an offence.

Second, the Australian bill excuses any Australian citizen or member of the ADF from any criminal liability in relation to cluster munitions if the act 'is done in the course of military cooperation with a foreign country that is not a party' to the convention.

Once again New Zealand has shown us how to legislate in strict compliance with the convention. Its 2009 law specifies the various offences relating to cluster munitions but then

notes that a member of their armed forces does not commit such an offence 'merely by engaging, in the course of his or her duties, in operations, exercises, or other military activities with the armed forces of a state that is not a party to the convention'.

New Zealanders may still involve themselves in joint operations with the Americans but they are not permitted themselves to assist in any way with the use, transfer or stockpiling of cluster munitions.

The Australian Government wants to stretch the 'interoperability' envelope by exempting from criminal liability any act by an Australian serviceman 'done in the course of military cooperation or operations with a foreign country that is not a party to the convention'.

Courtesy of Wikileaks we now know that the Australian Government has been in cahoots with the US countering the efforts of 'hardline' countries like Germany and non-government organisations which have been seeking a comprehensive ban on cluster munitions. In the name of accommodating the US alliance, our Government is asking Parliament to scuttle the real significance of this convention.

Sadly, only the Greens have taken the point thus far. And on this issue, the Greens stand as the only party in the Parliament in full sympathy with the Holy See which upon its own ratification of the Convention stated:

Joint military operations do not imply, in any way, a suspension of the obligations under the convention. 'States parties, their military personnel or nationals' shall never engage in activities prohibited by the convention. On the contrary, joint military operations should be opportunities for states parties to promote the standards introduced by the new instrument with the objective to protect civilians during and after armed conflicts.

The major parties and the Independents owe us an explanation as to why the proposed Australian legislation should fudge the clear requirements of the convention, especially as New Zealand has done the necessary legislative drafting for us this time. If we are to ratify this convention, let's show our good faith and legislate appropriate penal sanctions.

Mothers, soldiers and other entrepreneurs

NON-FICTION

Brian Doyle

Trapped in an endless meeting the other day, one of those meetings where you lose track of what the meeting was originally about (hermeneutics? badgers?) and start trying to remember all the girls you ever had a crush on, or former Geelong Cats, or both (Bernie Smith! Theresa O'Connell!), I got to pondering the word entrepreneurship, which is, let's admit it, a rhinoceros of a word, with more vowels than seems decent in polite society.

Unternehmen in German, 'a'a in Hawaiian, *hyrwyddwr* in the Welsh, all meaning he or she who undertakes, attempts, essays, begins ... and my mind spins away completely, chewing on the way that a word which means vast and amazing things has become so commonplace and thin.

To attempt, to begin, is really to dream, to envision, to speculate, and then to work like a burro to implement, to create, to make real. So mothers are entrepreneurs, aren't they?

And Christ, too, and especially Saint Paul, the greatest public relations agent ever; did he not envision that which might come to pass, and then work the market with unthinkable energy and creativity, until what he envisioned came to pass, and passeth still even in our time?

Or a novelist — does she not undertake to make a dream real, and sell many units of the created dream, so as to pawn the movie rights off to a hapless studio, and maketh enough money to buy Samoa? Or a cop — isn't he an entrepreneur, really, envisioning a world that might be, and working furiously and brilliantly to bring it to birth?

And soldiers — in the final analysis are they not wholly invested in a world beyond violence, where no child weeps in terror, and guns are all in hushed museums, and when people hear the word war they burst out laughing as at the most excellent and silly joke, which maybe someday war will be?

And colleges and universities — are they not the most entertaining entrepreneurial adventures, really, selling a remarkably ephemeral product, insisting eloquently on their primacy in a culture that often sneers at wisdom, and continually undertaking the riveting and visionary project of shaping raw and selfish teenagers into generous and subtle agents of hope and courage?

And some countries — are they not fascinatingly difficult entrepreneurial ideas at their hearts?

Australia, for example, dreamed into being by boat people many thousands of years ago,

and by brave restless wanderers like Matthew Flinders, and unquenchable open hearts like Weary Dunlop and Cathy Freeman and Mary MacKillop, and by the miner's son who in my mind essentially created modern Australia when he told Winston Churchill to buzz off in 1942; this new sort of country, said its creators, would endeavor to treat everyone equally, and choose its CEO by vote of the workers, and give even slimy murderous thugs a fair trial, and undertake to create a society where everyone is educated, everyone has enough to eat, everyone can think and say and dress and act pretty much as they please, and you can pray any way you want, to whatever Coherent Mercy you are awed by.

Isn't that a wild idea made real?

My meeting ended eventually, after what seemed like weeks. For days afterwards I found odd pieces of paper in my pockets, with gnomic notes (Tom Harley! Maureen McArdle!), but now I think maybe that was the best meeting ever, because it woke me up again to an idea so glorious no word can properly contain or explain it.

Hyrwyddwship, let us call it — the thing that most sets us apart from our companion species on this wild rock in the airless void, the thing that may yet save us all, the thing that we may well be here for, the thing that makes us the very image of God. We can dream, we can imagine — and then we can work like burros to make it real. Let's go.

Birdwatcher's odyssey

POETRY

Diane Fahey

Small wonders

Superb fairy wrens

Portly, brash, they seem

small essays in certainty;

engage nest-thieves in

'song-battles', send them packing.

Otherwise, sweet-voiced, gorgeous.

Splendid fairy wren

Head-on: monocle-

sized. His mating costume is

purple, cornflower-blue.

In eclipse: sober brown, wings

tinged with turquoise — a promise.

Lovely fairy wren

He's made a career

out of blue; now, songs to guard

young, call to confreres,

his mate ... valiant ascents

laced with fallible pauses.

Variiegated fairy wrens

But for upright tail,

mauve-blue, matching his, she's plain.

With lavender breast,

hyacinth head and chestnut

epaulettes, he lives in hope.

Zebra finches

Her decor's restful,

buff, fawn-grey. He wears neck stripes,

spots, rouged ear patches —

hints of jungle, and circus.

In common: wax-red eyes, beak.

Silveryeyes

Plump, precision-built,

yet somehow subliminal —

movements faster than

thought; white-ringed, heart-of-dartboard

eyes hypnotise then vanish.

New Holland honeyeaters

inhabit, become

jasmine and rosebush, taking

just what they need; sing

floriated canons; leave

in an excitement of wings.

Budgerigars

Faces, sun-yellow;

bodies, leaf-green; discreet beaks,

small eyes ... they're warmly,

dazzlingly, unassuming.

Outback flocks rise, block the sun.

Solo

Every feint and nuance that humans know

faced with the well-armed onslaughts of others
is present in the flight of this small gull:
a suavely parried climb becomes a slide
sideways down a wind that would douse it
in melted pewter — but for the panic-swift save
as wings cut a piece of sky, rise clear:
a jagged graph of strength reclaimed.

Now it coasts with a confidence won from
uncertainty, the wind's power its own.
This, the one bird at the estuary,
foregrounds miles of ocean when it swoops low:
capping tiered green with an abstract flourish,
scaling vertiginous whiteness.

Owl

This poem starts in a tree hole where,
caught by a cuckoo-camera, fuzzy frights
shriek their need. Eyes closed, I see thick night,
a barque with sumptuously ribboned sails.
Superlatives, a few, must be invoked —
the most soundless feathers, the sharpest hearing
(those ear-slits, points of a Bermuda triangle).
And the eyes? — mortal lamps to hang fables,
new omens on; the descending lights
of glaukopsis, 'the shining-eyed one'.
Who does not long, somewhere in themselves,
for the embrace of cataclysms of softness;
to be met by that startled, eldritch gaze

searching the furthest corners of their soul?

Wedge-tailed eagle

Then I saw for the first time over these fields —
the sky a padded ceiling, miles of light
seeping from the sun's wound — those hypnotic
swerves, a mark of dominion like all else:
its height, its eight-foot span, its primeval
patience.

The eagle turned, an archer's bow;
became a bold emblem that could impress
the red seal on a document of war;
rip out an eye.

Heaped in baroque abundance,
its wings, though, were operatic — their soaring
like a voice in rapt accord with silence,
yielding itself to, and enfolded by,
light: empyrean at last.

Human faces of Toowoomba conflict

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

Bishop Bill Morris' (pictured) announcement that he had tendered his early retirement under Roman pressure aroused deep grief in Toowoomba. It will certainly arouse debate in and outside the Catholic Church. It is ironical that action taken to preserve unity in the church should so strain unity of hearts and minds.

In these first days of controversy, it may be helpful first to reflect on the impact that the action has on the people most affected by it.

When feelings run high the persons at the centre always suffer a loss of their individual identity. They become tin soldiers dressed in the livery that military strategists wish to assign them. They become rebels, heroes, authority figures, emperors, inquisitors, and are praised or blamed accordingly.

This is the nature of things. But from a Catholic perspective the process should always be accepted only under protest. At the heart of the Catholic view of the world is the central importance of persons. The approach to work, for example, begins with the assertion that work is for the development of the persons involved in it. They are not to be treated as costs or machines. For the same reason reflection on the economy is always begins with the human relationships involved, not with an abstract consideration of profitability. In the Catholic view, too, the treatment of asylum seekers and prisoners must respect their humanity. They are people with faces. They are not objects, not problems.

So it is right to begin reflection on the events in Toowoomba by focusing, not on the rights and wrongs involved and on the larger issues, but on the people and what these events mean for them. Reflection on the central issues will follow. At the centre, of course, is Bishop Morris. In his years of responsibility for the Toowoomba church he has earned a reputation as a deeply pastoral man with a care for the people of his church and an exceptional ability to listen and respond to them. His informal style and his honesty, which alienated a few in his church, endeared him to most. News of his retirement prompted tears.

In addressing the scandals of sexual abuse and their mishandling that have plagued the Australian Catholic Church, as elsewhere, he was also exemplary. He acted decisively in cases of complaint, and was among the first bishops to accept legal liability for abuse, so sparing the complainants the burden of legal processes. He has been a model for the wider church.

His letter of resignation was of a piece with his leadership of the Toowoomba church. He began with anecdotes of his involvement in the church and gratitude for the people whom he had been able to serve. He narrated the events that led to his early retirement simply and

honestly, made it clear that he regarded the process as unsatisfactory, and that he saw his retirement as a way both of preserving communion with the universal church and of preserving his integrity.

Clearly, his retirement under these circumstances will come with a personal cost. He has lost the opportunity to serve people whom he cares for. If other people make him the hero in a sad story, it is insignificant recompense for his loss. Indeed it will only magnify the loss if he becomes the object and not the catalyst of religious conversation.

The personal cost to the Toowoomba Catholic community will also be high. The Bishop is a personal focus of unity in the church. His removal will leave many alienated from the Catholic Church. No doubt there will be passionately held and opposed opinions among Toowoomba Catholics about the matter. They will have to deal with suspicion and resentments without a trusted centre. They will feel their loss, uncomprehending and a sense of powerlessness. Bishop Morris' successor will have a hard road. It is always so.

We should spare a thought for the other Australian Bishops. The forced resignation of Bishop Morris can only deepen the public perception that they are branch managers of a large international corporation. If they break ranks and say anything critical about what has happened in Toowoomba, they will be accused of encouraging and exacerbating division. If they say nothing, they will be seen to abandon one of their own out of timidity and compliance. The affair will make even more difficult the continuing task they have of dealing with sexual abuse and its aftermath, and the immediate task of carrying through the new translation of the liturgy. It is not easy to be a bishop.

And finally, the Pope and his advisers are also persons. They have responsibility for encouraging the unity in faith of the universal Catholic Church. It cannot be a responsibility worn lightly.

In the Christian tradition prayer for the church has a firm place. It is often criticised as a cop-out, a resigned failure to change what should be changed. But when you focus on the faces of those involved in actions like this, where else would you begin?

Justifying Bin Laden's execution

POLITICS

Tony Kevin

US President Obama yesterday [calmly announced](#) to US citizens and to the world that Osama Bin Laden had been killed and his body taken into US custody, after a firefight during a US special operation at a house in Pakistan where Bin Laden had been sheltered, one gathers for a long time.

The President noted that no Americans and no Pakistani civilians had been killed. He said he had informed the President of Pakistan (after the event, it seems pretty clear) and that both agreed Bin Laden's death was good for Pakistan as well as for the US.

Obama underlined the continuity of US policy which he had inherited from George Bush and made his own when taking office, that the top priority of US global intelligence operations was to locate and kill or capture Bin Laden as punishment for Al Qaeda's mass murders of 11 September 2001.

(continues below)

He noted that this was not a fight the US had started; that Bin Laden's Al Qaeda had launched war on the US. He said that all Americans whatever their ethnicity or religion could be proud that justice had been done today.

I heard no Hollywood macho, unseemly chauvinistic gloating, nor any anti-Muslim undertones, in the President's sober presentation of what the US special forces had done in another sovereign country and why. This was, to my ear, a President of moral stature taking personal responsibility, with dignity and even nobility.

What is the political and moral significance of today's news?

Politically, it will revive US self-confidence about its role and power in the world, and will enhance global perceptions of the US as a resolute and ruthless opponent when its citizens or interests are attacked outside the bounds of international law.

It will also counter the idea that US Democratic administrations are weaker than Republicans when it comes to giving effect to tough foreign policy decisions. Obama succeeded where Bush had failed: he ended the US war in Iraq and brought Bin Laden to final US punishment.

Moreover, the ghost of Carter's failed hostage rescue operation in Iran has been finally laid to rest by this audacious, apparently flawlessly conducted military operation in Pakistan.

Obama's evident toughness may help restore more dignity and sense of proportion to the

increasingly trivial and silly tone of how Americans have lately been encouraged by the infotainment industry to see their president.

Robert Fisk suggests it won't make much difference globally: that Bin Laden's lasting achievement remains the generation of a self-sustaining Al Qaeda ideology; that the man himself has been on the run and ineffective as a terrorist leader for some years; and that Arab and Muslim politics has moved beyond him and Al Qaeda.

There is truth in this, yet Bin Laden's execution marks the end of an era, that could not completely be achieved while he still lived as a man at liberty, free to thumb his nose at US power and prestige.

And it would have been intolerable for American prestige, and for Obama's political standing at home, if the tenth anniversary of 9/11 should have passed with Bin Laden still at large and vocally defiant.

There is little doubt that Bin Laden was being protected by the powerful Pakistan [ISI](#) (Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence), effectively a state within a state. It suited ISI's Byzantine political agenda to give Bin Laden safe refuge, in defiance of Pakistan's nominal ally the US.

Al Qaeda has not pulled off any successful terrorist attack in a Western country for many years, thanks to increasingly effective Western counter-terrorism operations. Al Qaeda is reduced to attacks on Westerners in more loosely policed Muslim countries like Morocco. With Bin Laden dead, the world has less to fear from any Al Qaeda inheritors of his bloody mantle. Though continued vigilance will be needed, it is a declining movement.

The event will enhance America's prestige or 'soft power' as a global leader, but it will not arrest America's steadily declining global hegemony on the scales that count most — economic power. The shift of economic and exemplary power to China will continue.

One can also say that the event vindicates China's grand strategy of challenging US global power economically, while staying within the global rules-based order over which the US still presides. The event supports China's advice to states like Iran and even Russia that the best way to challenge US power is legally, staying within the world rules-based order, and not attempting high-risk provocative political or military actions.

In Afghanistan, to the extent that the Taliban disengages from Al Qaeda, the Taliban will remain a powerful militant voice of Afghan nationalism, however much we abhor its values. The case for an internal Afghan political settlement with the Taliban will strengthen as the Pakistan-based Al Qaeda influence now weakens. This suggests the wisdom of prudent, life-conserving rules of engagement for Australian forces in Afghanistan — there is no victory to be won there, just a negotiated peace.

Was the killing morally justified? It ticks my boxes. Obama was bringing an unrepentant

planner of mass murder (who had been amply warned) to justice.

Obama was admirably honest that Bin Laden had been killed after, not during, the firefight. It was clearly an authorised extra-territorial execution. Why wasn't Bin Laden taken alive and returned from Pakistan to face US courts? Given the power and dubious loyalty to the US of Pakistan's ISI, there could have been great uncertainties in getting a live captive Bin Laden out of Pakistan against ISI's wishes. A resulting political crisis could have tipped an already unstable, insecurely allied nation over the edge into chaos.

Here is a case where the cutting of the Gordian knot through an on-the-spot execution may be justified as the lesser evil. The US has the death penalty, and no reasonable person could dispute that Bin Laden inevitably would have faced that penalty after trial in the US.

It was admirable that Obama did not try to pretend that Bin Laden had been accidentally killed during the fighting. He 'fessed up to the facts, and took responsibility. Some may call this an extra-judicial murder of an untried man. I am not among them.

Fast-tracking Prince William and John Paul II

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

After Pope John Paul II's death six years ago, the faithful in St Peter's Square chanted 'Santo subito!', in a spontaneous call for him to be made a saint immediately. This is actually a practice that dates back to the first centuries of the Church's history.

During the persecution of the early Christians, all martyrs to the faith were proclaimed 'Santo Subito!'. It was not until the sixth century that the Church instituted formal procedures that were required to precede the beatification and subsequent canonisation of holy men and women.

Believers' acceptance of these procedures has fluctuated over the centuries but, essentially, popular sentiment has remained in a state of healthy tension with the rules.

The same might be said for the English monarchy, which has had to balance the Act of Settlement 1701, the Royal Marriages Act 1772, and common law, with popular wishes such as 'Long live the Queen!' or 'Kill the king!'.

In the lead up to the royal wedding, there has been much speculation over whether Prince William might displace his father as successor to Queen Elizabeth II, in line with the wishes of the people as indicated by opinion polls. That is unlikely, but it does suggest many would like to see him crowned king immediately, and that it is only royal process that is standing in the way of this popular acclaim.

There is no doubt that William is seen as a proxy for his late mother, Diana, Princess of Wales, who continues to be regarded as a cult hero. As a charismatic figure of compassion and style, her image represents what many long for in a monarch. To date William has not disappointed.

For his part, John Paul II's perceived personal holiness, coupled with his actor's gift for communication, makes him super-human in the eyes of many Catholics — certainly saint material. Immediately following his death in 2005, he was referred to as 'John Paul the Great'. He was only the fourth pope to be given this title, the first since the first millennium.

For the monarchy to be accepted by the large number of royal subjects influenced by the 'cult of Diana', the royal family will need to make some concessions, sooner rather than later, and accept that William is de facto king.

At this stage it is hard to conceive that popular support for the monarchy will hold if William remains in his father's shadow until his father dies, by which stage William himself could be an old man.

In the same way, the beatification of John Paul II was remarkable, in that it was cleared to proceed within such a short period of six years. This rapidity was no doubt influenced by popular acclaim. The previous beatification of a recent Pope — John XXIII in 2000 — took place 27 years after his death, and that itself was not slow.

The fast-tracking of the destiny of both William and John Paul II raises important questions, and it could be argued that it is an offence against due process and the rationality that underscores it. Moreover such haste can cause authorities to get things wrong.

In the case of John Paul II, hit critics argue that the holiness attributed to him by his admirers is tempered by the evil deeds that took place under his watch. For example, many thousands of priests and other personnel raped and psychologically destroyed children under their care in the Church over which John Paul presided. The Church protected many abusers from civil prosecution.

The view is that John Paul feted the notorious Legionaries of Christ founder Father Marcial Maciel, who himself would have been fast-tracked for sainthood had he not been exposed for his sexual abuse of minors and other sexual and financial misconduct.

It is a mystery why John Paul praised Maciel for his 'intense, generous and fruitful priestly ministry' and as an 'efficacious guide to youth' when the late pope is alleged to have known of allegations of sex abuse against minors.

Such mysteries are usually investigated during the long processes that precede most beatifications and canonisations. It is why 'Santo subito!' needs a question rather than an exclamation mark. Meanwhile the challenge for the monarchy is less about investigation than establishing distance from the cult of Diana.

Greens' and Abbott's guilt by association

POLITICS

John Warhurst

The company you keep in politics is crucial. Strong alliances across the political spectrum give you extra leverage on issues; but the concept of guilt by association has a long history in Australian politics. Examples are legion. Generally they concern partnerships, fleeting or otherwise, between the major parties and controversial allies on either the Right or the Left.

There have been several recent examples, including the pattern of alliances involving Greens and Independents supporting the Gillard minority Labor Government. The most controversial ones have concerned Tony Abbott and his allies in the anti-carbon tax demonstrations, and the NSW Greens and their allies in the proposed trade boycott against Israel.

At the height of the Cold War in the 1950s one staple of Coalition allegations against Labor was that their association with the Communist Party of Australia was too close.

There were many aspects to the charge that Labor was 'soft on communism'; a particular one was the so-called 'unity tickets', with left-wing Labor and Communist candidates combining in union elections to defeat right-wing Labor Industrial Group candidates. Rightly or wrongly Labor suffered from guilt by association during election campaigns. Labor leader, Dr H. V. (Bert) Evatt (pictured), personified this association in the public mind.

On the other side the Coalition suffered from time to time from allegations that particular conservative MPs were too close to right-wing groups such as the anti-semitic League of Rights. At one time considerable publicity was given to the claim that the Country Party was being infiltrated by the League of Rights. It was alleged also that the Liberal Party was too close to right-wing immigrant groups with Fascist connections.

More recently, claims of guilt by association surrounded Pauline Hanson and her One Nation Party. In 1996 Hanson, after her anti-Indigenous remarks attracted media publicity, was disendorsed as the Liberal candidate for Oxley by the Liberal central command to avoid such guilt. They wanted as much distance as possible between her and the Liberal Party if mud started flying.

Later the question of preference exchange with One Nation became fraught. Labor promised to 'Put One Nation Last' in order to put the Coalition over a barrel. The Coalition dithered over what strategy to pursue, but eventually fell into line. Hanson's party was ostracised because both sides of politics wanted to avoid the charge of guilt by association.

The two modern examples follow a similar pattern. Abbott became embroiled in controversy over the company he was keeping during the so-called 'people's revolt'

demonstrations against the proposed carbon tax. The issues became not just what groups, including the League of Rights, were allegedly present at the demonstration, but also the undoubtedly crude, prominent anti-Gillard signs.

The question of abusive signage and of the rowdy, even violent, behaviour of extreme elements in otherwise mainstream popular demonstrations poses a recurring dilemma for political leaders.

The Greens, especially the NSW Greens, have become embroiled over their participation in the anti-Israel boycott campaign. One part of the issue is about the participation of Greens MPs in demonstrations that also feature controversial figures like Sheik Hilaly.

The dilemmas of mainstream political figures are not helped by those with more extreme views who infiltrate campaigns and demonstrations. Political leaders don't control the agenda of many of these events. They take a risk in keeping such company. Minor groups piggy-back on mainstream events, high-jacking the proceedings.

These are difficult issues. Political leaders not only can be made to seem guilty of unacceptable associations, but can also be actually guilty sometimes of keeping the wrong company. Sharing a public platform does not signal full agreement between all the speakers on other issues. It is one thing to enter a permanent relationship; it is quite another thing to have a temporary association with a particular common purpose in mind. But you may have to draw the line somewhere.

Leaders can choose the company they keep and, therefore, should be careful. But they may be not just innocent of the charge of guilt by association, but brave too, in stepping out in a just cause with new friends beyond tried and true alliances.

Monarchy's undemocratic war on The Chaser

MEDIA

Ellena Savage

Clarence House's ban on ABC2's *The Chaser's Royal Wedding Commentary* has irreparably undermined the House of Windsor in Australia.

Until the ban, monarchists and the ambivalent masses alike could argue that monarchy was an effectively powerless symbol of the Commonwealth's cultural longevity and propriety, which did not impinge on liberal democratic values.

Ironically, its effective ban on democratic media representation provides a welcome jolt back to reality.

British monarchy is not the benevolent and benign institution we pretended it was, but a neurotic, self-perpetuating liability. It was their benevolence alone that guaranteed our unquestioned support, or at least tolerance, of their persistence as anachronistic figureheads in our parliamentary structure.

The BBC says royal wedding footage is not to be used for 'drama, comedy, satirical or similar entertainment purposes'. It claims this has forever been the standard, yet the 'satire' clause was added just days ago.

Under directives from royal spokespeople, the BBC is comfortable ignoring the fact that the media's exploitation, and our consumption, of contemporary British royalty is far from reverent. They are a real-life melodrama, ripe for the picking.

Lush and grotesque royal housings provide 'women's magazines' the ideal backdrop for the painful divorces, scandalous speculations and failed diet regimes that drive magazine and advertising sales. We consume the Windsors as we do soap operas. We want them to get fat and to struggle. Celebrity culture is fundamentally about *schadenfreude*, even where it is disguised as idolatry.

The Chaser's response to the monarch reads, 'To ensure that our coverage was respectful, we were only planning to use jokes that Prince Phillip has previously made in public, or at least the ones that don't violate racial vilification laws.' The ban has revealed that the royal establishment in all its pomposity is above criticism, and highly capable of implementing censorship to enforce this.

Recent polls reveal Australian support for a republic is at a 17-year low (although outright support for republicanism is still more common than for monarchism). One can only hope the swinging monarchists will be dissuaded by this propagandist interference. But is it enough to dissuade dyed-in-the-wool types?

Since WWII, the Windsor House has played a strategically emotional role in the hearts of the English and, to a lesser extent, Commonwealth subjects. Without doing much, they presented and preserved England and Englishness through post-war trauma, the rebuilding of cities and the collective morale.

Monarchists usually present unimaginative legalistic and touristic arguments for their case and often miss the gravity of their own romantic irrationality: that monarchy ordines England and reminds the English that England will be okay. It represents a romantic idea of collective identity.

Like religious faith, faith in monarchy need not be a rationalised experience. Indeed, to admit irrationality itself is powerful because it is honest and apolitical, lifting the debate from the banal. Rationality is only required in negotiating the public role of belief.

Perhaps, then, romantic supporters of the House of Windsor should pay a levy for their maintenance, and push for the removal of royal constitutional privileges, leaving the Windsors to do what they do best: indulge the popular imagination and sell tabloid media. Then republicans would be spared their expense, and would not be subjected to fascist pre-digestion of royal representation.

The problem with romantic irrationality for the monarchists is that it lacks solid political grounds. In a 'knowledge is power' culture they are forced to rationalise the irrational, and universalise the personal. In this culture they happily turn a blind eye to the reality of monarchy: that it is hereditary, patriarchal, legally enshrines the peerage system, is expensive, and exclusive — Catholics are excluded from participation by the prohibitive Royal Marriages Act of 1772 (legislated long before Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Atheists and Jews were even a factor in ordained British society).

It is as anti-modern as you can get without growing a beard and burning effigies of progress.

Hopefully, Clarence House's censorship of our beloved 'Chaser boys' will pave the way for a creative and critical conversation in Australia about what institutions might best represent what we look like now, and how we collectively imagine our future. I don't believe it will ask to have an inbred, welfare-dependant WASP family above the law and above democratic criticism.

Beatifying the Polish Pope

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

The next big event in Rome is the beatification of Pope John Paul II. Like most Roman events nowadays, it has been preceded by excitement and controversy. The excitement has been most notable among Polish Catholics.

After Mary MacKillop's canonisation, Australians have a better idea of what it all means.



John Paul's reputation for holiness has been judged well-founded, and he may now have a place in public liturgy in some local churches. He is a man of his own time and place, a local tile in the mosaic of the people notable for their faith who compose the universal church.

Karol Wojtyla was a larger than life size figure closely identified with his time and place. He came from a nation whose particular form of faith distinguished it from its often hostile neighbours. The Polish church was disciplined and had a sense of embattlement. He himself was a man of deep faith and prayer, and a natural leader in his church.

From his early years as a seminarian he confronted ruling powers inspired by totalitarian ideologies hostile to Christian faith. They particularly attacked the Polish Catholic links through the Pope to the broader church. They tried constantly to exploit divisions among Catholics.

He learned the importance of a unified Catholic voice and strict discipline, particularly among bishops and clergy. He also saw clearly the moral wasteland the Communist regime had created, the strength of popular disaffection with it, and so the weakness that beset its apparently unshakable power.

When he was elected Pope he brought his Polish experience and history, together with his personal instinct for the dramatic gesture, to the universal church. His gift and moral force, shown in his indomitable recovery from the attempt on his life, eroded the legitimacy of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe. His personal role in the fall of the Berlin wall and in the gaining of freedom from oppression and fear by the peoples and churches in Eastern Europe was significant.

No wonder his beatification has been so enthusiastically received in Poland and in much of Eastern Europe. He was a man of their times and place, as much a Polish Catholic as Mary MacKillop was an Australian. As they did with Mary MacKillop, Catholics in other parts of the world can join the Polish people and others in celebrating and thanking God for the gift of a faithful and brave person.

The controversy about the beatification of Pope John Paul II is not about his virtue or his historical significance. It asks about his legacy to the Catholic Church, and in particular whether a program that was right in Poland in hard times was, and will be, right for other places and for the situations that face other churches. Some have considered that the beatification of the Pope means that his program is now canonised as normative for the church of our day.

This is an open question. It is legitimate to ask whether the directions in which Pope John Paul II led the Catholic Church were beneficial to it or not.

Those who have reservations point to the increased centralisation of the Church under the Pope, withdrawal from the openness to change implicit in the governance of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, and the appointment of compliant bishops to significant sees.

They argue this has made the engagement with Western societies and Asian elites, through ventures like the new evangelisation and popular gatherings like World Youth Day, bound to fail. Catholics are left to deal with a world they are not encouraged to understand except in polemical terms.

This, of course, is as one-sided an account of John Paul II's pontificate as are the hagiographical versions. Both accounts are less about the Pope than about the future of the Catholic Church.

We have now had time to survey the local attempts throughout the world to invigorate the Church along the strong lines proposed and embodied in John Paul II. In my view, they have had little success, and have tended to alienate the Church further from the culture in which it must commend the Gospel. The proclamation of the Gospel to our grandchildren's world will demand exploring the questions posed by modernity to which John Paul's legacy has left us too ready answers.

But whatever our views on these matters, the faith, courage and humanity of Karol Wojtyla, expressed in his distinctively Polish and combative form, can be celebrated by all people as one tessera in the mosaic that is the struggle for freedom. They can be celebrated by all Catholics as one tile in the mosaic that is a faithful church.

His beatification also encourages us to ask whether other tiles in the mosaic may prove to be more significant for the Christian proclamation of the Gospel today.

Refugee rage

POLITICS

Kerry Murphy

Minister Bowen's announcement of 'tougher measures' for refugees in detention harks back to a time when the previous Government kept finding new ways of vilifying asylum seekers. He is proposing changes to the character test and a new 'temporary visa'. It is sad that within such a short time, the Labor Government has moved away from the promising rhetoric of former Minister Evans at ANU in July 2008.

Senator Evans [stated](#): 'A person who poses no danger to the community will be able to remain in the community while their visa status is resolved ... The department will have to justify why a person should be detained. Once in detention, a detainee's case will be reviewed every three months to ensure that the further detention of the individual is justified.'

As more boats came, and the Opposition ramped up the rhetoric to shrill antediluvian levels, the policy reforms were eroded. People were left in detention for longer and longer periods. The changes proposed do not address some of the causes of frustration in the first place.

I have clients in detention who have been there for over a year. Some took that long to finally get approval as refugees, now they are waiting for security clearances. When I contact Immigration about the security delays I am told they know nothing, as the case is being processed by an 'another agency' — code for ASIO. Immigration cannot tell me how long this process will take.

I have no reason to doubt ASIO are doing what they should, but they are clearly under-resourced, because it is taking 9–12 months or even longer to get the security checks. This period is commonly longer for clients out of detention.

When I complain about these delays to the Inspector General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS) I am told in classic *Yes Minister* style:

'We will not provide any other feedback but will contact you if we require any further information about the case. I suggest you maintain contact with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) for information about the status of the visa application.'

In other words: Don't call us and we won't call you!

So DIAC tell me they are unable to tell me anything, and IGIS tell me to contact DIAC. As an immigration lawyer, I am frustrated by this circular process. What must it be like, then, to be locked in detention and told after a year 'You are a refugee, you will be released, but we do not know when ... be patient.' And, 'There is nothing further we can tell you.'

The inability of Immigration to move the cases along is a major cause of the frustration among detainees, which led to the riots.

There are a number of major reports from experienced psychologists about the significant adverse consequences of prolonged detention. Now the Minister wants to punish them further.

The character test is already strong enough. Every person must pass the test before they get a visa for Australia. Now refugees will have a higher hurdle than anyone else, despite being found to meet the refugee criteria. Furthermore, they will be punished by a temporary visa which precludes family reunion — one of the worst parts of the old TPV regime.

The Refugee Convention provides that someone should not be refused refugee status unless they have 'committed a serious non-political crime', been involved in 'war crimes, or crimes against humanity', or are a serious security risk. In my many years of practice, I have seen less than a handful of such cases, because they are rare.

Burning of property, and alleged assaults are serious and not to be condoned. However, they are not so serious as to warrant someone not getting the full benefit of refugee protection.

A similar change was introduced by the Howard Government in 2001, leaving a number of refugees delayed in the process due to minor offences. The criminal justice system can deal with these cases under existing laws. The character test is strong enough; an individual fails if they have received a prison sentence of 12 months. That is good enough for every other visa, why not for refugees?

The Minister needs to show leadership, let the criminal justice system deal with the cases, and not pander to the Opposition's 'race to the bottom' politics. There are changes needed, but they relate to the need to speed up processing of security checks to avoid having people in detention for so long.

The weasel, the corpse and the manager who grew a heart

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***The Human Resources Manager* (M). Director: Eran Riklis. Starring: Mark Ivanir, Gila Almagor, Noah Silver, Guri Alfi, Bogdan E. Stanoevitch. 99 minutes**

‘Human resources’ is a corporate-speak oxymoron, by which employees — each one a unique and inherently dignified human being — are objectified, and judged according to their usefulness to their employer. Human resources managers, ideally, will balance the needs of the company (a collective, money-making entity) with respect and reverence for individual employees’ basic human dignity.

On the surface, the dull title *The Human Resources Manager* promises all the intrigue of a professional training video. But the implicit ethical dimension to the role of human resources managers bears deeper consideration, and indeed is one of the film’s central tenets.

The titular Human Resources Manager (Ivanir) is initially focused more on his company’s public image than on human dignity. The company in question is an industrial bakery in Israel, and it is large enough that HRM’s relationships with many of those who surround him have become largely depersonalised. The film emphasises this by pointedly not giving any of its characters actual names. Immersed in corporatism, HRM has lost touch with humanity.

HRM’s response to a potential public relations disaster is certainly impersonal, despite the upsetting details. A pay slip from the bakery has shown up in the possession of an unidentified migrant woman who was killed in a much publicised terrorist bombing a week ago. A nosy journo, dubbed by HRM as The Weasel (Alfi), has noted the bakery management’s apparent failure to notice their employee’s absence, and is threatening to run a story about indifference and neglect. HRM slips straight into damage-control mode.

As it happens, the disturbing oversight is not HRM’s or even management’s fault. But media spin counts for a lot. In order to counteract the pending defamatory story, the bakery offers to transport the dead woman back to her family in Romania and to pay for the funeral. That’s not all: it will also send a personal representative, in the form of the reluctant HRM. All involved are no doubt aware of the irony of combatting accusations of inhumanity with a publicity stunt dressed as human outreach.

What follows is a tragi-comic road trip. HRM encounters the dead woman’s cantankerous Ex-Husband (Stanoevitch) and feral street-kid son, The Boy (Silver), then embarks on an eventful cross-country journey towards the woman’s remote home village. He is accompanied by The Weasel, The Boy, and an assortment of others, crammed into the van along with the

coffin containing the woman's remains.

In the tradition of road movies, they encounter a variety of incidents, both comic and dramatic. They have a run-in with overzealous law enforcement officers — due to their cadaverous cargo they are determined to be grave robbers — and seek shelter from a blizzard in an underground military complex, where HRM suffers what proves to be a violent but epiphanic bout of food poisoning.

Also, in the tradition of road movies, of greater importance are the stories of human growth and bonding that occur, as HRM comes to better know and understand his fellow travellers. This, in turn, awakens in him a greater sense of the humanity that has been lacking from his corporatised role.

Grudging, mutual respect, if not friendship, develops between HRM and The Weasel. More poignantly, a fatherly bond forms between HRM and The Boy, who has been abused by his own father, and for whom HRM develops an affection that echoes his love for his own neglected daughter. His mission at the behest of his company gradually morphs into a determined quest on behalf of The Boy.

Also, on behalf of The Boy's mother, the dead woman: in the film's early stages HRM was not even able to identify her by sight; by its end, he has come to know that she was a woman who had ridden to Jerusalem on the back of hopes and dreams of a fuller life. In short, she was a human being, and not merely a resource. In this realisation especially, there is a note of redemption.

Rethinking religious education

EDUCATION

Gary Bouma

Given the current debate raging about religious education in Victorian state schools and its relevance for other states, it is time to go back to first principles and ask, What are the aims?

If the aim is to inform students about religions, there is little question that this is best done within the curriculum by people trained to deliver such content in a way that engenders respect for religion, as well as for other beliefs and ethics. In a society like Australia, this means education about many religions. Those working to revise the National Curriculum are wrestling with this.

If the aim is to educate about morals and ethics, critical reflection about these matters belongs in the curriculum, but indoctrination into one or another system of ethics belongs at home, and in the educational programs of religious and other groups.

In the West, Hollywood took over ethics and moral education from churches in the 1930s and 1940s, producing movies that addressed moral issues. Now television sit-coms provide the place where most Australians are exposed to ethical issues and their resolutions.

A group whose beliefs motivate them to take a different moral and ethical view must take on the challenge to provide alternative forms of education — a straight uphill battle requiring a great deal of effort, care and time. An extra-curricular, half-hour session per week will not achieve this aim.

If the goal of religious education in schools is to produce an adult believer in a particular religion, several issues become clear. First, this is the only reason that religious groups should financially support religious education in schools.

And, if this is the goal, I find it hard to legitimate tax dollars being spent to provide such education, even if the support goes to more than one religious group. It is a clear case of the state promoting religions, and of religions relying on state support to survive.

It is the responsibility of each religious group to train its people, educate them in the faith, and develop their own ethical and moral approaches.

If the goal is to produce believers in a particular religion, the opt-out system in Victoria is unethical because it pressures students to attend the mostly Christian classes. An opt-in system would be ethical as it would allow parents to make an informed decision regarding their children's education, so long as the options were explained and information was provided about what the curriculum included.

Third, if the goal is to produce adult believers, the question becomes, is the current system

an effective way to achieve this. The answer is no. Why?

Primarily, because growing an adult Christian (the arguments also apply to other religious group) in a multicultural, multi-faith society takes much more effort than was the case in 1947 when 88 per cent of Australians identified with a Christian denomination.

Christianity may have been the dominant ethos of those educated before 1971 when the second percentage decline in those identifying as Christians started in earnest — the first was between 1921 (96.9 per cent) and 1933 (86.4 per cent).

Concomitant cultural declines reduced the 'normalcy' of Christianity. Groups that knew themselves to be at odds with the dominant ethos, or now the various *ethoi*, invested heavily in faith based schooling — Catholics and, more recently, evangelical Protestants — or in parallel educational structures: an outstanding example is provided by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Other examples of groups putting substantial effort in education for faith development include the small groups and home study programs run by Hillsong, St Hilary's Kew, and other mega-churches. Jews have always invested in educating their young into adult faith. It is simple: those who do not take adult faith development seriously and invest in it, decline and disappear.

Moreover, offering religious education for any purpose outside the curriculum in an unassessed program taught by volunteers is not designed to engender respect for the subject matter. Would you like your children to be taught maths or science by volunteers and have it be an unassessed extra?

In short, the current religious instruction offered in Victorian state schools can no longer be seen as a well considered strategy to grow adult believers in a multifaith society. Those seeking to do so have a difficult task before them which requires far more investment of time, energy and talent if the effort is to be taken seriously and have any chance of success.

Breast sandwich

FICTION

Mary Manning



This hospital is like a city where some people wear their names on lanyards around their necks and walk the corridors purposefully while others hobble, stagger or are pushed on trolleys or in wheelchairs. Then there are people like me who wander around, confused because there are no recognisable landmarks, street names or road signs, only painted lines to follow.

Every time I come here I go to a different address depending on the procedure of the day. Today I find myself in a corridor with doors to an outdoor seating area, so I duck out to call my mother.

'Mum. Just reminding you about the op shop today.'

'But I've just put out my medicine for tomorrow and there's something wrong. I should have one capsule that's half-red and half-blue, one that's green all over and three white pills. But I've only got two white pills.'

'Do you know which one is missing?'

'The big long one I have to chew up because I can't swallow it. It's shaped like those surfboards you children used to have. At Lorne. Do you remember?'

'I do. That's the calcium pill. I'll get you some more on the way home. Are you ready to leave for the op shop now?'

'Are you sure today is op shop day? I just have to lock the door.'

'Have you put the phone in your bag?'

'I'm not silly.'

I take the first lift going up, get out at what is probably the wrong floor, turn around a few times and am suddenly in the familiar landscape of the radiography department.

'Just take a seat until you are called,' says the receptionist.

What will be my punishment for being a few minutes late? Will I be made to wait for ten minutes? Thirty?

I think of my mother on her way to op shop duty. She told me last week she'd been promoted to second-hand book manager and her new job is to stack donated books on shelves. She prefers to work behind the counter, taking the money and writing down what people buy,

but they said she should have a rest from that for a while.

Now a beautiful young woman calls my name.

'I'm Shareena,' she says. 'I'm your radiographer for today. For your breast screen.' She speaks with a lilt, and clearly enough for the whole waiting room to know my business.

An old man, leg in plaster, looks away from the television when he hears the word breast. His eyes linger over my sensible tailored shirt and I wonder if I have left a button undone.

'Step this way.' Shareena indicates the x-ray room. 'Please to take everything off above the waist. Put on the robe open this way to the front.'

White cotton, many times washed and flattened by some giant press. Two strings that should tie up somewhere, or to each other. I clutch it together.

'Step up to this machine,' she says. 'Have you seen it before?'

'The machine and I are old friends. I give it a big hug at least once a year.'

'Ah, yes,' she says looking at my card, 'so you do.'

How stupid I look in boots, tights and tweed skirt, and nothing on top.

'Relax your muscles. Now facing the machine, put your right hand on your tummy and your left hand at your side. I have to flatten you, get it all in the picture. Breathe in. Hold breath. Did that hurt?'

I tell her I felt like a slab of Turkish bread in a sandwich press.

'Now the doctor will compare these pictures with the last lot to see if anything is changing. You will be waiting for a short time.' She taps expertly on the keyboard.

'Can I make a phone call while I wait? My mum.' I don't know why I tell her that.

'Put your shirt on and phone from the waiting room away from this machine.'

'Are you there yet, Mum?'

'I am having a rest on the bus stop. It is a bit hot. Do you know where I can get one of those ice creams you peel the paper off and squash in between two wafer biscuits. What are they called? The girl at 7-Eleven has never heard of them.'

I persuade her to buy an icy pole, a fruity one.

I am back in my robe when Shareena returns. 'Doctor says one more view to make picture clearer from another angle.' She busies herself attaching new parts to the machine.

'Now this time from the side. Step closer. No, do not lean with your back, step with your feet. Left breast on machine, lean over, pull left shoulder back, twist, hold other breast out of

the way, back straighter, face with chin to wall, hold in breath. Ah! Now finished. You will wait while doctor decides.'

I sit for a long time clutching my robe. I am getting tired of this routine. At times I feel like a sculpture in an outdoor art exhibition stroked and rubbed by the fingers of strangers.

Shareena bounces in, young, beautiful. 'Doctor is sorry to make you wait. All is well. You go home now. Another patient coming in here now.'

I find the way out to the street and phone my mother again. 'Are you there yet?'

'I'm sitting on the bus seat. I can't remember what you told me to buy.' She sounds sad and confused.

'So you haven't been to the op shop yet?'

'They said it's the wrong day. I don't have to go on Tuesday any more.'

'Which day then? Did they change your day?'

'They say they wrote me a letter. Did I show you a letter?'

'Not from the op shop. What did they say in the letter? Did they tell you?'

'That I should have four weeks off and then they'll see. Maybe three weeks. They think I'm a bit tired and need a rest.'

I imagine her in the bus shelter. She's become hunched over lately because her bones need more than the calcium in the surfboard-shaped pills. Her fragile bones are being crushed under the weight of her sparrow body.

Note: The above story is a work of fiction.