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Anwar invokes true meaning of sharia law

VIDEO

Peter Kirkwood

This interview with controversial Malaysian Opposition Leader, Anwar Ibrahim, continues the series recorded for *Eureka Street* at the Parliament of the World's Religions held in Melbourne at the beginning of December 2009.

He speaks about the urgency of interreligious dialogue, how to deal with religious and cultural pluralism, the need for frank discussion and debate amongst Muslims, and the true meaning of sharia, of Islamic law. (Continues below)

The recent spate of fire-bombings of Christian churches in Malaysia highlights the need to promote dialogue and understanding between religious groups. In a recent press statement, Anwar denounced the actions of militant Muslims, saying he was 'outraged by the tragic attacks on our Christian brothers and sisters'.

He reminded Muslims of the teaching in the 29th Chapter of the Quran: 'And dispute not with the People of the Book but say, 'We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and that which came down to you ... our God and your God is one'.'

62 year old Anwar showed leadership from an early age. At university, he was president of the Muslim students' organisation. After graduating he was one of the founders, and the second president, of a leading Islamic youth organisation called Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia.

In 1982 the charismatic Anwar entered politics, and was taken under the wing of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. He rose rapidly through the ranks, and held several ministries before becoming Deputy Prime Minister in 1993. But tensions grew between him and Mahathir as Anwar spoke out against nepotism and cronyism within the government, and they had differences of opinion over economic management.

In 1998 he was ousted from the government, and in 1999 was convicted of corruption and sentenced to six years in prison. In 2000 he was sentenced to another nine years for sodomy. In 2004 the Federal Court of Malaysia quashed the sodomy charges and he was released from gaol.

In 2008, he stood as a candidate in a by-election in the Malaysian seat of Permatang Pauh. He won with a landslide, re-entered parliament, and became Opposition Leader. Shortly after, fresh allegations of sodomy led to further charges which are now before the courts. Anwar denies all the charges against him, saying they were trumped up by political opponents.

In December 2009 Anwar was named by influential US magazine, *Foreign Policy*, as one of

its Top 100 Global Thinkers. It says he has 'a bold message for change in a country now at the forefront of the struggle for democracy in the Muslim world. Today, Anwar's career is blossoming, despite a new, politically motivated indictment. Abroad, he has become an outspoken advocate of religious tolerance.'

Tony Abbott and the price of virginity

POLITICS

Catherine Marshall

Tony Abbott and I have something in common: we've both been having the sex talk with our teenage daughters.

As my 16-year-old firstborn navigates the world of opposite-sex attraction and ever-deepening relationships, my husband and I have sat her down and dispensed advice not dissimilar to that favoured by the Opposition Leader: think carefully and rationally before making any permanent decisions, respect yourself deeply, don't allow fleeting love to disrupt your academic pursuits, and, if you decide to go ahead and have sex, for God's sake use contraception.

It's a bittersweet ritual, the virginity talk: the final frontier of parental influence, this hollow script is recited to savvy teenagers across the world each year, energised only by the degree of love and expectation with which it is delivered.

It is in the murky subtext of this generic message that Tony Abbott and I part ideological ways. For no matter how seriously I take my parental advisory role, and no matter how desperately I long to extend my daughter's precious childhood, I realise that by proselytising on sex I am employing an outdated and irrelevant technique, broaching a subject on which she is already well informed and over which my right to exert control is rapidly diminishing.

Like other enlightened parents, I have acknowledged that sex does occur; not among all teenagers and not all the time, but regularly enough to render any furious denials quite pointless. Trying to suppress sex, particularly among hormone-fuelled teens and young adults, is like halting a tsunami with the palm of one's hand.

For many, virginity ceased to be a virtue a long time ago; an unmarried woman's dignity no longer depends on her chastity. Not because women have turned into lascivious pigs, but because we have come to see that the shame of 'impurity' suffered by women for millennia is negative and shackling. We have also learned that we are perfectly capable of making our own choices — not least when they relate to sex.

Socialised by the inflexible mores of the 1980s, during which I was a teenager, I still reflexively quake at the thought of gratuitous bed-hopping and mindless adolescent sex. But it's precisely this debauched, fantastical notion of sex, rather than the more realistic and mundane version of it, on which the morality police fixate when eviscerating the fragile new sexuality of teenagers. As guardians of a wholesome society, it is their duty to target these girls — and it is almost always girls — in a vain attempt to preserve civilisation's remaining

vestiges of purity.

After all, thousands of years after her death, the Virgin Mary's defining characteristic still serves as a talisman, carrying with it a mystique that spans religions and cultures: there are the American girls, some as young as six, who pledge to 'save' themselves for their husbands on their wedding night; the Jihadists who hope to be rewarded with 72 virgins in heaven; the women who sell their virginity on eBay to the highest bidder; the adolescents who are forced to submit to virginity tests; and the little African girls whose virginity is thought capable of curing grown men of Aids.

This bizarre glorification of virginity and the latent distaste of our daughters' sexuality removes the very power with which we strive to arm them. If we can't trust them to make rational decisions about their own bodies, how can we ever expect them to excel at school, to raise children of their own, to travel abroad, to prosecute criminals, to perform brain surgery?

And who should be tasked with the job of preaching to the next generation on the subject of morality: parents, politicians, schools, churches? Do we side with Tony Abbott, whose public expression of a private view has wrought deep communal divisions, or Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who claims to speak for 'all' Australian women in denouncing Abbott's views? Do we condense our daughters' essence to the physical existence of a hymen, or take a broader view by valuing them for everything they already are and will one day become?

For me, the answer is simple. I hope to raise daughters who are strong and sensible, who are comfortable with their bodies and capable of making good decisions about who they will share them with.

Certainly, let's encourage all teenagers — boys as well as girls — to treat sex with the gravity is deserves, to vigorously avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, to eschew promiscuity and the psychological distress that is often its bedfellow. But please let's not reduce virginity to a commodity and turn pre-marital sex into a shameful aberration.

Churches confused on Human Rights Act

THE MEDDLING PRIEST

Frank Brennan

Last year, I had the opportunity to take a bird's eye view of the nation, chairing the diverse committee charged with reporting back to government the community's thinking about human rights protection in Australia.

It is fashionable to claim discussion about an Australian human rights Act is just the concern of elites. Of the 35,000 people who sent submissions of any sort, 33,356 expressed a view for or against a human rights act, and 87 per cent of those who expressed a view were in support.

The majority of the 6000 persons who attended one of the 60 community roundtable discussions held the length and breadth of the country supported such an Act. The independent research resulting from a random telephone survey of 1200 persons turned up 57 per cent in support, 14 per cent unopposed, and 30 per cent undecided.

My committee recommended that the Australian Parliament enact a federal Human Rights Act.

Our recommendations have evoked diverse reactions in church circles. While Catholic bioethicist Nicholas Tonti-Filippini has described a Charter in the form recommended by my committee as 'a toothless tiger', Cardinal Pell has described our recommendations as a Trojan horse which 'will be used against religious schools, hospitals and charities by other people who don't like religious freedom and think it shouldn't be a human right'.

I doubt that the Australian public is much interested in a toothless tiger or a Trojan horse.

Over the years, I have often been involved in public advocacy of policy positions consistent with Catholic social teaching and with the Church's moral tradition. I don't claim that all bishops have agreed with my analysis as to how Church teaching is to be applied when making law or public policy, rather than how it is to be applied when simply enunciating what is moral or preferable behaviour for the individual wanting to live a good life.

This is the first time I've been on the other side of a public inquiry process, trying to respond to various Church voices putting sometimes contrary views on an issue of law or public policy. What were we to make of the varying formal positions on a Human Rights Act put forward by the governing bodies of the three major churches?

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) 'noted that much discussion has been about whether or not there should be a Charter of Rights. On that particular issue, the ACBC does not take a particular stand at this stage.'

The Anglican General Synod said: 'We support the enactment of human rights legislation because this has the potential to have a beneficial effect on government policy and the legislation and administration which give effect to that policy.'

The Uniting Church National Assembly submitted: 'The Uniting Church believes that a Human Rights Act, operating within Australia's system of open and democratic government, will provide greater protection for fundamental rights and freedoms, promote dignity, address disadvantage and exclusion, and help to create a 'human rights culture' in Australia.'

As if that was not confusing enough, Cardinal Pell expressed outright opposition to a Charter in any form. Moving beyond the neutral position of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, the Archdioceses of Sydney and Melbourne cooperated in activities with the Australian Christian Lobby before and after the release of our report.

The Lobby, which describes itself as 'a parachurch group', was opposed to a Human Rights Act in any form. For me and my committee members, it was difficult to get a handle on just who the Lobby represents.

It became too complex a task to try to represent in the report the viewpoint of the various churches on a Human Rights Act. Thus we omitted all reference to same. I daresay this will become a common response by public inquiries which doubt the public's interest in investigating the complex arrangements now in place for church leaders to express diverse views under various guises.

Following the release of our report, Cardinal Pell repeated his strong opposition to a Human Rights Act in any form. He wrote: 'I fear a charter could be used or abused to limit all sorts of freedom, and religious freedom. Already in Victoria legislation is attempting to coerce prolife doctors to cooperate in abortions. However that government will answer for this in the next and subsequent elections.'

Obviously there is room in the Church not just for disagreement about the application of laws but also about the electoral repercussions of controversial laws. The abortion reform was an Act of the Victorian parliament which did not split on party lines. My own political opinion, for what little it may be worth, is that the Brumby government will not answer for the abortion law reform 'in the next and subsequent elections'.

Where will that then leave church leaders who put their faith in parliaments unconstrained by charters of rights and in an electorate increasingly secularised and indifferent to religious moral pleas?

Some Church leaders, Cardinal Pell among them, think Church positions on contested moral issues have a better chance of being reflected and maintained in law and policy if parliaments are not constrained by a Human Rights Act. Judging by recent debates on abortion, RU486, and stem cells, I would beg to differ. Gone are the days when church leaders

behind closed doors can do deals with political leaders about laws and policies.

I understand the concerns of those Church leaders who fear the secularising effect of the soft left 'liberal' agenda will be accelerated by the passage of a Human Rights Act. I think those concerns are misplaced. A Human Rights Act can be designed to ensure parliamentarians have due regard for freedom of religion and conscience, including the conscience of the religious citizen who is out of sympathy with a prevailing soft left liberal agenda.

Selling short Nelson Mandela and rugby

FILM

Tim Kroenert

***Invictus* (PG). Running time: 133 minutes. Director: Clint Eastwood. Starring: Morgan Freeman, Matt Damon**

As a film director Clint Eastwood is capable of bringing a light touch to worthy subjects. That was evident in last year's *Gran Torino* ,where the redemptive arc of a seemingly irredeemable racist, Korean War veteran Walt (played by Eastwood), was imparted for the most part with warmth and copious humour.

In *Invictus* Eastwood again turns with a light tough to race relations, this time in post-Apartheid South Africa. The film recounts the South African Springboks' historic 1995 Rugby World Cup run, as well as then-fledgling president Nelson Mandela's role in rallying the team to victory. It is part biopic, part sports film, part feelgood drama. It really succeeds on only one of these fronts.

The film recreates the early days of Mandela's (Freeman) presidency. He arrives at work to find that the white members of government staff are convinced that his first point of order will be to dismiss them. He puts their minds at ease by offering the staff an introductory pep talk, the gist of which is that reconciliation in South Africa is going to begin among his own staff.

To underscore his point, he assigns four white men to join four black men as his personal bodyguards. A subplot in *Invictus*follows the gradual growth of trust and even camaraderie between these eight men. This is an enjoyable, if heavy-handedly symbolic, portrayal of reconciliation found through shared endeavour and dialogue.

Mandela decides rugby is key to his vision of reconciliation. The Springboks are beloved of white South Africans, but despised by black South Africans. Rather than slight the onetime oppressors by disbanding the team, Mandela puts the onus of forgiveness on the formerly oppressed: break the cycle of hatred by embracing 'their' team as 'ours'.

He then sets a simple challenge to the struggling Springboks' put-upon captain, Francois Pienaar (Damon): Inspire your people by winning the World Cup.

The film traces the Springboks' campaign, and Mandela's growing enthusiasm for the sport. What starts out as a political calculation becomes also a hobby for the president. Pienaar, meanwhile, grows to overcome his doubts and to appreciate the importance of the campaign, not just for sport's sake, but as part of the healing of his wounded nation.

Invictus is less interested in Mandela's political nous, than in the personal interactions

between him and members of his staff. We hear little of his activist history, although there is a sense of this in the respect with which other characters regard him. On the other hand we get glimpses of his sadness and regret with respect to his estranged wife and children.

In that regard, it is a warm and human portrayal, but one that sells the real Mandela short. We are left with the impression that his entire strategy, in terms of reconciling black and white South Africans, was based on barracking for their ruby team. It makes for a good story, but lends complexity to neither the protagonist nor to the plight of his countrymen.

Still, *Invictus* is certainly a compelling and entertaining drama. Among its strengths are the performances of Freeman (in the role he was surely born to play) and Damon.

The film also manages to find joy in small moments: a football clinic for slum children led by the newly socially conscious Springboks; a black child sneaking a listen to a World Cup match on a radio owned by two initially hostile white men, and later finding himself included in their celebrations as the match reaches its climax.

Invictus relies heavily on symbolism. For a sports film, this proves to be a weakness. Its portrayal of on-field rugby action is truncated and merely representative. Sports fans hoping to see large-scale set-pieces may be disappointed. *Invictus* favours mash-ups of scrums and field goals rather than sustained passages of play.

Also, aside from a few fleeting training sessions, we are not shown just how the Springboks elevated themselves from mediocrity to world-beating glory. Are we to presume the inspiration of the president and the increasing goodwill of a more united South Africa carried them all the way? Rousing speeches all well and good, but surely there had to be some hard work involved as well.

Similarly, are we to accept that the inspiration of sporting victory is alone sufficient to solve conflict and soothe the way to redemption and rebirth for a divided nation? If so, then it must be said that this is history rendered as a fairytale, and one with a fairly glib moral at that.

China turns tables on Australia's Indian racism

MEDIA

Peter Hodge

Many Australians reacted with displeasure to the accusations of racism directed at us by the Indian media.

Voices (media, government and civil society) emanating from emerging powers such as India and China grow ever more confident and cutting in their criticisms of the old order, as their economic might grows and the sense of inferiority, a by-product of colonisation, ebbs away.

It is important to realise that, like Australia, India does not speak with one voice. Nevertheless, we have been hammered by India's tabloid media, and the treatment has been unfair.

It seems naÃ¯ve to deny the possibility of racist elements in some or many of the attacks on Indian students, as it does to assume that racist motives are the catalyst for every attack that takes place. The true situation is certainly more complex than either alternative.

Expecting Indians to understand this, however, comes with an obligation, that Australians (public, media and government) should demonstrate greater awareness of the complexity which characterises most of the foreign issues we comment on. This is the lesson Australians must draw from the ongoing row.

Just as many westerners were easily persuaded that we should be fearful of Muslims, post 9/11, the recent association of 'Australia' with 'racism' will ring true to many Indians. With the power of suggestion, it is no great leap to extrapolate from the particular (specific instances where verbal or physical abuse has been racially motivated) to the general (all attacks are racially motivated).

To withhold judgement and apply critical analysis requires effort. Australians are less accustomed to being the victims of such lazy thinking and politically motivated attacks than we are to employing these tools ourselves.

Some China supporters — veteran defenders of China's human rights record, its treatment of Tibetans, Uighurs and so on — will have monitored the development of this issue with interest. They were incandescent with rage when western campaigners took full advantage of the Beijing Olympic Games to promote the Tibet issue.

Now the tables have turned, and some may wonder how Australians feel about the tarnishing of our reputation. Rightly or wrongly, the Chinese in 2008, as Australians have in recent times, felt that reporting of these issues was sensationalist, distorted and unfair.

Among their complaints, activists for China point to inaccuracies in western media reporting. They argue that westerners are forgetful of China's long experience of foreign interference, that we fail to acknowledge China's significant achievements in lifting millions out of poverty, and that the western mindset with regards to China is locked in the Cultural Revolution or Tiananmen Square. They have a point.

The Chinese media certainly took notice when the difficulties experienced by foreign students in Australia came to prominence last year. The multi-billion dollar education industry in Australia 'is under threat by a re-emergence of racist attitudes against international students', wrote Shen Gang for the *China Daily*.

There is awkwardness in the Australian response to reporting of the attacks on Indians. No one wants to be seen to blame the victims. Regardless, the blanket accusations of racism disseminated by sections of the Indian media should not go unchallenged; it is appropriate to point out that India is hardly a bastion of tolerance.

Comments issued by local Indians have been more nuanced in their analysis of the issue, and they deserve our full attention. The local Indian community has first-hand experience of the abuses that have taken place.

Oversimplification by politicians and media sources only serves to inflame reactions to these issues. However, complexity does not absolve authorities from the responsibility to take action, to identify and address the root causes of the violence and prejudice that is tearing the social fabric of so many of our communities.

In a healthy democracy we have not merely a right but a responsibility to reflect on, debate and speak out on all such issues. Australians can demand a higher standard of critical thinking from our critics but we must practise what we preach. Only then can we hope that advice we offer to countries like China will be treated with at least a modicum of credibility.

The climate change vanishing act

BY THE WAY

Brian Matthews

A couple of years ago, in the obscure, unexplained way these things sometimes occur, I was reminded suddenly of Dutch filmmaker George Sluizer's marvellous and scarifying 1988 movie, *The Vanishing* (Dutch: *Spoorloos*).

A Dutch couple — Rex and Saskia — are driving in France on holiday. When they stop for fuel, Saskia goes to buy drinks and does not return. Increasingly distressed, Rex looks everywhere for her but never sees her again, despite being obsessed by the search ever after.

Many years later, he discovers the truth which, of course, not to spoil it for you, I won't reveal. If you decide to hunt for the film with Rex-like obsession, make sure you get Sluizer's original Dutch version and not his greatly inferior English language remake. And don't blame me for the nightmares you may have for some weeks after.

The mind has mountains, cliffs and sheer falls, and my imagination had been distracted into precipitate and detailed recall of the film by that one word: vanishing. On that distant day back around 2007, I was contemplating the stretch of dried-out weeds and sun-baked earth which a higher power in our household had earmarked for, some day, a pool. Not just any old pool. A pool with a — vanishing edge.

The vanishing-edge pool is also known as the infinity pool or the negative-edge pool. To quote from one commercial description: 'The names refer to the effect of blending pool water seamlessly into the horizon without the visible intrusion of a wall.' And it looks terrific. The absence of a wall creates a stunning effect of space and distance as sky and surface merge.

In no time at all, when this wonder was explained to me, I saw in my imagination's eye the pool surrounded with paving, and a sturdy but elegant fence for the safety of the grandchildren, and shade at one end from the surrounding lemon-scented gums and, of course, the illimitable, long and level reaches of the blue water.

'Without the visible intrusion of a wall', however, water simply tumbles quietly over the infinite edge. This means it has to be collected down below and pumped back up into the pool which, like a duck swimming, remains serene on top while furious and ceaseless activity is roiling away underneath.

For all this to happen — especially the pumping part — serious equipment is required and it is for this reason that 'infinite' has an even more apposite meaning. It accurately refers to the cost. This, we saw as our researches proceeded, was the actual 'negative edge'.

Still, it might all have remained in reach of optimistic possibility had it not been for another species of vanishing. The Global Financial Crisis rolling in with its variable and quixotic temperature tantrums — red hot interest rates, freezing of funds — threatened to make freelancers like us an endangered species.

Funds vanished or were buried in icy vaults beyond our puzzled reach. Talk about merging seamlessly with the horizon. That's what the infinity pool plans did — and were never seen again.

You know how when you become aware of something it seems to bob up everywhere. Well, from that admittedly rather self-indulgent moment (infinity pools, vanishing edges — really!) there seemed to be more vanishing taking place than was ever dreamed of in George Sluizer's philosophy. No sooner was Kevin Rudd elected than the GFC looked like wiping out his bank account.

Meeting this challenge with an effectiveness scarcely equalled by any other major economy, he was then accused of being the architect of another vanishing: 'We'll all be rooned', moaned Barnaby 'Hanrahan' Joyce contemplating emptying national coffers.

Meanwhile, leaders of the opposition vanished serially, as if snatched and entombed; Kevin Rudd routinely merged seamlessly with the horizon; Martin Hamilton-Smith, Malcolm Turnbull and Godwin Gretch all fell for the old vanishing email trick; the Murray threatened to disappear; the Coorong went missing along with several Himalayan glaciers, although the latter returned once Family First's Senator Steve Fielding got on the case.

Using graphs based on Channel 9's Snicko, Senator Fielding proved that climate change had been going on for millions of years. Senator Penny Wong agreed but suggested it had been going on differently as could be demonstrated by using not Snicko but Hot Spot.

Not familiar with TV cricket terms and technology, Senator Fielding announced he was between a hard place and a hot rock and, anyway, when he said 'Snicko' he actually meant El NiÃ±o. So there.

The debate petered out and, you've guessed it, vanished when Tony Abbott incautiously declared it was all 'crap'. Re-thinking, he amended crap to tax — it was just a big tax. This proposition merged seamlessly with the climatically ambiguous horizon and, without the intrusion of a wall, went right over the edge and out of sight. Well, for now anyway.

'Hysterical' Indian media speak the truth

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

General Peter Cosgrove's Sunshine and Shade Australia Day address last week could represent a turning point in our maturity as a nation if we can join him in admitting the existence of a 'strand of racism' in Australia.

Officially racism ended with the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972. But in practice it went underground. We are delusional when we think of Australian society as egalitarian. If we can acknowledge racism, there is a good chance that we will be able to manage it.

Cosgrove said attacks on Indian students have become 'a major problem'. He added that the nature of the attacks makes it clear there has been racial motivation.

Following the speech, Victorian police chief Simon Overland agreed that racism has played a part in the attacks.

However there remain skeptics in high places. Victorian premier John Brumby was perceived to be in denial of the racist motivation after he criticised Cosgrove's speech as 'factually inaccurate' and wide of the mark.

We need a chorus of political leaders to back General Cosgrove. The fact that they have not yet supported his remarks could reflect their reluctance to speak hard truths in a year of multiple elections.

It's self-evident that no social ill can be tackled until its existence is acknowledged. Historically major breakthroughs have been made when the community recognised certain fundamental associations, such as smoking and lung cancer, and drink-driving and an unacceptably high road toll. Conversely, there will be little progress in slowing climate change while there remains significant denial that it exists.

The spokesman for the Federation of Indian Students of Australia, Gautam Gupta, was overjoyed that the police chief had admitted racism against Melbourne's Indian community played a part in the attacks on Indian students.

'It is a breakthrough, it is an endorsement of what we have been saying for so long,' he told *The Australian*.'This is what we have been fighting for, they have acknowledged it. They have been in denial, I don't understand why. I am so glad he has come out.'

It is easy for Australians to focus on complaining about the 'hysterical' nature of coverage of the attacks against Indian students from sections of the Indian media. Hysterical or not, there are speaking a truth about us that we do not like to hear.

Prince William vs the Republic of Australia

POLITICS

John Warhurst

Prince William's visit to Sydney and Melbourne last week came just as we were gearing up for Australia Day. The paradox of that visit for monarchist enthusiasts is that, despite all the spin generated by Buckingham Palace and a media pack lusting after stories about a young celebrity, the visit has fuelled the republican debate and laid bare the weaknesses of members of the Royal Family such as William as candidates for Australian Head of State.

The celebration of 26 January has numerous controversies associated with it and many still question its legitimacy and appropriateness as our national day. But it is a day when as well as enjoying ourselves we pause to think about our country and its values. These are themes that will be taken up in many Australia Day addresses.

As the Boyer Lecturer Major-General Peter Cosgrove, himself Australian of the Year in 2001, put it in one of the early addresses entitled 'Sunshine and Shade: The Triumphs and Tribulations of Australia in our Time', Australians 'are a highly moral, inclusive and stable society with the precious gifts of democracy, affluence and security'.

For Cosgrove the sunshine in Australian values was seen in our generous response to the 2004 Asian tsunami, while the shade was demonstrated both in the 2005 Cronulla riots and in recent attacks on Indian students.

Australia Day is associated with the announcement of Australian of the Year and other awards to inspirational and representative Australians. Last year's Australian of the Year Professor Mick Dodson has lived a life that is both inspirational and representative of the aspirations of Indigenous Australians. He immediately demonstrated not just the symbolic but also the substantive aspects of the award by taking part in a debate about Australia Day itself.

The announcement of the Australian of the Year provides a good opportunity to think about the monarchy-republic debate because that too has symbolic and substantive elements. Australians of the Year stand for Australian values. So must the Australian head of state. At the moment, no matter what the qualities of the governors-general and state governors, they represent the Queen in Australia.

The limitations of the British monarchy as demonstrated by Prince William for Australia are of two types.

The first is the obvious one that, not being Australian, they cannot represent Australian values. Not only do they not live in Australia but they are not Australian citizens. William

came to try to get to know Australia. Even the pathetic refrain that 'if William was to marry an Australian he would blow the republicans out of the water' recognises indirectly the longing of Australians for one of their own at the apex of our constitutional system.

Perhaps more importantly the British monarchy cannot represent Australian interests when they conflict with those of Britain. In William's case he launched England's bid to host the 2018 Football World Cup tournament and has been lobbying on England's behalf, despite Australia also having launched a bid. This is just one example of a quite natural but inevitable conflict of interest to Australia's detriment.

The second disqualifying limitation is that the monarchy is contrary to Australia's egalitarian values because it is based on inheritance, not on merit. Our egalitarianism is something that we pride ourselves on, some would say even to a fault. William is second in line to the throne only because he is Prince Charles' first born son. Charles, first in line to the throne, in turn is the first born male heir of Queen Elizabeth.

In addition, not only cannot William convert to Catholicism if he wants to remain heir to the throne, but he cannot even marry a Catholic. So the monarchy is based on discriminatory rules as well as being foreign.

That is why the whole package represented by Prince William should be anathema to modern Australia's constitutional future, whatever else he might have to offer as a person.

Google in China should have known better

POLITICS

Thomas Bartlett

Google's announced intent to withdraw from China is certainly provocative news. Will it happen? I'll be surprised if it does, because the loss of face to China would be so great. But it may be that Google's strategists have come to the point where they realise that being polite and compliant only increases the demands on them. Most foreigners in China have to go through some painful experience in China before they realise this.

It recalls my experience ten years ago when I was sent by my academic employer to attend a ceremony sponsored jointly by our institution and a Chinese counterpart. The Chinese party commissar who handled the arrangements asked for my cv in advance. I translated it into Chinese, showing the Chinese name given me by my highly literate Chinese teacher 45 years ago, when I began to learn Mandarin.

I sent the translated cv in advance of my arrival. By the time I arrived, they had retyped the whole cv into their format. Most significantly, they had also substituted an officially prescribed phonetic translation of my Chinese name, rendering it immediately obvious to any reader that I am a foreigner, in place of the elegant and authentically Chinese name by which I've been known for decades.

When I objected to this invasion of my personal prerogatives and degradation of my identity, my handler told me that in China I must do things the Chinese way. I replied that for me to acknowledge any other Chinese name would be to show disrespect for my Chinese teacher. Finally, when he insisted, I said I would simply return to Melbourne, and not attend the ceremony.

In that instance, I was not acting; I meant it. And it worked. He immediately relented, and I realised that he had been disguising, through this petty bullying, his uncomfortable dependence on needing a conspicuously foreign-looking face to attend the ceremony in order to give an appearance of authenticity to the joint program. I concluded that the key in any negotiation with the Chinese is to identify what they need and exact my price for it.

So, did Google think their entering China could exert a force for China's 'opening up'? If so, I would suggest that they have deceived themselves.

Foreigners approaching China often fail to see the full depth of Chinese dynamics, because they have become blinded by their own cupidity and/or vanity. Chinese elites are adept at nurturing such attitudes in the foreigners who go to China. The carefully nurtured inscrutability racket, for example, is uncannily effective at promoting our suspension of

disbelief, thus inducing the 'fascination' which renders us vulnerable to manipulation.

Has Google been blindsided by the hacking and theft of intellectual property? It would seem so. To address its sense of shock and awe, Google needs to realise that China is simply being China. First and foremost, Chinese government is about control. In any Chinese social situation, the basic ordering question is, 'Who's in charge?'.

In that context, Google needs to ask how much control by Chinese bureaucrats it can tolerate. I hope that the recent news signifies that Google has reached its limit of tolerance for the relentless petty and not so petty humiliations and abuse which the Chinese system inevitably visits on it.

Rupert Murdoch was even more naÃ¯ve, with his famously indiscreet remark that advances in communications technology posed an 'unambiguous threat' to authoritarian regimes. Later, after huge losses, he made a public statement of withdrawal from China, not without considerable bitterness.

These people not only don't know enough about China, they don't know where to look to learn. Each thinks he'll be the first one to break out of the old pattern. They need to read Yale historian Jonathan Spence's 1980 book, *To Change China: Western Advisors in China, 1620—1960*, written just after the US established diplomatic relations, as troops of consultants and technical advisors of various and sundry stripes trooped off to Beijing and Shanghai.

And they need to read the translated works of Han Feizi, the philosopher of centralised imperial authority in China. The spirit of that school of thought has been at the core of the perennial state system of China for the last 2000 years. Just imagine if the Roman Empire had continued in Europe to the present.

I would also venture a further personal opinion. Murdoch's comment expresses an especially silly idea, which unfortunately is widely shared, that cybernetic technology is inherently liberal in its nature, and creates freedom. Maybe it's just a marketing slogan, but if the marketers come to believe their own propaganda, they reveal their own lack of intellectual depth.

On the contrary, such technology is directed at control. The Greek word 'cyber' is cognate with the Latin word 'govern'. In ancient Greek, a *kubernetes*is a helmsman who steers a boat. The Chinese intuitively understood that, because their own philosophical principles are devoted principally to enhancing centralised state power.

I'm further reminded of an article which appeared in the English language *China Daily*in the late 1990s. This newspaper's contents represent entirely the views of central authorities, and are directed in large part at forming opinion among the foreign community resident in China.

In this article, a commentator congratulated foreign companies for developing new

industries in China with imported technology, and then went on to congratulate local companies which responded to the stimulus and 'recovered the lost markets'.

My question is, 'What lost markets?' No market existed before the foreign firms created them. To call that a 'lost market' exposes the fundamental attitude that everything in China will always belong only to the Chinese, and that foreign firms will never have true 'ownership' of anything.

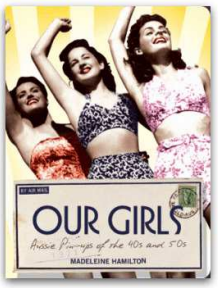
The cynicism, from my perspective, of that comment confirmed in my mind fundamental conclusions of a similar nature which I formed after working for six months in Beijing in 1980. The more it changes, the more it stays the same. That's what Google and everyone else need to understand about China's so-called 'opening up'.

Aussie pin-up girls' war on inequality

BOOKS

Ellena Savage

Hamilton, Madeleine: *Our Girls: Aussie Pin-ups of the 40s and 50s*. Arcade Publications, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-9804367-5-4



When I think of 'cheesecake' models, pin-up girls from the '40s and '50s, I ignorantly assume that they were desperate women. I imagine that they unwittingly participated in an industry that sought to idealise women unrealistically, as women without families, ambitions or personalities of their own.

Madeline Hamilton's new little book *Our Girls* has altered my assumptions of these women dramatically.

It follows the history of Australian pin-up girls, from before the war through to the dawn of the bikini. She offers us a glimpse into the world of the models' lives. Through their interviews and their letters, we develop a closer understanding of their personal lives, motivations and pride.

Hamilton asserts that due to the rigidity of the times, women who sought out swimwear modelling work were in fact 'trailblazers of the sexual revolution'.

Now, I'm slightly cynical about this 'sexual revolution', a revolution that occurred long before I was born. I'm grateful it granted both sexes unimaginable freedoms, and formed the basis of a much more equitable society. My dilemma is that it also seemed to open the floodgates for the commodification of female sexuality, something we plainly accept in our cultural lives.

Hamilton suggests that far from cowering to the reigning patriarchy of the day, pin-ups had to be daring, assertive and confident to work in that industry. They could certainly earn more money than they would otherwise, sometimes even more than the average Australian man.

They often met with resistance from their families. They seldom possessed plastic surgery-modified bodies, and were not digitally enhanced. These women were healthy, poised and radiant. They did it — the modelling — for a laugh, for adoration, and often for the independence it gave them.

Probably due to our great exposure to American popular culture, we associate the pin-up girl with the ambitious, young and naÃ¯ve starlet baring flesh for fame. Hamilton reveals that the Australian experience was quite different. During the Second World War, women who

featured in magazines for the diggers stationed in distant and inhospitable lands were often photographed in their work uniform while working in men's professions.

They were every-women. Beautiful with their youth and femininity, but not always typically 'sexy'. They played a vital role in building the esteem of desperately homesick young men on the battlefields, men who, although subjects of a liberal democracy, were expected to sacrifice their lives for their government.

Perhaps in representing the wholesome attractions of home life, the models provided the basis of patriotism required for these men to justify their great sacrifice. One admiring digger wrote to 'Sweet' June Myers, 'I feel like throwing in the towel at times and getting away from army life, but your picture reminds me of my duty to my country to protect our heritage and womenfolk. You are truly my inspiration.'

In another letter to a pin-up, Chas Leach, an Australian soldier wrote to Linda, 'Well Linda it is well over 12 months since I last saw the mainland, and life in New Guinea goes monotonously on. One has to reconcile himself to this deadly sameness of routine, day in and day out, by realising that the day will dawn again when a normal life can be resumed.'

Our Girls is full of this gut-wrenching stuff. One cannot help but take pleasure in the company of the girls and their personalities, their patience and compassion towards men they didn't know, but knew were in anguish.

After the war, pin-up models began to occupy a new space: post-war affluence and the birth of Playboy culture, the 'relentless celebration of high living' that was definitely manly and heterosexual but toyed with sophistication. Sex became a selling point, and so began the 'sexual revolution'. We (both men and women) became liberated by sex, only to find ourselves in the confusion of consumer culture sexuality where we now remain.

Our Girls is a nostalgic journey into a world where Australian women were celebrated for being fun, healthy and self-assured. The dimensions of their bodies were secondary to the confidence with which they presented themselves. I'm certain a handful of cellulite wouldn't have stopped them. Hamilton's writing is bright and personal, and the pictures, which are generously scattered throughout the book, are delightful.

Madeleine Hamilton will be speaking as part of the Debut Mondays series, the Wheeler Centre, Melbourne.

Celebrating Aboriginality on the road from Freo to Broome

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***Bran Nue Dae* (PG). Running time: 85 minutes. Director: Rachel Perkins. Starring: Rocky McKenzie, Jessica Mauboy, Ernie Dingo, Geoffrey Rush, Missy Higgins, Tom Budge, Magda Szubanski**

There's nothing I would rather be/Than to be an Aborigine.

Moments after I left the cinema, I caught myself singing it. For the next hour the melody continued to bob about in my brain. Not a malicious infection, like an insidious pop song might be, but infectious nonetheless. I'm sure anyone who heard me whistling it would unknowingly have picked up the tune. The song, like the film it appears in, tends to remain with you. In most cases the association will be a fond one.

Yes, *Bran Nue Dae* is silly, but it's fun. It is imbued with such joyful irreverence that it's hard to imagine that any but the grumpiest of filmgoers could bear it ill-will. Take, for example, Missy Higgins, in her supporting role as an airhead hippy. Clearly, she's been cast for her singing, her persona, and not her acting. But she visibly has a good time with the role. Likewise Geoffrey Rush, who hams it up as a nasty German born priest, Father Benedictus.

Bran Nue Dae is a musical-comedy-coming-of-age-road-movie, directed by filmmaker and Arrente woman Rachel Perkins, and based on the 1990 stage musical of the same name. Set in the mid-1960s, it follows the adventures and the eccentric encounters experienced by Aboriginal teen Willie (McKenzie) as he traverses the long stretch of highway from Fremantle to Broome.

After fleeing the Christian mission where he had been sent to be schooled by the brutal and patronising Benedictus, Willie heads north, drawn homewards to Broome by idyllic memories of spear-fishing off the untouched coastline, and by images of the angelic face of his would-be girlfriend, Rosie (Mauboy).

He gets a little help on his way from the drunken, roguish Uncle Tadpole (a show-stealing Dingo), as well as a couple of impressionable young hippies (Budge and Higgins) who unwittingly agree to drive the Aboriginal pair 'up the road' to Broome in their fried-out combie.

Easier said than done. Benedictus is in pursuit, never far behind them on the sweltering highway. Even if they can escape him Willie has his own self-doubts to endure: once he gets home, he'll still need to somehow stare down his rival for Rosie's affections, thuggish bar

singer Lester (soul singer Sultan, revelling in this swaggering bad boy role).

Along the way there is a run-in with the cops, and with an inappropriately lascivious rural shop owner (Szubanski). There's also plenty of song and dance numbers in a range of genres, from rock'n'roll to old-fashioned Broadway style showstoppers. Meanwhile the Australian outback looks stunning through Perkins' expansive cinematic eye.

If Perkins' name sounds familiar, it's because she was one of the directors of *First Australians*. That TV doco series pored over colonised Aboriginal history. *Bran Nue Dae* dances through it. And where last year's important but bleak Indigenous feature *Samson and Delilah* (which, incidentally, is screening on ABC2 this Sunday) favoured realism, *Bran Nue Dae* is pure escapist entertainment.

It rarely keeps a straight-face, which is not to say it doesn't tick off a checklist of serious truths about the realities faced by Indigenous Australians of the day: along with alcoholism and police brutality, the trend of separating Indigenous children from their families. Not to mention colonisation itself — the theme song adds:

There's nothing I would rather be/Than to be an Aborigine/And watch you take my precious land away.

A few drops of medicine sopped onto a giant spoonful of sugar. In truth *Bran Nue Dae*could provide an accessible means for introducing young people to the ongoing impacts of white settlement upon Indigenous Australians. But mostly, it's a celebration of Aboriginality itself (the white characters are, without exception, doofuses), and Willie's rediscovery of his ancestral roots is the film's thematic core.

Legacy of a Catholic social thinker

EULOGY

Andrew Hamilton

On 11 January Jean-Yves Calvez died at the age of 82. He was a Jesuit priest, an influential social thinker whose engagements responded exactly to the large movements in the Catholic Church and the world over the last 50 years.

Shortly after he was ordained a priest in 1957, Fr Calvez published *La pensÃ©e de Karl Marx*,which provided a clear and objective treatment of the German philosopher. It came out of his studies in German intellectual history during the 19th century. The work was as much studied in Communist cells as it was in Catholic circles.

Fr Calvez was then teaching social ethics, and the success of the book led him to engage constructively with many Marxist intellectuals at a time when a small space for reflectiveness had opened in communist circles. The book also enabled him to enter into conversation with Russian Orthodox thinkers on social issues.

Before the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, he was studying systematically Catholic Social Teaching, and his collections, edited with Jacques Perrin, of key documents on the Social teaching of the Popes, appeared from the start of the Council, followed later by a three-volume treatment of Christian thinkers about society.

The impact of Fr Calvez on Catholic attitudes was enormous but diffuse. He inherited a view of Catholic social teaching as a body of abstract reflection on principles, dominated by its opposition to political systems, and particularly to Communism. He showed how Catholic reflection was influenced by and responded to changing social contexts.

The change in emphasis can be seen in the title of his first book which referred to Catholic social teaching, whereas that of his last spoke of Catholic social discourse. He also made clear that it was about human beings, and so involved solidarity with the poor as well as thought on their behalf.

His books, articles, introductions to papal and episcopal documents and comments on issues of the days influenced two generations of students and teachers. Perhaps his indirect influence can be detected in the high place given to social justice in Australian Catholic schools.

By the end of the Vatican Council, Calvez had been elected as Assistant to Jesuit Fr General Pedro Arrupe in Rome. He supported Fr Arrupe in his insistence that familiarity and solidarity with the poor are an essential dimension of Jesuit life, and helped respond to the conflicts and misunderstandings that this emphasis gave rise to in the Society of Jesus.

These conflicts echoed the larger divisions in the Catholic Church following the Council, and were part of the tension between the Papacy and the Jesuits.

In his writing Fr Calvez developed his reflection on economic issues concerned with development. He was particularly concerned with the impact on the poor. He published a number of books on this theme, and became a frequent visitor to Latin America where he was able to experience the situations that he reflected upon.

After returning from Rome to France Fr Calvez was made President of the French Provincials. His principal task was to prepare for integrating the four Jesuit regions, each with their own governance, into a single Province.

From 1995 he edited the Jesuit cultural magazine, *Etudes*for ten years. He continued to publish widely, and his reflections on Catholic documents on social issues influenced the way in which the texts were received. In his last work, published in October 2009, he revised his collection of documents to include those of Benedict XVI.

As a human being and Jesuit, he was simple, genial and convivial. The current Jesuit editor of *Etudes,* Pierre de Charentenay, said of him:

'He was a man of extraordinary modesty. He never pushed himself forward, always refused awards, decorations and honorary doctorates, saying that it was not in his vocation as a Jesuit to receive these kinds of honours. He was always at the service of the church, a grass roots Religious who had an extraordinary but simple experience in his daily life.'

The life of Jean-Yves Calvez is of wider interest in a time when our instinctive assumptions about the world will not serve us well in the face of the ecological challenges we face. He was deeply engaged in the great changes in church and society over 50 years, but was able to see them in a broader context.

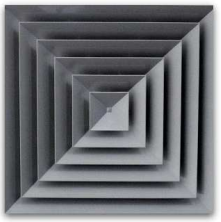
He was never trapped into polemic or denial, always ready to engage with people with whom he disagreed. He could see them as persons and not as walking ideologies. His constant concern was for the poor who were affected by change, and his interest lay in entering their perspective.

He will be greatly missed.

More than one way to cool a baked couch potato

ENVIRONMENT

Paul Mitchell



A 38-degree day. Not what you need when you've got a three-month-old boy who has yet to tell night from day, let alone spring from summer. Who has already spent the previous night in the Children's Hospital emergency ward, floppy and dehydrated.

His mum had been there all night, too, so she was exhausted. After work, it was my job to keep the baby cool. But the weather god was with me — by 6.00pm the vicious temperature had dropped to a humane 23 degrees. A perfect night to pop him in the pusher and enjoy a cool breeze.

Focused on his needs as we walked, it took me a while to notice that very few others in the suburb thought a cooling stroll was the answer after a day sweating at even the thought of physical activity. Except for my many Greek neighbours. They were out in numbers. I waved as they strolled the footpaths together under the loquat trees, brushing flies away with tree branches, or sat in groups, talking (loudly) on their verandas.

But the only sounds as I passed many other houses were air conditioners, chattering on side walls or rooftops. Below them sat cool and often ornately furnished verandas, silent and unoccupied. If it had been just a couple of houses, I'd have thought, 'Okay, so they don't know the cool change has come.' But I walked my son past rows and rows of houses, and so many of them had air conditioners talking as loud as my Greek neighbours.

We're a nation that can't tell a cool change from climate change, I thought. And felt immediately hypocritical. How often had I driven around in an air-conditioned car, hot not because of the outside temperature, but because it had sat for hours under a mild sun? What's more, I own a portable air conditioner and bring it out of the shed to cool a room when the mercury gets as hot as Mercury. And I'd bring it in more often — if it wasn't for my wife.

She's part Italian, not Greek, but reminds me to let the cool change do its work, rather than the air conditioner. As soon as it cools down outside, she opens the windows and doors and wafts the day's heat on its way. And, even if it's only marginally cooler outside than in, she packs me and the rest of the family outside to the porch or footpath.

Where my Greek neighbours are. I haven't polled them, but I wouldn't be surprised to find that none of them have air conditioning. I wonder, also, if they have the gadgets — wide screen TVs, video game consoles, the net — that seem to keep the rest of us inside, pushing black balloons out of our air conditioners, despite the temperature change welcoming us baked couch potatoes out for a cooling stroll or porch conversation.

We need air conditioners when the temperature turns Saharan. Not least of all for babies like mine and for the sick, elderly and frail. But this summer, I'm going to bring climate change, cool change and community together. Take my cues from my Greek neighbours. Get outside, have a walk and a chat when the sun loses its sting. And pop the black balloons that emanate from at least one air conditioner.

Haiti faces the best and worst of Christianity

HUMAN RIGHTS

Beth Doherty

In times of crisis, people seek to explain what is surely inexplicable. Scientific theories, explanations of why earthquakes and floods occur become less important than a punitive eye-for-an-eye response or indeed, a rush by organisations to feed, shelter and clothe those affected. Christianity is one faith that in times of crisis can be on both ends of this spectrum.

The most recent of world crises is the disastrous earthquake that has shattered the tiny Caribbean nation of Haiti, where 100,000 or more are feared dead, and three million are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The earthquake is considered by the UN to be one of the worst humanitarian emergencies ever.

It is in such times that we look to our leaders. For some, they are leaders of government. Others, leaders of religion. Our leaders can come up with a wide range of responses. Haiti has lost both leaders of government and of religion — its Archbishop and its President among others.

US Televangelist Reverend Pat Robertson last week sparked outrage across the world when he claimed Haitians made a pact with the devil to eliminate the French while under colonial rule. 'They've been being punished ever since,' he said. This is one image of Christianity, which is getting much airplay in the international media.

Another image of Christianity is presented in the aid agencies, including Christian agencies, who are already partaking in the massive relief effort in Haiti. While Robertson no doubt sits in air-conditioned comfort in his TV studio in the US, others are donating funds or providing hands-on assistance.

Even before the devastating earthquake, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) was present in 200 locations in Haiti. Jesuit organisations such as the Jesuit Refugee Service and *Fe y Alegria* have united to assist in the rebuilding.

These are two diametrically opposed images of Christianity — one of judgment and condemnation, the other of empathy and service. The media portrays both at different times. Often it depends on which media we subscribe to. In a nation which largely identifies as Christian, the Christian response becomes important and notable.

Haiti is one of the poorest nations in the world. Yet it is also an extremely religious country, though perhaps not in a conventional pious Catholic or Protestant mould. In this sense, Robertson's comments are particularly unhelpful, especially when Haitians themselves are wondering what went wrong to lead to this disaster.

Some Haitians see the earthquake as a message from God to the whiter-skinned elite. Citing the destruction of centres of power throughout the capital Port-au-Prince, they believe God wishes to challenge the elites to stop corruption and to distribute wealth among the majority who are, for the most part, impoverished and black.

Others see it as a sign that despite their deep religiosity, God has deserted them. The fact that every one of the capital's 81 Catholic Churches was destroyed has been taken as a sign that the Church has not done enough to challenge corruption. Such conclusions are counterproductive. They are less helpful than prayer and action.

A punitive reading of Christianity such as that profferred by Robertson, which pitches God against God's people, damages the reputation of the holy and thankless work of Christian agencies and people. On the other hand, those with a social justice focused reading of the Bible might say it is in the poverty of people in Haiti that God's love truly dwells.

Like in most environmental disasters, commentators and religious figures offer their contributions as to what they believe the Lord is saying by such events. Much talk and comment will come from within the protected borders of western nations, all with something to say about God's hand in the tragedy.

At the same time, hundreds of workers are amongst the rubble, pulling out bodies of people whose lives have been characterised by poverty and suffering. In Haiti, mothers have lost children, people have lost spouses, their country is without governance or resources.

There seems no prayer great enough to justify the bloodshed and suffering. In the aid efforts, in the love of neighbour, and the recovery process, Christianity at its best will be what it truly is: a light in extreme darkness.

The big gift of small problems

POETRY

Brian Doyle

Quid hoc ad aeternitatem

Quid hoc ad aeternitatem, as old Saint Bernard of Clairvaux
Used to mumble when faced with the usual parade of travail,
What does it matter in the light of eternity? And yet, and yet,
With total respect for eternity, don't you love your problems,
The smallness of them, the salt and roar of them, considering
The alternative? The blizzards of bills I can never pay *in toto*,
The surly son, the dismissive daughter, the wet shabby house,
The battered car, the shivering pains, the grim brooding debts,
The dark thread of fear that I might not have been a good dad,
The feeling sometimes that maybe there was a better husband
For my wife if only she had hung in the contest a little longer,
And the ones that haunt me every minute of the blessed week,
The health and joy of our kids, and the fragility of their future;
But there are great moments when I realise that all the muddle
Is so very much better than *aeternitatem*. Could it be that what
Keeps us awake at night are the greatest gifts we can ever get?
Just thinking. Because soon enough, as real time is accounted,
We'll be muttering Latin with Bernard, and what we will want
More than anything, even there, in the incomprehensible Light,
Is to be in a chair late at night, frightened, rocking a sick child.

Her hands on the shoulder of my coat

I am pretty sure but not totally sure that Mass in this town is at eleven,
So I shamble across the street from the motel and arrive neurotic early,

I hate to slide into Mass late and croak the door and get the death stare
From the old ladies, what is it about a head scarf that makes you mean,
And I wait for the crowd but only six people wander in and one leaves,
A man with a huge cowboy hat who kisses a woman and then basically
Runs down the aisle grinning, what in heaven's name is the story there,
But just then the lanky priest emerges and says *in nomine Patris et Filii*
Et Spiritus Sancti, and I realise this is a Latin Mass — the old Tridentine
Rite in which I was soaked as a boy. The old tongue is a physical shock.
I can feel the language like my mum's hands on the shoulder of my coat.
For an instant that no instrument will ever measure I am in the pew with
My dad sitting by the aisle because he will soon help with the collection,
And my three brothers, the oldest surly and tall and handsome and bored,
And my wry wild lone sister who will incredibly someday become a nun,
And my mum, in the pew behind us because Mass was so crowded today,
Her hands on the shoulder of my coat. Maybe they were there to keep me
From punching a younger brother, or maybe she was slipping me a dollar,
Or perhaps we tell each other that we love each other without words more
Easily than we do with words. *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus*. I bet you a buck
My mum was sitting in the pew behind us because none of us kids wanted
To sit closer and make room for her, we were all our own selfish republics
Then, adamant about what the world owed us. *Nobis quoque peccatoribus*.
The tall priest this morning sings occasionally but I long ago lost my Latin.
Domine non sum dignus — well, that line I know too well: I am not worthy.
And *ite missa est*, the last words, the Mass is over. The other five attendees
Genuflect and vanish but I sit there a long while with her hands on my coat.
My brothers jostle for space and one nearly crushes my dad's hat. My sister
Is the only one of us who turns to see where mum is. My dad gives us coins.

Eventually the thin priest leans out of the sacristy and gives me the fish eye.

I hope to find my mum waiting outside the church but when I open the door The first thing I see is the guy with the cowboy hat kissing the woman again,

Which feels like exactly the right thing at exactly the right moment, as usual.

Australian Open's soul is in its tail

SPORT

Michael Visontay

For two weeks every January thousands of people descend on Melbourne to watch young men and women stand on a rubber surface and hit balls to each other. Melbourne, January, tennis. It's the holy trinity of summer sport.

Like the Melbourne Cup, the Boxing Day Test and the Aussie Rules grand final, the Australian Open is an institution that transfixes the nation. In homes and pubs across the country, big screens and small, we are glued to the daily battles.

The city itself sizzles with an electricity that is absent from London, Paris and New York when they host Wimbledon, the French and US Opens. Unlike those Grand Slam events, the Australian Open is held in the centre of the city. Everywhere you look, people are going to, coming from or talking about tennis.

The buses and trams are chock full of fans who make the daily trek to Melbourne Park, a stone's throw from the MCG. On the way, they pass locals who pack Federation Square to meet, drink and watch the action on huge screens. The city is united with a sense of kinship that brings people back year after year.

Part of that appeal is the game itself. Tennis occupies a special role in the Australian psyche. It is the most egalitarian of all sports, and so nearly everyone in Australia has played the game. The equipment is cheap, the courts are accessible, it's not dangerous. You can play for exercise or recreation, singles or doubles, with men and women. Tennis is the only sport that is played equally by both sexes.

On a physical level, tennis has an elegance that makes other sports look lumpen. From the graceful arch of the back before serving, to the whip of a groundstroke, the pinpoint precision of a passing shot, the snap of a crisp volley, and the topspin lob that lands on the baseline, tennis exudes beauty.

It demands versatility, rewards soft touch as well as raw power, and requires a mental toughness that separates the best from the good. For many years this package was encapsulated in Roger Federer, whose artistry has made him the most magical player of all time, even if the jury is still out over whether he is the greatest.

Last year Federer had the strokes and the skill to beat Rafael Nadal in their final, but having lost to the Spaniard at Wimbledon in 2008, the Swiss player started to doubt himself. Federer wasted so many break points it was no wonder he cried at the presentation ceremony. The magician had reduced himself to a mere mortal.

Watching this on the screen is one thing. To see it in person lifts the pleasure even higher. When you sit courtside and see how fast a first serve actually moves, how hard players hit the ball, how low it fizzes over the net, how little time they have to react, tennis is endowed with an almost hypnotic magnetism.

My son's tennis coach once told me that when you're in the top 100, tennis becomes a mental contest, a test of character. And so it is this year. Federer is struggling to regain his intensity, Nadal is searching for confidence after injury, Andy Murray will confront his demons as he tries to claim his first Grand Slam.

Will the Belgian comeback queens Kim Clijsters and Justine Henin be genuine contenders, or will the Williams sisters and Eastern bloc Amazons, Dinara Safina and Ana Ivanova crush them?

Parallel to this is the Australian campaign: Lleyton Hewitt, teenager Bernard Tomic, Samantha Stosur, and Alicia Molik (also making a comeback).

Walk around the outside courts, however, and you discover what sets tennis apart from other sports. Unranked players, veterans with wildcard entries, fringe youngsters, doubles specialists — a gallery of invisible journeymen who will never be famous but keep playing because they love the thrill of being on court.

The telecasts rarely cross to these matches, the results don't make the nightly news. The early round losers pack up quickly and fly off to the next tournament in another country, determined to do better next time and improve their ranking. For every Federer or Nadal, there are 10,000 no-names. Without them, the Australian Open would be all head and no tail, all body and no soul. These are the players that remind you what sport is all about.

How to be wealthy *and* virtuous

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

Every other day it seems there's a new set of data pointing to Australia's increasing economic wealth relative to other developed countries.

On Friday it was a rise in the number of people in work. Our unemployment rate has fallen to 5.5 per cent, compared with a figure of 10 per cent for the United States.

While key sectors of the US economy such as the auto industry are still on life support, investment is flooding into resource projects in Australia. The economy is so buoyant that most experts predict a fourth successive interest rate rise when the Reserve Bank meets in two weeks from now.

Australia's economy has come a long way since 1986, when then federal treasurer Paul Keating told John Laws that Australia risked becoming a banana republic. Then a decade ago, at the height of the dot com boom, Australia was perceived to have missed opportunities in the IT sector and was branded an 'old economy'. But a combination of good fortune and good management since then has put Australia ahead of the pack, at least for now.

There is no mistake that it can be a good thing to be wealthy. It's what you do with your wealth that is often problematic.

The *Sydney Morning Herald's* Peter Hartcher recently quoted a survey of 52 resource-rich countries and found that only four had managed to extract a real national benefit from nature's bounty: Chile, Malaysia, Indonesia and Botswana. Along with the United States, Canada, and New Zealand, Australia is one of just a handful of truly resource-rich nations 'to have made it all the way through the obstacle course to become First World countries'.

However it's one thing to avoid squandering a nation's wealth through corruption or mismanagement, and another to use the wealth to develop a better society in the moral sense. Wealth can and should have a social dividend.

Melbourne Business School philosopher in residence John Armstrong wrote about the 'noble' use of wealth in Friday's *Australian Financial Review,* in the context of the issue of executive remuneration.

He argued that wealth can enable a person to flourish if it is used to 'nourish the soul'. But if people use their money for 'ugly, ignorant, unimaginative or banal purposes, then they lack a moral title to their wealth'.

'It is good that a family live in a beautiful house — if they love it for its beauty; it is good to

take interesting holidays — if these nourish your soul.'

If we are talking about a moral society, one's own sense of soul must be seen as a contributor to the nation's soul. Philanthropy can act to radiate this in a society where there is inevitably an unequal distribution of wealth.

It is legitimate to reward individuals according to their particular contribution towards realising the nation's wealth. But Armstrong argues that there is an amount to which they have 'moral title', and that while almost everyone has less than they need for their own 'finest flourishing', some people have too much.

Empathy for the Haiti I know

HUMAN RIGHTS

Kent Rosenthal

I was dreading the task of writing a story about Haiti's earthquake. In 2006 while living on the island of Hispaniola (which contains the nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic), I wrote about the plight of human trafficking victims, but the same issue of justice doesn't seem to enter the picture when talking about an earthquake.

What light could I shed on the enormity of suffering and destruction with my slight contribution? It's the Caribbean's worst earthquake in 200 years and it hit the nation least equipped to cop the 7.0 magnitude.

Up to 100,000 are feared dead and another three million are suffering. If there is a place on Earth that could have done without an earthquake right now, it's Haiti. It's the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with 80 per cent of its people living in extreme poverty. What response would suffice?

My email inbox is full of statements and media releases from various church and humanitarian organisations around the world. These contain up-to-date information and details of the relief efforts they intend to carry out.

Crisis response teams meet to discuss what they can do. Even before the earthquake it was a challenge for aid organisations to provide medical supplies, sanitation, clean water and food in Port au Prince's shantytown areas.

In the face of human suffering, our instinct to reach out runs strong and deep. We either want to do something or we want to find out what's happening as a form of empathy with the victims. Within minutes of the quake, cyberspace was awash with people seeking and exchanging information.

Among the emails and news alerts in my inbox, there were two that stood out — one encouraging, and one downright disappointing.

The encouraging email was a personal message sent to me from a young Haitian man living in the United States who happens to be a Muslim (Muslims make up less than 1 per cent of Haiti's population). He was responding to a video I posted on Youtube which I took from the roof of the Jesuit novitiate in Port au Prince in 2006. In the background of the video you can faintly hear the call to prayer coming from a nearby mosque at dusk. He wrote:

'I saw your video about the Islamic call to prayer in Port-au-Prince. I am Muslim and Haitian. I wonder if you are in Haiti, or were you there yesterday during the quake. I'm just

reaching out, really and I know my reach is not very far.

'Are you Muslim? What can Muslims do for them since most Muslims will hesitate to donate to the Christian cause? If you are able to reply in any way, I will be grateful.'

He went on to reflect on the oneness of humanity and religion.

'The Truth is one. God is one. Humankind is one son of Adam. I wish it were easy to convince everyone of this.

'I hope your friends there, if you still have any of them there, survived the quake. We have not heard news from our family in Port-Au-Prince.'

Quite a contrast was the news alert about US televangelist Pat Robertson, who blamed the earthquake on a pact between the nation's founders and the devil.

Haiti won its independence from France in 1804 after a slave rebellion. It became the world's first black-led republic when Jean Jacques Dessalines, inspired by the French Revolution, lead a group of rebel leaders and slaves in a revolt against the French rulers and became the first ruler of an independent Haiti.

Mr Robertson blamed the earthquake on a pact, cited in some historic accounts, that Haiti's rebel leaders made with the devil to win them freedom from slavery.

'They were under the heel of the French, you know Napoleon III [sic] and whatever. And they got together and swore a pact to the devil,' he said. 'They said "We will serve you if you will get us free from the prince". But ever since they have been cursed by one thing after another.'

Haiti's independence wasn't recognised for a long time by the US and France, who ostracised the new country because they were afraid their own slaves would rebel.

Responding to Robertson, the Haitian ambassador to the US, Raymond Joseph, cautioned against attributing the country's independence from France to a pact with the devil. He said it was Haitian independence that enabled the US to acquire 13 present-day states in the Louisiana Purchase and also helped to spur the freedom fights of many Latin American countries.

But it seems Haiti has never fully recovered from its fight for freedom and it's now in the midst of yet another international appeal to save it amid catastrophe.

So as hundreds of aid groups mobilise their resources and staff to respond to Haiti's disaster, the survivors pray in thanksgiving.

'Amid the crying and wailing, people are spending the night outside,' the International Committee of the Red Cross's head of delegation in Haiti, Ricardo Conti, said. 'People are trying to comfort each other. What you are hearing in the streets are the prayers of thanks of

those who survived.'