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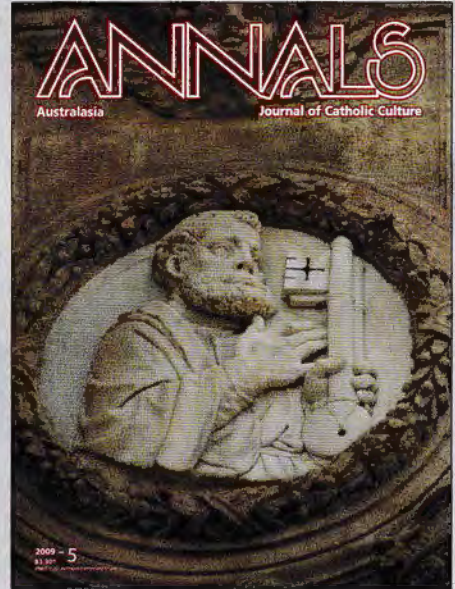
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Front Cover: St Peter holding the 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' as promised by our Lord [Matthew 16,19] – on the facade of a church in Almeria, Spain. See page 15 this issue for the remarkable letter written in 426 AD by St Isaac, Patriarch of the Armenians from 390-440 AD. The first Maronite Patriarch, long before the Greek Schism in 1054, noted: 'As a Patriarch has authority over his subjects, the Roman Pontiff has authority over all Patriarchs in the same manner as Peter had it over all the leaders of Christianity and over all Churches, for he is the successor of Christ, placed over his Church, over his flock, over all people'. See Luke Rivington, *A Plain Reason for Joining the Church of Rome*, London, 1890, p.80.

Back Cover: A selection of new booklets recently published by Chevalier Press. They are ideal as gifts for relatives and friends interested in the Catholic Faith, for RCIA groups following catechism courses in preparation of baptism at Eastertime, or as school prizes. They make ideal bedtime reading, and we recommend them to all Catholics wishing to deepen their understanding of their history, and of their faith.

Cover Photo: Paul Stenhouse

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n the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and
of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

ANGELS AND NEEDLES



A GLIB SPEAKER in the Brains Trust once entertained this audience [and reduced the late Charles Williams to helpless rage] by asserting that in the Middle Ages it was a matter of faith to know how many archangels could dance on the point of a needle. I need not say, I hope, that it never was a 'matter of faith'; it was simply a debating exercise, whose set subject was the nature of angelic substance: were angels material, and if so, did they occupy space? The answer usually adjudged correct is, I believe, that angels are pure intelligences; not material, but limited, so that they may have location in space but not extension. An analogy might be drawn from human thought, which is similarly non-material and similarly limited. Thus, if your thought is concentrated upon one thing – say, the point of a needle – it is located there in the sense that it is not elsewhere; but although it is “there,” it occupies no space there, and there is nothing to prevent an infinite number of different people’s thoughts being concentrated upon the same needle-point at the same time. The proper subject of the argument is thus seen to be the distinction between location and extension in space; the matter on which the argument is exercised happens to be the nature of angels (although, as we have seen, it might equally well have been something else; the practical lesson to be drawn from the argument is not to use words like “there” in a loose and unscientific way, without specifying whether you mean “located there” or “occupying space there.”

– Excerpted from *The Lost Tools of Learning*, an essay by Dorothy Sayers
[1893-1967] presented at Oxford in 1947.



May steadfast faith sustain us

CHRIST, HEAVEN'S LIGHT

O CHRIST, the Light
of heaven
And of the world true Light.
You come in all your radiance
To cleave the web of night.

May what is false within us
Before your truth give way,
That we may live untroubled,
With quiet hearts this day.

MAY STEADFAST faith
sustain us
And hope made firm in you;
The love that we have wasted,
O God of love, renew.

Blest Trinity we praise you
In whom our quest will cease;
Keep us with you for ever
In happiness and peace.

- Hymn from The Roman Breviary at Lauds on
Tuesday of the First Week of the Four Week Psalter.
From the Hymnbook of Stanbrook Abbey, a loose
translation of *Rerum Creator Optime*, attributed to
St Gregory the Great [540-604]



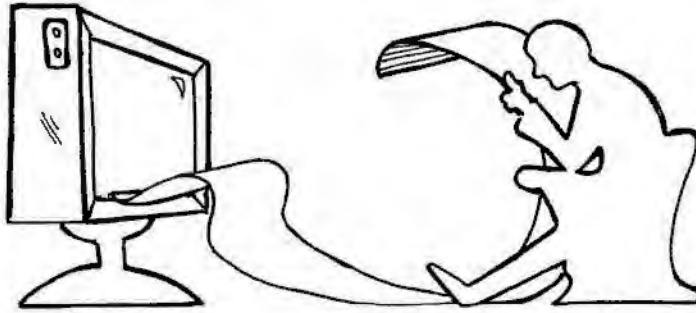
It's one of the easiest things in the world to kill a man, any of us could do it, if, that is, we were so disposed. One need only creep up behind someone and plunge a carving knife into their back, or push them into the path of a bus or train. There are child soldiers in Africa who regularly kill, which tells us that killing is child's play. But

to preserve a life, nurture and protect it, now that's the really difficult thing. Evil is easy, while goodness is hard; which is why goodness is deep, while evil is shallow. And this contrast shines brightly in the act of repentance and contrition.

Back in the 1990s I used to sit in on the Royal Commission into the NSW Police Force. Those were heady days, for there seemed to be the real prospect that the wicked would be brought to book. I'd like to think I was young and idealistic, only I wasn't – but with the flush of enthusiasm youth seemed to spring afresh and one dreamed dreams!

In the course of the proceedings one saw and heard corrupt officer after corrupt officer, as well as their friends and cohorts in the larger criminal fraternity. Whenever I see yet another show that presents criminals as sophisticated, exciting, and sexy I think back on the cast of real life characters who paraded through the Commission. As the tapes were played of their conversations, recorded without their knowing it, one heard no wit, no style, no polish, merely four-letter words expressing school-boy desires and the ruthlessness of bullies. It was the soundtrack of evil: boring and vapid table-talk, devoid of anything more glorious than the aggressive grunting of pigs. Perhaps some find this sexy, after all there's no accounting for taste. But one suspects that spend ten or so minutes in the company of these men and you'd be looking at your watch, feigning surprise at the time, and saying that you were late for a tooth extraction.

The criminals were simply uneducated, unintelligent, and as a rule very ugly people. The corrupt police especially so – and I mean physically ugly. Perhaps it was all the beer, but no, there are honest beer drinkers who are not ugly like these men were.



THE JOY OF ANGELS

By ROBERT TILLEY

There is something about corruption that makes a man ugly, even more than, let us say, honest criminality. Corruption is a betrayal of an office of trust, and such betrayal is one of the ugliest things a man can do; he stabs the back and cuts deep but as he does so he disfigures himself. Over time the action tells, for the ugliness rises to the skin and begins to shade the features with a nasty film. It's not as if the man's features have gone

to seed, though often they do, more that the tone and the pallor changes such that the very sight of them smells.

But there is always repentance, and with repentance a beauty that causes the angels of heaven to rejoice.

In September 1995, a police officer took the stand denying any corrupt behaviour, notably concerning the fitting-up of an aborigine for a crime he had not committed involving the alleged stabbing of a policeman. This officer was among the ugliest to take the stand. His name was suppressed so it couldn't and can't be reported. I think his code name was JTS 7, but my notes are confused on this point.

A few days after his previous appearance he again took the stand, only now he had rolled over. But here's the thing, unlike the other police who rolled over he had done so not because they had him on tape, but for another reason entirely. The Commissioner asked him his reason. It was, JTS 7 replied, because over the weekend his daughter had said to him something like, "I thought you were here to protect the public." This had pierced his heart and now, here he was, close to tears. But here's the wonder of it; he now looked somehow handsome. He now looked, one might even say, beautiful! God knows but something had changed and now here was a man who again had honour and dignity.

This is how every sinner who repents must look to the angels, and because of JTS 7 those of us present were granted the gift of seeing something that makes heaven rejoice.

I do not know if things are the same or if JTS repented of his repentance, if he curses himself for having been a fool. As I say I do not know, but what I do know is that back then you shined, back then you were glorious!

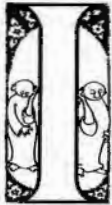
ROBERT TILLEY is a regular contributor to *Annals*.



'A world without God is Monstrous'

THE ELUSIVE FOURTH DIMENSION

By Paul Stenhouse



IN 1880 Wyman and Sons, London, published a translation of Arabic poetry *The Kasidah*, 'The Lay of the Higher Law,' by Hâjî 'Abdû el Yezdî. The book proved to be popular, especially in the United States.

According to the introduction to the first edition, the translator was a certain 'F.B.' We learn from Lady Isabel Burton, wife of the famous explorer and Arabist Sir Richard Burton, that F.B. was 'Frank Baker,' a *nom-de-plume* used by her husband. It was derived from Francis his second name, and Baker, his mother's family name.¹

Later editions came clean and informed the reader that the book was 'translated and annotated' by Hâjî 'Abdû's 'friend and pupil' Sir Richard Burton.

'Fine,' you may say. Well, not really. We later learn that Burton was more than just a 'friend and pupil' of Hâjî 'Abdû. He says of his 'friend': 'Hâjî

'Abdû has been known to me more years than I care to record'.²

That, at least, *was* true. *He* was Hâjî 'Abdû. He never translated the long poem: he *wrote* it in 1853/1854 on his return from Mecca.

I mention these convoluted and seemingly trivial details concerning the identity of the author and translator because in his introductory comments *To the Reader* the mysterious F.B. warns that Hâjî 'Abdû considers 'facts' to be 'the idlest of superstitions' and 'advocates suspension of judgement and suspicion' in their regard.

Fans of Burton will find much to admire in the book, as well as many 'facts' of which to be 'suspicious'. It has been compared with Edward FitzGerald's translation of the *Rubiyat* of Omar Khayyam. Lady Burton assures us that Burton composed the work eight years before he became aware of FitzGerald's translation. But did he?

The book articulates beautifully Burton's well known cynicism and scepticism regarding truth – especially religious truth – and much else besides. He gives himself [Hâjî 'Abdû] the sobriquet *Nabbianâ* – 'our Prophet' declaring that he wished 'to preach a Faith of his own – an Eastern version of Humanitarianism blended with the sceptical, or, as we now say, the scientific habit of mind'.

Hâjî 'Abdû's ideal 'humanitarian' world is one in which 'All Faith is false; all Faith is true,'³ where '... all and naught are both the same,'⁴ and Divine Laws are 'Living Death/A world where none but Phantoms dwell.'⁵ He castigates 'the despot's darling dream/A Church to rule and sway the State'⁶ and advises 'Be thine own Deus: Make self free/Liberal as the circling air'⁷ and cautions 'When doctors differ who decides/Amid the milliard-headed throng?/Who save the madman dares to cry:/ " 'Tis I am right; you all are wrong'⁸.

At this point I feel compelled to leave Hâjî 'Abdû and his *alter ego* Sir Richard Burton, with the poetic expression of his doubts, disbelief and scepticism. Not because I don't care, or because no response can be given to his *cris-de-coeur* but because I think that despite his posturing [or perhaps, because of it] Burton genuinely *wished* to believe; but he did not, or could not, make the leap of faith.

It seems ungracious to lay bare Burton's mental and spiritual throes as he slashes away at revealed religion, and especially at Catholic belief and practice [clung to with great devotion and love by his Catholic wife, Isabel] and at God Himself, in his desperate search for what our Lord called the 'Pearl of Great Price'.

He offers us a rare clue. 'Perhaps,' he suggests, Hâjî 'Abdû would join Ernest Renan [1823-1892], the archtypal shepherd in the mist who had lost his

Paternalistic Democracies

As I have already pointed out it is not likely that the Western democracies will ever become either Communist or Fascist. But I think it is very probable that they will follow a parallel line of development and evolve a kind of democratic *étatisme* which, while being less arbitrary and inhumane than the other two forms of government, will make just as large a claim on the life of the individual as they do and will demand an equally whole-hearted spiritual allegiance. We can already discern the beginnings of this paternal – democratic regime in England and can see how all the apparatus of the social services-universal secondary education, birth-control clinics, ante-natal clinics, welfare centres and the rest – may become instruments of a collective despotism which destroys human liberty and spiritual initiative as effectively as any Communist or Nazi terrorism.

– Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1935, p. 106.

faith, in exclaiming: 'A world without God is monstrous.'⁹

I have no way of knowing what insights Burton received subsequent to writing this mischievous, revealing and terrifying book, but I suggest that at the time of writing he was a man struggling to make sense of a world that in his eyes was no more and no less than it appeared to be. In Hâjî's words,

'And this is all, for this we're born
To weep a little and to die!'¹⁰

Catholics should not be surprised to find that people who lack faith in God, or in our Lord's divinity and messiahship, misunderstand, distort, mock and twist our beliefs until they assume shapes and meanings that bear no resemblance to the truths they touch upon.

St Augustine [354-430] knew from experience the dilemma confronting those without faith. To Consentius who asked him questions about the Trinity, Augustine wrote: 'Faith has eyes of its own,' ['habet namque fides oculos suos,'] and he went on: 'by which one sees to be true, what one does not yet "see".'¹¹

Faith enables us to see beyond the finite to the truth of the infinite, beyond the 'now' to the truth of the 'hereafter' and beyond the ephemeral to the truth of the eternal.

Of its nature, faith has realities to see, truths that are its proper realm. Just as our five other senses are designed specifically because there are things to be heard, touched, scented, seen and tasted, so faith exists because there is another world of which too many of us remain largely oblivious; there are other realities, beyond the material world that so completely absorbs our time and interest, whose truth would otherwise escape us.

Hans Urs von Balthasar [1905-1988], quoting the expression 'les yeux de la foi,' 'the eyes of faith,' as used in two articles written in 1910 by Abbé Jean-Pierre Rousselot [1846-1924], describes Christian faith as consisting essentially in a 'faculty' – an ability to see as true what God wants to show us, and what cannot be seen without this 'faculty' that we call 'faith'.

Not that we can see everything, or even see clearly what we see. St Paul told the Corinthians¹² that while now

Slavery and Conquest

THE jihad slave system included contingents of both sexes delivered annually in conformity with the treaties of submission by sovereigns who were tributaries of the caliph. When Amr conquered Tripoli (Libya) in 643, he forced the Jewish and Christian Berbers to give their wives and children as slaves to the Arab army as part of their jizya [tax on non-Muslims]. From 652 until its conquest in 1276, Nubia was forced to send an annual contingent of slaves to Cairo. Treaties concluded with the towns of Transoxiana, Sijistan, Armenia, and Fezzan (Maghreb) under the Umayyads and Abbasids stipulated an annual dispatch of slaves from both sexes. However, the main sources for the supply of slaves remained the regular raids on villages within the dar-al-harb [House of War, i.e., non-Islamic regions] and the military expeditions which swept more deeply into the infidel lands, emptying towns and provinces of their inhabitants.

– Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996, p. 108.

we see supernatural realities 'as in a mirror, darkly,' then [after death] we will see 'face to face.' Now, our knowledge is partial, then it will be whole.

Nor is the situation of people without faith like that of people who are blind; who cannot see at all. It is more analogous to those whose vision, for all its acuity, lacks depth; who are unable to perceive another, a fourth, a spiritual, immaterial, supernatural, dimension. For those without 'the eyes of faith' not to be able to see what people with faith can see – however imperfectly – is to be expected.

St Augustine, in his usual direct fashion, reminds Consentius of this in the letter quoted above: 'there are certain things that when we hear about them, we disbelieve; while other things that we should not believe, we take to be true. Thus, all God's marvels are scorned by unbelievers because they cannot see their reasonableness.'¹³

On a different level, St Thomas Aquinas [1225-1274] writes of those whose philosophical views differed from his own: 'we must love those whose opinions we follow and those whose opinions we reject: for both set themselves in search of the Truth and collaborate with us in this. However,

we have an obligation to follow what is more certain, that is, the opinion of those who have arrived at a more certain truth.'¹⁴

What he had to say applies *mutatis mutandis*, to encounters between believers and non-believers.

While deploring many of the opinions of Hâjî 'Abdû a.k.a. F.B. a.k.a. Sir Richard Burton as specious, cynical and at times defamatory, we should acknowledge that without 'the eyes of faith' opinions on supernatural topics inevitably lapse into distortions and mockeries of the truth.

More often than not, those who hold such opinions are the first to deplore them when they receive the gift of faith, and see the truth of what lies 'beyond the seen'.

1. See *Biographical Note* in the 1926 ed. of *The Kasidah*, published by Philip Allan and Co London, pp.9-12.
2. *ibid.* note 1, p.121.
3. *ibid.* Book Six: p.69, l. line 1.
4. *ibid.* p.74, 15, line 4.
5. *ibid.* p.100, 38, lines 1-2.
6. *ibid.* Book Eight p.88, lines 1-2.
7. *ibid.* Book Nine, p.110, 21, lines 1-2.
8. *ibid.* Book Eight, p.97, 29, lines 1-4.
9. *ibid.* p.123. Renan's words were 'Un monde sans Dieu est horrible'.
10. *ibid.* Book Two, p.12, 10, lines 1-2.
11. Letter cxx. *Consentio ad quaestiones de Trinitate sibi propositas*, Migne, Patres Latini, Paris, 1841, vol. xxxii, col.456, 8.
12. 1 Corinthians 13,12.
13. Migne, vol.cit. col.454, 5.
14. *In Met. in fine*, 12, 9.

Unicef Supports Liberalised Abortion in the Developing World

UNICEF PUSHES FOR LEGAL ABORTION IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

DESPITE DIRECT intervention by a top United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) official, the Dominican Republic appears poised to adopt a new constitution that protects human life "from conception until death."

While Dominican lawmakers were debating the merits of such a provision and the nation's penal prohibition of abortion, Nils Kastberg, UNICEF's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean, interjected himself, calling on Dominican legislators to consider liberalizing abortion so women would not be forced into unsafe procedures." He also suggested they would be "hypocrites" unconcerned with the nation's higher than average teen birth rate. Kastberg made his unusual statements while visiting the capital of Santo Domingo at the end of March.

Rather than bowing to external pressure from UNICEF and pro-abortion non-governmental organizations, members of the bicameral constitutional assembly voted 167-32 to approve the proposed charter, including Article 30, which states, "The right to life is inviolable from conception to death." Another article would define marriage as being between a man and a woman.

Pro-lifers are considering the constitutional reform to be a *fait accompli*, though a second reading followed by formal promulgation by the President is also required. Support crossed party lines, with the opposition Partido Revolucionario Dominicano and Partido Reformista Social Cristiano and most members of the President's Partido de la Liberación Dominicana declaring their support for the right-to-life provision.

The meddling by Kastberg, a Swedish national, also brought to mind another pro-abortion Latin American intervention by UNICEF and other United Nations agencies. When Nicaragua strengthened legislation protecting the unborn in 2006, UNICEF joined agencies like the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Fund in signing a letter to the head of the Nicaraguan National Assembly that asserted – incorrectly – that the legislation violated rights contained in various international documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, or CEDAW.

In addition, four Scandinavian countries, Holland and Canada signed the letter, with Sweden reportedly cutting over \$20 million in foreign aid to Nicaragua as a result of the legislative reform, and Finland threatening to link continued aid to changes in Nicaragua's abortion law.

Despite its image as a benign agency dedicated to assisting children in the developing world, in recent years UNICEF has supported liberalized abortion. According to Douglas Sylva, a senior fellow of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM) [publisher of the Friday Fax] and the author of a White Paper on the agency, UNICEF is "an opportunistic advocate of abortion rights." One longtime UNICEF watcher told the Friday Fax, "Where does UNICEF get the authority to interfere in the constitutional decisions of a sovereign state?"

When formally adopted, the Dominican Republic will join other Latin American nations whose constitutions explicitly protect unborn life, including Chile, Paraguay, and Guatemala. In addition, at least 10 Mexican states have amended their state constitutions to protect life from the moment of conception, including most recently, the Pacific coast state of Nayarit. The pro-life constitutional revisions in Mexico and the Dominican Republic signal popular reaffirmation of pro-life principles throughout the region.

– Source: www.c-fam.org

St Mary's Basilica Sydney – St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne

A TALE OF TWO CATHEDRALS

By Tony Evans



THE thirty or so Gothic cathedrals and minsters of England and Wales, and many more throughout Europe, are justly famous and of inexhaustible attraction to visitors. The more those visitors know about the Faith of those that built them, the history of the times, and the subtle styles of the architecture employed in them, the more value they will gain from their visits. For many, too, the visit will prove a lasting spiritual experience.

Australian Catholics may be forgiven for feeling envious of those rich treasures which remain beyond the reach of us – except on rare and expensive occasions. But this envy should not blind us to the treasures we possess closer to home.

The two monumental Catholic, Gothic cathedrals here in Australia, St Mary's in Sydney, and St Patrick's in Melbourne, are every bit as important in the context of Australian history, and as awe-inspiring in size and structure, as many of the celebrated mediaeval cathedrals elsewhere.

True, they cannot compete in age with their ancient forebears, being examples of Victorian Gothic, but they are superb examples of that style, much praised and treasured

by architectural historians both in Australia and overseas.

All Australian Catholics interested in their history and church architecture should regard a visit to St Mary's and St Patrick's as an essential part of their travels in Australia.

Those who know both cathedrals are doubly privileged.

It is given to few architects to design a cathedral, but here there are not one, but two cathedrals designed by one and the same man, William Wilkinson Wardell (1823-1899).

Wardell, a prominent Catholic convert architect and apostle of the Gothic Revival, left England in 1858 to settle first in Melbourne and later in Sydney. Although he designed many other churches and buildings throughout his professional life, his two cathedrals were his crowning works which claimed his constant attention over the forty years that he made Australia his home.

He concerned himself with every detail – not only of construction but also the furnishing of both churches. Since the building of both was carried out roughly in parallel, he engaged in an almost daily correspondence concerning points of detail, writing (by hand) simultaneously to Archbishops Carr in Melbourne, and to Vaughan and later Cardinal Moran in Sydney. He might have been like a juggler,

or some chess master playing two opponents at one and the same time. These, however, were not opponents but Wardell's clients. In spite of occasional differences between the architect and the archbishops, mainly arising from Wardell's refusal to compromise standards and the archbishops' difficulties in finding the necessary money to avoid doing so, they remained on close, friendly terms.

On one occasion he countered a cost-cutting proposal by the Building Committee that the side-aisle vaults in St Mary's should be of wood, rather than stone. He wrote to Vaughan: 'the supreme consideration is not what is cheaper, but what is best, and if one method is better than another I venture to think that it should be adopted although it may take a longer time to complete.' He won the argument and we can see the result today.

Those who are fortunate enough to know both St Mary's and St Patrick's take some pleasure in comparing the two; and local loyalties are likely to intrude.

Generally, it seems, St Patrick's has received the greater praise. According to the celebrated architect and historian, the late Robin Boyd – a Melbourne man, it must be added – when 'Viewed in the golden light of amber glass windows, the Cathedral's interior presents a Gothic vision probably unsurpassed by any other building in the four hundred years since the great Gothic era.'

Externally, and on first inspection, St Patrick's may not appear particularly impressive. The undressed bluestone (Basalt) gives it a stern, unsmiling aspect. It presents a somewhat dumpy appearance when compared to St Mary's in Sydney. This is partly due to the transepts having externally-buttressed aisles (unlike St Mary's) which adds to their width.

Telling Good from Bad

JUST as, in fact, through our bodily sense of taste, when we are doing well, we distinguish unmistakably the good from the bad, and desire what is useful, so, in the same way, our spirit, when it begins to move vigorously in all quietude, is able to feel in all its fullness, the divine consolation without ever being led astray by whatever is hostile to it.

– Diadochus, 5th century bishop of Photike in Greece, *Treatise on perfection*, 6,30, quoted in *The Roman Breviary*, in the second reading at Matins for the fourth week of the year.

Another reason may be the extended height of the three spires, out of proportion to the rest of the building. These were only completed in 1939 and were clearly unintended by Wardell; they lead the eye ever upwards – the lateral line, in effect, minimised in favour of the vertical which again adds to the Cathedral's slight dumpy appearance.

It is significant that Wardell's architect-son declined to accept the commission to design the steeples and enlarge the central tower because it was not true to his father's design.

The real beauty of St Patrick's is revealed when the visitor steps inside the west door. The vista, when viewed on entry is immediately breathtaking. The great length extends three hundred and forty feet towards the east end where the unusual apse comprising seven small chapels in the French Gothic style seems far in the distance.

The great height of the nave, at ninety-five feet – higher than Durham and Gloucester Cathedrals – is crowned with a timber vault with angels on the hammerbeams, and a barely visible carved frieze above the clerestory. The width of the nave is greater than that of Canterbury, Salisbury and Norwich Cathedrals. The simplicity of the nave contrasts with the rich decoration of the chancel and its elaborate vault.

There is no central, eastern window like St Mary's, but a circle of smaller stained glass windows and behind, in the ambulatory, a half circle of richly decorated chapels which project outside to give the building its distinctive lozenge shaped appearance.

In contrast the warm glow of the dressed sandstone exterior of St Mary's in Sydney, particularly when viewed from the west across Hyde Park, is reminiscent of an English abbey church. Like some crouching animal or sphinx, it lies in command, unassailable in its natural elevated domain. The external elevation and massing of St Mary's has something of the character of the mediaeval Benedictine foundations with their cloisters and cells for monks. When planning the original St Mary's Polding had wanted a similar arrangement for his Benedictine priests and Wardell is likely to have had this in mind.

Catholics with Tails?

A SORT OF sly notion has, by some means or another, crept into the world, that difference of religion would render men unfit to perform together the offices of common and civil life. ... There may have been times in England when the quarter sessions would have been disturbed by theological polemics; but now after a Catholic justice has once been seen on the bench and it has been clearly ascertained that he spoke English, had no tail, only a single row of teeth, and that he loved port wine – after all the scandalous and infamous reports of his physical conformation had been proved to be false – he would be reckoned a jolly fellow ... nothing in fact can be more un-candid and un-philosophical than to say that a man has a tail because you cannot agree with him on religious subjects.

– Sydney Smith, *The Peter Plymley Letters*, Letter x, quoted *The Selected Writings of Sydney Smith*, ed. W.H.Auden, Faber and Faber [undated] p.72.
Sydney Smith [1771-1845] was an Anglican clergyman, essayist, wit, and founder of *The Edinburgh Review*.

The interior of St Mary's has an altogether different atmosphere from that of St Patrick's. In contrast it is darker, more massive in construction. It is without the lightness, the French delicacy, and the youthfulness of St Patrick's, but gives instead an impression of solidity, greater massiveness, of awe and maturity befitting the mother-church of Australia.

The differences in the dimensions of the two Cathedrals are minimal.

The length of St Mary's is three hundred and fifty feet, while the length along the nave and chancery of St Patrick's, excluding the apsidal chapels, is three hundred and forty feet.

The width across the nave and aisles of St Patrick's is just two feet greater than St Mary's.

Wardell chose 14th century English Decorated style with minimal internal decoration, achieving an impressive unity throughout. Here is an historically accurate model without being fussy or pedantic. No one part conflicts in style with another and yet the whole remains uniquely Wardell.

On a dull rainy morning the prospect in the unlit nave is sombre and dark. But more often when the sun catches the amber-glass clerestory windows and illuminates the bays, arches and triforium, and the aisle stained glass windows glow with rich colour, the scene is one of great splendour and visual delight.

Ultimately the claim of superiority of one cathedral over the other is misleading and unnecessary. St Mary's and St Patrick's Cathedrals are two magnificent but differing examples of Gothic Revival architecture, two sides of the same Gothic coin. They are supporting sisters, not warring rivals.

According to one of Australia's foremost architectural historians, the late D. I. McDonald writing in the *Australian Encyclopaedia*, both St Mary's and St Patrick's are 'notable for their purity of expression and richness of symbolism; [they] rank among the greatest buildings constructed anywhere in that style.'

Without having known and visited these two Cathedrals, and getting to know something of their saintly architect, Catholics are missing out on an exciting and inspiring part of the history of the Church in Australia.

TONY EVANS was a producer with the ABC for many years and is now a freelance writer living in Western Australia. He has published three historical biographies, the latest being the very popular *C.Y.O'Connor, His Life and Legacy*, published by UWA Press. Evans founded the *G.K.Chesterton Society* in W.A. Recently it became the national *Australian Chesterton Society*. He has just completed a biography of William Wardell. The beautiful St John's College within the University of Sydney, founded in 1858, is the oldest Catholic University College in Australia, and first Catholic University College to be built in the English speaking world since the reformation; it is also one of the cultural treasures bequeathed to Australian Catholics by William Wardell its architect.

The UN Shows its True Colours

THE DAY FREE SPEECH DIED

By Nat Hentoff

ON Inauguration Day, after it got the United Nations to pass a gag rule on insulting religions, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) told our new president in a New York Times ad that Muslims “have compelling strategic and moral reasons to cooperate and peacefully coexist with the United States in particular, and with the West in general.”

Many Muslims here and elsewhere want that partnership; but some, jihadists in the name of Islam, disagree violently. In its address to our new president, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (which has permanent status at the United Nations) made no mention of its own strategic skills that resulted, on Dec. 18, in the passage by the U.N. General Assembly of a nonbinding resolution (with strong advice to its members) that condemns “defamation of religion,” especially Islam.

In an 83 to 53 vote, with 42 abstentions, the U.N. General Assembly urged nations to provide “adequate protections” in their laws or constitutions against “acts of hatred, discrimination, intimidation and coercion resulting from defamation of religions and incitement to religious hatred in general.”

Only Islam and Muslims are specifically named in this resolution against religious defamation, sponsored by Uganda on behalf of the 57-member Organization of the Islamic Conference, and cosponsored by Belarus and Venezuela. Opponents included the United States, a majority of European countries, Japan and India.

Those in favor said they do not want to limit free speech but do intend to stop such expressions as the 2005 Danish cartoons disrespecting the Prophet Muhammad that ignited violent protests by Muslims around the world.

Among the opponents, including myself, of this U.N. move to have its members legislate, with penalties, against such very broadly designated “religious defamation” is Floyd Abrams, the nation’s leading protector of the First Amendment in the Supreme Court and in his writings. In his Dec. 9 lecture on global communications, issues at the United Nations itself in New York, he cited a recent study by the European Center for Law and Justice finding “that laws based on the concept of ‘defamation of religion’ actually help to create a climate of violence.”

“Violators of these laws, as applied in most Muslim countries, are subject to the death penalty,” Abrams continued. He cited from the study a 22-year-old Hindu in Pakistan who “was beaten to death by co-workers at a factory for allegedly committing the crime of blasphemy, which is a crime punishable by death in the country.” The three workers were “charged not with murder but with ‘failure to inform the police that blasphemy was under way.’”

- Nat Hentoff, 'A free speech killer,' *The Washington Times*, Monday, February 2, 2009.

Annals Australasia remembers with affection its late Chairman, supporter and friend

FRANK DEREK DEVINE

[DECEMBER 17, 1931-JULY 3, 2009]

By Jane Fraser



THE first time I had lunch with Frank Devine was in 1988, after we'd had a few personality issues; it was not unknown for Frank to inflict hiccups on those who didn't measure up to what he expected.

He took me to an Italian restaurant as was his wont. It was a popular place, full, on this particular day of Eastern suburban glitterati; Frank loved a good entrance. He pushed the door open, paused and then bellowed at the maitre-di HELLO I'M DEVINE! There was the thunderous sound of knives and forks hitting glass table tops, as the diners, mouths open, wondered whether they were witnessing the Second Coming.

And so began the best 20 years of my life; a weekly lunch with Frank, Paddy McGuinness and James Murray. These lunches were interspersed with many more erudite guests, including priests – some of them troublesome – politicians and accomplished journalists passing through town. We went at first to *The Shakespeare*, a rather ordinary pub up the road from the office. It was aptly named; the food, for example, was half comedy and half tragedy. After a while Paddy, a food snob if ever there was one, cocked his snook at what he thought inferior cuisine, and took himself to the more up-market restaurant across the road; he would glare at us balefully, wave his superior piece of fish in the air and then join us for a restorative ale or two, over which he would tell us why we were misguided souls who knew nothing.

Frank would retaliate by talking about his grandchildren, which, to Paddy, was a forbidden subject, as was any mention of sport, especially cricket, one of the many loves of Frank's life. What a contrast they presented; if they'd advertised for

someone in every way different from themselves, they would have found each other; they were the greatest of friends; who would ever forget Frank crying when he delivered the eulogy at Paddy's funeral.

James Murray has averred that although he had many differences with Frank, they had never had an argument; however I well remember the time he left the table in a monumental huff at something Frank had said or done, and for good measure, when he walked down the side of the pub, he stopped at the window, wacked his walking stick on the windowsill, gave us a considerable piece of his mind and marched – well, okay, hobbled, down the hill.

In Memoriam

FOR ALMOST FORTY years, Frank Devine supported and encouraged *Annals*. I first met him and Jacqueline and their children when they returned to Australia from Japan via Perth in 1971. A dear friend Cyril Pearl, first editor of Sydney's *Sunday Telegraph*, long since gone to his reward, made sure that we met, and our friendship endured. Frank became Chairman of the Board of *Annals* and was unfailingly helpful and wise. He never hid his Catholicism, and his journalistic prowess was ever at the service of truth and justice. He hated cant, and phoniness of any kind, and as far as I can recall never bore a grudge. He was a big man in every sense. His heart was as big as his voice. He made many friends, and will be much missed.

Requiescat in Pace

– Paul Stenhouse, Editor, *Annals*

Everyone has a Frank story, and when he died almost every obituary mentioned his love of a long lunch. Yes, he did, but not in the sense that journalists had the reputation of whiling away the afternoons getting plastered. He was too sophisticated, too innately courteous, perhaps too nervous of getting a tongue-lashing from Jacqui; also there were his grandchildren to pick up from school, take them to his place, talk to them about sport, teach them to play poker and show them how to cook. He got as much pleasure out of them, as he did his intellectual friends; and he loved little anecdotes such as when he asked one of Rozzie's twins how his younger brother, Robert, was. In deference to the boy's trouble with the R word, Frank said: 'How's Wobert?' 'Frank,' replied the boy, 'it's not Wobert; it's Yobert!'

Frank was a prodigious reader with eclectic taste. His favourite writers were John O'Hara and John Cheever but he also eagerly fell on the series of books written by Alexander McCall Smith set in Botswana, which, like many other books, he read aloud to Jacqui, in his wonderful voice. His children say that if Frank hadn't been a journalist he would have been an actor. He loved the movies and went as often as he could, every time with great enthusiasm.

The last film he saw at the cinema was *Gran Torino*, and when he was so ill and in hospital, rather than whine about the terrible pain when one of his daughters stood on his foot or that the nurses were slow with his morphine patches, he would do Clint Eastwood's old-tough-growl; a growl which considerably increased in volume when his hospital dinners were served.

Frank has not been known for his robust health for over 30 years. For three decades there have been reports of his impending demise, but like the

proverbial cat he always sprung back to his feet. He smoked; one year he asked one of his daughters what she'd like for Christmas. That you give up smoking, she replied. He did.

Frank was in the Royal North Shore Hospital for six weeks. He hated it. Being incarcerated in a windowless ward with three other patients and a loo with no light was certainly not his cup of tea. He said he woke up every morning, profoundly disappointed – that he wasn't dead. However he greatly admired the doctors and nurses and wished he was well enough to write their stories, where they came from, what they did and why. The light of the journalist in him never went out.

While he was enduring agony, tended-to by overworked staff in a bed too short for him, he never lost his charm. Because of his wonderful sense of irony the nurses sometimes didn't understand what he was getting at, but they loved him, and when he was discharged and sent to Greenwich Hospital for palliative care, they came out one by one to tearfully embrace him. 'A James Bond line-up of exotic beauties,' he said, and he became known as the Maurice Chevalier of the prostate ward, and he loved the title as *Gigi* was one of his favourite movies.

He was far happier in Greenwich, in a sunny room with a balcony, but towards the end he was eating only oysters, which reminded me of the bets Paddy and Frank would have, mainly concerning elections. Paddy always lost and the reward for Frank was a large supply of truffles or caviar within an exquisite dish.

Frank accepted his death with no rancour, but frustration because he felt he still had many things to do.

He believed in God and was quietly religious. 'It's just easier to be born Catholic, be baptised a few weeks later, and then get on with life.' In James Murray's book, *Would You Believe*, he is quoted as saying: 'I see the presence of God everywhere. And I can't think of anyone in whom I haven't seen a divine presence, and then I hear about evil people I find myself thinking of them as brothers or sons or fathers, or mothers, sisters and daughters, and I can't believe that in these roles there hasn't been in their lives a flicker of goodness.'

He was a person who enhanced lives; quick to praise and encourage, slow to criticise and he had more good and true friends than you can imagine. Part of



Frank and Jacqueline, with grandsons Tom and Frankie in the background.

this was due to his gregariousness and a larger part because he was a good and honest man who was a lot of interest and fun to be with.

His Eminence George Pell was one; he couldn't be here today because he is in Rome but he told me last week Frank was very much in his thoughts and prayers.

Former Prime Minister John Howard was another. When the staff at Greenwich Hospital was told of his imminent arrival they raced around putting a new pair of pyjamas on their patient and putting a fresh cover on the bed.

Greek Orthodox Archbishop Stylianos lunched with him and was driven home by Frank, an experience he would never forget. Frank's driving skills were, to say the least, frightening, described by one as a kind of Luna Park dodgem car race. He thought he was a fantastic driver and was fond of telling anyone who suggested he might be a danger on the road, that he had never had an accident, unconscious of the fact there were pile-ups all around him.

He was an inspiration to a generation of journalists; photographer Adam Knott was a cadet when Frank was Editor and says not a month goes by without he and his colleagues remembering how encouraging he was to young members of staff. Editor-in-chief of *The Australian*, Chris Mitchell, lunched with the Devines before Frank went to hospital, after which Frank called to say what a wonderful time he'd had; his spirits were buoyed for a week. Chris said he signalled a new era for *The Australian*, bringing a worldliness and sophistication to the paper. He consulted with his senior members of staff and no story was too big or too small. 'He instilled in us a confidence we hadn't had,' he said.

After Mass last Sunday I had tea with Jacqui and two of her daughters. We pored over boxes of photographs and they chose the one in the Order of Service today as being a typical Frank picture. It had, they said, been a great adventure being with Frank in many countries in the world.

A good friend told me about the time he dined with Frank, and the music was deafening; Frank asked for it to be lowered but was told the kitchen liked it. He stood up and started singing very loudly and the owner pleaded with him to stop. 'Well turn the music off and I will,' said the unrepentant soloist. They finished their meal in peace.

I've seen a bit of Frank and his family over the past couple of months and it has been an eye opener. The feeling of love in the Devine home is palpable, something we should all hope for. Nephews, sons-in-laws, cousins and, of course, wife, daughters and beloved grandchildren were ever present. It has been a great privilege to be a small part of it. I was very honoured to have been asked to say a few words today and thank Jacqui, Miranda, Rozzie and Alex.

A final lunch story. Frank was dining with two colleagues some years ago when his heart gave out on him. He recovered, but not before he had fallen to the floor and shouted 'I'm coming, God!', somewhat startling other patrons. He didn't go to God then, but he has now. And left us with his three wonderful gifts: his writing of course, but more importantly his giving and loving. Vale darling Frank; we all love you.

JANE FRASER is a columnist with *The Australian*. This is a slightly condensed version of her eulogy at Frank's Requiem Mass, which appeared in *The Australian* on July 8, 2009.

Give Credit Where Credit is Due

BARRY OBAMA ATTENDED A CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

By Patrick McGurn

OF THE many parallels between Barack Obama and John F. Kennedy, one has eluded all coverage: Both attended Catholic school as children. In fact, while JFK may have been the Irish Catholic from Boston, he spent less time at the Canterbury School in Connecticut than did young Barry (as he was then called) at St. Francis of Assisi in Indonesia.

At a time when America's 6,165 Catholic elementary and 1,213 secondary schools are celebrating Catholic Schools Week, President Obama's first-hand experience here opens the door to a provocative opportunity. In his inaugural address, the president rightly scored a U.S. school system that "fail[s] too many" of our young people. How refreshing it would be if he followed up by giving voice to a corollary truth: For tens of thousands of inner-city families, the local parochial school is often the only lifeline of hope.

"When an inner-city public school does what most Catholic schools do every day, it makes the headlines," says Patrick J. McCloskey, author of a new book called "The Street Stops Here," about the year he spent at Rice High – an Irish Christian Brothers school in Harlem. "President Obama has a chance to rise above the ideological divide simply by giving credit where credit is due, by focusing on results, and the reason for those results."

You could argue that Mr. Obama is halfway there. In "The Audacity of Hope," he states that disagreements over public funding often cloud all other judgments. "Our debate on education," he wrote, "seems stuck between those who want to dismantle the public school system and those who would defend an indefensible status quo, between those who say money makes no difference in education and those who want more money without any demonstration that it will be put to good use."

Put funding issues aside, however, and the results speak for themselves. A New York University study of the city's schools showed that Catholic school children do better on tests – and the longer they spend in Catholic school, the more they out-achieve their public school counterparts. A more recent study in Los Angeles by Loyola Marymount's School of Education found that poor and marginalized students attending Catholic schools have remarkably higher retention and graduation rates than their peers in public schools.

– Patrick McGurn, 'Obama should acknowledge his roots' *The Wall Street Journal*, Tuesday January 27, 2009.

Philosophy and Theology in Christianity and Islam

DIFFERENCE DOES MATTER

Reviewed by JUDE DOUGHERTY



THE PREMISE that animates this enquiry is that the Middle Ages is a period of history that has something to tell us about ourselves. In

an autobiographical note, Brague tells the reader how his classical studies led him out of his early work on Plato and Aristotle to a serious study of the Middle Ages and a professorship in Arabic medieval philosophy. Any French man or woman who studies medieval philosophy is perforce an autodidact, given the absence of medieval studies in the French curriculum even at the university level. Many American readers will remember that Etienne Gilson founded his influential Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies not in France but in Toronto.

Brague opens with a set of distinctions rarely encountered in contemporary literature, i.e., between theology in Christianity and *Kalam* in Islam, between philosophy in Christianity and *falsafa* in Islam, elaborating on the terms and the difference in understanding they make.

Addressing the genesis of European culture, Brague acknowledges, "Europe borrowed its nourishment, first from the Greco-Roman world that preceded it, then from the world of Arabic culture that developed in parallel with it, and finally from the Byzantine world. It is from the Arabic world, in particular, that Europe gained the texts of Aristotle, Galen, and many others that, once translated from the Arabic into Latin, fed the 12th-century renaissance." Later the Byzantine world provided the original version of those same texts, which permitted close study and alimanted the flowering of Scholasticism." Where would Thomas Aquinas have been, he asks, if he had not found a worthy adversary in

Brague, Rémi. *The Legend of the Middle Ages: Philosophical Explorations of Medieval Christianity, Judaism, and Islam*. Trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. pp. xi + 287. Cloth, \$35.00; £24.00.

Averroes? What would Duns Scotus have contributed if he had not taken Avicenna as a point of departure?

Islamic philosophy is usually seen as beginning with al-Kindi, around the 9th century and ending with Averroes around the 12th century. No one contests the fact that Muslims continued to think after Averroes, but what remains to be defined is to what extent that thought can be called "philosophy." There are in history highly respectable works that one would never call philosophical but which we would nevertheless describe as "wisdom literature" or "thoughts." Heidegger, Brague tells us, would place "thought"

on a higher plane than philosophy. Brague is particularly sensitive to the broader cultural context in which philosophy is developed. He finds that the opinions generally admitted within a given community provide the basis on which philosophy is built. Those opinions are historically conditioned, and they come in the final analysis, he maintains, from the legislator of the community. All medieval works were affected by this phenomenon. Within Christianity, revelation is the all-important communal bond. "Muslim and Jewish revelations, which are presented as laws, do not pose the same problems as Christian revelation." Reconciling religion and philosophy is an epistemological problem in Christianity and may even be a psychological one, but in Islam and Judaism reconciling religion and revelation is primarily a political problem. Unlike Islam and Judaism, Christianity includes the Magisterium of the Church, whose teaching is granted authority in the intellectual domain.

The institutionalization of philosophy, Brague points out, took place under the tutelage of the Church and remains exclusively European. There was indeed something like higher education in all three Mediterranean worlds, but the teaching of philosophy at the university level existed neither in the Muslim world nor in Jewish communities. Jewish philosophy and Muslim philosophy were private enterprises. It is usual to compare the great philosophers of each tradition, for example, Averroes, Maimonides, and Thomas Aquinas, but the difference is that Thomas was one of many engaged in the same corporate activity, standing out, it is true, among countless obscure figures. Within Islam there is no corpus of canonical texts that lend themselves to *disputatio*. To illustrate the difference, Brague remarks, "You can be a perfectly

Celebrity Egos

The religions of celebrities are the ultimate expression of an ancient spiritual impulse, the worshipper's desire to eliminate the middleman, the clergy, and achieve direct contact with the divine. Famous people are egomaniacs, gods in their own right, and they do not want to be kept waiting ... they want God to be accessible, a name in their Blackberry.

- 'God's Speed Dial,' *The Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 2009, a review of 'Celebrity Spirituality,' by Daniel Harris, in *Salmagundi*, Fall-Winter 2008-9.

competent rabbi or imam without ever having studied philosophy. In contrast, a philosophical background is a necessary part of the basic equipment of the Christian theologian." Leo Strauss, acknowledging the status of philosophy in Christianity, on the one hand, and in Islam and Judaism, on the other, regards the institutionalization of philosophy as a double-edged sword. The official acknowledgment of philosophy in the Christian world made philosophy subject to ecclesiastical supervision, whereas the precarious position of philosophy in the Islamic-Jewish world guaranteed its private character and therewith its inner freedom from supervision. Brague contests Strauss on this point as would any Catholic scholar who has pursued a philosophical vocation.

Brague offers a chapter on the importance of the study of nature. From the point of view of Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), "The problems of physics are of no interest to us in our religious affairs or in our livelihoods. Therefore we must leave them alone." Physics, he held, must not bother us because it cannot be applied to the two domains that are truly important to us: this life and the life to come. Averroes, by contrast, will say that the study of nature is obligatory because a knowledge of nature leads to a knowledge of its Author. The real goal is to know God, the Creator, through His creation. Thomas in the *Summa contra Gentiles* devotes two chapters to the pertinence of the study of nature for theology and suggests that scientific knowledge of nature has the added effect of freeing one from the superstitions of astrology. Brague adds, "Thomas's intention (among others) is not far from that of Epicurus, who sought to calm human anguish, one of the most dangerous types which is anguish before celestial phenomena."

A succeeding chapter addresses the difference between Christianity and Islam from the Muslim point of view. Ibn Khaldun is again taken as an authoritative source. In Ibn Khaldun's view, as presented by Brague, within the Muslim community the holy war is a religious duty because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and the obligation to convert all non-Muslims to Islam either by

The Myth of the Golden Age of Spanish Islam [1]

THE myth of Islamic racial innocence was a Western creation and served a Western purpose. Not for the first time, a mythologized and idealized Islam provided a stick with which to chastise Western failings. In the eighteenth century, the philosophers of the Enlightenment had praised Islam for its lack of dogmas and mysteries, its freedom from priests and Inquisitors and other persecutors – recognizing real qualities but exaggerating them as a polemical weapon against the Christian churches and clergy.

- Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1990, p.101.

persuasion or by force. In consequence the caliphate and royal authority are rightly united in Islam so that the person in charge can devote his available strength to both objectives at the same time. "The other religious groups," Ibn Khaldun finds, "do not have a universal mission and the holy war is not a religious duty to them, save only for purposes of defense. It has thus come about that the person in charge of religious affairs in other religious groups is not concerned with power politics. Royal authority comes to those who have it by accident, and in some way that has nothing to do with religion and not because they are under obligation to gain power over other nations." Holy war exists only within Islam and furthermore, Ibn Khaldun insists, it is imposed by Sharia.

Its theological warrant aside, Brague asks, how is jihad viewed from the vantage point of Islam's greatest philosophers? He puts the question to three Aristotelians, al Farabi (c. 870-950), Avicenna (980-1037), and Averroes (1126-1198), all of whom profess belief in Islam. All three permit the waging of holy war against those who refuse Islam: al Farabi and Averroes against the Christians, Avicenna against the pagans he encounters in Persia. Al Farabi, who lived and wrote in the lands where the enemy was the Byzantine empire, draws up a list of seven justifications for war, including the right to conduct war in order to acquire something that the state desires to have but is in the possession of others, the right of combat against people for whom it is better for them that they serve


but who refuse the yoke of slavery, and the right to wage holy war to force people to accept what is better for them if they do not recognize it spontaneously. Averroes, writing in the farthest Western part of the Islamic empire, approves without reservation the slaughter of dissidents, calling for the total elimination of a people whose continued existence might harm the state. Avicenna condones conquest and readily grants the leader of his ideal society the right to annihilate those who, called to truth, reject it. In general the philosophers express no remorse about widespread bloodletting, and Brague offers some additional examples. Al Farabi has nothing to say about the murder of "bestial" men. Avicenna suggests that the religious skeptic should be tortured until he admits the difference between the true and the not true and is penitent. And Averroes advocated the elimination of the mentally handicapped.

Although the book has some appendices and 43 pages of supporting notes, the last chapter of *The Legend of the Middle Ages* is entitled, "Was Averroes a 'Good Guy?'" One might say, in spite of the fact that he condoned the extermination of the handicapped, favored the execution of heretics, and sanctioned what today is called ethnic cleansing. Moral issues aside, Thomas Aquinas accused him of being more the corrupter of Aristotelian philosophy than its interpreter.

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Supremacy of St. Peter's See

ST PETER THE ROCK

OW the early faith of the Armenian Church as to the supremacy of S. Peter's See is given by its Patriarch in a remarkable letter, professing to give the tradition received from S. Gregory the Illuminator, which thus carries us up to the beginning of the fourth century.

The letter itself, giving the traditional belief of the Patriarchate of Armenia, was written AD 426. S. Isaac, the author of the letter, a man of the very highest account in the Armenian Church and nation, was Patriarch from AD 390 to 440, the latter being the year in which S. Leo ascended the throne of St. Peter.

In 426, this saintly man, who went through so much for his faith, wrote thus in a document which is of the very highest value, written in Greek, which may be thus translated:

“The precept of GOD commends to us, not a Church built of stones and wood, but the human race built on a rock by faith in the truth. Wherefore the true faith is the Church which gathers us together and builds in the unity of the knowledge of the Son of GOD: for He Himself the Life-giver, teaches us, saying to St. Peter: “Thou art Peter, and on this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against thee.” Now when we hear Peter called a rock, what are we to understand to be said? That it is like a stone amongst stones? Far from it; but it is a man using reason, the head of the Apostolic band; and since he with immovable faith confessed Christ, the Son of the living GOD, he obtained the blessing, and was called Rock.”

— Luke Rivington, *Authority, or A Plain Reason for Joining the Church of Rome*, London, 1890

A young Sydney woman describes her journey to Catholicism.

FROM ZOROASTRIAN TO CATHOLIC

Interview with Wanda Skowronska



I WAS BORN in Bombay [Mumbai] in India but have been living in Australia for the past 10 years. My family were Zoroastrian – they are also known as Parois in India. It is a very ancient religion. You know, King Cyrus and Darius were Zoroastrians. However after the rise of Islam in the seventh century, many Zoroastrians fled from Iran in about 1400AD, as they were persecuted for a long time by Muslims and they made India their home. There has been a group of them living in India ever since, about 70,000 – only 20,000 remain in Iran.

What did you believe, as a Zoroastrian?

Zoroastrians believe in the teaching of Zoroaster, a prophet, who has revealed Ahura Mazda to us, who we understand as the 'lord of wisdom', the supreme divine authority. According to the holy book Avesta, Zoroastrians believe that Mazda was filled with a Holy Spirit. In Zoroastrian tradition there is a good spirit represented by Spenta Mainyu, who is for order and good and an evil spirit represented by Angra Mainyu, who is for chaos and destruction. There will be an end of the world where evil will be purged in heaven and earth, and it is mentioned in the book that the 'son of God' will come to the earth.

It is like the book of Genesis, in that there were bad angels who fell away from God and the good and bad angels are perpetually in conflict. There are three basic principles I was taught to live by – good thought, good words and good deeds. These are taken very seriously by Zoroastrians. In Mumbai I visited the fire temple every day –

this is an essential ritual – there was no idol or figure there but we worshipped fire. Water and fire are agents of ritual purity. We said our prayers around fire and we used the ancient Avesta language. Zoroastrians are very strong in their beliefs and moral norms. They have prayer competitions and I used to win prizes in them.

How did your journey out of Zoroastrian begin?

Well, though I visited the fire temple every day and always wanted to help others [my mother was kind to others, and instilled in me a sense of helping others]. I had this inner sense that these 'norms' were not enough. I was always curious about God, and asked questions about the ancient rituals

and wanted to know more. The years rolled by and I felt I did not get the answers I was seeking to the mysteries. I wondered about life after death and even had a dream at the age of 7 of a light filled place with a throne, which made a deep impression on me. I just kept wondering and looked around at other people.

As a young girl in India I knew some Catholics, but they did not seem to have the sense of an 'evil spirit' that we Zoroastrians have and did not seem too observant about their faith, except for going to Mass on Sundays. I asked them about what they did in church and they told me about eating bread and drinking wine and said 'It's the Body of Christ' but could not explain much more to me. I asked 'If Christ was the son of God, why didn't God help him, take him down from the Cross? Why did God not perform a miracle and do this?' But no one could answer my question. Now I understand better why it happened that way.

Then I had a series of tragic experiences in my life. I was married in a Zoroastrian ceremony and came to Australia with my husband but there were so many difficulties that the whole situation broke up. I was left with about \$60,000 of debts from a failed business venture which were not my debts in reality, but I paid them off in any case. This was part of my mother's training, to do what needs to be done, and though my former 'husband' apologised to me later saying 'Sorry for what I have done' in leaving me to pay the debt. I just took the burden and carried it. I think that somehow, my mother, in teaching me to 'do what was necessary' for another, and even more, had some 'pre-concepts' of Christianity, when I think about it. In any case, my mother died when I was 16, and my father

University Graduations: How They Have Changed

FOR THE HONOUR of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, and the for advancement of Holy Church and the studium, by my authority and by that of the whole university, I grant the degree of Bachelor/Master/Doctor in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

– Catholic form used for conferral of degrees in Oxford and other English Universities before the Reformation.

when I was 22, and I found myself alone in Australia. To put it mildly it was a difficult time for me. I used to sit and smoke – I have given it up since – and wonder ‘Why was I born? Where are you God? Are you alive? Will I die soon?’ and so on. I just sat and thought about these things for hours on end.

Then one day in 2002, I went for a walk intending to reach Malabar Beach in Sydney, not far from where I was living. I walked past St Andrew’s Catholic church on the way, and somehow felt that I should go in. I don’t know how to explain this, but I felt the church was calling me inside. It was a weekday and I thought the church might be closed – I found out later, it usually is – but the door was open. It was about July and with some trepidation, I went in and I know this is hard to express, but I truly felt something so real, a presence, the presence of God. But I could not understand it and I thought it was all so ‘abnormal’ and so after being in the church for a little while, I ran away.

The next day, I came back again around the same time. Again, it was open when it should have been closed. I walked inside and again I ran home. The third time when I came back at the same time, and again it was open. I could not stop the tears. They just came and I asked myself ‘Why am I crying’. I stayed and cried for a long time.

What happened then?

Well, I continued to come back to visit the church and I knew some people in the area who were Catholics, because I was living and renting a place there at the time. I asked one Catholic lady if I could go to a Sunday Mass with her and so I went with her and some others to Mass. Then the questions started to get the better of me and I kept asking these people why do you stand, why do you sit, what is the meaning of the bread and wine? I said to myself ‘You have to find out’. I listened to the sermons of Father Pat Hurley, I always liked listening to his sermons about the faith. Fr Hurley was transferred shortly afterwards to a parish in Sydney’s south-west. I asked my friends questions about the faith – about baptism, salvation, and all and I could not get the answers I sought. At that time, I thought I will go and try

Catholicity and the Church of Rome

ST Cyprian of Carthage [died AD 258] calls Pope Stephen [AD 254-257] ‘the head and root of the Catholic Church’.¹ He calls the Church of Rome the ‘root and womb of the Catholic Church’,² and writing to Pope Cornelius [AD 251-253] he calls the Church of Rome ‘the root and mother’ of Catholic Unity.³ When the bishop of Carthage heard of the election of Pope Cornelius he wrote to him telling him that he had sent letters throughout the north African Province so that ‘all our colleagues might approve and cling to you and your communion, which is not only the unity but the charity of the Catholic Church’.⁴

– Paul Stenhouse. Cyprian was bishop of Carthage from 248-258. See [1] Epistle lxxiii. [2] Epistle xlvi. [3] Epistle xlv. [4] Epistle xlvi. For all references, see Migne Patrologia Latina, tome iv.

other Christians too, in my search for the truth and I went to the Baptists, the Salvation Army and I observed them and asked them questions. It is strange for a Catholic to appreciate this, but I did not sense there was any great difference among Christians at that stage.

I attended prayer meetings of Derek Prince [a Protestant pastor] in Blacktown for 2 years and listened to his talks. He spoke with fire and passion and I thought ‘wow’ but I still had the sense of not getting to the core of truth as I wanted to understand it, even though I derived much spiritual solace from these meetings. Somewhere around this time, I was given a New Testament and would read it, then fall asleep with a lot of questions on my mind. I would awake at 3 or 4 am still thinking of the problem and would have some kind of answer. Once I was asked by a friend ‘What is important

faith or wisdom?’ and I fell asleep pondering this question, agonising about it, you could say. I prayed ‘God please answer me’ and when I woke up, the thought came to me that ‘You have to have faith- when you have faith you have wisdom’. I would kneel and pray for hours. I was going to many different Christian churches, listening to what they all had to say continually searching. That’s how it was.

At some stage I became ill and did not know why I felt unwell. I remember meeting up, through friends, with a ‘healing priest’ from Sri Lanka. I was in the room praying with him and he said to me at some point that I had some cancer cells in the uterus and I was blown over as I went to have a check up and he was right. The medical report said I had ‘epithelia cells,’ that is, cancer cells at an early stage of development.

I was shocked but even more so, when this priest actually prayed over me, and on further tests, the cells had disappeared. I realised I had been cured and was proudly moved and aware of the power of God. At that stage I got to know something of Our Lady too and had attended a rosary group in Malabar, which I liked. Then I heard about the Pilgrim Statue of Our lady of Fatima and I attended the events surrounding that. I prayed the rosary a lot during the day and in the night, even while lying on my bed. This sounds strange, but at some stage I felt some kind of ‘evil’ – perhaps demons? – as I prayed. Again I wondered why would I get this sense of evil as I prayed, and the answer came



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to me that I was being cleansed of evil, and the cleaner my heart became, the more graces I would receive.

So in the midst of all this, did you think of conversion?

Now I know this sounds strange too, but in 2006, even though I was praying the Catholic prayers of the rosary, I would still think about the Salvation Army as well, as I had been very impressed by some of their people and their good works. As well, the thought returned to me that 'I am a Zoroastrian'. Very confusing! You see, you are born into Zoroastrianism, and it is not just a matter of habit and culture, it is a really deep thing- you live this belief and are expected to die in it. Somehow after all that I had experienced with Christians, I felt it was difficult to 'let go' of the traditional faith of my ancestors. I was interested in Christianity, I loved the prayers, I had had extraordinary experiences, but when the actual moment of 'letting go' of the past came, there was a real struggle. I somehow thought I could continue with all the various groups and religious searching without facing the ultimate question of conversion. About this time, I had a dream, when visiting some friends in Brisbane - I remember I saw an enormous light and heard someone ask - 'Why are you so stubborn - why don't you get baptised?'. In the dream I answered 'But I am a Zoroastrian'. Then

I sensed that the voice was Jesus and it was as if he were following me. I saw droplets of white light falling all around me. I was frightened and said in the dream 'Please don't baptise me' but I heard the voice beckoning me drawing me into the white droplets saying 'You are one of us.'

Can you imagine such a dream? I woke up with a start and said 'Thank goodness it was a dream'. However, the thought prompted by the dream continued when I was awake and I found myself asking Jesus 'But why do you want me to be baptised?' and the answer came to me 'Because I want you to do my work' and I found myself saying something like 'Ok, I want to do your work'

From that time I had the sense that Jesus was always walking with me, whether I went to a church or a club. On another occasion, I had the idea that I would go to a Mass and go to

Mercy

All wish to receive mercy; few are ready to show mercy to others.

- St Caesar of Arles, AD 470-542,
Sermon 25. From the Second
Reading at Matins, for Monday of
the 17th Week of the Year.

Holy Communion but then I realised that was just an ego trip on my part, for I thought I could do this without being baptised - just go and that was all. At that time as I was thinking these things, I closed my eyes in prayer was prompted to think of the Crucifixion and Our Lady standing there and realised that Jesus on the Cross and Mary were pointing me to think of the Eucharist in a very different way. With the crucifixion in my mind I heard Jesus say 'Look at me, this is what the Eucharist is, it is not just a piece of bread - this is why you have to be baptised'. This was a very important realisation for me and I felt as if I had reached some turning point. I had realised that the Crucifixion of Jesus and the Eucharist were deeply linked and I found myself thinking 'I promise I'll get baptised'. I knew then that God wanted me to be baptised.

At the same time, I spoke to some Catholic people but they seemed to take it easy about my sense of need to be baptised. Then I searched for some other Catholic friends and ended up in a course for people intending to become Catholics. I went to confession weekly and this was a challenge to my individual faults. After hearing a priest talk about smoking, I gave it up and have never smoked since.

I learned the beauty of confession, about prayers and Catholic beliefs. I was baptised at St Christopher's in Bankstown in April 2007 and I was on fire with love of Jesus in the Eucharist and with prayer. When October came, the month of the Rosary, I would say the rosary as often as I could. Sometimes I prayed it at night and would not finish till 4 or 5 in the morning. I learned to pray while working and came to learn that November was the month of the Holy Souls and learned to pray for them. When I moved back to the eastern suburbs, I enrolled for the Bible study course at Randwick Sacred Heart church run by Father Tony O'Brien and Father Rate [MSC priests] and I found it very good. I go to Mass at Daceyville and Fr Jerzy Chrzonowicz has helped me a great deal.

One problem at that time however, was that I was too scared to let my brother, who was living in Canada, know about my conversion. You know,

Zoroastrians would be really shocked to think that one of them became a Catholic. It made me shake to think about it. But I asked the Lord to take care of this problem.

So what happened was strange. One day I joined a procession in the city – for Our Lady I think – and an American Catholic struck up a conversation with me. Well I told him my story and – you can imagine – it is not every day someone hears about a Zoroastrian converting to Catholicism. He was stunned and asked me if he could write about me somewhere. I agreed and he wrote up a short account of our meeting on the internet. Then – and I don't know how this happened – my brother came to read about it on the net. Can you imagine – of all the billions of links on the net, he somehow finds that one.

He rang me shocked and said 'What have you done?' and by that stage I realised that I did not have to tell him I had converted – God had taken that hard part away from me – I just had to tell him how happy I was and what it meant to me. In the end he calmed down. And that is when I thought perhaps in the future he might convert also. I am working on it.

How has conversion to Catholicism changed your life?

My life has changed 180 degrees. I feel I am now with the living God and I walk with Him. I talk with Him. I think He is rectifying me, straightening me out, putting me on the right track. Regular confession keeps me on track and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. I asked God to let me serve my purgatory on earth and I pray a lot for the Holy Souls. I did a short course on the Eucharist and I loved it. I love the Eucharist and getting to know about it – everything about the Eucharist renews me more and more. I read the Bible every night and I am going to read about Saint Augustine because I have heard that his writings are very good. I have been told about other books to read too. It has been a long road and I am still on this wonderful journey with the Living God.

Wanda Skowron-ka is a registered psychologist who works as a counsellor in inner city schools in Sydney. She has done voluntary work for the Catholic pro-life organisation Human Life International.



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– Editor, *Annals*

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Making a home in Australia at the end of the 19th century: a story of love and Faith

NAIRHEE MY MOTHER

By Jack Sobb



THIS IS the story of a young girl educated, not in school, but by parents who followed strict family traditions in discipline, and strong Christian principles.

Her name was Nairhee. She born in 1877 to a market gardening family on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. All members of the family were expected to work for the good of the house, to do whatever befitted their age.

At the age of eight Nairhee was shown how to harness an ox to a water cart and maintain water supply for the crops as the family tilled the soil.

Betrothed to Anthony, she was married in 1895. The following year the couple emigrated to Australia. They stayed with friends, who had arrived earlier, in Redfern, until they learned the language and the local customs.

Anthony decided to operate a business and, registered as a hawker. He proceeded to buy stock and filling a wagonette with all household needs, set out to service the settlers and farmers in the far outlying areas.

Nairhee was nursing a baby, it would not been easy living in the wagonette. Water had to be carried for themselves and the horses.

Travelling was slow on roads little better than tracks. Cooking on open fires, bathing and washing posed a challenge but Nairhee was well trained by her mother.

A real farmer's daughter, she calmly kept all things well organised. Travelling at only 12 mph was slow and tedious.

Two days out from Sydney, and their first encounter with local aborigines – almost naked and with spears – was a real shock. Fearful for the safety of the baby and concern for the stock in the wagon, Anthony quickly made every friendly gesture he could and soon managed to get smiles all around.

There were two little girls in the group and Nairhee threaded some gaudy coloured beads and gave them to them; they were delighted!

Anthony soon had the older visitors intrigued with sleight-of-hand tricks he had learned on the boat coming out to Australia. There were a few anxious moments but, after presenting a few trinkets and some food, they parted company.

It was a very real learning experience and it increased their confidence for the difficult times ahead.

In Maitland, Anthony decided to stay a while – there were many farms and it proved to be a successful time. The Morpeth area was another long stay.

Nairhee had another babe and, after restocking from the Morpeth warehouse, they wended their way to Brantton, Singleton and reached Copetown where a diamond mine was operating.

To give some respite for Nairhee they decided to stay a while. The only dwelling available was little better than a shack- three rooms, two for sleeping and one with an open fireplace. The floor was smoothed, hardened clay. It at least gave more room to move. Water had to be drawn from a nearby creek.

There were several farms and Anthony would be away for two or three days and Nairhee would stay put with the children. Clever with her hands, she made children's clothes to sell.

Then, time to move on. Such was the life of a hawker. Nairhee had never seen electric light; 'mod cons' were unknown to her.

Arriving in Moree Anthony decided to settle and acquired a nice house with four bedrooms and kitchen with a fuel stove and a bathroom with a bathtub with water laid on from an outside tank. Nairhee was in a dream. There was even a double wash tub. The front of the house was a shop and Anthony made it a general store.

Nairhee made many friends. She had a great love for the Rosary and the Virgin Mary, and often had a get together organised with a few families, for the rosary, and she would get someone to do a little bible reading. They were such happy days.

The years were slipping by and the family now reached seven siblings. Another move to Lithgow and another shop. Nairhee could neither read nor write yet managed the shop with cool confidence.

It was in Lithgow that her last baby was born, a boy weighing 12lb. Poor Nairhee! That was the only one born in a hospital. No wonder! Nearly 6 kilo!

The year was 1917 and Nairhee

Myth of the Golden Age of Spanish Islam [2]

IN the early nineteenth century, West European Jews, newly and still imperfectly emancipated, appealed to a legendary golden age in Muslim Spain, of complete tolerance and acceptance in symbiotic harmony. This, too, had some foundation in reality but was greatly overstated to serve at once as a reproach and an encouragement to their somewhat dilatory Christian emancipators.

- Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1990, p.101.

began to worry about her elder children getting work. In 1919 they moved to Sydenham in Sydney. They all got work and all was going well. It was on Sydenham Road – the first concrete road laid – where, sadly, Anthony was knocked down by a truck and had to retire.

The shop was sold and the family finally settled down in a large brick home in Marrickville in the year 1925.

All the children married except the bouncing twelve pounder. The home was on a very large block and Nairhee soon had a garden going. They were very happy days.

The youngest was away in New Guinea during the war years and came home safe and sound on the strength of Nairhee's prayers, no doubt. She would walk to morning Mass with Anthony despite having a knee problem.

In 1949 Anthony was called home, sixty three years after landing in Australia. Nairhee was always a realist, she loved her garden, was always cool, calm and collected, never angry, never rushing, never gushing, moving quietly, seemingly filled with the Holy Spirit. She faithfully served the family she bore.

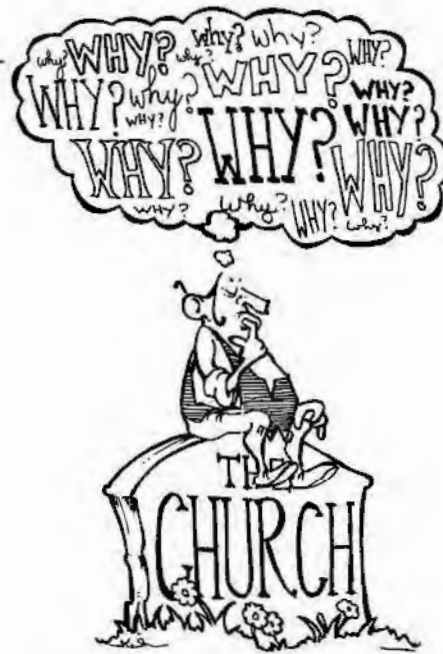
Nairhee was called home in 1969. Love shone through her tranquility. She loved her last sixteen years after losing Anthony. She kept her morning walks to Mass. She was such a gentle Mother, a kindly mother – she was the mother of a Booragul parishioner; she was my mother. I was her last born.

I have many lasting reflections. Father was great fun yet a strict disciplinarian. Nairhee never spanked me: it was always a quiet little chat of reason and fault and it always left me truly sorry to hear her say 'You know you have made me very sad.' How could I feel otherwise against the ever gentle love and affection.

She is not with God – God is with her. I only hope that whilst I'm here, God is with me. I can almost hear Nairhee saying 'You must decide; do you want him or not?' I can only reply 'Christe Eleison' for all of us.

Say one for me and I'll say one for you.

Jack Sobbe's parents were Maronite Catholics who came from Lebanon in 1896. I first met Nairhee in 1963. Her home in Marrickville was a haven of love and hospitality; its centre was her room where she spent her last years bedridden – with her dog-eared Arabic prayer-book, and her rosary beads in her hands. – Ed. *Annals*



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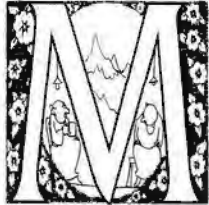
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The [Human Rights] Commission would become "a kind of Clayton's court"

AUSTRALIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS

By Bob Carr



MORE JUDICIAL REVIEW, or judge-made law, is the last thing Australia needs. So nobody should be distressed that the push for an Australian Charter of Rights is now exhausted. "The parrot is dead ... it is an ex-parrot," as Monty Python would say.

A Charter, according to its supporters, is a list of rights and allows the High Court to make findings of "incompatibility" between these and Commonwealth legislation.

But the constitutional difficulty of designing a Charter emerged when two former High Court judges, Sir Gerard Brennan and Michael McHugh, said that requiring the High Court to play an advisory role to Parliament is outside the court's power. The advocates of a Charter are self-proclaimed experts on the Constitution; this was close to a death blow to something they had worked on for years.

Hence the scramble to come up with another version at the April 22 meeting convened by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

This new model may be constitutional. Michael McHugh thinks it is. But it is politically indigestible. In it the Human Rights Commission boldly claims for itself a role in forcing the reshaping of Federal laws. To quote its website, "the Commission would be empowered, at the request of a party to the proceeding or of its own motion, to notify the Attorney General of a finding of inconsistency."

It goes on to say the Attorney General would be required to table this opinion in Federal Parliament and the government to respond within a defined period. That is, an elected government would be required to legislate to over-rule the objection served on it by the Human Rights Commission.

In other words, the only way of rendering a Charter of Rights constitutional is to give the Australian

Human Rights Commission a role in effectively striking down laws. This recasts it as an annex to Australia's High Court. As NSW Attorney General John Hatzistergos put it, the Commission – an administrative body – would become "a kind of Clayton's court."

This guarantees the rejection of the Charter proposal, even if Father Brennan's inquiry, due to report at the end of August, were to recommend it – which is now pretty near inconceivable. One can guess what Chief Justice Robert French would say to the Prime Minister about an idea to twin the Commission with the nation's constitutional court.

Cabinet members would be more likely to ritualistically wrap themselves in typhoid-infected blankets, collectively inhale paint thinner and revive John Howard's Work Choices than to accept this crackpot hybrid.

Yet I am advised this is now the only model from supporters of a Charter before Brennan's inquiry.

It may not be the best moment to attempt to elevate the Human Rights Commission. Its members attended the recent UN World Conference Against Racism widely seen as a biased convocation with racist tendencies. The Conference was boycotted by the Australian government, and Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was the only head of state to roll up.

And the Commission is engaged in an inquiry that will likely revive its 1998 recommendation that Australia enact religious anti-vilification laws, laws that in Victoria have seen evangelical preachers prosecuted for criticisms of Islam in a lather of legal bills totaling one million dollars.

On another front it was only a matter of time before the operation of the Victorian charter, which commenced in January, began to hurt the national campaign for a Charter.

Losing Sight of our Humanity

IN OUR OWN age, the very category of 'the human' itself is under attack, as philosophers decry the hierarchical distinction between humans and animals, or humans and nature, and postmodernists of various stripes proclaim the disappearance of the human 'subject' We also are far less clear about what we mean by the word 'culture,' and about the standards by which it is judged, including most notably the clear distinction between 'high' and 'low,' let alone 'excellence' and 'mediocrity.' Matthew Arnold felt reasonably confident that we could agree upon what constituted 'the best' examples of humanistic expression. But we are not so certain that such a category even makes sense anymore.

— 'The Burden of the Humanities,' Wilfred M. McClay,
The Wilson Quarterly, Summer 2008, p.41.

Victoria has just legalised abortion. Section eight of the Abortion Law Reform Act requires doctors and nurses who conscientiously object to abortion to nonetheless perform such a procedure in an emergency. An issue of conscience, surely. A group of doctors and nurses sought the protection of the Victorian Charter of Rights. They were turned away.

I am, incidentally, a supporter of abortion rights. But this episode confirms the criticism you hear that those seeking a Charter only want respect for the rights they are happy with.

What is put on a list of rights and what gets left off is the first problem with the Charter concept. A right to privacy could stifle media freedom, a right to property environmental protection and a right to free association wipe out trade unionism. The rights sound eloquent. What they mean will be defined by judges. And progressives need to think about what "rights" might be stuck in a Charter by future conservative governments.

In NSW - without a Charter - conscientious objection is routinely respected. That is, objecting doctors and nurses cannot be forced to perform abortions - yet another example of how rights can end up being better protected without codification. I debated the Charter with Professor George Williams at Unions NSW last week. As the author of the Victorian Charter he said he would undertake to redraft it. And it has only been in operation four months!

This shows again the sheer messiness of designing a statutory Charter. Perhaps the route to a constitutional Bill of Rights would be simpler. But a Bill of Rights is an amendment to the Constitution and can only be adopted by a referendum. In 1988 it got a vote of about 30 percent and was defeated in every State and Territory. Indeed we are having this debate precisely because advocates of a Bill of Rights know that if Australians are consulted in a referendum the thing is doomed.

Bring it on.

This is the first of two articles on the Charter Bill of Rights by Bob Carr, a former Labor Premier of New South Wales.

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ANGLICAN COMMUNITY CROSSING THE TIBER

By Bother Stephen, O.Cist

THE ANGLICAN All Saints Sisters of the Poor in Catonsville, Maryland have announced their intention to be received into the Catholic Church on September 3. These are wonderful women and this is wonderful news.

As an Anglican, I made two retreats with the sisters when the men's order I was an associate of held its chapter at Catonsville and I've visited one or two other times. One of their sisters was assigned to St. Anna's, the small house they maintain in Philadelphia, and I knew her quite well from my days at S. Clement's.

The sisters have been in discernment about their future and the rumor mill has been churning for some time, so this is not unexpected, but it is very good to hear. Their resident chaplain, Rev. Canon Warren Tanghe, announced his submission some time ago. Their previous chaplain was also received four or five years ago. They've been in my prayers and those of many others.

This is a hard decision to make and the announcement notes that two sisters, including the former superior, will be remaining Anglican. Those of us who have already crossed the Tiber should do our best to stay focused on the good news in this rather than taking yet another opportunity to congratulate ourselves and slag on the Anglican Communion. As I said someplace else recently, I don't remember anyone ever deciding to cross the Tiber because someone kicked a lot of sand in his face while he was standing on the bank.

Founded in England at the famous All Saints Margaret Street, the sisters opened a house in the U.S. at the request of the rector of Baltimore's Mount Calvary, an early bastion of the Anglo-Catholic movement. True to their full name, The All Saints Sisters of the Poor, the sisters lead a mixed life, chanting the office from the Anglican Edition of the Monastic Diurnal and also working in the hospice they founded in downtown Baltimore.

I remember being in the convent chapel for a Holy Hour several years ago. At the exposition, Mother Virginia came out from behind the organ console, which is in the visitors area, and knelt on the tile floor. And knelt and kept on kneeling. Mother Virginia could be the mother or grandmother of all the people who were there on retreat. She stayed on her knees on the tile for an hour, so we stayed on our knees on the tile for an hour. These women are serious business.

When I had made my own submission and was beginning to visit religious communities, it was Sr. Elaine who gave me some of the best advice I got on vocation. She said, "Don't sweat this too much. When you find your community, it will fit you like a glove." She was right.

Welcome to this side of the Tiber, sisters. I hope it fits you like a glove.

Reflections on the life of an Elizabethan saint

ARE WE TRULY EVOLVING?

By Giles Auty



T. Edmund Campion was martyred four hundred and twenty-eight years or about seventeen generations ago if we take the standard figure of twenty-five years as representing a generation.

Does that all seem an impossibly long time ago to most of you? His martyrdom certainly took place a long way from here but for me the Tower of London, where he was examined under torture, is less than one hundred kilometres from the town where I was born.

One of the major conceits of our present age is that it is more important, relevant and informed than any which preceded it.

In short because we are more technologically advanced than all the ages that preceded ours we imagine – erroneously – that we must automatically be more advanced and knowledgeable in other ways too.

Another factor which I generally describe as the rhetoric of radicalism contributes further to the latter delusion.

Rhetoric, as we know, is language designed to persuade or impress. It is thus the appropriate language of advertising and political spin but not yet, I hope, of academic disciplines.

What the rhetoric of radicalism insinuates is that because we are so advanced technologically, our mainstream ideas about art, aesthetics, philosophy, religion, education and culture generally must also be worthy of attention.

Regrettably, I fear this is far from the case.

What has really happened in Western or westernised countries such as Australia is that admirable technological progress can easily go hand in hand with intellectual and moral regress.

The following is an address given on June 25, 2009, on the occasion of the annual *St Edmund Campion Lecture and Dinner* held at Campion College, Toongabbie, NSW – Australia's only Catholic Liberal Arts College.

Only a fool would maintain that all change must automatically be for the better. The current danger facing the Western world is the creation of intellectually and morally third-class societies which are nevertheless served excellently by superb technology.

Our mobile telephones get smaller and slicker all the time but what about the quality – or even sense – of the conversations generally held on them? There is an obvious analogy here also with the technological wonders of modern television and with the intellectually and morally bankrupt nature of much of the material which is screened on our sets.

When I was about the age of many of you here tonight the fashionable

critical orthodoxy was that art, too, was advancing inexorably.

One began, say, with renaissance painting then 'progressed' triumphantly via mannerism and the baroque to romanticism, neo-classicism, impressionism, post-impressionism, cubism, surrealism and abstract expressionism and arrived finally at art's Darwinian apotheosis: Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles*.

At least that was the kind of evolutionary theory advanced by such supposed critical geniuses of the day as Clement Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg and Patrick Heron.

I claim no particular credit for never believing a word of it. This was because, living in Europe, I could always make all the historic comparisons I needed to at first hand. This vital facility is denied here, on the whole, to artists and writers. In short, the Prado, Rijksmuseum, Uffizi, Louvre, National Gallery in London and a host of other world-class museums are an awfully long way away from here. Nothing remotely comparable exists in Australia.

I, on the other hand, was lucky enough to be able to see the works of the greatest of Great Masters whenever I wanted to. I am afraid this fortunate facility did not lead me to conclude that Jackson Pollock or Mark Rothko were the final triumphal products of any evolutionary process.

Tonight I want to talk about a number of subjects other than art but cannot resist, in passing, demonstrating to you an example of what I call 'reverse evolution' in action.

Edmund Campion was executed during the reign of Elizabeth I and the cause of his death related directly to that lady's birth in 1533. Elizabeth was of course the only child of Henry VIII's marriage to a second wife, Ann Boleyn. And it was Henry's defiance of the

What faces our Youth

It is more and more custom, routine, personal preference, that will in reality be determining their religious life, and not faith – the faith which has ceased to be preached to them, which perhaps was never preached to them as by its nature it needs to be preached, and which now, for all their lifetime, has been obscured by persistent, persuasive, and congenially human propaganda that contradicts the faith.

– Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England*, London, Burns & Oates, 1962, p.188.

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Pope's order not to remarry that caused his excommunication and England's historic rift with Rome – the profound consequences of which remain with us unfortunately to this day.

The official royal portraitist at King Henry's court was effectively the first such in British history. Indeed, it is through the excellence, perception and courage of Hans Holbein the Younger's portraits of Henry VIII and his courtiers that we have wonderfully penetrating images to put to their respective names.

But here is a strange fact.

By common consent among art historians and critics, Hans Holbein

the Younger was not just effectively the first royal portraitist in Britain but also the best that has ever existed notwithstanding claims that could be advanced for Sir Anthony Vandyck who was court painter a century later to the ill-fated Charles I.

There have been some distinguished and fairly undistinguished portraits painted of the British royal family over the intervening years. Indeed one of the last such I saw was painted on television with much ado by Rolf Harris. Rolf is a decent and engaging man but his portrait of Queen Elizabeth II was forgettable to say the least.

Here, I propose to you, is a perfect example of 'reverse evolution' in practice where we begin with the best and end with the worst.

One of the reasons I can maintain this very confidently is that royal portraiture is an art form where merit can be measured and explained relatively easily. That said, a very strong critical consensus exists also about the precise order of merit of European artists prior to about 1900. If critical objectivity were as impossible as post-modernists like to claim the only explanation for such a consensus must be either coincidence or conspiracy.

Naturally it is nothing of the kind but is based instead on scholarship and intelligible reasoning.

Off-hand I cannot think of any post-modernist theory, be it social, intellectual, political or educational with which I am in any agreement at all and I have a suspicion that if Edmund Campion were alive today he might feel very similarly.

Like communism, post-modernism is entirely a man – and, of course, woman – made ideology which has no basis whatsoever in any traditional human system of belief.

Political correctness, multiculturalism, post-colonialism, feminism, gender theory, structuralism, determinism, deconstruction, neo-Marxism and relativism are, in fact, systems of interlocking blindfolds which prevent – rather than encourage us – from seeing life at all clearly.

Let us take the little matter of truth.

Some years ago when I was still allowed to write art criticism in the mainstream Australian press, a young woman approached me at an exhibition in Sydney and asked me, as an experienced commentator, to explain something of the nature of the show we were looking at to her.

As usual in such situations I did my best.

However, I have no way of knowing what she really thought about my views since she finished the conversation by saying "of course, that is only your truth" by which I concluded immediately that she was engaged currently on an arts course at an Australian university.

My late father spent the latter years of his life revising dictionaries. In fact

he contributed twenty-six thousand new entries to the 1970 supplement to the Complete Oxford English Dictionary.

I imagine he would have been horrified to learn that 'truth' is used today, in academic circles, as a direct synonym for 'opinion' when the two concepts have nothing in common at all. The idea of co-existing, 'multiple' truths strikes me often as quite funny and leads me to imagine, with pleasure, conversations that might take place in households where both parents are post-modernist academics.

Summoning the elder two of their three children they address them thus: "Andrew and Kirstie we want to know which of you broke your little brother's space-gun. We want you to tell the truths".

St. Edmund Campion died a horrible death defending what he conceived to be a singular truth and I doubt whether even the greatest saint would have put his or her life on the line defending something which was mere opinion or hearsay.

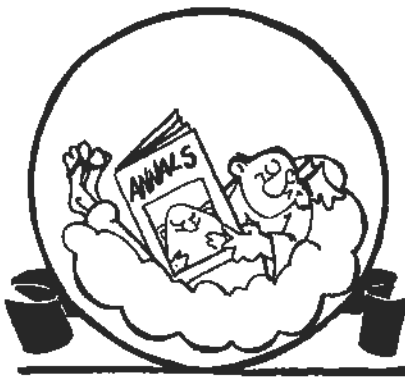
I do not know why so many people today have such a problem with the idea of truth in the singular especially since the latter already underpins our notions of criminal justice and investigative journalism.

Casting about for a simple way of explaining the idea of singular truth and of distinguishing this from even expert opinion, I turn sometimes to the example of archaeology. Clearly a host of opinions can exist about the precise whereabouts of some historic site but if the site itself is discovered eventually through the presence of incontestable evidence then it clearly doesn't matter a fig what all the so-called experts thought previously. Interesting as their opinions may have been they had no bearing at all on the factual truth.

Archaeology also demonstrates another vital aspect of singular truth: a factual truth exists about the location of an important site even if this truth remains unknown to anyone at all for centuries to come – or even forever.

Perhaps the moral of this is that opinion is mobile while truth itself is static. In short whatever truths we manage to perceive are facets of the same monolith.

With views such as mine I think



you will understand why my name is rarely encountered on Australian arts programmes nor at fashionable festivals of contemporary art or writing.

However, occasionally slip-ups do occur. Indeed I first came to Australia to deliver the Jack Manton Memorial lecture in 1994 at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

The title of my talk was *The Meaning of Modern* and it has often crossed my mind since then that the central point I made was largely lost on a predominantly art-world audience.

Tonight I will try it again on you since it has direct relevance to points I want to make later on about the vital nature of religious continuity.

If you look in any simple dictionary you will find that two meanings are given for the adjective 'modern'.

One of these refers simply to time while the other relates just as clearly to style and attitude. Usually the definitions given are *of the present or recent times* and *new-fashioned not antiquated* – or something very similar.

Now let us attach the adjective 'modern' to another word or words, so giving it a context.

What does 'modern' mean when we attach it to the noun art as in *modern art* or as in *museum of modern art*?

In short, is 'modern art' simply any art of, say, the past one hundred years or is it distinguished largely from all other contemporaneous art by its *style and attitude*.

I hope, by now, you can see the implications of what I am saying.

While I contend that we should collect the best art of the modern period irrespective of its style or attitude and of whether or not it belongs to a continuous or to a radical tradition *this is not what has happened in fact*.

What we have really done in the Western world, at least, is show overwhelming bias towards the radical, trendy and supposedly progressive. Art in short, which destroys as many links as possible with the past. Generally this is collected on our behalf at the expense of art which is part of a continuous, unbroken line stretching back at least to the renaissance and which includes most of the greatest pictorial talents who have ever lived.

Who authorised this particular bias which is demonstrated in many scores of museums of modern art worldwide?

The answer is nobody. It has merely been assumed that artistic radicalism should become our effective index of quality. This coincides with our infantile and ignorant notion of what constitutes 'progress'.

If we speak, even for a moment, of the often overlooked value of continuity in other fields it may also seem obvious that without the essential tradition of continuity Catholic Christianity would no longer exist in any recognisable form – or conceivably at all.

St. Edmund Campion does not seem to me an historic figure whose life was so distant as to be virtually incomprehensible to most of us today.

For a start, he was born into a bookish family in London and was educated at a school I might easily have attended myself. I have a faint recollection that the scholarship I won to my own English Anglican boarding school would also have entitled me to attend Christ's Hospital.

We should not forget here that Campion was originally an Anglican deacon. As I have said earlier, his subsequent conversion to Rome brought with it profound risks.

When he returned to England as an ordained Catholic priest after his training at Douay the risks he incurred were roughly the same as those of a British agent being parachuted into occupied France during the Second World War to assist French resistance fighters – where torture and death would also be an inevitable consequence of capture. Campion's role was to try to bolster the faith of his fellow countrymen in a religion which had been officially persecuted in England since before he was born.

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Looking back in time not so many years before that, Campion could have reflected on the former reality, for English-speaking peoples at least, of being an integral part of a still predominantly Catholic Europe.

In the years when I taught briefly in an English art school I used to test the attention of students by asking questions such as “Why is there so little beautiful Catholic ecclesiastical architecture in Britain?” suspecting rightly that their minds would fix on examples such as Liverpool’s modern Catholic cathedral – known locally as Paddy’s wigwam – or on a rash of lugubrious brick churches or on instances of 1970s architectural fashion at its worst.

The point I was making of course is that prior to Henry VIII’s rift with Rome all the great cathedrals and churches of England were Catholic as were all the wonderful Gothic cathedrals and churches of Western Europe. From the 12th century onwards over six hundred magnificent Gothic cathedrals and churches were built to designs and standards of building we can only marvel at today.

To stand in the shadow of Canterbury cathedral or of Chartres, of Lincoln or of Vézelay is to marvel at human faith and ingenuity at a time when everything still had to be carved and built by hand.

Standing beside the great cathedrals of Britain and continental Europe

we can only mourn the subsequent loss of the depth of faith which once underwrote their construction.

In my wanderings through Europe I feel sometimes that its soaring Gothic and Romanesque churches and cathedrals, which once uplifted human spirits and pointed them towards God, are simply relics now of a lost, beautiful and complex civilisation which many imagine we have thankfully left behind us as we stride purposefully into a largely technological and anti-spiritual future.

What has happened to Western society which has caused such widespread ignorance and complacency?

The American Roger Kimball is one of a number of cultural commentators with whom I have corresponded over the years.

Here is his answer: “In a democratic society like ours, where free elections are guaranteed, political revolution is almost unthinkable in practical terms. Consequently, utopian efforts to transform society have been channelled into cultural and moral life. In America, scattered if much-publicised episodes of violence have wrought far less damage than the moral and intellectual assaults that do not destroy buildings but corrupt sensibilities and blight souls. The success of America’s recent cultural revolution can be measured not in toppled governments but in shattered values. If we often forget what great changes this revolution brought

in its wake, that, too, is a sign of its success: having changed ourselves, we no longer perceive the extent of our transformation”. This quote is from Roger Kimball’s *The Long March*.

With the collapse of communism in 1989 there is no doubt in my mind that what is known now as post-modernism has supplanted communism proper as Christianity’s most relentless current foe. This is not surprising since so much of post-modernist ideology is drawn from Marxist teaching.

Perhaps the most damaging aspect of the latter has been the politicisation of public education at tertiary, secondary and even primary levels.

In Australia, generations of children have been abducted effectively from the influence of their parents who generally have little or no say in what – or how – their children will be taught in public education today.

Even with a thoroughly old-fashioned English education such as mine it was still necessary to grope one’s way painfully towards any kind of adult illumination or understanding. The greatest advantage my kind of education offered was that it was not politicised and that subjects were still taught as discrete entities rather than combined into the kind of amorphous coagulations we are familiar with today.

Clearly it is hard to see how subjects such as Latin, Greek or French can be easily politicised – which may be why they are so out of favour today in tertiary education in Australia. I recall an article in *The Australian* by a former editor of the *The Australian Literary Review* which argued that the teaching of classical languages should be abandoned as outmoded and irrelevant in favour of teaching localised Aboriginal dialects.

As I pointed out at the time until Vatican II, at least, Latin was still the liturgical language of a billion Catholics worldwide – so perhaps it was not quite so passé and irrelevant as the author of the piece seemed to imagine.

Another advantage of classical languages is that they provide one of the major keys to the origins of words as well as a reliable guide to grammatical construction.

By contrast, the study of English or History can be all too easily politicised today with the result, in the first

case, that the overwhelming beauty and spirituality of language can be overlooked and forgotten as everything is reduced to the status of 'text'.

Fortunately for us, human beings have one other inherent virtue as well as the existence of a conscience. Perhaps the best way to describe this is to call it an instinct for plausibility or for the truth. This is an instinct that can be developed profitably through a non-politicised education where the student is encouraged to develop an ability to reason and a strong, independent mind. In later life such an instinct is also the principal catalyst in our voyages of self-discovery. It is the old-fashioned steam train, in fact, which pulls all the rest of our intellectual baggage down the track.

If you keep asking 'why?' often enough you can set your own steam-train in motion.

Unfortunately as you progress in self-knowledge you will probably also find yourselves in conflict with many of the educational, political and intellectual orthodoxies of our time. When I came to Australia to work in 1995, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida were the secular saints of the Australian academic world and I doubt whether too many students have been encouraged even today to read Roger Kimball's *Experiments against Reality* or Roger Scruton's *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Modern Culture* which effectively blow the reputations of both Foucault and Derrida out of the water. Both Kimball and Scruton are Catholic writers and neither is read nearly as widely as he should be.

When the late Jacques Derrida spoke at Sydney Town Hall some years ago almost all of the available seats seemed to have been block-booked by the staff of Sydney University. I was giving a talk at the university that day but could not get a ticket.

At home we were employing an extremely erudite house painter at the time and I asked him, out of interest, how much Derrida he had read.

His answer was about one hundred and twenty pages.

Naturally I congratulated him on this feat but he was quick to dismiss my praise.

What he said was that he had read the same four pages thirty times trying to extract any intelligible meaning.



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- Editor, *Annals*

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I do not believe that the great truths of life need to be couched in unintelligible language. I certainly do not claim my writings about art necessarily contain any great truths but I do claim that in over a million words of published writing on the subject you will not find a single unintelligible sentence - unless this was the work of newspaper sub-editors, of course.

I believe the lives of the saints of our church such as St. Edmund Campion bore witness to vital truths revealed to them by God during their lives here on earth.

My own conception of an afterlife

is of humanity's collective exposure to absolute truth.

If I am correct in this hypothesis, surely it behoves us to take a bit more interest in the subject of truth while we are all still here.

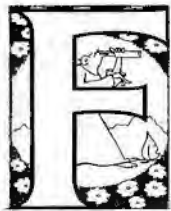
At the very least we should all learn urgently to differentiate properly between truth and opinion.

GILES AUTY was born in the UK and trained privately as a painter. He worked professionally as an artist for 20 years. Publication of his *The Art of Self Deception* swung his career towards criticism. He was art critic for *The Spectator* from 1984 to 1995 when he became national correspondent for *The Australian*. He now devotes himself to his original love - painting.

Kashmir: Young converts from Islam pray for the Holy Father

BENEDICT XVI: A BEACON OF TRUTH AND LOVE

By Nirmala Carvalho



FOLLOWING the example of a group of Muslims from North Africa and the Middle East, young Catholic converts from Kashmir joined in the prayers for the pope launched by AsiaNews in Lent this year.

The three converts offered their suffering and marginalization, together with the sacrifice of their father Bashir, murdered by Muslim extremists because he had converted to Christianity. There was also participation from Italy, where the humiliations suffered by John Paul II are also being remembered.

Some young former Muslims who converted to Catholicism joined in the prayers for the Pope this Lent. Shabnam (21), Saira (17), and Adil (16), together with their mother Ameena, who still lives in Kashmir, wanted Benedict XVI to know that they were praying for him and offering their sufferings and humiliations for his mission. "We pray that he may be strong," Shabnam says, "and may continue to be the beacon of truth and love for the whole world."

The three young people and their mother participated in the proposal made by AsiaNews that during Lent Christians should pray for the pontiff, who is at the center of a media "war" against his ministry. The proposal originated from a suggestion sent to AsiaNews by a group of several hundred former Muslims in North Africa and the Middle East, who have launched prayer novenas for the pope, whom they see as a "sign of Jesus' love and a defender of the weak ."

Adil, the youngest son, who this year will take his final year school exams, saw a profound unity between the sufferings and humiliations of converts

from Islam, and the humiliations suffered by the pope: "I was baptized when I was very young, and it has always been very difficult: criticism, sarcasm, threats, discrimination, and social ostracism have caused us great suffering. But every suffering teaches us something, and our faith is strengthened, we rely on Christ and it is he who guides us in difficult times.

"Holy and beloved Father, never lose sight of your mission, do not forget the reason why God chose you, guide the generations to truth, and may God always be with you."

Bashir Ahmad Tantray, the father of Shabnam, Saira, and Adil, was killed by Islamic militants in November of 2006, in broad daylight. He had converted to Christianity in 1995, and had fled from his village after being threatened by Islamic extremist groups. Years later, he had gone back there to care for his dying father, and was killed.

No Popery!

A MOB may cry out many things, right and wrong. But a mob cries "No Popery," it does not cry out "Not so much Popery" still less, "Only a moderate admixture of Popery". It shouts "Three cheers for Mr Gladstone". It does not shout out "A gradual and revolutionary social tendency towards some ideal similar to that of Gladstone.

— G.K.Chesterton, *The New Jerusalem*, pp.115-116

Bashir was an engineer for the J&K Power Development Dept, and regional coordinator of the Global Council of Indian Christians in Kashmir. "Ever since the death of our father," Shabnam recounts, "it has been horrible. Few can understand our suffering and sense of abandonment. We fled to Mumbai, but our mother is still in Kashmir. We see her only during vacations. For her, every day is a constant struggle and a constant suffering ."

Among the expressions of support for the proposal to pray for Benedict XVI sent to AsiaNews was one from an Italian woman, Paola.

"I join the initiative without reservation," Paola writes. "I will pray for the pope, as I have always done since 1978."

And she recalls that John Paul II was also frequently attacked (and still is today, even after his death): "In order to proclaim to humanity that it is only in Christ that man rediscovers himself, in order to seek unity among Christians, Pope Wojtyla did not hesitate, even at the last limits of his strength, to confront exhausting journeys, almost impossible encounters, even criticisms on the part of those who were close to him. Did we ever ask ourselves how much pain he felt in the face of the accusations from Küng, or from the Lefebvrists? And what can be said about the radical attacks and his isolation amid his countless appeals against war, against abortion, against the dangers of a humanity without God?"

"Yes," she concludes, "I will pray for Pope Benedict XVI; even more than this, I will entrust him the intercession of his 'little-great predecessor', but I also urge more fervent prayers that the appeal of 'Santo subito' [the immediate canonization of John Paul II] may come to fruition."



MEDIA MATTERS

By JAMES MURRAY

World Benediction

Pope Benedict XVI's third encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (Love in Truth) did not receive the coverage it merited despite demonstrating, even by secular standards, the most valuable of attributes: continuity in relation to social justice for the human race.

The first of the social justice encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) is deemed to be a response to the laissez-faire capitalism of the Industrial Revolution. It did not, however, rise from a vacuum.

The Catholic Church in all times has, like its founder Jesus Christ, displayed concern for the poor (and the rich with their camel-needle difficulty about entry into the kingdom of heaven).

Pope John Paul II's encyclicals had as their personal inspiration the strength of workers unionised in a just cause, a strength exemplary in Poland's trade union, Solidarity, dissolving Soviet hegemony.

Benedict XVI? He grew up in post-war Germany to witness the transformation of its devastated economy. In this, trade unions were able to play the part validated by the social justice encyclicals. As of right, trade unionists were given seats on the boards of major production companies.

Barrack for Barack

No doubt someone, somewhere is scissors-pasting together a compendium, entitled, *The Wit and Wisdom of President Barack Obama*. A must for inclusion is his riposte at a White House press conference when criticised for lack of swift comment on post-election events in Iran.

'I know you guys are on a 24/7 news cycle,' he said. 'I'm not.'

Spot on. Nonetheless, why are political leaders expected to be on 24/7 alert? Business leaders, particularly those in media, are not harassed into grabs for 24/7 print, television, radio, website, blog twitter, YouTube, Facebook and, coming up, <tower@babel.com>.

Simple: ex-hack spinmeisters, because of craft conditioning, see it as their role to gear up quick coverage for their political masters. The majority of working hacks sing along for two reasons: a quick response enhances their career prospects; a laggard response means they can be cut out of the loop when a substantial story breaks.

For politicians is the process inevitable? Not necessarily. Bob Menzies appointed the first, parliamentary PR, Buzz Kennedy, whose brief was not to set up perpetual coverage but to free his master's time for governance, positive or negative.

Obama like Menzies (now there's a comparison) realises that journalism of all kinds

is deadline driven. Politics is about longer-term positive outcomes.

It can be argued that 24/7 gearing between spinmeisters and hacks results in public-interest coverage. Not a strong argument. Case in point Gulf War II in Iraq.

China Plates

Breaking news can for a time remain beyond spin. Ask Prime Minister Plenipotentiary Kevin Rudd. There he was at the G8-Climate Event in Italy, playing second banana to President Barack

Religion with a Difference

HOW DO Islamic radicals justify such terror in the name of their religion? ... formal Islamic theology, unlike Christian theology, does not allow for the separation of state and religion. ... we used to laugh in celebration whenever people on TV proclaimed that the sole cause for Islamic acts of terror like 9/11, the Madrid bombings and 7/7, was Western foreign policy. By blaming the government for our actions, those who pushed the 'Blair's bombs' line did our propaganda work for us. More important, they also helped to draw away any critical examination from the real engine of our violence: Islamic theology.

- Hassan Butt, who was once a member of the radical group *al-Muhajirin*, raising funds for extremists and calling for attacks on British citizens. *The Observer*, July 1, 2007.



Obama, the showbiz aura touched by the obsequies for song and dance man Michael Jackson (RIP).

And wham-bang-alacazam out of a clear blue sky came the arrest of Rio Tinto executive Stern Hu leaving Rudd initially spinless. Why? Because spin depends on a modicum of inside knowledge tweaked to serve political ends rather than the public interest.

Rudd had no such knowledge. China outdoes the former Soviet Union in being a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma and for a similar reason: a regime driven by Marxism, modified opportunistically but not in long-term aims.

Worth remembering the Soviet Union also had business executives suddenly arrested for anti-state activities. Rudd's command of Mandarin and his diplomatic experience in China have been emphasised. Of more importance, perhaps, has been his experience as a hired business consultant operating in the tricky area where private interest negotiates with state apparatus, ostensibly independent.

Little consolation to Rudd but his opposite number Malcolm Turnbull has once again made him look good. Turnbull, the phony Utegate e-mail still rattling behind him, went to hot air, suggesting that Rudd get onto Chinese supremo Hu Jintao and demand Stern Hu's immediate release.

Demand? Backed with a gunboat? Or its modern equivalent, a sabre squadron of SAS troopers? As well call for the Vatican to threaten Swiss Guard deployment to obtain the release of imprisoned Catholic clerics.

Okay, under England's Common Law exported to other countries including Australia the principle of presumption of innocence obtains. It is not, however, a universal principle even in democratic states. And as Turnbull, a formidable lawyer, must know the presumption of innocence does not preclude the possibility of guilt even when accusers may be malevolent or vengeful.

For both reactions there is a harsh context which is being fudged in favour of Rio Tinto. Yet its management found itself in trouble of its own making. It treated with Chinalco as a rescuer. Then, result of market and possibly government

disapproval, Rio switched to an alliance with its rival BHP Billiton. Alliance? Virtual cartel.

Now think of the reaction of an ostensibly independent apparat confronted by such a cartel, an apparat controlled by a regime with power to define randomly anti-state activity.

You need a long spoon to sup with the devil. You need even longer chopsticks to sup with China's totalitarian regime. So no effective response? One: break-off dealings with the Chinese regime until it truly reforms, feel a modicum of the pain too many of its people endure.

Stoking Packer

Coverage of the James Packer V Kerry Stokes bout over Consolidated Media Holdings has

tended to describe Packer as his family's third generation into wealth, implicitly branding him with the folkloric tag: 'Rags to rags in three generations.'

Emphatically James Packer is not third generation into wealth. He is fourth generation. His great-grandfather, Robert Clyde Packer, was the founder of the family's wealth. Up from journalist to co-proprietor of Smith's Newspapers he gave his son, Frank Packer, 10,000 shares in the company, entitling him to a seat on the board and

subsequent excursions into uncommon wealth. (See Bridget Griffen-Foley's, *Sir Frank Packer: the Young Master*).

In eschewing media for gambling enterprises James Packer may not avoid the fate of those who swim with sharks. However, the speed of his anti-Stokes counter may indicate what your correspondent still believes is his ultimate objective.

Consolidated Media Holdings is his beachhead to regain control of the foundering, equity-funded Nine Network in the style of his late father Kerry Packer's anthem, *One Bond in a Lifetime*.

Who's Bank?

Debate about the need for a People's Bank to offset the quadropoly of the Big Four - Westpac, NAB, ANZ and the Commonwealth Bank - has

Ayatollah Khomeini

IDEALISM is contagious, and Khomeini and his followers captured the imagination of many. However, although Iran inspired Islamic activism and forever changed the politics of the Muslim world, the final impact of the revolution would be far from what Khomeini had hoped for. He failed to achieve Muslim unity and the leadership position that went with it, but he managed to escalate anti-Americanism and inculcate fear and distrust toward Islam in the West as his glowering visage became the virtual face of Islam in Western popular culture.

- Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, W.W.Norton & Company, New York, 2006, p.138



under-emphasised reference to Australia's having, until recently, a *de facto* People's Bank.

Paradoxically it was the Commonwealth Bank, established by Andrew Fisher's Labor Government in 1911 and retained as a substantial influence over general banking and credit by the Bob Menzies Coalition even after it defeated Ben Chifley's Labor on bank nationalisation in 1949.

Again a paradox: privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank was set in train by the Labor duumvirate, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. Their comment on the revival of the People's Bank concept would be fascinating.

Even more fascinating would be the comment of David Murray (no relation), key figure in transmuting the Commonwealth Bank, and now Future Fund boss.

He need answer only one question: did the people's Commonwealth Bank contribute more to the public good than the privatised Commonwealth Bank has so far?

Book Worming

Who doesn't want cheaper books? A growing number of people as a matter of fact, divisible into those who don't want books at all and those who believe they don't need them.

The latter might include those who drafted the Productivity Commission Report on publishing import and copyright. Its jargonised style showed scant evidence of any plain prose reading.

Proponents of reduction, Woolworths and Coles, might strike some as odd companions for the Dymocks boardroom champion, Bob Carr, former NSW premier, now bank wallah and writer. But Woolworths and Coles already profit from discounts for big orders, and want to profit more.

Despite Sam Johnson remark about those who don't write for money being blockheads, thousands write on spec. Book distributors get the most substantial deal share and they operate on sale or return. Published writers face a nadir: remaindering

without royalties. Distributors are thus best able to reduce prices by cutting their margin.

Increased compensatory subsidies for writers will merely aggravate the existing situation where administrators and political placemen get more for dispensing subsidies than authors do for writing.

Attorney-General Robert McClelland is the minister responsible. Hard to see Rudd, a bibliophile, not putting in a word – or eight thousand. At this date, no final decision has been made.

Note: Readers with scruples on no-royalty remaindering should patronise Society of St Vincent de Paul shops. Where else can you acquire a low-priced, mint-condition Bryce Courtney epic while helping the poor?

Tolerance

PROTECTION of religious places, tolerance and respect for religions of minorities is most conspicuously absent in leading Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan and even the smaller Islamic states like Bangladesh, and Malaysia. What kind of tolerance or respect does the leader of the Islamic bloc, Saudi Arabia, show for other religions? What kind of record does the frequent spokesman for the bloc, Pakistan, have in the matter of protection of religious places, sites shrines, and symbols of non-Muslims or for tolerating ethnic and religious minorities?

- J.P.Sharma, 'Defending the Indefensible,'
South East Asia Analysis Group, Paper No.
3255, June 15, 2009.

Quick Call

Advertisements for free mobile phones and BlackBerries abound, tempting even a technology Fred Flintstone such as your correspondent to do a deal. Second thought: if mobile phone users can be offered freebies, why does Telstra still charge fixed-phone users a rental fee?

Surely after, say five years, Telstra fixed phone users should be entitled to a loyalty freebie? Or is there an opportunity here

for Optus to offer fixed-phone users a discount equivalent to the Telstra phone rental?

Sinful Error

Language shifts can be fascinating. The phrase 'cardinal sins' is becoming more common. There was a time, not antediluvian, when virtues were cardinal and sins were deadly.

For the record (and younger readers), the Cardinal Virtues (as defined by Plato) are: justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude. To these Christian philosophers added, faith, hope and charity. The Deadly Sins? Pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth.

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A National Treasure

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PROVIDE HOPE

By Patrick McGurn

UNFORTUNATELY, America's Catholic schools are in the midst of a crisis that has its roots in the loss of the nuns, priests and brothers who once supplied these schools with low-cost teachers. Catholic school enrollment today is less than half what it was at its peak of more than five million, back when JFK was president. Thus inner-city Catholic schools have almost the opposite problem of their public counterparts: Though doing a heroic job, they are closing their doors at an alarming rate.

Now, Catholic schools are not for everyone, and they are not the answer for all that plagues our cities. But they are an answer – one answer that is real, less costly, and working for many families desperate for the opportunities these schools provide. With a little imagination, these schools could reach many more such children.

Here is where the president could provide a huge lift. The elephant in the room of education reform is this: No matter how much a white Republican leader may be committed to inner-city school reform, support from a black Democrat will always have more of an impact.

This doesn't mean that Mr. Obama must embrace vouchers. Given the dynamic of his party, that would be expecting too much. And a president can't institute vouchers anyway, except in limited ways. However, simply by acknowledging Catholic schools as a national treasure that should be preserved, Mr. Obama would give them a badly needed shot in the arm.

Bishops wondering about devoting so many of their scarce resources to people who are largely non-Catholic would be encouraged to work harder to keep their schools open. Business leaders who donate millions to support change in our public schools might devote at least some of these dollars to places that are already working. And good men and women who make it their mission to teach children others have given up on would be inspired to keep going.

Mr. McCloskey [author of a new book called "The Street Stops Here," about the year he spent at Rice High – an Irish Christian Brothers school in Harlem] sums it up well. "The Catholic schools are supplying hope," he says. "They could use a little help with the audacity."

– Patrick McGurn, 'Obama should acknowledge his roots' *The Wall Street Journal*,
Tuesday, January 27, 2009

Bound for freedom from hunger

THE WRECK OF THE NASHWAUK

Reviewed by IAN MACDONALD.



PEDESTRIAN yet surprising title. Who knew there were servants in Australia? Part of its egalitarian myth is that everyone pitched in, Jack and Jill being as good as their masters and mistresses.

Marie Steiner in a meticulous piece of scholarship debunks that myth while enlightening us to the travails of the women who came here to go into service.

So high were there numbers that in 1855 the South Australian Government established a system of depots to cope with them. The author could have made more of this date in framing her story. The Great Famine in Ireland began in 1845. Thus these single women were survivors of that famine and its millionfold death toll.

Shiploads of them travelled on assisted passages in search of work and, as a by-product of this, husbands. Their numbers became 'excessive'

Servants Depots in Colonial South Australia
By Marie Steiner, Wakefield Press
rp \$22.95

when low harvests meant that settlers could not afford to employ them.

Such depots were not confined to South Australia. What gives the South Australian depots an extraordinary appeal is the *Nashwauk*, a ship which ran aground at Harriott's Creek, Moana.

On board were 162 young Irish women. All survived the wreck and went on to pass through the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, housed for a time in what was called the German Hospital or in the Police Armoury until purpose-built accommodation was ready.

Although it had a Matron in charge, the accommodation was not exactly five-star. A reporter from the *Adelaide Times* described the blank look on the faces of the, '140 young women who were yesterday brought up from the Port' and a 'bursting flood of tears.'

Nonetheless the immediate need for food and shelter was served. And subsequently 500 pairs of boots were purchased 'to prepare these young women for domestic service.'

Two hundred pairs were distributed. As Steiner makes clear from the contemporary record the distribution of free boots had an unintended consequence: 'Many have left their situations to enter the Depot and procure boots. It is a nice point to issue what is necessary and at the same time not to render the Depot sufficiently attractive to induce them to come into it.'

Other depots were established at Clare, Encounter Bay, Robe, Willunga, Cawler and Mount Barker and their histories are told with equivalent vignettes on success, turmoil, good works and lack of subservience in the women immigrants.

All but seven of the *Nashwauk* survivors were listed as Catholic and Steiner's research enables her to name them and sketch their backgrounds and fates.

The range is wide. 'Ahearn, Catherine, 20, domestic servant from Tipperary, Catholic. She left for Melbourne on the *Burra Burra* with a letter and cash from her brother in July 1855...

'Copping, Mary 31, farm servant from Galway, Catholic. She was in the German Hospital, and from the Clare Depot she was engaged in July 1855 at 2/6 a week by Mr Young, shepherd, Clare...

'O'Brien, Bridget, 22, farm servant from Clare. Catholic. In the German Hospital. From the Clare Depot she was employed by Mrs Burscott near Clare (Armagh) in 1855 at 2/6 week. She married Benjamin Horne. A daughter, Ellen, was born in 1859. George and other children were subsequently born at Auburn...

Building on the Past

NOW for the average man ... Legitimate invention should be always preceded by a complete study of the field to see what other people have already done. Then some one or more defects should be clearly recognized and analysed, and then it is entirely legitimate for the engineer to use his ingenuity and his inventive faculty in remedying these defects, and in adding his remedy to the existing elements of the machine or the process which have already been found to work well. Any other invention than this should be looked upon as illegitimate, since it is almost sure to waste the money of your employer, as well as your own, and to result in partial, if not complete, disaster.

— F. B. Copley: *Frederick W. Taylor*, Harper Bros. 1923, vol. i. p.77

*Riordan, (Redling, Reardon) Bridget (Brigid), 20, domestic servant from Cork. Catholic In the German Hospital, she said she had applied for Melbourne. She fell overboard when a deck rail gave way close to Pt Noarlunga. She was recued possibly by Jacob Haarsma whom she later married. She went to Clare Depot and was employed by Mr Rogers, schoolteacher. After marriage to Jacob Haarsma she lived at Seven Hills, and had nine children...

*White, Bridget, 22, domestic servant from Galway. Catholic. In the German Hospital. From the Clare Depot she was engaged in August 1855 at 4/- a week by Mr Beacon near Broughton.

The wages paid may have been of the times and justified by proponents of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (published 1776). Others, in the spirit of Catholic social justice, were ready to anticipate *Rerum Novarum* (1891) on wages.

An official report on the Willunga Depot revealed: 'The girls are going off slowly which I cannot help attributing in great measure to the impediments thrown in the way by the Reverend J Hughes. He will insist on high wages, in no case under 4/- a week.'

Perhaps Father Hughes, although partly stymied by officialdom, lay and clerical, deserves nomination as Australia's first advocate of minimum wages. He was also notable for introducing a book to be signed by employers giving girls the right to attend Mass every alternate Sunday.

Marie Steiner graduated with an honours degree in history from the University of Adelaide. She also studied music at the Elder Conservatorium. That's her cue. Her spare, understated paperback is a fascinating draft of a brilliant libretto for *Nashwauck: The Musical* complete with a vivid cast of characters in addition to Father Hughes.

They include Major Thomas Shuldham O'Halloran, born India, leader of a punitive expedition against local Aborigines but not always as zealous in protecting the rights of female immigrants.

Bring on harps, songs and Irish jigs to call up remembrance of the Nashwauck Irish women and wonder at the number of their descendants.

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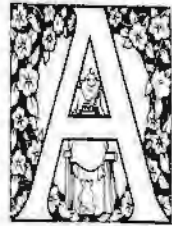
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ANTI-CHRISTIAN VIOLENCE IN INDIA



young man has been abducted and tortured by Hindu fundamentalists without police lifting a finger. If anything when his mother tried to file a complaint about his disappearance, police issued him a summons to come to the police station, this according to Sajan K. George, president of the Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC), an NGO that monitors the ill-treatment of Christians in the Indian State of Orissa.

In Daringabadi, a village in Kandhamal district (Orissa) police refused to register the statement of disappearance involving the young man; instead, it issued a summons for the abducted Christian to come to the police station.

"At 4 pm on 11 February a Hindu mob surrounded Golyat Pradhan's house, demanding that the 22-year-old and his widowed mother Pusra convert to Hinduism," said Sajan K. George.

"When the two Christians soundly refused, the mob became enraged. Hindu fanatics then "dragged the man out of the house" and "began beating him mercilessly. Helpless the mother watched, pleading with her son's assailants to have mercy on him." Instead, "her cries spurred the fanatics who then shoved her inside the house, bolting the door."

The Hindu extremists took Golyat to the neighbouring village of Galabadi, dragging and beating him mercilessly. Armed with sticks they tied him to a post, standing guard near the entrance to the village, to prevent any attempt to rescue him.

The mob beat the young man till he lost consciousness. Two fires were lit near the post where he was tied. The torture continued until 10 pm when the extremists called Daringabadi police, informing them that they had arrested a "Maoist" who had come into the village to rape.

"Police arrived in the morning around 10 am," said Sajan K. George, "and freed the young man's mother, who took the agents to where her son had been taken. But there was no trace of him. He has not been heard ever since."

The activist said that instead of starting an investigation into the young man's disappearance the police issued a summons for him to appear before police to answer charges filed against him.

Since August of last year, when anti-Christian violence broke out in Orissa, the Pradhan family has been the victim of threats by Hindu fundamentalists. Local sources told *AsiaNews* that this was due to the fact that "they are close friends of a Catholic priest, a situation that has made them a prime target for fundamentalists who want to reconvert them to Hinduism."

Cultivating Barren Souls

THE CROSS, THE PLOUGHSHARE OF CHRIST



WHEN A HOUSE has no master living in it, it becomes dark, vile and contemptible, choked with filth and disgusting refuse. So too is a soul which has lost its master, who once rejoiced there with his angels. This soul is darkened with sin, its desires are degraded, and it knows nothing but shame.

Woe to the path that is not walked on, or along which the voices of men are not heard, for then it becomes the haunt of wild animals. Woe to the soul if the Lord does not walk within it to banish with his voice the spiritual beasts of sin. Woe to the house where no master dwells, to the field where no farmer works, to the pilotless ship, storm-tossed and sinking. Woe to the soul without Christ as its true pilot; drifting in the darkness, buffeted by the waves of passion, storm-tossed at the mercy of evil spirits, its end is destruction. Woe to the soul that does not have Christ to cultivate it with care to produce the good fruit of the Holy Spirit. Left to itself, it is choked with thorns and thistles; instead of fruit it produces only what is fit for burning. Woe to the soul that does not have Christ dwelling in it; deserted and foul with the filth of the passions, it becomes a haven for all the vices. When a farmer prepares to till the soil he must put on clothing and use tools that are suitable. So Christ our heavenly king, came to till the soil of mankind devastated by sin. He assumed a body and, using the cross as his ploughshare, cultivated the barren soul of man. He removed the thorns and thistles which are the evil spirits and pulled up the weeds of sin. Into the fire he cast the straw of wickedness. And when he had ploughed the soul with the wood of the cross, he planted in it a most lovely garden of the Spirit, that could produce for its Lord and God the sweetest and most pleasant fruit of every kind.

- Homily 28 of the homilies attributed to St Macarius of Egypt [300-390 AD] also called Macarius the Great. From *The Roman Breviary*. The Second Reading for Matins for Wednesday in the 34th Week of the Year.

*Christian Charity by the Knights of Columbus***HELPING OTHERS COPE**

DURING the Great Depression of the 1930s, the catchphrase was “Buddy, can you spare a dime?” Now, in the current economic recession, it could be “Can you spare a day?”

That’s according to Knights of Columbus’ Supreme Knight Carl Anderson, who pointed out that an hour of volunteerism a week is less than 10 minutes a day. With millions of people losing their jobs and many losing their homes, nonprofit charities are feeling the pinch in decreasing contributions. To meet the challenge, Anderson is calling for a massive new volunteerism effort. The Knights, along with the Center for Faith and Public Life at Fairfield University in Connecticut, are sponsoring a volunteerism summit in New York City Feb. 27.

Headlined “Neighbor Helping Neighbor,” the summit will include representatives from top charities and volunteer groups to find new ways to promote volunteerism to help more seeking assistance.

“This is a nation filled with imagination and with millions of people ready to step forward,” said Anderson during a Jan. 23 speech at Fairfield University announcing the summit. “If greed – one of the worst aspects of human nature – helped push us into this crisis, then one of the best aspects of our nature – generosity – will be necessary to help pull us out of it.”

The Knights often boast of the man-hours their members provide doing charitable works. In 2007, the latest year for figures, the Knights not only donated \$145 million to charitable causes but provided 69 million hours of volunteer service “through an effective grassroots structure of thousands of active councils motivated by the Christian principle of charity,” Anderson said.

“The challenge we must meet is to effectively connect new volunteers to the local community projects,” Anderson stressed, “and there is no better place to start looking for new volunteers than in our churches.”

On Jan. 19, he said, Knights in Washington, D.C., through local churches, gave “the gift of warmth” to nearly 1,200 children in their “Coats for Kids” initiative. (The rest of a total 7,800 new coats were distributed later in January to children in Detroit and Chicago.)

“Specifically, volunteer groups with religious ties – including the Knights of Columbus – need to partner with their local churches and synagogues to reach those in the pews with the news about opportunities to volunteer,” he said. “No audience should be more receptive to this message.”

– National Catholic Register, February 15-21, 2009.

Beautiful Kate

Truism: making movies is not easy. In her first writer/director feature, Rachel Ward has added to the process multiple hazards. She has adapted American author Newton Thornberg's novel set in Idaho to Outback Australia. Her script is powered by flashbacks, always risky when they involve younger look-alikes playing the older lead characters.

These hazards are evidence of Ward's bold reach. Her casting is aptly superlative. Ben Mendelsohn plays Ned Kendall, a writer, accompanied by waitress/wouldbe actress Toni (Maeve Dermody). He has returned home to visit his dying father Bruce (Bryan Brown) who is being nursed by Ned's sister Sally (Rachel Griffiths).

The visit revives to a blaze the guilt embers of Ned's sexual episodes with his sister, the beautiful Kate of the title (Sophie Lowe, playing age 14-16), killed in an accident that resulted in the suicide of her other brother Cliff (Josh McFarlane).

From her cast, Ward elicits finely tuned performances, demonstrating that her own acting skills may make her, above all, an actor's director. Mendelsohn has never been better as the writer Ned and newcomer Scott O'Donnell must be mentioned for his delivery of the teenage Ned.

Rachel Griffiths underplays to Bryan Brown's patriarchal authoritarian, his voice like an angle-grinder cutting through rusty corrugated iron. Maeve Dermody brings off a neat mix of cheek and revulsion. Sophie Lowe is the movie's gem-class find, her beauty, talent and command reminiscent of the younger Cate Blanchett in her beguiling turn as a dancing genii in a Tim Tam commercial.

Increasing her bold reach, Ward refrains from making the Kendall property one of the stately homesteads of Australia. She shows an unerring eye for the suburban style in which most station folk live, adding drought to battling.

The boldness of Ward's reach exceeds her grasp, however. It was Chekhov who told writers never to show a gun unless they were going to use it. Similarly never show Catholic symbols unless you are ready to integrate the beliefs they represent into the action.

MOVIES

By JAMES MURRAY

The crucifix and the image of the Sacred Heart on repeated display in the dying patriarch's bedroom are idle props. They bear no relation to the way in which Ned and family members deal with the moral law he has broken.

Rather the ikon in which Ned finds exculpation is Toni's name tag. His hardboiled cynicism cracks into egoistic smugness; his waitress awaits. The ancient Greek playwrights were not so facile in their treatment of incest, and the fate of its perpetrators.

As for integration of Catholic faith into movies from novels, impossible to go past Graham Greene. A paraphrase from the French comment on the charge of the Light Brigade occurs. Rachel Ward's debut is magnifique but ce n'est pas Catholique.

MA15+★★★★NFFV

Cheri

Begins as it means to go on – disastrously. It opens with a montage of archival photographs of courtesans in France 1906, height of *la belle époque*. A

Janet goes to town.

People frequently ask retired people what they do to make their days interesting. Well for example the other day my husband and I went into town and went into a shop. We were only in there for about five minutes, and when we came out there was a cop writing out a parking ticket. We went up to him and said "Come on man how about giving a senior citizen a break?" He ignored us and continued writing out the ticket. I called him a dumb idiot. He glared at me and started writing out another ticket for worn tires. So my husband called him a rotten so and so. He finished the second ticket and started writing out a third. The more we abused him the more tickets he wrote. Actually, we came to town by bus.

- Anonymous

voice-over – very English, very twee – identifies them and rises archly over the image of Lea de Lonval.

She is a fictitious character, created by Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette and played by Michelle Pfeiffer at 51, looking, if not younger than spring time, then certainly not too old for Cheri who as played by Rupert Friend is precociously aged.

Above all the novel Cheri is a mood piece. Because of the voice-over, director Stephen Frears, working from Christopher Hampton's stagey script, has little chance to create mood.

How do you make Michelle Pfeiffer seem boring? Keep interrupting with that needless voice over. Who could blame the French if they reacted to this travesty by taking a Jane Austen novel and treating it in reciprocal fashion with a mock-French, oo-la-la commentary about ze naughty Anglais.

Hampton might have done better to stick with his original project: a movie about Colette herself which would surely have included her relationship with the man known as Monsieur Willi. He used to lock Colette, now deemed a proto-feminist, in her room until she wrote her quota of words.

M★★NFFV

Noodle

Israeli director Ayelet Menahemi recipe for his hit tragi-comedy: take the titular child (BaoQi Chen) whose command of Hebrew is limited to the self-evident. 'I am a Chinese boy.' Mix in a widowed El Al flight attendant Miri (Mili Avital) with any number of relatives and friends to help her re-unite the child with his illegal migrant mother (Vicky Lyn), summarily deported to Beijing.

Revealing the re-union method would spoil the sweetness and sadness, the laughter and tears. Indeed, while vividly sketching Tel Aviv's illegal shadow world, Menahemi and his co-writer Shemi Zarhin could have intensified the laughter by elaborating more on the method and less on Miri's relationship with her sister Gila (Anat Waxman) and the latter's husband Izzi (Alon Abutbul).

In her austere marvellous performance, Avital brings off a rare double. She allows neither the child nor a wayward pooch to steal the movie.

PG★★★★SFFV

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

Abracadabra. He's back: Harry Potter (Daniel Radcliffe) with his pals Ron Weasley (Rupert Grint) and Hermione Granger (Emma Watson). Also in attendance franchise veterans Professor McGonagall (Maggie Smith), Severus Snape (Alan Rickman) and Professor Dumbledore (Michael Gambon). Enter Jim Broadbent as newcomer character Horace Slughorn whose initial disguise is designed to make you jump out of your seat. Helena Bonham Carter as the predatory Bellatrix Lestrange adds to the transfixion.

Director David Yates drives the magical special effects to new heights and keeps decent control of adolescent flirtation. A cut in the 150 minutes would have helped. Nevertheless must be seen, preferably in 3D.

Yates is scheduled to direct the final brace of movies based on JK Rowling's last book in the series, *Deathly Hallows*. Will Harry then die? Sherlock Holmes did, only to be revived by his creator Arthur Conan Doyle.

Better surely to film the story of how an unknown writer scribbling in an Edinburgh coffee shop sent her manuscript to the publishing house Bloomsbury in London. There it was rescued from the slush pile to make Bloomsbury richer than the Bank of England and the writer richer than the Queen of Great Britain, give or take the Crown Jewels.

Collector note: For promotional purposes 200 signed, hardback copies of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* were released. They are fetching up to \$85,000 each. Magic indeed.

M★★★★SFFV

Tyson

Documentary director James Toback achieves the impossible. He makes ex-world heavyweight champion Mike Tyson, a convicted rapist, pitiable if not totally sympathetic through superlatively edited archival footage intercut with Tyson's own words.

Above all he does it with an assessment of the great trainer Cus D'Amato's paternal mentorship of Tyson and the effect D'Amato's death had on him.

M★★★★NFFV

Official Classifications key

G: for general exhibition; PG: parental guidance recommended for persons under 15 years; M 15+: recommended for mature audiences 15 years and over; MA 15+: restrictions apply to persons under the age of 15; R 18+: Restricted to adults, 18 years and over.

Annals supplementary advice

SFFV: Suitable For Family Viewing;
NFFV: Not For Family Viewing.

Valentino: The Last Emperor

Silly sub-title for a factual documentary. But perhaps the Italian dress-designer needs it to distinguish himself from the very late Rudolph whereas Tyson is Tyson is Tyson.

Matt Tyrnauer directs with a mordant eye for the profit and gloss of high fashion and the relationship between Valentino and his companion-manager Giancarlo Giammetti.

Tyrnauer had the backing of *Vanity Fair* magazine and consequently an inside track; he shot 250 hours of startling footage yet it did not fully cover Valentino's abdication in 2007 brought about by his deal with an equity fund, an event summarised in end-credit captions.

Tyson and *Valentino* would make a great double bill. Better their footage could be intercut to show two faces of celebrity, one bruised, the other overtanned.

M★★★★NFFV

Coco Avant Chanel

For Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel the phrase 'rags to riches' had a double meaning. She began orphan poor in rural France, she and her sister being brought up by nuns. But she also came to fame and fortune in the rag - high fashion - trade of the *la belle époque* Paris, and lived on till 1971, her signature scent Chanel No 5 covering

the aroma of collaboration with the Nazi occupation of the 1940s.

Writer/director Anne Fontaine restricts herself to capturing Coco's formative years before the Great War of 1914-18. In Audrey Tautou, she has found an actress to embody the spirit of Chanel: headstrong, mesmerising, talented of whom it could be said: 'She came. She saw. She got women out of corsets.'

A quartet of fine players set off Tautou's spirited portrait etched in ambition, desire and regret. Her sister Adrienne is played by Marie Gillain, her first customer, the actress Emilienne, by Emmanuelle Devos. Chanel had two influential lovers in her formative years, the French land-owner Etienne Balsan (Benoit Boelvoorde) and the English businessman Boy Capel (Allesandro Nivola).

The other star is the French landscape set with country houses where the young Coco came to learn about her future clients yet not to be impressed by their idle lives, her need being to express herself by working.

Adroitly Anne Fontaine casts the Frenchman Boelvoorde and and the Englishman Nivola against national stereotypes. Boelvoorde comes on as a bluff, horsey landowner, Nivola as a moustachioed, entrepreneurial smoothie.

The effect is to intensify the high contrast between the two suitors as they duel politely for Coco, the tantalising and ultimately elusive prize. More might have been done to link Chanel's convent training as a seamstress, a training that surely added to the underlying austerity of her style. (Not always followed in the present).

The word 'elegance' is used frequently. It is an elegance designed to substitute for virtue which does not always disguise vice.

PG★★★★SFFV

Winged Creatures

Working from a script by Roy Freirich, director Rowan Woods and cinematographer Eric Alan Edwards show what happens when fatal random shots in a diner ricochet through the lives of those present, each remembering it from a different perspective and need.

For Anne Hagen (Dakota Fanning) the need is to protect the memory of

her father, a victim in the shooting. For Charlie Archenault (Forest Whitaker), a survivor, ironically sick to death, it's the need to provide for his family.

Dr Bruce Laraby (Guy Pearce) has a more shifting, sinister need and for Carla Davenport (Kate Beckinsale), waitress in the diner and single, it's the need to remake her life. How? And with whom?

In the ensemble cast, former child actor Jackie Earle Haley, face like a lethal weapon, is magnetic as the father trying to build a friendship with his son, Jimmy (Josh Hutcherson) another survivor.

In what is his Hollywood debut movie Woods enhances the reputation he made with *The Boys* and *Little Fish*. Meg Reticker handles the movie's flash-back edit with superlative deftness although at times it moves more slowly than a hearse with four flat tyres.

Intriguingly, and against convention, the movie finds more hope in the young Anne Hagen's belief in God than in the activities of a hospital counsellor armed with a notebook and a set of modish queries.

M★ ★ ★ NFFV

Fanboys

Cult movies by definition take time to attain their status. Director Kyle Newman, with writers Ernest Cline, Adam Goldberg and Dan Pollock, has contrived to shorten the time and put together an instant cult movie.

Easy. In the manner of a pseudo-religion syncretist, he has included in his work two existing cults: Trekkies, devotees of *Star Trek*, and call them Staries, devotees of *Star Wars*.

Newman's transforming stroke is to have his Staries decide to traverse America in a van, invade the Sky Walker ranch of George Lucas and get a sneak preview of *Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace*.

M★ ★ NFFV

I Really Hate My Job

Early in his comedy, black as a pudding, sharp as a pickled onion, director Oliver Parker gives us a rodent's eye view of a London restaurant setting up expectations of a catastrophe or more exactly – terrible pun – ratarstrophe.

Other items are on the menu. And Parker with Australian writer Jennifer Higgie have a quintet to perfect

them: Neve Campbell (Abi), Shirley Henderson (Alice) Alexandra Maria Lara (Madonna), Anna Maxwell Martin (Suzie) and Oana Pellea (Rita).

As Alice, a frantic chef who wants to be a writer, Henderson tops the bill of fare. Neve Campbell's Abi, an expatriate American no longer content to stand and wait, serves up a piece of what might be called naked, passive aggression.

Danny Huston (as himself) makes a late entry and walks off nonchalantly with the movie under his top hat.

M★ ★ ★ NFFV

Ice Age 3: Dawn of the Dinosaurs

Global warming seems to have affected director Carlos Saldanha's sequel: he creates a cartoon world where the hairy mammoth Manny (voiced by Ray Romano) and his mate Ellie (Queen Latifah) have to venture from ice into a piping hot environment.

This while Ellie is pregnant and they have to assist their friend Sid the Sloth who has adopted three baby dinosaurs whose mother wants them back Diego, the Sabre Toothed Tiger (Denis Leary) and Buck the Weasel (Simon Pegg) join in the fun which for tinier tots may be over scary.

The ending may not please doomsayers such as Al Gore but it does indicate that like the mammoths human beings have survived previous ice ages and global warming.

PG★ ★ SFFV

The Proposal

Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy, Grace Kelly and Cary Grant, Doris Day and Rock Hudson. To these romantic-comedy doubles add Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds.

She plays a steel-spined New York publisher, he her assistant forced to marry her when she is threatened with deportation. Proximity propinquity in Alaska when he takes her to visit his family including his grandma (the immortal, golden girl Betty White playing a native American).

PG★ ★ SFFV

Drag Me Down to Hell

Director Sam Raimi and his co-writer brother, Ivan Raimi, have created a horror movie which

inspires embarrassed laughter: embarrassment that it is being watched, embarrassment for those taking part in its plot: ambitious finance officer Christine Brown (Alison Lohman) refuses to extend the home loan of Mrs Canush (Lorna Raver). She puts a curse on Christine which the latter's boy friend Professor Clay Dalton (Justin Long) is unable to lift.

The movie does live up – or down – to its title: the hell it drags us to is a hell where boredom fights disgust, and the Exit sign looks ever more tempting.

MA15-★NFFV

Bruno

Is the new, fashionista persona of comedian Sacha Baron Cohen. Even more than Ali G, Staines rapper, and Borat, Kazakhstan TV reporter, it mixes the funny and the fundamentally appalling.

This time round the ratio is one to ten. Thus we have Bruno on high camp hilariously sabotage a fashion show by wearing an outfit made of Velcro. Then, however, he is aboard a run-away train of risky and risqué sketches.

These comprise sends-up ranging from Jerusalem's Hassidic Jews to the crucifixion of Jesus (symbolised by an adopted black child OJ) to an all-in cage fight in redneck country that turns into a homosexual bout between Bruno and his gofer Lutz (Gustav Hammarsten).

Cohen, a Cambridge University graduate, is reportedly an observant Jew who keeps that side of his life hermetically separated from his showbiz schtick (which owes something to *Candid Camera* and Cary McDonald's *Norman Gunston*).

To maintain the separation, Cohen would have to be into double-think. In one hemisphere of his creativity he aims to satirise celebrity follies: in the other he is complicit with those follies and through them seeks profitable celebrity for himself.

Difficult to define. Perhaps *kapo* humour does the trick after those death-camp inmates who were complicit with the system in order to survive.

MA15+★NFFV

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SOS! - Christianity in the Middle East

DEEPLY saddened by the crisis engulfing Christianity in the Middle East, Pope Benedict XVI has asked the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) to provide urgent help.

In many parts of the land Our Lord Jesus Christ knew so well, the faithful now live in fear as increasing poverty and growing extremism threaten the survival of these ancient communities.

A mass exodus of Christians from the Middle East is now taking place. For some it is a question of escaping bloody persecution. In the Holy Land for example, the proportion of Christians has plummeted from 20% to as little as 1.4% in the last 40 years.

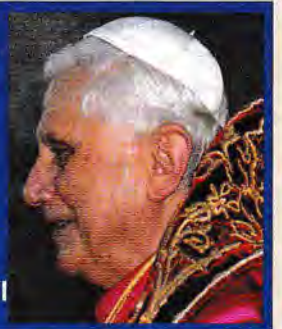
ACN is helping to keep faith and hope alive throughout the region by providing urgent aid to priests, religious and lay people, offering subsistence help to refugees and building and repairing Churches and convents. Please help us strengthen and rebuild the Church in the land of Christ's birth.

A beautiful, olive wood crucifix, handcrafted in Bethlehem, will be sent to all those who give a donation of \$20.00 or more to help this campaign.

Please tick the box below if you like to receive the little olive wood crucifix*.



"... Churches in the Middle East are threatened in their very existence... May God grant ACN strength to help wherever the need is greatest."
Pope Benedict XVI



Donation Form: SOS! - Christianity in the Middle East

Send To: Aid to the Church in Need, PO Box 6245 Blacktown DC NSW 2148
Phone/Fax No: (02) 9679-1929 E-mail: info@aidtochurch.org Web: www.aidtochurch.org

I/we enclose \$..... to help keep Christianity alive in the Middle East.

Yes please send me the little olive wood crucifix*

Made of olive wood from the Holy Land, this small crucifix is powerfully evocative of Christ's passion and death. The crucifixes are lovingly handcrafted by poverty stricken families in Bethlehem and your donation helps them survive. Comes in a display box with accompanying religious image.
(Size 12cm x 7cm)



I enclose a cheque/money order payable to Aid to the Church in Need OR please debit my Visa or Mastercard

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Aid to the Church in Need a Catholic charity dependent on the Holy See, providing pastoral relief to needy and oppressed Churches

The Soviet Union is dead! Long Live the Soviet Union!

THE 'CHURCH' OF VLADIMIR PUTIN

By Stanislav Belkovskiy



ANY specialists (especially foreigners) who laboriously study contemporary Russia are prone to claim that Russia's ruling elite is dominated by genuinely devout Orthodox Christians and that the influence of the Orthodox Church is rapidly growing in general -- the Russian Federation as a country stands on the brink of wholesale clericalization. And one highly respected expert told me about four years ago in a strictly private conversation: "It seems as if they want to make Russia into an Orthodox Iran."

The author of these lines, however, overcoming his fear of autumnal loneliness, boldly attempts to assert the

opposite. Namely, that contemporary Russia's true religion is the cult of money; which in turn serves as the basis of the ruling system (regime) - a monetocracy.

In conditions of a monetocracy Our Lord Jesus Christ must look like a total loser and a sap; the exemplar for universal imitation could be, on the contrary, Judas Iscariot. For our elite the Church is nothing more than a "Russian Soul Saving Corporation" that offers services aimed at relieving the soul's burden in various price categories.

But recently my loneliness ended. Russian Federation Prime Minister Vladimir Putin came resolutely to my aid.

First was his visit to Helsinki (3 June 2009), where he commented on the actions of the Finnish consul who

smuggled five-year-old Anton Salonen and his father out of Russia in the trunk of his diplomatic car -- a well-known story whose details we will not repeat.

The gist of Putin's words was: "Look, if a functionary is concerned about humanitarian values, there is no place for him in the hierarchy of power. Let him go and work in a church."

That's "church" with a small 'c'.

So if you cannot engage in serious matters and look at the world pragmatically, push off to church and join other freaks like yourself.

And on June 10 this year the premier visited the well-known arts businessman Ilya S. Glazunov in Moscow to congratulate the latter on his 79th birthday, and also the 60th anniversary of his commercial activity. And during this friendly visit he subjected the holy princes and passion-bearers Boris and Gleb - the first Russian saints - to systematic criticism.

Here is what he said: "Boris and Gleb are, of course, saints; but one should fight for oneself and one's country, whereas they gave up without a fight. This cannot be an example for us; they lay down and waited to be killed."

From Putin's words it follows that it is the murderer of the holy princes -- *Svyatopolk the Accursed* -- whose example should be followed. Now he indeed fought for himself, having had no intention of giving up without a fight. And he did not miss his chance; he seized the moment and cleared potential rivals from his path in the only way accessible to his understanding.

Perhaps the time is not faraway when *Svyatopolk the Accursed* will be renamed *Svyatopolk the Sovereign* and reburied in the capital in the cemetery of Donskoy monastery. Having been awarded the title of *Hero of the Russian Federation* (posthumous).

True, it is not known where Svyatopolk's legendary 'stinking' remains

Kremlin's Ministry for the Salvation of Soul?

DESPITE THE RUSSIAN constitution's legal separation of church and state, President Boris Yeltsin and his successor Vladimir Putin forged a political alliance with the Orthodox Church - an alliance that has continued under Putin's successor, Medvedev. Kirill is escorted around Moscow by a cavalcade of Kremlin security guards and was listed No. 6 on the government's list of state dignitaries.

Stanislav Belkovskiy, a political analyst with close Kremlin ties, says the church has become "the Kremlin's Ministry for the Salvation of Souls."

Church leaders have blessed Kremlin plans to eliminate some social benefits for the elderly, called on Russia's youth to volunteer for military service in Chechnya and consecrated new warships and nuclear missiles, calling the latter "Russia's guardian angels." The church has also supported the Kremlin's official ideology, which asserts that Russia's unique historic role makes it unsuited for Western-style liberal democracy.

"The church is trying to offer a new anti-European Utopia," prominent writer Viktor Yerofeyev complained in a December article in the French newspaper *Le Monde*. "Its main principle: Russian values are different from Western values."

For the church, political loyalty has paid handsomely.

The State Duma, or lower house of parliament, is considering a bill to return to the church up to 7.41 million acres nationalized after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

- Mansur Mirovalev, April 4, 2009, "Russian Orthodox Church a growing political force"

lie. But in the era of nanotechnologies this is no obstacle. If necessary, the remains will be synthesized from any available dust/rubbish.

This is how Russia's rulers understand Christianity and love the Church. Such are the signals, ladies and gentlemen.

It is noteworthy that the Russian people have already reacted to this 'clericalization' with a new generic joke:

"Once upon a time a well-known Russian oligarch died. He ends up in the Proper Place. In the reception room he was met by the Authorized Representative. Carrying the oligarch's personal file under his arm. And the Authorized Representative says: "Esteemed oligarch, we have studied your file closely. The decision is unambiguous -- you go to hell!"

What is this?! Why hell?" the oligarch howled. "I funded four churches and three monasteries, and built five chapels! I paid for twenty-three banquets on Mt Athos! I gave the Russian Orthodox Church's administrator of affairs a brand new Maybakh with manual steering!"

The Authorized Representative retires to confer. He quickly returns and says: "The decision is as follows. Your money will be returned. And then -- you go to hell!"

However, they are not planning to go to hell just yet. They have other priorities.

Russkiy Pioneer, the journal for which for some time Premier Putin has been moonlighting as a columnist, the other day organized a big drunken party on the cruiser *Aurora*. With oysters and black caviar, governors and ministers.

Representatives of the elite who had had a drop too many jumped off the cruiser into the warm June waters of the Neva River. To be fished out by their guards.

Admittedly, by law it is forbidden to do such a thing on the museum-ship *Aurora*. But if you have big money, then you can. Everything is possible. This is the most important rule of a monocracy.

And this will have to be explained to the many, many specialists who continue to devoutly assert the opposite.

Putin and Co. are restoring the Soviet Union.

Nothing more or less.

Yezhednevnyy Zhurnal, June 12, 2009



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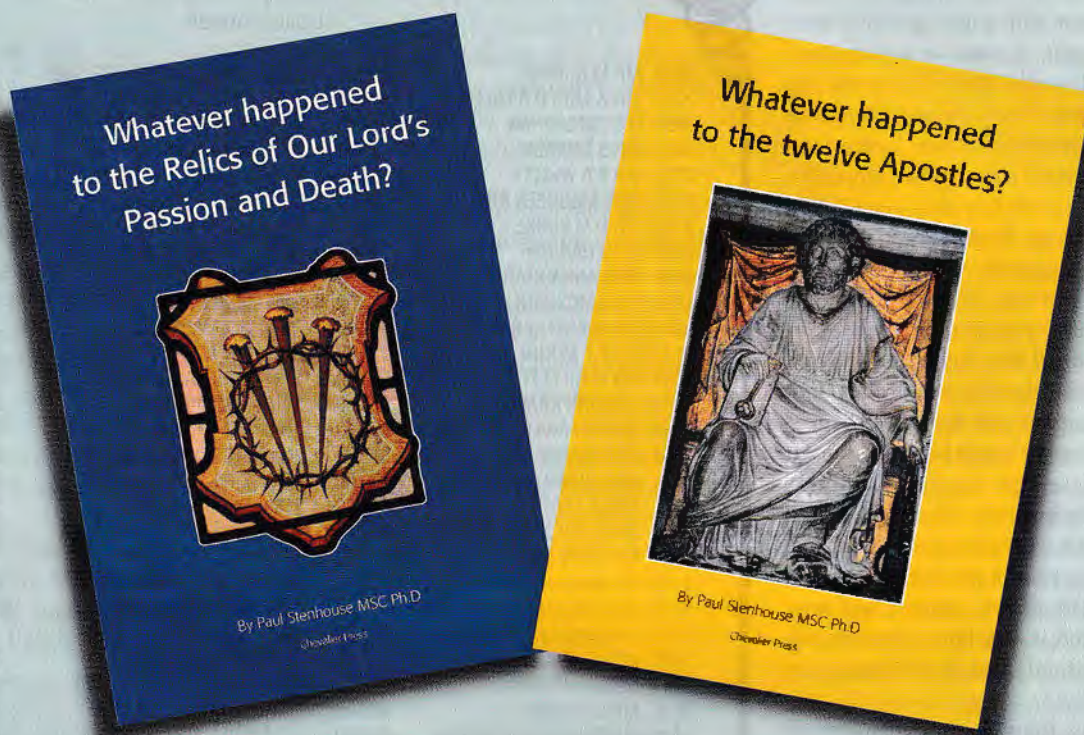
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