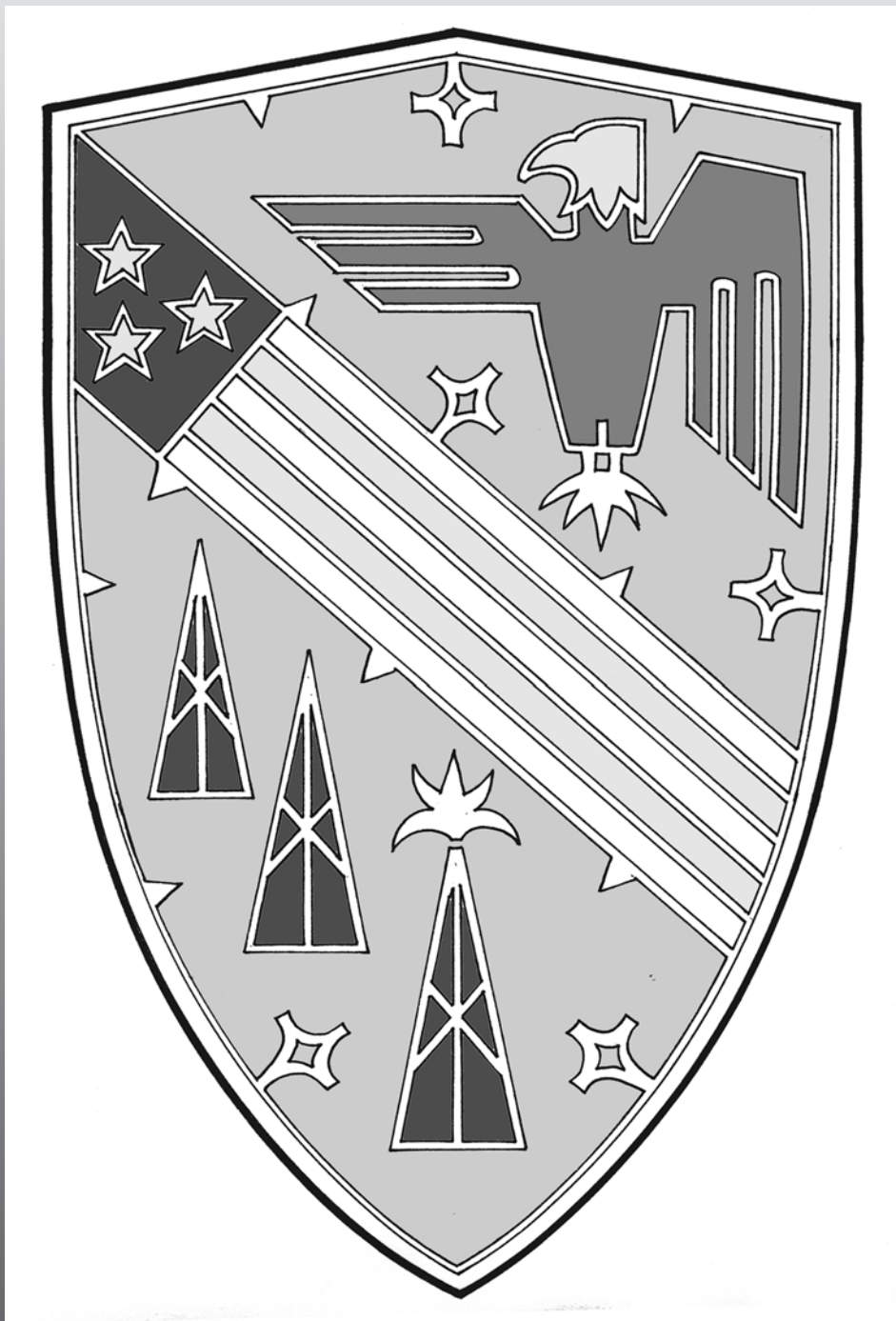


Tui Motu

InterIslands

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The New Crusade

blood, sweat... and oil

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Last Rites declaration a hoax

Vatican Radio has released a disclaimer that the so-called *Last Rites Declaration* of Pope John Paul II did not come from them and was a hoax.

This 'declaration' was quoted in Jenny Dawson's article: "A Yearning for Unity", *May Tui Motu* p 13

Blood, sweat... and oil

Top of the pops in movie theatres as I write, is the film about the Crusades, *Kingdom of Heaven*, reviewed opposite. Before 9/11 and its ferocious aftermath, the arrival of yet another blockbuster epic would have excited little reaction apart from screams of delight from fans of such pictures. However, nothing could be more symbolic than this movie – an unholy alliance of misguided faith, political greed and gratuitous violence, mimicking the 'War against Terror' presently being waged throughout the Middle East.

The Crusades are a huge blot on the pages of Christian history. Urged on by popes, saints and kings, fortified by the prospect of immediate loot in this life and eternal reward in the next, the knights and peasants of medieval Europe were lured on these wild and bloody expeditions, which had more to do with continuing the Norman French tradition of warrior knights earning their spurs than any deeply religious sentiment.

Muslim Arabs who had lived for centuries at relative peace with Christians in the Holy Land were suddenly subjected to violent assaults by – so it seemed to them – crazed savages. Constantinople, the ancient capital of Orthodox Christianity, was also sacked as a side-show. Little wonder that for centuries Arab Muslims and Byzantine Christians alike have held Rome and Christianity in utter disdain. The

Crusades left a permanent mark on their collective religious psyches.

And suddenly... it's all happening again. When President Bush chose the word *crusade* to describe his response to 9/11, the Muslim world recoiled in horror. Ironically, no word could have been more apt: a bloody medieval folly was about to be re-enacted. In this issue two articles analyse this imperial 'war against terror' (pp 7-11), being waged by the United States and its allies.

Ron O'Grady (p. 11) reports a comment, that "every Empire in history has depended on religion to give legitimacy to the expansionist views of its political leaders". The American 'Empire' is no exception: the American Religious Right acclaims as godly and righteous the US intervention in the Arab world and its unequivocal support for Israel against the Palestinians.

Pope John Paul spoke out consistently, not just against violence in general, but against these wars in particular. The huge toll inflicted on innocent civilians is proof that whatever the motive, these pre-emptive strikes are diabolic and self-destructive. To use the gospel of Jesus Christ as some sort of justification for what is little more than a classical foray in power politics is a blasphemy. It was in the time of Saladin. It is in the time of Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat. And it is time now for the true Christian majority to repudiate it. ■

Dialogue and debate

One of the aims of *Tui Motu* is to provide a forum for serious discussion on issues of faith, of religious practice and of the great issues of our times. We particularly welcome Bishop Cullinane's regular contributions (see pp 4,6). The Vatican Council opened up areas for debate which for centuries had been closed, and has enabled a much freer flow of ideas to occur

ecumenically. This type of debate is faithful to the tradition of Vatican II.

It is matter for grave concern, therefore, that the editor of the respected theological review *America* has lost his post precisely for encouraging this sort of debate. The circumstances are covered in detail in our *Postscript* (p. 32). It is an ominous development.

M.H.

Kingdom of Heaven

Given that the Director of *Kingdom of Heaven*'s previous movies included *Black Hawk Down*, *Blade Runner*, and *Gladiator*, Ridley Scott was unlikely to give us a tender exploration of themes often associated with the kingdom of heaven.

The title is rich in meaning, but the principal one is the medieval association of the earthly Jerusalem with the heavenly one, the centre of the world and potential entry point to the kingdom of heaven. However, Ridley Scott did not make this movie to lead us into a deeper understanding of the medieval world. The movie ends with a screen text reminding us that, 1,000 years after the story we have witnessed, Jerusalem remains a religious battleground.

So the context for Ridley Scott's take on the Crusades is not the Middle Ages but now. What he would like is laudable. He wants peace in the Middle East – don't we all? – and suggests that Jerusalem should really be a place of peace (as its name implies). So, the core story is about a man of peace caught up in the violence of the Crusades and the medieval failure to create the kingdom of heaven.

Balian (Orlando Bloom) is a blacksmith in France whose wife and child have died, his wife by suicide, which puts her among the damned. Balian is a noble's bastard who accedes to knighthood and eventually becomes responsible for the defence of Jerusalem when Saladin defeats the Christian armies following the death of King Baldwin.

That's complicated enough, but throw in an obligatory love interest (Eva Green as Princess Sibylla), egomaniacal schemings by Christian princes, a storm at sea, religious bigotry from the attending bishop, plottings in the Saracen camp led by Saladin (Ghassan Massoud), then the proposed themes of the picture cannot be explored at depth. The characters are cardboard cut-outs with clichés for dialogue. The only ones to evoke interest are Saladin himself and Tiberias (Jeremy Irons), who has the wisdom to walk away from the folly of the upstart successor to King Baldwin.

Given the ostensible theme of the folly of war and longing for the kingdom of heaven, care is needed in the portrayal of war itself. If the audience is to sense Balian's dilemmas and pain then it needs more than some passing remarks that war is folly and hell. But that is about all we get amongst the testosterone mayhem. The flashing blades and lunging bodies, the contorted faces and trampling hooves, the blood-

covered corpses and flying weapons are neither frightening nor evocative of feelings in war: they are just tiresome. They arouse no feelings about the characters involved. As the cameras pan across the field of dead outside Jerusalem, it looks more like the city rubbish dump than the gut-wrenching horror of a pointless war. The music over is banal, an over-amplified sobbing cello grinding out a tune of mawkish sentimentality.

The historical context lets Ridley Scott indulge in all this violence with some sense of legitimacy because 'that is what happened'. But his purpose in taking us there is not to help us understand the Middle Ages, but to make a plea for less religious bigotry, to give peace a chance, and to admire the smith from Ibelin who just wants to leave the world a better place.

As a historian, it is not the errors of detail that bother me about films such as this. In the interests of presenting complex stories and characters on screen, some liberties with history are essential. Some events must be telescoped, some characters left out, some characterisations simplified. One can even hold historical truth in abeyance in the pursuit of profounder themes, as in Peter Schaeffer's *Amadeus*. But *Kingdom of Heaven* is no *Amadeus*.

Ridley Scott is too interested in depicting violence to explore other themes. He approaches the Middle Ages with his own presuppositions about what is needed for peace in Jerusalem. What is lauded in the film is the kingdom of the mind and heart and the conscience of the individual.

Organised religion, more in its Christian than its Muslim guise, is gratuitous error destroying the value of human lives. These are pseudo-rationalist values from the 19th and 20th centuries, and very thin at that. There is no understanding of the role of religion in any age, let alone its place in medieval society. Even the love story belongs in the 20th century. The sight of Balian and Sibylla at the end of the film walking off into the sunset hand in hand down a dusty road, she now content to be the smith's wife in a village in France, is the triumph of the saccharine over any historical reality.

If you like spectacle and violence and are not concerned about engaging dialogue or the exploration of feelings at any depth, and do not mind the exploitation of history as an excuse to make movies, then you will probably enjoy this romp, but clearly I have not added it to my list of must-see movies.

Ken Booth

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Tui Motu-InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed. The name Tui Motu was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

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Making Eucharist real

Richard Dowden's commentary on John's gospel insights into Eucharist (*TM April*) inspires me to recall that in John's 'signs' emphasis is on getting disciples to realise that they are the Christs of today. That leads me to reflect on how I live out Eucharist. In other words, how am I eaten and drunk by others? Living a life of service is expressed in many ways.

One of the most obvious is in marriage. Both partners risk the loss of identity in entering their union; so that they die to self-centred living and their communion in love brings forth a new creation. Each meal on the table says: 'Take us and eat, this is the product of our bodies' work. This glassful is our blood, sweat and tears, given for you'. Christ acts in me in every act of service, every time I put the other before myself. Parish Eucharist replenishes my spirit of giving, especially when the giving applies to my selfish life.

Michael McCarthy (also *TM April*) observed: "The earth is finished". Mother Earth has been raped by humans over the last four thousand years. She has seen civilisations come and go. She is bigger than us and is capable of evolving new species, because she is driven by the life within her. It is we humans who will suffer from the decline of Western civilisation.

Being 'eucharist' in service to sustainable living activities, which is going to

mean a drastic reduction in our selfish lifestyles, is the only way to create the Reign of God and the new humanity.

Ron Sharp, Motueka

letters to the editor



We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not altering meaning.

Response articles (up to a page) are also welcome, but need to be by negotiation

The Pontiff in winter

The review by Dr Anna Holmes of John Cornwall's *The Pontiff in Winter*, has a number of unbalanced statements.

For example: "fearful of change and freedom"... "needs to be in control"... "in total contrast to the detached logic of Thomas Aquinas"! Tell that to the Dominicans who support this magazine! The review gives little evidence of a desire for the 'conversational Church' she espouses in her own article on pages 14/15 of the same issue.

Pope John Paul had one of the largest funerals in history, which was attended by hundreds of thousands of young people, mostly lay persons, the future of the church. By their prayerful presence, in a world of spin and glam, they recognised him as an authentic shepherd who spoke the truth in love to them. The review is a sad contrast to the article by Bishop Boyle about the Pope humbly listening at so many

Synods. Bishop Boyle was there. The review proclaims the Pope's "rigid teaching about marriage and sexuality". It ignores his epoch-making and original *theology of the body* and his dialogue with his many married friends from Krakow days and on to his time as Pope? It is interesting that the review has no mention of the Lord Jesus, the passion and the centre of the life and teaching of Pope John Paul the Great.

Carl Telford SM, Christchurch

In fact, Dr Holmes' review contains many 'balancing statements'. The comment quoted above about St Thomas Aquinas described Max Scheler's position, which was not necessarily that of the young Karol Wojtyla: Ed.

Was Jesus married?

Glynn Cardy's worthy review in *TM May* issue of that overblown blockbuster *The Da Vinci Code* errs in one respect: that no reputable scholar supports that Jesus was married.

The Jewish writer Geza Vermes sees little reason to doubt that Jesus, like all men of his time except the Essenes, was married. The renowned Catholic scholar, John Meier, has also argued persuasively that Jesus was married.

Resistance to the reasonable notion of a married Jesus seems to stem from some persistent tendency to equate sexuality with sin: therefore Jesus, the sinless, must remain celibate and, of course, unmarried.

(abridged)

Norman Maclean, Gisborne

GE a hot potato

In the February issue of Tui Motu Columban Father Pat McMullan wrote an article on Genetic Engineering, critical of the NZ Catholic Bishops' submissions to the Royal Commission on GE, held in 2000. In our May issue Bishop Peter Cullinane issued a substantial response to Pat McMullan.

Fr McMullan now writes:

My foremost concern in my article on Genetic Engineering was to critique the New Zealand Bishops' assertion to the Royal Commission on GE: "in itself, the technology of genetic modification is not unethical." There is a considerable body of scientific thought that would support my disquiet over this claim of intrinsic ethicality. To use a Biblical parallel,

we are not talking here about whether it is appropriate to eat of the fruit from the tree of good and evil (i.e. ethical decision making) but about redefining the tree of life itself (*Gen 2:9*).

There is a qualitative difference in this technology. GE is *not* just an extension either of the ancient craft of crossing and selecting seeds or of classical Mendelian applied genetics. Since the 1970s, the

expression 'biologically impossible' has become obsolete. One observer notes: "everything is biologically possible provided only that it does not transgress the laws of physics." This conceptual shift in science has given humanity a power hitherto unknown. "The idea that there's some compulsion always to turn the findings of science into new technologies, putatively to make life more comfortable and to

generate wealth, is an add-on, and a pernicious one.”

I am at a loss to understand why Bishop Peter accuses me of being against conferences to discuss GE. However, I am aware that some senior church people are concerned to justify the two meetings recently held in Rome (in November 2003 and September 2004). To this end the Prefect of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Cardinal Martino, recently stated in a letter that these meetings were held to provide balanced voices in opposition and support of GMOs.

Caritas International is one organisation that is not convinced by this. They were deeply disturbed by the recent conference in Rome, *Feeding the World: The Moral Imperative of Biotechnology* (held at the Gregorian University, 24 September 2004). *Caritas* wrote: “Our main concerns relate to the food security implications for poor farmers and their communities in developing countries.

“We are concerned, inter alia, with poor farmers becoming dependent on agri-business as far as their capacity for producing and cultivating seeds is concerned. The companies that are promoting GM crops are essentially looking for new markets. We are concerned that GM crops are a technology in search of a market, rather than a market in search of a technology.”

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences’ *Study Document* came out of a conference where every speaker was pro GE. Moreover, not one speaker addressed the concerns of groups like *Caritas*. Given such bias in the conference itself, it is not surprising that the *Study Document* reflects the vested interests of the major co-sponsor, the United States Embassy affiliated to the Holy See.

For example, conventional agriculture, which is very dependent on petrochemicals, is unsustainable in the long term, partly because of the damage it is doing to soils, but more so because fossil fuels are limited. The so-called Green Revolution led to a massive increase in the use of petrochemicals

in agriculture. However, within a decade or two, fossil fuels will become expensive and scarce. Moreover, it is fallacious to argue that GE crops will be less dependent on fossil fuels. Glyphosate-ready seeds are developed to encourage even greater use of petrochemicals.

The Pontifical Academy’s *Study Document* argues that Genetic Engineering is just a continuation of the long history of cross-breeding; and that this technology is “precise” and “efficient”. These assertions are a dangerous deception. Under conventional breeding methods it is only possible to mix the genetic material of closely related species most of the time. Recombinant gene technology, however, makes it possible to transfer any gene to another species no matter how distant they are in the evolutionary scale.

This technology is qualitatively different from anything previously known. Moreover, current recombinant gene technology is neither precise, nor site-specific. It is random, as the transgene usually integrates itself into the genome of the recipient plant’s genome in an unpredictable way. Genetic engineering does not necessarily improve the plant that is ‘engineered’.

Contemporary ‘feed the world’ proponents spin the argument that bio-crops will help alleviate starvation and malnutrition. Personally, I think it is an affront to use the untold suffering of millions to justify this expensive, patented and unproven technology in this way.

Early this year the late Pope John Paul II called for “a vast moral mobilisation” in the face of the “dramatic problem” of starvation in our world (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 10 January 2005). He noted the contradiction that our world has been made “wondrously fruitful by its Creator”, and yet “hundreds of millions of human beings are suffering from grave malnutrition, and each year millions of children die of hunger or its effects.”

While notably silent on GE, the Pope did reaffirm a key pillar of the Catholic

Church’s social teaching: *the principle of the universal destination of the earth’s goods*. “While this principle cannot be used to justify collectivist forms of economic policy, it should serve to advance a radical commitment to justice and a more attentive and determined display of solidarity.” This kind of analysis which the Pope used was sadly lacking in the Pontifical Academy’s *Study Document*.

The fruits of the earth and the work of human hands are obviously of central concern for Catholicism. I urge Bishop Peter and his brother bishops to challenge their colleagues in Rome to revisit the urgent question of starvation in the world by hosting a consultation that would not only seek to investigate thoroughly the causes of starvation and poverty but would be broad-based and inclusive also. Such a conference would, undoubtedly, make a timely contribution to the church’s mission in this Year of the Eucharist.

In a sublime moment, Pope John Paul enjoined the world to embrace an “ecological conversion”. He challenged us to return to being ministers of the Creator. “In this newfound harmony with nature and with themselves, men and women will once again walk in the garden of creation, seeking to make the goods of the earth available to all and not just to the privileged few, exactly as the biblical Jubilee suggested (Lev. 25:8-13,23).” (spoken at a *General Audience Address*, 17 January 2001)

I concluded my recent article with a call for us all “to re-examine thoroughly our narration of gospel, creed and doctrine” in the light of Genetic Engineering. The ecological conversion is the key by which to examine both this present debate and also, more importantly, to advance the work of saving God’s creation for the generations to come. ■

Columban Sean McDonagh has written an extensive critique of the Study Document on the Use of GM Food Plants to Combat Hunger in the World. Available from St Columban’s Missionary Society, PO Box 30-017 Lower Hutt. A small koha to cover costs would be appreciated.

Is Satan real?

Bishop Peter Cullinane

In his article *Is Satan real, or just a literary device?*, (*Tui Motu, March*) Glynn Cardy reduces Satan to a “religious personification of negative and destructive feelings”, and Satan’s ‘history’ in human affairs to our tendency to stigmatise or demonise people who don’t belong to our in-group. Doing this gives a kind of religious sanction to the practice of condemning people who are not like ourselves.

Cardy does well to critique that practice. However, his reductionism seriously underestimates the nature and power of evil. I am not about to suggest that we should overestimate the influence of Satan. There is tendency in some circles to transfer the blame for everything to Satan. In this way, people conveniently exonerate themselves from personal responsibility. Much less can we make Satan a kind of counterpart to God with an existence independent of God, as in dualistic world-views.

The position promoted by Cardy is based on at least two fundamental errors – one logical, the other ontological. First, our human tendency to demonise others does not logically exclude the existence of a personal force for evil. Critiquing the practice of demonising neither requires nor proves the non-existence of a personal Satan. It could be a both/and!

Secondly, the practice of demonising does not fully account for our human experience of moral evil. The Scriptures and the church’s teaching presuppose that the calamitous situation in which the human race finds itself is not entirely the product of human freedom: “Prior to the free decision of the individual and of human beings generally, the world already has an element of what is evil and hostile to God” (*Adolph Darlap*).

This element of evil shows up in ways that include “an inherently groundless resistance to God”, temptations that are ultimately anti-human and the perversion of a world that God made entirely good. As well as our personal sins, there is an experience of evil that somehow lies outside our command. And it cannot be attributed to God.

If we are seriously to maintain that God made everything good, then the outbreak within God’s creation of resistance to God must be accounted for in terms of free choices on someone’s part. Otherwise, there would be no-one at all responsible for that element of evil that lies beyond our command.

The ‘literary devices’ of Scripture are the language it sometimes uses to point to aspects of reality that exceed our understanding. They are not mere pre-modern mistaken perceptions. What the Scriptures teach concerning evil, and especially concerning Christ’s victory over evil, is not reducible to just a mythological personification of evil (even on a positive understanding of ‘myth’), and less still to a “religious personification of negative and destructive feelings” within ourselves.

The New Testament speaks of Christ’s victory over “principalities and powers”. The images belong to an outmoded cosmology. But the obvious reference to evils beyond those of our own making belongs to the content of Christian faith. To underestimate the nature and power of evil is bad enough on its own. But it also involves underestimating the full measure of Christ’s victory over evil.

It is, of course, Christ’s victory over all evil, depriving it of ultimate power over us, that needs to be featured when dealing with this aspect of our faith. ■

Peter Cullinane is Catholic Bishop of Palmerston North

From *The Screwtape Letters*,
by C.S. Lewis

“I wonder that you should ask me whether it is essential to keep the patient in ignorance of your own existence... Our policy for the moment is to conceal ourselves. Of course this has not always been so. We are really faced by a cruel dilemma. When humans disbelieve in our existence we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism

and we make no magicians. On the other hand when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists or sceptics...

“I do not think you will have much difficulty in keeping the patient in the dark. The fact that ‘devils’ are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in your mind, suggest to him

a picture of something in pink tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that, he therefore cannot believe in you.” ■

The Screwtape Letters are words of advice given to a junior devil on how to tempt a human ‘patient’, from his much senior colleague, ‘Uncle’ Screwtape.

*Holy War –
or unholy terror.*

*9/11 let loose upon
the world the prospect
of uncontrollable conflict
between Islamic countries
and the West.*

*Part One
of an analysis by
American theologian Peter
Hodgson sets the scene
and offers a preliminary
evaluation*



Christian theology in an age of terror

The New Millennium – not what we expected

The new millennium began with high expectations. The Cold War had ended, the United States was the world's only remaining superpower, and Americans were experiencing an unprecedented boom of prosperity fueled by new technologies and rising stock values. The problem of terrorism was not on the radar screen.

All that changed dramatically on September 11, 2001. Before we knew it, the Cold War had been replaced by a Holy War. It is called the *War on Terror*. Despite President Bush's insistence that the US is not waging war on Islam, there are indications to the contrary. One of his relatives is quoted as saying that the President thinks that "they are trying to kill the Christians. And we Christians will strike back with more force and more ferocity than they will ever know."

Many excellent books and articles have been published since 9/11 on terrorism, the war on terror and the cultural conflict between the Arabic

and Western worlds, by political analysts and advisers, sociologists, psychologists, and historians. Not much has been heard from theologians. The religious voice that has been heard has come from conservatives and evangelicals in support of the war policies. A prophetic public theology such as that represented by Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich in *World War 2*, or by Martin Luther King at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, is not to be found today.

Holy War – and unholy terror in Islam

"Violent ideas and images are not the monopoly of any single religion. Virtually every major religious tradition – Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist – has served as a resource for violent actors", says Mark Juergensmeyer (*Terror in the Mind of God*). Acts of religious terrorism "are symbolic statements aimed at providing a sense of empowerment to desperate communities." These are words worth pondering as we reflect on Islam, which provides legitimation for the terrorism that is mostly threatening us today.

Islam as such is not an enemy of the West, but a growing number of Muslims are hostile and dangerous, and have come to see the United States as an irreconcilable enemy of Islam. They have taken up the idea, which is found not only in the Koran but also in the Old and New Testaments (and elsewhere in antiquity), that God has enemies and needs human help to identify and dispose of them. This lies behind the doctrine of holy war or *jihad*. Strictly, *jihad* means "struggle" – not only the struggle to do God's will but also to spread Islam and defend it from attack. Although *jihad* is not supposed to include aggressive warfare, it has come to mean just that for some Muslims.

But restrictions apply that are rather similar to the just war theory of Western politics. Lewis remarks that "at no point do the basic texts of Islam enjoin terrorism and murder. At no point... do they even consider the random slaughter of uninvolved bystanders."

The problem is that the idea of holy war can slip over rather easily into a legitimation of unholy terror. Obviously



most Muslims are not terrorists, but they lack the resources or the will to refute the terrorist distortions of Islamic theology and law. Western imperialism in the 18th and 19th centuries brought a humiliating end to the great medieval and early modern Islamic civilization that challenged Europe until the end of the 17th century. By the early 20th century almost the entire Muslim world had been incorporated into the four European empires of Britain, France, Russia, and the Netherlands.

With the collapse of these empires, the Middle East was left in a condition of poverty and tyranny. Devastating statistics show how far, socio-economically, the Muslim countries have slipped behind not only the West but the Asian rim. The Arab world has (with the exception of Turkey) been dominated by corrupt tyrannies. A high birth rate has produced a growing population of unemployed, uneducated, and frustrated young men and women – desperate communities seeking empowerment.

The American Empire – only remaining superpower

After the European powers abandoned their colonies and the Soviet empire collapsed, the United States became the only remaining superpower. The ideology of empire is fairly simple, says theologian John Cobb: “It expresses the desire to add to one’s wealth and to dominate over others... The ideology assumes that if one’s group is able to assert its will over others, then it is superior to them and has the right to exploit them.” In other words, might makes right. History shows that empires go through stages of innocence, consolidation, over-extension, and collapse. Ultimately they all collapse.

The United States until recently has been in the stage of innocence and consolidation. Reinhold Niebuhr pointed out that the American delusion of innocence, the belief that we are pursuing noble and divinely-

sanctioned purposes, has blinded us to the temptations of power. Such idealism suffuses the language of President Bush, even as a more cynical use of power undergirds his actions.

In a prophetic passage, Niebuhr warned that our belief in the possibility of mastering the forces of history “could tempt us to lose patience with the tortuous course of history... We might be tempted to bring the whole of modern history to a tragic conclusion by one final and mighty effort to overcome its frustrations. The political term for such an effort is ‘preventive war.’”

Pre-emption – imperial arrogance

The US has been so tempted. The doctrine of pre-emption, used to justify the invasion of Iraq, is preventive war. We have assumed that a superpower does not need approval or support from the community of nations for its actions: we decide what is right because our knowledge and our might make it so. Iraq had no connection with terrorist attacks on the US and no weapons of mass destruction.

it is an illusion to suppose democracy can be imposed by force and the world remade in the image of America

The real reason for the invasion was principally to demonstrate American power and command of world events, and Iraq was chosen as a target because it was relatively weak and defenceless (as compared with Iran or North Korea). Another reason was purely political: control of the world’s second largest oil reserves, the promotion of market capitalism, and the establishment of a permanent military presence in the region.

It is a presumptuous illusion to suppose that democracy can be imposed by force, and that the world can be remade in the image of America. The conditions of possibility for democracy must be nurtured: education, economic

stability, political leadership, religious support. In addition is the folly of invading an Arabic state by force of arms, which recalls to the minds of Muslims the Crusades and the European colonisation.

Richard Clarke writes: “Nothing America could have done would have provided al Qaeda... with a better recruitment device than our unprovoked invasion of an oil-rich Arab country. It was as if Osama bin Laden, hidden in some high mountain redoubt, were engaging in long-range mind control of George Bush, chanting: ‘invade Iraq, you must invade Iraq’” (*Against All Enemies*).

“Pre-emptive war,” says Michael Ignatieff, “can be justified only when the danger that must be pre-empted is imminent, when peaceful means of averting the danger have been tried and have failed and when democratic institutions ratify the decision to do so.” The Iraq war, he says, failed to meet all three of these tests. Without ethical rules and constraints the constant temptation of a war on terror is to descend to the logic of terror itself – an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, taking the vengeance of the Lord into our own hands. A terrorist’s best hope of success is to taunt us until we ‘let slip the dogs of war.’

Richard Clarke sets forth an alternative scenario to the invasion of Iraq. We should “have launched a concerted effort globally to counter the ideology of al Qaeda and the larger Islamic terrorist movement with a partnership to promote the real Islam, to win support for common American and Islamic values, and to shape an alternative to the popular fundamentalist approach.” Suppose we had taken the 300 to 500 billion that this war is likely to cost, and suppose that Europe and Asia could add another \$500 billion: such resources might begin to make a difference in righting the age-old injustices suffered by the Arabic world. If we could empower

desperate communities, they would no longer turn to terror.

No other gods

I come now to a theological critique of the war on terror. For Jews and Christians, the critique is grounded in the first and second Commandments: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; *you shall have no other gods before me*. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (*Exodus 20:2-4*). A similar injunction is found in one of the five pillars of Islam: “There is no god but the God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.”

Unfortunately, these statements can be used to justify intolerance and aggression against infidels. Our God is the only god, and we are God’s true messengers and agents; our God has enemies, and we are justified in striking them down.

Exodus also puts these words on the lips of God: “I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes... I will send my terror in front of you, and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come” (*Ex 23:22, 27*). Terror seems to reside in the mind of God, and it becomes a tool against the enemies of Israel. A similar ideology appears in Islam, and it is not surprising that today there are terrorists who claim to know the mind of God, to know that God wills the violent destruction of fellow human beings.

Interpreted critically, however, the Hebrew commandments and the Muslim profession of faith mean that God alone is God, that no human doctrine or action can claim divine legitimation, that nothing in heaven above or on earth below is to be made into an idol. What distinguishes the critical from the ideological interpretation?

The critical principle

Paul Tillich writes, “The critical principle contains the divine and human protest against any absolute claim made for a relative reality... It is the guardian against the attempts of the finite and conditioned to usurp the place of the unconditional in thinking and acting. It is the prophetic judgment against religious pride, ecclesiastical arrogance, and secular self-sufficiency and their destructive consequences.”

war has become a form of idolatry, a false god, a divine destroyer.

- *Prophecy* is one of the ways that the Israelite tradition guards against the ideological interpretation of the first Commandment. The Hebrew prophets chastise the pretensions of Israel and the arrogance of its kings; prophecy plays an important but lesser role in Islam and Christianity.
- *Mysticism* is another instrument of criticism, and it too is found in all the Abrahamic religions but outside the mainstream: the Jewish Cabbala, Islamic Sufism, and the Christian mystics.
- And *gospel*, which seems to be unique to Christianity, proclaimed and lived by Jesus, whose Cross, Tillich suggests, is the religious symbol that cancels all religious symbols, negates all idolatrous claims. Jesus’ proclamation of the *basileia* of God is the central theme of his ministry. The Greek word *basileia* is generally translated as ‘kingdom’, but this is not a good translation because Jesus is talking about God’s grace and compassion, not God’s sovereign control.

A better translation of *basileia* is *commonwealth*, meaning a realm that is organized for the common good. Jesus depicts a community in which there are no ranks and privileges, where the logic of grace prevails over that of ordinary consequences, where

the needs of others take priority over personal desires, where God’s will is done and God’s purposes fulfilled in the form of healing, release from servitude and debt, sharing of wealth, forgiveness of sin, care of neighbour, love of enemies.

In accord with the *basileia* vision we challenge oppressive rulers and work for the creation of a better society, one that is not in the service of wealth and global domination. Despite all the odds against it, Jesus’ gospel of the commonwealth of God keeps breaking through; it is the deep ground for envisioning a just society, for resisting idolatry, for challenging empires and their wars.

War is a form of idolatry, a false god, a divine destroyer. Proponents of the war on terror want us to think that we are at war in order to foster patriotism, maintain secrecy, suppress opposition and legitimate any actions deemed ‘necessary’. Terrorists for their part claim to be involved in a great cosmic conflict between good and evil that justifies horrible atrocities. Promoters of a modern, ‘clean’ war suggest that torture, humiliation, rapes, the killing of innocents and useless destruction are now avoidable. But to go to war is to go to the bottom of the pit. War has itself become a kind of terror, terror waged against terror, terror breeding more terror.

The war in Iraq is the worst kind of war – a war of occupation against an insurgency. Both continue despite the transfer of sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government. Al Qaeda is stronger now than before the invasion, having gained support and recruits as a result of it. The insurgency has widened and deepened and will continue as long as American troops are present, as might have been anticipated from familiarity with the history of Arabic resistance to Western occupation. There is no good outcome to the present morass. ■

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The Holy American Empire



Many US churchpeople are aghast at the apocalyptic fervour characterising the American Religious Right – as Ron O’Grady discovered at the Christian Conference of Asia meeting in Thailand

A group of 15 prominent church leaders from the United States made a goodwill visit to Asia last month. They travelled through Thailand to attend the opening sessions of the 12th Assembly of the *Christian Conference of Asia*, an event which brings together over 400 Christian leaders from South, North and Eastern Asia as well as Australia and New Zealand.

The Americans said they wanted serious discussion with Asians about *The Empire*. They wanted to know whether Asians welcomed the Empire or saw it as a threat. And they wanted to share their own understanding of the Empire to see whether Asians shared the same perspective.

You have guessed by now that *The Empire* is a new shorthand used by many liberal Americans to describe the international political stance of the United States of America. The leader of the American delegation, former Congressman Bob Edgar, assured the Asians that he spoke for many church leaders “who have not – I repeat *not* – been silent in their opposition to the new Western Empire being created by

uncontrolled misguided religious and secular radical ideologues, who still think that being a superpower gives them the right to rule the world”. Strong stuff.

*If elephants start fighting,
ants will have to run
and hide*

The evidence produced from America was enlightening. As early as 2001 a Defence Review spoke about the “decisive defeat of adversaries” and “occupying foreign territory until US strategic objectives are met”. One year later the *New York Times* (12 March 2002) leaked a Pentagon document which outlined ambitious nuclear battle plans as fundamental to US defence policy and spoke of “useable nuclear weapons”. Then in March of this year the Pentagon *National Defence Strategy of the USA* hoped to secure “strategic access to retain global freedom of action”, a statement which openly challenges accepted principles of national sovereignty.

Quotations such as these are reinforced by the fact that the United States military currently has a presence in 132 countries and base rights in 40 of them. This fact which led Professor Michael Ignatieff of Harvard University to state: “what word but *Empire* describes the awesome thing that America is becoming.”

Not surprisingly the Asian response to this recital was one of serious concern since many of the outposts of America’s empire are now found in the Asian backyard. Afghanistan has become a theatre of war, North Korea is seen by the US as part of the ‘axis of evil’, the US has opened up a ‘second front’ in the Philippines, and American arms sales could fuel a conflict between India and Pakistan.

But an even greater fear for Asians comes from the threat to security posed by the emergence of China as a significant political and military power in the region and the possible response that could bring from the American empire. Dr Ninan Koshy of India quoted Henry Kissinger who said: “in our age the rise of China as a potential superpower is of even greater

significance (than the emergence of a unified Germany), making as it does a shift in the centre of gravity in the world from the Atlantic to Asia-Pacific”.

If elephants start fighting, ants will have to run and hide.

At a certain point in this long recital of problems someone felt moved to remind both the Americans and Asians that empire cannot be considered apart from religious belief. Every empire in history has depended on religion to give legitimacy to the expansionist views of political leaders. The present empire is no different.

But the religion that supports the American Empire is hard to name. It is a conglomerate of a number of different religious groups which we loosely link together as ‘right-wing’ or ‘conservative evangelicals’. The truth, as we know, is that many of these churches and groups are wildly diverse and in many cases are built around a charismatic individual. They have taken to themselves the label ‘evangelical’ because their strongest drive appears to be building up their numbers. Church growth is, for them, the same as evangelism.

But the brainwashing and mindless nonsense preached by many successful American evangelists bears little relation to the outgoing gospel of compassion and acceptance which marks the ministry of Jesus. It is hardly ‘good news’ to get trapped in a sanctimonious community which lives only for itself.

Whatever we call this coalition of religious-right, conservative ‘evangelicals’ in the United States, their support has been a critical factor in the development of the American empire. This is evidenced by the constant use of evangelical language in the speeches of President Bush and other key politicians, who speak as if their political mission has been ordained by God.

The goals of both ‘evangelical’ Christianity and America’s political aspirations run on strikingly similar parallel lines. Both emphasise the cosmic struggle between good and evil, and identify themselves completely with the forces of good. Both want to achieve global domination—to win the world for Christ, or for democracy, terms sometimes confused and interchangeable. Both speak of freedom, but practice policies which deny freedom. Both hold conservative moral values, which they attempt to impose on all people.

Most worrying of all, both assert a moral and social superiority over those who are different. The Empire wants to convert the world to its own understanding of what it calls democracy/freedom. The new Christians want to convert the

*the Empire
wants to convert the world to
its own understanding of what it
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world from the heathenism of Islam/Buddhism/Hinduism to their own understanding of Christianity. When you believe yourself to be religiously and/or morally superior to other creatures on God’s earth, it is a short step to confrontation and aggression and a long step back to genuine compassion and forgiveness.

New Zealand is a small player in this larger scene. Unlike Australia we have declined to be directly identified with the aspirations of the American empire, and we can be grateful for that. But within our society there are the same yearnings for political power by many in the religious right, and they are clearly rousing their supporters for a confrontational war with political correctness in politics and what they define as immoral behaviour.

In this country, ecumenism is mostly irrelevant to these new crusading and missional churches. Their sole goal is winning the nation for Christ. Will the pendulum eventually swing back, and help us rediscover those ecumenical ideals which have inspired us for decades and which still resonate in our hearts? Let us hope so.

We must pray and work for a country and a church which stresses the importance of tolerance toward diversity, humility in service, patient compassion and justice for the oppressed. These are not the voices the empire wants to hear. But if they are the truth which Jesus gave us, then all the more reason for us to continue to proclaim them. ■

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McIndoe Rogan ad

The Sacred in the Secular

Mary Eastham looks at the pervading secularism of Western culture and suggests the church is well placed to respond to the cry for healing, for justice and for truth which underlies the contemporary malaise

In a recent article in *Tui-Motu*, Sr Pauline O'Regan argued that secularism had paradoxically produced a hunger for the sacred instead of driving it underground. An explosive interest in spirituality is calling for a creative response from the church – because the old wineskins cannot contain the new wine. Sr Pauline challenged religion to provide this new wine of spirituality with a “welcoming place where it could, in time, evolve and mature to give nourishment and healing to humanity in the 21st century” (*TM April 05*).

Few analysts would doubt that contemporary society is undergoing radical change. Judging by the means by which the powerful are propping up the economic and political institutions which are strangling two-thirds of humanity, we might conclude that the modern world is actually in the throes of death.

Yet there are two kinds of death: literal, and symbolic. For those who know only force, the only recognisable death is literal and physical. Wars are fought, countries are destroyed, people die. But for those who understand something about symbolic death, the awakening of the spirit blowing across the religious landscape indicates that people are aware that certain ossified ideas, attitudes and institutional forms must give way to life-giving ones. This kind of death is called *conversion*, and holds out the possibility of rebirth.

The explosive interest in spirituality responds to three specific needs in the human person today – healing, justice and the search for truth. Catholics are in an excellent position to provide a welcoming place for these spiritual energies because they express the *shamanic*, *prophetic* and *sapiential* dimensions of the religious personality which come to the fore precisely during times of radical transition like that of today.

The Shamanic

The shaman is the *self-healed healer*. Psychologically, the shaman is the most balanced person in the community, the master of the threshold between this world and the world of the spirit. The primary role of the shaman is to *rescue the lost soul* in order to restore equilibrium to the



community. Lost souls suffer from such a profound loss of meaning that they can no longer navigate through life without the intervention of a healer. They lack the strength to defeat the dark forces which dominate their lives.

To heal the lost soul, the shaman makes the dangerous journey into the underworld (of the *psyche* or soul) in order to understand the evil forces afflicting the person and pull him out into the light of day. Sometimes shamans actually take the illness upon themselves in order to transform it. They are strong enough to bear the burden of another's illness because their own soul is intact. They have already made the healing journey in their own life and emerged on the other side.

Why is the shamanic important today? Despite the wealth of the first world, the high prevalence of illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, anxiety and depression suggest that our way of life is greatly out of balance. This explains why much of the focus in spirituality today is *healing*. The huge demand for self-help books and the interest in Eastern spirituality is a recognition that patterns of thought, like the need to control, are killing the bodies and souls of people in the first world as well as the third.

Carolyn Myss writes: “Our system for appreciating life is essentially an economic one in which the value we ascribe to people and to other life forms is based upon earning capabilities and the acquisition of earthly power... Thus, as a result of what our value system has done to the quality of life, we have in our midst a wide variety of epidemics many of which are virus-associated. The other ‘epidemics’, such as drug and alcohol addiction, are purely emotional and spiritual in nature...” (*The Creation of Health*: 1999)

In her book, *Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics*, Marsha Sinetar documents countless stories of people who, once they began the journey toward wholeness and balance in their own lives, became vehicles of healing for others. These people were mostly middle-class professionals whose lives were beginning to unravel due to personal or professional crises. Even though they did not have the luxury of opting out completely, they made a conscious decision to simplify one area of their lives, so that a clear space could be found to listen to their deepest

selves. As they began to listen to thoughts and feelings that had been buried for years, they began to recognise the root causes of conflict in their lives. This awareness in itself was liberating. Moreover, their spiritual and emotional awareness of others increased dramatically.

Spiritual directors, chaplains, counsellors, social workers, teachers, religious, priests and others can easily document the healing journey of people whose lives they have touched. Surely at this eleventh hour it is time for healers from all these diverse traditions – secular and religious – to enter into dialogue about healing the wounds of modern society.

The Prophetic

The prophet has always heard the cry of the poor – the voice of God calling the world to justice and humanity. The prophet *denounces* the causes of injustice and oppression, and *announces* the vision of the Reign of God.



Prophets emerge during turning points in history when old forms of thought are decaying and new ones are breaking through. They know that moral errors become part of the religious and cultural fabric of history because they are embedded in political, economic and religious institutions.

Since the former may be identified with the will of God, it will resist critique. For this reason, prophets perform a vital interpretative role in retrieving the life-giving kernel of the tradition to make it new for succeeding generations. In their day, prophets do not know whether the forces of goodness will prevail over the forces of evil. And yet, they remain people of hope and promise.

The prophetic has been expressed in the secular realm in movements like women's liberation, gay and lesbian rights, the renaissance of indigenous cultures and grassroots movements aiming to eliminate poverty in our day.

It is no accident that liberation spiritualities, feminist spiritualities, spiritualities of the Earth – as well as indigenous spiritualities which emphasise the interdependence between human beings and the Earth – have emerged precisely from those excluded from positions of authority in organised religion and the modern experiment. The cry of the poor mirrors the cry of the Earth; indeed, people are often poor precisely because their local environments have been devastated and self-sufficiency is no longer possible for them.

Since the preferential option for the poor and marginalised is an ethical imperative, Catholics are in a unique position to provide a welcoming place for serious dialogue on the

above issues. Moreover, Pope Benedict XVI has already stated that 'listening' and 'openness' will be hallmarks of his papacy. The conversation will be fraught, and superb facilitation skills will be needed.

The Sapiential

The sage is generally associated with the mystical traditions of Christianity and dedicates his/her life to the search for truth and holiness. Theirs is a renunciation (ascetic lifestyle, strict diet and celibacy) undertaken to purify the spirit from the cravings of the body. Theirs is a path of contemplation intended to increase levels of spiritual, moral and intellectual awareness.



The sage may live apart from the world (monastery, desert, mountain, hermitage) or spend one portion of his/her life engaged with the affairs of the world and another portion as a renouncer. In St Teresa's *Interior Castle*, the Abbess is finally able to conduct everyday affairs without ever being displaced from the 'castle' of her soul. The relationship between master and disciple is also crucial to the spiritual development of the sage.

The sapiential dimension is critically important during turning points in history when confusion, uncertainty and violence afflict personal, social and cultural life. Since moral chaos and violence go hand in glove, deep contemplative prayer is required to purify the human heart and open people to the truth. Western and Eastern mystics alike know that nonviolence, the search for truth and the struggle for justice are impossible without prayer. Prayer transforms the human heart as it strengthens the spiritual and moral fibre that holds the universe together. It is the pockets of contemplatives around the world who hold the world together.

There are many welcoming places in New Zealand that help people from all walks of life to sort out the confusion and clatter of their lives, just as there are places of healing and venues for the dialogue about justice. Catholics like Sr Pauline O'Regan are sensitive to the spiritual hunger of people. It expresses the universal need for healing, justice and wisdom. Since the shamanic, prophetic and sapiential dimensions of spirituality are well developed in our heritage, we are in a perfect position to engage the spiritual energies alive in the secular sphere today. In this way, contemporary men and women may touch the centre of the sacred in both Church and world, and allow the Spirit to get on with her work of renewing all things. ■

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How does our faith grow?

John Bruerton revisits the classic description of stages of faith proposed by James Fowler. Fowler helps us understand how the way we believe may develop with experience in much the same way as our personalities grow and change

The withdrawal of Hans Kung's licence to teach as a Catholic theologian in 1980 by Pope John Paul II and the current debate in the Anglican Communion over homosexual persons in leadership roles, appear to have very little in common. But why do different Christian churches, at different times, rely on the authority of Scripture, tradition, reason or clergy for their faith orthodoxy?

Why are some people willing to move through stages of faith while others become long-term residents and arbiters at particular points, and persecute non-conformists like Hans Kung or those who insist on an inclusive role for homosexual persons in the church? It seems timely to re-visit James Fowler's typology on faith development to help us diagnose the current situation and predict what will come next if there is to be any change.

In 1981 James Fowler, a Christian theologian, outlined a series of typical faith changes through which people move as their faith matures. (His book is called: *Stages of Faith The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*). For Fowler, 'faith' is a verb and has to do with making meaning about our orientation to life and what we believe to be ultimate. What Fowler points out has been known by generations of Christians and the progressions have been accepted across the denominations universally. Very few people actually traverse all six; many only progress through the first two or three.

Static or dynamic?

In many evangelical churches, for instance, the idea of faith being a journey, with normal crises and change points, is not generally understood or encouraged. Rather, faith is seen as something relatively **static** or as achievement. For Fowler, however, faith is a **dynamic**, changing and evolving process where we leave behind some of the elements of the previous stage.

It is important, however, to understand that no stage is 'better' than another. People who settle for one stage are not superior or inferior to others. Nevertheless each stage offers a deeper and broader understanding and experience of faith and how we believe than the stage which preceded it.

Our faith journey is not a gentle and undemanding stroll, and there are no shortcuts. The transitions between stages can evolve through upheaval, crises, ambiguity, suffering and uncertainty because transition involves and implies the dissolution of an earlier stage. The stages have been

retitled for simplification from page 119 of Alan Jamieson's *A Churchless Faith. Faith Journeys beyond evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic Churches*.

Stage 1: The Innocent (first eight years, approximately)

In childhood our faithing is essentially an imitation of what we pick up from adults. The worlds of reality and fantasy exist side by side, moral judgments are based on observed rewards and punishments, and social awareness is limited to the family. Nevertheless, Christian rituals, sacraments, singing, offertory and architecture are all vital forms of nourishment. We are loved into knowing and feeling as we are loved into being. Church support for parents is vital for parents in their role as fountainheads of faith.

Stage 2: The Literalist

(older children and possibly 20 percent of all adults)

This is the great era of storytelling especially the formative Hebrew and Christian stories and parables. Symbolic language, however, is treated in a rather wooden, literal and authoritative way, while moral thinking is largely based on an ethic of reciprocal fairness and immediate justice.

Some images of God created in childhood may stay on into adulthood.

Stage 3: The Loyalist

(older children and many adults)

This is a very tribal stage with a new awareness of interpersonal relations and a desire to conform to the expectations of significant 'others'. My social awareness is dominated by my 'in-group'

or 'church-family'. It is a time for going with a particular faith-current, for like-mindedness. There is a strong appeal to external authority and finality: "the Bible says so", or "the pastor, Pope or tele-evangelist said so". Dualistic thinking, also, soon develops: good versus bad, saved versus unsaved, sacred versus secular. God is seen as transcendent, so Stage Three people are uncomfortable with the notion of an immanent, in-dwelling deity.

Loyalists have generally not stood outside their belief system or made a personal, in-depth critique of it or their own identity. (Have you ever tried to argue with young religious "door-knockers"?) People at this stage of faith development need permission, help and space to learn new modes of prayer, including meditation and contemplative prayer.

In their approach to Scripture they need to learn to distinguish between the medium and the message. Theology is never done in a vacuum, nor is it socially or politically neutral. A fair number of adults find their equilibrium here



but for those who go on to Stage Four the situation cannot be sustained.

Stage 4: The Critic (late 20s to 40s)

This is probably the most difficult stage to traverse because it involves considerable dismantling of previous learning and experience. Such people are no longer happy to be walled-in or to conform. They can no longer tolerate a faith that is second-hand.

It is a strongly individualistic stage; everything is up for grabs and open examination. 'Critics' find it difficult to live with a leadership structure that requires them to be dependent. There is a danger of arid intellectualism, conceited independence and over-simplified naiveness at this stage.

It is a time of becoming oneself and of owning one's worldview, lifestyle and church. It can also be a lonely and uncomfortable stage. The difficulty for many church leaders, synods and assemblies is that Stage Three and Four people do not see the possibility of anything different from their own position being valid.

Stage 5: The Seer (rare before mid-life)

Fowler regards this stage as a re-working of our Stage Four faith. It is a time when the glue and seams start to come apart. We come to respect the truth of the viewpoint of others. We are capable of keeping in tension the paradoxes and polarities of faith and life be they age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ideology, other faiths or our conscious and shadow selves.

There is a new willingness to meet God 'face to face' and to let God direct our lives. Truth and theology are not *either/or*, but *both/and*. This openness to others and the complexities of reality is expressed in a new humility in a person's faith knowing. The seer insists on respecting the freedom and dignity of all human beings, and knows that the church's grasp on ultimate 'truth' needs continual correction and challenge.

At Stage Five there is a new willingness to let symbol, liturgy, myth and story speak to us again, to employ journalling, to love mystery and to relish the vastness of the unknown. Not surprisingly, church synods and councils see Stage Five views as too liberal and all-embracing.

All too often the local and national church fears and marginalizes Stage Five learners, because they are difficult to control, pigeonhole or understand. The weakness of this stage is to retreat into a private world of spirituality away from involvement in the work of God in the world. For Fowler, the appropriate level of aspiration for a public church is Stage Five faith, for it is this stage which can keep a congregation open-ended towards continuing growth.

Stage 6: The Saint

A very rare stage and usually only in later life: eg Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King. However, some who have suffered profound experiences may

enter this stage earlier. Stage Six people display a faith, which is essentially a relinquishing of the self, where the self is no longer the ultimate reference point. It has been abandoned in favour of a grounding in the ultimate reality, a grounding in God. We note this focus in Jesus' prayer: *Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me: yet, not my will but yours be done.* (Luke 22:42) and Paul's observation: *But we have the mind of Christ*" (1 Cor 2:16).

A Stage Six person is in the world but not of the world. For him/her, life is both loved and held loosely. It is a stage which includes a vision of the sense of the unity of all things through the multiplicity of faith and being. Its power is of a uniting love for all. The old orthodoxies are no longer viable for the **Kingdom of God**. The 'wineskin-breaking ministry' is about to begin! *Why do you eat and drink with tax-collectors and sinners?* (Luke 5:30); and *But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies* (Luke 6:27).

Stage 6 people may not survive long in the world, as they give so much of themselves and are vulnerable to the power of those whose values they challenge by their own valuing. *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it.* (Lk 13:34). Yet there is a distinctly new faith and a new quality of freedom, respect and dignity with the self and with others. The training of clergy and ministers should include real experience of real people at different faith stages.

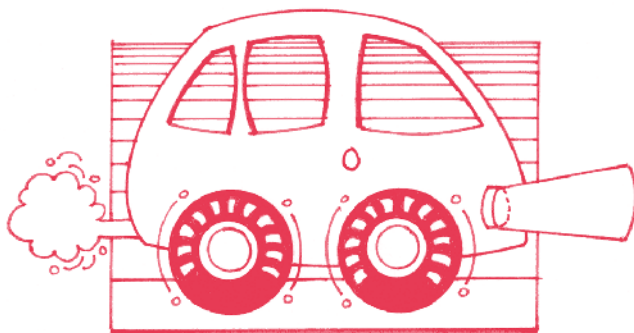
Conclusion

The church needs to expect and provide support for on-going adult development in faith and to invest in the faith of the next generation. The climate of expectation within each denomination and congregation is most important – not a hothouse garden; rather, nurturing help, rites of passage, and opportunities for social service that call forth the gifts and emergent strengths of each

stage of growth. The issue here is how far a congregation, denomination or church expects to change as it grows older and undergoes different and even difficult experiences. We should not overlook or underplay the variety of faith stages to be found in a congregation or synod.

For example, Stage Three fundamentalists are not likely to appreciate the more open and plural style of knowing distinctive of Stage Five. Faith development theory helps us to diagnose the present situation and to predict what may come next, and why. *The life of the church is its witness. The witness of the church is its life. The question of authentic witness is the question of authentic community*, says Norman Kraus. (*Constants in Context: a Theology of Mission for Today*, Bevans and Schroeder, 2004). ■

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It is not often, observes Trish Harris, that you go into an Art Gallery and enjoy an experience which can challenge the deepest layer of your spiritual being

A recent exhibition held at Porirua's Pataka gallery did precisely that by challenging the limits and possibilities of one's spiritual beliefs.

"Talking about spirituality is the most intimate exchange with a person," says Pukerua Bay artist and composer Radha Sahar. In her 28-piece exhibition titled "Spirituality in the Public Domain" she produced works drawing on the world's main faith traditions as well as Tangata Whenua and "secular spirituality". She also brought a unique edge to the exhibition encouraging viewers to use all their senses as they interacted and connected with the works.

One of the most striking pieces was a long wall of canvases in muted colours symbolising the Wailing Wall or Western Wall in Jerusalem. There was also a Buddhist-inspired prayer wheel, fabric scripture scrolls containing



Exploring the edge –

quotes from the Koran, a painting containing a vial of water from the Ganges, Raranga Wairua – a work in progress consisting of strips of canvas on which people were invited to write their heartfelt beliefs and then weave them together – and from the Christian faith a Rose Labyrinth with quotes from the Beatitudes painted round the edge. With many of the exhibits people were invited to insert/add prayers or blessings, smell the beeswax, and in the case of the labyrinth, walk on top of the canvas.

One grandmother who popped in for a brief visit with her five year old granddaughter ended up staying most of the morning. The granddaughter, who had just learnt to write, delighted in writing prayer after prayer and 'posting' some of them into paintings and weaving others into the canvas.

Not everyone has responded so favourably. One person, a Christian who saw the exhibition advertised in the paper, said she wouldn't attend because it appeared to 'equalise' all faiths. "An exhibition like this may encourage people to think it really doesn't matter what you choose to believe. But Jesus says it's the difference between life and death."

Radha says "I was aware that I was making myself vulnerable by producing work around the topic of spirituality and that not everyone would agree with my approach. Spirituality is one of society's most taboo subjects: nothing makes us more socially uncomfortable than being subjected to a stream of staunchly held beliefs that oppose our own. That's where art comes in. Art is the arena where taboos are ignored, where beliefs are challenged, where we can stand on the edge."

Radha does not belong to a specific faith tradition but says she has a deep belief in spirituality and the spiritual path. Over the last 20 years she has been better known as a composer of music for children and adults, with one of her songs appearing in the hymn book Songs of Aotearoa. 'Art' in the form of painting is something she has come to more recently.

"I began painting when I attended a retreat a couple of years ago. One of the sessions was a creative one. I just started with colours and I thought, 'I like this'".

Over the next 18 months she fitted painting in round her day job. She would pray before beginning to paint,



(left) local kuia, Aunite Tawai, adding her 'heartfelt thanks' to the woven *Raranga Wairua* canvas

(centre) the centre of *The Rose Labyrinth* canvas, with quotes from the Beatitudes painted round the edge. Artist Radha stands in the middle showing it to visitors

(right) children writing their prayers to go in the Buddhist-inspired *Prayer Wheel*

Note: Many cathedrals in Europe contain 'labyrinths'. During the Crusades pilgrims could take this sacred walk in lieu of visiting the Holy Land.

- spirituality in the public domain

always asking that Spirit guide her hand. Next she would often write in a stream of consciousness style and then add scriptural quotes from the different faith traditions to the canvas before beginning the actual painting.

As she produced the works Radha sought out the advice of local religious leaders from the Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Buddhist communities and they were also involved in blessing the works at the opening. When she consulted Rabbi Lipman about her hidden layers of writings underneath *Prayer Wall*, he recalled a passage from the Babylonian Talmud that talks about the value of 'hidden treasures'. Radha says she was pleased to add that passage as it linked with her own belief that what is most important in life is often hidden. Another of her paintings uses that same theme, drawing on recent discoveries of quantum physics that can now measure energies in objects.

Radha produced canvases with rounded corners, interlocking edges, canvases within canvases. She says each time she felt impelled to try something new her 'superficial' mind would say "but you can't do that". The deeper part of her would say "come on, off we go". She acknowledges such journeying into the

unknown is not without its dangers. "I'm very aware from my study of many faith traditions that there are forces of light and forces of darkness and the mind can trick oneself. I ask to be on the path of light."

The 28 works – the finished product of that process – brought over 4000 people of many different faith traditions and those with no organised connection to a religion, into the gallery. Two such people were Anne Hadfield, an ecumenical spiritual director, and Peter Rawsley, a regular contributor to *Tui Motu*. Anne says, "Religion is often viewed as being very defensive. I think Radha did a great thing – she transcended that and made it a dialogue."

"Another thing that was very strong and unifying in the exhibition was the universal wisdom that was coming through the different faiths, for example the importance of compassion." Her one criticism of the exhibition is that it didn't touch on suffering as part of life. "For me spirituality includes all of life – including suffering."

Peter also commented on the common spirituality that came through the major works. "In an open society I

think it's important to have a dialogue with other viewpoints." He said for him it was the directness of the exhibition that had most impact.

"It was very refreshing. You could smell, touch and listen to music relating to the works – it meant you could link with them in a much more direct way than is usually possible. For me the smell of the incense and the wax linked me straight back to childhood memories." He says the piece that stayed with him the most after the exhibition was the *Prayer Wall*, a work that sparked its own creative spin-off in a poem he wrote (see p 21: *The Wall*).

Radha says "The unique edge in my work is not a visual one. It is that, in new ways, it elicits a remarkable level of involvement: the public is creating the edge, exposing 'deepest meaningful' in turmoil or celebration." ■

For more information visit her website: <http://www.radhasahar.com>

Trish Harris

The Family – idyll or idol?

'Family' is a loaded word for religious people, suggests Glynn Cardy, for it may imply enshrining patriarchy. This was one of the cultural bonds that Jesus dared to challenge. 'Family' can still be an idol for religious people today

I'm always a sucker for sculpture. Not that I can afford it. The other day I was in a religious bookshop, another weakness of mine, when my eyes strayed to a series of beautiful, simplistic statues of a woman and a man holding a child. Their appeal was in their expression of the parent-child bond – evoking wonder, nurture, protection, and love.

For those of us fortunate to have children there is something quite mystical about the experience. Stephanie, my wife, and I have brought into being not just combinations of our chromosomes but unique, never before created, human beings. No one has ever had, or will ever have, the fingerprints, the soul-prints, of our children. This is quite goose-bumpy. It's also hard to put it into words.

That's when sculpture, and music, and all those things that touch the soul when the mind can't, are helpful. Marian spirituality too can express something of this wonder that a parent feels, and how it works in the parent's heart.

My neighbour, Jim, calls this 'family'. He is a great advocate for what he calls family. "Family is Mum, Dad, and the kids," he says. "It's under threat though," he quickly and solemnly adds. "It's so hard these days for parents – what with beneficiaries, child abuse, and now civil unions." You get the

feeling that Jim preaches this message regularly.

With one sweep of the verbal brush Jim has coalesced so many ideas around 'family' that it takes considerable determination to rationally pick it apart. I too think parenting is hard, though rewarding, work. But I fail to see how beneficiaries, or child abuse, or civil unions make my parenting harder or easier. On my wish list would be safe cycle-ways so kids could get themselves to after-school activities; and better technology to help parents monitor children's screen time and programmes. More importantly, I dream for the day when 50 hours worth of salary or wages would be enough for most families to live on.

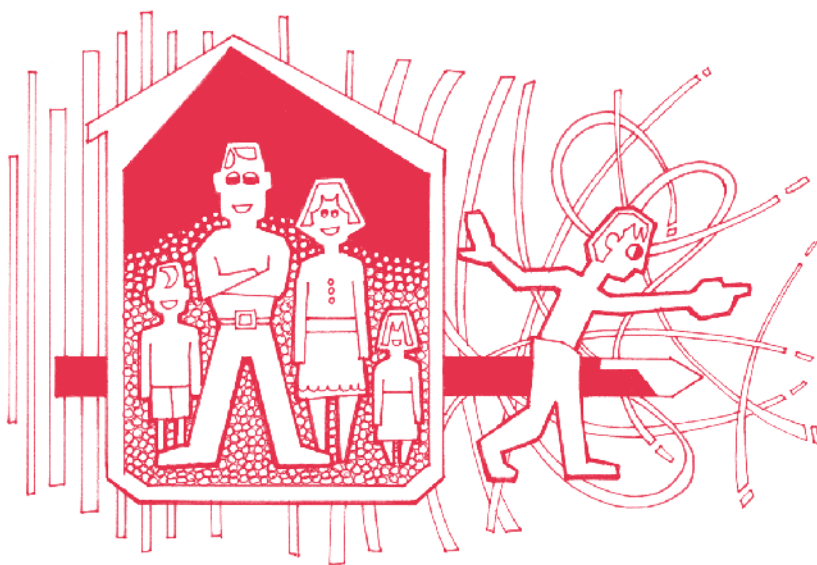
Yet this is one of those arguments where more is going on than the mere rational. 'Family' is an ideological code word. It triggers all sorts of feelings and presumptions. Jim's church, for example, has a big sign outside: *This is a Family Church*. It could mean simply

that children and their parents are welcome. What parent doesn't want a church where children's needs are catered for and their noise not frowned upon? But the sign also sends another message: if you are happily unmarried or gay you don't fit!

Family is a loaded word, like it was in first century Palestine. Back then family was the patriarchal family – dad, boys, mums, girls, and slaves. It was the foundational institution of society and prescribed one's role in life. The male patriarch was in charge. The eldest son came next. Women were subservient to the men, and slaves were subservient to all.

The early *Jesus* movement gained a lot of traction amongst people who had broken free from or were outside the patriarchal family. In a number of the early house churches women took leading roles. Members called themselves 'brother' and 'sister'. The movement was trying to redefine the word family to describe their embryonic egalitarian structure, based on giftedness and mutuality rather than on primogeniture, class, gender, or wealth.

It was this movement that first began to put the Jesus story into writing. So it is not surprising to find little reference to his family's patriarch, Joseph.



Interestingly in *Luke 2:49* the text helps us shift from understanding 'Father' as the human patriarch to understanding 'Father' as God. For the early *Jesus* movement there was only one 'Father' in terms of sovereign authority, and this was God.

It is also not surprising to find what we might consider Jesus' rude behaviour vis a vis his family. In *Mark 3:31* when his mother and brothers asked to see him, he retorted, "Who are my mother and brothers?" The point is family. The *Jesus* movement was trying to build a new understanding of that word, independent of bloodlines.

Jesus is not described in the usual family categories. The gospels are silent on his marital or celibate state. They do not say whether he was gay, straight, or bisexual. Neither do they tell us about any children. There is no comment on his nuclear family arrangements or his sexuality. He stands outside of family categories.

The *Jesus* movement was in a combative relationship with the ideology of the patriarchal family. This is how we can understand *Luke 12:53* when Jesus spoke of his mission bringing division: "From now on (the) household will be divided... father against son... mother against daughter..." Likewise in *Luke 14:26* "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother... cannot be my disciple."

Elaine Wainwright's work on *Matthew* is helpful in understanding the communities that shaped it. In the years between Jesus' death and the completed compilation of that Gospel, the contributing communities interacted with the oral text inevitably shaping it. Some of those communities were radically egalitarian. Others were less so. Wainwright shows how some Matthean texts have both family and anti-family sentiments sitting side by side.

Today I think one of the major continuums of difference among Christians is not conservative or liberal, Catholic or Protestant, pro or

anti homosexuality, but rather whether they are exclusively supportive of a traditional family structure or whether they are trying to live out the radical egalitarianism seen in the early *Jesus* movement.

Jim slides down one side of this continuum and I the other. Our concerns though are often similar: how to create safe, healthy, and interesting communities that care for children and others who are vulnerable. It's just the methods, and the presumptions behind the methods, that we differ on.

We also differ on God. Jim has God ordaining his family ideology. I suppose he would say that I try to use God to ordain my ideas too. When is it reasonable to accuse either of us of idolatry?

I began by talking about my love for sculpture. In some branches of Christendom sculpture is frowned upon as idolatrous. Chris, an old mate from University days and a very talented sculptor, signed up with the Serbian Orthodox, did his time at Mt Athos, and channelled his talent into two-dimensional icons. He made nice icons, but...

Idolatry has long been linked with the story of the golden calf (*Exodus 32*). It's an interesting tale. In short, the Israelites were impatient with Moses' God. They wanted a God who was present, tangible, and whom they could relate to. They were fed up with the inconsistencies of a wandering God who was leading them nowhere. So they made their own. Idolatry, therefore, is that which takes our focus off God and demands we reprioritize our allegiance.

I want to expand on this definition. The God of the Bible is not entirely consistent and does not co-operate with our attempts to make Him or Her so. If God is God then by definition God is outside of our control. God does not always act how we think God should act. God is not always present when we think that God should

be present. The God of Moses and Jesus will not be domesticated by our theologies, presumptions, and need for convenience.

If you think I'm being PC by using the phrase 'Him or Her' for God, I would counter that making God fit exclusively into the constraints of a masculine or feminine pronoun is precisely my point about idolatry. Making God exclusively a 'Him', as the church often does, locks God into an anthropomorphic, masculine cupboard that is then very hard to break out of.

I'm of the opinion that the church is in danger of doing to God what Dan Brown in the *Da Vinci Code* has done to Jesus. Or, in those great words of Fr Daniel Berrigan, done to God what the 1970s Governor of California wanted to do to the Redwoods – cut them down into den furniture. We are in danger of domesticating the Almighty.

I fear that in various parts of the Christian world God is so closely aligned with and circumscribed by the traditional family structure that God's sovereignty is under threat. It is God's sovereignty, God's radical independence of human systems (which was at the heart of the 16th century Protestant reformation) that is being compromised by adherence to 'family values'. The corset of family ideology makes it hard for the Almighty to breathe.

I believe in the mystical God, who touches both mind and soul, who brings the uniqueness of children to birth with all their gay colours, who breaks open our cupboards and loosens our corsets, who dances with the dawn and in our hearts... This God is a wild God, untameable, an iconoclast, who will lead us into deserts and tell us to wait... This God, the God of Jesus, displaces the first with the last, turns our presumptions inside out, and holds us all to account with the demands of love. Woe betide any fettering ideology. ■

Glynn Cardy is an Anglican priest and Vicar of St Matthew's-in-the-City, Auckland

World Refugee Day this year is 20 June (celebrated in churches on 26 June).

Caritas worker Lisa Beech shares the story of Hawa, a Somali refugee who knows that a harsh life is still better than death



Congolese children receive food aid at a refugee camp

The joys and sorrows of a refugee woman

Hawa – more than any other refugee I knew – needed a relative to join her in New Zealand. I thought of her when I heard on the news that New Zealand had offered refuge to a number of Afghani asylum seekers from the *Tampa*. I knew it would reduce her chances of family reunification. I thought she would think so too.

But Hawa always surprises me. She came to see me the next day, pressing her hands together and raising eyes filled with joy. “Thank you God, thank you for New Zealand,” she said. She had seen news pictures of a woman on the sinking ship and recognised the desperation in her eyes. “I prayed and prayed that someone would rescue them.”

Hawa understands desperation. She fled Mogadishu in a jeep full of workers from a British NGO when fighting broke out. They almost made it to Kenya, but armed men ambushed them. The jeep crashed, killing the driver and other passengers, and leaving only a few injured survivors.

Hawa lay in agony with two broken legs, while the armed men robbed

both the living and the dead of all their possessions. Then she was left with the bodies of her friends, unable to move or seek help.

It took two days before people from a nearby village found her. It took six months to get from the village to the refugee camp. It took another year before Hawa was recognised as being in need of hospital treatment. She was sent to Nairobi hospital, where she fell in love with and married another refugee, but was then told she had been granted resettlement to New Zealand for medical treatment.

In New Zealand an orthopaedic specialist saw her some years after her legs were first broken. The bones had been badly set, and had healed poorly. Some mobility was restored to one leg, but there was nothing that could be done for the other. Her knee was permanently fused, unable to bend.

Hawa was devastated, wondering why she had come alone to this cold, lonely country. She knew no one else from her own tribal group.

She begged the Immigration Service to reunite her with her husband. They were suspicious and reluctant. Her

marriage had not been declared by the authorities who had recommended her for resettlement, and Hawa had not understood that she was required to tell them. She kept asking and hoping.

Hawa was one of the lucky ones. She was told that not only her husband, but also his parents had been included in the refugee quota. She was excited to gain parents-in-law as well as a husband. She hoped for a happy family life to replace the one she had lost.

But her mother-in-law took an instant dislike to her. Instead of recognising Hawa as the person who brought her to New Zealand, her mother-in-law did not even greet Hawa. “She said I was from the wrong tribe, I was a cripple and I was ugly, and her son should divorce me.” The pain of this rejection never leaves Hawa.

Hawa was expected to clean and care for the household, despite her disabilities, while her mother-in-law spent her days trying to persuade her son to find a ‘better’ wife. At first he was loyal to Hawa, and their baby daughter was born. But the pressure became too great, and he left with his parents. Hawa was alone in a house with stairs and a

young baby. Caring for her daughter took all her physical strength. It was almost more than she could bear to learn that her mother and sisters had been found – injured but alive – but far from a refugee camp.

This time the Immigration Service offered no hope. Hawa was haunted by fears for her family's safety, grief for her lost marriage and guilt that she had favoured her husband over her mother.

But she found purpose in life in helping me to understand the Somali people that I worked with. She decided I needed help understanding Islam. I confessed to her that I had struggled with understanding and remembering people's names.

"Kiwis find our names difficult, but Christians know our names. Christians and Muslims have many of the same prophets. Hawa is Eve, the mother of us all. Ibrahim is Abraham, and Zahra is his wife Sarah. Yacob is Jacob, Yusuf is Joseph and Maryam is Mary. We know Mary. And many men in our community are called Isse which

means Jesus. We know Jesus, but we call him Isse."

Hawa's need for family was so great that at first I could not understand her joy over the *Tampa* refugees. I knew it would have ended any slight chance she might have had for the case of her mother and sisters to be included in the refugee quota. I thought she must not understand that.

But I was wrong – Hawa did understand the decision had implications for her. But she just couldn't bear to think of someone in the same desperation she had faced, and not being helped, whatever the cost to herself.

And when I said this to her, she looked at me with wisdom and understanding and penetrated all my defences: "You are the same, you help us with our families because you are waiting and waiting for the father of your own children." No one else showed me so clearly that the core of my motivation for refugee family reunification was grief at my own separation and loss.

Sr Catherine Jones, a leader of inter-faith dialogue, says that Muslim Christian dialogue does not only happen between church leaders and theologians, but just as important is the 'dialogue of daily life'. Hawa and I shared many moments, but she taught me more than I learned from any one else about how much Christian and Muslim women have in common. There is faith, fidelity, endurance and hope, but most of all the desire that people who are worse off than we are might yet find that doors can open that seem closed to us.

Hawa and I are still finding ways to live with our grief and ourselves. When I am tempted to feel sorry for myself, I remember Hawa's joy about New Zealand's acceptance of the Tampa refugees, and hope that I will have her courage to choose life for others over my own needs. Hawa teaches me the hope she gained when she realised that she would live, and not die. Life has not been kind to her, but Hawa is certain that it is better than death. ■

The Wall

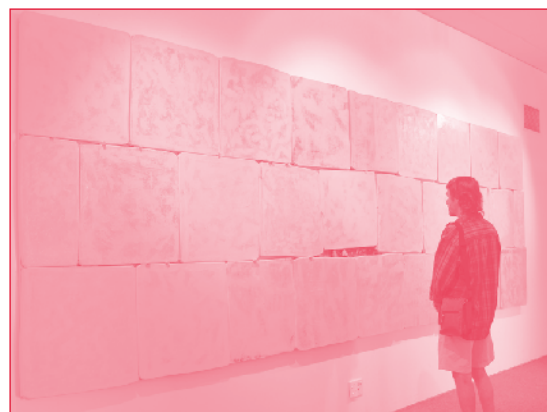
went on for ever
upward and downward no one remembered
a time when it was different but could only
tell they had been climbing a few kilometres
per day for a long time. It was comforting

after breakfast to unpeg the hammock
fastened overnight. They would flex their joints
and begin to place hand, foot, thoughtfully
as chess pieces on a cloud shadowed board.

When their time came they crawled
into crannies, gave birth and carried
their infants on their backs with
certain objects and scraps of bunting.

No one died of illness or old age but
when one was ready they stopped
and showed a face as empty as sky
would rock a few times and tilt out like

a metronome to the beat of
privately heard words, would fall
out and down silent and thistle light
into a cloudy haze of blue and grey.



Person at the Prayer Wall: these canvases symbolise the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. As at the original wall people were invited to write and insert their prayers

They would often try to decipher
the ideograms of snow on black escarp
or imagined they could become like
water and soak into the fissures between
slabs into the dark recesses of stone
and then break through
into an ocean of dense light as if the wall
was a mere tracery of arabesqued window
and not an impenetrable barrier after all.

Peter Rawnsley



Mana and manaakitanga

*This address was given by Pat Snedden
to the Auckland University Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences,
at Graduation, Wednesday May 4 2005.*

To the graduands and your whanau, friends and mentors, especially to parents and partners, let me extend my warmest congratulations to you for your achievement in launching the ones about to graduate here into this rite of passage. So allow me to honour you by reflecting on the meaning of what is occurring here in a uniquely New Zealand way.

Today this institution, its academic staff and your family and supporters are conferring on you not just academic honours. They are conferring on you mana. They recognise that the training and success that has come from years of commitment has now reached a recognition point. You are joining a community of professionals looked to for competence, compassion, innovation and leadership, as well as intellectual and clinical excellence. You are more today than you were

yesterday precisely because today this community marks your success.

When I talk to you of the mana related to your achievement, whilst I am using a Maori idiom I am sure that most of you will have an intuitive grasp of what I mean. So let me pose a question: what is the quality of this mana?

Mana is about prestige. It is about the assumption of authority and control and the rights that go with this. It allows for you to exercise the leadership for which your academic success equips you. Crucially, such rights also carry obligations. There can be no mana without the corresponding manaakitanga, the care and consideration for the other, the outsider.

Our nation's founding Treaty was all about mana and manaakitanga – about recognition and responsibility, about rights and obligations. It was because the British Crown agreed to

recognise their mana and protect their rangatiratanga (their chiefly authority to exercise trusteeship over all their possessions) that the chiefs responded with manaakitanga (consideration of the other). They agreed to a single legal system and a common citizenship right for all new migrants to come and enjoy our right to belong here. In the lovely words of Maori Land Court Chief Judge Eddie we are tangata Tiriti, those who have settled here since the Treaty and belong to this land by right of that very Treaty. This is our unimpeachable security, our right to belong, passed from generation to generation. But such an unimpeachable right to security carries its own responsibilities.

Last Sunday I was at Pukaki marae in Mangere for the launch and blessing of a publication chronicling the challenge of diabetes for that tribal hapu. They paid tribute for the assistance they had received from your own Faculty

of Medicine and Health Sciences. As person after person rose on that marae to tell their own story of diabetes, they recalled the staggering numbers of their own whanau who have been claimed by this disease. One family of 14 all dead before the age of 60. Another whanau of eight, seven now lost with the oldest remaining not long past 50.

In their korero one truth was inescapable. They told us: "unless we are able to deal with this matter on our own terms and in our own way we will continue to die." And to deal with this, they said, we need your support. We need you who have the expertise, the clinical skill, the diagnostic accuracy, the care and compassion to place in service of our own kaupapa, our own agenda.

It was compelling and direct. If you affirm our rangatiratanga, they said, you will support our capacity to regain full control of our lives on terms we understand. Then what you offer us will

truly help to save our lives. I profoundly understand their challenge. Members of the Pukaki hapu, supporting those who are dying from diabetes, will assess the quality of the health care they receive from our Health Board by how well we hear their stories, honour their kaupapa (agenda) and bring our medical skills and resources to act in service of their needs.

As one kuia put it so simply and eloquently: "is it too much to ask to be allowed to be ourselves and to be treated in a way that both honours who we are and is proven to be more effective in helping us survive?" As a fifth generation Pakeha New Zealander, I want to reassure this hapu publicly here today that indeed, this is not too much to ask.

A final thought. Today you are at the pinnacle of your educational achievement. We honour this moment and the mana it confers. Your new

skills in your chosen field bring you closer than most to the cusp of life and death. Truly this makes you a taonga (a treasure). Let me humbly invite you to consider adopting as an iconic metaphor for your emerging career; the capacity for manaakitanga. It is a notion of consideration for the other that represents a quality of healthcare fully alive to the needs of those you treat and committed to be in service of those needs.

The wonderful example your Faculty has shown already in your collaboration at Pukaki in the diabetes research shows your institution is already alert to the value of this approach. Should you continue with this kind of insight in your careers we just might achieve a renewed nation, a country fully cognisant of its history and with a sophisticated and imaginative understanding of the contemporary value of that other taonga unique to us all, Te Tiriti o Waitangi. ■

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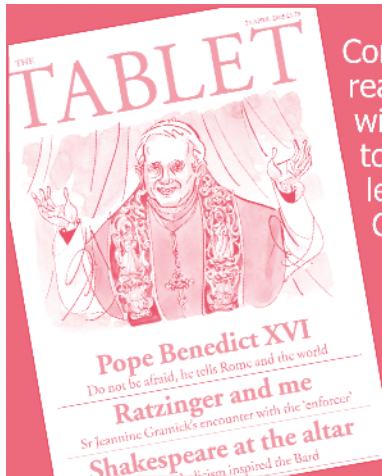
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Letting go

Irish Jesuit Paul Andrews uses the example of John the Baptist to help us with coping with redundancy as well as other times of transition

This month on 24th June, which is roughly the longest day of the year in the northern hemisphere, the church celebrates the birthday of St John the Baptist. He was born six months before his cousin Jesus – that much we know from St Luke's Gospel. But Luke does not give us a date for either John's or Jesus' birthday. In any case they had a different calendar from the one we use. When they fixed John's birthday for the longest day of the year, and Jesus' for the shortest day of the year (at least in the northern hemisphere – south of the Equator it is the other way round), the main reason was in a remark of John the Baptist in the third chapter of John's Gospel: *He (Jesus) must increase and I must decrease*. So in the weeks and months after Jesus' birthday, the days are stretching; and in the weeks and months after John's birthday they are decreasing.

When John spoke about increasing and decreasing, he was not thinking about the length of daylight. Rather he was reflecting a dramatic moment in his life. John was a major figure in Jerusalem, what would nowadays be called a celebrity. Crowds were coming out from the city to listen to him preaching at the river Jordan, and to seek baptism from him. To each group that came out he had something wise and strong to say: for instance he told the soldiers: *Don't take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely; and be content with your pay*. He was fearless and incorruptible, had few needs and lived a hard life. For that reason people were attracted to him and listened to his words. He was their idea of a true prophet, and he was still in his early thirties, in the prime of life.

So it is astonishing to see what

happened when Jesus walked his way. John was the older cousin, and he was, in that region, famous. He had many disciples. But when his cousin came to him (see the story in John 1,29), instead of saying: *That's a young cousin of mine from down the country*, John used a phrase which we hear at Mass: *Behold the Lamb of God* – and said it with such reverence that two of his disciples left John and went to follow Jesus. Later John's disciples remarked to John, with a hint of jealousy, that Jesus was now drawing the crowds. John replied: *This is how my own happiness is made complete. He must increase and I must decrease*.

This was a more remarkable feat than living on locusts and wild honey. John was turning away from the cult of personality and from the fame and celebrity he enjoyed, and watching his followers move away from him towards Jesus. He was preparing for redundancy, for accepting that even he, with Jerusalem at his feet, was dispensable.

For a modern example you would have to imagine a country's president fingering another politician and telling people: *Vote for him; I've had my day*. Or imagine a star singer promoting another star at the cost of her own sales. It does not happen. How many careers in business, politics or entertainment end sadly because of inflated egos, celebrities who cannot recognise the moment when they should hand over? In any job you should be able to point out who is your deputy and who is your successor – or at least how they will be appointed. Many men and women find that an uncomfortable notion.

When Yasser Arafat was president of the Palestinian state, he refused

to finger anyone as his deputy or probable heir, with the result that his death was attended by unseemly chaos and rivalry between factions. You find parish priests who hang on long after they are of real service to their flock; they will always find old buddies who persuade them they are indispensable. It is the ultimate illusion, which the Lord finally cures when he calls us to himself. He did not put us in this world to help him out of a jam. He put us here because he loves us.

Handing over a job is not dying. It is the start of a new phase of living. If that phase means what we call retirement, then making a go of retirement takes as much energy as initiation into any job. You need to find a new rhythm in your everyday, and you need to ask for help – it is there if we look for it – in finding new occupations.

Of course the real pain of handing over comes from a primitive source. The hardest lesson for a toddler, after a blissful period in which he only had to cry to have his needs met, is to accept that he is not the centre of the universe, that the world does not exist for the purpose of indulging him, and that other people have needs too.

I'm writing this as a Jesuit; we are taught this lesson thoroughly and repeatedly. You are put into a job, you give it everything you've got, and you are taken out and reassigned elsewhere. Sometimes the hardest part is not so much handing over the job, as seeing your successor doing it better than you did. It does not become easier with age. But it is one of the features that attracted me to the Jesuits in the first place. There is no place here for the careerism that St Ignatius saw was rampant in the church of his day.



Milking the Cow

*For Diane Pendola, a simple domestic chore
becomes a contemplative moment*

She grazes in the green, green pasture. Black and solid as an oak log, her short legs carry her up the hill at a surprisingly brisk pace at the sound of my voice. She stands at the gate, ears forward, eyes alive with kind intelligence, expectant. She's longing for the grain I have in the blue bucket. For that she stands, willingly allowing me to attach the lead line to her halter. For that she follows, to a sturdy post where I tie her and place the bucket of rolled oats and molasses on the ground before her.

As she eats, I gently wash her udder with a warm cloth. I prefer the side with less hair on her bag. Yes, remarkably, one side is hairier than the other! And I've caught those hairs, as I've squeezed her teats, and gotten a kick in quick reproach!

Having prepared her bag for milking, I allow her calf to join us. I separate Baby Bossie in the morning in order to build her appetite, and Mama Bossie's willingness to let down her milk, for both of us in the afternoon.

This is being written in New Zealand, where I am caring for a series of one-man parishes to allow their pastors a holiday. I am also conducting an experiment in redundancy: *how will my 15-strong community manage without their superior?* Will I come home to find the brethren at one another's throats, the staff on strike, the bank foreclosing on Manresa in a crisis of confidence, the whole operation drifting rudderless towards the brink? Or will I find that the good man who is filling the role in my absence is doing it better than me? Watch this space. ■

The heifer takes mama's milk into her warm, moist mouth, happy sucking sounds ensuing.

On the opposite side I begin squeezing a teat, first with thumb and forefinger and then down the length with the rest of my hand as I hold a milk bottle with the other. The thumb-sized teat is slack at first but begins to fill as the calf works and soon the milk is flowing. Mama settles into a soft-eyed trance. Chickens come close, looking for scattered remains of grain, even sucking a little milk through their beaks from the last cream I strip into a special bucket for the feral barn cat.

Tomorrow morning's coffee will be full of green, green pasture, soft-eyed intelligence, the touch of wind and the feel of milk flowing through my hand. It will carry the stroke of her coarse flank and my fingers twining the locks of hair that curl so cutely between her attentive ears. It will carry the calf's bawling and the sweet smell of creamy foam on her hard rubbery mouth as she sneaks over to my side, butting me away as though I were her twin.

I will reflect deeply on the milk in my coffee and find no reason for regret or rancour there. ■

'a feeling of ease and warmth'

— Barbara



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Paul – the passionate apostle

Will O'Brien

*Paul has had a bad press among many Christians.
However, on closer examination Paul is very much in
line with gospel teachings*

Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)

His words sanctioned the transatlantic slave trade. He is a patriarchal curmudgeon, sanctifying the subservience and even abuse of women. For centuries he has been the patron and pastor of empire, urging unquestioned fidelity to even the most brutal of rulers. His teachings have been wielded to keep the poor in their place. To this day he is the 'enemy' of gays, lesbians and other sexual minorities.

Saul of Tarsus, the Apostle Paul, missionary to the world, the Great Lion of God: the very name strikes fear, disdain or cynicism in the heart of many a 'progressive' Christian. His personal history and teachings pervade the sacred Scriptures of our faith – yet many of us don't know what to do with him.

Even when we aren't disturbed by his social and political stances, we struggle with his theology. His Greek-influenced sensibilities seem to suffocate the radical gospel of Jesus under a shroud of obscure, heady doctrine. He morphed Jesus' gritty, communal ethos into the purely spiritual worship of an other-wordly saviour. For years I have struggled intensely with Paul. Like other Christians who care about the liberating power of our faith to transform society, I stumble over what appears to be Paul's 'conservative' theology. I have argued with him, been embarrassed by him and sometimes just ignored him.

A re-evaluation of Paul

But I believe authentically Biblical faith does not permit us to marginalise Paul. More importantly, a growing

number of scholars, theologians and historians are unveiling a powerful new portrait of Paul. Yes, he is the evangelist of grace – but not a grace twisted into the privatised spirituality of Western individualism. As he took the Gospel of Jesus into the expanses of the Roman Empire, he did not betray the Galilean social movement – he built on it. In countless ways, despite his personal foibles and lapses, Paul engaged in subtle but powerful subversion of the domination system of his time, echoing Jesus by inviting people to a radically new way of life.

I also see with greater clarity and urgency that Paul's situation is not unlike our own. He lived in an empire, where the politics and economy of oppression are swathed in moral and religious language, where the power system seems vast and impervious to change. Maybe those of us living under the auspices of *Pax Americana* need to pay a bit more attention to what Brother Paul is about.

One of the troubling aspects of Paul is his apparent neglect of Jesus' teachings. He seems to stress worship of Christ at the expense of obedience and discipleship. But a closer look, both at Paul's writings and at the stories in *Acts*, reveals a remarkable continuity. Paul was essentially expanding the spiritual-social revolution that Jesus initiated.

Paul's economic teachings

Consider, for instance, Paul's economic teachings. (Yes, there are some!) In matters of money and possessions, Paul is powerfully in synch with Jesus in proclaiming and enacting the

Jubilee revolution. Throughout his correspondence we read of Paul's fierce insistence on collecting funds from the various house churches to send back and share with the poorer church in Jerusalem (*1 Cor. 16:1-4; Rom. 15:25-32, Gal. 2:10*, also mentioned in *Acts 11:27-30*). This was not a matter of pass-the-hat charity for the 'less fortunate'. Rather, he is nurturing the covenantal economic solidarity envisioned by Jesus for the discipleship communities, first expressed in the post-Pentecost communities of believers portrayed in *Acts 2:42-47* and *4:32-35*. The challenge for Paul and his missionary colleagues was to translate these values and practices over thousands of miles among more culturally diverse groups of people.

The detailed discussion on economic sharing in *2 Corinthians 8-9* is a critical text, revealing much of Paul's sense of how communities are to live out the gospel. Here, too, Paul is urging (not demanding) a generosity and distribution of resources that ensure all needs are met. At the heart of this passage is his almost Marxist-sounding evocation of the manna teaching in *Exodus 16*: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one that gathered little did not have too little" (*2 Cor. 8:15*).

Like the story of the rich young man (*Mk 10:17-22*), Paul is exhorting the wealthy members of the community to break ties with the old, exploitative economic system and values. In the spirit of Jesus' ensuing promise to the disciples of an economy of abundance (*Mk 10:23-31*), Paul is

Reflecting on Matthew

Susan Smith

In Matthew 16:24, Jesus tells the Twelve they must take up their cross to follow him, and lose their lives in order to find them. Jesus, like most of his first disciples, lost his own life in a particularly violent way. There were few friends there with him on Calvary, no outpouring of prayer from multitudes of followers, and yet his greatest gift to us was the gift of life, the consequence of his violent death.

Recently, church leaders have been quick to point to the effects that secularism, materialism and consumerism are having on the institutional church. In the Mass that inaugurated the papal conclave, Cardinal Ratzinger warned against the dangers of modern trends. Some of our own church leaders have similarly blamed secularism and materialism as responsible for loss of faith. Of course there is a certain truth in their remarks regarding modern Western culture but the problem is that if these modern trends are identified as the only causes of the present malaise, then the corollary is that it can be reversed by a return to the past, by a return to a pre-Vatican II church. This is a real possibility.

Although modern trends are affecting the life of the institutional church in ways that must appear ominous to its leaders, there is another problem - the power of the institution, its wish to perpetuate clerical structures, and its reluctance to think laterally about our contemporary situation. I have no problem with church leaders highlighting the challenges

that contemporary culture poses for the church. I just wish that their definition of dangerous trends was not so limited. What about the problem of exclusion of women who could play a much more decisive role in building a church for the future? What about the relatively limited resources that are used for the formation of good lay leaders, men and women, for our parishes, particularly when we consider the significant resources used to train seminarians? And this brings me back to Matt 16:24. It is a mistake to think that this text has relevance for our personal lives only. It has institutional significance. After all Jesus was addressing the Twelve, and we are taught that their successors are the bishops.

Perhaps contemporary bishops, as successors of the apostles, could explore what losing life for the institutional church might mean. As I looked at TV coverage of the papal funeral – the thousands gathered, the political leaders and dignitaries, the brief appearance of women and lay people in token capacities in the funeral liturgy, I was aware of the power the funeral symbolised and reminded of a joke I heard long ago. Two tourists were standing in St Peter's Square amazed at its architectural splendour, the priceless treasures, and at the cardinals and bishops being chauffeured in and out of the Vatican State. As one said to the other: "To think this all began with a man on a donkey!" ■

Dr Susan Smith is a Mission Sister who teaches Biblical Studies at the School of Theology, University of Auckland

striving to shepherd the community's transformation toward a radical new ethos of sisterhood and brotherhood, of economic solidarity and covenantal sharing.

Resisting exploitation

I have also been struck by what I see as Paul's radical actions of economic resistance. The *Book of Acts* recounts two fascinating episodes. In chapter 16 Paul and Silas are jailed in Philippi after casting a demon out of a slave girl. The real crisis in the story is that the exorcism resulted in a rupture of the economic order: the girl had been exploited for profit by her owners for her fortune-telling capacities. In freeing her, Paul and Silas are spoiling her owners' business – but, more broadly,

they are undermining an economy based on exploitation.

Later, in *Acts 19*, we read of Paul's missionary fruits in the bustling town of Ephesus. His preaching leads to so many conversions that it undermines the economic profit of those who traded in religious relics for the goddess Artemis (*vv.23–27*). Soon, the town breaks out in a riot. Once again the announcement of the good news of Jesus threatens the economic order.

Both stories weave together religion, economics and social propriety, and in both stories Paul's actions amount to radical acts of subversion. More tellingly the episode of the slave girl is framed by the conversion of the wealthy cloth merchant, Lydia, who

offers her home to the discipleship community – including, at the end of the story, even Paul and Silas's jailers. All of this is in direct continuity with Jesus: the preaching of a new order, the formation of communities that break off from the old order and practice the new, and the consequent persecution from the powers who are threatened.

In a society of mega-malls and hyper-consumption swathed in the religious veneer of prosperity theology, Paul models how to live and preach a table-turning gospel. We can learn from Paul's efforts to form communities and practices of resistance. ■

Next month, in Part 2 we observe how Paul confronts the society of the Roman Empire, applying to it the criterion of the Cross of Christ

The little man who rode upon a horse

John Wesley: A Brand from the Burning

Roy Hattersley

Abacus, 2004, (originally published in 2002 by Little, Brown)

Price: \$29.95

Review: Colin Gibson

Some years ago, as a contribution to world-wide celebrations marking the life and work of John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, I wrote a hymn intended for younger Methodists. It began, '*John Wesley was a little man who rode upon a horse*'. That's still the iconic image of the man whose extraordinary life is traversed in this latest biography by Roy Hattersley.

The biographer himself is a former distinguished politician, deputy leader of the British Labour Party, so it is no surprise that he offers a remarkably shrewd analysis of the power struggles and manipulations among the many religious sects and movements that swirled round Wesley's gradual (and reluctant) formation of an independent church organisation outside the established Anglican Church of England.

He also has a sharp eye for the telling anecdote. The narrative thread of the biography is continually enlivened with the kind of story that never figured in the Sunday School versions of John Wesley's life; stories of which I was totally unaware when I composed my naïve text.

Take his tempestuous relations with his wife, Mary, for instance. Hattersley quotes (he is scrupulous in recording his sources) an early Methodist lay preacher and biographer who "went into a room and found Mrs Wesley foaming with fury. Her husband was on the floor where she had been trailing him by the hair of his head; and she herself was still holding in her hand venerable locks which she had plucked up by the roots".

Hattersley also offers a flow of astonishing information: but after all Wesley was a simply an astonishing human being. One of Wesley's preachers, who later abandoned Methodism to become an ordained priest of the Established Church, recorded his admiration for Wesley's almost incredible degree of labour which "nothing but the best constitution informed by the most active spirit could have enabled him to support".

That labour included riding for 52 years the appalling roads and tracks of 18th-century England, Scotland and Wales at a rate of more than four thousand miles a year; preaching two sermons a day (and very frequently four or five); sustaining daily a private diary and published journal; writing and publishing books, pamphlets, polemics and broadsheets that take up two columns of the excellent index to this book; founding schools which educated children with the same rigour which marked his own childhood – the children rose at 4am for prayers and studied till 8pm; engaging throughout his life in fierce theological debate; and holding together by the sheer force of his personality and his genius for organisation the hundreds of little faith communities which he gradually welded together into a national church capable of surviving their charismatic leader's death.

Wesley's personality comes across as paradoxical, even paranoiac. The fearless leader of a great religious revival, he was forever adjusting his own theological position; he preached the certain knowledge of salvation but was never sure of his own and went through crisis after crisis of conscience; he proclaimed tolerance of other faiths – including Islam – in what he called "the catholic spirit", yet he was a fierce antagonist of Rome and Popery: a letter written in 1780 argued that "no (Protestant) government ought to tolerate men of Roman Catholic

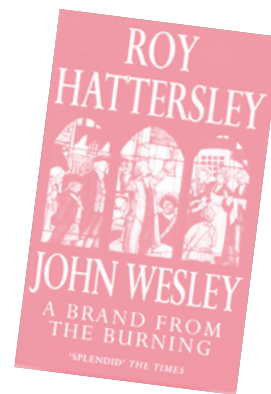
persuasion"; throughout his life he preached redemption by faith, *sola fide*, yet inspired his followers to revolutionary social action.

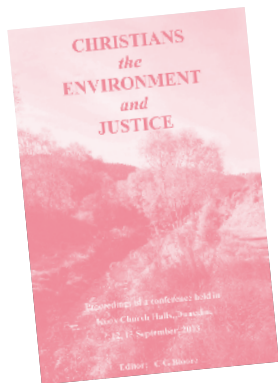
Hattersley is capable of expressing all this in prose which at times has a magisterial quality: "Women were his weakness, doctrinal promiscuity his abiding sin. In other ways – moral, physical, intellectual – he was unreasonably strong." Despite his capacity to conduct "an almost continuous theological disputation (with himself as well as with his critics) at a time when he was creating – despite the risks to both person and reputation – a new Protestant denomination... somehow he always managed to fight his way towards the final objective – first a revival, then an organisation – despite distractions which would have diverted a weaker man.

"He was usually poor, often crossed in love, constantly reviled, regularly betrayed by false friends and in a permanent state of anxiety about his own fitness to answer his great calling. But still he struggled on."

It is impossible that there should be a final and definitive biography of such a complicated and extraordinary man, but Hattersley comes close to providing one. There are times when I could have wished for less emphasis on Wesley's theological nitpicking with himself and more on his practical genius (he not only provided his followers with a huge body of new hymns to sing – mostly those by his brother and poet Charles – but he saw to it that they were taught to read music in order to sing the new tunes).

I am left not yet understanding what it was about Wesley that made him such





Treating the earth justly

Christians, the Environment and Justice

Edited by Chris Bloore

(from conference of Social Justice Workgroup, Knox Church, Dunedin, 2005)

Copies available for \$10, or \$12 posted from Knox Church Office, P O Box 6316, Dunedin

Review: Albert Moore

Well, in this case you *can* tell a book by its cover. You are drawn into the colour picture of the Kaikorai Stream, Dunedin, in autumn. Inside the book you find a short account with further colour illustrations of how a local church community put faith into action by caring for the environment and helping to regenerate half a kilometre of Kaikorai 'streamscape'. That is down-to-earth and inspiring, too.

Turning to the other articles, which are longer and more academic, you still find them interesting and clearly expressed, so as to relate to experiences and ideas relevant to our life and place. I must say that I have been immediately drawn to this production.

The book is good to see and handle (like an enlarged 60-page issue of *Tui Motu*). Then, a perusal of the seven papers from the original conference shows a wide range of information about the ecological movement of the past 40 years, which has become a truly

global concern now. And this is brought into focus with Christian theology and values on the one hand, but also with our New Zealand situation and problems in mind – as in the issues concerning mining and forests with the *Resource Management Act*.

To outline the contents briefly, there is a short and helpful article on what the Bible says, not only in what *Genesis* says on the goodness of creation, but also in the Wisdom literature of *Proverbs* and *Job*; this is by Judith McKinley, an Old Testament scholar.

Then from modern theology, Clive Pearson draws on his experience both in New Zealand and Australia to show how the themes of ecology have come to be central to theological thinking concerning today's world and particularly our own landscape. In his two lectures and lively concluding sermon, he suggests that "the earth itself is the world's new poor and the whole of creation is my neighbour".

A substantial contribution also comes from Royden Somerville, a Dunedin lawyer who has completed a Ph.D on environmental justice. He shows that this has now gone beyond issues of 'legal rights' to issues of values, in which Christian values can play a fruitful part. We are now concerned with 'public interest' and wider human rights to a healthy environment in face of toxic wastes and air pollution. So how are we to achieve 'sustainable development and management'? This paper is rich in information, ideas and references.

All told, this book is great value in its coverage and stimulus. It could well be used as a text for a group studying the impact of environmental issues from a Christian standpoint. And in this regard, because it is a matter of universal human concern, the subject can draw together Christians of various churches and indeed people of the whole community.

From the more secular standpoint also, these are issues affecting the whole life of the planet and civilisation, as shown in the urgent message of some recent best-selling books: Edward O. Wilson's *The Future of Life*, (2002, 2003 Abacus), and Ronald Wright's *A Short History of Progress* (2004, Canadian Massey lectures, Anansi pbk.)

But as a reminder that this concern is not just a recent fashion, let us quote from the prayer of Basil of Caesarea, a Cappadocian Father who lived in the 4th Century, prefacing our book: "O God, grant us a deeper sense of fellowship with all living things, our brothers and sisters, to whom in common with us You have given this earth as home." ■

a charismatic preacher in the fields. But I finished this biography knowing so much more about John Wesley, that I think I shall have to go away and write a decent hymn about one of God's eccentric geniuses; I think they call them saints. ■

Our reviewers

Colin Gibson is a Methodist hymn-writer and layreader. He was Professor of English at Otago University.

Albert Moore is a retired Presbyterian Minister. He was Professor of Religious Studies also at Otago.

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Crusade of destruction in Iraq

Two years after the illegal invasion of Iraq, the tragedy continues to unfold, and the language used to describe it continues to cloud the truth. The destruction of Falluja is depicted as its 'liberation', but we know now that the city has been reduced to a wasteland. The excuse for the war was 'weapons of mass destruction', which turned into 'regime change'. The 'coalition of the willing' has become 'multinational forces', and American losses are no longer enumerated as frequently as before, yet the total is climbing just as relentlessly. The number of civilian deaths is not even mentioned. Propaganda and media compliance continue to hide the destruction of Iraq and the history of civilisation. Language becomes a weapon of deception.

Some of the wonders of Iraq that traced the history of humankind have been obliterated. A minaret in Samarra, which dates back one thousand years and survived the Mongols, could not withstand the 'shock and awe' of this century's barbarians. Archaeological sites dating from long before the time of Christ have been decimated, museums looted, universities razed to the ground. Graffiti cover the great ziggurat of Ur, believed to be the birth place of Abraham. The wonders of Babylon, the mosques of Karbala and Najaf lie in ruins. Now Iraqis wonder at the abuses of Abu Ghraib.

In the public perception the justification for US forces staying in Iraq has been subtly shifted from the original intention of having 'enduring American bases' (still the ultimate goal for the control of oil), to fighting and suppressing the so-called insurgents. No mention is made of civil war which, in truth, describes the current situation. It is one of Iraqis fighting against the invaders of their land and killing fellow countrymen who support the invaders.

Perhaps there is a parallel in history for what is really happening in Iraq. As France celebrated the end of war in

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

Europe, its army was bloodily involved in uprisings in Algeria. The death of thousands of civilians there in 1945 marked the real beginning of Algeria's war of independence.

Bush's latest catch-cry of 'freedom and democracy' rings just as hollow as his former 'regime change'. Britain's Prime Minister, and co-conspirator in this cultural rape of a sovereign state by colonialist powers, was right when he said: "history will judge."

Day of reckoning for Tony

Tony Blair's historic third term victory in the British general election has come at a price. Labour's majority was cut by nearly 100 seats and every political statistic points to Blair's fall from grace. The tragic folly of the Iraq war, which he has continued to support as senior partner in the 'coalition of the willing', has destroyed the confidence associated with the most promising British Prime Minister for decades. His own party is calling for his resignation.

He has obdurately ignored public opposition to the Iraq war since the pre-war demonstrations of two million people in February 2003. The resignations from his party and his plummeting popularity in the polls were described as mere setbacks. Today, he still defends his role in creating the chaos of a divided war-torn country.

Just before the polls opened, Blair's argument for war was undermined by the publication of the British Attorney General's warning of the dubious legality of his actions. He has, at best, used political spin or concealment of documents to support the war in Iraq. At worst, what seems more evident now is

that he was determined to invade Iraq, ever since his first meeting with Bush in 2002.

In retrospect, his posturing before the press and such infamous claims that Saddam Hussein had the ability to launch WMD in 45 minutes, appear unbelievable. His appearances before committees to justify the continuation of Britain's support of Bush's discredited war seem bizarre. His peers perceive him as being devious and untrustworthy. He has lost all contact with reality and has paid the price.

Amazingly, Blair now supports Bush's argument that British troops cannot leave Iraq until Iraq's own forces can guarantee security for the country. But the violence is, directly and indirectly, the result of the very presence of foreign troops. Blair will never admit that he is wrong nor that he lied. He has been responsible for Britain's greatest foreign policy disaster since the days of colonialism. The British people have passed judgment and written his political epitaph.

Where have all my taxes gone

It is comforting to know that my accountant's insane estimate of this year's 'tax-payable' is going to worthy causes. The Labour government has just given the bankrupt Wananga O Aotearoa a loan of \$20 million for a few incidental expenses. After the \$33 million given to the America's Cup defence, which turned to custard, the government has decided to advance only \$20 million to the rugby union for holding the World Cup in 2011. Then there is the new raincoat requested by the New Zealand High Commissioner. He has hunted around London and finally ordered a custom-made, rain-proof, bullet-proof Burberry with extra large pockets for holding cash. All this comes to a lot of taxpayers' money, but then so does my 'tax-payable'. Helen and Michael know what to do with surpluses. ■

Stumbling blocks for imported clergy

There are a growing number of foreign born priests working in New Zealand parishes. Not just ones like the Irish priests who have over the years contributed so much to Catholic life in our country. But priests from other backgrounds, predominantly in Asia and Africa, where the culture has many differences from that of our land.

One hears complaints that some of these imported priests do not readily fit in to our culture. They come from societies where male dominance and the subservience of women is the rule. They follow the same model in their relationship to women here. Their home societies place the priest high on a pedestal. They do not readily accept the partnership-like relationship that New Zealand Catholics have come to adopt in their dealings with their pastors.

Can we expect such priests to soon learn the lesson and minister in step with New Zealand Catholic culture? My own time as an imported priest has taught me that one does not readily recognise that one is out of step with the local culture and does not readily change one's ways.

I spent several years in the Philippines engaged in parish missions. Not infrequently one encountered children who had not yet been baptised. This was due to the long-term absence of the chosen godparents. I would assure the parents that we could go ahead with the baptism without the designated godparents being present. It would be enough to presume their willingness to act as such and to inform them afterwards. Little did I realise that in my ignorance of Filipino Catholic culture, I was inflicting a grave injustice on the children concerned and on their parents.

Being a godparent involves in the Philippines relationships with the godchild and with its parents that we do not dream of in New Zealand. The godparent becomes, as it were, a

second parent, a reality expressed by the term *kumpare*, co-parent. The obligations of the godparent can extend even to helping pay high school fees if the parents cannot readily afford these. The obligations are two way, with the godparent having the right to call on the natural parent for financial or other assistance when needed.

The *kumpare* system provides Filipinos with a back-up in the stresses of life that does not exist among New Zealanders. The system has also been a providential support of the faith. Despite limited availability of priestly ministry due to the endemic shortage of priests, baptism has been sought for children at least to ensure that they would have a godparent to look after their interests and that their parents would have entry into a network of supportive relationships.

For years I blundered around in the Philippines unaware to the significance of a major part of the ministry I was exercising. Only on taking up graduate studies that involved cultural anthropology did I come to realise the importance of this phenomenon of ritual kinship, of which my New Zealand upbringing had given me no experience.

I have sympathy with the imported priest who brings into New Zealand, as I did into the Philippines, the cultural outlook of his homeland. But I have no optimism that he will readily change his ways. I wonder if I ever would have done so had it not been for my fortuitous exposure to cultural anthropology.

The importation of clergy from other lands is no solution to our priest shortage. We need to promote candidature for ordination from within our own ranks, initially of married men, and at a later date hopefully also of women. ■

Humphrey O'Leary

Fr Humphrey O'Leary is rector of the Redemptorist community in Glendowie, Auckland

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Signs of the Times

Hans Kung suggested that the role of the papacy can change people and that sceptics should give the new Pope a chance: "wait for signals to emerge", he suggested.

At his inaugural Mass, Pope Benedict said: "My programme is not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole church, to the word and the will of the Lord..."; he pledged to be guided by the spirit of the Vatican Council; he addressed other churches with warmth. Could this be the former Cardinal Ratzinger?

Alas! an all too familiar episode in early May has sent a cold blast through the hopeful. Fr Thomas Reese SJ, editor of the well-known Jesuit weekly *America*, has always insisted on the importance of free speech, and the magazine has provided a forum for honest debate on issues confronting Catholics in

contemporary society. Fr Reese, described as "an exemplary Christian, a model priest and even-handed in his journalistic treatment of themes", always took care to present differing views on the topics under discussion.

Some of these were the use of condoms in the context of HIV/Aids, procedures for investigating theologians, refusing Communion to politicians who disagreed with their bishop's views, and questions about homosexuality. But for the past five years, Cardinal Ratzinger and the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* have been putting pressure on his Jesuit superiors to get rid of Fr Reese. Now, with Ratzinger as Pope, Reese has been forced to resign.

Many are asking: does this mean a continuation of Pope John Paul's practice of insisting on human rights and freedom of expression to the world at large, but denying this very freedom

within the Catholic Church itself? Does this bullying interference with the freedom of the Catholic press and the role of Catholic journalism signal an ongoing climate where serious, rational discussion and exchange of ideas about how to live the gospel in the context of the 21st century is outlawed?

One writer commented: "If Catholic thinkers and writers in previous eras had remained unquestioning of Church teachings, we Catholics might still believe the earth is the centre of the universe, that women are inferior because they are incompletely formed males, that slavery is a social necessity and that making interest on money lent is a serious sin."

Until Rome rids itself of the fear of being questioned and recovers from its lack of faith in the promise of Jesus, that His Spirit is not confined within the walls of the Vatican, the barque of Peter could be heading for choppy waters. ■

Jim Neilan

Study reveals deeper social issues



New Zealand's food banks have proven to be a reliable indicator of the problems being experienced by large numbers of residents throughout the country.

Over the last four years the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services has conducted an ongoing study (Poverty Indicator Project: Foodbank Study) on the needs of people using food banks and some of the information revealed is shocking. Without question this ongoing study confirms that large numbers of New Zealanders continue to remain marginalised.

While numbers of people requiring food bank assistance decreased by about 25 per cent over the four years of the study, the report suggests that people needing food bank services often experience complex problems.

Seven key food banks operated by Christian social services agencies participated in the project, which commenced in 2001.

Major findings include:

- * Median and average weekly incomes of food bank clients are less than half that of the average New Zealand household
- * 70% or more of food bank clients receive a benefit as their only source of income
- * More than 60% of food bank clients spent greater than 30% of their income on housing

* The majority of those surveyed had debt.

The food banks were in South Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North and Wellington in the North Island and Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill in the South Island.

NZCCSS spokesman Major Campbell Roberts says while the report provided a snapshot of seven food banks across the country, it indicated that people still need the services provided by food banks.

"It is of significant concern that despite strong economic times, there is a group of people with often multiple social, health and financial problems that, somehow, 'fall through the cracks'," Major Roberts notes.

"The project was an important and unique piece of research, which has met its aims. It's focused attention on the difficulties people in our community often face – from the costs of housing, to the level of debt, and the difficulties families face in just trying to make ends meet."

Major Roberts says that NZCCSS will continue to work with government and in the wider community to highlight the needs of people in poverty.

If you can help, contact the number below for more information.

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