Tui Motu

InterIslands

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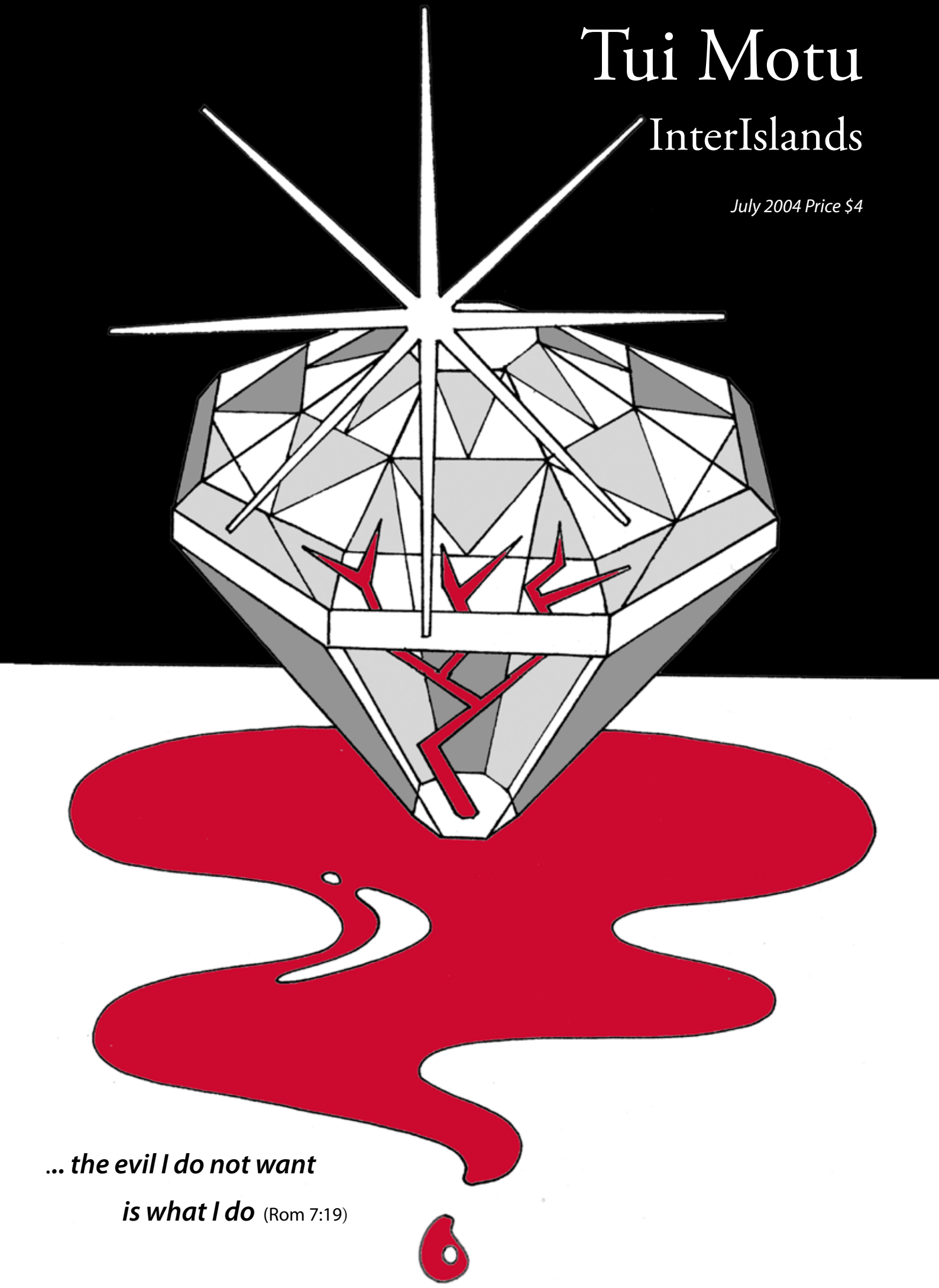
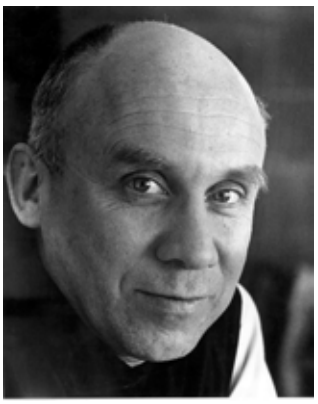


... the evil I do not want

is what I do (Rom 7:19)



Thomas Merton
1915-1968

Hiroshima Century.

While we may look back on the 1900s as a time of extraordinary progress in technology, human knowledge and rising living standards, it has also been an era of unspeakable horrors. We might well name it the *Hiroshima Century*.

Medical achievements have been spectacular; yet sexually transmitted diseases are rampant – with AIDS ravaging whole countries in Africa. Democratic and constitutional government has grown steadily; yet the world has suffered a succession of appalling civil and international conflicts and genocides. Electronic miracles are worked using the microchip. Yet no one seems to know how to solve the universal problem of sin – except perhaps to abolish the word.

Tui Motu's leading article, by Mike Riddell, examines this most fundamental aspect of the human predicament. Humanly speaking there is no solution, because the capacity for evil is present in all of us. Jesus soberly bids us to cleanse the dirt out of our own eye before attempting to heal other people's problems. Sadly, those who most insistently call themselves 'Christian' often abuse the Word of God by propagating false and dangerous interpretations, as Albert Moore eloquently points out opposite.

But if we look back over the centuries we may note that the times of greatest human decadence often provided an opportunity for the wisest apologists. Jeremiah, most eloquent of prophets, spoke when Israel was about to be thoroughly chastised and enslaved. Augustine wrote when Rome was being ravaged by Vandal hordes. Eckhart, the mystical theologian, shone as a bright light as the mediaeval Catholic church was about to fall apart.

So who is the luminary for our own age, the prophet for our times? In the English speaking world one candidate must be Thomas Merton. Like Augustine, Merton turned his back on a world where he had happily indulged in forbidden fruits. His solution to his own frailty was to seek God and wisdom in the contemplative life.

Far from hiding the light of his remarkable literary and philosophical mind under a bushel, he became a best-selling author. His teachings spread across the world. He demonstrated that the way of prayer and of silence was one sure answer to human yearnings. It is not the preserve of the hermit or monk in his cell, but indeed possible to all who have faith. The contemporary revival in spirituality owes hugely to the writings of Thomas Merton.

In his maturity he turned his attention increasingly and prophetically to the problems of the time. He became the correspondent and mentor of leading figures in the anti-nuclear movement and liberation theology. He was an ecumenist well before Vatican II and sought to dialogue with Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems and unbelievers. He was an environmentalist at a time when few even knew what the word 'ecology' meant.

There were two Thomas Mertons: the young man who turned his back on the alluring literary world of New York city and fled into a monastery. And the other who a few years later went into Louisville, the local town, and noted the goodness of all the people he met. "One saw mud, the other saw stars" – in the words of Oscar Wilde.

Merton is an iconic figure for our age: one who accurately diagnosed the appalling ills of his time, yet in the bountiful context of God's grace he recognised the solution. And what is that? Watch this space – in the August issue of *Tui Motu*.

M.H.

Religious pulp fiction

Albert Moore

Fiction can be entertaining fun or a vivid means of presenting serious truths about life through films and novels. It can also distort and twist material into what is called 'pulp fiction', worthless as literature and misleading from a religious point of view. This is what made Susan Smith's books-comment in the June *Tui Motu* so disturbing in her hard-hitting exposure of the "Left Behind" series of novels.

If "all the kids" are really reading that kind of stuff, then what is its appeal to them? If 60 million copies have been sold in the United States and elsewhere, is that because violence, conflict and disaster movies are ways of attracting such an audience? When this is focused on the last days of the Earth, the horrors of Tribulation, the forces of Antichrist and the 'Rapture' of all true believers into heaven, what sort of religion are the readers imbibing from such a heady mix? One cannot but be alarmed at the appeal to fear and hatred, the fatalism about the impossibility of improving the world, as well as the covert political agenda in these books as described in the article.

There is nothing new about these ideas. From the very beginnings of Christianity there have been groups of believers who expected the End of the World to come soon; their misdirected expectations, so full of fervour, mistook the message of the Gospel – of faith, hope and love – and so distorted its truth.

The Bible certainly has much to say about Christian hope for the future. This is the concern especially of the *Book of Revelation.* These visions of John came from one of the periodic times of persecution of Christians by the imperial power of ancient Rome; this is the context from which the book still speaks. Further, these visions are expressed in vivid symbolism of the struggle between good and evil in the cosmos; the imagery is directed to reinforcing faith in the ultimate power of God and the way of Christ.

The symbolism is expressed in a language of faith and hope often mysterious to the modern reader. But it is quite misleading to draw on the book for proof-texts as when the End will come; Jesus himself warned against such predictions (*Luke 17:20-21*). In the interests of the truth of the Scriptural message it is always necessary to keep in mind the living context and the symbol-laden nature of the message. These make us aware of the Christian concern to relate such symbols to actual questions of our own life in the world.

A vivid example comes from the book of Jonah in the Old Testament. This is the story of a disobedient prophet, sent by God to prophesy the imminent destruction of the city of Nineveh. His attempts to sail away in the opposite direction led him to being thrown overboard and swallowed by a "great fish" (popularly remembered as 'Jonah and the Whale').

When he does eventually reach Nineveh and preach doom to the people, they repent. God relents and changes his mind. Jonah is annoyed at this change and sulks at God for letting him down. But is this really the case? Jonah's prophecy has not failed: indeed it has succeeded in changing the minds and hearts of his listeners. God gently rebukes Jonah and reminds him of the divine compassion for the great city and all its peoples – and even its animals!

The Book of Jonah is a Jewish *midrash*, a "droll adventure", as the Jerusalem Bible puts it, "intended to amuse and instruct". It was written as religious fiction to expose national exclusiveness after the Exile, and to show the universal concern of God for all people. It is necessary to understand the context of the story in order to get its point; otherwise readers can be misled into wondering whether the real Jonah could have been swallowed by a fish and lived to tell the tale.

From the Gospels we can learn a parallel message about context and symbolism in Jesus' teaching about the Last Judgment (*Mt. 25:31-46*). In the symbolism of the King judging from his throne, people are vividly confronted by their actions of feeding the hungry, visiting the sick – or not, because these actions show solidarity with Jesus as their Lord. Jesus is challenging us to make a commitment to living out our faith through actions in everyday life.

The future which Jesus pictures is continually coming into our present world. And that is what matters. It gives concrete expression to our professions of faith and hope and love. It is the authentic Christian alternative to the misleading interpretations and predictions of the "Left Behind" novels. ■

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Tui Motu-InterIslands

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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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Harare, Zimbabwe: Howard Adams (left), of Gore, and daughter Megan (right), hand over a $NZ2500 cheque to Sr Margaret LCM, for the Mashambanzou Mission

Jan Adams writes:

As a result of the article on the Mashambanzou mission to AIDS sufferers in Harare, Zimbabwe (Tui Motu February), some 30 readers responded with donations adding up to $NZ2500. This was handed over last month to the Mission Director Sr Margaret LCM. The money will probably be spent on buying medicines and children's clothing.

We visited the 34 men, women and children in the hospice. The experience was shattering, but we were heartened by the loving care given by the dedicated staff in the simple but clean conditions of the hospice.

We are grateful to Fr McGettigan and the Gore parish Justice Group for organising the collection. Further donations will be paid into the Mashambanzou London account.

and from the Coordinator

Greetings, prayers and good wishes from Mashambanzou Care Trust. We felt very privileged and honoured with the visit of Howard and Jan Adams. Their daughter, Megan, has been a tremendous support and source of energy for us.

We were truly overwhelmed and deeply moved by your generosity in responding to the needs here in Zimbabwe. The situation in the country is difficult and it is only through the generosity of great people like yourselves, that we are able to offer help to so many people in need.

Two of our Outreach teams are fully concerned with the plight of the increasing number of orphans. Our Counsellors are trained to give social and psychological support. All of us can empathise with the needs of young people. They will thrive, if both their material and emotional needs are met. They are the hope of the future. Encouraging an open attitude among HIV/AIDS people allows them to hold their heads high and choose to live rather than give up.

The strength needed to do the little we can do, and do that very well, comes from our trust in God, and that each individual is precious in His eyes. We thank you for giving us the practical means to care for each one.

Margaret McAllen LCM

Crosscurrents

I am sick and tired of the eternal bleating against George Bush and Don Brash. The agnostic Helen is destroying the moral fabric of our society with more and more bills against the family. We have a gay activist amd a lesbian promoting all mannert of objectionable films – why is your columnist silent about these. Can we please have a change of topics and a change of columnist?

Ray Thomas. Ruwan@paradise.net.nz

TUI MOTU: how much is it worth?

Not an easy question to answer but when people ask, as they do, "How do you manage to produce it at such a modest price?" The answer is "not quite". There is a small deficit each year despite the additional dollars some readers thoughtfully forward with their subscriptions. Minor monetary miracles enable us to bridge the gap.

The time has come now to invoke the saintly axiom that declares 'the Lord helps those who help themselves'. So we are compelled to announce that the subscriptions will rise in August from $22 to $24 for five issues and from $44 to $48 for a year (11 issues); somewhat more substantially, the cover price will advance from $4 to $5, this latter being the first increase in seven years.

Overseas mail costs have also risen substantially – double, to Australia – so there will have to be some adjustment there too.

The additional income generated will also enable us to provide some part time administrative assistance that will leave much needed space for our editors to focus on editorial commitments. The versatility they bring to the manifold tasks has been admirable, but scarcely the best use of their talents. This price increase will provide them with better options.

The Board is conscious that for those on a fixed income this could impose real hardship. So, for the unwaged, subscription rates will remain as they were.

Comparisons are reputed to be odious so I won't make them, but in a quiet moment ask yourself where you could find better value for five dollars?

Thirty-two pages of good news is really a bargain. And have you noticed that it gets better all the time?

Tom Cloher – on behalf of the board of directors

Capitalism and the Church 2004

The doctrine and practice of global market capitalism, with the core ideology of individualism, free markets and limited government, influences the daily lives of most citizens of the world. It promotes also a colonization of the mind whereby the goals and processes of capitalism are seen as normative, progressive and legitimate – and any opponents must be ridiculed, scapegoated or punished. It is the dominant worldview on economic and technological development and international trade. It is promoted and communicated by the vast resources of electronic globalisation: satellites, Internet, cell phones, photocopiers and fax machines.

Capitalism as a paradigm redefines human identity, value and destiny. Human beings are now regarded as commodities to be used and consumed. Capitalism – or to use the Tom Sine label, "McWorld" – is the secular gospel of salvation where the good life, the American Dream and Western progress is to be found in economic growth and efficiency. With the primary values of individualism, consumerism and materialism in mind it ratchets up our appetites for 'more', via aggressive commercial advertising, trademarks, slogans, stars, brandmarks, music and television.

But it does not just preside over the suburbs and supermarkets: it compels governments to make national domestic policies subservient to international trade policy as set out by the World Trade Organization. "The new economism of capitalists is no less illiberal than the old one of the Marxists", says Ralf Dahrendorf.

Yet people and the earth cannot thrive or survive in these circumstances. Such economic management, aided by Information Technology and intense advertising, is destroying life rather than sustaining it. For increasing numbers of countries (and continents like Africa and South America) and societies within these countries, the economics of global capitalism are the economics of death – a downward spiral of impoverishment, brutal working conditions, the child prostitution trade, political injustice and ecological destruction.

This economic revolution has been going on in the world for at least 20 years yet the church has largely slept through it and structurally adjusted to it. "Our theological imaginations have long been captive to the market-driven orthodoxies of modern capitalism." (*Wayne Meeks*). Gustavo Gutierrez was insistent that his liberation theology was not meant to assist the bourgeoisie discover the 'meaning of life', but rather to assist the dehumanised in South America to recover their humanity. Gutierrez sought to challenge the logic and ethic of the capitalist system and to provide a model of action against the human beings who perpetrated such social and economic crimes against their neighbours.

The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and the Kingdom of God paradigm in particular have a powerful response to this modern idolatry. The renowned Biblical theologian,Walter Brueggemann, writes: "Much human conflict is rooted in the conviction, born of greed and enacted in acquisitiveness, that there is not enough, and one must seize what one can. Israel's sense of human hope is grounded in Yahweh's faithful intention of abundance, which liberates humans from the driving grip of scarcity in order that they begin to act, in hope, out of a conviction of abundance. This material abundance as an alternative to scarcity is a parallel to communion as an alternative to commodity. In both anticipations of communion and abundance, Israel's sense of the human future is derived from and legitimated by Yahweh, who is accessible and generous, with self and with the blessings of creation".

It is high time that we challenged our church leaders to break their silence in order that we confront the current crisis and allow penitence and new beginnings to occur. In particular, we need to develop a theological framework to address the excesses of market capitalism in this country and overseas.

We need to commit ourselves, at all levels of the church, to an inter-disciplinary process (and struggle) of learning, investigating, research, education, confession and political action regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction. Why? Because we are part of the problem and because the heart of the issue is theological. But this won't be easy; the cost of our addiction (dualistic discipleship and cultural accommodation), over many years, is already evident in our domesticated and privatised religion.

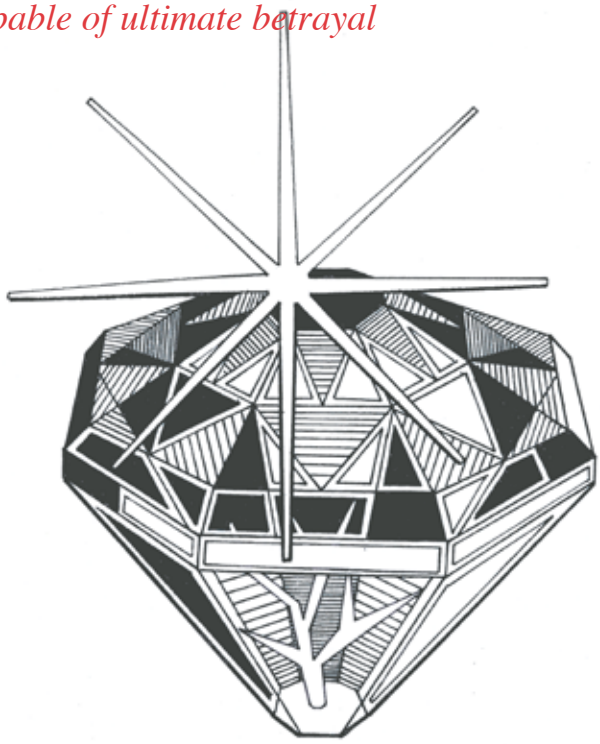
"We read the Gospel as if we had no money," writes Jesuit theologian John Haughey, "and we spend our money as if we know nothing of the Gospel."The paradigm we live by, consciously or unconsciously, plays a significant part in our lives: the way we live, the way we treat others, the way we treat the rest of creation and the way we think about and respond to God. ■

John Bruerton is an Anglican layman with the North Canterbury Joint Regional Committee for Co-operating Ventures.

People they ain't no good

Dachau, My Lai... and now Abu Ghraib. Each foul human action, suggests Christian writer Mike Riddell, points to that struggle at the very heart of what it means to be human

We are like flawed diamonds, made in God's image – yet each is capable of ultimate betrayal



The gulf between Christian tradition and contemporary culture is nowhere so evident as in the associations carried by the word 'sin'. This humble three-letter word, which at one time in human history was enough to bring a shadow of fear across the hearts of even the rich and powerful, has been diluted to the point of ridicule. It now turns up in menu descriptions, where a dessert might be identified as 'sinfully sweet'. In popular jargon, the word 'wicked' means 'good'.

Religious language has been colonised, and perhaps it is a lost cause to seek to reclaim it. But what we cannot do, without losing our hold on the legacy of faith, is relinquish our understanding of a concept which, our Scripture tells, Jesus died for. The reality indicated by 'sin' is as much a feature of human experience as ever it was, and we ignore it at our peril. We can play fast and loose with the terminology, but the struggle which it points to lies at the very heart of what it means to be human.

Recently America has been shocked by events in Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. The United States forces, sent forth as agents of light and liberation, have instead been revealed as sadistic torturers. The human face of humiliation has been Private Lynndie England, a young church-going woman now famous for her sexual intimidation of Iraqi prisoners. Locals from her hometown describe her as a 'very sweet girl' and find it difficult to believe that she could be guilty of the abuse she is accused of.

If we don't find some way of understanding what forces are at work in events such as these, we remain condemned to re-enacting My Lai or Dachau for each successive generation. Sin – and I continue to use the word for want of any better – is neither irrelevant nor inactive in a world come of age. Increasingly, apparently secular commentators are forced to cast about for some sort of terminology to describe behaviour which is clearly beyond the boundaries of 'inappropriate'.

Unfortunately, the church and post-modern society have both contributed to a notion of sin which is not substantial enough to carry the weight of history. Somehow along the way, we have adopted a consensus that sin refers to 'acts of wrongdoing'. This focus on individual transgression trivialises sin, making of it something private and petty.

The Catholic practice of listing 'sins' for the purpose of confession has probably not helped in this regard. Instances of misbehaviour or immorality are not insignificant; but neither are they sufficient on their own to explain the dark currents which spawn them.

It is by plumbing the depths of the much neglected concept of Original Sin that we come closer to understanding. This is a theological

insight which has little to do with an historical event, but much to do with a sharp perception of human life. To put it in more contemporary words, singer/songwriter Nick Cave has a soul-rending song which proclaims '***People they ain't no good***'. It is not so much a writing off of the value of existence, as an echo of the realisation that all of us are deeply flawed in some way. There is something skewed at the core which undergirds our grief and tragedy.

The church, in its heavy-handed way, occasionally feels obliged to convince the world of its sin. This usually results in moralising crusades which attempt to point out to the unwashed masses the errors of their ways. This approach conveys two equally misguided messages. One is the none too subtle 'We're better than you are'. And the other is that if people would only stop doing wrong things and start doing right things, they would be better people. Neither of these observations, it seems to me, has much to do with the gospel.

The church can hardly claim the moral high ground given current public awareness of clergy abuse and other religious shortcomings. The days of hiding behind a façade of sanctity have gone for good. And the behaviour of Lynndie England is not the result of bad potty training or lack of knowledge of the ten commandments. There is something amiss at the foundational level in human nature, and it is a contagion we all participate in. That is the recognition which the doctrine of Original Sin seeks, often clumsily, to convey.

At the risk of generalisation, I don't believe that most people need convincing that their lives are broken in some way. As Nick Cave has it, '***People just ain't no good / I think that's well understood***'. There are always the few whose self-confidence is unassailable, but the majority of people feel deeply their faults and compromises. We might put on a good show for the sake of others, but when we're forced into silence or solitude, there is no escape from the tawdry deceit and envy which makes us less than we could be.

It is in this universal experience that our reflection on sin might usefully begin. People of faith should never despise nor think themselves above the struggles of humanity. James K. Baxter lamented 'the gulf between the battlements of the Church Militant and the stony ground below, where men struggle often with the same basic problems under different names'. It is those same problems under different names which call for a renewed understanding of sin.

sin calls us to the searching of our own hearts rather than blaming or demonising others

We live in a shattered community. Life has become so difficult and isolated that people seek relief in a variety of ways, and addictions sometimes seem the only flower blooming in the urban jungle. Relationships have ceased to be places of refuge and trust; torn apart by infidelity, emotional cruelty, selfishness and exhaustion. Children are sexualised and exploited. Leaders at all levels of society lie and manipulate to perpetuate their own hold on power. Cultures, religions and peoples are divided, with violence the frequent consequence. The poor are ignored or blamed, the earth ravaged. And prisoners tortured by good Christian folk.

The force of the concept of sin is to locate the cause of such turmoil in internal rather than external forces. Certainly outside forces have a bearing on the shape of our lives, but the genesis of much of our suffering lies within us. Sin calls us to responsibility; to the searching of our own hearts rather than blaming or demonising of others. To use the word 'sin' is to acknowledge that we have been made for more than this. Without some understanding of the nobility of human life, of the inextinguishable image of God, of the possibility of love – sin has no meaning.

Some years ago I made a pilgrimage to Dachau concentration camp. It was a compelling and disturbing experience. The thing which unsettled me most was not the crematoria or the pictures of horrific medical experiments. It was a letter written by a doctor conducting such experiments, to the wife of the camp commandant.

With impeccable politeness, he thanked her for the meal he had enjoyed with her family, and expressed the hope that the children had liked the chocolates he brought. The proximity of civility and evil rocked me. As I paused in the chapel to reflect, I did not blame the German people. Rather I considered the atrocities which lie dormant within me.

Sin is universal not only in that we are all participate in it, but also in that we are capable of and caught up in the effects of what any one of us might do. That, I believe, is the sting in the tail of sin, and the reason that many of us resist the notion. We prefer that it be acts of wrongdoing, and only *our own* wrongdoing at that. By focusing on personal sin, we try to limit our complicity. At least then there is the sense of control, and the self-understanding that while we're not good, there are many worse than us. Sin becomes something manageable; unpleasant but tolerable, akin to tax.

The Christian tradition we live out of has a somewhat less genial notion of sin. It regards sin as a force which threatens physical, communal and spiritual life, often mortally. Furthermore, the gospel treats this black tide in the affairs of humanity as something beyond our own remedy. The individual can no more quench the flow of sin than Canute could command the incoming sea. In fact, perversely, the more we seek to resist through our own efforts, the more deeply we suppress our capacity for wrongdoing, and the more

powerfully destructive it becomes when it inevitably bubbles to the surface.

This is the underbelly of moralism, which treats human behaviour as something which can be successfully modified through education or commitment to values. Puritans and behavioural psychologists alike share the belief that people can be made good through their own efforts, with a little reinforcement from those who know best. History reveals that this is not only mistaken, but highly dangerous. There is no more viciously cruel society than one which believes itself to be right and good. The United States of America might be a case study in this regard.

Is the alcoholic or gambler a worse sinner than the circumspect accountant or pious teacher? Overlooking the clear folly of grading sin or the people who enact it, the answer is paradoxical. Those most overtly hobbled by life's circumstances may in fact be more psychologically and spiritually healthy than their disapproving neighbours. This strange reversal, which we might call the scandal of the gospel, is because those at the bottom of the social scale often have less opportunity to conceal their own failings from themselves. They have no illusions about their ability to redeem themselves.

At the heart of Christian faith is the simple acknowledgement that human life is broken in a way which is beyond our own capacity to fix. We come to the point of confession, which is a place of recognition that despite our best efforts, despite our good intentions, despite our commitment to do what is right and good; still we find ourselves unable to live as we want to live. And at that place of understanding, we cry out for help from beyond ourselves, searching for the name of God. It is here that healing becomes possible, because we have come to the edge of the chasm.

Confession has fallen from favour in our culture, as few are willing to admit they have anything to confess. Psychotherapist Scott Peck, whose *People of the Lie* remains one of the most chilling and insightful assessments of personal and political evil, regards this age as dominated by narcissism. I would add to that assessment the quality of ***hubris***: the arrogant pride and misplaced confidence which prevents people from seeing or acknowledging their own faults. Already in the heyday of Greek culture there was an understanding of how hubris inevitably contained the seeds of tragedy. We seem to have lost that insight.

The opposite trait, and one in short supply in these days, is that of *humility*. This quality is not necessarily a product of religion, and is often found more easily in those who claim no belief. But it is certainly the starting point for Christian faith. Humility is the realistic assessment of the human condition, and one's own participation in it. It allows people to acknowledge fault without despair. In Jungian terms, it enables the courage required for the facing of one's own shadow. The inner darkness which we reference as sin has never been diminished through turning our backs upon it.

humility allows people to acknowledge fault without despair

Humility is best understood through such cognate terms as humus, humour and humanity. It speaks of earthiness, delight and belonging. True humility is not to be confused with those forelock-tugging and life-denying forms of Christianity which regard people as inherently bad. There is within Calvinism (and some forms of Catholicism) a view of humanity as profoundly corrupt; something to be despised. It creates suspicion of oneself and others, and looks on the world as something to be feared and withdrawn from. Humility, by contrast, opens us to life and people.

Denial is the furnace of sin. Those who imagine themselves to be free from sin are in the most danger of incubating it. Self-deceit allows our generation to think ourselves free from the primitive notion of sin with all its negative limitations. As sophisticated and liberated people, we have outgrown dependence of every kind. The evidence, however, suggests a different picture. Sober acknowledgement of our status as creatures (implying a Creator), rejected along with the submissiveness it seems to imply, has given way to a multitude of more subtle and destructive dependencies.

Repeated dishonesty runs the danger of transforming sin into evil. Scott Peck, who has treated a range of disturbed people, both military and civilian, tells the story of parents who presented their young son with a gun for his Christmas present; the same gun with which his older brother had earlier shot and killed himself. Struggling to understand such diabolical inhumanity, Peck suggests that 'the central defect of the evil is not the sin but the refusal to acknowledge it'. He argues that continued self-deceit runs the risk of crossing the threshold between sin and evil.

The failure to acknowledge our personal shadow may trigger the emergence of the cultural shadow, which frequently results in genocide. Sin, and the willingness to confess our participation in it, is not merely a private religious issue. It shapes politics and history in demonstrable ways. Strangely enough, a strong cultural religion may breed evil rather than keeping it at bay.

There is a credible argument that centuries of Christendom created the Crusades and witch hunts, that Lutheranism contributed to the rise of Nazism in Germany, and that evangelicalism in America can be linked to current events in Iraq. Religion becomes bad when it encourages false pride in piety, thereby forcing sin underground. The torture at Abu Ghraib may be mystifying to many patriotic Americans, but it is entirely consistent with the contemporary

Bloody Purim. . . and the Bloody Passion

Rabbi Arthur Waskow

In the Jewish sacred calendar there is a spring-fever festival called Purim that is intertwined with the Scroll of Esther. It is celebrated with masks and costumes, and with improvised plays that mock authority. Its frivolity betokens a deeper sense of the world turned upside down: a threatened genocide thwarted and turned on its head; hostility to women turned into following the directives women gave.

This year we greet the tenth festival of Purim since the Purim morning when Baruch Goldstein, a West Bank Israeli settler whose name meant "blessed" but whose actions meant accursed, murdered 29 Muslims who were prostrate on their faces in prayer at the Tomb of Abraham in Hebron. This massacre occurred at the very place where the forebear of both the Jewish and the Arab peoples lies – the very place where our two communities should be celebrating each other.

Why do I feel it necessary to remind us of this terrible date – terrible in my own life of Torah, in the life of the Jewish people, in the life of the Palestinian people, in the history of the human struggle to make peace across old boundaries and barricades? Because the event must teach us to recognize and transform the murderer that hides within each people, each person, rather than asserting it lives only in our enemies.

For centuries – and now again, in the wake of the film ***The Passion of the Christ*** and its pointing at "the Jews" as killers of the Christ – Jews have insisted that Christians also look inward for the impulse toward that killing: look inward to the Roman Empire that actually ruled ancient Palestine, even if it had installed a puppet government made up of Jews.

➥

neglect of sin. Lynndie England is not an aberration in an otherwise exemplary culture, but rather the personification of a current which flows through the whole of America's military.

And more to the point, she is also representative of the very Western democracy which we as New Zealanders participate in. Tempting as it might be to demonise her, we would do better to see reflected in her actions the same sadistic aggression and xenophobia which resides in our own hearts. That is not to excuse her, or to suggest she should go unpunished, but rather to recognise our own complicity.

This is not a comfortable proposition, and many will bridle against it. We want to draw a line in the sand which separates us from the worst in human nature. We wish to appear decent and reasonable people, free from the taint of sin.

An honest commitment to the way of Christ will not allow us to deceive ourselves. This is the brutal truth of the Christian understanding of sin: we are all responsible for what each of us is capable of. We can apply as many cosmetics to the corpse as we wish. It will remain lifeless, and sooner or later it will stink.

If that were the end of the story, it would be a very miserable tale indeed. Fortunately for us, it is the beginning. The confession of sin and our helplessness in the face of it opens us to God and each other. It brings the humility which is fertile ground for grace.

For the story of humanity which we hold to is not the tragedy of sin. It is the wonder of grace. Amazing grace, which allows us to be fully alive. That is a gift worthy of its own space. ■

Mike Riddell is a New Zealand author and playwright. Mike wrote a novel which explores the nature of evil, **Masks and Shadows** *(Flamingo 2000)*

Look inward to a Rome that crucified thousands and enslaved hundreds of thousands of Jews – the Rome in which Christianity became the established church and then its successor power. Look inward at Christianity itself and its re-enactment of the crucifixion on the bodies of million of Jews, millions of Yeshuas and Miriams, millions of Jesuses and Marys, millions of the non-violent, compassionate Jews who suffered from the story of the Passion. Jews who remember centuries of being murdered by Christians to avenge this story of a murder, also know that the massacre in the Tomb of Abraham did not stand alone. For Jews remember decades of murderous attacks by Palestinians, by Muslims, against Israeli Jews.

look inward at Christianity itself and its re-enactment of the crucifixion on the bodies of million of Jews

For most people, it is easy to focus on the malevolent misdeeds of one's enemies and to blot out the memory of one's own malevolent misdeeds. For some people, it is easy to do the reverse: bare our hearts to our own evildoing and forget what has been done to us. But only if we can remember both sets of evildoing can we take the steps to end them.

The bloody Purim of 10 years ago reminds us that Jews too must look within. If the ancient Purim story of a thwarted anti-Jewish genocide comes to remind us of the murderous impulse that has arisen against Jews across the centuries, and to remind us that the murderous impulse can be turned upside down and inside out, to destroy its perpetrators – then bloody Purim comes to remind us that the same impulse stirs within ourselves as well.

In the *Scroll of Esther* there are two reversals of old reality: Haman, a malevolent power-hungry official, ends up hanged on the gallows he had intended for the Jews. A pompous, stupid king who had started out the story by deposing a queen who would not take orders from him, ends up taking orders from a newly-empowered woman, his new queen.

I hope that Christians and Muslims will take this occasion to read the *Scroll of Esther* in the light of the appearance of *The Passion* film, to open again their hearts to the centuries of fear that not only corrodes the memory of many Jews but turns that corrosion into rage.

And I hope that Jews will reread the scroll this year after going inward through the Fast of Esther, after remembering the aspect of Haman that we also (not only Baruch Goldstein) carry in ourselves, after saying mourners' Kaddish for those whom we have allowed some among our own people to destroy.

And then, but only then, to celebrate the ultimately hilarious joke of Purim – that the attempt to oppress others ultimately turns the attempt itself upside down. That we can laugh and dance and wear the masks that hide us and reveal us, can thumb our noses and shake our noisemakers at oppressive kings and ministers, because the universe does lift the needy into joy. ■

Rabbi Arthur Waskow, Ph.D., is director of The Shalom Center.
He is the author of The Freedom Seder, Seasons of Our Joy, Down-to-Earth Judaism, Godwrestling, and Godwrestling - Round 2.

Life – *lament on the birth of a stillborn baby*

Out in the winter rain
beneath the decaying leaves
lays the price of her motherhood

Pain of birth and death combined
to empty womb into the grave

Milk of sorrow flows from the heavy breasts
suckling grey desolation

Arms hold air
heavy with the wretchedness of longing

Cold bassinet stands in solitude
listening to dry tears that fall inward

The seed of joy, raped by woe,
shrouded in torment waits
as grief's footprint sets its path

But time grows tender love
and understanding from the grave
that gently empties back
its gift of itself,
LIFE

Marieke Marygold

Retirement of a priest

Humphrey O'Leary (Tui Motu March '04) raised some very interesting issues when he asked "when should parish priests retire?" Two associated questions are: "What is the role of a priest in the post-Vatican II church?" and "How can a priest best answer his vocation?".

I was a late vocation entering the seminary a year after the death of my wife of 30 years. I was ordained in 1996 and over the next eight years served in four parishes. I am now 67: not old, but rather, not so young.

Last September I bought a unit on the Kapiti Coast. This became a 'home away from home' and satisfactory accommodation for a time when I would no longer be living in a presbytery. I moved into this new house and was immediately captivated by a sense of peace. For the first time in several years my stress levels came down, and I found myself praying again, for I had unearthed a place where prayer became possible.

During 2003 I had been far from well and had struggled to respond to the demands of parish life. I consulted with family and friends to discern what direction my life should take. This led to the submission of my resignation as Parish Priest, and my offer to work among those around retirement age and older from my own home. My resignation was accepted.

While a lot of time and energy is expended in encouraging the young to take their place in the church, little attention is given to the needs of those who are not so young. Many of these have given tremendous service to their church, and now they are unable to fulfil the roles as they once did and are often ignored. This is especially true of those put in rest homes or hospitals and often not given the opportunity to be part of the community with which they worshipped.

I left my parish in January 2004 and for the first time for 13 years I found myself able to please myself. I no longer had to 'rush, rush, rush!' I had time to pray, and I could read and study. I still felt called to serve older people. As the year has advanced I find myself becoming busier, helping people with their spirituality.

I feel we in the church of Aotearoa New Zealand need to work smarter and allow our priests to concentrate on the role for which they are ordained – the spiritual and sacramental care of people.

J Kershaw, Paraparaumu

Bioethics and true compassion

Anna Holmes (Tui Motu May) not only sets out a range of issues in bioethics of concern to all, but follows through the implications of some of the present practices approved by bioethicists to see what the future holds. What awaits us is not appealing. The bioethicists are the guardians of all that is human and moral in the practices of the scientists. But the indications are that the guardians need supervision too.

We can readily accept that the great majority working in the area of biotechnology are intent on doing good. Granted this, there is still need to recall the dictum of Mark Twain, "If you see someone coming towards you intent on doing you good, run for your life." Well-meaning efforts are not enough. If one is doing science one adopts the scientific mindset and the successes of that mindset are all around us. But the scientific mindset serves as a sort of blindfold shielding one from reality and enabling one to do what would otherwise offend one's deepest sensibilities. Dr. Holmes mentions that in considering the use of embryos to provide stem-cells for the treatment of some conditions no member of the panel adverted to any aspect except the good to be achieved.

Failing to take the human dimension and human dignity seriously in one's deliberations is to fail to enter the moral sphere. Entering there, we learn the meaning of human dignity not by consulting a dictionary but by allowing a contemplation of the face of the other to evoke reverence for him or her. We are reduced to a sort of silence before the other person, who in freedom expresses self beyond any control of ours. We come to see that we must not attempt to use the person for our purposes, manipulate or merely ignore them. Respectful dialogue is the only appropriate approach.

We understand the other person only because what we discern in the other and what the other reveals resonate in ourselves. This is the basis of compassion. We become aware of our own dignity in being open to that person's dignity, and only if we are willing to recognise our own can we recognise the other. For this reason our moral statements always contain potential reference to ourselves. This questions the validity of treating a question such as that of stem-cell research as a problem 'out there'. The panel-members were in principle referring to themselves at a very early stage of their development.

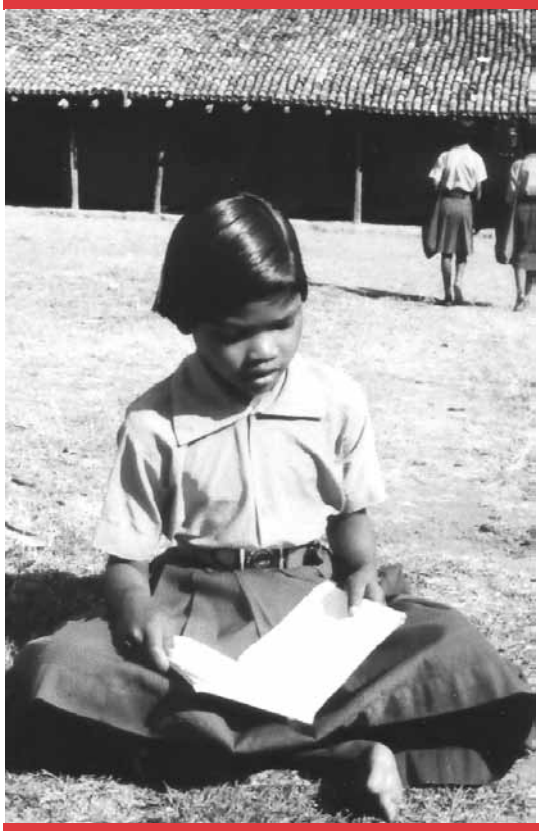
The key-term 'rights' cannot, on its own, do justice to what is involved. There is a matrix of meaning enshrined in a set of terms which includes 'witness', 'compassion', 'the heart', 'freedom', 'contemplation' and 'mystery'. These indicate the 'world' of authentic moral discourse and have priority over terms such as 'definition', 'analysis', 'argument', 'proof' however useful the latter may be in articulating the moral.

Vincent Hunt, Auckland

For a faith that does Justice ...
Jesuit Missions

... an extract from a letter from a parish priest in our mission ...

Birsi learning to read



- $10 supports a student for one month
- $100 supports a student for one year

"Birsi, now nine years old, is one of the sixty-nine girls who have come to the hostel in Jamuniatanr. It wasn't easy for her to come to school.

Her parents had to decide whether she went to school or not. Apart from the problem of paying fees for their daughter, sending her to school would seem like a dead loss to the family. Birsi should stay home to look after her baby sister while her mother went away to work in the fields.

Birsi could at the same time take the cattle out for grazing, and when free, she could help fetch water from the village well, help in the kitchen, and clean the house and the courtyard. In fact, she could do a multitude of other work at home, so it would be a huge loss of labour if Birsi left home to go to school. After all, Birsi was not going to stay on her parent's property once she grew up and married. So why educate a girl-child who would eventually work for her in-laws? The parents needed a lot of convincing to send Birsi to school, especially in the matter of fees, which the mother considered the biggest loss for the family. I was able to give the parents hope of a fee subsidy for Birsi.

It took over a year before the mother reluctantly agreed to send her daughter to school. Birsi is now in the boarding school. She has already learnt the skill of drawing the letters of the alphabet, and is even able to form the letters into meaningful words.

There are many girls like Birsi who have joined the school. There are also many more parents who need a lot more convincing and a lot more subsidies to educate their daughters. We would like to bring more and more girls from rural areas to the boarding schools. It is not an easy scheme, but with your help it is not an impossible one either."

Whatever you give will be greatly appreciated. Cheques should be made payable to:
"New Zealand Jesuits in India"

I enclose $ .....to help provide education for the young girls in rural areas.

Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

Address:..... TM May '04

Mr & Mrs Tom and Carole Ryan, New Zealand Jesuits in India (A registered Charitable Trust)
PO Box 25922, St Heliers Bay, Auckland 1005

New Zealand Jesuits in India...care for the poorest of the poor

FOJ 1703

The Grandfather Question

Paul Andrews

People in training to be psychotherapists, and for years after they are trained, go every week to an experienced person who is called a supervisor, and seek advice about their work. My supervisor was a wise doctor called Michael. One day as I described my work with a 12-year-old boy, Michael interrupted: *Paul, does this boy see you as his father or as his grandfather?*

Once he had asked the question, I realised that the boy was relating to me as to a grandfather. It was an incisive question, not merely for the sake of that boy, but for my own readiness to accept my age. It was the first time I had seen myself in that role, and it felt comfortable.

At the time I was living in a community where the average age was 76. I told them this story and said: *I suppose you mostly think of yourselves as greatgrandfathers?* The question was not received kindly. My elderly brethren still had the self-image of 27-year-olds coupled with old bodies and habits. They did not want to be seen as senior citizens, although grandfatherly attitudes were much in evidence. They would happily indulge in the denunciation of the young, which has been described as part of the hygiene of older people, greatly assisting in the circulation of the blood. But they did not want to feel they were old.

Two faces of ageing

You do not have to look far for reasons. Ageing is likely to mean higher blood pressure, dimmer vision, blunter hearing, less efficient immune system, aching joints, impaired balance. Your parents are dead, your brothers and sisters are often distant or have died before you. The Death columns of the papers report daily the passing of people you worked with, admired, perhaps hated or envied. You have seen the end of enterprises and organisations which seemed simple facts of life: Dublin Transport, Rolls Royce. The currency which served you, the £ S D which seemed the ultimate criterion of realism, has lost its value and given place first to Irish decimal coins, then to Euro and cent.

The nation for which your generation fought has surrendered part of its independence in order to become part of the European Union. You have seen fashions and values change, skirts grow long and short and long again, long hair and beards come – and go. You're smiling all the time because you can't hear a thing your companion is saying. And yet ...

Seventy is wormwood
Seventy is gall.
But it's better to be seventy
Than not alive at all.

It is not just the fact of being alive. Now that I have left 70 behind, I am more aware of the bonuses. In St Declan's, the little school where for many years I acted the grandfather, sitting in an accessible chair, available but not intrusive, I found it in many ways more agreeable than being in charge. You shed the power of authority, and also shed the distance which it imposes.

Children use their grandparents in a particular way. They can be very direct and contemporary in their comments. A friend was telling his granddaughter a story when she interrupted: *Fast forward, please, grandpa*. Grandparents can be safe people to talk to. Children know they can count on affection, and need not fear retribution if they tell things the way they are. In return children give their grandparents a joy that compares with that of parenthood.

Where the old are envied

Some cultures do not depend on children to make the old feel good. A doctor called Alexander Leaf discovered places in Asia and South America with lots of centenarians, some living in good health to 110 or 115. The factor common to all of them was not weather, diet, or anything genetic, but the way people viewed ageing.

To become old was considered to be an enviable thing: You were respected, venerated, seen as more useful, wise and responsible, more functional. People envied older people. We need to recognise ourselves not as redundant, but as a resource, like Leaf's oldies. Two thousand years ago Aristotle recognised this: ***We are bound to give heed to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of the experienced and aged, not less than to demonstrations; because, from their having the eye of experience, they behold the principles of things.***

Having the eye of experience – what does that mean? Faith in a reality which does not change, and enjoyment of a reality which does. For the old, realism takes on a new meaning. What is real is the experience that things pass. You are disengaged from the daily business of life, and from ambition, and this detachment can bring wisdom, a wider perspective in which that final thing, the real thing, should become luminous. You may be tempted to capitulate to transitoriness, to having no more future. You may be tempted to the cynicism of hopelessness in which mutability has conquered.

The true faith of old age is in direct contrast to this. It has cast aside the dreamy aloofness of childhood, renounced the endless demands of youth, seen how fleeting and transitory are human achievements. In this perspective the Providence and love of God, the communion of the dead and the living in Christ, the surpassing meaning of the Mass, can become more real than anything in this world; but not easily. It is not that we have all the answers, but we have enough to sustain our faith and love. ***Faith is the fruit of love, that is, of darkness***, said St John of the Cross. It is based on God's faithfulness. ■

Paul Andrews in a priest-psychotherapist, living in Dublin

Kopua today – *the Cistercian way*

Kopua Abbey in Central Hawke's Bay, New Zealand's only Cistercian foundation, is to be rebuilt. The community has been there for 50 years.

Recently, Margaret Darroch met Abbot Brian Keogh and asked him about the rebuilding and about Cistercian life

Brian Keogh, who has been Abbot of Kopua since 1998, acknowledges that when people look at the plans for the new abbey, they are prompted to ask a couple of hard-nosed questions: firstly, does the present Kopua community really have a future? Secondly, who is going to support such an expensive venture?

"Six years ago," says Br Brian, "we took a hard look at our prospects. We decided that if we can respond to what the people of New Zealand require of us in line with what it means to be a Cistercian, then we have good reasons to think we have a future. We are planning long-term for a community of ten. When I came we were six, presently there are 11 in the community. I don't think it will grow any bigger."

So what is your life – what does it mean to be a Cistercian?

"At present we are able to chant the Office and the daily Eucharist. We can offer hospitality to about a dozen people. We are not embarking on a venture bigger than we can reasonably manage. Casual visitors are growing all the time. They come to Mass and stay perhaps for morning tea and the office of Sext. But we don't intend to build facilities for these.

What we have agreed on is that we need a plan for our future facilities and we need more flexible accommodation for the growing number of visitors. So there will be a hospitality complex.

"I used to say the monasteries were the 'motels of the Middle Ages'. 'Hospitality', I think, is a better word. I say: don't judge a monastery by its buildings but by its capacity to welcome the stranger as Christ, to welcome the pilgrim as Christ – that is part of the Cistercian Rule. Indeed it is part of our contemplation: we contemplate Christ in the face of the stranger. Those who come and visit enrich our contemplative life.

"Cistercians are Christian contemplatives. Being a contemplative is simply being with God; and God being with us; and we being for God's people. That is *Matthew 25.* Jesus said: 'as you did it to the least of my brethren you did it to me' (*Mt 25,40*). It is not enough simply to seek God. We have to be Christ for others. That's the ongoing challenge. Our rule is based on that of St Benedict, which simply enables people who live in community to put the Gospel into practice.

"Our vows as Cistercians are ***obedience*** to the Abbot and to each other; ***stability*** here in this community; and a ***commitment*** to living the monastic life as well as possible. Our 'poverty' simply means to share our belongings together.

And if a young man wants to join. .

"A person who thinks he might be called to serve God as a Cistercian here must 'come and see' if God is really calling him. He must be content with a life in this community focused on the praise of God and welcoming the poor and the stranger. Initially he might come for a week. When the candidate enters we invite him to spend two years

The Kopua community in their present chapel. Br Brian Keogh, the Abbot, is front left

as a novice, and then another nine years before making the final decision. We're not in a hurry.

"Nowadays most of those who come to us are in mid-life. I think it's good if people come with a depth of experience and a richness of life – and not still working out their adolescent angst! Mostly, the young who come are still too immature for this kind of life, and usually they discover that for themselves.

Several Polynesians have come. They find the cultural differences difficult. Acculturation is slow. We have one Tongan at the moment with us. Some people will come and go and come back. The Rule of St Benedict allows for three 'goes'; the Buddhists allow seven!

"If a married person wants to try a religious vocation, the church will always give primacy to his marriage vows: that's non-negotiable. A dispensation can be given by Rome to a husband and wife, who no longer have responsibilities for children, to separate and become religious. But they remain married. I have a friend who is an Oratorian priest, whose wife is a Dominican Sister. The church requires them to keep in contact and to meet each year. If a man were divorced, that would require another dispensation and the wife's permission for him to enter. The married state always has priority.

The monastic day at Kopua

"The monk's day is punctuated by seven 'hours' of prayer. Night prayer is at 4 am. Morning prayer is combined with Mass. Then there is Terce, the office of the 'third hour', before work. Then there is prayer at the 'sixth hour' before dinner. Then a siesta. There is prayer at the ninth hour, then afternoon work. Evening prayer is at 6.15 and night prayer at 8 pm, before the monks retire. Besides work there are several hours for quiet reading of Scripture or for reflective prayer. Our spirituality as Cistercians is founded on the word of God. That is one reason why our churches are so plain. Light is an important image for us, and plays a signicant role in the design of our monastic buildings. When we chant the night Office we are awaiting the dawn of the light."

What about you yourself?

"I was a monk at Tarrawarra in Melbourne, and was elected Abbot here in 1998. I wasn't living here. I was busy milking the cows at Tarrawarra, when the message came that the community at Kopua had chosen me to be abbot: would I accept? I say I was 'hijacked'.

At first I found it very difficult. I almost had a breakdown, and the doctor said it was 'reactionary depression'. But now I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. I am a contented man here and grateful to be here. I often quote to myself 'Don't be afraid: I have called you by your name; you are mine. I am with you' (*Isaiah 43:1-2*). That was the text that kept me going when I was ill and it still keeps me going.

"I feel we are treading water here at Kopua. We're not on solid ground. We are moving into the future without being sure what that future is. But we believe we have discerned the right way. I have the reassurance that God is with the community. That text from *Isaiah* keeps coming back to sustain me if I feel like giving up. And the *Matthew* text I quoted earlier takes me out to others. That is the full expression of my contemplative vocation.

"The new building project on the one hand fills me with a feeling of optimism. On the other hand I know we cannot do this on our own. The people who say we are wasting our time could be right! But we are prepared to step out in faith.

"We are living now in a prefabricated temporary building, built 50 years ago. We've looked after it and it will last us another 20. But we have to have some sort of plan for the future. And this is it. This building programme is planned to go forward without interrupting the life of the monastery.

"It is designed to take place in three stages. The first will be the Hospitality Centre. Then we will rebuild the church. The present church is all right but the ceiling is too low. It will be costly and the final stage will have to wait until the money is available.

"The Hospitality complex will offer wonderful accommodation for those who want a silent retreat. The Assembly area is very versatile, and could even provide marae style living for 20 people. Individual units will allow people on sabbatical to come and stay up to six months. The guest-house can be relocated down the drive and used for families. The architect has already designed the Buddhist monastery in Stokes Valley, Wellington."

And who comes to Kopua?

Br Brian says that all sorts of other faiths and denominations visit: Buddhists, some Muslims, many Anglicans come. The ecumenical activity is long established in Kopua.

Margaret Darroch, who did this interview with Br Brian, has herself visited Kopua many times as a retreatant, visitor and guide. She testifies to the enthusiastic support the monks receive throughout the area of Central Hawke's Bay, irrespective of religious belief.

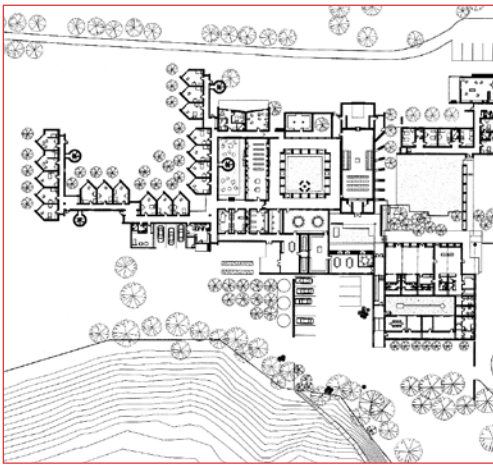
"The monks warmly welcome those who come to the Abbey for prayer, for guidance or just to be alone in surroundings of peace and love. Always I experience a sense of God's presence and the qualities of simplicity and quiet which make sacred the small actions of daily life. It is a place where people can come apart and be with God on their own terms." ■

Margaret Darroch is a parishioner at Our Lady of Lourdes, *Havelock North. She is also a* Tui Motu *Board member*

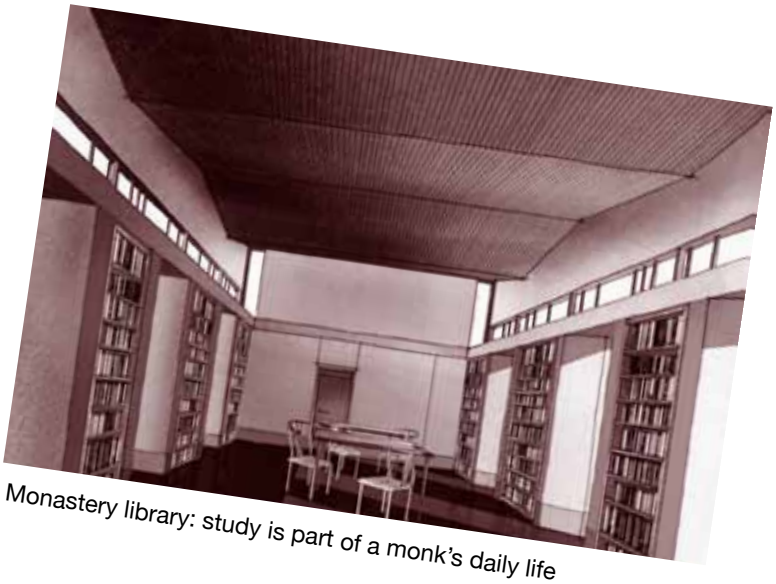
The new

The cloister – transition space in every monastery

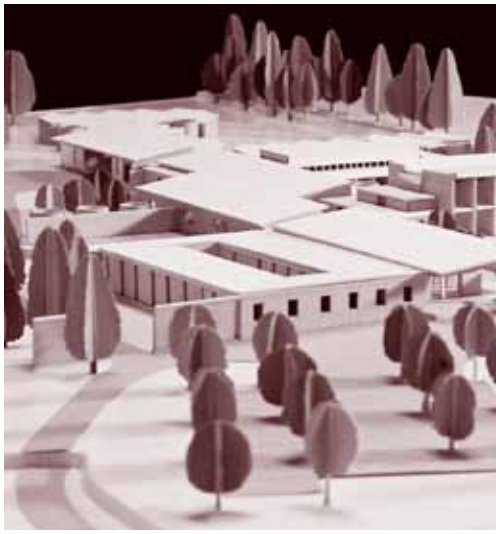
1 church
2 cloister
3 welcome centre
4 guesthouse
5 entry
6 monks cells



Plan of the rebuilt Kopua Abbey



Monastery library: study is part of a monk's daily life



The new Kopua: an artist's impression. Approa
Centre is in the foreground; the church is the t

Enclosed monastic communities are worlds unto themselves. Their members live out the entirety of their lifespan inside the monastery walls, working, eating, worshipping and dying *in situ*. This integration and self-containment of the monastic life presents a challenge for the design of monasteries, and the Cistercians, who have been building monasteries for centuries, have developed well-tested solutions to accommodate their way of life.

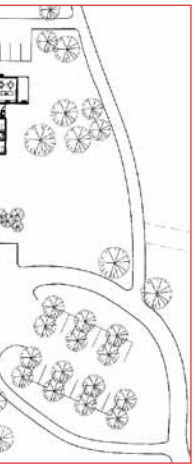
The Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (OCSO), also known as Trappists, is often characterised as a 'silent' order. While the monks don't take a vow of silence, it nevertheless permeates their way of life. ***Silence*** is not the absence of speech so much as the cultivation of an attitude of listening, and the architecture seeks to enable and support this. To speak of architecture as 'silent' or 'quiet' is not to describe its acoustic properties but to describe an approach to the organisation of spaces and activities that encourages an ordered and calm way of life.

Hugh Tennent Architects were invited to design the new monastery for the monks of Southern Star Abbey, New Zealand's only Cistercian monastery. Tennent's brief requested that the design of the new monastery express the community's relationship with God through sharing the Word of God and the Eucharist; hospitality towards guests; life in community; and care for the environment. These are the four cornerstones that underpin the architecture of the new monastic complex.

The Rule

Kopua

Catherine Alington

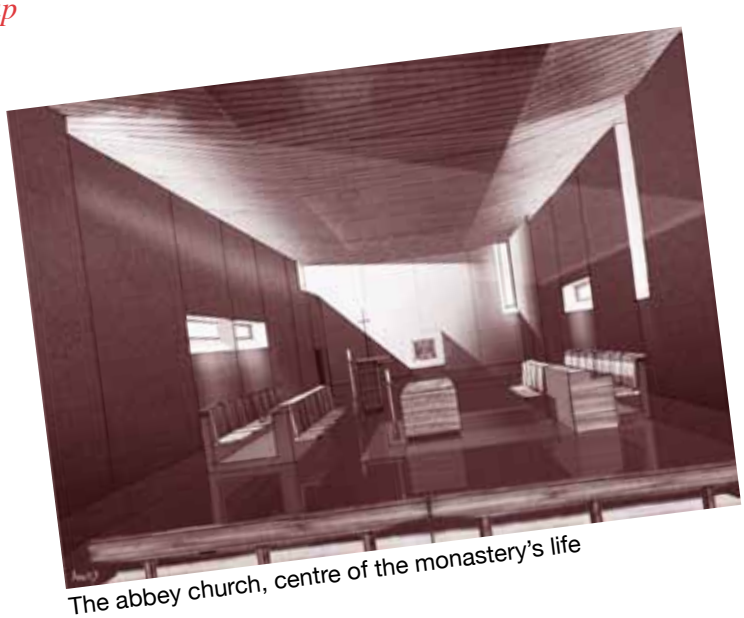


Fifty years ago the Cistercians came to Hawke's Bay. Kopua Abbey began using temporary prefabricated buildings.

Now the community has plans to build a permanent monastery enabling them to offer hospitality to many more visitors and pilgrims.

The design has been drawn up by Hugh Tennent architects

The monk's cell: austere but looking out on the natural world



The abbey church, centre of the monastery's life

aching from the road, the Welcome
tall building in the centre

Like Benedictines, Cistercians follow the Rule of St Benedict. Cistercian life is a life of prayer and work, organised around the Divine Office, where the entire community meets seven times a day in the church for prayer and worship. The day begins early with Vigils around 4 am, and throughout the rest of the day until the final office of Compline at 8 pm, the monks engage in a mixture of study and reading, private prayer, manual work including household chores of cleaning and cooking, and recreation. Because their day is organised around the times of Office, this necessitates frequent movement to and from the church.

The Church

The church, therefore, forms the hinge in the layout of Cistercian monasteries. Very early in the development of the Cistercian order, a somewhat standardised arrangement for the buildings had been settled on, a plan that uses the church to form one wall of a cloister enclosed on the remaining three sides by spaces for study, sleep, and eating (*see plan above*).

Because locals from surrounding villages would also attend the abbey church, it also became the point of interface between the public and private areas of the monastery. This same relationship is seen in Tennent's design, where the church is at the centre of the plan, open to access from both the community side and the guest side. Symbolically and spatially, it forms the hinge that joins the community to the world.

The Refectories

Kopua Abbey: the Welcome Centre, the first part of the new monastery to be built

The refectories, the dining halls for guests and monks, form a second pivot of the hinge. They are a point of meeting between the private inner world of the community and its relationship to the outside world. ***Hospitality***, a principal charism of the Order, is expressed through the offering of food and respite to the guest and traveller. The refectory is therefore centrally placed in the layout of the monastery, to express the centrality of hospitality in the life of the community.

The spatial organisation of the activities within the monastery support the daily activities of both monk and guest, and allow the various facets of daily life to be carried out with minimal disruption and inconvenience. By placing the church and the refectories centrally in the plan, guests and monks come together in common activities and then separate again to pursue individual tasks.

The Cloister

There are sound pragmatic reasons for providing a cloister in the plan of a monastery, and possibly the origin of the cloister was simply a response to the problem of arranging all the daily activities close to the church to avoid long treks from workplace to worship. The cloister is a space that both separates and connects the activities surrounding the church.

The monks move from areas of work or sleep into the sacred cloister, and from there into the church. Rather than moving abruptly from bed to choir stall, or from tractor to church, the cloister provides a space of transition that links the areas while simultaneously acting as a buffer between them. The cloister enables the monks to move unimpeded and under shelter between all areas of the monastery.

The cloister also plays an important role in establishing a contemplative attitude towards worship. Rather than moving directly from peeling potatoes to chanting psalms, the cloister asks the monk to leave the potatoes behind and when he enters a space open to the sky, he subtly reorients his thoughts away from his chores.

As he moves around the cloister, the changed rhythm of movement from standing or sitting to walking, awareness of the air temperature, the change in light intensity from inside to outside, all these factors draw his awareness away from the activity he was engaged in and readies him to focus on the activity ahead, prayer.

In the new plan for Southern Star Abbey, the placement of the guest facilities in relation to the church provides the guests with a similar experience. The east wall of the church forms a publicly-accessible cloister that is enclosed on another two of its four sides by buildings that serve guest needs: the *Welcome Centre* and the guest house itself (*see plan*). As guests drive up towards the monastery, they first see the freestanding cross then as they get closer the east wall of the church becomes visible. They do not arrive at the church, however, but at the *Welcome Centre*, and are greeted and settled in accommodation before they approach the church on foot. This sequence of arrival and approach to the church is deliberately arranged to create an attitude of ***silence*** and readiness, similar to the monks' approach to the church through the sacred cloister.

In the present monastery guests drive right up beside the church, and go directly from car to pew. Requiring guests to leave their car and walk along covered walkways provides a transition that takes them from outside the monastery to inside its heart, from outdoor space to inside a church, and provides time for the mind to quieten down, for the body to slow down, and to prepare for worship and prayer.

These zones of transition between activities in the monastery are important devices for generating an attitude of attentive listening. Their success depends in part on all the other attributes of the architecture being in accordance with the same goal. The use of light, colour, surfaces and textures must all contribute equally to fostering the silence that creates space for contemplation.

The decor

Cistercian monasteries are renowned for their use of light. Until the advent of electric light, daylight was of course essential if rooms were to be used at all. But light took on a special significance in Cistercian architecture because it was the principal means of surface decoration. At the time of their founding in the 11th century, the Cistercians strongly disagreed with the Benedictines' approach to the decoration of churches with precious metals and costly works of art.

The Cistercians removed decoration, not because it was seen as evil but because of a commitment to a more austere way of life that they believed more closely reflected

the simplicity demanded by the Rule under which they lived. As a result, Cistercian builders avoided carving and surface decoration, and older Cistercian monasteries tend to be built of unadorned stone with smooth surfaces. Instead, the passage of light, filtered through windows and casting shadows across walls and floors, took the place of decoration. Because it was subtle, it required attentiveness to notice it, and its effect was a call to contemplation.

In this same spirit Hugh Tennent's design for the new monastery employs a restricted palette of materials and colours. Most of us live surrounded by a visual cacophony of colour and materials, and our minds are continually occupied in filtering out details competing for our attention. Colour can be stimulating, and can engage our emotions even when we think we are unaware of it. By reducing the obviousness of colour, and limiting the palette of materials, interior surfaces create a harmonious composition of colours and textures that do not compete with one another for attention.

The structure

The new monastery will be built of solid masonry walls. The natural variation in colour of simple materials provides delicate relief of flat wall surfaces. There is no busy wallpaper pattern causing the eye to move incessantly over its repetitions seeking a place to stop. Colours are neutral so that walls, door and window frames, and floors become unobtrusive surfaces that allow the eye to come to rest. The limited number of complementary and simple materials has the effect of quietening the space because nothing is visually clamouring for attention.

Thick walls also visually anchor the building firmly on its site. Solid, heavy walls create a sense of permanence, physically expressing one of the three vows monks take, a vow of ***stability***. Although this is understood principally as a commitment to membership in one community, it also extends to the place where that community resides. Monasteries endure, the buildings outlasting any individual member, so they convey a sense of timelessness that extends beyond the human lifetime. Permanence precludes any idea of moving on when resources are despoiled or used up.

An atmosphere of silence and permanence created using thick walls, sheltering roofs with eaves for protection from weather, gradual transitions from exterior to interior space, and ever-changing light: these are the elements that make up the new monastery at Kopua, and equally describe Cistercian monasteries centuries old. The buildings are home to a spirituality of contemplation, and their role continues to be that of fostering a life of quiet devotion within their walls. ■

Catherine Alington trained as a landscape architect and is now a freelance writer in Wellington. She is an Associate of Kopua Abbey

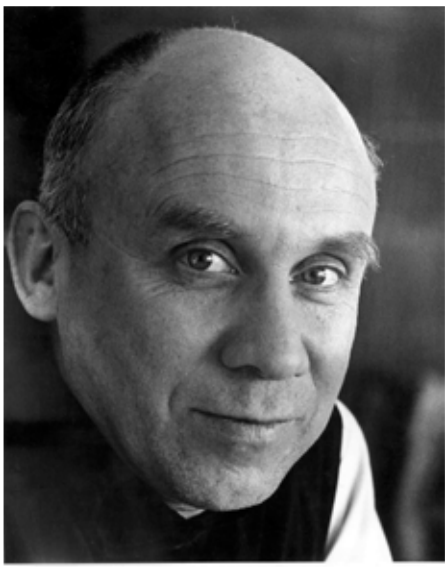


Photo: John Howard Griffin.
With permission of the Merton Legacy Trust

Thomas Merton ... monk and prophet

Thomas Merton, the Cistercian monk, was probably the most influential Catholic writer – in English – during the 20th Century. Here Tui Motu *interviews Dr Paul Pearson, a Merton scholar, who recently ran a seminar on him in Christchurch*

Dr Paul Pearson is Director of the *Thomas Merton Centre*, Louisville, Kentucky – the archive of Merton's works, a research centre and a library. Louisville is an hour's drive from Gethsemani, the abbey where Merton spent his 27 years as a monk. There are some 45,000 items there of Merton memorabilia.

Paul's own interest was aroused at the age of 15 when he was recommended to read Merton by his school chaplain. He was immediately attracted by something in the writing – perhaps it was Merton's desire for God. He read Theology at University and was recommended to write a paper on Merton. He became one of the founders of the Merton Society in the United Kingdom, producing a journal twice a year.

After University he worked with the Benedictines, who ran a mission in SE London. He then tried his own vocation with them. Later he did a Master's degree and studied Merton's use of 'journey' as a metaphor for the monastic life, with particular reference to the famous mediaeval "Brendan voyage". Merton's own early life had been one of ceaseless wandering through Europe finishing up in the United States. There he joined a Trappist monastery, where the journeying abruptly ceased. Or, rather, it became transformed into a spiritual quest. Brendan was searching for the promised land, and monks also were searching for God and redemption.

his writings

In the '60s Merton started to write again: he often wrote about the search for truth, which at the time was often being perverted by the political leaders and the media. He started to follow a prophetic path, following lines which were not popular at that time. He invited members of other religions and Christian congregations – Presbyterians, Southern Baptists and Methodists – to come to Gethsemani and have dialogue, not on doctrinal issues but on their experiences of God and prayer. This is commonplace today, but at that time it was not commonly done. Later he invited Rabbis, Sufi mystics and Hindu monks. He was an ecumenist way ahead of his time.

Merton was always one for pushing boundaries. He and Abbot James appear from Merton's journals to have been at each other's throats for much of the time. Yet the Abbot said Merton was the most obedient of monks and he kept him as novice master for ten years, from 1955 to 1965. During that time the monastery became crowded with new vocations so he was hugely influential.

What characterised him more than anything else, says Paul Pearson, was his extraordinary discipline, which enabled him to achieve so much in only 20 years. He used every minute of the day that was available. He was a very focused person, and never wasted a moment. He gave himself fully to his novices, but their appointments with him closed as soon as they had received what they needed.

The archives at Louisville include 18,000 pieces of correspondence, involving some 2000 people ranging from Popes and Presidents, Nobel Prize winners to ordinary people sending Merton a Mass stipend. All written by himself. And he mostly did his own editing.

his poetry

Merton had written some poems before he came to the monastery, and his first two published works as a monk were collections of poems. There are nine

such collections altogether, and his *Collected Poems* runs to 1000 pages. At first he wrote traditional religious poetry, but in time he evolved his own style: there is a strong sense of solitude and the 'desert' experience. Later in the '60s his poetry, just like his later theological works, began to reflect the issues of the world and often dealt with civil rights.

One early poem (*see below*) was composed on the death in action of his brother, the last survivor of his immediate family. It is entitled "For my brother: reported missing in action, 1943". "Original child bomb" is about the nuclear bomb, written in 1962. It marked a change in his writing, following the style of the 'anti poet'. Phrases being bandied about by the media are taken and fed back in poetic form, with a view to arresting people's attitudes to politicians and the media.

as a monk

Gethsemani became very crowded during the heyday of the monastic revival and Merton craved for solitude and space. At one time there were over 200 in a monastery designed for 70. Yet he needed other people also. His need for solitude was to some degree satisfied by being allowed to use a disused shed in the grounds of the monastery. Merton brought into the open what contemplation really means, that it is available to the ordinary believer, not just to the specialists, monks and nuns. He played a big part in this movement towards a more available spirituality. He opened up the monastic tradition, made it accessible to ordinary readers. He wrote in an understandable way about some of the most profound insights of the Fathers and mystical writers. He is perhaps the single most influential figure in reviving interest in spirituality for Catholic and non-Catholic lay people.

He was hopeless with anything mechanical or technical, so the accident which killed him was not entirely a surprise. He was electrocuted in a hotel bedroom in Bangkok. One of the monks commented afterwards that the amazing thing was that he had survived so long! He had a reputation for being lethal with an axe when he was out in the forest, and the others gave him a wide berth. In the hermitage he was always burning his food.

as a prophet

In 1962 he wrote profusely on issues of war and peace, until he was silenced by the Order. They said it wasn't the role of a monk to write this sort of thing. When John XXIII issued his celebrated peace Encyclical *Pacem in Terris,* Merton commented that the Pope was lucky he didn't have to go through the Trappist censors, or the Encyclical would never have been promulgated!

When the Abbot received the letter silencing Merton, he sat on it for several months to enable Merton to complete the work he was doing. His own brethren respected his writings, but Cardinal Spellman of New York, who was also chaplain to the American Army, did not like what Merton was saying. The Abbot General of the Cistercians was French, indeed a supporter of de Gaulle and he wanted the French to have their own atomic bomb. These brought pressures to bear to silence this turbulent monk.

for my brother

reported Missing in Action, 1943

Sweet brother, if I do not sleep
My eyes are flowers for your tomb;
And if I cannot eat my bread,
My fasts shall live like willows where you died.
If in the heat I find no water for my thirst,
My thirst shall turn to springs for you, poor traveller.

Where, in what desolate and smokey country,
Lies your poor body, lost and dead?
And in what landscape of disaster
Has your unhappy spirit lost its road?

Come, in my labor find a resting place
And in my sorrows lay your head,
Or rather take my life and blood
And buy yourself a better bed –
Or take my breath and take my death
And buy yourself a better rest.

When all the men of war are shot
And flags have fallen into dust,
Your cross and mine shall tell men still
Christ died on each, for both of us.

For in the wreckage of your April Christ lies slain,
And Christ weeps in the ruins of my spring:
The money of Whose tears shall fall
Into your weak and friendless hand,
And buy you back to your own land:
The silence of Whose tears shall fall
Like bells upon your alien tomb.
Hear them and come: they call you home.

At his death he had just finished writing *Peace in a post-Christian era* which was never published. Some 15 years ago it was looked at again but the publisher at the time thought it was no longer relevant. Last year another publisher said: "This is the time: it is more relevant now than when he wrote it". If you take out comments about the struggle against Communism and substitute 'War on Terror', it becomes immediately relevant.

He had always been sensitive to the race issue, and before he joined the monastery he had worked at *Friendship House* in Harlem, New York. The Afro-American activist Hylton Cleaver said no one wrote more sympathetically about Harlem, and Merton wrote a poem where he described Christ being 'crucified' in Harlem. In the '60s and '70s Gandhi would have been better known in Britain than in the United States, but Merton probably did a lot to make Gandhi's thinking better known in the US.

There is a profound perceptiveness in his writing. His European education

and background during and after the war gave him a very wide experience. He knew several languages. He could read St Bernard in the original Latin. But his conferences to novices were solidly based on Scripture and the monastic tradition.

as a person

Some monks in the community at Gethsemani nowadays do not want their vocation to be painted only by the Merton brush: they like to think they live their own Cistercian lives, not 'Merton monasticism'. Indeed many of the monks who were with him were unaware of his fame outside the monastery. Nevertheless his influence has lasted.

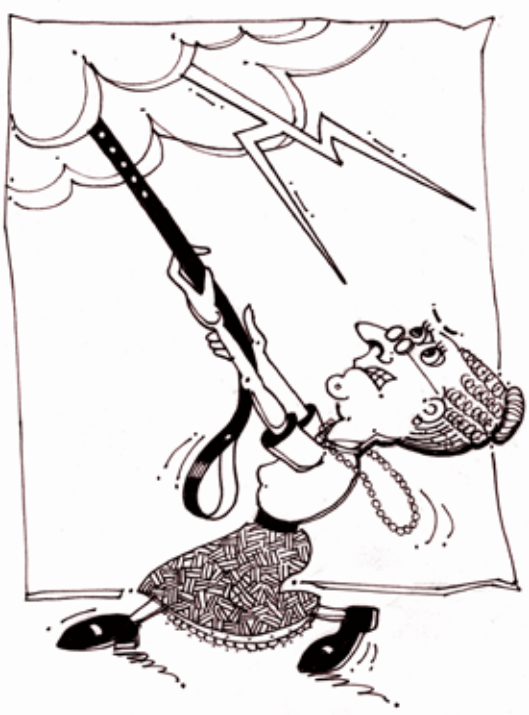
Paul Pearson met an ex-novice, now married with nine children, who is a deacon in his home parish. He stated that the contemplative part of his life, which he had stayed with, he owed entirely to Thomas Merton. Frequently people will speak of him as if he had been their best friend, so he certainly had the gift of relating to people, children as well as adults.

In community, he was probably a thorn to some at times, but generally he was a good community man. Those who knew him invariably spoke highly of him. His religious community was the first real family he had experienced – and the Abbot was the first real father! When he was in Asia he wrote back to the community with great affection, even taking the trouble to write personally to a Belgian monk whose English was very hesitant. The postcard arrived on the same day as the news of his death.

He was totally at home in the Catholic Christian tradition, and it was precisely because he was so comfortable with who he was as a priest and monk that he could dialogue so comfortably with other faiths. ■

Leashed

Glynn Cardy



The way we think about God is influenced by the way we individually think. It is not uncommon for someone whose paramount value is serenity to have a calming, she'll-be-right God. It is not uncommon for someone who fears that things might get out of control to have an organised, general-manager God. For good or for ill we tend to project our needs, our hopes, on to God. This was the same in Jesus' day.

A way of understanding Jesus is to think of him as a debunker of God thoughts. Whenever anyone would try to neatly wrap God up in brown paper and string, Jesus would break lose with the scissors. He was a disturber of the peace. Whenever God seems to be the tame accessory, walking sedately on a lead, the spirit of Jesus wants to cut loose.

I lived with a dog for many years who never used a leash. He didn't like them, and my voice could do the job just as effectively. Mind you, I did have one, but more for show than anything else. He was born a stray, of mixed lineage, and insatiable appetite. He would run and play with the neighbourhood kids in our fenceless street. Why he adopted me I have no idea.

I hadn't grown up with dogs and didn't know the first thing about them. I quickly learnt that sleeping on the bed was out. But he slept nearly everywhere else. He also accompanied me nearly everywhere I went. This was determined by two factors: firstly, there didn't seem to be any good reason to exclude him, and, secondly, he made a terrible din if left at home.

I became known as the priest with the dog. Or was it the dog with the priest? A consequence being that people assumed that I was an avid advocate for the animal kingdom, and I was crowned with the kudos thereof. Not that I was anti-animal. I just treated the particular mongrel that resided with me as I would any friend whom I spent nearly every hour, every day, every week with.

Mrs Smythe disagreed. "Dogs need to be leashed!" Mrs Smythe was a neighbour. And she owned a dog. Not a very big dog, but it was a dog. She called him Samson, and his hair was clipped short. I would see Samson and Mrs Smythe trotting together every morning at 7 a.m. The leash was on, although I never saw him straining it.

Mrs Smythe kept most things on a leash. Her husband, her house, and her children. Everything was well behaved, well ordered, and ran to time. She had made this her life's work. The leash was almost invisible. But, ahh, should a paw stray off the path... Whambo! The leash would snap tight.So her daughter told me when I met her in London. She was the prodigal who never made it home. Her mother was still waiting for her to come back, settle down, marry, and to suffocate in the maternal embrace.

The one thing Mrs Smythe and I had in common was church. Not the same one mind you. She went to the square brick church on the corner. Every Sunday, rain or shine. God was as regular as Samson's walks. She helped at the Op Shop too. Every Wednesday. She was a pillar of her church, and you were told if you didn't know.

One day we talked about God. It was when I happened, by chance, to spot you-know-who doing you-know-what on her front lawn. "Oh no", I groaned, and headed out with the trowel before the offending article, the offender, or the offender's manservant were spotted. No such luck.

"Good morning Reverend", she hollered, advancing from the side path. "Nice day to be in the garden."

There was no escape. Trowel in hand. Offending article nicely balanced and giving off that nauseous odour. "Hello Mrs Smythe."

"I see you've been collecting the morning's manna," she beams.

I was never one for a quick, slick reply. "Yes," I mumbled and looked for an escape.

"I'm glad I happened to see you," she continued, ignoring my discomfort. Or was she enjoying it? "I was puzzled about that letter of yours that appeared in the Herald."

"Oh no," I thought, "this is all I need. I'm about to hear her views, whether I want to or not. Probably the letter about politics and prayer. It was tongue-in-cheek, satirical. But Mrs Smythe's imagination is as fluid as a brick."

"What sort of God do you pray to?"

Wary of the verbal baseball bat now poised above my head, I proceeded to articulate a most Anglican answer. One of those careful expositions designed to meet the least resistance while bearing a slight semblance to one's actual beliefs. The smell of dog dung hung in the air.

"I think God is straightforward," she responded. Had I expected anything else? "God is there to preserve, protect, and if necessary punish."

Pause. Big pause.

That was it. Theology in a thimble.

"Does God ever misbehave?" I ventured.

Momentarily she lost her calm demeanour. "Never!" was the vehement reply.

I had the strong impression God was on a leash. ■

During May, Professor Richard Hays, of Duke Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina, delivered the Burns lectures at Otago University. His principal theme was the connection between Old and New Testaments. Lectures on each of the canonical Gospels were framed by introductory and concluding ideas on how both scholar and devout Christian might read and apply the revealed Word of God. Below is a summary of lectures One and Six.

Photo: Jim Neilan

Richard with his wife, Judy

How to read and preach the Scriptures?

In the Gospel of *Mark* we read how Jesus came to Jerusalem for the last time, went into the Temple and drove out those who sold and bought, overturning the tables of the moneychangers. Jesus says: "Is it not written: 'My house shall be a house of prayer for all nations'?. But you have made it a den of robbers". This Temple passage is sandwiched between two incidents involving a fig tree by the wayside which Jesus discovered to be without figs. "May no one ever eat fruit from you again," he pronounces. Later the disciples observe that the fig tree has withered to its roots (*Mk.11:12-20*).

Richard Hays notes that the context of interpretation of this passage is in *Jeremiah*. The prophet too stood in the Temple and denounced the idolatry and injustices of the Jewish people of his time, who hypocritically chanted: "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!"(*Jer. 7:4*). A few verses further on Jeremiah says: "When I would gather them, says the Lord, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree: even the leaves are withered, and what I gave to them has passed away from them" *(Jer.8:13)*. Israel has become like a barren fig tree, and its Temple worship has become vain.

The people took no notice of Jeremiah, but their infidelity appears to have been punished by the destruction of their temple and the conquest of their nation by Babylon. In the passage out of *Mark* Jesus appears to be repeating Jeremiah's warning. Hays interprets his action as a cleansing of the Temple to make it a fit place for both Jews and Gentiles to worship in. But the Jewish leaders interpret Jesus' warning as a prediction that he will 'destroy' the fabric and in three days replace it by a temple not made by human hands. As custodians of the Temple they see this as a threat to their security. They accuse Jesus of blasphemy and connive at his death.

In general terms, Professor Hays insists the Scriptures are not just historical documents of possible political or sociological interest. They are writings for a believing community. They represent the Divine initiative to rescue and restore a broken world. The Scriptures are not primarily about people, nor are they just the history of one race. They are essentially about God – about God's manner of dealing with the people of God. The Scriptures fundamentally are works of *theology*.

The Old and New Testaments comprise one continuous story. They describe how God deals firstly with the Jewish race and then with the Gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ: both are equally 'the people of God'. The Old Testament flows into the New, and the New Testament cannot be correctly interpreted except in the context of the Old.

Jesus was a Jew. His disciples claimed he was the long-awaited Christ. He spoke the language of the Jewish tradition. The first Christian writings, including the Gospels, are Jewish writings, arising out of the experience

and reflection of Jewish Christian communities.

Hays criticises Christian commentators on both wings of the theological spectrum: the *Jesus Seminar* scholars on the one hand who disregard any texts which they regard as of doubtful historicity, and the Biblical fundamentalists who select certain texts and apply them literally to support their own agendas. For various reasons both groups tend to neglect or ignore the Old Testament. Once upon a time Catholics neglected it also – to their impoverishment.

There are certain themes which occur throughout Hebrew literature which are keys for understanding the Gospels:

• *the judgment of God*. The prophets especially challenge the people to be faithful to God and tongue-lash them because of their persistent failure and idolatry. Jesus continues this especially in his preaching against the Scribes and Pharisees and the discourse about the end-times.

• Isaiah, Ezechiel and Jeremiah all look forward to a *new creation*. Another age is predicted when the stranger and the outcasts will return to the fold. This becomes a theme song of Jesus' preaching too.

• the God revealed in the Old Testament is *mysterious and elusive*. God is essentially 'other'. Insofar as Jesus reveals himself to be Son of God, his message too is mysterious and elusive.

The encounter on the Emmaus road notably underlines the connection between the Old and New Testaments. The Risen Christ appears and becomes the interpreter of the Jewish Scriptures for two fleeing disciples, who are disillusioned and dejected. There is no new revelation in Christ's words, simply an insistence that the whole Jewish tradition leads up to the death and resurrection of Christ. "Was it not necessary," he asks, "that the Christ should suffer and enter into his glory?" (*Lk.24:26*).

In sum, it is not a violation for Christians to use and base their belief on the Old Testament. We are not highjacking someone else's sacred writings! Rather, Professor Hays points to an essential complementarity: the old Covenant leads to the new; the exile foreshadows a return; the death of Jesus leads inevitably to the Resurrection. We can look back to the old Jewish writings and recognise the 'types' which are later fulfilled. Especially in table fellowship we learn to participate in a rich and ongoing Biblical culture which has helped form God's people and continues to do so.

How can a preacher use the Old Testament to illuminate the gospel message?

Professor Hays insists that a student of Scripture needs to use imagination as well as scholarship. Origen, Augustine, Luther were universal scholars, not specialists. In the post-Enlightenment era, we are too much at the mercy of specialists. By concentrating on the wood we miss the trees. The preacher has to be artist as well as exegete.

How much are we prepared to use imagination in interpreting God's word? Are we drawn to it by its beauty? Or is preaching it simply a chore? So many of the great events described – creation, covenant, a nation of priests, Incarnation, the call of the gentiles – are deeds of imagination. Before each of them happened, they were unimaginable.

The Gospel writers themselves were artists in the way they drew their portraits of Jesus Christ. They wrote within a 'history', starting with the Creation and proceeding through the story of Israel to its climax in Jesus Christ. But it does not end in Jesus' death, but continues on to the Resurrection, the church of Christ and through to the end-times.

Professor Hays insists that what each evangelist writes is unfinished: we are invited to continue the story. So, if we are to do justice to God's words and deeds in our preaching, we must use our imagination. We too must be artists.

The political and religious scene in the United States

The scene is dismaying: the right-wing tends to merge their Christianity with American interests and values in an uncritical way. At worst they are even prepared to accept violence and militarism as instruments of what they see to be the divine will. They relive a crusade mentality. Fortunately there are many Christians in the United States who don't go along with this at all, but the negative consequences will affect the world for a long time.

President Bush himself walks a narrow line: on the one hand he appeals to the American civil tradition which is not specifically Christian; on the other, he is constantly using Christian or Biblical language and imagery to describe his mission. For instance he will apply to the war against terrorism the words of the Prologue to the Gospel of John – "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it" (*Jn 1:5*). To suggest that the military power of America somehow represents 'the light' verges on the blasphemous. If the Church allows itself to fall into this way of thinking then it is being manipulated to invalid ends.

Support for this type of thinking tends to fall as much on race and class lines as on traditional Christian ones: thus Afro-American churches, many of whom are Southern Baptists and evangelical in their theology, have tended to be strongly opposed to the war. Generally speaking, denominational divisions in the US have become very diluted in recent times. So, any one 'church' may comprise the whole political and theological spectrum.

Reflecting on Luke

Susan Smith

Luke 11 concludes with Jesus being invited to eat in the home of a Pharisee who berates Jesus for his failure to wash in the prescribed way before a meal. Jesus responds by attacking the Pharisees for their insistence on an outward purity, not matched by concern for an inner cleanliness. He then condemns the lawyers who impose minute and burdensome regulations on people, laws they themselves do not take seriously. These were the law and order brigade of the times and we see how Jesus condemns them.

There is a hardly a night goes by without someone on TV, often enough a lawyer-turned-politician, proclaiming the good news that their party will insist on tougher sentencing, no parole, life imprisonment will mean what it says, more prisons, and so on. Such outraged statements of apparent concern are applauded by the public. I often wonder how Jesus would have responded to such situations. It is hard to see that he would have been cheering on such expressions of apparent concern that appear to have more to do with gaining votes than with a genuine concern about both victims and perpetrators of violent crime. Our law-making politicians seem less concerned about white-collar crime, perhaps because it is often the prerogative of some of their peer group.

Recently we have witnessed the sorrow and trauma of some families in Whangarei because one young woman's frustrated anger led her to drive her car through a group of young people partying. This was an appalling thing to do. We saw too that people were angered at the sentence the judge handed down – they wanted a life for a life, and even if they were not thinking of capital punishment, then life imprisonment.

The judge pointed to the young woman's traumatic childhood and said that needed to be considered as a contributing factor as did the fact that she was beaten up by the partygoers. As I read her letter of remorse with its poor spelling and grammar, it was obvious enough that here was one of life's victims, one whom our law-making politicians probably would never have the "misfortune" to have to meet socially, one whom society's institutions had failed. I keep asking myself, "where would Jesus have been in all this?" Certainly he would have consoled and empathised with those who suffered as a result of the young woman's crime. But he would also have reached out to the young woman, and at the end of the day he would be crucified by the lawmakers for such behaviour. ■

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Richard Hays has been involved in the production of a book of essays called *The Art of Reading Scripture,* (published: Wm.B Eerdmans, $NZ69.95). Here the preacher is called on to emphasise that God is alive and active today, that Scripture is the history of God's dealing with humanity which is being retold every time we preach.

The artistic preacher will not fear to use allegory. For example, in *Daniel 3* the three men in the fiery furnace are joined by a mysterious fourth figure. Christian writers have often interpreted this figure Christologically – as the pre-incarnate Christ. Such interpretation would be anathema to critical scholars today. But why? For those writers the figure was identified with Christ, who not only comes into the furnace to share our suffering but remains there when the three young men are rescued. Such allegorical preaching is theologically powerful.

So what is its limit? If the Gospels are the inspired word of God, then it is the Holy Spirit who provides the limit. It is the Church's own rule of faith which we find in the Creeds. Augustine's rule was even simpler: the rule of love: if you went outside love you had transgressed the boundaries. That is not a bad guideline. ■

Inspiration

The completion of the process of inspiration takes place not so much in the individual reader of the inspired text but in the communion of faith that receives it. Nicholas Lash, a Cambridge Catholic scholar, wrote an essay called Performing the Scriptures, where he says the interpretation of Scripture is a communal activity in the same way as performing a Beethoven string quartet or a Shakespeare play. No single person can render an adequate rendition of a text or theme.

Should this man be beatified?

Antonio Rosmini 1797-1855

Jim Neilan

When someone suggested to Dorothy Day, the American social justice activist, that one day she would be canonised, she protested: "I don't want to be dismissed that easily".

Her comment perhaps articulates a certain cynicism, quite common in recent years, about the whole business of the creation of new saints. The sheer numbers created by Pope John Paul II as well as the undue haste and sometimes questionable characters of those whose causes have been pushed, has contributed to this scepticism.

Antonio Rosmini will probably be among those to be beatified next year. There are sure to be disparaging remarks, "Par for the course; another celibate male; founded a religious order and so there'll be plenty of money to push his cause; what about someone we can relate to?" and so on. Which is a pity, because Rosmini is someone we can relate to and is someone whose writings on philosophy and spirituality have much to contribute to the needs of the contemporary world.

Getting to grips with Rosmini's thoughts is not a matter of curling up in front of the fire for an entertaining read; he was writing in Italian in the early 1800s in the style of that period. Our *Tui Motu* editor, some years ago, produced a 74 page booklet, *Rosmini Revisited*, which is very helpful in making his spirituality more accessible to English readers.

Rosmini lived at the time of the Enlightenment, the name given to the philosophical movement of the period. Its most famous proponents were Locke, Hume and Kant who insisted that the only certainty and truth we can have, comes through our reason and our senses. There is no place for God in our search for truth – science and religion are at loggerheads.

Rosmini confronted these ideas head on, refuting them in their authors' own language and on their own grounds. He put forward a coherent system, with God as the central reality, drawing on the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure.

Pope John Paul wrote of him: "Rosmini knows there is no opposition between faith and reason, but that one demands the other. Believers are also thinkers – faith without reason withers into myth and superstition; and so he set about applying his immense gifts of mind, not only to theology and spirituality, but to fields as diverse as philosophy, politics, law, education, science, psychology and art, seeing in them no threat to faith but necessary allies."

Supporters of Rosmini have had a long wait for any progress on his way to canonisation. His influence has been largely lost to the English-speaking world and even in his native Italy the depth and originality of his thought made contemporaries wary of him. Popes of his time, particularly Pius IX, were ambivalent in their treatment of him, and after his death his opponents quite blatantly distorted his writings, so that Leo XIII put 40 Propositions extracted from his works on the Index of Condemned Books.

It was only in 2001 that Rosmini was officially 'reinstated'. Cardinal Ratzinger stated: "The ambiguity, the misunderstanding and the difficulty of understanding some expressions and categories present in the condemned propositions, explain how certain interpretations of an idealist, ontologist and subjectivist stamp might be attributed to Rosmini by non-Catholic thinkers." (Translation: "Don't expect us to admit we got it wrong.")

The preamble to the new European Constitution omitted any mention of the historic role Christianity has played in the formation of Europe's identity. The draughters jumped from the influence of the Greeks and the Romans directly to the Enlightenment. So, last spring, in Vienna, the Pope reminded this committee that Christianity has left its mark on the rich life and culture of Europe for almost two millennia. He added: "The Christian roots of Europe are the main guarantee of its future."

And here, in New Zealand, this same refusal to acknowledge that Christianity has anything to offer becomes more and more widespread through the world of politics, education and the media. Meanwhile a glance at the Personal columns in any daily newspaper shows hordes of advertisements for clairvoyants, tarot readers *et al*, promising recipes for happiness and self-fulfilment.

The message of Rosmini is as urgently needed as an antidote to the philosophies of 2004 as it was to those of the 19th century. Pope John Paul said of him, "His teaching transcended his own time and place and is still today both relevant and timely." Hopefully, by making him a saint of the universal Church his influence can be used for the good of the Church and the world. ■

Tolerance the victim in the fundamentalist war

Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11
Bruce Lincoln
University of Chicago Press, 2003, 142pp
Review: Albert Moore

My first reaction on seeing this book title was to mutter "Oh no! Not another American analysis of terrorism and the Twin Towers!" But this turns out to be something different. It is a short book which packs many a punch. Its six chapters take only 92 pages, followed by four appendices and then scholarly footnotes. It focuses first on the attitudes of the Islamic activists and gives a careful commentary on the final instructions to the hijackers from the pages recovered in the luggage of Mohammed Atta.

To say that these six pages (printed as Appendix A) are fascinating would be a vast understatement. They begin and end with devout injunctions to prayer, interlaced with God's guidance from verses of the Qur'an. In this way they read like guidance for someone preparing to go on a religious retreat or for purification by prayer and ablutions for a sacred ceremony filled with 'total certainty'. But also, you must make your knife sharp... "Strike for God's sake... Take prisoners and kill them... Afterwards we will all meet in the highest heaven, God willing."

This is followed by Appendix B which is President George W Bush's *Address to the Nation* a month later (October 7, 2001) when the USA was beginning its strikes against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan for aiding terrorists "and the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name".

The comparison of these two documents leads Bruce Lincoln to view them as "symmetric dualisms". Both Osama bin Laden and George Bush see the other side in terms of black and white, demonizing the enemy as "the Great Satan", (American pagans and infidels against Islam) or as "terrorists and killers of innocents" (against the freedom of America). The speeches of Bush and bin Laden mirror one another; "both men constructed a Manichaean struggle where Sons of Light confront Sons of Darkness" with no possible middle ground. Both appeal to the support and judgment of God: "God is the greatest and glory be to Islam" versus "May God continue to bless America".

In support of Bush, the transcript of a broadcast interview with two American televangelists is of interest. Gerry Falwell (of the 'Moral Majority') says that the Lord has protected America wonderfully in its history as a nation; but the terrorist attack suggests that God is lifting his protective veil because of American secularism keeping God out of public life and education. So God will not be mocked and religious revival is the answer.

Bruce Lincoln interprets this as a desire for religion which is 'maximalist' in the sense of stirring for the maximum influence of religion permeating all aspects of society and human existence. This is contrasted with the 'minimalist' approach which seeks to restrict the influence of religion, to avoid conflict and to enable religions to live together peaceably in a more neutral, if not secular, world. The Western world has known this for the past two or three centuries since the 'Enlightenment" of the 18th Century brought toleration of religions and a liberal approach to learning, as a relief from the confines of 'maximalist' attitudes with their wars of religion.

The world is now challenged by the maximalist form of Islam being expressed in its extreme form by Muslims of the Al-Qaeda school. This is not only in the Middle East but also in northern Nigeria where Muslim majorities seek to impose Islamic Shariah law. Bruce Lincoln's later chapters point out that in such post-colonial states where colonial rule left a legacy of Western Enlightenment outlook, new forms of national identity and rebellious groups may find religion to be a prime source of national identity (as can also be seen in Serbia or Pakistan).

So this raises new problems for the 21st Century. While it is good for people to be taking their religious faith seriously for the whole of life, it is also necessary for people to live together in mutual respect and toleration of differences. The lessons of the Enlightenment liberalism are not to be forgotten.

Bruce Lincoln writes as a scholar of the world's religions; he is a Professor of Divinity at the University of Chicago and involved in Middle Eastern Studies. He shows a wide knowledge through illuminating examples of the history of religions from antiquity to new religious movements. This short book is remarkable for the insights and interrelationships it brings out from the initial event of September 11. It challenges and disturbs by leading us to see the wider and deeper meanings of religious events around us. I could not put the book down. ■

Footnote: The book shows the influence of Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian Islamic philosopher, martyr and mentor of the Muslim Brotherhood and (posthumously) of Al Qaeda. His writings have been studied by Dr William Shepard, now retired from University of Canterbury, who studied in Egypt and translated a work of Qutb on "Social Justice in Islam".

Book Bytes

Art of Reading Scripture
edited by Ellen F Davis and Richard B Hays.
Eerdmans 2003 - 334 pp

This book is of immense value in dealing with the many difficulties that have arisen in relation to interpreting Scripture over the last few decades. Patrick Miller, of Princeton Theological Seminary, writes: "This is surely one of the most helpful books on interpreting biblical texts that has come along in a long time…I especially commend it to those who are interested in seeing how rich and deep can be a reading of the Bible that is truly done in community."

Richard Hay's was recently in Dunedin giving a series of talks for the Dept of Theology's Burns Lectures. In this one Hays contributes four chapters out of about twenty-one, as well as being involved in writing the Introduction and the essay that follows: *Nine Theses on the Interpretation of Scripture.*

Other contributors include: Richard Bauckham, James Howell, William Stacy Johnson, R W L Moberly, David Steinmetz, and Marianne Meye Thompson. ■

drawing from wisdom's well
Gloria Ulterino
Ave Maria Press

In this richly imagined new work, Gloria Ulterino introduces us to a communion of extraordinary women of deep faith. With helpful biographical sketches, provocative reflections, and creative new forms of prayer, we are invited to accompany these courageous women as they worship and give praise to God. Truly a gift from Wisdom's well to the church. ■

Silent Hope
John Kirvan
Sorin Books Notre Dame, IN

This is a book about living a rewarding spiritual life even when God is silent – and the hope that makes it possible. It is a journey that Kirwan invites us to take in the company of great Christian, Jewish and Islamic mystics, a list that includes Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Abraham Heschel, Augustine, Julian of Norwich and Kwaja Abdullah Ansari.

In 50 meditations and prayers that are rooted in the wisdom of these great mystics, we are given an opportunity to better and more deeply understand our own struggle with the silence of God. ■

The Heavenly Man – the remarkable true story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun, with Paul Hattaway.
Monarch Books 2002 - 350 pp

God took Yun, a young, half-starved boy from a poor village in the Henan Province, and used him mightily to preach the gospel despite horrific opposition – including three times in prison where he often suffered prolonged torture. For many years he was one of China's house church leaders until forced to flee to the West as a refugee. His account of life as a Christian in China challenges the idea that economic improvement is making any difference to the ongoing religious persecution, which is a daily reality for millions. But Yun doesn't look for change in this area: for him persecution has been the major means by which the Chinese church has grown so phenomenally.
The book is told in the first person, as well as by letters from other people involved in the story. Much of it reads like the *Book of Acts* – God-coincidences abound! Yun tells us that one of the reasons the Western Church doesn't see the same kind of miraculous incidents is less through unbelief than through lack of need; Christians in the West have everything. This is an extraordinary insight into what it means to be a Christian in a anti-Christian country. ■

Elegy for two American entertainers

Last month the death of two Americans, who left an indelible mark on the world, gave some respite from the harsher realities of the American Dream. Both came from the entertainment industry. One became a political showman and the other a peerless piano man with a bluesy voice, whose rendition of *Georgia on my Mind* is a benchmark in jazz.

Ronald Reagan, a former President of the United States and Ray Charles the jazz musician, who sang "America the Beautiful" at the Republican National Convention in 1984, the year Reagan commenced his second term as President, were honoured in very different ways.

Ronald Reagan is credited with ending the cold war. He had an optimism which appealed to the 'can do' spirit of Americans and revived (if momentarily) the idea of patriotism which is being desperately sought by the incumbent President. His funeral developed into a feast of pomp and ceremony, a romanticised celebration of a majestic figure, rather than the dignified honouring of a man whose passing was probably a blessing for his family and his country. Alzheimer's disease had long claimed the mind and body of the 93-year-old Republican.

During his 73 years, Ray Charles, blind since childhood, brought the essence of soul to blues music. During Reagan's second term, Ray Charles was one of the first to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and won dozens of Grammys for his recordings. He always sounded as if he was singing from experience and could project this feeling at every performance. His funeral was low-key but heartfelt. He lived his art and told jazz lovers earlier this year that, "until the good Lord calls my number, that's what I'm going to do". I'm sure everyone in heaven is jiving.

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

The great Aussie battler

Incredibly, John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia since 1996 and staunch supporter of Bush's invasion of Iraq, was able to state as late as mid-June, that he thought things were improving in that war-torn country and that he had noticed 'a turnaround'. From anybody else, this assessment would be laughable. What is the appeal of this man among Australians?

Howard has allied himself and his country with America just as closely as Tony Blair and Aznar have done. Blair and Aznar have been severely punished and face political oblivion, yet Howard still survives and could even win another term as Prime Minister should he wish to run.

Australia's close relationship with the US is essential in order to maintain a strategic balance in Asia, and this manages the inflow of unwanted immigrants and the implicit danger of terrorism. But this alliance is also about economics as well as security. Any move by Australia to extend its sphere of influence in East Timor or the Solomon Islands would depend on US defence capability. Howard is well aware of these imperatives, but the price of this loyalty to the US comes with a price.

If a country is a close ally of the Bush Administration, that country must do what the US requires. Bush was even emboldened enough to abuse Mark Latham, the Labour opposition leader, for promising to withdraw Australian troops by Christmas. Australia got the message. Mark Latham backed off.

The guarantee of security looks weak because by sending fighting troops to Iraq, Australia has become a target for terrorists. The free trade deal with the US, the reward for being a member of the "coalition of the willing", is being criticised as being all in favour of the US. There are Australian citizens in Guantanamo Bay prison who are not being given 'a fair go'. Opinion polls show increasing voter disenchantment with Australia's involvement in Iraq.

John Howard should be politically dead in the water, yet his opposition appears half-hearted. The little 'Aussie battlers' don't seem to know what to do about John Howard. His political life is as strange and enigmatic as another Australian native – the wombat.

Vietnam revisited

The war in Iraq goes from bad to worse, with the revelations of the atrocities inflicted on Iraqis at Abu Ghraib prison by American personnel. Violence is a mark of human failure and a bearer of sorrow. War is not new, but this war is fast becoming infamous. A recent reading of *The Cold War Letters* by Thomas Merton, written in the early 1960s, confirms that not much has changed in the minds of those in power.

When writing about Vietnam, this is what Merton had to say :
"The United States had entered the war with the conviction of the justice of its cause and with the firm intention to abide by just means. How is it that we are now almost ready to permit any outrage, any excess, any horror, on the grounds that it is a lesser evil and necessary to save our nation? The UN is proving itself unable to fulfil the role of international arbiter and powerless to control the pugnacity of the nuclear club."

Undoubtedly, Thomas Merton was familiar with Carl von Clausewitz's theory that the only source of war is politics. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.* ■

Coeliacs and Communion

Like anyone else who writes in Tui Motu, I have the hope that on occasion a reader will scan my lines, breath a sigh of relief, and say, "Ah, there is the answer to my problem".

A couple of months ago I wrote about the ample power of dispensation enjoyed by the bishops of our Church. Civil laws and regulations are on the whole inflexible. Without doubt the Church's rules and regulations can at times be applied woodenly and unsympathetically. But nevertheless we live in a Church where most of the rules the Church has itself established are supposed to be adapted to individual needs and circumstances.

One reader was reminded through a recent article of mine of the availability of dispensation. They thought it would simplify a problem they face. Unfortunately it does not.

Those who suffer from coeliac allergy are unable to absorb gluten, a normal constituent of wheat. They are made quite ill by even small traces of it in what they consume. They need to take care to avoid foods which contain gluten. Such folk cannot receive the normal communion host without disastrous consequences.

Gluten-free flour is available and from it can be produced hosts that are without gluten. Was it the solution to the problem that the hosts consecrated for coeliacs' consumption be baked using flour that is gluten free? Keeping in mind the discipline of dispensation, the thought occurred to the reader that the bishop could dispense from the requirement that normal flour be used in baking the hosts.

This solution does not work. I wrote in my earlier article, "One cannot get a dispensation from the divine law". I illustrated that with quite extreme examples. "One cannot get an advance permission to lie, steal or injure another." But it seems that it is also a matter of divine law that the "bread" over which the consecrating priest validly pronounces the words, "This is my body" contain at least a minimal amount of gluten. Baking hosts with low gluten flour is fine. But using completely gluten free flour is not.

A recent ruling of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith confirmed earlier decisions to that effect. I am not always an enthusiast for the rulings of the Congregation. But Rome does not always get things wrong.

Could the Church broaden the category of what is acceptable matter for the Eucharist? We hear stories of priests imprisoned in China who said Mass using rice when no bread was obtainable. Were I in their place I think I would give it a go. But the Church has always had the policy of following the safer course when it is a matter of ensuring that celebration of the Eucharist is a true one. For the moment there is no place for rice on the paten or for non-grape wine in the chalice.

For all the limitations of the present situation we are immeasurably better off than in pre-Vatican II times. Those with coeliac problems can receive from the chalice. Fifty years ago, that option was not available. In those days Rome was so insistent on the rule that only the priest could receive from the chalice that coeliacs were refused permission to receive the Precious Blood even at Easter to fulfil their Easter duty. They had without the slightest fault of their own to go for years without communicating. Not so today. In at least some things the Church has made progress.

Humphrey O'Leary

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

The 'enemy' on my shoulder

A psychiatrist friend of Thomas Merton once challenged him on his yearning to leave the Trappist communal silence for the even more withdrawn life of a hermit was schizophrenic: "You want a hermitage," he said, "in Times Square with a large sign over it saying 'Hermit.'"

Towards the end of *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Merton himself says:
"There was this shadow, this double, this writer, who had followed me into the cloister... He rides my shoulders, sometimes, like the old man of the sea. I cannot lose him. He still wears the name of Thomas Merton. Is it the name of an enemy?... Maybe in the end he will kill me, he will drink my blood. Nobody seems to understand that one of us has got to die."

Merton suffered a lifelong, inner struggle between the desire to be a contemplative and solitary with the burning presence within him of the writer's gift. One commentator notes that a similar kind of multiple personality disorder keeps turning up in writers – and writers with a religious bent: they have an extraordinary, almost prophetic vision of the divine presence in human affairs. But at the same time they can write sympathetically of human frailty because they see it within themselves. Dostoevsky and Graham Greene are quoted as examples. Another, of whom Merton wrote with great empathy, was William Blake. Merton too was a poet and an artist, as well as a writer. And, like Blake, there was a lot of the Bohemian in him.

Perhaps it is no surprise that when he was hospitalised towards the end of his life he fell passionately in love with one of the nurses, a girl half his age. His official biographer, Michael Mott, agrees that the incident reflects several unresolved conflicts in Merton. He wanted it eventually to be known for what it said about his neediness and incompleteness. He himself comments: "Passing near the hospital, I thought I was slowly being torn in half. Then several times while I was reciting the office, felt silent cries come slowly tearing and rending their way up out of the very ground of my being."

Merton remained faithful to his vocation as a monk. Fundamental to his complex character was the call to be a contemplative. He was possessed by "a pure attraction to wordless union with the absolute", as one writer puts it. Thomas Merton remains a wonderful source of wisdom and inspiration for anyone seeking to meet God in his or her life, yet remain fully involved in the complexities and paradoxes as well as the follies and fallacies of the contemporary world. ■ *M.H.*