

Tui Motu

InterIslands

September 1999 Price \$4



*Thrill-seeking and holiday adventures —
what do they do for the
human spirit?*



inside **homosexuality**
the Church

Spiritual and Sexual Leanings

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The September issue celebrates our second birthday.

Our paid circulation, 1800, has doubled since we started in September 1997, and includes 80 overseas, 1000 N.Island, 700 S.Island.

The Board and staff are grateful for ongoing support of subscribers – and especially the many who have sent us small donations. Many thanks.

People and their behaviour might be described as more and less spiritual or more and less evil. To do so implies a continuum, closer to God or further from God. Some theologians describe it as 'being' or 'non-being'. The best we can be is fully in the image of God (*Imago Dei*) or at the other extreme to be nothing (non-being) otherwise known as evil. It's a popular insult today "they are just nothing".

Choice most obviously lies at the mid-point on such a continuum. I may choose to be worse – disordered, diseased, discouraged, disintegrated, unholy, hateful, alone, destructive, predatory, murderous, evil and finally nothing, a non-being. I may instead choose to be better – ordered, well, encouraged, integrated, whole and holy, loving, related, constructive, protective, caring, good and fully human, a human being in the image of God. My choice will progressively define my wholeness or my emptiness.

Is it possible to apply continuum to sexuality without it implying a moral or spiritual value. To do this we can start from a mid point and ask, "can each person be more a male or a female and less so?" Neuroscience says yes. It demonstrates that each human person has a balance of oestrogen and testosterone which influences physical and behavioural disposition. Everyone is more and less male or female, and while the majority are definitively orientated one way or another, a minority are not. Little can be added to common knowledge about those who at perhaps twelve years old find they are sexually confused or more attracted to the same sex. For years they may hope this 'feeling' might

go away then they 'come out' often to the opprobrium of their society.

What is their choice? If they are gay are they therefore less female and necessarily less human? Surely not. Long ago we accepted the 'fine' Christian, very sensitive male, and the 'fine' Christian very assertive female and every alternative without knowing why. Today neuroscience has effectively described how 'brain sex' develops and behavioural science has described socio-familial orientation and the effect of problematic influences. Very little choice appears to determine orientation, our place on a sexual continuum is likely to be genetic and developmental.

A continuum may instead be applied to a more useful measure, which is to consider the influence of orientation and acceptance on a person's spirituality. To do this we again start from a mid point. A homosexual man or lesbian woman may begin by feeling, or be caused to feel, unacceptable and then, estranged, isolated, disordered, angry, predatory, alienated and progressively despairing until they suicide, this surely being the definitive act of 'non-being'.

They may alternatively feel acceptable and value their orientation becoming integrated, involved, and re-ordered, happy, caring, associated and progressively finding their way towards behaviour and 'being' that reflects their God and Creator.

Not to reflect the *Imago Dei*, the loving, caring, spiritual reality of God within us, is sin. It is that and not our sexual inheritance that we need to consider with care. ■



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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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Grasping the nettle

There is no topic which causes more soul-searching, anguish, guilt and division among Christians than homosexuality. At a recent Synod the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand decided not to revoke its ban on homosexuals being in active ministry: a decision opposed by a considerable minority. The Methodist Church has been deeply divided on the same issue. The Lambeth Conference of 1998 suffered some days of angry argument, confrontation and recrimination on this issue. Some Catholics may delude themselves that because of the tradition of celibacy among priests and religious, therefore they have no problem.

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* homosexuality is treated in three somewhat sterile paragraphs (out of a total of 2863). It acknowledges that homosexual people do not choose to be such; they should therefore be treated with respect and compassion – and not suffer any form of discrimination. Nevertheless the condition is described as a "trial", a Cross to be endured. Since the tradition of the church is to regard homosexual acts as intrinsically disordered, then homosexuals are called to follow a life of chastity.

Recently I preached a homily on the Feeding of the 5000. This story is a magnificent example of total inclusion on the part of Jesus: the people were fed irrespective of colour, sex or creed, simply because they came to be fed. I reflected that on the law of averages the crowd would have included at least 200 homosexual males, "not to speak of women and children" (*Matt. 14:21*). In this issue of *Tui Motu* we publish the testimony of a young man and his mother. Their family is solidly Catholic, and is totally supportive of this public discussion of the plight of Catholic – and Christian – families, one of whose beloved members is gay.

Should it cause such anguish to be both gay and Christian? Have the Christian churches a massive obligation of repentance for the discrimination and active persecution of homosexuals which they have tolerated, if not actively encouraged? Or are we locked in a tradition of 'irreformable teaching'? At least we should look a little further than the three unsatisfactory paragraphs in the *Catechism* quoted above.

Firstly, the Church's teaching does develop and change. One has merely to think of the condemnation of usury or of co-education – and many other such issues. Indeed the 20th Century has already seen – even in the Catholic church – a Copernican revolution in its attitude to and teaching on sex. Although Jansenism was the most extreme form, the whole of Catholic teaching on sexual morality and conduct was once deeply afflicted by dualism and Manicheism. It left many young Catholics with unnecessary guilt, unhealthy taboos – and, sadly, drove many more out of the church. This radical change of thinking by the modern church can be expressed in two simple statements. Firstly, the sex act itself is described, not as concupiscence or carnal desire, but as "a sacred act of mutual self-surrender", a fusing of souls, an imaging of the love between the Persons of God. Bernard Haering states that "it is God the Creator who is to be found at the kernel of the encounter". Secondly, the primary end of marriage is defined, not as the generation of children, but as the fullest expression of mutual love which binds the couple together. The generation of children flows out of this and is secondary to it.

The full effects of this change of mindset we have yet to see, for we are still in the middle of it. In the Catholic church the fruition and development of new thinking is hampered by the fact that

(continued overleaf)

Queries about Restorative Justice

I found the articles on Restorative Justice full of challenge and promise. The concept and the experience of an impressive number of people indicate that this could well be a way forward.

Do they – or how do they – see Restorative Justice as being useful in cases of domestic violence, where there is frequently a cycle of ‘repentance’ and ‘forgiveness’ as an integral part of the problem? Already the Christian Church is experienced and described by people working in this area as ‘an institutional support of battering’ because of the reinforcement of this pattern by the preached Christian ethos of repeated forgiveness.

My impression is that Restorative Justice is primarily focussed on a better, more constructive and ultimately cheaper outcome for the *offender*, in which project the victim is enlisted or invited to participate, rather than a process focussed primarily on the needs and best interests of the victim. My theology leads me to think that if there is to be a genuine reversal of the misuse of power, and if justice-making is to be truly done, then the interests of the *victim* have to be given priority.

This may well involve a long human journey into experiencing their anger and pain before the subject of forgiveness can be approached in anything like a healthy way. My fear is that Restorative Justice encourages the short-circuiting of that process, as the victim is offered an opportunity to help the perpetrator and can be encouraged into forgiveness mode before they are truly ready.

Trish McBride, *Wellington*

Supporting Catholic writers

The idea has been growing in my mind that Catholic writers, those who write for the Church in whatever capacity – reporters, teachers, novelists, poets, all who are involved with words within the framework of Catholic thought and understanding – should become known to one another. This would give to us, not only the benefit of association, but also allow us in time to form a body which, when the need arose, could speak out with a Catholic voice.

Presumably we use our gifts for the benefit of the church and the people of God because we believe. In these days of many counter-Christian streams, we as an Association of Catholic Writers, could become an articulate and committed body responding to challenging ideas with reason and understanding.

I do not envisage belonging to this association being too onerous: simply initially making ourselves known to one another and then later the occasional newsletter giving shared information on books, future possibilities and work within the Catholic writing field.

I will be happy to make contact with anyone who responds positively to these ideas. I can be reached through the following address:

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(editorial continued from previous page)

the moral and pastoral decisions are still being exclusively made by celibate males, insulated from the experience and wisdom of married couples who make up the bulk of the church, and who struggle daily with the realities and pressures of modern living, one of which may be to have a gay son or daughter.

So how may change come? Firstly, in the Gospels Jesus has quite a lot to say about fidelity between couples – but nothing at all about homosexuality. A central Gospel theme is for society to be inclusive, especially of those people who are wounded and marginalised: the lepers, for instance, were vilified and excluded in Jewish society, just as gay and lesbian people are often treated nowadays. Jesus embraced, welcomed and loved such people. That must be the way of the church.

Secondly, the church needs to ask itself why homosexuality is seen as “unnatural” and its acts contrary to the natural law, if there is nothing in the Gospels to guide us. Natural Law theories which are the basis of much Christian morality, derive from Aristotle and not from the Hebrew tradition. That does not make them wrong, but at least they need to be challenged and developed in the same way as Copernicus challenged and changed the ‘natural’ view of the cosmos also inherited from the Greeks. It is generally accepted today that up to five percent of males – and perhaps fewer females – are homosexual. That is the way they are. That is the way God made them. So what is ‘unnatural’ about them?

We need, therefore, to listen to these brothers and sisters whose whole sexual

being is different from the so-called ‘norm’. To listen to them we have to accept them – fully. We have to accept them as Jesus accepted them. We have to listen to, and support their families. And the church must rethink its taboos and its moral teaching. These people need moral guidance just as much as do heterosexual singles or couples. There are ideals for them, and they too will sometimes fail and need to be forgiven. In that respect they are utterly normal. In that respect they are utterly lovable and forgivable by God. They are also wonderfully gifted people – because of their homosexuality, not in spite of it. The Kingdom of God contains many such as these. It is high time we trumpeted this fact from our church rooftops. ■

M.H.

Knife edge in East Timor

Cardinal Tom Williams and Bishop Owen Dolan, of Palmerston North, spent six days in East Timor early in August at the invitation of Bishop Carlos Belo as a support to the local people. Bishop Owen has a particular care for the work of *Caritas Aotearoa*.

They flew in to Dili on Friday 6 August, being met there by Bishop Carlos Belo. The first day was spent visiting the various agencies in the city: *Caritas* headquarters, the diocesan Justice and Peace office, and the Catholic Radio Station. This commands about 80 percent of the listening public, and for that reason it is being used by UNAMET (the UN Aid Mission to East Timor) to broadcast information to the people.

Right from the start the two New Zealand bishops were impressed by the paramount need of support that the East Timorese church needs from the world Christian community – and especially from Australia and New Zealand. The population of over 800,000 is 91 percent Catholic. There is a serious lack of the infrastructures needed by a modern state; this had been to some degree provided in the last 20 years by Indonesian immigrants, but many of these have now gone back. For instance there used to be over 4000 teachers – but this workforce is now reduced to 700 and the shortfall is being made up by untrained personnel. Education standards are therefore slipping.

On the Sunday Bishop Belo took the visitors out into the mountains for Mass at Ermera, two hours away from Dili. The Mass was celebrated in the open air before a crowd of some 5000-6000, who had been streaming into the town since daybreak from the surrounding valleys. Cardinal Williams was the chief celebrant and preached, with Bishop Belo translating. Among those present were 20 or so UNAMET officials who,

Bishop Owen thought, were doing a fine job in challenging circumstances. They often have difficulties with the militia and the Indonesian military, and have no powers to disarm troublemakers.

It is quite evident that the church is a powerful factor for stability in the Timorese community. Vocations are plentiful: 20 diocesan men will be in the major seminary next year. The Italian Canossan Sisters have many novices as have the Salesian priests. Bishop Owen was impressed by the strong, simple faith of the people. The devotional heritage of the Portuguese is much in evidence.

They returned to Dili via Liquica on the coast, where 200 people had been massacred by the militia in April. The local priest had escaped by hiding, and when Bishop Belo arrived the following day some of the dead were still in the churchyard; 25 people were murdered in the church itself. Much of the population has fled and Bishop Owen described it as “like a ghost town – an atmosphere of fear”. Another day they went west to Baucau to visit Bishop Basilio do Nascimento, who was appointed to this new diocese in 1996. By contrast this trip was into an area with less tension.

One day they were invited to a ceremony in Dili when the Protocol for running the Referendum was formally signed by leaders of both the pro-Integrationist and the pro-Independence groups. This was done in the presence of Ian Martin, the British leader of the UNAMET commission, with the press and TV present in force. Speaking afterwards to the NZ bishops, Mr Martin acknowledged the work of the two East Timorese bishops in putting together the Protocol and being the force behind the movement for national reconciliation.

A vast weight of responsibility rests on the shoulders of Bishop Carlos Belo.

Bishop Owen thinks he is such an eminent person now as to be “almost untouchable”. He has received less support from the Indonesian hierarchy than one would expect – understandable perhaps given their position surrounded by a huge Islamic majority. Therefore, the support of the church of Oceania for the two bishops becomes all the more important.

The supportive presence of the NZ church has made a great impression, and now the Australian and New Zealand governments are becoming much more emphatic in their support for a just outcome for the referendum. Five New Zealand MPs are due to be present at the time of the actual vote. The New Zealand government is also paying the expenses of East Timorese nationals to go to Australia to vote.

The days leading up to the referendum are crucial. Bishop Belo is deeply concerned about the outcome, and it is evident that the Indonesian military are not doing what they should to keep the militia in check. The military itself has a vested interest in East Timor staying with Indonesia. Meantime the politicians in Jakarta have no desire to see the East Timorese setting a precedent of independence which could be followed by other separatist groups throughout Indonesia.

Bishop Owen's closing memory is visiting the Santa Cruz cemetery where the massacre took place which put the plight of the East Timorese before the eyes of the world. He and Cardinal Williams stood and prayed there for this embattled people. Their time in East Timor was, says Bishop Owen, “perhaps the most memorable week of my life”. ■

On Friday 20 August on his breakfast talk-back show, MP John Banks referred to the East Timorese in New Zealand as “bludgers”, condemning the use of taxpayers money to enable them to go to Australia to vote in the Referendum. No comment!

Bishop David Coles, Anglican Bishop of Christchurch, takes a critical look at the effect of 15 years of market reforms on New Zealand society. Poverty has increased – but the main casualty has been the destruction of community



Wooing the minds and hearts of voters

This is election year. It is also election year in the United States next year. American Vice-President Al Gore is running for the Presidency and recently said: "Americans know that the fundamental change we need will require not only new policies, but more importantly *a change of both our hearts and our minds*".

Ruth Richardson in her 1991 budget said the Government was engaged in a battle for the "hearts and minds" of New Zealanders. In 1992, Richard Randerson, now Assistant Bishop of Canberra, published a book entitled *Hearts and Minds: a place for people in a market economy*. Responding to Ruth Richardson's phrase he said: "Her words were prophetic, for that is precisely the nature of what is going on. There is indeed a battle as to whether New Zealand can retain the reality of community in the face of continuing policies which seek to emphasise the individual. Will there be a warm heart of community, or only the coldness of individuals out to pursue their own interest with diminished regard for the circumstances of those around them?" (page 5)

Since then, if anything, there has been a continuing hardening of policies which protect individuals at the expense of community life and development.

In this address I want to talk about social capital, a term invented by political theorists to describe the benefit



to a community when people associate together for some common purpose. When the total number of people belonging to community and voluntary organisations declines, social capital also declines. Wherever people group together for mutual benefit and especially for service in the community, that is undoubtedly a valuable asset and worth investing in.

I believe there is evidence that community organisations in this country are facing in many instances a crisis of membership and of funding. For several years now, uniformed youth organisations have struggled to find leaders. Community service organisations also struggle to find volunteers, and the churches and their social service organisations are no exception. While many people applaud the deregulation of retail trading hours and the flexibility brought about by employment contracts in terms of working hours, there has been a huge cost, I believe,

for community groups and the recruitment of volunteers who in many cases no longer have regular time available for voluntary groups after work or at weekends.

The argument which has been espoused by National, Labour and coalition governments over the last 10 years that "if we get the economy right, all else will follow", is, I believe, in tatters. It has simply not been the case that economic well-being has been followed by successful healthy communities. Social capital cannot be created by any government but it may be encouraged or discouraged by government policy decisions affecting our social fabric. The poverty issues which were highlighted by the *Hikoi of Hope* – unemployment, inadequate benefits, the increasing costs of education, health and housing, all result in a deconstruction of social capital.

As more and more victims of poverty withdraw from society, social capital is diminished. This increase in poverty leads to a form of social and psychological deprivation characterised by feelings of hopelessness, shame, depression, despair and even aggression and violence. As people experience these feelings they pull back from participation in society into isolation and withdrawal. Thus, much of our present poverty becomes unseen, and consequently ignored and denied by society and government.

Whatever you may think about the virtues or shortcomings of a free-market economy, the side effect of this is an increasing individualism and a decline in the recognition of the "common good". We see this expressed most dramatically perhaps in the recent scandals over the spending sprees of senior officials and executives in agencies which exist for the common good but which are now being modelled on a free-market approach in their management and salary structures.

Shortly before his death, the late Cardinal Basil Hume, wrote: "A society without a common understanding of what it is to be human and without a shared morality is in danger of gradual disintegration". Although he was speaking of the British scene, I believe his

words apply here in Aotearoa/NZ as well. "Change is needed," he said. "We each have a role to play to bring about change; not least, of course, politicians, the media and business leaders. Beware of those with vested interests, those who are for no change, and cynics who are sceptical about the possibility."

So, what changes are necessary if we are to regain a healthy sense of an interdependent community where everyone's contribution is valued and important? The relentless pursuit of a self-centred ideology of extreme individualism at the expense of healthy communities has delivered us into our present social disorder. We are losing our belief in our story – our story of a Christian basis for our society. We see the expression of this

in the teaching of the American philosopher Ayn Rand who has written that "to risk one's life for a drowning stranger only indicates a lack of self-esteem. If the person at risk was someone you loved, then you might make a sacrifice on the self-interested basis that life without that person would be intolerable".

I simply want to contrast with that the fundamental Christian ethic which is based on the concept of social capital when Jesus said: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." If there is any Christian imperative which challenges this year's line-up of political candidates and parties and all of us who vote, it is that expression of caring for others. ■

PM rejects Bishop's claims

In response Mrs Shipley said she did not agree. "Look, there are people in difficulty in our society, but that is just not a fair description of the New Zealand we are today," she said. "There are still a huge number of Government agencies, voluntary agencies, and private agencies working to support New Zealanders who are in trouble. Organisations like Anglican Social Services were huge providers of those services, and much of what they did was supported by taxes."

Mrs Shipley said that when the Government took over in 1990 the unemployed or anyone else needing a State entitlement had to queue for hours to get help. "Today, if you go into a Work and Income office, and you're an unemployed person, you will sit down with someone who's trained and qualified to actually talk to you about what your qualifications are.

"If that's individualism, I support it."



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Oranges and Other Fruits

by Nick Thompson

*A sound tree cannot bear bad fruit,
nor a rotten tree bear good fruit.*

(Matthew)

As I write, an Orange parade is marching down the street outside my window. There are a lot of them in Glasgow at this time of year. I would like to be able to ignore the one passing now. After all, most of the marchers are old men. This gives me reason to hope that the days of this kind of sectarianism are numbered. Yet, for all that, there is something about the fifes and drums that I find unsettling. It is difficult not to take it personally. What might we say to one another – any one of those marchers and I – if we met over a pint in one of Glasgow's myriad pubs? I imagine that if the question of my denominational allegiance were not raised, we would have as good a chance of a decent conversation – maybe even a laugh or two – as any two strangers meeting for the first time. But what if they knew I was a Catholic? What if I let it slip somehow? How would they judge me then?

I have a fair idea why the Orangemen mistrust Catholics. They regard us and our beliefs as a threat to the kind of society they cherish. After all, it is only relatively recently that my church took up – or even recognised – the language of human rights, liberal democracy

and religious freedom. It is even more recently that my church recognised their churches as Christian at all. We still make it awkward for them to marry us, and we insist that when they do, they bring up their children in our faith. We still run a separate education system. Sometimes we even run our own separate sports and social clubs. It is as though we wanted as little to do with them as possible. How will I convince the Orangemen that in all this we bear them no ill-will; that we would like to work together with them to build a better society for all of us?

To an extent my Catholicism is a matter of choice. Faith, of course, is a gift of the Holy Spirit, but, at a more mundane level, it would not be much more difficult for me to become a Presbyterian than it would for me to join the Labour Party. Subscribe to the group tenets, pay the sub, sign along the dotted line, and there you are. My homosexuality, however, is not a matter of choice. When I was 13 I realised that I was attracted to males rather than to females. At the time

I looked in a book or two and decided that it was just a phase I was going through. It would pass. Twenty years on, and I am still waiting.

If the state were to discriminate against me on the basis of my Catholicism or my membership of the Labour Party, the church would regard this as indefensible. However, in the matter of my sexual orientation, the church censures only 'unjust' discrimination. Here it makes a distinction between my 'sexual orientation' and the 'acts' consequent upon it. Where it is a question of 'acts,' discrimination is still theoretically legitimate. On these grounds some of the churches in the United Kingdom have recently sought exemption from the European Convention on Human rights. Yet a distinction between 'Catholicism' and 'Catholic acts' or 'Labour Party membership' and 'Labour Party acts' would seem absurd. Why is discrimination legitimate in one case and not the other two?



Here a comparison is sometimes made between homosexual orientation and a predisposition to alcoholism. We are still not entirely sure what causes either. It might be in the genes. It might be in the upbringing. It is probably a bit of both. However, it doesn't seem to be something which individuals choose. There doesn't seem to be much evidence that it can be 'cured' – not at least in the majority of cases. The best that can be done is to help the individual to live with and to 'control' the predisposition. No-one in their right mind would cen-

sure or reject a person simply because of his or her predisposition toward alcoholism. However, you would not put a *practising* alcoholic in charge of a bus. In the first case the discrimination is *unjust*. In the second it is *just*. *Mutatis mutandis*, and the same applies to those with a homosexual orientation.

The question begged, however, is whether a legitimate comparison can be made between the consequences of *acts* which arise from a homosexual orientation and those which follow from an alcoholic one. I can hear the answer

already. What about the high suicide rate among homosexual teenagers? What about homosexual child abuse? What about 'homosexual promiscuity'? What about AIDS? What about the threat homosexuality poses to the stability and continuity of the family?

Paragraph 2358 of the Catechism observes that for most homosexual people, their condition is a "trial". I have no doubt that this observation is meant compassionately, but what is it which makes it such a trial? Indulge me in a paragraph or three of make-believe.

Imagine another universe in which homosexuality constitutes a majority and heterosexuality a minority – of, say, somewhere between 2-10 per cent of the population. Perhaps you have always known that you were attracted to members of the opposite sex, or perhaps, one day in adolescence, it dawned on you that you were one of those people your peers sniggered about. How, you asked, could such a thing have happened to you – someone who seemed to come from a happy, loving, but otherwise unexceptional family background? "Aha!" the experts said, "Are you sure it was as ordinary as you thought?" It is clear, of course, that someone must be blamed for having produced a monster such as yourself, and the experts cast a horoscope into which they stretch and squeeze the details of your life. Your parents, they claim, were over-affectionate; or emotionally distant; or domineering and bullying; or weak and ineffectual. Your 'condition' is clearly a result of your inability to form adequate relationships with your own gender; or with the other gender. The churches – often reluctant to touch the findings of the sciences at less than the distance of a ten-foot barge pole – embrace these findings uncritically.

You have no way of knowing what to think, because you don't know who the other heterosexuals are. Unless they *are* 'flamboyant', (the queen bees and he-men of this

world) there is no way of recognising them. From what you see on television, they are a strange, sad lot with whom you'd rather not associate anyway. All around you homosexuality forms the theme of folklore, literature, song, film, and advertising. When (and God forbid) the odd heterosexual relationship is treated in these media, you heterosexuals are said to be 'flaunting it' again.

You would like to tell your family about yourself, but you know that, no matter how well they take the news, it will cause them anxiety. You cannot talk even with your best friends about some of the most everyday aspects of love and life – except in generalities. One slip into specificity and the game will be given away. The moral guardians of this society deny the legitimacy of heterosexual relationships and give them no social recognition. Yet at the same time they criticise such relationships as do exist for their instability. "Look at dysfunctional families. Look at domestic violence. Look at all the men and women trapped in loveless relationships", they cry. These, if nothing else, proves that heterosexual relationships, "do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual mutuality".

(Catechism of the Alternative Universe, para.2357.)

Imagine that for Catholics living under the penal laws in Ireland, their condition was a 'trial' as well. The solution was not for them to become Protestants – however much the Orangemen might have preferred it that way. Nevertheless, if misery is not necessarily consequent upon a homosexual orientation, what about the 'obsession' with sex, the sexually transmitted disease and the child abuse which feature so prominently in the

anxieties voiced about homosexuality? Yes, many homosexual people *do* treat human sexuality in a self-indulgent way. Many *are* infected with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. Some *do* abuse children. Ditto, in each case, for heterosexual people. Open the sealed-section in *Cosmopolitan* or read the sorry stories in your local scandal sheet if you doubt me. Yet again the question is whether any of these are the necessary consequences of a homo-

sexual orientation, or merely possible consequences. When I hear it said that homosexuality poses a threat to the stability of the family, I often wonder if the speaker imagines that the heterosexual population is about to stage a mass defection and queue for admission to homosexual evening classes. Many of us have seen and experienced families in which the mercy and kindness of God is plain for all to see. We can only thank God for families such as these. I find it



difficult to imagine anyone who would not do all they could to encourage and support them.

On the other hand, more than a few gay and lesbian people have experienced the Christian family as more of a curse than a blessing; the parish ‘family’ as a place in which they are welcome only as long as they shut up and keep their heads down.

Ambivalence toward the institution of the family has led a number of gay and lesbian theologians to remind the wider Christian community that marriage and the family have a relative value in the kingdom of Christ. Where the family stands in the way of the Gospel, it must be abandoned. Indeed Jesus makes it clear that the proclamation of the good news will cause families to collapse (*Mark* 10.29; *Matthew* 10.34-37; *Luke* 14.26). Among the children of the resurrection there is neither giving nor taking in marriage (*Luke* 20.25). Among the friends of Jesus the water of baptism is thicker than the ties of blood.

Nevertheless, this brings me to something you may have wondered when I was imagining the alternative world above: where would all the babies come from? Such a world, you might argue, would require a rather different Genesis account! Some arguments against homosexual sex, appeal to physiological design. I don’t know whether the ‘it just ain’t natural’ argument proceeds from some acute moral insight, or simply from the speaker’s queasiness at the mechanics of his or her own sexual physiology. I do know this: hands were not principally ‘ordered’ for talking, but deaf people seem to manage quite well. However, even if one were to acknowledge that homosexual ‘genital acts’ had at least a unitive character (one of the ends of human sexuality), there would remain the objection that they are not open to the other intention: the procreation of human life.

I used to be underwhelmed when I heard gay and lesbian people arguing that, because God ‘made’ them ho-

mosexual, a homosexual orientation must be thereby good. God made me arthritic, I thought crabbily. That didn’t mean the arthritis was good. An occasion of grace maybe, but not *good*. However my attention was drawn recently to a passage in the book of *Sirach* (or *Ecclesiasticus*) – which has made me rethink. I’ll quote it in part here, and leave you to look at the full passage in chapter 39:

How wonderful the actions of the Lord! Whatever he does is done at its proper time! You must not say, ‘What is this? Why is that?’ ... The works of the Lord are all good, when the time is right, he gives whatever is needed. You must not say, ‘This is worse than that,’ for sooner or later, everything proves its worth.

Eccles 39:16,33-

In his writing on his life and work with intellectually handicapped people in the *L’Arche* communities, Jean Vanier has argued that as a consequence of their very ‘incapacity’, these people bring a love to the life of the community which does not come as readily to the normal and ‘able’. When I read articles and advertisements advocating the possibility of a cure for homosexuality, I cannot help but wonder whether there is so very great a difference between these and the arguments of those who advocate genetic manipulation and selective abortion in their quest to produce a more ‘perfect’ humanity.

I confess I am not sure what homosexual people are *for*. I have some hunches, but I think that with Ben Sirach I would prefer in the end to keep quiet and acknowledge the mystery of God’s creation. What I do know is this: as I

began to meet other gay and lesbian people, I was struck by their utter ordinariness. They were not walking, talking ‘genital acts’, but human beings displaying the same variety of virtues and vices as I had encountered anywhere else.

What has struck me most, however, is that among them I have found well-balanced, contented, holy and (again, God forbid) joyful people. Some of these are single; some of them are living in faithful and loving relationships. These relationships give life not merely to the partners themselves, but to the communities which they build around themselves, to the wider society and to the church itself. How can this be, I wonder, if these relationships involve ‘intrinsically disordered’ acts ‘of grave depravity’?

This is what gay and lesbian people are talking about when they ask the church to listen to their experience. It is not that we regard our own experience as infallible. Anyone who attempts to arrive at the truth autonomously will become captive to his or her private insanity. Yet the writer of the first Letter of *John* describes the eternal Word not as some discarnate proposition, but as something, *which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have watched and touched with our own hands* (1 *John* 1.1). What is said to have attracted converts to the early church was the simple acknowledgment: *see how they love one another*; not, *behold the splendidly coherent edifice of their systematic theology!*

How can good fruit such as this come from a rotten tree? I believe that it is on the basis of such a judgment that the place of homosexual people in the church ultimately rests. This – more than Greek etymologies, more than the arcane reaches of sexual anthropology, more than our finite attempts to grasp and define the order of creation – is what will ultimately shape our Scriptural hermeneutics and our discernment of the church’s tradition. ■

A mother's story – Sue Thompson speaks of the impact on her and her family of the discovery that her son, Nick, was gay. She describes her journey from shock through grief and fear – to peace. But it has challenged her unquestioning attitude to some Church teaching

A Different Kind of Grief

I am finding it hard to begin this, but after the pain of the last three years I know that I must. I write, hoping that by being open instead of assenting to the customary 'discretion' and uneasiness about homosexuality, our experience might be of help to others who must live their grief in fear and silence. I also hope that it may provide for the rest of the community an awareness and, hopefully, an understanding of some of the issues that face lesbian and gay people and their families.

Three years ago our much loved eldest son told us, after years of heartache and struggle that can only be imagined, that he is gay. We had been an ordinary, normally happy family, with a number of sons and daughters we had enjoyed. We had always worked towards the ideal that each child was encouraged to be themselves as well as a family and community member. We liked our children. Life was full and busy, especially in recent years, and his news came as a great shock.

The day he came out to us I will never forget. Even now its details are etched vividly, the last day of that part of our lives. I can remember the date, the weather, the chores and the school fair I had attended – all the mundane details that surrounded this life-changing event. This way of writing it seems melodramatic now when our son's homosexuality seems a very ordinary part of him, but I make no apology for recounting how the experience was for us, rather than to simply say that we are all in a better place now.

After he told us he wept, and so did we, sitting on either side of him, all trying to comfort one another. It was an emotional evening as we learned of his gradual realisation, and final acceptance, that he was gay. It felt like catching up on someone we hadn't seen for years, even though we thought we had known him well. I was appalled as I thought that at the time when he was making these painful discoveries I had been busy and had no inkling that anything was wrong. We talked until very late.

That weekend was strange. Although life carried on, neither of us, his parents, was really there except on the surface. We both found ourselves remembering all sorts of things about the family we had enjoyed, including every stage of Nick's grow-

ing up. At the same time we began to realise that although he was still the son we knew and loved, he was also part of a group regarded in the community rather like the lepers in the bible – feared, shamed, labelled – persons treated with little respect or recognition and relegated to the fringes of society. It was almost more than we could bear. A huge sadness, too, was the thought of how he had carried this burden afraid and alone for so long, and yet had managed to live a full and generous and apparently joyous life. I suppose courage – or grace – is the name for it.

I think then that fear became a part of my life. We were greatly honoured to be trusted with such an admission, but for the moment we agreed that he would gradually tell his brothers and sisters in his own time. I found that living with such concealment was a strain with family and friends. Both of us wanted to protect him, not being able to bear the thought of people gossiping or making judgment about him and not yet able to cope with what might be said to us. All conversations felt shallow and insincere, as I was unable to talk about something that was occupying me deeply.

With friends I felt I was living dishonestly, not able to share with them what was really going on. It was a very isolated and lonely time of needing support and yet being afraid to ask for it. I also examined the past, wondering if somehow by our parenting we had caused this trouble. At this stage to hear homophobic jokes and remarks was very painful – and those who made them were utterly unaware of what effect they were having. So life went on; we talked a little, worked hard under strain and sighed a lot. I took up a diverting hobby and tried to carry on as always through a number of other heavy demands, and tried to pretend to the world that all was well.

At Easter the next year, a visiting daughter and I were in a cafe when she told me that she now knew. That the silence was at last broken and that we shared a common sadness and love, was my Easter joy. After a few months the rest of the children were told, and we all spoke freely which was a huge relief. They, of course, accepted him at once. "But he's Nick", as one of them said. However, each of them has talked of their experience and it includes a similar sequence of thoughts to ours – suffering on his behalf and recognising the difficulty of



his journey and of the injustices that homosexual people face. It was later heartwarming to receive the support of friends and their unchanged respect and affection for Nick.

What about the Church?

When life throws up some huge event, it is always a time when there is a possibility that the faith that has served well enough up until now, is turned upside down. This has been the case for me. There is a world of difference between accepting church laws on an intellectual level and the painful lived experience of the effects of those beliefs. At first I was quite disturbed at some of the church laws. I began to question. It is, I read later, a common experience for parents of lesbians and gays to find themselves on the fringes of the church. One of the children remarked recently: "The trouble is, when you find one thing that doesn't make sense, it's tempting to throw the whole lot away".

I did find that I withdrew from church things I was in because I felt angry and also hypocritical, as my beliefs and experience were so different from official Catholic teaching. And yet, many of the supportive friends mentioned above were from within the church.

A number of questions and considerations now concern me:

- Three years ago a conversation took place which altered our lives. There were no dramatic outward events. Our son went overseas. For us, life carried on as usual. The event was our realisation, through our reactions, of the impact that church and societal attitudes can have on gays and lesbians and their families.

- We became aware that there must be other families out there facing the same issue who may also appreciate some support. Some families conditioned by social and church attitudes of homophobia, disgust, guilt and fear, can reject their children.

- The plight of young gays and lesbians is often cruel and even tragic. Many young gay people cannot accept their different sexuality and are afraid of rejection by their families. They are frequently the victims of bullying at school and some commit suicide. The bullying has often not been properly acknowledged or dealt with in schools.

- In the Catholic church, as in the other churches, we are not as one on the issue of homosexuality, although our problems are somewhat different, and yet: "We belong to a long tradition of expressed appreciation of the mystery and wonder of sexuality but one which at the same time seems filled with fear and apprehension of this singular gift" (*Noon to Nightfall*, Mary d'Apice RSCJ)

The Church's laws regarding sexuality have in recent years caused heartache, alienation and guilt to many. The norms that were once to be kept under pain of serious sin have, as the faithful tried to cope with them in real life, proved unattainable and unrealistic unless a compassionate priest could be found who would make the burden lighter. To do the church justice, it has stated that homosexual people "must be treated with respect, compassion and sensitivity". However, it describes as "traditional" its view that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*).

- At present the church's idea of treating gays and lesbians with respect seems to be less widely known than its views on

the disordered nature of homosexual acts. Does the church seem a very welcoming and accepting place to gay and lesbian people who, for various reasons, are not living the celibate lifestyle and may feel judged and unwelcome?

- I wonder whether the church will ever have the courage and compassion to re-examine its traditional views by the light of God who is greater and more loving than all of us. I believe that God rejoices as fully in his gay and lesbian creations as in the rest of us, varied as we are.
- I am full of gratitude for the support and strength I have gained from PFLAG (Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), a worldwide organisation. The group meets at present once a month and aims to provide a place of friendship and support and confidentiality. The meetings are relaxed and there is an atmosphere of trust and respect. We are also able to provide books and other resources which families may find useful. If you come to the group – it can be just to

listen – if you wish. (Contact: Citizens Advice 477 1111 or P O Box 5266, Dunedin.)

Three years on and how do I feel about Nick and about the experience? I can truthfully say that I would not wish that anything had been different. How could we wish that Nick was changed in any way? If anything, we love him and are more proud of him than before. The way he has continued to live life fully through much painful questioning, with creativity, compassion and courage and joy and humour, is a delight and inspiration. As a family we have been pushed beyond the boundaries of what was familiar and safe, and now seem to have a broader view of life and more compassion and a family loyalty and love that is deep and strong. Although I write personally, it became obvious as I consulted with the family that they all wanted to be included in this account as they shared its sentiments. We have indeed much to be thankful for. ■

*Sue and Kevin Thompson
and Becky, Matthew, Penny and Sam.*

One who puts his hand to the plough...

Early in August as I walked into the church porch my eye caught a poster advertising the NZ Catholic – *Religious barred from ministry to homosexuals*. An exclamation mark appeared in my mind's eye. Since that day I have reflected on the various aspects of Scripture which struck me and at times made interesting associations with the heading in the NZ Catholic. And I turned to Vatican Two as a starting place for my deliberations.

It is approximately 40 years since the Vatican Council. One might liken our journey towards the new millennium to the Exodus, when God's people walked the weary miles with a limited amount of nourishment and much hardship, to the land promised them. Our future, the new millennium, like the promised land is as yet uncharted territory which we, like the Jews of long ago, are called in turn to build into a viable proposition for the Church of the future.

In the Vatican Documents the sentence that captured my attention came from *Church in the Modern World*: "The Church has one sole purpose – that the Kingdom of God may come and the salvation of the human race may be accomplished." I asked myself 'Do homosexuals then not belong to the human race? Is that the reason for the Church denying them the right of a guide

on their journey to discover their own truth in Christ'.

I then turned to one or two of the scriptural verses I had been reflecting on during the past few weeks. 'No-one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God.' (Luke 9:62). A footnote suggests this as a reference to 'the Way': "The road or Way to Jerusalem became symbolic of discipleship". Jesus said "I am the Way", and where was Jesus most often to be found?

Assisting those who are lost along the way, homosexual or otherwise, who are seeking to discover the Kingdom within the truth of their own hearts. If religious take their hands from the plough of this ministry, will they then be unworthy of the Kingdom, while the homosexual community on whom the door has been closed, yet again, by the Christian Church, be the ones to be welcomed in?

How will anyone ever change or find the Kingdom if those especially nurtured on a rich diet of spirituality and study, supposed to equip them for the task of handing on the Kingdom, are forbidden to involve themselves in it? What is there to fear?

Since Vatican II there has been a dearth of spirituality. Go to any church during the week and there is a rim of older people, a

faithful few, who have prayed the prayers they love over the years. But where is a spirituality that will hold the youth of the future. The church has changed a great deal. Society and its moral values or lack of them has changed even more. Education has given our young people the ability to discern for themselves and they do that. They are not lacking faith in God, but could well be caught in the directionless seeking of our time, if they are not assisted to discern the Way they are called to discover within the human situation, in order to minister to those seeking the Kingdom in our day.

Perhaps the youth of today have a greater courage and are more prepared to take a risk for the Kingdom because their convictions are born from their experience which, when reflected upon in the light of faith, will enable them to act in the security of that. Perhaps the spirituality emerging from their reflection will be more redemptive in quality and their understanding of the Kingdom broad enough to reach beyond what appears to be the narrow confines of a religion which seems to have lost its security in the power of the one who called them to serve, "so that the salvation of the human race (might) be accomplished". ■

June MacMillan



Bulk Funding

...a thorny

by Leon W Benade

Bulk funding has come as a financial bonanza to many schools. But it is challenged by teacher unions – and it raises serious questions regarding Special Character

The question of how schools are funded in modern times has become a contentious issue, particularly in Western democracies, especially since the advent of *Thatcherism*, *Reaganomics* and, in the context of New Zealand, *Rogernomics*. The 'New Right' has found increasing popularity in these democracies as successive governments have grappled with problems related to balancing budgets. 'New Right' approaches to the application of liberal democratic values have seen a shift away from welfarism towards individualism. Responsibility is devolved upon individuals and smaller communities in preference to solutions being sought, found and paid for at a national or central level. In return, individuals and local communities are given greater freedom of choice in the form of tax cuts or bulk funds, to purchase that which was formerly state provided.

It is in this context that the concept of 'bulk funding' of teachers' salaries in New Zealand has arisen. Put simply, the state provides individual schools a single bulk allocation of funds from which the salaries of teachers will be paid, usually enough for a three-year period. Initially, the formula was based on an average of salaries of current teachers at the school, multiplied by the number of teachers. Recently, however, the 'Fully Funded Option' has been more generously calculated, now paying at the level of the most highly paid teacher, multiplied by the number of teachers on the staff.

This system offers several advantages: access by individual schools to a greater lump sum of money; allowing schools flexibility taking on extra staff; developing areas otherwise neglected (such as cultural and sporting staffing and provision); and paying incentives. Boards of Trustees are given real responsibility

and can exercise considerable clout, not previously possible.

But bulk funding also poses many threats:

- the very real temptation for Boards of Trustees to replace older (more expensive) teachers with younger (less expensive) teachers.
- the government's desire to have schools negotiate individual, 'site-based' contracts with teachers, thus moving them off the collective contract bargained between state and union. The strength of the unions is undermined, and schools can open the door to negotiating differential salaries with teachers (breaking with the structured salary scale approach).

This series of events fits precisely with the New Right agenda of devolving more control to local communities and

more responsibility onto individuals.

By virtue of the Integration Agreement Catholic schools find themselves having to deal with this issue, and some have already opted for the 'Fully Funded Option'. How are they to respond? In some cases there is simply no debate, as the sum of money making up the bulk fund would make little material difference, eg in the case of (often small) schools which have teachers mainly earning at the ceiling level. However, where schools have larger and younger staffing arrangements, the bulk fund is very tempting indeed.

Special character

A Catholic school is a community. This suggests the school as a family, a close-knit collection of people who exist for each other. It implies such values as mutual respect and reverencing the dignity of all. The school is valued as a place of caring and sharing. Against this is the organisational metaphor so loved by those keen to privatise education. Within this metaphor is the view schools must 'market' themselves to 'stay ahead of the game'. It is a short step to refer to teachers as 'curriculum agents' and students as 'clients'. Within this setting Boards of Trustees sometimes find themselves thrown into pitched battle with teachers anxious to retain their job status and career prospects, while still holding on to virtuous ideals in respect of the children and adolescents they teach.

There is no denying that the 'Fully Funded Option' creates enormous advantages for some schools. Whether a school sees this as a pragmatic leg-up, or as a pottage of dollars in return for which it sells its soul to the state, will be determined largely by the extent to which a school staff and its Board of Trustees share a mutual vision. In this context it is equally unhelpful if the Board pushes its own barrow while teachers relentlessly pursue some self-serving agenda. In the context of collegiality and the development of a shared vision, a Catholic school will be able to best determine the most life-giving

course of action to take.

Biblical justice

Jesus clearly signalled (*Mt 5:1-10*) in the Beatitudes that his expectation was that justice would be done; that retributive justice would be replaced by a sense of justice based on love, compassion and forgiveness. Catholic schools have been characterised by their strong efforts to uphold and advance social justice causes through outreach programmes, concern for the poor and providing a place for the marginalised.

A key concept to keep in mind here is the notion of that which is life-giving. In consideration of any problematic moral question, consequences must be examined in light of the question: will this course of action be life-giving?

Two questions arise concerning the justice of bulk funding. Is it a policy of further enriching the powerful while disempowering already impoverished schools? It seems that bigger, already well-resourced schools are most like to benefit by attracting far larger allocations, while smaller, often under-resourced schools will gain no benefit by opting for bulk funding.

*does bulk funding enrich
the powerful while
disempowering already
impoverished schools?*

Secondly, the debate has driven wedges between Boards and teachers. Older, better paid teachers are led to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about their personal career prospects, and come to view younger, lesser paid teachers as a threat. Boards are viewed by teachers as pursuing a narrow, utilitarian agenda, while Boards see these teachers as dinosaurs, unwilling to make changes for the betterment of the school.

It is within the power of individual schools to address justice issues within their own community. Such a debate

would be more pragmatic than discussions around community. A shared vision would include justice issues, and would help to guide this debate. A Catholic school cannot be riven by conflict created on the back of suspicions and fears.

Liberation

This concept resides in the redemptive and salvific nature of Christ's death and resurrection, central to the vision of a Catholic school, and in the Catholic belief in free will. The notion of liberation should see those involved in the enterprise of Catholic education as freed from the materialistic issues of the day so as to pursue the common good of the school community. This would certainly have applied to the religious orders who formerly owned and operated these schools. Now, however, in the context of total, or almost total, lay involvement, this value is not as easily attainable.

In the public provision of schooling, in which the state provides schooling to all, teachers can be liberated from materialistic concerns. However, in the New Right agenda, that equal access of all to a public schooling system is now under some threat. Further, by offering the 'Fully Funded Option' to schools, the current government divests itself of considerable responsibilities and now locks local communities into the concerns that grow out of the need to supplement government money in other ways.

It is thus important that a Catholic school community considering whether to adopt bulk funding, should look at ways in which this choice curtails its liberty to pursue its core values, vision and mission, locking itself instead into a merciless merry-go-round of additional fundraising and bargaining teacher contracts. Only if the school community has vision will it cope adequately with these changes. ■

Leon Benade teaches at St Paul's College in Ponsonby, Auckland, and wrote this as part of a larger paper for the Catholic Institute of Theology

Thrills and spills – 'mid hills and

In the wake of the Swiss canyon disaster which killed two New Zealanders and 14 Australians, among many others, Tui Motu invited three very different people – but with a common love of nature and the wild – to look at thrill-seeking and the call of the wild. What does it do for the human spirit? The photographs (including the magazine cover) come from their family collections

Peter: I think thrill-seeking doesn't do anything for you because it does not make you better person.

Robyn: I disagree. Taking risks is a way of extending the comfort zones we build up. Climbing a mountain, for example, is something you have to struggle to do as regards personal safety. You gain a

sense of achievement, and that extends itself to everyday living. It helps you extend your potential.

Kevin: Thrill-seeking and adventure are different points on a continuum – and there are good and bad aspects.

Self-development, learning how to push the boundaries, is a plus. There is also an adrenaline rush which is satisfying. I think when you have been really scared, it can put life in perspective in such a way that you start to value life more.

For example, bringing down a mate who is badly hurt, being caught out in a storm, running like fury from an avalanche – these have been close calls in my life.

So while there is a lot that is good in taking risk, there is also a market building up in high-risk adventure – and I question the ethics of that. It's so easy to sell the hype of 'high-risk' experiences, but you may also be putting other people's life and limb at risk.

Peter: There is all the difference in the world between stepping out of your comfort zone and so called 'thrill-seeking'. For me the thrill is seeing young people stepping outside their comfort

zone and learning, for instance, how to light a campfire. But I see no point in thrill-seeking and taking unnecessary risks with one's life.

Kevin: I believe it's a question of managing the risk. The job of the operator and the participant is to minimise the risk. The recent canyoning disaster where they were overwhelmed by a wall of water – that's a bit like the avalanche on the mountain. Local knowledge will tell you if there's a low or high risk of an avalanche. It's a question of how far you should go. Some will always tend to push the limit further than others.

Robyn: In the thrill-seeker there is an element of the child that comes out – a lack of inhibition. Some young people seem to have no fear – even when they're always breaking bones!

There is a desire to play, almost as if they never want the child in them to grow up! They want fun. They're not trying to prove anything; they just want to play in the wild! They're free spirits.

You feel alive when you are out there, in the elements, *on the edge*. You feel at one with the earth.



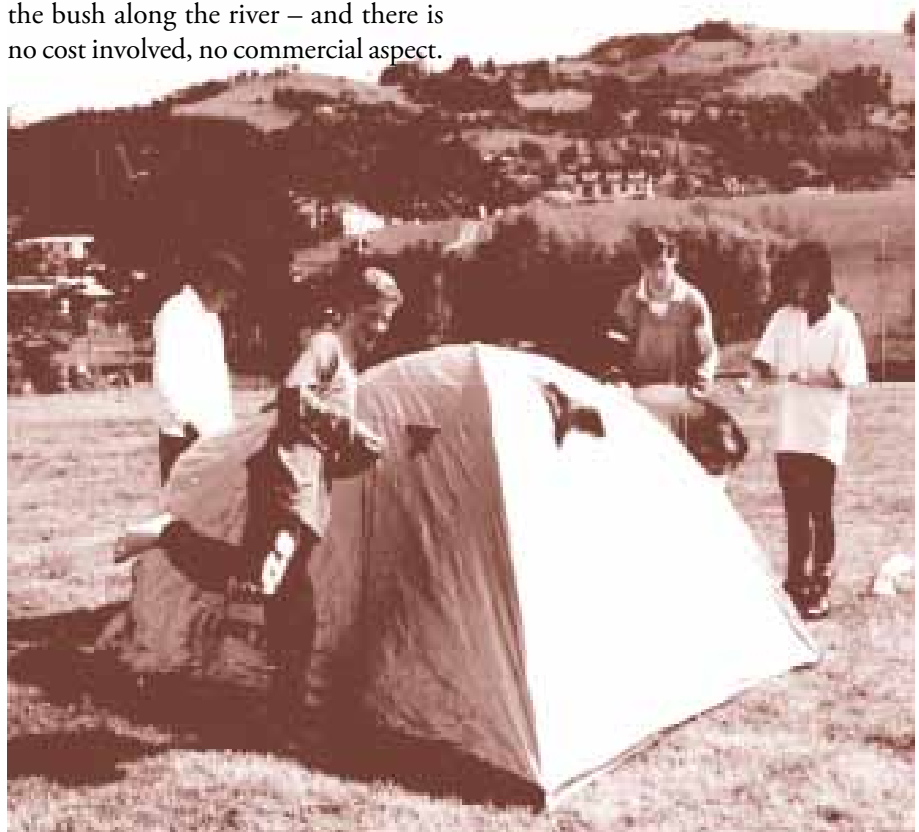
duotone climber



Kevin: There is a very high degree of satisfaction in completing a difficult climb, especially is once upon a time it would have been beyond me. You extend your boundaries, and that personally gives me great satisfaction. Mind you, if we had had our family 15 years before we did, I would have stopped climbing mountains 15 years earlier! Having children, I view safety very differently. There's often a very fine line between everything going smoothly – and a terrible accident.

Peter: For young people the team element is what I believe it is all about. The daredevil in the group may be the one who says to the slower member: *I'll show you how to do it.* So they learn from each other and they learn to support one another. They build up one another's confidence. In a 'patrol' of six or eight boys there will always be one who pushes the rest along. I think that's team building. It's not just individual bravado! When I take young people tramping, it's the peace and quiet which appeals, not just getting from A to B, but taking in the beauty of nature – the river

flowing, the campfire burning, cooking your own meals, listening to birdsong. Just observing nature like that brings an enormous peace – and to the young people. That's when they really open up and talk about themselves, in the evening round the campfire. You can wander in the bush along the river – and there is no cost involved, no commercial aspect.



Kevin: The risk-takers tend to go for the instant thrill – quick in, quick out – rushing from one thing to another, busy, busy, busy – without ever taking stock. The thrillseeker may well be trying to escape from himself rather than find himself.

Robyn: Once I went on holiday to Thailand and stayed in a hotel where you don't have to do anything for yourself and you're quite separate from what's around you – I was so miserable and just hated it. Then I stayed in a one room hut on poles built over rocks with cockroaches, living with families who were very poor, I was so much happier. Being with the people and having to do more for myself.

Kevin: I would just love to give my children that experience – like walking through Nepal – so that they can see life in a third world country and learn that you don't need material possessions to be happy. I would be delighted to let the children see that it is not money that makes you happy – real happiness comes from deep inside. ■

Exploring the Beatitudes – 4



I've never been one for disembodied theology. I need flesh and blood people who, whether they are believers or not, can reveal to me something of God's plan and love for our world. When I was a teenager the sayings in the *Sermon on the Mount* seemed to me to be so utterly paradoxical (incomprehensible even) that the only people who could understand them had to be intellectual Houdinis. Twenty or so years on in my journey I have been given some experi-

ences, memories and examples from people who have lived something of the mystery of the *Beatitudes* in a way that has helped me understand.

Mercy and righteousness are major themes in the *Sermon of the Mount*. Mercy is the compassionate care for others whereby one takes on the burden of another as one's own. Righteousness means the restoring of just relations with ourselves, with others, with the human community and organised society, with nature and with God. The one often informs and educates the other.

My cousin Andrew was someone who demonstrated this for me. As a young man Andrew had graduated from Edin-

burgh in Social Anthropology and went on to complete his doctorate at Oxford. His research took him to the Peruvian Amazon, where he and his wife, Sheila, spent a year or so living with the Harakmbut people. They made friendships there which had a profound effect on their lives. Mercy leads us to feel the oppression of friends or loved ones more keenly than if we ourselves are the victims. Andrew's research documented the threat to the Harakmbut from gold miners, loggers and oil workers. The experience of seeing these new friends under threat turned Andrew from an

academic researcher into an effective campaigner, and the rest of his life was spent working for a restoration of right and just relationships with indigenous people throughout the world: North America, India, East Timor, Amazonia, and Bangladesh.

Tragically, Andrew died earlier this year when his plane crashed into the sea off Port Vila. At his memorial service a letter from the Harakmbut People was read out. I reproduce a translation of part of that letter:

"It is with the deepest sorrow that the Harakmbut people of the forests of Madre de Dios wish to inform the indigenous peoples of Peru and the whole world of our im-

mense distress at the loss of our oamambuy Andrew Gray. Andrew has been part of our lives since he decided to come here from his native country of England as a young man, and to live with us in San Jose del Karene, a Harakmbut community which was to become his second home.

"There he built a lovely little house of palm leaves and poles, and together with his inseparable wife, Sheila, and his son, Masabibi Robbie, began a new life in the Harakmbut way, learning to make his garden, to hunt, to fish, and to work for gold, with never a sign of irritation, in spite of the demanding work. Andrew

and his family learned our language, and with their love and humility they gradually earned our affection, respect and admiration...

"...Thus began his life in Madre de Dios. He was completely absorbed in the indigenous cause, suffering with his own flesh the injustices committed by colonists, gold miners, loggers and oil workers, who have posed a great threat for our people in their attempts to exploit our natural resources with no regard for our fundamental rights. His life was always directed by that boyish enthusiasm which led him to battle steadfastly on, showing us the path towards the ideals of social justice, self-determination and a better life of peace

*Blessed are the merciful ...
for they will receive mercy*

and harmony...” (from The Harakmbut Indigenous People, *Madre de Dios, Peru*).

For Andrew justice was not a cheap campaign slogan, nor a sword to attack others with: it went hand in hand with his delight in the Harakmbut people (who described him running to greet their community with outstretched arms) – and with ‘suffering in his own flesh’ the injustices they experienced. The Harakmbut became his teachers, and together they discovered the power of just relationships, lived in the give-and-take of merciful love and friendship.

Another person who has revealed to me something of the meaning of the *Sermon of the Mount* is Jean Vanier. Jean often speaks of his defining relationship – one where friendship and justice were linked. Jean discovered his real poverty in his relationship with Raphael (pictured right with Jean) and Philippe, the two men he welcomed from a state institution and with whom he formed the very first *L’Arche* community. In their daily life together, Jean discovered that it wasn’t his achievements or his intellectual prowess that Raphael and Philippe needed: it was *him* and whatever love and friendship he could offer. This is surely what is meant by *Blessed are the poor in spirit*. A self-esteem that is built on wealth, achievements or intellectual prowess will die with us; built on an understanding of ourselves as being loved by God, it has the potential to last for ever.

I remember when we were beginning a house for people with multiple disabilities in Liverpool, my wife, Maria, and I went to visit the local mental institution. We were shown to the ward where no one visits, where people with multiple disabilities were arranged on the floor on bean bags, where the air was punctuated by cries, groans and murmurings.

Two people made a profound impression. David was introduced to us by the nurse who compared him unfavourably with her star patient. “Unlike Jenny, who is very bright, this is David who is *very, very slow*”, she said. As if to emphasise the point, David very, very slowly turned his gaze upon us. He had a look that appeared to see deeper into your heart than anyone had ever seen

*justice is to suffer
in one’s own flesh
the injustices others
experience*

before. Then his smile began. As the nurse said he was very, very slow. The smile continued to spread across his face for what felt like ages, and he held our eyes fixed as he did so. A gentle nudge from the bustling nurse and the smile disappeared, his face clouded and a lifeless David shuffled away.



Our next encounter was with Ying, who was folded in half on a bean bag. “She is blind”, we were told, “and she doesn’t talk.” We settled down beside her, telling her who we were and why we were visiting. As we talked, Ying’s presence led the way into a companionable silence. We stayed that way together for something like half an hour, never having seen Ying’s face which was buried in the confusion of her limbs in the cushion. We bade our farewells, promising to come and see her again. As we left, something

made us both turn and look back. What we saw was remarkable: opening up, very slowly, like a flower turning to the light we saw a beautiful, upturned smiling face. Then, like quicksilver, it was gone and she folded in on herself again.

Ying and David came to live with us in our *L’Arche* community in Liverpool. They and other members of their household used to go to the local parish each Sunday, some in their wheelchairs, some on frames. We would go right to the front so that they could see, or if they couldn’t see, then hear. It was a noisy group, bringing cries, groans and shouts to the Sunday liturgy.

One Christmas vigil one of the congregation, a taxi driver, came over to the group very visibly moved, and said: “Some people here might object to this noise, but I want you to know that these people are a gift to the parish, they help me understand the Mass – they’re what it’s all about.” By being in right relationship with their parish community, by just being present, I believe Ying and David drew out of the heart of that taxi driver a truly merciful response. In turn, his merciful heart began to understand the liturgy more deeply.

The new economics, which currently hold us in thrall, have their own alternative, sacrilegious beatitudes: “How uselessly unproductive are the poor in Spirit – they will never get on in life.” “Blessed are the ruthless – they shall inherit the earth.” “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for money – benefits will trickle down to the poor from them.” In Andrew’s life, in Jean’s life and in the communities of *L’Arche* I see a strong challenge to that way of thinking, and I see those paradoxical, incomprehensible *Beatitudes* of Jesus coming alive. ■

Mike Noonan is Director of Catholic Social Services, Dunedin. He and his wife Maria worked for many years in L’Arche communities.

Did Jesus Christ rise bodily from the dead?



The “Jesus Seminar” visited New Zealand in July, in the person of Irish-American Scripture scholar John Dominic Crossan. Tui Motu asked Associate Professor Paul Trebilco (left) and Dr Greg Dawes (right), of the Otago Theology Department, to debate how these scholars understand Jesus

You have both listened to John Dominic Crossan and spoken with him. What is your principal impression?

Paul: I have two quibbles with the Jesus seminar. It uses a different methodology from much other New Testament study, and it's very selective.

I would go along with Crossan regarding his justice theme: for Jesus, table fellowship and sharing food are symbols of acceptance, and that is central to the Gospel. But there is so much left out! – Jesus' emphasis on the forgiveness of sins, the miracle stories, restoration of relationship with God, calling Israel back to its true nature, setting up a new society.

Greg: What Crossan concentrates on is Jesus' ethical teaching. My impression is that the Jesus Seminar movement has arisen in the US to fight fundamentalism, and its research tends to be aimed at undermining the sort of religious stance taken, for instance, by the Southern Baptists.

Paul: I agree. The difficult issues like Resurrection, judgment, election and covenant, which Scripture scholars need to grapple with, the Jesus Seminar simply ignores. They seem to be seen as secondary elaborations, not belonging to the essential Jesus.

Greg: To me, the Jesus of the Jesus Seminar is not so much too “human” as too modern. We can identify with the ethical teachings of the Gospel easily enough, but the sort of Jewish apocalyptic world-view when Jesus lived was totally different from our own age, since it envisaged an imminent intervention by God into our human situation. It seems to me that the Jesus seminar people have simply avoided that problem. By dismissing it they make Jesus into too much of a modern figure.

Paul: They also overlook that because of Roman domination and Jewish loss of freedom, the belief that God should and must intervene and do something about it, was on everybody's mind.

Greg: Absolutely. After Jesus died his followers yearned for his return in glory. Paul talks as if Jesus is about to return in glory next Tuesday, and it is only by the time *Ephesians* is written that it has become much clearer that the Christian church was in for the long haul. The apocalyptic sermons in the gospels could hardly have been made up: indeed it's a principle of Biblical scholarship that sections in Scripture which would have been an embarrassment to the early church, could not have been invented by them and put on Jesus' lips.

Paul: It seems to me that the scholars of the Jesus Seminar combine a scepticism regarding parts of the gospels with a willingness to accept uncritically, for example, the apocryphal gospel of Thomas. They accept quite complex hypotheses regarding the way the sayings of Jesus evolve with a radical scepticism about other sections of the gospel. This combination of views seems very unlikely.

I believe, for instance, that Jesus' message was handed on not like dead bones but as a ‘living word’. So *Thy Kingdom Come* (in *Luke*) becomes *Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done On earth as it is in heaven* (in *Matthew*). I call this a sort of friendly elaboration. I see no difficulty in understanding this as the process of handing-on Jesus' message with some adaptation by the Gospel writer. We do not have to be sceptical, as the Seminar is, about everything except an irreducible core of sayings which have come down unchanged. We should judge the gospel texts we have received as reliable, on the grounds that in an ‘oral’ culture people were used to passing on teachings with the basic ideas intact. The evangelists were like good biographers: they wanted to set the story of Jesus down and make it intelligible to their people, not to distort it.

The historical Jesus

as perceived by John Dominic Crossan



Who was this man living 20 centuries ago whom half the people worshipped as divine and the other half sought to crucify?

To answer that question properly we have to go to the context of Jesus' life – historical and social. Jesus lived at a time of growing social unrest as the iron rule of Rome strengthened its grip. The impact of Roman commercialism was to create a wealthy landowning class while reducing the poor to destitution. During the first Century the people rose repeatedly against their imperial masters. The Baptist movement and the Jesus movement have to be seen against this backdrop.

The Roman system flew in the face of the biblical tradition of the justice of God. The land belonged to God and it was for the use of God's people. To alienate the land from the people was therefore a grave injustice. The creation of cities like Caesarea was a sacrilege. The land *must* in justice be restored to the dispossessed people.

John Dominic Crossan maintains that the Kingdom which Jesus preached and which is central to his 'good news',

implies restoration of divine justice. Jesus speaks little of land but he says a lot about sharing food and restoring the dignity of the dispossessed. His is therefore a politically subversive programme.

The apocalyptic expectations of the Jewish people of the time would be fulfilled in the message of Jesus because it implied destruction of an unjust world and the ushering in of the new Kingdom of God. Jesus' programme may have been non-violent, but it still implied revolutionary change because it confronted the new alliance between the Roman masters and people like the Sadducees who collaborated.

The cleansing of the Temple, described in all four Gospels, is a fulfilling of the prophecy of Jeremiah: it confronts the Jewish establishment as well because it condemns them for not doing justice to the people. Jesus comes to Jerusalem to threaten both the Romans and the priests. Therefore he deserves to be crucified! ■

Greg: Texts should be evaluated according to historical criteria, not on how they fit in with some preconceived theory. For instance, the Jesus Seminar people dismiss the divorce texts in the gospel as "unlikely". Yet there are few examples of texts more consistent than Jesus' sayings about divorce. Why question a text just because Jesus is giving a more rigorist teaching?

Paul: I am happy with the notion the Jesus Seminar teaches that the radical nature of Jesus' message brings him into conflict with the authorities of the time.

Greg: But that is ethical teaching – how we *should* behave. It's not the central issue of the Gospel. One of the points made by scholars like Weiss and Schweitzer was that the apocalyptic bringing about of the Kingdom was destined to happen through the hand of God, not by human effort. A first century Jew looked to God to set things right. And Jesus would have seen it that way too. It was God who would usher in the

kingdom, not some human revolution-ary movement.

Can we look now at the Resurrection of Jesus. What do they teach about that?

Paul: As regards Resurrection the disciples believed in the *bodyliness* of the Jesus they experienced after Easter – but it was a transformed body. Whereas the Jesus Seminar affirms the continuity only of the *message* of Jesus after his death. They are sceptical about a returned physical presence of Jesus. For them, it is his spirit that continues. Whereas we would say that the tradition that Jesus died, was buried and then rose implies a continuity that involves the body. For Crossan the 'Resurrection' of Jesus implies psychological or spiritual experiences which were completely internal. There was no literal sense of "seeing the risen Lord".

Greg: I would prefer an interpretation that the disciples were accurately reporting what they thought they saw but they were deluded, than to say that

they made it up many years later. The Resurrection narrative represents what they believed at that time – and later.

At the time of Jesus *Resurrection* to the Jews meant bodily resurrection. Historically it is better to acknowledge this and accept that the Apostles may have been deluded or lying, than to try to turn their message into something else.

Paul: One can accept that in terms of scientific history people will question bodily resurrection on the grounds that it is an unrepeatable event, so it cannot be tested. The assertion that God raised Jesus from the dead is a *faith* statement – but I think it is not contrary to the historical evidence as we have received it. It makes sense in terms of the world view of the people who experienced it and of the overall reliability of the gospels themselves.

I ask myself: *what was the mindset of the disciples on the day after Calvary?* It must surely have been that Jesus was wrong, for he had been crucified and that meant

(continued overleaf)

(continued from page 21)

he was cursed by God. Then the disciples experienced Easter. That experience totally contradicted such a mindset. It could not therefore have been mere wishful thinking on their part. The contemporary apocalyptic belief of the Jews was to expect bodily resurrection *for all* – but not the Resurrection of one man. For the disciples, as Jews, to come to believe in the resurrection of Jesus is a revolution in their theological thinking.

Greg: I agree. It is better explained by a sudden experience than as the result of a long drawn out period of reflection.

Paul: The Resurrection then is seen as an act of God. For the New Testament writers God acts in history, so such an assertion becomes acceptable to them as Jewish people.

Let's move on to the healing stories? How does Crossan evaluate the miraculous in the Gospel stories?

Paul: Crossan distinguishes between the disease which is physical and the illness which is the sociological effect of the disease. So 'leprosy' is a form of

skin disease, a medical condition. But the leper is also ostracised. Crossan talks about Jesus curing the illness, the isolation of the leper – but not the disease. Yet Jesus' opponents never deny that Jesus healed people of diseases: they say he's in league with Beelzebul. Historically there are very good grounds for saying Jesus was a miracle-worker.



Greg: The historian tries to see events as they were seen at the time. And the miraculous was perfectly plausible to the popular Judaism of the first century. Again, they may have been deluded – but that is not the point. To distinguish disease from illness as the Jesus Seminar authors do is a modern distinction, and there is no reason to attribute it to the Gospel writers.

Paul: In fact the evangelists are very reserved in their accounts of the miraculous – compared, say, with some of the later, non-canonical gospels. The Jews of that time were by no means gullible. The evangelists wrote it this way because they believed that Jesus had healed in this way, and it was entirely consistent with their expectation that when the reign of God broke into human history this sort of event would happen.

Greg: We have sometimes regarded the miracle stories as proofs of Jesus' divinity. To the Gospel writers they were nothing of the sort! They were signposts of the coming of the Kingdom, prophetic actions which pointed to the arrival of the Day of Salvation. Our modern distinction between science and magic focuses on the *mechanism* of how something is brought about. Whereas in the ancient and mediaeval world it was not a question of

mechanism but of whether the action came about through the power of God or through the devil! A miracle worker, in this view, could be tapping into divine power – or into demonic power. The mechanism would look the same.

What value do you place in general terms on the work of Crossan and his fellow scholars?

Paul: The value of Crossan's work is the stimulation to take the historical Jesus seriously. We can be tempted to make Jesus a cipher that we fill with what we want to believe. The Risen Lord proclaimed by the church must always be continuous with what the historical Jesus was all about. These scholars provide a critical function to challenge us to find out what Jesus really did say – what he really was on about.

Greg: One contemporary scholar suggests that day by day we draw on the historical past because of its immediate relevance to the present, but we tend to leave out what isn't so relevant. He claims that a historian must be faithful to the past in *all* its complexity and all

*the Risen Lord
proclaimed by the
church must always
be continuous with the
historical Jesus*

its otherness, or difference.

The temptation always is to use the past to confirm what we think to be true. So we make Jesus into an ecologist, or a social reformer..! It's better to say, "this is what Jesus was on about – but I don't believe a word of it!", than to distort the memory to fit our own particular agenda.

Paul: In fact I find a great degree of continuity between how I think Jesus saw himself and how the Gospels and Paul proclaimed him to be. I think the Jesus Seminar sees this continuity in far too narrow a sense. ■



Ward 24

Two o'clock in the morning.
The ward is bathed in blackness
opaque as a winter glove –
except for a chink in the curtain
from whence flows
escaping light from an opposite block.

Rain splatters fitfully against the pane;
but for the rest there is silence.
In the corner a monitoring machine
with its green hieroglyphics
having done its work
has ceased to clank.

Those awake are left in a void
uncluttered by movement,
or welcome distraction
while darkness bears irrevocably down
with a consistency thicker than fog.

The mind sets to endure
utter emptiness, complete foreignness
of the situation,
accentuated by a wounded body
seeming so strange, hardly one's own,
unpacing time and thought
and heavily sedated.
The whole world stands still in blank emptiness

and has no answer
to this crushing phenomenon –
this utter sorrow of being, yet not being.

Time expands like a rubber band stretched
each minute multiplying itself
and itself, a dozen times over.
And still there is no ending.
You but wait, and hope and pray.

Sounds come to consciousness –
the muted steps of a nurse outside,
crutches scraping against the floor,
and a buzzer in the distance.
Then all is silent again.

The first shy glimmer of light
attaches itself to the ceiling
and slowly darkness recedes
giving way to golden reality.

And you wonder in the quiet efficiency
and order of the morning
if you have merely dreamt
or truly experienced
the horror of the night.

Sister Adrienne, OP

on biking

*biking's more intimate
you give yourself completely
to the rain to the sun light
to the darkness
the hot nor'west burning
the sharp white frost penetrating your bones
this way, when it comes, the joy
'tis more complete
because you have
opened yourself utterly to the sky
held nothing back
no cloak of metal surrounding you
not even an umbrella*

Kathleen Gallagher

Dragonfly

*Today I found a dragonfly
as perfect in death as in flight.
Four blemishless wings support
the slender streak of his body.
So beautiful a brother
manifests the mystery of creation.
Holding the small and lovely form,
with compassion for life's fleeting arc
I sense the single cosmic throb
born of a billion beating hearts,
connected in diversity,
united in divinity, bonded in eternity.*

Penelope Whitaker

Promoter's Corner

Dear Tui Motu People

<http://www.catholic.org/newzealand/tuimotu>

Yes, it's true. We are on the world wide web, thanks to being able to 'piggy back' on the Catholic Church website, and thanks to its indefatigable web master, Mike Leon.

Our appearance will attract more overseas subscribers (who number 80 at present). It may also attract a generation of those people to whom the screen is more commonly an information medium than the printed page. Tell them about it!

In early August the editor and I participated in *Tui Motu* gatherings at Palmerston North and Wellington city. We were buoyed up by ideas and enthusiasm aplenty. The content and 'attitude' of *Tui Motu* was strongly affirmed, together with explicit plans to promote the magazine in both cities.

Our ambition to have 2000 readers by the year 2000 suddenly became far more realistic. When that happens our costs of production will be approximately covered: affluent we may not be – but afloat! And that is an experience we will enjoy.

Tom Cloher

Sisters Stay. Sisters Go

*The SMSM Sisters have withdrawn from the Chatham Islands
after fifty years of devoted service*

The Chatham Islands, 800 kilometres east of South Island, New Zealand, will be the first place in the world to see the sun in the Third Millennium. At 5 am, three quarters of an hour ahead of the rest of New Zealand, TV3 will showcase worldwide this group of islands, sometimes called “The Sisters”.

Real Sisters, Sisters of the Missions of the Society of Mary, have upstaged the global spectacle. They’ve worked on the islands for more than 50 years and seen the sun rise many times. Archivist Sister Mary Aquin says, “When we arrived there was a boat every four months or so but less frequently in winter. If you were lucky the trip took about four days on choppy seas and you might have to make a number of trips to the wharf before you got aboard.

“Now there’s a plane several times a week and phones, faxes and TV. All first-time mothers fly to the mainland to deliver their babies. The Chathams don’t need us now. Undoubtedly the major change has been the development of transport and communications”.

The Sisters were invited to staff the hospital because no one else wanted to. “The greatest difficulty has obtained for a long time past in securing hospital staff for Chatham Islands,” wrote the secretary of the hospital board to the chairman. “Lately the problem has become even more acute. The hospital was left for some weeks with only one nurse and very casual domestic staff.” This was the official way of saying, “Patients have to get their own breakfast when the staff doesn’t turn up”.

Delicate negotiations took place before the Sisters were allowed to go. While some people congratulated them, others were angry. One reader wrote: “I would like to know if the people of the Chatham Islands were consulted in the

question (about Roman Catholic Sisters taking over the hospital). Apparently they are to be left to the tender mercies of this ‘great reformatory’ and the effect on the minds of these impressionable people can well be imagined”. The Sisters were also devalued by the Church. When the Hospital Board offered them a salary of £1000 a year, the bishop of Auckland cut it back to £750.

For most New Zealanders, Chatham Islands means the end of the weather forecast, usually ‘cold, wet and windy’. For the SMSM Sisters the islands have always been an adventure. Ten bleak islands constitute the Chathams. Only two, *Chatham* and *Pitt*, named for 18th century British statesmen (father and son), are inhabited.

In 1949 three nursing sisters and their Mother General boarded a flying boat in Wellington

Harbour. It was unusual to travel to the Chathams by means other than boat but the sisters’ appointment coincided with an Island visit by the Minister of Education. “We climbed into the nose of the plane like trap door spiders”, they wrote. “Our heads got a few knocks on the roof when we tried to straighten up.”

This was the beginning of a 50-year apostolate. Foundation Sisters Mother Mary Basil, Sisters Kieran, Imelda and Brendan set the scene. On arrival they were introduced to the traditional Island costume – oilskins and gumboots. Their trunks took two weeks to get there. They made do with aprons made of sackcloth and a theatre gown that Sister Kieran called her maternity garment.

The hospital had accommodation for four adults, two children and several babies but no patients to begin with

– just a grumpy ex-matron who frequently and deliberately interrupted them during prayers. The first sanctuary lamp was a candle in a peanut butter jar. After 40 years the Canterbury Hospital Board built a new house; a marked improvement on their first week when they found a dead hen in the fowl run and a dead cat in the laundry.

A recent newsletter from the Sisters reported a busy nursing scene “with enjoyable times and some emotionally draining times”. They write about drama classes, darts’ competitions, aerobics and touch rugby. “We’ve made friends with wonderful, genuine people, who have taught us a lot about their own life journey... and given us a deep

awareness and appreciation of why we are here”.

The Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary went to alleviate a desperate situation. Misunderstood and underpaid, they had nothing much to look forward to, but they took the people health and joy. They delivered hundreds of babies as well as nursing sick and wounded adults; and they looked after the islanders’ spiritual needs.

Now, five months before the birth of the ‘world’s biggest baby’, the Sisters are leaving the Chathams. Earlier this year Most Rev. John Cunneen, Bishop of Christchurch, celebrated Eucharist on the islands. Sister Brendan, one of the original Sisters, attended. She says: “We’ve worked ourselves out of a job on the Chathams. There are more pressing needs now.” A global audience of a billion people on 1 January, 2000, will miss them. ■ *Rosaleen Conway*

To Paul's mother: *you are missing money...*

Paul Andrews SJ, priest and psychotherapist, looks into the case of the child who steals. Is he or she going to grow up a delinquent?



You have been missing it for some time, and feel sure that Paul, your ten-year-old, has been taking it, though he denies any knowledge of it. You are terribly upset and worried, and you simply hate to have the role of detective thrust upon you.

It happens all the time. Mothers have to know what is happening in the house, without ceasing to be mothers. If Paul has been stealing, then almost certainly he will lie about it. The two forms of dishonesty are almost inseparable. Children who have stolen can look you unblinkingly in the face, invite you to search them or their room, offer explanations as to how the money disappeared.

It is generally a mistake to start a lengthy and painful questioning of the suspect. Better to look for evidence to satisfy yourself, and when it points clearly towards Paul's guilt, confront him; ask if he has spent all the money, and on what. It is upsetting enough to have to face his stealing. Do not make it more painful by an inquisition which will probably lead to his lying as well. Instead look for evidence elsewhere.

The rationalisations and excuses will come in plenty. "I borrowed it, I was going to give it back." Some parents are so reluctant to accept that their children steal, that they let themselves be persuaded by those excuses and stories. That is always a mistake. You are allying yourself with the dishonest, excuse-making part of Paul, and deep down he knows it. He needs to be

blamed, confronted with his guilt, and be obliged to pay back what he has stolen. He knows clearly enough what he would demand if somebody stole money off him. He would be upset and concerned too, and would demand the money back. It is a mistake to be too bland, calm or controlled in the face of stealing. There is every reason to be upset, and show concern, but with some cautions.

Many parents in this situation respond by giving 'a good scolding' or 'a good thrashing', and hope the lesson has been learned. This may ease your feelings of indignation, but produce nothing more than a lonelier thief or a cleverer liar. It is right to show indignation and impose a just punishment. It is wrong to make prophecies of delinquency and involvement with the police.

A parent's prophecies have a terrible power. They draw children towards fulfilling the prediction, or imagining that they do. I remember one lovable but hyperactive boy whose mother, in a moment of weariness, groaned: "You'll be the death of me, John". When he was ten, she suddenly dropped dead, leaving him with a burden of guilt which took years to lift.

Threats are generally a sign of weakness. It is enough that children know it is wrong to steal, and why. You do not need to warn Paul in advance that you may bring him down to the police, or face-to-face with the shop-owner he has robbed. It may be a good move when the time comes. It is nearly always a mis-

take to rehearse it in advance by threats.

When you ask Paul why did he steal, he will say he does not know; he does not understand his action. So it is up to the parent to seek an understanding, a harder task than showing indignation and imposing punishment.

Two key questions are: *Who did Paul steal from; how did he spend the money?*

If it was your money that he consistently robbed, it is worth looking hard at that relationship. Does he feel let down by you, ousted by another child, pressed too hard, blamed too much, stroked too seldom? Can you read his feelings and surmise the answer? It is surprising how often stealing goes back to a feeling of not being understood by parents.

I remember one boy whose shoplifting led to a major row with his father, the best thing that ever happened between them. The boy felt his father had been pushing him too hard, asking for standards he could not reach. He knew stealing was wrong, but the pressures in his life, and the absence of affection, made him feel sullen and cheated. He felt deprived of the only currency that matters, parental love, so made up for it by taking cheaper goods.

The other question is also revealing. How did he spend the money? Younger children sometimes want to buy friends with sweets or other gifts – then the problem is social, not financial. Others feel they get too little pocket-money compared with their companions: no

easy answer here, but you may be able to help them earn a bit more with jobs. Others are simply greedy, self-indulgent, compulsive eaters. Others have fallen into bad company, in which conscience is blunted and robbing is condoned.

Understanding why Paul stole does not solve the problem, but it is the only key to a permanent solution. Take time with him, get him to imagine being the victim. You want to make wrong-doing unattractive for him, but you do not want to make him pay so hard that he does more naughty things just to spite you. And of course if he sees dishonesty in his parents, then the problem lies not in him but in you.

In case some of this seems like soft psychologising, let me add two letters. The first from a Scottish woman in middle age.

"I often used to wonder why, out of a big family of God-fearing, honest children, I was a thief and a liar – the two go hand in hand. I remember stealing a small thing from school when I was only five years old. I think I was caught stealing when it dropped out of my clothes. At an early age stealing was for my own

gratification, but then I started to take money in order to win loyalty from my pals. I thought I could buy friends.

"At times I was absolutely petrified of my mother's anger and ashamed of my father's disapproval. The punishment I received only alienated me and filled me with guilt, and I became even more deceitful, even in confession.

"Although I in no way blame my mother, who was the very soul of honesty, I do think that if I had been blessed with children of my own and was faced with this problem, I would immediately single out the child for extra love and try to get a close loving relationship going. I am deeply convinced that I would have been spared years of misery – of my own making, it is true. Happiness is a good conscience, and children have different needs of affection, even in one family.

"I am telling my case to let mothers know how much children need warm love in their young lives – some more than others – and they won't have the need for wrong-doing. Even today, with wives out working, lots of them buy expensive clothes and things for their kids, but it won't make up for the time given

to the children along with patience to attend to their emotional needs."

The other letter, from an 11-year-old boy who had been caught in petty stealing from his mother, was written on crude lettering on a big sheet of paper, and left for her to find in his bedroom. "Dear Mum, I have got a bad feeling that you have had enough of me Mummy. Do you think I will go to court, will you care if I go to jail? I have got a very good feeling you won't care if I go to jail, and Mum, do care for me and forgive me, because if you don't I have got a feeling you don't care for me and Mum I do care about you. Love. Stephen."

These two letters, one written in the calm reflection of middle age, the other in the fierce agony of feeling rejected, make us pause and think hard about our own children, who are unlike any others. If they steal they are often using a language. It may be saying – not just 'I am evil and greedy' – but 'I feel cheated, hard done by, in the most precious currency of all, and I am looking for a poor substitute in hard cash, and if all goes well, in my mother's attention'. ■

Fun in the Deep South

Scarfies

Review: Nicola McCloy

Not so long ago, on a dull Saturday night I sat down and watched a rerun of classic Kiwi comedy, *Goodbye Pork Pie*, which for me has always been the yardstick by which to measure the success or failure of New Zealand comedies. Since its release I have never found anything which has lived up to the anarchic, purely Kiwi laughs that the little yellow mini served up. Every other New Zealand comedy I have seen since has been absolutely cringe making (*Via Satellite*) or hasn't dated well (*Came A Hot Friday*).

I have, I guess, been waiting for a film to come along to take up the gauntlet which was thrown down to makers of NZ film by the *Pork Pie* crew. Finally that film has hit our screens.

I have to admit to being more than a little concerned about a film based on the experience of a bunch of young, slightly boho students living in City Rise in Dunedin. My concerns largely stemmed from having lived precisely that life style for a number of maddening and marvellous years. Would the Sarkies brothers be able to pull it off?

Cinema



In a word, absolutely! *Scarfies* is a fabulous celebration of life as a student in Dunedin. It made me laugh, it made me scream and, most importantly, it made me desperately homesick! Not for the cruddy flats with the dodgy wiring and the noisy flatmates, but for the city, the 'Brook', cheese rolls and the Minimalist Dairy that never had any stock.

Scarfies was made on a relatively small budget by a bunch of first time film makers and a largely untested cast. Stand out performances in the strong ensemble cast are Taika Cohen and Neill Rea as two of a bunch of flatmates who move into a tumbledown house on Brown St.

Not wanting to give too much of the story away, the flatmates find a lucrative crop in their basement and this leads to a series of dark twists and turns in what is a rollicking story.

One of the best things about this film is that it does not try to be a comedy and it doesn't try to be a thriller. It walks the line between the two genres and succeeds to serve up the laughs and the scares in equal and awesome proportions.

This film will go down as one of New Zealand's great comedies and, fittingly, Dunedin is the winner on the day! ■

Making the Old Testament live in a NZ context

The Old Testament in Aotearoa New Zealand

by M.E. Andrew

Wellington: DEFT 1999

Price: \$85 (pbk) 628pp

Review: Mike Stachurski

The universal God takes in all places, which means that Aotearoa New Zealand too must be accepted as a place where theology can be pursued.[p.17]



book reviews

Old Testament. Theology. Context. New Zealand. Alone or in combination, these words provide a thumbnail sketch of the concerns addressed within the teaching, research, and writings of Maurice Andrew for nearly four decades. This book is a worthy addition to his extensive literary corpus, and as the title makes clear, Aotearoa New Zealand is both *his* and *our* place for reading the Old Testament. These ancient books have been taken by the author from the sand, sheep, and olive groves of the ancient Near East and planted into a culture and place removed in time and latitude. Now the harvest has come.

A sense of *place* is axiomatic in much of our recent historical writing: with the works of James Belich, Judith Binney, Bronwyn Elsmore, and Michael King being examples. Similarly, this is also true of our recent theological writing: witness the writings of John Bluck, Neil Darragh, Judith McKinlay, and the late Michael Shirres. The works of these authors are subtly incorporated in and supplemented by the works of our poets, novelists, journalists, and cartoonists – so that the author creates a rich and resonant backdrop for the narrative. Andrew is thus aware of trends within our recent writing and popular art, and is continuous with them: grounding the book firmly here.

Originally conceived and published as a series of study guides for the Anglican Church's *Education for Ministry* (EFM) programme, the book sets a gentle,

conversational pace through the Old Testament. At first, I found the book profoundly shocking: this being the first time that I had met Maori creation stories interwoven with the familiar accounts in Genesis.

As the book left Genesis behind, travelling through the rest of the Pentateuch and into the book of Joshua and beyond, the issues of land, treaty, and covenant (the approximate title of one of the author's earlier books) were brought into sharper focus – in a place where such issues are very current indeed. It was enlightening to read too how prominent Maori such as Te Kooti (e.g. in his use of *Ps.* 85) and Te Whiti (*Ps.* 46) interpreted the Old Testament in their own particular situations.

Old Testament hermeneutics has not been a solely Pakeha preserve in Aotearoa New Zealand: the two cited examples (plus many others) show that Maori hermeneutical activity has often been of considerable sophistication. Following Judith Binney, the author notes that:

"(The) Old Testament (for Te Kooti and his followers) became their 'salvation history', for building a new culture and religious order. It was a way of preventing a European control of time, space and history." (p.356)

The book follows the Old Testament in canonical order, although it does not deal with the so-called "deuterocanonical books", e.g. Judith or the Additions to Esther, which are part of

the Catholic canon. This is a minor and perhaps understandable omission, given the intended audience for the study guides that became this book. It does not seem to detract, however, from the splendid effect of the author's style and the ease with which the 'local content' is incorporated into the work as a whole. Sometimes this is done unobtrusively by means of a concluding sentence, and on other occasions by way of an appropriately headed paragraph. Or there is a well-chosen cartoon facing the first page of a new chapter.

The prophetic tradition is one area where the author senses an unease among New Zealanders, with its characterisation by some of our authors (Witi Ihimaera and Margaret Mahy, for example) as being replete with one-dimensional purveyors of gloom. While the prophetic corpus does indeed contain *some* gloom, it also contains visions (sadly not always fulfilled) of people living in their own land at peace with God and their neighbours. Not really doom-laden stuff, but there is a hint at least in this literature that all will (eventually) be well for us.

The author concludes his book with the claim that writers in Aotearoa New Zealand characterise the Old Testament as speaking to four major issues. One I have spoken of already: prophets and prophecy as essentially gloomy. The other three are creation and land, Moses, and vengeance. These, he says, have been relatively untouched by acquaintanceship with biblical scholarship here, or by any notion that the people of the Old Testament had a context of response and worship in which to articulate the problems of their day.

His answer to this is that things do not *have* to be as they are. Old Testament motifs such as creation, exile, promise, and liberation may help us to frame our responses to life *here* in Aotearoa New Zealand. He hints that it is, after all,

(continued overleaf)

Finding God in the Tararuas

Soul Survivor

by Paul Hawker

Northstone Publishing, 1999

Price: \$29.95

Review: Mike Crowl

I'm not the sort of person who enjoys isolation in a non-urban setting for more than a few hours, so I don't much empathise with Hawker's decision to spend 40 days alone with God and Nature. Furthermore, not many of us would have the time, or the spiritual drive, to want to spend 40 days without books, paper or any form of distraction. And in Wellington's Tararua mountain range to boot! However, his spiritual pilgrimage did touch me deeply.

Hawker had reached a time in his life when, in spite of having a great family and a successful documentary film-making career, he felt hollow inside. He saw himself as the sort of person who needed to work at life full-bore in case others discovered how "unlovable" he really was. He enjoyed people, but he also delighted in solitude – though, as a responsible family man, he'd had few opportunities to experience it. The

mid-life urging of his soul gave him the motivation not only to go into solitude but also to strive to hear God's voice.

In the first few days he was forced to stay in one area due to his feet blistering under the unaccustomed weight of an extremely heavy pack, and during that time he discovered some criteria for discerning whether what he was hearing was from God or from some other source. He lists these criteria in an appendix, and makes no claim that the list is complete, or that he has always got it right.

It's interesting to compare his idea of what God was saying to him with the series of books, *Conversations with God*, by Neale Donald Walsch, in which Walsch's 'God' sometimes seems to dismiss traditional spirituality, yet endorses and embraces some New Age ideas. Hawker is more cautious about what he hears, rejoices more when he understands, and revels not only in the extraordinary beauty of nature but in his deepening relationship with God. And even 'God' comes to seem too small a word for the overwhelming greatness he

experiences, since in one focused moment not only does he see 'Christ', but he also gains an increasing appreciation of just how much he is loved.

And this 'being loved' isn't just some simple thing: in Chapter 17 Hawker explains how God asked him to describe his life in detail, and nudged him continually, almost provoking him to dig into all sorts of matters and events Hawker had regarded as trivial. In doing so he realised that God is interested in the minutest personal components of our lives.

Hawker's background is Christian, but his book has the ability to reach beyond the Christian scene, to anyone who feels a mid-life hole in their centre, or is trying to understand the spiritual element of their journey. It's perhaps a sign of contemporary spiritual searching that this book has not only been published by a secular publisher but has been reviewed on Kim Hill's *Morning Report*.

At \$30 it may seem a bit overpriced, but it's well laid out and is more than just a one-time read. Hawker's 'adventure' is simplicity itself, but the spiritual aspect should dig deeply into any receptive soul. ■

(continued from page 27)

living with such incongruity that we have in common with the people of the Old Testament.

It needs to be said that the author is not afraid of 'dirtying his hands': this book faces the more unpalatable issues within the Old Testament candidly (e.g. the vengeful sentiments expressed at the end of *Ps. 137*): often with wry observation and wit.

It is a time honoured practice to assess a book upon biblical matters by turning to a particularly tricky or controversial passage and seeing how the author faces the inherent issues – or dances around them. For this review, I arbitrarily decided to look at the way that the *Song*

of *Songs* is treated: because of the sometimes baffling imagery within it, and because of the interesting history of its interpretation.

The author candidly admits that this book is love poetry, and that its passage into the canon was contentious. That said, he notes the book's placement at the end of the *Writings* and before the *Prophets* as being highly significant: coming after *Ecclesiastes*' rather cynical view of human life, but before such prophets as Hosea – for whom fidelity to the marital relationship is a very strong leitmotiv.

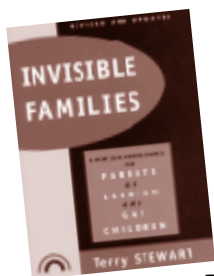
Andrew suggests (after Athalya Brenner) that this book effects a transformation in the portrayal of human love (pace *Hosea* with its stress on fidelity); and its

reversal of roles: the one doing most of the speaking and courting is female.

The bafflement concerning some of the imagery within it (e.g. *Cant. 4:1-2; 6:5-6*) in our context, the author points out, is due to: "...*New Zealanders' primarily economic attitude to farm animals; these comparisons (hair to a flock of goats, teeth to a flock of ewe) seem odd to us.*" [p.393]

Catholic readers may be interested also to learn that the author admits the possibility that the image of Mary as the 'black Madonna' may have its source in *Cant. 1:5-6* ("I am black and beautiful"). In sum, the imagery of the *Song of Songs* has long stirred the imagination of Christian interpreters,





Invisible Families
by Terry Stewart
Tandem Press
Price: \$27.95

Reviews: Michael Hill

These two recent books are written for parents of gay and lesbian children. Terry Stewart and her husband Ron discovered that their eldest son was gay when he was a young adult. Terry describes how mortified she felt because of the unconscious attitude of prejudice they had shown him; and angry because of the cruelty he had endured from some elements of society, especially during his final years at school. At one stage he had sought advice from a local church, only to be told he was “abominable and perverted”.

Terry went through the not unusual heart-searchings as to whether her mothering had been the cause, then resolved to find out as much as possible about homosexuality and what resources were available in New Zealand to help young gay people and their families. She gathered data from parents, family members and from lesbian, gay or bisexual sons and daughters. She used a questionnaire, and the results of her survey are used throughout the text.

This is an extremely well-written and valuable book. It would make worthwhile reading for any parents, but especially for those with homosexual children. It sys-

Supporting gay children

tematically and thoroughly covers a range of issues including coming out, prejudice, religious perspectives etc. It also has a most useful appendix of useful information: further reading, support agencies and a brief look at the issue in Maori and Polynesian communities.

Coming Out, Coming Home covers much the same ground, but was written in Australia. Joan Golding's youngest son was homosexual. She nursed him for three years until he died of an AIDS-related illness in 1989: that experience precipitated her into a career of counselling and public speaking. Joan is an Anglican, and this book has more to say about the religious aspects – especially the prejudices – than does *Invisible Families*. Her co-author, Peter Wood, is a Catholic priest, who chose to follow a celibate vocation after being an active homosexual for some years.

This book is written in a chatty, dialogue style. That does not always make for easy reading and it can occasionally seem artificial. However, it has the advantage that some issues are gone into more deeply, and sometimes the

Coming Out, Coming Home
by Joan Golding & Peter Wood MSC
Spectrum Pubs. Australia
Price: \$19.50



two authors have different views. For instance Peter is convinced that early childhood development is a crucial factor in determining sexual orientation. “I believe,” he says, “that there is a genetic component but it requires a certain environment for it to develop.” Joan does not agree, and regards being gay or lesbian as inborn: our problem, she thinks, lies in not acknowledging the divine purpose in this area of creation.

Peter especially deals discursively with the moral aspects. He does not attempt to defend the Catholic Church's teaching, nor to criticise it. But he is quite insistent that gays too are obliged by a sexual morality even if they are different. He says; “I am committed to the Church, but I see my role as essentially to encourage gay people to be loving people, towards themselves and towards others. I believe it is important to encourage gay people, who need intimate relationships, in the values of fidelity, commitment and monogamy.”

In a field where there is so much ignorance and prejudice it is good to find two such useful, understanding and well-researched books. Both are recommended. ■

▷▷ but the author makes the provocative claim that its status as love poetry has often been more apparent to people listening to it than studying it!

The Marian reference brings me to a noticeable feature of this book: its relative paucity of reference to the New Testament, or to Christian theology generally. This may be problematic for some readers, but I would count this as one of the book's strengths.

Theologically, the Old Testament is thus shown to have *merit in its own right*, its diverse theologies are given their own voices: the texts can and do speak for themselves. Given that the author has couched his descriptions of these phenomena with *our* culture and place, the relevance of the Old

Testament to us in Aotearoa New Zealand today is brought into much sharper relief.

This book began as a course for prospective ministers, but I would envisage its potential readership as being much wider than this. It wears its considerable scholarly dress and its encyclopaedic grasp of contemporary New Zealand culture very lightly indeed.

This makes for a book that, due to its frame of reference and topicality, will be constantly dipped into for sermon preparation as well as for background information. A first of its kind in Aotearoa New Zealand – and its author is to be congratulated upon his considerable achievement. ■

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Calamitous management in mental health

The state of adolescent mental health in New Zealand remains a continuing blight within our health system and an ever-present reminder that the system itself seems powerless to initiate change.

If a young person is identified as having attempted suicide and is referred for assessment, the current waiting time is about three months. It is therefore hardly surprising that our youth suicide is the worst in the Western world.

Recent revelations about the treatment of depression and a three year delay in the production of the advisory booklet underscore the inertia of the bureaucratic monster attempting to administer the health needs of the country. If we are to have effective strategies for dealing with child and adolescent health, we have to have people who are capable of administering these strategies.

At Primary School level we have a number of different agencies whose task it is to deal with the child at risk. Police, Health, CYPFA and Special Education Services are the main providers in a system presently remarkable for its lack of co-ordination and co-operation. The first referral at primary level will be through SES, which in theory acts as a filtering and assessment agency. But lack of adequate staffing, an absence of effective strategies and personnel who lack the skills to deal with children in crisis have rendered this agency ineffectual. The Police Youth Aid organisation which had developed an effective intervention agency has been rendered impotent through restructuring. Likewise the Children, Young Persons and their Families Agency (CYPFA) has had its staff pared back to a degree which compromises its ability to act and intervene. The whole system needs a tremendous shake-up with the different agencies looking at their effectiveness and willingness to co-operate with one

Crosscurrents

by Caliban

another.

When a child moves from Primary to Secondary school, the first point of reference is the school counsellor. Has any agency examined their selection, training and effectiveness to deal with a student in crisis? While courses and requirements have been broadened in recent years, one wonders about the criteria for the selection of counsellors.

New agencies are gradually being set up throughout the country attempting to co-ordinate the work of all these services. But who makes the critical decision as to who gets the funding? These funding agencies seem to be following WINZ and putting incompetent people into the critical front line. There appears to be a dwindling amount of money available to the various providers.

The solution on the part of government is to wheel out a person who brings no baggage, who is not going to be distracted by experience and who will apply rigid criteria to the application, being apparently unwilling or incapable of discussing the merits of a particular application. The agents chosen seem to be usually young, female and hard as nails: at the risk of sounding sexist they could be described as 'trolley dollies', persons more at home in the centre aisle of an aircraft who dress up and parade to allay people's fears! This cynical approach by government to the distribution of vital funding simply erodes the quality of services available to young people.

The National Mental Health Standards, published by the Ministry of Health,

are being circulated, and providers are being asked to implement this strategy by the year 2000. One has only to read through the section on standards for children and young people to realise that the 16 protocols are so far away as to seem unattainable in the next decade, let alone next year. The writers appear to have been living in a dream world.

Adolescent mental health is in crisis, youth suicide has rocketed to alarming levels – and we are still incapable of delivering practical and sensible interventions. We prepare statistical data, offer academic analyses and theorise *ad infinitum*, but still avoid putting the right people into areas where they can deal with these urgent problems face to face.

In a 1995 report of the Education and Science Committee to the House of Representatives it was recommended to government "that the Ministry of Education be charged with devising and providing positive incentives to

*we avoid putting the
right people into areas
where they can deal with
problems face to face*

reward those schools which are successful in keeping their at-risk students in attendance". This appears at odds with the usual Ministry position of giving little recognition to those schools who have provided a successful and positive environment for all their students.

Some schools are, on their own initiative, providing a range of health and welfare services in a desperate effort to confront the problem, while the Government has placed some social workers in certain schools to assist in the administration of at-risk students, but for the most part the needs of these

Banned from Ministry

Two American religious, Salvatorian Fr Robert Nugent and Notre Dame Sister Jeannine Gramick, have recently been prohibited by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), from “any pastoral work involving homosexual persons” and from holding any office in their congregations.

An 1977 they founded the *New Ways* ministry for the education and counselling of homosexual people, concentrating on the reconciliation of homosexuality with Catholicism. In 1984 they resigned from *New Ways* but continued to help through workshops, retreats and their writings.

Their ministry was first investigated by a commission within America and then transferred to the CDF in Rome, which decided that some views expressed in books they had written were “erroneous” and “dangerous”. Fr Nugent replied that “he had never deliberately denied or placed in doubt any Catholic teaching which requires the assent of theological faith”, and asked pardon for any failures in his writings. This did not satisfy the Congregation, and he was asked to sign a Profession of Faith. This he did, but he altered some of the language which he considered particularly insensitive: for instance, he substituted the words “objectively immoral” to describe homosexual

acts rather than “intrinsically evil”. This was not accepted, and in July this year the ban was announced, signed by Cardinal Ratzinger. Nugent and Gramick were accused of having continually called in question central elements of church teaching on homosexuality.

Fr Nugent has accepted the findings, saying he intends to “implement it accordingly”. In her statement Sr Gramick said she had been faced with a decision “whether or not to accept the outcome of a process that I believe was fundamentally unfair”; she is taking a month off to consider her future.

There has been considerable criticism of the Congregation over its handling of this case. It is accused of acting as prosecutor, jury and judge; that its procedures lack openness and fairness; there is considerable concern as to how the Vatican stance is going to affect Catholic homosexual men and women. Will they see themselves as being singled out for special harshness, especially when the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* itself states that they are to be accepted “with respect, compassion and sensitivity”? It is also feared that some anti-homosexual groups who use biblical texts and traditional beliefs in a homophobic way, will seem to be supported by the Vatican.

In a video made for the American bishops – but not shown until after his death – the late Cardinal Basil Hume criticised some of the procedures of the Roman Curia. He said there was often insufficient consultation with local bishops, and “often an unease about the way in which theologians and their writings have been investigated”.

It is difficult not to see the case of Sr Gramick and Fr Nugent falling into this category.

An Australian initiative

The Sisters of Charity have been well known for their health services in Sydney ever since they first arrived from Ireland in 1838. In recent years they have led the way in the care of patients suffering from AIDS. Now, at St Vincent’s hospital, they are setting up Australia’s first legal, heroin-injecting clinic.

Addicts will be enabled to inject themselves with the drug under medical supervision. It is hoped that this procedure will reduce the number of deaths from overdose, and cut down the use of shared needles (a classic means of transmitting HIV). Heroin will not be supplied by the hospital.

The scheme has received a mixed reception, but the Sisters argue that compassion and respect for the dignity of the human person called for some positive help to be given to heroin addicts. ■

Jim Neilan

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Heads you WINZ!

WINZ, the merging of Income Support and the Employment Service, has become the metaphor for the demise of the Public Service as well as for moral bankruptcy and political mismanagement.

We should not be too surprised at the scandalous waste of beneficiaries' money, nor with the megalomania of WINZ's Chief Executive, Christine Rankin. They come as a natural progression of New Right, free market policies put in place over the last nine years. It is individualism separated more and more from moral obligation. It is the natural extension of the politics of avarice and greed.

The Public Service is no longer a profession. It has become corporatised, run by people earning huge salaries, who seem barely answerable to the people they are supposed to serve.

Social engineering is always preceded by a change in language. Now, WINZ talks of "customers", of a "rebranded" organisation "focused on client needs". Managers go by chartered jets on "team building" parties to preside over wedding breakfasts.

WINZ has spent \$1.3 million on television campaigns to urge people, among other things, to do in a beneficiary. The vulnerable and the poor must now prove their poverty in front of a personal advisor who is dressed in a smart new uniform and twiddles with a "stress pen" in an expensively refurbished office.

Christine Rankin will have her performance bonus docked but will retain a \$250,000 salary, because the Government has neither the moral nor the political will to correct a monumental botch of its own making. However, her 'customers' must work under the iniquitous conditions of the Employment Contracts Act. WINZ is an illusory corporation controlling

a market in social welfare, required to economise on benefits.

Right Wing free market policies focus on money. Salaries paid to chief executives of State Owned Enterprises are grossly inflated under the fallacious argument that they would go overseas if they were not paid as much. Jobs have been lost in a never-ending reconstruction of organisations. A poor class has been created – cared for by Christine Rankin! It is a culture of wealth transferred to a few, with poverty endemic among the many.

Today's minority government, supported by the opportunistic ACT party and a motley bunch of political drop-outs, has done the country immense harm by the abrogation of its moral responsibility of caring for the least of its citizens. If every nation gets the government it deserves, these last nine years speak ill of New Zealand. ■

John Honoré

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