Tui Motu
InterIslands

And falling to their knees
they offered him gifts

December 2000 Price $4

Christ in a Chinese setting

The advent of Jesus is destined to be universal, for all the world. Our vision of Jesus as the Christ is enlarged by seeing him through the eyes of a modern Chinese. The artist of our cover picture, He Qi, grew up in the latter years of Chairman Mao's Chinese Communism and has found his vocation as artist and teacher at the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. His book of paintings published in 1999, *Art Works of He Qi*, presents some thirty interpretations of biblical stories which are full of surprises, full of colour, strong in design and sometimes reminiscent of Western stained glass windows – yet still very Chinese.

Here, for Christmas and Epiphany, the artist of our cover picture takes us into the humble surroundings of the infant Jesus. Horses look down from their stable on the left. Three solemn wise men, the Magi, pay their respects with their precious gifts; two kneel and the third stands with bowed head. These visitors from afar seem strangely remote. Mary seems oblivious to their status and is wholly concerned with the child Jesus cradled in her arms. Clad in bright Chinese peasant costume she nestles with closed eyes above the child; and it is his eyes which are open and gaze out intensely at us. He is the Christ of all the world; he comes for us. We look again and it is his eyes which meet ours from this picture:

Though Christ a thousand times
In Bethlehem be born,
If he's not born in thee
Thy soul's forlorn

(cited by J.H. Oldham)

Our second picture by He Qi takes us back to the source of Christmas in the story of the Annunciation. Here the young Mary sits in a tidy and well-appointed Chinese home. Into this orderly setting of domestic culture comes something quite unexpected and disturbing. An angelic figure swoops in to confront her with a startling message – that she is called to be the mother of the promised child. She is mystified by this news as if it were an unexpected phone call from out of the blue. Yet she accepts that she cannot fully comprehend and her acceptance is vital for the fulfilling.

The angel brings a lotus flower, well known in Buddhism and the East as a symbol for the pure and noble, arising from the humble earth and water. Angels in the Bible are messengers from God; they represent the new possibilities which confront people who may be bewildered or hopeless or in need of a new vision. That vision will have to undergo the fires of testing. Like Mary's response, our own can be a 'yes' to the future. ■

Our Lady's Tumbler

Blessed Virgin enthroned on high
ignorant as a beast am I.
Tumbling's all I've learned to do,
Mother of God, let me tumble for you.
Straight away he stripped off his jerkin,
and his tumbling acts he did begin.
So eager was he to do her honour,
that he vaulted higher than ever before.
Unmarked by him Our Lady now
steps down from her niche and wipes his brow.
Thank you, Barnaby, she said, and smiled,
well have you tumbled for me, my child.

W.H. Auden

Christmas 2000

The Board and Editorial team of Tui Motu wish all our readers the fullness of joy and peace for Christmas.

May the year 2001 be a time of prosperity and grace for all your families and communities

Epiphany

The Epiphany is the second great feast of the Christmas cycle. The mysterious visitors from the East represent the other peoples of the world coming to worship and rejoice at the coming of the infant son of David. A universal feast, as Albert Moore says (*see opposite)*.

The Magi bring gifts. It is a humble acknowledgment of the prodigious generosity of God who became human, indeed became a helpless child to invite the care and kinship of the human race. Generosity on the part of God is a potent impulse for good in us.

Christmas prompts us to give and to acknowledge gifts. In Rome on the Epiphany, the people of the city give presents to the police – even if for the rest of the year they may treat them less kindly! It is the right occasion to do a godly thing.

In the spirit of Epiphany we wish to thank all those who make *Tui Motu* possible – our many voluntary helpers, those who promote and sell in the parishes, those who have supported us both materially and with prayer. Truly a 'gifted' enterprise. And especially we thank you, our readers, who respond thoughtfully, critically, but always generously to our efforts.

The end of the Year of Jubilee takes us back to the impulse of Pope John Paul to make this year the occasion for the remission of Third World debt. One worthy resolution for 2001 might be to create a world public opinion to further such a vital cause on behalf of the forgotten ones. Let the Jubilee continue!

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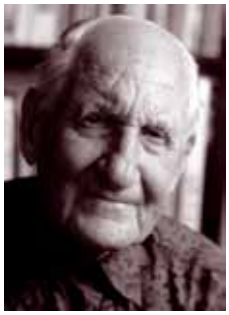

A tribute to the late Selwyn Dawson celebrated Methodist Minister and social campaigner (*page 24*)

The truth that sets us free

This month's leading article (*pages 5-7*) deals with a crisis which so far has not touched us in New Zealand directly – Mad Cow disease, or BSE. It has been a scourge in Britain and it is now sweeping continental Europe, with fresh panic reactions in France or Germany or Spain reported almost daily.

What is far more relevant is the parallel to be drawn with the Royal Commission on Genetic Engineering. Our scientists and senior civil servants are under pressure to legalise Genetic Modification experiments and the free entry of GM products. Biological processes will be widely introduced which have no counterpart in nature. There is absolutely no guarantee that some totally unforeseen disaster is not already being compounded in the labs or fields of the giant agrochemical or pharmaceutical corporations pushing these new technologies. They are driven by the prospect of huge financial gains.

According to the comprehensive Phillips Report presented last month to the British parliament, the lesson of the Mad Cow fiasco is simple and grim: secrecy and paternalism make for bad government and bad science. "Public trust," the Report states, "can only be established if communications about risk are frank and objective.." Do we believe that our civil servants and research biologists will be any less secretive or fallible than those who blundered in Britain? Or will we give them a blank cheque – and leave it to future New Zealanders to reap the consequences?

The churches – especially the Catholic church – have a lot to learn from this whole nasty business. In church circles secrecy and paternalism also make for bad government and bad theology. Secrecy – and a patronising attitude towards the laity – has a long and baleful history in our church.

Let us take a closer look at this. The secrecy of the confessional is an absolute, and its counterpart in secular life is the professional confidence that can be demanded of a counsellor or psychotherapist. That is beyond criticism. But it is no excuse for the cloak of secrecy that covers so many other aspects of church life.

Take, for instance, the way in which the Catholic church appoints bishops. 150 years ago Rosmini insisted that every society was entitled to a say in the choice of its leaders, and that included the appointment of bishops (A Rosmini: *The Five Wounds of the Church*). The church rewarded Rosmini by putting his work on the Index of prohibited books.

When a priest or a teacher offends by sexually abusing someone, the church rightly regards such conduct as extremely serious and unacceptable. But frequently church authorities have compounded the sin by covering it up, sometimes with the result that the perpetrator has reoffended. Some years ago when a protocol for dealing with such matters was being drawn up in New Zealand, the lawyers advised the bishops that not merely must the contents be kept confidential, but even the very existence of such a protocol must be kept from public knowledge.

Why was this? Was it to maintain a pretence that religious people would never commit such offences? Was it fear of upsetting the pious? Or is it that priests – and other 'experts'– too easily fall into the way of treating 'uninformed layfolk' like children? In fact the vast majority of laypeople are hugely reassured to know that such safeguards exist and that such matters as sexual abuse are treated with extreme seriousness. Today laypeople expect to be consulted, to be informed and to have a say in the way the church is run. It is their right – nothing less.

The worst offender when it comes to habits of wilful secretiveness is the Vatican. When a priest or religious or teacher in the church is accused of heretical teaching, the case is judged behind closed doors in Rome. The accused is not afforded the normal democratic right to defend himself or herself. The silencing in America of Sr Jeannine Grammick is discussed critically (*see pages 22-23*) by Joan Chittester. She suggests that open discussion within the church, the lifeblood of a free society, is being stifled and a culture of oppression substituted.

On another page (*p.32*) C*rosscurrents* talks about the celebrated Australian journalist, John Pilger. His documentary on the continued persecution of the Iraqi people by Britain and America was shown recently on TV1. Pilger relentlessly pursues the truth, and campaigns tirelessly for the world's forgotten people. The rescue of East Timor from the Indonesian tyranny owes a lot to his exposé journalism.

This month we mourn the loss of one of the truly great figures in the New Zealand church, Selwyn Dawson. As a Methodist he doubtless inherited much of his zeal for God and passion for the truth from John Wesley. *Tui Motu* was greatly enriched through his pen (*tributes: page 24*). The vitality and continuing presence of people of the calibre of Selwyn – likewise the other authors quoted in this editorial – gives us grounds for profound thanksgiving and for hope. When Pandora's box was opened and its contents escaped, the final thing to come to light was hope. ■

M.H.

P.S. The *Hague Conference on Global Warming* broke up in disarray after the Americans (4 percent of the world's population but creating 24 percent of greenhouse emissions) refused to cut back on their profligate use of fossil fuels. Write your protest now to the *US Ambassador, Ms Carol Moseley Braun, US Embassy, P.O.Box 1190 Wellington*

letter to editor

In the October issue you mentioned "a wishy washy relativism which says it's all right to hold whatever you will as long as your conscience is at peace", and in a later article Bishop Cullinane alludes to the same thing when talking about the "cult of individualism in which the truth is whatever the individual thinks it is." I understand that he is objecting to what he sees as an individual taking the easy option. I would like to suggest that the easier option can in fact be to accept what others have stated is the truth.

Similarly, what disturbs me about your statement is the implication that it is not enough for "one's conscience to be at peace." I feel that this is in fact the ultimate (and in this life unattainable) goal.

I feel that we must constantly question both our own truths and those held by others, and beware of feeling com-pletely certain of anything and blurring the distinction between a conscience at peace and a conscience that has been silenced.

I am very wary of the certainty that some people seem to feel about what is the truth, as it is my impression that God does not allow us to remain certain of anything for long, but rather that God is constantly urging us to explore further.

With this in mind I feel it is appropriate to assume initially that another's opinion is as valid as my own (in order to listen more carefully if nothing else), to be very wary of judging another, and, yes, I do believe that in this life we cannot ultimately know what is true. Even questioning the existence of God will lead to a greater understanding of God if one honestly pursues one's conscientious efforts.

Karen Pronk, Nambour, Queensland

Where have all the flowers gone?
Responses to the social justice question

In reviewing the situation of a decreased interest in social justice the following need to be noted:

1. One tragedy of history is not to learn from past successes as well as from failures.

2. Pre-Vatican communism was easily identified as an ideology in contradiction to Christian view. Now perhaps social issues *are* so intangible that people are baffled as to how to tackle them (*Tui Motu* – Nov issue). Without a methodology and structure we suffer the loss of spiritual leadership and growth in the absence of a national movement with international links.

3. There is today a corrosive drift from the church and the Christian view of life – not as a rejection deliberately made but an almost unconscious inattention to a Christian view because of the secularity of Western society.

4. To revitalise the vision would mean to grapple with 'vocation' as a lay Christian and as church, supporting the vocation of laity in the world.

This last will involve a deep, visionary exploration and love of the church. There is a need to examine the rift that has opened up like a poisoned river between those who style themselves progressive or liberal in their views about the church and those who identify as traditional or conservative.

In the war between Catholics, the exchanges have taken on a thin layer of church life between people heavily involved in the institutional aspects of Catholicism. The arguments frequently centre on structural questions – on what kind of bishops are being appointed; whether women should be ordained; allegations of liturgical and other abuses by liberals; and charges that conservatives lead destructive campaigns against church leaders with whom they disagree.

"Suppose, however, that each of us, wherever we may locate ourselves on the spectrum, paused for a moment, waved away the smoke, and tried to make out the ground on which we stand together. What is it, we might ask, that makes people Catholic from the inside out?" (*Eugene Kennedy, 1991)*

Jocelyn Franklin, Auckland

continued overleaf

Tui Motu-InterIslands

ISSN 1174-8931

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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Printed by John McIndoe Ltd

Where have all the flowers gone?
Responses to the social justice question

Where did the energy for social justice go?

My age group (30-40) never had it in the first place. We were never really there. Except for a miniscule number of us who can be best characteristed as the stragglers, the slow learners.

The rest of us, the ones who could keep up, were fighting new battles. Many women of my age were the first to shatter the glass ceiling: the first female partners in law and accounting firms, the first to be appointed to senior management, the first to describe themselves as the farmer not the farmer's wife. They achieved all this while maintaining quality relationships, friendships, recreational activities and after a later start than their own mothers, children.

And the men, well we were just trying to keep our balance in a fast changing world, maintaining the 'kiwi bloke' exterior and 'she'll be right', while coping with uncertainty of restructuring at work and, worse still, making compromises with the new ideal man - the 'sensitive new age guy'. We were far too distracted to find much energy for traditional community involvements, let alone global problems.

And if we did have a bent for the philosophical, we had been captured by the great battles of the 80s and 90s - identity politics also known by the more pejorative term, ***political correctness***. The politics of race, gender and sexuality so often lead down a path of inaction and reduced energy. Mean-while the multinationals and their henchmen were rolling out global-isation, and we believed or were eventually worn down by their mantra: "*there is no other choice*". We gave up, went to the mall and had our consciences completed gutted by their ultimate weapon: branding. No longer satisfied with appealing to our vanity or our wallets, they want our values and spirituality as well. Let's face it – we were just not up to the job of social justice.

When did I finally realise that I was a dinosaur, the ultimate slow learner, still battling on within the *Justice and Peace Commissions*, both diocesan and national until the late 80s?

Then the big boys upstairs finally spelt it out to me. I still regard with enormous pride my involvement with the research project, *Made in God's Image : sexism in the church*. That so little action came from it was bad enough, but then I was told from the pulpit that Rome had degreed that women could never take a central role in the church and what is more, discussion on the issue was to cease. My face was slapped and the penny finally dropped. By then, avenues for involvement by lay people in social justice action were drying up, the bishops restructured the Commissions, and the message was: go to Mass, join a parish family group but whatever you do, stop thinking and don't challenge the orthodoxy from those who knew better.

But there is hope. I occasionally join the meetings of a small social justice group in my parish. Every week they come together to share their wisdom, of which they possess a great deal, and lifetimes of practical experience of this planet and all its creatures they love so much. In their presence my hard shell of cynicism starts to melt away...

Philip Casey, Gore

A church of compassion

I think the church needs to be - and be seen to be - a church of compassion. A church that treats and respects all human beings for their uniqueness no matter whether they are male or female, divorced or remarried, gay or lesbian - from a different culture or religious belief. Unfortunately this is often not the case.

While the Catholic Church has recently moved to address some past historical wrongs there is still much injustice within the institutional church which causes alienation, isolation and margin-alisation.

For instance, consider the abortion debate. How does this sit with the church's stand on contraception? This country's rising abortion statistics clearly show that many women use abortion as a form of contraception. The church needs to decide whether it is worth continuing its anti-contraceptive stance when a) it is openly flouted by couples who otherwise consider themselves to be "good catholics"; and b) it leads to unwanted pregnancies and desperate women making choices about abortion? I consider the church's stance on contraception is unjust and anti-women. Maybe if contraception was accepted, fewer women would seek abortions. Which is the lesser evil?

It seems to me that the church is a place where we should find nourishment, support and the strength to go into the world and make a difference on issues of social justice. Instead much injustice lies within the clericalised church and it remains undealt with, ironically because those with power at the top have ensured that there are no avenues or processes in place where issues can be voiced or heard. There is no healing or ability for reconciliation. No wonder much of the energy is gone.

In spite of that, I see lots of good work done by good people in the church - lay and religious alike. They give me hope. I know that the spirit is alive and well at the grassroots despite the power and mis-use of it at the top.

Katie O'Connor, Riversdale

Eve Recurrent

Pandora
opened the box
found it bare
yet seconds later
the air
tasted blisteringly
strange

Beatrice Hoffman

Opening Pandora's Box

It is one thing to penetrate the secrets of the atom or the gene. It is another thing altogether to release into nature the products of such research – new elements, new genes, new species. The Editor poses the question: are we letting loose a monster we will be unable to contain?

As I write, the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification (GM) is busy receiving and listening to submissions from the general public. Shortly it will move towards the time of decision. Such decisions are momentous since some of them – e.g. whether to import or develop genetically modified species – are irreversible. We cannot afford to get such decisions wrong.

What are the powerful arguments in favour of allowing the introduction and development of GM products and encouraging genetic engineering research in New Zealand?

• Firstly, there are the scientific assurances that, with normal prudent safeguards, importing such GM products will cause no problems. After all, many of these products have been developed and used in the United States and elsewhere for some years, and there have been no major disasters. And lots of benefits.

• Secondly, there is the powerful humanitarian argument that without the development of these wonder crops an expanding world population cannot be fed. The alternative must be ever-increasing misery and famine.

• Thirdly, there is the tempting economic argument that New Zealand, still primarily an agricultural country, cannot afford to lag behind in what is a spearhead of modern scientific discovery. Unless we move with conviction into developing new varieties, our products will simply become less and less competitive on world markets. Our agriculture will be doomed to decline – and with it, the country's prosperity.

These arguments are alluring – but they have a familiar ring. I want to take you back to two scenarios where the same sort of arguments were commonly used and convinced a great many influential people. One is now fairly ancient history; the other is tragically recent and still very much with us.

Scenario A: the Fast Breeder Reactor

I was first introduced to this wonder beast nearly 40 years ago at a public lecture in Leicester, a city in the English Midlands. The lecturer was an eloquent and persuasive scientist from the UK Atomic Energy Authority. What he was demonstrating – with all the bells and whistles available to a public lecturer of those days – was the Fast Breeder Reactor: the 'answer' to the world's energy problems for the foreseeable future. And since it was being developed in Britain it would help keep Britain's nose ahead in the industrial rat race.

without GM our agriculture will be doomed to decline

This new reactor was not only extraordinarily efficient but it was described as much easier to control than the conventional thermal atomic power stations, then being brought into operation right through Europe and in the US. Basically, the Fast Breeder Reactor was triggered by a small quantity of uranium but the principal fuel was plutonium – an undesirable product of more conventional reactors. Moreover it appeared to produce more fuel than it used – more plutonium. Shades of the Sorcerer's Apprentice! Little wonder it was such an attractive proposition to energy technocrats and governments.

To my youthful scientific imagination the most spectacular feature was the use of liquid sodium metal as the coolant. The heat generated was such that water or gas would have been inadequate: liquid sodium with its high thermal conductivity was the indicated material to carry away the enormous energy being produced at the core and transfer it via heat exchangers to the turbines which generated electricity.

The basic fuel used in atomic reactors, as everyone knows, is uranium, which is not an abundant substance. Therefore the fact that the Fast Breeder Reactor produced approximately 50 times the energy per pound of uranium fuel compared with conventional atomic reactors was a hugely persuasive feature. Britain would become far less dependent on the importing of this expensive raw material.

While details of this fascinating lecture have faded with the passage of time, one aspect conspicuous by its total absence at the time was any reference to safety concerns. One's suspicions might have ▷▷

▷▷ been aroused by the fact that the first experimental Fast Breeder Reactor was being built at Dounreay, on the northern coast of Scotland – as far as it is possible to get in Britain away from large population centres.

A few years later, however, these concerns were raised by a *Royal Commission on Atmospheric Pollution* (1976). One worry the commissioners had was the extremely hazardous leakage of radiation from atomic reactors. This has happened and continues to happen. A greater concern was the possibility of the reactor accidentally 'going critical', in other words, blowing up. The Commission concluded "the risk is very small... the hazards posed by reactor accidents are not such as to justify the abandonment of nuclear power" (*Sir Brian Flowers, a principal member of the Commission*). Since that time there have been major incidents in Japan and in the United States, as well as the disastrous explosion at Chernobyl. Were the risks indeed so "very small"?

Another major problem concerns the production of plutonium which is an extremely toxic substance as well as being a potential raw material for making atomic weapons. We all know only too well the huge and growing concern regarding the disposal of atomic waste products, some of which remain dangerously radioactive for thousands of years. These dangers were acknowledged by the Royal Commission. "But we are sufficiently hopeful that an acceptable solution will be found that we do not advocate halting the processes giving rise to the waste". Wishful thinking indeed!

It is easy to be wise after the event. Nevertheless it is astonishing at this distance to read how easily and lightly the dangers were dismissed by these eminent scientists and civil servants. The Fast Breeder Reactor is nowadays little heard of. The nuclear proliferation risk of putting hundreds of tons of separated plutonium into commercial circulation was deemed too high a price to pay even for this wonder machine.

***Scenario Two*:**

Mad Cow disease

Much more recent – and perhaps more relevant to us in New Zealand now – is the frightful epidemic of Mad Cow disease (BSE) among British cattle and its spread to humans in the form of variant Creutzfeldt Jacob disease (v-CJD).

Mad Cow disease is thought to have originated among British cattle in the late 1970s although the first reported case (cow 133, in Sussex) was in 1985. The cow died in 1986. The epidemic peaked in 1992 with some 36,000 cases. Literally millions of cattle have been slaughtered and their carcases burnt, so that the incidence in the UK has sunk to fewer than 1000 cases this year. The outbreak has had a devastating effect on the British beef market, and particularly on exports: cost to date has been estimated at over £4 billion. Cases of BSE have been reported in most European countries, and recently stringent measures have been taken in France to arrest its spread.

The main cause of spread of the disease has certainly been the common practice among cattle farmers, especially in countries where grazing is restricted, of feeding bovine protein to cows. One could say that BSE may have first occurred by chance, but its spread was guaranteed through bovine cannibalism, something that could never happen 'in the wild'.

The human form, variant-CJD, was not identified until 1996, since when there have been 80 cases in Britain. "The first thing you notice is a numbness and unexplained mood swings. Then come the hallucinations, staggering and pain. Eventually you lose your thoughts, sight, memory and personality" (*New Scientist November 2000*). There is little doubt now that v-CJD is caused by eating infected beef. Since its first reporting in 1996 the disease has increased in Britain exponentially. No one knows how long humans incubate the disease. But scientists who study the spread of epidemics suggest that the death toll may rise to thousands, and possibly hundreds of thousands!

In view of the gravity of the Mad Cow crisis the British Government commissioned a comprehensive inquiry. The *Phillips Report*, just published, runs to 16 volumes. But its message is clear and simple. Scientists, politicians and civil servants conspired to minimise the crisis. It has been an object lesson in 'experts' indulging in secrecy and paternalism. The result was bad science and bad government.

"Ministers, officials and scientific advisory committees alike," says *Phillips*, "were all apprehensive that the public would react irrationally to BSE. As each additional piece of data about the disease became available, the fear was that it would cause disproportionate alarm, would be seized upon by the media and by dissident scientists as demonstrating that BSE was a danger to humans, and would lead to a food scare."

So what errors did the scientists make? Initially veterinarians assumed that BSE was a form of scrapie, a disease of sheep which has been around for centuries. And since scrapie has never been known to affect humans it was fondly assumed that BSE would not affect humans either. This was an extraordinary assumption. If a disease is found to jump one species barrier – from sheep to cow, why should it not jump another – from cows to human beings? The science people were also incorrect in their initial explanation of how BSE spread among the cows. Government

officials uncritically accepted what the scientists said – and so the disaster was compounded.

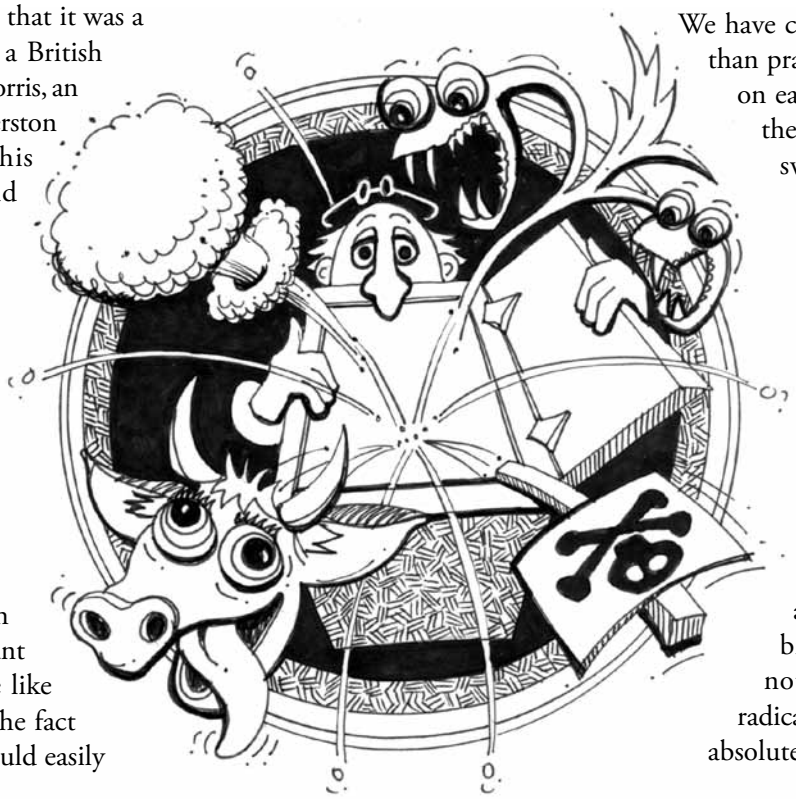
How did the disease arise in the first place? The simple answer is that no one knows. One theory is that it was a spontaneous mutation in a British cow in the 1980s. Roger Morris, an epidemiologist from Palmerston North, is sceptical of this explanation. Why should such a chance mutation happen only once, in a British cow? His suggestion is that BSE may have originated from another species altogether, a wildlife source outside Britain, but which was fed to British cows. That would account for its unique origin. Obviously such research is highly important to prevent a killer disease like this ever starting again. The fact is that BSE and v-CJD could easily appear in New Zealand.

Conclusion.

Now to return to GM. The arguments in favour of Genetic Modification have an ominously familiar ring. The scientific establishment offers a majority opinion that there is little evidence of possible harmful consequences. The international companies – indeed some overseas governments (see *Tui Motu* February 2000) – bring pressure to bear on us to conform to what is becoming accepted practice. The economic benefits are manifest. There is the haunting fear that if we don't go into this, we shall be left behind in the march of progress.

But surely exactly the same sort of arguments were used to justify the wholesale adoption of nuclear power. And, equally clearly, it was the economic argument which justified putting animal protein into cattle feed. The material was there. It was cheap. And would not animals thrive on the addition of some animal protein to their diet?

If in today's debate you were to protest that "it's unnatural" you would be laughed out of court. Yet, in modifying the way in which animals and plants breed and thrive, you are in danger of interfering with systems which have established themselves in equilibrium in nature over many centuries and countless generations. It is the sudden introduction of a 'wild card' that can precipitate a totally unforeseen crisis. This is the lesson of Mad Cow disease. Exactly the same reservations must obtain as regards interfering with the genetic code. It is similarly "unnatural" – and therefore fraught with danger.



And is it really to New Zealand's advantage to jump on this latest scientific bandwagon? Many would claim the one thing that gives us a real competitive edge in the international food market is our 'clean, green' image. We have cleaner air and purer water than practically any other country on earth. Just at the time when the markets of the world are swinging the organic way and when the 'beefburger Coca Cola' diet is being universally questioned, by going down the GM road are we not in danger of giving away the one trump card we have?

We said *no* to nuclear power – in any shape or form. And many countries applauded us for such a brave decision. We should not be afraid to be equally radical in rejecting GM – totally, absolutely. ■

M.H.

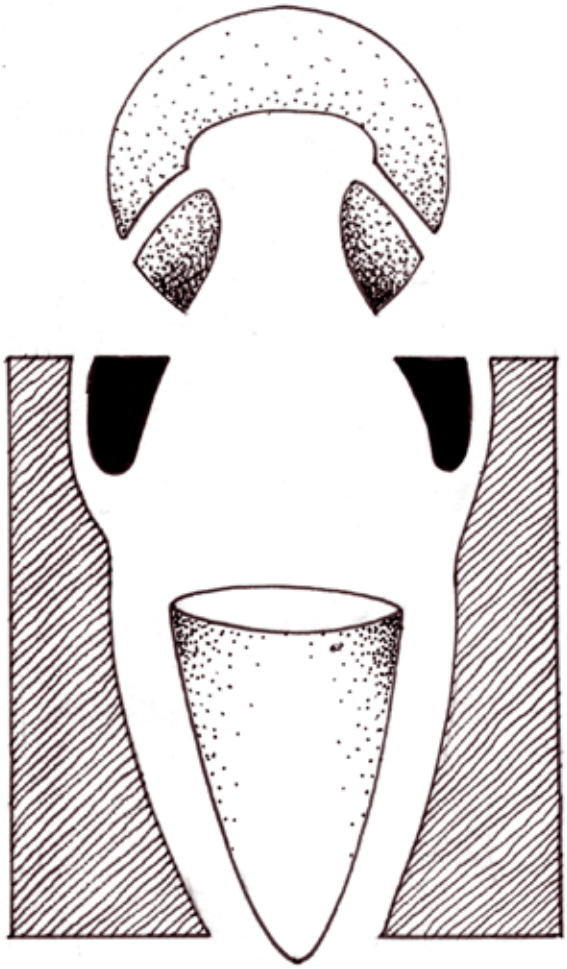
GM Gossip

Two cows were munching together in a paddock. One said to the other: "What's it feel like to be a mad cow?" The other replied "How should I know. I'm a pig!!

Who is Mary?

Joy Cowley

There was this girl, you see. Oh, just a young thing, not far past playing with dolls by all accounts. For it was the custom in those days to betroth a girl to a man when she was as young as eight or nine, and for the marriage to take place after the first menstruation which showed that she was old enough to bear children. Well, that's how it was. And Mary was betrothed but not married, not yet woman, still with the trust of a child who says 'yes' to a gift without asking where it's from or how it's made. We know what happened then. Earth and Heaven came together in rejoicing and angels sang like bellbirds on a summer morning, and a child came into the world bearing all the names of love which have ever existed. Emmanuel. God is with us.



But her story doesn't end there, so who was she, this Mary? No wide-eyed child at Cana, that's for sure, but a woman of authority organizing wine for a wedding feast. Perhaps she felt responsible. You can imagine her thinking that maybe the wine wouldn't have run out if her son hadn't brought along so many friends. So right there, she was Mary the Mum, knowing that miracles are commonplace. It's the way God always works. Miracles. Godincidences. Knowing that all she had to do was to ask and keep on asking. So once again Heaven and Earth were joined in a fine old celebration. We aren't told the outcome of that blessing on human love but if we look between the lines, we can fill in the singing and dancing as though we were there.

What else about Mary? Well, she keeps popping up in the background of her Son's ministry, the giver behind the giver, we might say. No details. Just regular mention so that we get the feeling that Jesus is drawing from a powerful spring of spirituality as he grows into the realisation that he is the Christ and one with God. The well-spring that nurtured him must have become salt with tears the day he died. She saw it all. The cross. The dying man they called "King of the Jews". Only to her, he wasn't a king, not even a man but her child, the baby who cried in the night and was comforted. What could she do to comfort him in this, the longest night? Nothing, except to be there.

But then he showed her what he meant about the death of a grain of wheat. Grief never exists on its own. It is always connected to rejoicing. And all the crucifixions, be they big or small, have resurrections. Three days of sorrow and again, the water turned into the wine of celebration. Again, heaven clasped earth and danced, and Mary was part of the festival.

But really, who was she? Yes, we know that she was with the others at Pentecost, but after that? The New Testament offers no more, although there are a number or stories threaded through early Christian traditions. Like all stories, each bears the love and fear and hope of the teller. Together, these stories form a tradition which can't be separated from the rest of our faith history.

But whatever is said, we don't find out who Mary was. There seems to be no selfhood of Mary which we can shape into an individual. We have more information about James and John, Mary and Martha, Peter, the woman at the well, Paul. Why not the mother of our Lord? Perhaps it's not there because it's not there. Maybe the who of Mary is all burned up in the fire of what she was. The what is the Mary we know - the vehicle, the container, the giver of God, Mary the smallness who let herself be made into God's greatness, Mary the mother who has gifted us with the knowledge of divine motherhood.

For the truth is this. No matter who we are, male, female, single, married, Christian, non-Christian, we all have within us that virgin space which belongs to God alone. Nothing on

this earth can fill it. Oh, we try. Because that's what life is about. Searching. Looking for answers. So we reach out for things, for power and success, for money, objects, for people. We try to stuff them into that small hungry space of the heart but they don't come anywhere near it. You could say that our heart-hunger is a bit like Cinderella's slipper. Only one can wear it. And it's a funny thing. Just as we know something about an object by the space it occupies, so do we know a bit about God from the God-space inside us. It's the space which is always fresh and eternally new, the space in which we reach out with the trust of a child, the yes, yes, yes, yes space where we become pregnant with God.

So who is Mary?

YOU are Mary. And you and you and you. We all are. Heaven and Earth are in joyful embrace. The God-space within us grows far beyond the limitations of this little thing we call self. It fills the universe!

And listen! There is something like the music of stars, a hymn which spreads through galaxies to wrap itself about this planet. Can you hear it?

It's the singing of angels as we give birth to Christ in the world. ■

Birthdays

Happy Birthday, Jesus!

We come like children to a party,
bearing gifts in your honour.
No surprises amongst them,
they're much the same gifts as last year
and all the years before that.
Some of them have got a bit shabby,
worn, and torn around the edges.
Some look as though they're broken
(that often happens with promises)
and some need a bit of patching.
But they're all here again for you,
our days, our dreams, our hearts, our love,
given in complete confidence
that you, who delight in the small,
the weak, the battered and broken,
will receive them with great rejoicing.

As we light the candles and wish you
many happy returns to our hearts,
we count the number of times
we have celebrated your birthday.
Then we go on to reflect
on the miracle of your love,
and our hearts fill to bursting
with the wonder of knowing
that you, blessed Jesus,
never stop celebrating
our birth.

Joy Cowley

Hope

What good can one man do
when evil so abounds?
What difference can I make
to all the problems here?

My efforts would be lost
amongst the many wrongs;
why bother to insist
on keeping hope alive?

Yet somewhere in the depths
a spark will not be dimmed,
resolved to keep intact
that tiny flame which burns.

The hope that fills the minds
of thousands of like souls
will not be lost to time
no matter what the odds.

The love that drives the hearts
of many on this earth
is stronger than despair
which claims there is no way.

The God who gave us life
and light to see his way
bids hopelessness to flee;
for life in all its trials
is built Oh Lord on Thee.

Desmond Smith

The Third Joyful Mystery

Sandra Winton

The Third Joyful Mystery, the Nativity," hissed the boy. "This is the one. About Christmas." He jabbed his sister, who was fidgeting again. "Think of the picture. On the calendar." The child tried to remember the Columban Calendar in the kitchen. December. The picture was dark and the people old and foreign with cloths round their heads and just their faces lit up around the fat, naked baby lying there. The boy hoped it would be enough to hold her attention. He hoped his own attention would be enough – enough to make the prayers work, that is. "Concentrate," he said, as much to himself as to her. The girl felt scared of her brother when he was like this, sort of desperate and relentless, making her pray every evening after tea. "Our Father..." She couldn't see why it was so important.

The boy wished they'd put a better picture on the calendar – more like the one he had in his head. That one was much brighter. Mary had brown hair under her blue veil. Her eyes were soft like his mother's were sometimes when she tucked him into bed. The baby was wrapped in white with a glowy circle round its head and the man was right there, with his arms bare as if he'd come in from the workshop and was keeping the woman and the baby safe. He was wearing brown and had his hand on the woman's shoulder. The whole picture was light and happy and secure with the woman, man and baby making a kind of circle. It was all in a holy picture his grandmother had given him. "The Holy Family", it said on the bottom in nice writing. The picture had gold edges around a pale blue background fading into white. Before Libby came along he imagined it was Mum, Dad and him as a baby. When Libby was born he had to put her into the place of the baby and himself a bit to the side, like one of the cows whose faces looked in beside Mary's shoulder. But that's what they were, the Holy Family.

Lately, though, he'd begun to worry about the family. Dad was coming home late, and he'd usually been drinking. Often the boy lay in bed with his hands over his ears, swishing his breath in and out through his teeth so that he couldn't hear his parents shouting. Sometimes he checked on Libby but she seemed to sleep through it. He was the one who knew. And he was scared. He wasn't sure what he was scared of. Maybe that nothing would stop them. Maybe that one day they'd tell them they were getting divorced. Maybe that one morning he'd wake up and Dad would be gone leaving Mum crying in the kitchen. Maybe that he would have to step into the picture, looking after Mum and Libby, keeping the circle in place.

Lying in bed with his ears covered, he'd prayed, "Stop them, God, please." But God hadn't stopped them. Well, something had to. Then he got this idea. He'd tried to explain it to Libby.

"You know how mum and Dad are fighting," he said.

"Ye—es."

"And how Dad isn't a Catholic."

"Yes." Libby frowned.

"Well, I've got this idea. If we say a rosary every day in December, then God will make Dad come to Mass with us on Christmas Day and we'll all be together and they'll stop fighting and everything will be all right." It all spilled out.

Libby looked doubtful.

"Like the Holy Family."

"A whole rosary!" said his sister.

"Well, we have to do something really hard or God won't think it's serious."

"A whole rosary! That's hours."

The boy had to admit she had a point. So they settled for three decades, the first three Joyful Mysteries, every evening behind the macrocarpa hedge when they went out to play before bed. Libby set up her plastic statue of Mary full of Holy Water. The boy decided that the soreness of their bare knees on the ground made up for the missed two decades.

One Christmas Dad had come to Mass. When they were getting ready he'd said, "Where's my white shirt, Pat", and he'd driven them in the car. The boy felt so proud as they passed Jimmy Toomey and his Mum walking. But it hadn't been a great success. For one thing Dad looked uncomfortable in his good shirt and tie, and for another he had already taken a couple of bottles of beer to the old man next door. "Poor old fellow," said Dad. "No one to have a drink with at Christmas." The boy hoped people wouldn't smell the beer on Dad or notice how restless and irritated he was. His whispers sounded very loud in the small church. "We're not standing up again, are we! We've only just sat down." And "What's he doing now! You'd think he'd wash his hands before he started." Worst of all was when he decided to sit up through the consecration as if advertising his Protestant dissent. Mum didn't say a word. She put her face in her hands and prayed with her eyes shut. Libby was playing with her book. Only the boy felt it all, the embarrassment and the fierce, defiant pride.

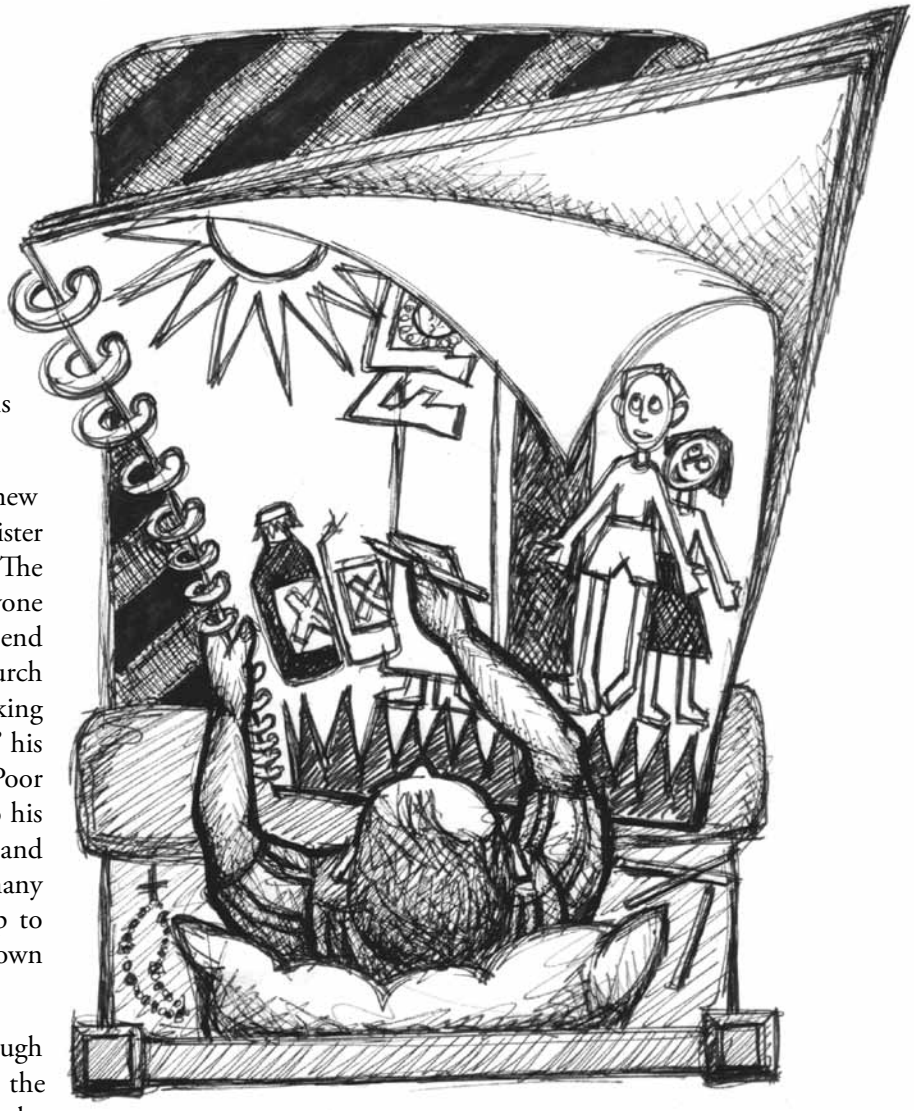
He came back to the present. Libby was wriggling again. "I'm sick of this. Why do we have to do it?"

"Because," said the boy. "For Christmas. For Dad. The Family. It's the deal."

He was so intense, she thought. Then he softened. "Only two more days."

On Christmas morning the boy knew pretty soon it wasn't going to happen. He stood there while his mother combed Libby's hair. "Is Dad coming?"

"You know your father," she said. "He's out digging new potatoes and picking peas for Miss Baldwin and her sister and he wants to go next door to see Mr Spencer." The boy felt a stab of disappointment and shame. Everyone knew that Mrs Spencer had gone on her own to spend Christmas with her married daughter in Christchurch because Mr Spencer had started on his annual drinking spree a week before Christmas. "I don't blame her," his mother had said. "She's put up with it for years." "Poor old beggar," said the boy's father. The boy went to his bedroom. He took the picture of The Holy Family and put it into his drawer. Face down. He didn't say many prayers at Mass and had to be nudged to go up to Communion. He'd had it with God. He felt let down and defeated.



When they got back there was no sign of Dad, though there was a pile of freshly dug new potatoes on the kitchen bench and a basin of peas to be shelled. The boy and his sister sat on the back doorstep throwing peas into one basin and shells into another.

"Dad didn't come to Mass," said Libby.

"Oh, it was stupid anyway." The boy sounded hurt and angry. Libby didn't ask any more because Dad came over the fence.

"Hope you two are whistling. We'll need some extras. Mr Spencer is coming to dinner."

Libby's eyes widened. Sometimes when he wanted to frighten her the boy would tell her that Mr Spencer with his half bald head, his yellowy frizz, his whisky breath and his red watery eyes would grab her one night.

"And you kids be nice to him. Can't let him be on his own on Christmas Day, can we?"

Mum came out behind him.

"Better bring in a few more carrots too, Ian," she said. She didn't seem mad or anything.

Christmas dinner went OK. Mr Spencer wasn't too far gone and Dad told Mum what a great cook she was. Dad even got out a pair of socks he'd been given by his auntie and he and Mum gave them to Mr Spencer for Christmas.

In the afternoon the adults went to the front room to doze in armchairs while the kids played outside with their presents. The boy ran in to tell Dad he'd hit a tin with his new shanghai. He stopped in the doorway. Mr Spencer was crying and snivelling. "I've been a rotten husband. And Ena's the best woman you'd hope to meet. Too good for me. What if she doesn't come back?"

Dad was sitting beside him with a hand on his shoulder and Mum was on the other side holding a hot cup of tea. The boy stood looking at the three of them in a patch of sun coming in the window.

When Mr Spencer went home, Mum and Dad stood in the doorway together and Dad put his arm around Mum. All of a sudden the boy stopped being angry. That night he sat up in bed and did a picture with his new coloured pencils. He drew Mary and coloured her dress pink, for a change. He did Joseph with his arm round her waist. He drew two children beside them and in the middle a baby with a half-bald head and a gold fuzz of hair. He put in green grass and a blue sky, a big glowy sun – and two bottles of beer to celebrate the day. ■

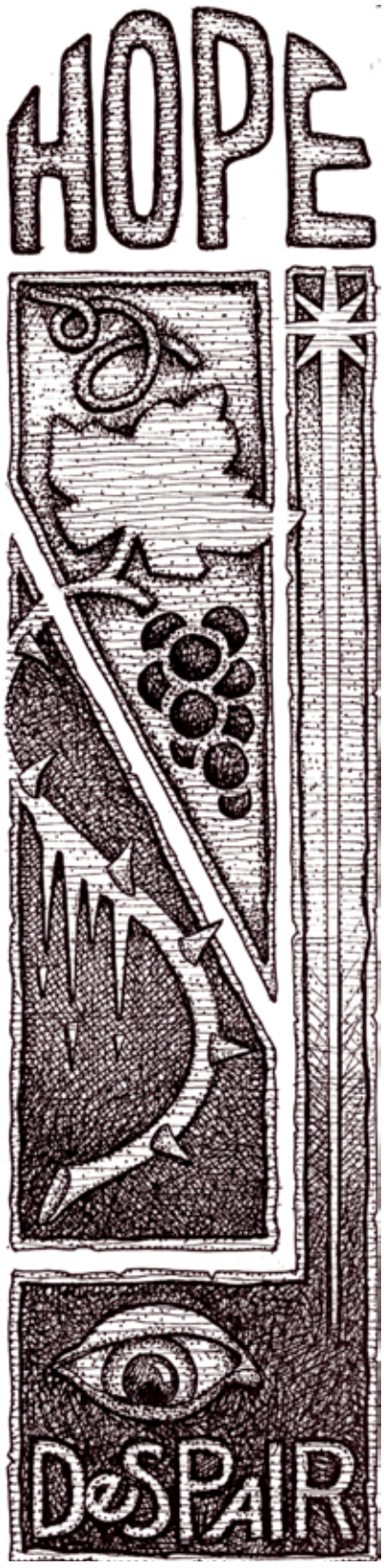
Sartre's Christmas story

Paul Andrews

Can non-Christians have any idea what Christmas is about? Can mere males have any idea what motherhood is like? What you read below is a test of both questions. In one sense, of course, the whole world thinks it knows what Christmas is about: giving and receiving presents. The hucksters of toys and other gifts plan for Christmas from early in the year and give more thought and energy to their preparation than Christians do. But that is what you might call the nonsense side of Christmas, the tinsel and the spending. Can a non-Christian really savour the central theme of Christmas, as pictured in Mary and her baby? Let me talk for a moment about one who did.

In the autumn of 1940 the Nazis captured and deported Jean-Paul Sartre, the existentialist philosopher and play-wright, to a labour camp in Germany. Before Christmas a Jesuit fellow-prisoner, Fr Paul Feller, persuaded Sartre to write a nativity play for the French Christians who shared his captivity. Jean-Paul, baptised a Catholic, was by this time a declared atheist. Writing a Christmas play ran against the grain. But as a gesture of solidarity with his French fellow-prisoners, he wrote *Barjona, Jeu scénique en six tableaux.*

To my knowledge the play was never published in Sartre's lifetime. He presumably saw it as a *jeu d'esprit,* like a piece written for a Christmas party among friends. As an atheist and existentialist, he would not appreciate its location in a spiritual setting. However the play is of such searing beauty that whenever I have quoted it, people have looked for the text and marvelled.



Barjona is the headman of a village near Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth. He is a Sartre-like figure, a strong man consumed by existentialist despair. The villagers are starving and powerless under the yoke of Rome, and he cannot help them. In the play he has just persuaded his fellow-villagers into a joint pact that they will bring no more children into the world, in protest against the oppression of Rome and the silence of God.

Then the Magi enter, following a star. Barjona abuses them as doting, deluded old men, and points to the misery of the crowd who have gathered, torn between despair and hope. Baith, one of the wise men from the East, answers Barjona with gravity:

Baith: *You see this man here, weighed down with his flesh, rooted on the spot by his two big feet, and you say, pointing your finger to touch him, 'he is there' – but that is not true. Wherever a man is, Barjona, he is always somewhere else. Somewhere beyond the purple peaks that you see over there by Jerusalem, beyond this icy day, in a tomorrow. And these people standing round you; for quite a while now they are not there any more. They are at Bethlehem in a stable, round the little warm body of a baby. And all this future of which man is moulded, all these peaks, all these purple horizons, these wonderful towns, which he haunts without ever having set his foot there, that is hope.*

(Here you must imagine the French prisoners speaking their lines in a concentration camp). *Look at the prisoners before you, who live in mud and in cold. Do you know what you would see if you could follow their souls? Hills, and the sweet meanderings of a river, and vines, and the sun of the south – their vines and their sun. It is down there that you will find them. And those gilded vines of*

September – for a prisoner who is shivering and full of vermin, that is hope. Hope is the best part of themselves. You want to deprive them of their vines and their meadows and their shining distant hills. You want to give them the bewildering present of the beast.
There is your despair, to ruminate on the instant that passes, to gaze between your toes with a stupid and rancorous eye, to tear your soul from the future and imprison it in the present. Then you will no longer be a man, Barjona. You will be no better than a hard black stone in the road. The caravans pass on the road, but the stone stays alone, fixed like mud in its resentment.

Barjona: *You're doting, you old fool!*

Baith: *Barjona, it is true that we are very old and very wise and we know all the evil in the world. Still when we saw this star in heaven, our hearts leapt for joy like the hearts of children. We have been like children, and we set out on the road because we wanted to accomplish our duty as men, the duty of hope.*
The man who loses hope, Barjona, will be chased from his village and cursed. The stones of the road will be rougher under his feet and the brambles more spiky. The load will weigh heavier on his back, all his misfortunes will plague him like angry bees, and everyone will mock him. But everything smiles on the one who hopes. For him the world is a gift. Come on then; see if you want to stay here or make up your mind to follow us.

The villagers follow the Magi to Bethlehem in search of the new-born King. Barjona, determined to eliminate this illusion before it catches the imagination of his friends, takes a short cut over the mountains to Bethlehem, where he plans to kill the baby.

There is a gap in the text – Sartre's note reads: *il manque trois pages* – before it resumes in the stable. Sartre will not describe a conversion, but he leaves the door open for hope.

Barjona is on his knees, watching from the shadows as the villagers and the Magi gather round the manger, and a narrator describes what they see.

The Virgin is pale, and she looks at the baby. If I were a painter, what I would paint on her face is an anxious wonderment, such as has never before been seen on a human face. For Christ is her baby, flesh of her flesh, and the fruit of her womb. She has carried him for nine months, and she will give him her breast, and her milk will become the blood of God. There are moments when the temptation is so strong that she forgets that he is God. She folds him in her arms and says: *My little one.*

But at other moments she feels a stranger, and she thinks: *God is there* and she finds herself caught by a religious awe before this speechless God, this terrifying infant. All mothers at times are brought up sharp in this way before this fragment of themselves, their baby. They feel themselves in exile at two paces from this new life that they have created from their life, and which is now peopled by another's thoughts.

But no other baby has been so cruelly and suddenly snatched from his mother, for he is God, and he surpasses in every way anything that she can imagine. It is a hard trial for a mother to be ashamed of herself and her human condition before her son.

But I think that there are other rapid, fleeting moments when she realises at once that Christ is her son, her very own baby, **and** that he is God. She looks at him and thinks: *This God is my baby. This divine flesh is my flesh. He is made from me. He has my eyes, and the curve of his mouth is the curve of mine. He is like me. He is God and he is like me.*

No other woman has been lucky enough to have a God for herself alone, a tiny little God whom she can take in her arms and cover with kisses, a warm-bodied God who smiles and breathes, a God that she can touch, who is alive. And it is in these moments that I would paint Mary, and I would try to capture the air of radiant tenderness and timidity with which she lifts her finger to touch the sweet skin of her baby-God, whose warm weight she feels on her knees, and who smiles.

So much for Jesus and for the Virgin Mary.

And Joseph? I would not paint Joseph. I would show no more than a shadow at the back of the stable, and two shining eyes. For I do not know what to say about Joseph, and Joseph does not know what to say about himself. He adores, and is happy to adore, and he feels himself slightly out of it. I believe he suffers without admitting it. He suffers because he sees how much this woman whom he loves resembles God; how she is already at the side of God. For God has burst like a bomb into the intimacy of this family. Joseph and Mary are separated for ever by this explosion of light. And I imagine that all through his life Joseph will be learning to accept this. ■

That is how John-Paul Sartre, a male, an ex-Christian, a prisoner in a labour camp, saw the Holy Family. The typescript came my way from a French fellow-student in Munich shortly after the war. Paul Feller had given him a copy. Our life in Munich was Spartan. I was cold, hungry (the basic diet was still potatoes and turnips) and, as an isolated Irishman, lonely. I needed hope, not as a theological virtue, but as an existential experience, to help me trust that there was something beyond this stark and loveless existence.

We put on *Barjona* as a radio play one Christmas. It was not like spiritual books which spoke from a faith too comfortable and unquestioning. I responded to Sartre when he described the Incarnation: *a God who would submit to learning this taste of salt at the bottom of our mouths when the whole world abandons us.* This was philosophy from the guts, not the head. It gave me spiritual sustenance when I needed it most. It has stood to me in bad times since then, recalling me to our duty as humans, the duty of hope. Thank you for the excuse to recall it.

P.A.

Christmas Carol Service

Peter Frost

I have a story from a long time ago of a boy who thought he would be good. He would do whatever was asked of him and mostly he did. If his Mum asked, he did it, eventually. If his Dad asked, he did it straight away; it was less painful that way. His Dad was a powerful figure but he could sit on his knee when he was small. At those times his Dad sometimes smelt warm and familiar and sometimes smelt of hops. In time, it became harder to please him and sometimes it hurt a lot when he was wrong and often he didn't really understand why.

He worked hard at school, and worked hard after school. It was better to work hard at times than to go home. He went to church with his Mum. His Dad didn't like church. He knew that Jesus wanted him to be good and not to commit sins, and that seemed to mean not telling fibs, not pinching things and not being disobedient, which was the biggest word he knew.

One day he discovered that he had grown up. He was put in the men's choir because he had been good in the kid's one and he could sing. He worked hard at work and he visited home and did things for his Mum because Dad didn't do much of anything these days. Then he got to know a girl. He liked her and they talked a lot. She had a Mum who shouted at her Dad, especially if he went to the pub. When the girl got pregnant he believed everyone who said he had made a bad choice, but couldn't help feeling that it hadn't seemed much like his choice at the time. He did the right thing and married her and they had a boy and a girl and she shouted at him although he didn't go to the pub. When he asked why she shouted she didn't seem to know, it just was something she did. He was puzzled and unhappy. But he knew that it was right to be a good Christian husband so he cared for her and the kids but she left anyway. She said he didn't understand her, which was true, he didn't. Now he had the boy and hardly every saw the girl and he felt he had failed. Somehow he had got it wrong, not lying, not stealing, and being obedient hadn't been enough. He went to the pub. He also stopped going to church. He had left the choir years ago to help at home. Life seemed to have a meanness to it. He felt alone and it seemed nothing had meaning any more.

He loved his son and missed his little girl. At the boy's school he met a woman. She decided to marry him. She was lovely and sensible, it was a huge relief. She liked to hear him sing, she was kind to his son, and she tried to find his daughter.

One Christmas she said, "Let's all go to the carol service tonight?" He was immediately anxious and said No he couldn't. She took them anyway. As they walked towards the lighted church he felt ill. He thought, "I've failed all that, I can't go back. I haven't got anything to offer, I've only got the mess I made, I want to be left alone", but he said nothing. Inside he heard nothing that anyone said. There was a pain in his head where he wanted to weep but didn't. Mercifully they sang a carol. He didn't sing but it did help to hide from the strain. Somewhere in the service someone talked about Jesus being a small boy; he felt that he would like to go back to that. He remembered the peace he had felt as a chorister. Then he had felt he belonged; now he felt like an alien.

They stood to sing another carol. It was very familiar, he tried to sing but it got choked. He felt like leaving but his wife had somehow got hold of his hand. The service went on "What do you want from me?" he said to an invisible presence. They announced another carol, as he stood up someone said "Be my son" but he couldn't see who. The carol was set high but he did sing this time. The carol was really quite beautiful, it required discipline and control to get right, he forgot himself. There wasn't a big congregation, just a local country church. He became aware of a lone voice, a magnificent voice, one that he had never heard before; it was powerful and beautiful at the same time. No one else seemed to be singing, but the church glowed and the lights blurred and then the carol ended and he looked down. His wife was looking at him with glistening eyes and his son just stared.

The church became a sort of second home. He became the choirmaster and every year at Christmas he put on a magnificent cantata. People came from miles around.

That is my story. ■

Christmas Day 225 Years ago

Nano Nagle (1715-1784) has been described as the Irishwoman of the Second Millennium. She is foundress of the Sisters of the Presentation, who work in the Archdiocese of Wellington and in Dunedin.

Her first convent of the Order was opened in Cork on Christmas Day. The manner of opening was characteristic. There were no dignitaries present. Instead she invited 50 beggars to dinner, and Nano waited on them at table with great joy. For the rest of her life this custom was faithfully observed on Christmas Day.

Nano Nagle was 60 years old when in 1775 she founded her congregation. She had prepared herself by years of work among the poor of the city, especially in providing education. Today Cork is a thriving commercial city of 150,000 people. 250 years ago conditions in the city were appalling. There was no sanitation, water, light or heating of the houses as we know it today. Vice and disease were rampant. There were no schools for the poor. the children were wild and ignorant, often left to fend for themselves. Since it was still the time of the savage penal laws imposed by the English government, there was no religious education and Religious orders were banned.

Nevertheless Nano Nagle succeeded in introducing the Ursuline Sisters from France. She started her own school in 1754, at first in secret even from her own family, and within a year she was looking after 200 children.

Although she came from a comparatively well-to-do family she left the comfort of her brother's home to live in a mud cabin so as to share the life of the poor. After school was finished she spent hours visiting the poorer parts of the city. It was said that she knew personally every garret and tenement in Cork. Later she built an almshouse for destitute old women next to her cottage.

Her decision to found her own congregation was founded on years of practical experience of the needs of the poor of the city. From the beginning she insisted that her Sisters were free of the religious enclosure so that she and her companions could continue to move freely in the streets, teaching and serving the needy.

Nano Nagle was the first great modern to perceive that one of the most pressing wants of her time, as it is of our times, was the raising of the standard of womanhood, holding that all people, even the very poorest, ought to be taught and trained in the ways of culture and morality. (G.R.Duraind) ■

I remember the day Lord,
when I was welcomed into your church.
A day when your love poured over me,
demanding that I know you more fully.

Thank you, Lord, for leading me to *Walk by Faith*.
A course that has helped me learn more about myself
and my faith. I want to understand your plan for me,
and to serve you with more conviction.

This year you have shown me that your creation
is a wonderful gift to us all.
I am able to see you more in the beauty of the world
and understand that we are all part of your plan.

Lord, you have helped me understand that although it is a struggle,
your love will be revealed more and more as I move closer to you.
I know this is what you want
but I need to choose to follow you.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, to the world.
Please help me to have the strength he had
to stand up for what he believed, knowing that the ultimate reward
will be to be with you in heaven.

Lord, I know that as a member of your church here on earth
I need to more fully participate in proclaiming the Good News.
Help me to be a worthy disciple who will be an example to others.
Give me the knowledge to help others improve their understanding
of you.

Thank you, Lord, for this first year of *Walk by Faith*.
I pray that the teachers, participants and I will all continue to find
nourishment and understanding during the coming year.

Daryn

Modern art, modern music – is it junk?

"Are the moderns out of touch with the taste of ordinary people?" The editor popped this provocative question to some knowledgeable friends – Colin Gibson, retired Professor of English at Otago; Albert Moore, retired Professor of Religious Studies; and our resident artist, Donald Moorhead, himself no mean musician

The majority of people, says **Albert Moore**, have never followed the avant-garde in music or art. But they vote with their feet by simply not going to their concerts or exhibitions. Yet the experiments are often valid. What I think they do rebel against – and with reason – is being told that these avant-garde artists are 'good for you'. What you have now is a diverse pluralism in music – from rock-and-roll at one end to the most esoteric at the other. There is no one form which predominates in our age: there is no *right* art for everyone.

Colin Gibson: Yes, we buy into our own kind of music or art. But there is a flow from one form to another. Reggae style which has its own audience may flow on into other quite advanced forms of modern music. There is a lot of cultural 'inter-traffic', which is going to puzzle the audiences.

Donald Moorhead: A few years ago you went to a Symphony Concert – and it was the same old Beethoven programme. They churned it out because it dragged in the crowd. Nowadays it's quite different. It's quite exciting – you have a Beethoven symphony, but they will also slip in an avant-garde modern work.

Colin: The point is the frontier keeps advancing. What was new, strange, bizarre, unthinkable when it first appeared becomes the dogma for the next generation.

But what about music which is cacophonous. Take Schnittka, for example. Personally I can't cope with the constant dissonance.

Albert: The parallel in the visual arts would be grubby-looking assemblages which art galleries display because it's someone who is supposed to be experimental. They seem to be trying to see how far the boundaries can be pushed.

Colin: One thing that's important is the state of the viewer's or the listener's soul! As they approach they will respond or not depending on their inner state. You could not cope with the dissonance of Schnittka's music – and yet in your life you would be able to take a great degree of dissonance.

Donald: If there were simply beautiful themes – and nothing else, then there would be no beauty!

Colin: Surely the point is that it's very subjective. There's a degree in which all of us have learnt to be stimulated by, or at least to tolerate dissonance, disorder, chaos, fist-in-the-eye kind of art. Yet real lives are interpenetrated all the time by dissonance and the punch in the eye.

The Crucifixion for example was never 'nice'. Artists, except perhaps Grunewald, have succeeded in making it acceptable. Or take Christmas – the birth of a baby is bloody and painful. Yet we have a wonderful facility to mask common reality from ourselves.

Yet when a baby is born the mother or the father see the beauty through the blood and the pain: they see the miracle of this new being in spite of the pain. Doesn't the artist of the Nativity often convey that? Whereas Grunewald is expressing something which is so totally evil you are stunned by it.

Colin: I think that is special pleading. Many births are as you describe. But what about the mother who doesn't want the child? The disabled child? There are many circumstances in which a child comes into the world and there's none of this beauty – for the parent. We may wish to idealise this child at Bethlehem as the model of how things *should* be, rather than the way things are. I get distressed by the oceans of sentimentality that wash over us at Christmas.

Albert: During the Arts festival recently a Wellington saxophone quartet performed in the Anglican Cathedral and sometimes you could close your eyes and it sounded

like a Bach fugue on the organ. Then there was a solo by the tenor sax which sounded like an Australian traffic jam! An exercise in honks and squeaks, which was interesting – but you wonder, is it music?.

Can we look now at Michael Smither's landscape?

Colin: I think the Smither landscape is very striking. What strikes me is how each artist paints the Central Otago landscape in a different way. This is much more aggressive, pebbly and difficult to walk on than Grahame Sydney.

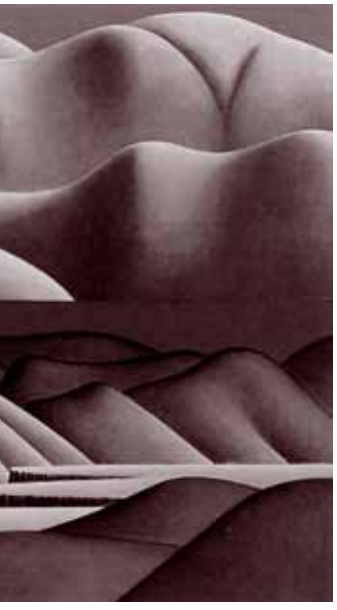
This is 'comfortable' modern art, because countryside is countryside. We can hang onto it. When you move away into the purely abstract – or the dissonant in the case of music – when there is no point of contact, then the audience finds itself very worried and lost.

Donald: Like a Mondrian...(*see right*)

Colin:.. Even a Mondrian we can manage. Because we see it now on a thousand T-shirts. What was thought as ridiculous at the time, we now see on linoleum or as a backyard decoration! Mondrian draws grids. We like grids, because we like a world that is tidy and ordered.

But where there is a loss of control – not a world ordered as we would wish it to be ordered it is not so easy; whenever the artist takes us into a world that seems fractured, uncentred, incapable of unity or depth, then we get bothered.

Albert: To get back to Smither's painting. It registers the artist's involvement in the landscape and its changes. There's a 30 year gap between his first and second representation of St Bathan's. The second is an ageing one, just as Smither himself was ageing. Things have worn down a bit.



Yet it's a very beautiful picture – the gold tint evokes Otago's gold-mining history. The shapes of the hills remind one of bodily expressions – knees and elbows. It almost has the shapes of a human torso, as if it were under a blanket. Some shapes are smoother; some more eruptive.

Colin: Yet when Grahame Sydney comes to the same landscapes it's not the ups so much as the great folds of hills he captures. Sydney was inspired by Smither when he was a young artist.

When does the experimental become the absurd?

Colin: When the great composers of the past first produced new music it was regarded as dissonant, unthinkable, unmusical. We tend to go back with this veneer of sentiment to the past, as if everything written then was made for beauty. In fact the experience of beauty is something we have gradually acquired over the centuries.

Donald: Van Gogh sold only one painting in the whole of his life. He traded others to buy bread. But he simply was not accepted by his contemporaries.

Albert: What we see in van Gogh is the vitality that comes out at us from the painting. The contact with real life sometimes comes to us in a more refined, 'beautiful' way, but sometimes it is a more rough-ended way. People can identify with something...

Colin: That is often what is most offensive when a work is first created. Like the riot in Paris over Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. It was the most discordant noise they'd ever heard in their lives – they couldn't bear it. Yet we now regarded Stravinsky as one of the great writers of modern music. We've learned to recognise the energy in the notes as we have learned to see the energy in the paint of van Gogh. We haven't yet seen – all of us – that there could be similar energy in Jackson Pollock.

The newest latest, freshest art in any period has so much life in it that we just back off from the glare! We've learned to accommodate ourselves to the glare of the distant past – we can take that. We acquire the past gradually. Bach in his own lifetime was very small beer. He languished for a hundred years before he was 'discovered'. We are too close to Benjamin Britten – even, perhaps, to Schnittka.

Albert: Sometimes the shocking innovator may inspire someone else working in another medium. Today almost any medium goes, even mixed media – and what is regarded as 'craft'. For instance, there was an exhibition of quilting here a few years ago, and some of the quilters used Op Art. I thought they succeeded better than the original paintings. Transferring to another medium created another work of art, and some were quite stunning.

The advent of new media is a feature of our age: they really appeal to people today. World music today incorporates new sounds and new instruments, making full use of modern technology. I think people are tantalised by these new combinations.

Donald: Familiarity in art is what attracts us. Even if you don't like something at first, you are haunted by it and it draws you back. I came to appreciate Mozart by drip-feeding myself until I grew to like and appreciate his music. It's a case of conditioning.

Colin: Sadly, however, there is a sales element in contemporary art, where art steps back and commerce steps in. In contemporary music and painting this occurs. This is spurious and hypocritical. It may be 'pleasing'. We need to distinguish art which has integrity. Artists with integrity express themselves as they are – and such art stands up.

The other may be brilliant, but it's false. It's not done to help you know more about yourself or the world. ■

Left – Michael Smither's St Bathans Diggings: Day and Night *(1998).*
Above – Piet Mondrian's Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue *(1921)*

The Future of Work

What is happening to the vocation to work in today's global, neo-capitalist economy? Ron Sharp writes in response to articles in Tui Motu *during 2000, as well as some recently published books.*

In his book ***The Corrosion of Character*** Richard Sennett writes on the personal consequences of work in the new economy, where the emphasis on flexibility is changing the meaning of work. 'Career' once meant a life-long channel for one's economic pursuits. Flexibility is rapidly changing that. 'Job' originally meant a lump or piece of something that could be carted around. Flexibility brings this back into vogue as people today do pieces of work, lumps of labour, over their working life. Flexibility inevitably arouses anxiety: "what path will I pursue?" "what risk is going to pay off for me?"

One's personal character is going to be affected by flexible capitalism. How do we decide what is of lasting value to ourselves in a society that is impatient and focuses on the immediate moment? How can long-term goals be pursued in an economy devoted to the short-term? How can mutual loyalties and commitments be sustained in institutions that are constantly breaking apart or continually being redesigned?

The new emphasis on the global marketplace and use of new technologies in modern capitalism have brought with them new ways of organising time. '*No long term*' is a motto and principle that corrodes trust, loyalty and mutual commitment. Short term capitalism threatens to weaken our characters, especially that which binds human beings to one another and furnishes each with a sustainable sense of worth. In the realm of the family, where formal obligation, trust, commitment and purpose reign, '*no long term*' means keeping moving on, not committing yourself, not sacrificing.

Today a young person entering the workforce after university can expect to change jobs at least seven times in a 30-year working life (from 24 to 54), and to change her/his skill base three times or more. What is peculiar about today's uncertainty is that it exists without any looming historical disaster eg. war or famine. Instead, uncertainty is woven into the everyday practices of a rigorous capitalism. Instability is normal; the entrepreneur is the ideal 'Everyman'.

Viviane Forrester, in ***The Economic Horror***, claims that the world is governed by economics. Powerful economic forces are stealthily changing the lives and destinies of whole populations in all countries. For the first time in history the vast majority of human beings are no longer indispensable to the few who run the world economy. The economy itself is increasingly wrapped up in pure speculation. Workforces and their costs are becoming superfluous. In other words, there is something worse than actually being exploited – to be no longer worth exploiting!

Many awakened people have seen what is happening because it is not being concealed; yet it is not being talked about clearly. In democratic societies you don't tell people they're superfluous. Some people still claim the industrial age can be patched up. But wage-earning is disappearing, and the temporary allowances and benefits designed to replace it are shrinking. The unemployed over the past 20 years have been made to feel ashamed, which in today's world is an absurdity. This shame goes hand in hand with the fear widely felt by the privileged, those who still have a job but are afraid of losing it.

Once upon a time work was regarded as slavery. Today, falling labour costs are seen as a boost to making profits in big companies, where 'restructuring' by involving fewer workers results in a surge in stock market values. Politicians pay lip service to job creation, but the Stock Exchange gets worried whenever there is a slight reduction in unemployment figures.

This raises a serious question for the future, especially for young people. "Should people be profitable rather than useful, in order to 'deserve' the right to live?" Of course we may believe that usefulness is an important value in society; yet people are being made to squander their energies because of profitability being seen as the be-all-and-end-all of society.

Democratised countries have abandoned old priorities, such as health and education. Medical and teaching staff are increasingly feeling political aggression. Positions are abolished and funding is cut in a drive towards privatisation and the user-pays economy – and this in services which are indispensable to the welfare and future of humanity. This confusion between profitability and usefulness is disastrous.

In ***Building Wealth***, Lester Thurow describes how the new economy is dismantling the old foundations of personal, business and national success. He, too, laments the loss of career ladders and the riskiness for the individual of investment in a good education. What used to be true only for industries in decline – that skills suddenly become valueless – is now true everywhere. Downsizing is a way of life, even in good times. In the global economy, if skills are cheaper to get elsewhere or if there are less pollution restrictions, then companies will move there to lessen production costs. They will not be tied to a particular set of workers.

When new knowledge makes old skills obsolete, firms want to employ workers who already have that knowledge. Employers want a free ride in the training system: '*You train; I'll hire*'. The system evolves, therefore, towards less commitment and less investment in skills just when it should be moving in precisely the opposite direction. As a consequence real wages have dropped for most of the labour force – except for the top 20 percent where increases have never been larger.

So where does the Spirit seem to be leading us? Paul Hawken, along with Amory and Hunter Lovins, in ***Natural Capitalism***, present a manifesto that invites us to transform our fundamental notions about how business is to be done in the new century. Traditional capitalism has always neglected to assign value to the natural resources and ecosystem services which make all economic activity and, indeed, all life possible. Natural capitalism, in contrast, asks us to take a proper accounting of these costs. And as a first step towards a solution to very real environmental threats, natural capitalism advocates resource productivity, which means accomplishing more by using less.

"We cannot by any means – monetarily, governmentally or charitably – create a sense of value and dignity in people's lives when we are simultaneously creating a society that clearly has no need of them." (*Natural Capitalism*)

The book demonstrates how industry can redesign itself on biological models that result in zero waste, recommending that more be invested in sustaining and expanding our environmental capital. It contains numerous examples of innovative and profitable businesses that are putting these principles into practice.

"Just as overproduction can exhaust topsoil, so can overproductivity exhaust a workforce..
"..carrying a laptop from airport to meeting to a red-eyed flight home in an exhaust-ing push for greater performance may now be a problem, not the solution." (*ibid.*)

Also woven throughout the book is the consistent message: moving an economy towards resource productivity can improve overall levels and quality of employment, while drastically reducing the negative impact we have on the environment. *Natural Capitalism* argues that there is no justification for the waste of people through unemployment when there is also so much urgent and good work to be done.

Today, companies are firing staff who are perfectly capable in order to add one more percentage point of profit to the bottom line. Some restructuring has been necessary and overdue. But far greater gains can be made by 'firing' the wasted kilowatt-hours, the barrels of oil, the pulp derived from old-growth forests and 'hiring' more people to do the energy-saving jobs. In a world that is crying out for environmental restoration, for more jobs, for universal health care, more educational opportunities and better and affordable housing, there is simply no justification for a wastage of people.

Hazel Henderson, who in 1998 spoke at conferences on ***Businesses for Social Responsibility*** and ***Reclaiming APEC***, believes the time has come to stop sitting around and waiting for some multinational corporation to offer us a job and start looking to create our own livelihoods. And many people are starting their own businesses. Women particularly are creating new companies at twice the rate men are – and the motivation of making money comes fourth on their list of priorities. Most women initiate their business on the kitchen table and figure out how to find a market via the internet.

Also we have to capitalise the 'care economy', working with young and old in home-based care. Every community, every neighbourhood and household is familiar with the absolutely vital tasks – those areas where new jobs will come from. The future must lie with social innovation and invention. We have huge military economies. Why cannot we have huge caring economies?

What is necessary is to re-imagine the shape of an economy. Any economist will tell you that you can create work by digging holes and filling them up again. The trouble is we are stuck with an old industrial philosophy that can never admit it is based on a patriarchal control system run by a few power hungry hounds.

Another area of growth is the creation of local economies. People are sick of seeing their deposits in international banks being vacuumed out of their own communities and put into an electronic transfer system to start a hotel that nobody needs in Bangkok.

During the Depression of the 1930s, when banks all over the world closed down, people created their own scrips to show we all actually know how to barter and trade with each other. The phenomenon is arising again. Bartering systems are growing rapidly from garage sales via flea markets to bring-and-buy sales, right up the line.

When it comes to global trade, we shouldn't be shifting cakes around the world. At the global level we should be sharing recipes. ■

Ron Sharp is a horticulturalist in Motueka and an active member of St Peter Chanel parish

Spiritual Growth

Part 2 of a study of spiritual and psychological difficulties by Tony Baggot, SJ.
Fr Baggot describes how true spiritual growth embraces the whole human person: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual

Inner Pain

"I prefer to deal with my inner pain by praying and asking God to take it away." Some confusion lies behind this. Praying is not a substitute for our human contribution, and of itself does not heal psychological wounds any more than physical ones.

A Dutch proverb advises that when caught in a small boat in a storm: *Say your prayers and keep rowing*. May we not say that through our human co-operation, God may take our grief away, since ultimately all life and power flow from the divine source? We are, under God and with God the Creator, the creators of our individual and communal lives. Praying does not take away depression nor alleviate the hunger of starving children. Meditation does not dispense us from the human effort of head, heart and hands but deepens our sense of awe about the mysterious universe of which we are part.

I can carry my worry, hopelessness and fear to God not simply by praying about them up in my head but by breathing with them and thus integrating them into myself and defusing their pent-up energy. In this way I am with God as I actually am, trustingly acknowledging and exploring the dark parts of myself.

Many in acute distress reproach themselves, saying, "I can't pray". An earnest worrying type of person can twist herself into emotional and physical knots by adding her effort to pray to the suffering she is going through. Her best intentions are self-defeating. Humble acceptance of inner anguish does not take away the harsh reality of a shattering accident which cripples for life or the disastrous loss of a parent who was the centre of the family home. Yet it can ease and mitigate turmoil of spirit and bring some calm. The peace promised by Christ does not remove life's struggles but can give courage to meet them.

We are in deep waters here. *By his wounds we are healed*, we read in Scripture. Christ experienced in himself the extent of humanity's pain, and surrendered himself and all he was going through to the God he called Father. From this dying to himself as well as his actual death, he released a new spirit into the world. So the account of his appearance, his visible presence on Easter Sunday evening, says that he showed his apostles the marks in his hands and side of his human struggle.

It seems, indeed, that through our wounds we are healed, that it is by entering into our woundedness we move towards wholeness of body, soul and spirit. The mystery of living is linked to the mystery of our wounds and the manner in which we deal with them.

Mistaken Attitudes

There are many mistaken spiritual attitudes which stunt the growth of the spiritual self. One of these is thinking that love and understanding for others always means giving in, of taking on tasks that others will not face up to, of pleasing and humouring – all of which may stem from living out of tension and anxiety. Proper love of self includes a sense of self-respect which requires respect from others.

Another instance is a feeling of guilt which is not so much moral guilt about actual sin or wrongdoing but is rooted in a feeling of not being good in oneself, undeserving as a person, unlikeable and difficult. Feeling unworthy in God's eyes may be the consequence of being a failure in coming up to parents' expectations or being valued only for what was acceptable to them, a conditional form of loving. The words of the centurion, the Roman officer, which we repeat at Mass – *Lord, I am not worthy* – do not mean that we are totally unworthy. They cannot in fact mean this if we hold that God loves us. *Not worthy* was the officer's way of expressing respect in the presence of Jesus of Nazareth, and awe at his healing powers. Unworthy in this sense is not the equivalent of worthless.

Small though we are in comparison to the limitless greatness of the mystery of God we, with the Creator's life and love in us, have dignity and value. The absence of a sense of personal worth can lead to the opposite extreme of dominat-ing other people by controlling them or disregarding their rights and views even with the alleged purpose of helping or doing good.

Caring for Oneself

The effect of lack of care for self might show up in a social worker who complains of an inner hollowness which is draining the spirit out of him. Whatever degree of belief in himself he had is now gone and the satisfaction he derived from helping others no longer registers. In his head he may say that people like him and turn to him with confidence for counselling and advice.

With him it may be the old story so commonly found with those who look after other people. He is giving to them without receiving for himself. So the well has run dry. All the energy is flow-ing out and none is flowing in. Worryng about his plight and praying despairing-ly wear him out still more, and cause deeper depression. He feels caught in a situation from which he cannot break out. Analysis and logical reasons do not bring relief. He has to go down into the world of feelings to release the energy blocked in his body and thus open himself to receive his own spirit.

God cannot catch us
Unless we stay in the unconscious
room of our hearts.
(*Having Confessed* Patrick Kavanagh)

Perhaps locked away below the surface is a history of a mother's well-meaning but controlling rather than warming love, absence of affection and caring. He may have memories of crying himself to sleep as a small boy, followed later in teenage years by too much responsibility for the younger children during the father's long illness leading to death. All that lies hidden behind the closed door of his heart has to be opened out. As his life's energy is released and starts to flow more strongly, his spirit will come alive. His spirituality difficulties are tied in with his physical and psychological ones.

Response of Whole Person

Our spiritual journey involves more than 'believing' in God. It leads us to respond to the mystery we call God, through exploring the mystery of oneself. The two go together. In privileged moments along the inward journey, people may have the sense "of being connected to God in the very centre of my being". Through our deep personal experiences, we co-experience God as a mysterious Presence.

The first person however that I meet in my life and in my prayer, is myself. Yet there is far more to me than the limited self I am ordinarily aware of. The full self is wider and more profound. So the more I become present to myself the more I will become present to the Great Self that is God. If instead I confine myself defensively and protectively to my narrow self, I will not be opening to receive broader life from God, the sacred Source of all life.

Spiritual growth, following the workings of human nature will, along with prayer and spiritual guidance, welcome the place of counselling, therapy and various forms of loosening and transforming negative energies and encouraging the development of positive ones. Such means of releasing the springs of life within are more than additions to spirituality. They have a special spiritual quality of their own directed to the healing of the sacred human person.

Effective spirituality, grounded in the body, is not laid down on top of unresolved destructive inner energy patterns of behaviour. These show up in all kinds of ways such as tightness of panic in the chest, anger held in arms and shoulders, grief gathered as a lump of energy in the throat, tension of loneliness in the solar plexus, bouts of despair and moodiness, dryness of spirit. Internal turbulence obstructs our inbuilt longing for some degree of harmony between the bodily, emotional, mental and spiritual parts of ourselves.

We have to do more than cling desperately to religious practices when paralysed by fear or sick with worry. As confusion clears, and the conflict of disorderly and disturbed energies settles, we enjoy more freedom of spirit to seek and find the will of God in the depths of ourselves. Our true sense of self is derived not from abstract knowledge in the head but from wisdom gained from experiences of the whole human person.

Rather than forcing ourselves along a spiritual path by trying to control and manipulate external circumstances, we will tend to let issues heal from within ourselves. 'I am now feeling more real and out of that reality flows my spirituality' is an actual summary of what we can discover on our inward spiritual journey. ■

Gagging the prophetic voices

In 1999 Sr Jeannine Grammick was stopped by Rome from ministering to homosexual people. Recently she has been silenced. Joan Chittester OSB challenges the validity of such actions

The Protestant theologian Martin Niemoeller wrote at the end of World War II: "They came first for the communists, and I didn't speak because I wasn't a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me and, by that time, there was no one left to speak up."

Like the rest of my generation, I lived through institutionalized racism and the Vietnam War, Christian anti-Semitism and religious intolerance far too silently. Now we find ourselves faced with the Vatican silencing of Sister of Notre Dame Jeannine Gramick after her years of ministry to the gay and lesbian community, and we are again con-fronted with the issue of our own silence.

when they came for me.. there was no one left to speak up

This is not an article about homosexuality, though given the findings of modern science, the insights of psychology and the witness of history, homosexuality is clearly a subject worthy of serious, ongoing reflection. It is not an article about due process either, though that is surely a subject worthy of a great deal of thought in a world where human rights are fast becoming the basis of even international relationships. It is not a column about the role of religion in life, though to ignore such a subject is always to risk crossing over from worship to magic.

No, this article, rather, is about something even greater than those things. It is about the darker aspects of human nature that militate against due process, human rights and the most fundamental of religious values. It is about force and fear and what it does to the best of humankind. The picture is not a pretty one. It raises questions of grave moral import for us all.

what happens to the soul of a people .. when reflection is suppressed and questions denied

This article, then, is about the problem of who is permitted to talk about what and who gets the right to say so and what happens to the soul of a people and the fibre of a church when reflection is suppressed and questions are denied.

In the post-World War II culture in which most of us have been raised, a great deal of ink has been spilled over the pages of history about Christian soldiers, public figures, Christian neighbours, Catholic clerics who did nothing whatsoever to save Jews, to confront Hitler, to say a word of reason to a government gone mad with power.

In our own time, we look back with shame and wonder why we never so much as questioned segregation, why we asked so few questions about the role of the CIA in Central America, why we so naively accepted so many official explanations as true that later, it became clear, were obviously false. And down deep we know it is because we knew what happened to people who did such things. They were ostracized or harassed or arrested.

In the church, the corrosive spiritual effects of having no arena – no right – for people to discuss questions of science and relics and witches and faith and the ordination of women and the sacrament of marriage and the requirement of celibacy and the validity of slavery and the nature of the universe go back centuries. The question is, how can the truth become so obscured for so long? How is it that otherwise good people will close their minds to the obvious, will call white black and bad good?

The answer keeps coming back to the same insidious centre: someone somewhere snuffs out the light, and the rest of us fail to light it again. Someone somewhere has the power it takes to cow a people into silence, into submission, into sin.

someone snuffs out the light and we fail to light it again

We know that for asking forbidden questions such as those, they excommunicate people or condemn them publicly or call them heretics or torture them for years at the psychological stake. They do all those things in the name of piety, in the name of obedience, in the name of salvation, in the name of God. They make the current sin a virtue and they enslave

the people to fear. Better to say nothing, I learn early, and save my own life, my own position, my own security – my own soul – than to raise honest questions, to say another truth and save the gospel.

Now we are watching it happen again. We are in the throes of a culture of ecclesiastical silencings designed, I'm sure, to save the church by imposing gag orders on the human soul and mind. The mandate to Gramick – of which, of course, we are expected not to speak – requires that she not question the process that condemns her, not speak her case, not criticize its conclusion, not raise her questions. Despite the fact that her only problem, it seems, is not what she says but what she refuses to say: her own private thoughts on the morality of homosexuality.

But what is being served by a call for such unquestioning intellectual submission, for loyalty that betrays the questions, for obedience that is at best intimidation? Certainly not the authenticity of the church. Certainly not the integrity of the process. Certainly not the nature of religious life if, as Vatican documents say, religious life is really the prophetic dimension of the church.

her problem is not what she says but what she refuses to say

If the cause is so clear, why is it necessary to enforce it at the end of a stick? Why is it necessary to threaten to put on the streets a woman religious who has served that church well for 40 years by ministering to one of the most neglected groups in society? If the process is so just, why can't it be examined? If the conclusion is so obvious, why is it necessary to plague a person with expulsion to maintain it? What is it about this truth that does not itself persuade? And if scandal is the problem, surely answering one scandal with another is hardly the answer.

Great sin we seem as a church to abide quite well. For paedophilia, ecclesiastical torture, war crimes and Crusades we neither silence nor excommunicate. But great questions, and the people who raise them, great company all – Teilhard de Chardin, John Courtney Murray, Leonardo Boff, Yves Congar – we stamp out ruthlessly. Until, of course, those challenges – the design of the universe, the nature of women, the place of religious pluralism, the supremacy of conscience – return to haunt us, to measure us, to condemn us. And they always do.

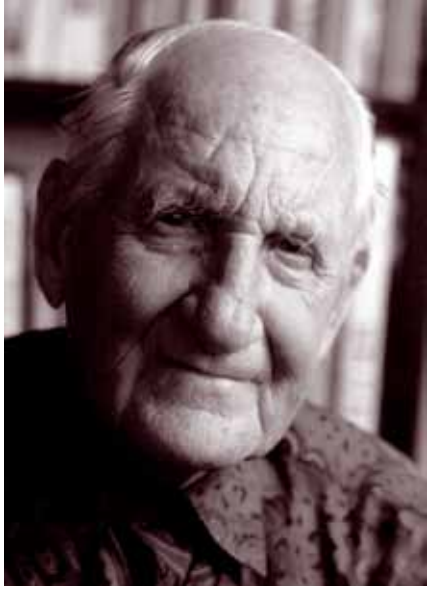
The greatest question of them all, of course, is ***which is really the greater sin in a time of doubt: the use of force to keep standard ideas intact or the passive capitulation to fear that keeps the rest of us silent at a time when real faith demands that we question and question and question?*** One thing for sure: history will faithfully remember who did what when it was needed most. ■

This article first appeared in the American journal – The National Catholic Reporter

Selwyn Dawson (1918-2000)

Kua hinga te totara o te waonui o Tane

The totara tree of the realm of Tane has fallen



Rev. Glynn Cardy writes:

After an initial greeting, Selwyn's inevitable question was "What are you reading, m' boy?" Funny how, when I think about it, that I never found the potentially patronising 'm'boy' offensive. On his lips it was a term of endearment. The question, "what are you reading?" was not a ploy to make one feel under-read, rather a reflection of his humble desire to learn and his passionate desire to engage. Mind you, the question had the effect of making sure one was currently reading at least one book of substance.

The desire to engage was very strong in Selwyn: to engage with people, whether of the church, of other faiths, or of none, with the city and society, with politics and policies, and especially with God - the One who is both revealed and yet hidden. Selwyn loved to talk, to debate, to pray, to think, and to argue. He was never one to withhold an opinion for long. And he took it as a compliment if you argued with him.

He was forever encouraging me to write to the papers, and write for journals, despite the fact that he would disagree with large sections of what I said. I still feel his affirmation every time I submit something. Selwyn encouraged me to print my sermons. For my part, I encouraged him to get on to a computer. The internet and Selwyn were born for each other!

Two of his admonitions abide with me: Firstly, a worn cliche: Selwyn believed in having "the Bible" in one hand and "the newspaper" in the other as he preached and wrote. One needed to pay attention, disciplined attention, to what both were saying. One needed to let the Bible speak to our worlds, but also our worlds speak to the Bible, for in the interaction there was, and is, the possibility of knowing a God called Love.

Secondly, his method. I remember the late '80s and the then debate regarding homosexuality in the Methodist Church. There was a series of Jurassic jurors who verbally strutted forth. A number were Selwyn's colleagues. Using largely the same modernist worldview he countered them point for point. Talking with him in those days it was obvious that Selwyn's reason did not drive his compassion, but rather his compassion drove his reason, and everything else in his life. As Selwyn would have said, "I'm just a simple Parson, who loves his people." ■

The Rev. Glynn Cardy is Vicar of St Andrew's Anglican parish, Epsom

Tom Cloher writes:

Selwyn lamented the seeming likelihood that no book would mark the 2000th anniversary of Jesus, so at age 81 he wrote one himself. His main objective was to introduce to young people, especially, the Person whose life inspired his own.

It was a characteristic initiative. Christian faith being the core of his being, he wanted to share its good news as widely as possible, and as far as his gifts allowed. That was a considerable distance - from Methodist pulpits throughout the country, to ecumenical dialogue (some readers would recall the friendship and mutual respect he shared with Bishop Brian Ashby in Christchurch), to society at large.

Selwyn had a special flair for engaging the secular reader and listener. His talks on *Morning Report* over the years were appreciated nationwide. Aucklanders had more enduring access to his gifts in later years. Not only through his six years of service as an Auckland City Councilor but through the newspaper column he wrote for the *Times* Newspapers every fortnight for eight years; 30,000 households and businesses were regular recipients: well-informed, tolerant, never preachy. *"On the other hand"* nonetheless made a compelling case for the gospel imperatives of truth and justice.

Speaking of columns *Tui Motu* had the privilege of carrying in its *November* edition the last column he wrote, and as readers would be aware he has been a constant contributor. More than that he was consistently enthusiastic about the publication - "it's not just the quality of the contents, the layout and production is so good", he assured me on more than one occasion.

Selwyn's engagement with the world was evident to the last week of his life. A friend visited him as he was coming out of anaesthetic after major surgery. Selwyn opened his eyes and asked "Is it Bush or Gore?"

And his engagement with God? As he awoke from a deep sleep the following Sunday afternoon his wife heard him recite the first line of St John's gospel: "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God...*" before he quietly passed away.

He had once written a book on the craft of preaching which he dedicated to "Enid, who has listened to more of my sermons than any other living soul, and still loves me". The book was called *Appointment on Sunday*. Enid has since quietly observed: "Selwyn kept his final appointment on Sunday". It might also be true to say that Enid had listened to her last sermon. ■

Tom Cloher is Chairperson of the Tui Motu Board

Conflict and resolution in recent tales of Ireland

Kathleen Doherty

There are always exceptions to upset any generalisation, but it seems to me that the films coming out of Ireland portray the music hall image of the Irish – naïve, gullible, laugh-a-minute characters embroiled in slapstick situations (*Angela's Ashes* is an obvious exception), while the fiction tells an altogether different story.

The novels and short stories tend to tell of the brooding, dark side of life, the misunderstandings and conflicts, but also the reconciliation and tentative steps to understanding which redeem the human condition. Irish literature, full of flawed characters, has an honesty which makes it universal. It is not 'heartwarming', you don't 'laugh till you cry', it doesn't give a 'feel-good experience' – all advertised attributes of recent Irish films – but it can leave you with a deeper understanding of the human condition. And the language can be marvellous too. Here are four gems from this year's reading.

With *Wild Decembers* Edna O'Brien has completed her unconnected trilogy of modern Irish life which started with *House of Splendid Isolation* followed by *Down By the River*. Ireland, to Edna O'Brien, has always been a problem – she hasn't lived there for decades, being driven out, while quite young, by what she considered the warping influences of fear – of church, of phantoms, of ridicule, of hunger and of the ingrained antagonism which could not strike out at those in authority and therefore caused people to strike out at each other. Her fiction has been a 40-year attempt to reach some sort of peace with her background: *Wild Decembers* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson) is her most successful effort to date.

It is a story of tradition versus innovation in the desolate setting of the west of Ireland, a working out of the crippling Irish fears which drove Edna O'Brien away. All the afflictions of the culture are encapsulated in the afflictions of a particular family coming to terms with change.

The characters of Joseph Brennan, the traditional farmer who has fulfilled family expectations by staying on the farm, his sister Breege, who gave up ideas of leaving and becoming a nurse to stay at home and be his housekeeper, and forward-thinking Mick Bulger, who comes back from Australia to take up his inheritance of the neighbouring farm, are stunningly recognisable. The language moves between the movingly simple which is pure Edna O'Brien and the lush poetic word-play which seems to owe much to James Joyce and may be attribut-ed to the author being Joyce's biographer. It is a deeply satisfying read.

So too is Colm Toibin's *The Blackwater Lightship* (Picador), again the story of a family coming to terms with itself. This time there is conflict of town and country, old ways and new, liberal and conservative. To watch three generations of a family dealing with the painful truth that a loved son, grandson and brother is dying of Aids is not the morbid experience that it could have been in the hands of a lesser writer. Instead, the twists and stalls and tentative advances as the generations, which have been essentially isolated from each other, move towards understanding and acceptance, make it a life-giving book.

Any such situation is bound to be complex. There are old unresolved griefs which have kept people apart for years, and truths which have to come out as an impending death breaks down barriers and results in an intimacy which, one fears, may last for only as long as the present situation. All hurts may not be healed, but at least they have been acknowledged, which is the first step towards healing.

After a skirmish with an angel last year in *Two Moons* (there seemed to be an excess of angels in last year's novels – something to do with the millennium?) Jennifer Johnston has come firmly back to this world with her twelfth novel, *The Gingerbread Woman* (Review). The title refers to the gingerbread man which children have to run away from in the old jingle. The two main characters in this novel, Lar and Clara, are both running away and in doing so run into each other, an encounter which neither of them particularly wished for.

Jennifer Johnston, in spite of her output, is one of the least celebrated Irish writers. She is a peacemaker. Her novels all contain the theme of reconciliation between disparate parties; she has chosen to live in Derry, that less than peaceful Irish city, and is aware on a daily basis of the need for reconciliation. Her novels are slim and beautifully crafted, the language simple and concise. She has a wonderful ability to record the lives of people who for one reason or another have 'missed the boat' and stumble into each other.

The Old Master continues to reign supreme: William Trevor has just published a new collection of short stories. *The Hill Bachelors* (Viking) will be familiar territory to readers who have already discovered this marvellous writer, but no less compelling for that. William Trevor, born in County Cork, now living in England, is the master of detailing the world of missed opportunities, of tiny hopeful connections in the midst of loneliness. The silence between individuals, the words they cannot say, the sadness and failure they feel at their inability to connect, the hope they have that an apparently unrelated action will provide the necessary link, are hallmarks of William Trevor's work.

In these stories there is little drama. William Trevor knows that most lives are shaped not by big events but by chance happenings and opportunities not taken. The characters, flawed and complex as are most people when their lives are examined, take one into all sorts of by-ways of the mind, which means that a William Trevor story improves with each reading, acquiring a multitude of layers. It is a great joy to open a new work from the writer considered by some critics to be the greatest living exponent of the short story in English. He is 72 now. With each year the wine becomes better. ■

Religions and the rise of science

The Roots of Science
By Harold Turner
The Deepsight Trust, Auckland
Price: $29.95
Review: Michael Hill IC

A book which thoroughly explores the frontier between modern science and the religions of the world is timely. When it is as comprehensive and easy to read as is this compact volume, it is doubly welcome.

"Deep down", says Harold Turner, "religion and science need each other, and can fertilise each other, as we seek the whole truth about the whole universe. Ultimately, truth is one, consistent and coherent"(*p17*). It is certainly refreshing to read an author who so confidently proclaims that science and religious faith do not need to be inevitably at each other's throats. And it is comforting to be assured that outside the Judaeo-Christian cultural setting, modern science as we know it would never have arisen.

Turner is in the tradition of that celebrated historian of science, Herbert Butterfield, who half a century ago demolished what was then known as the *Whig interpretation of history*. According to that tradition history is seen as a process of emancipation from the stranglehold of mediaeval obscurantism. The Reformation, the scientific revolution of the 17th century, the Enlightenment, the growth of liberalism and the foundations of the modern, secular state are steps along the path of inexorable progress. In the face of the triumph of modernity, religions – and especially Roman Catholicism – fade into irrelevance or into dinosaur status. They are just outdated curiosities.

The conflicts and failures of the century that has just closed have somewhat dented the rosy optimism of the '*Whig*' view. Nevertheless, it is extremely helpful to have a study like Turner's which rises above the oversimplified account of the sweep of history as sketched out above.

Turner's thesis is that cultures evolve three basic 'worldviews'. *Tribal* cultures see the universe as one glorious mix of the divine and the human. They are capable of quite sophisticated technologies, like building the pyramids or Stonehenge. But their appreciation of nature in any scientific sense remains primitive.

Over against these primitive belief systems can be placed the rise of Graeco-Roman civilisation and the great religious movements of Asia. All these are characterised by **dualism**. The universe is seen no longer as a seamless unity but divided into a superior realm of the spirit contrasted with the inferior world of matter. This debasement of the material world – often seen as evil – has haunted the Christian centuries in the form of Manichaeism and, later, of Jansenism.

The third strand is that of the Hebrew and Christian traditions. According to Turner the supreme insight of Israel was belief in one supreme and personal Being who "creates, loves, blesses, judges and saves". This God has created a coherent, orderly world, and this world is 'good', as the first chapter of *Genesis* insists. The temporal world of creation and the eternal world of the Creator are distinct but not separate or opposed. They co-exist within an overarching unity.

This perception of a universe ruled over by a benign God does away with all recourse to magic and caprice. Both space and time are 'desacralised', so that they can be explored and interpreted. This is the task of science. Christian civilisation more or less allows for such exploration. What held it back during the Christian era was an abiding loyalty to the cosmology of Aristotle. He required all manner of angelic beings to keep his universe in motion. From Aristotle the mediaevals inherited a division of the universe into the sublunary world of base matter and the eternal spheres of the superlunary cosmos: a dualism which had to be dethroned by Copernicus, Galileo and Newton for physical science to flourish.

Turner traces the history of science through the Christian era, and reveals some interesting details: for instance, Clement of Rome (c 100 AD) envisaged the Antipodes as being possible – as indeed did Basil (370 AD); whereas Augustine (420 AD) denied the possib-ility of life in our part of the world – on biblical grounds! There was a steady progress in scientific thinking, culminating in the work of the Alexandrian, John Philoponus in the 5th century, who overturned several of the key points in Aristotle's physics. His discovery of 'impetus' to explain the continuity of physical motion paved the way for Galileo. Turner even notes that the Council of Chalcedon (451) as well as establishing the distinct human and divine natures of Christ, also laid down a methodology of argument which forms a base both for Christian theology and for modern scientific reasoning.

I found this book fascinating, by no means difficult to read, very informative and helpful in showing how theology and science can be perfectly compatible bedfellows. Together they can proclaim not merely the intelligibility of the physical world but also its 'goodness' and the reverence we humans must have for it. It also provides an antidote for the rampant individualism and relativism which are the fruits of so-called 'post-modernism'.

Truth is one. It is objective. It is not merely what I happen to prefer or what I find convenient to believe. It is rather the goal of all my strivings. And not just 'mine', but the common endeavour of inquiring minds of any and every age, scientist and theologian, priest and layperson. Treat yourself to a feast of wisdom for Christmas! ■

The women of the Gospel of John

The WOMEN in the Life of the Bridegroom: A Feminist Historical-Literary
By Adeline Fehribach
The Liturgical Press
Price: Approx $59 NZ
Review: Mary Betz

Those combing the Scriptures for stories which show women as well as men to be companions and disciples of Jesus have usually found them most clearly and abundantly in the gospels of Luke and John. A few years ago scripture scholar Barbara Reid burst the bubble of hope that recent readings of *Luke* had engendered: she documented ways in which the women in *Luke*'s gospel, far from representing active liberating Christian discipleship, were instead shown to be respectable only when they submitted to silent, passive and supportive roles. Now Biblical Studies professor Adeline Fehribach inflicts the same painful surgery on the gospel of *John*.

For the last two decades, *John*'s gospel has been increasingly seen by eminent scripture scholars such as Raymond Brown and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza as one which modeled a Christian community of equality and mutuality, especially with regard to women and men. The characterisation, dialogue and actions of women - the woman at the well discoursing on theology with Jesus, Martha and her Christological confession, Mary of Bethany and her prophetic anointing, Mary (mother of Jesus) intervening at Cana, Mary Magdalene as apostle of the Resurrection - had all been interpreted by many scholars as signs that women as well as men, both in Jesus' time and in the early Johannine community, shared roles of leadership and apostleship.

Using literary analysis, Fehribach is ruthlessly thorough. Her verdict is that women characters in the Fourth Gospel fulfil a literary function not unlike women in first century Graeco-Roman novels - they exist in order to point to and further the career of the male hero, and to support the prevailing androcentric and patriarchal principles of the time. She demonstrates with academic verve and copious footnotes how first century readers familiar with literary and cultural conventions of their time would immediately understand the Johannine women as functioning in the roles of mother, sister, or betrothed/bride of Jesus, the messianic bridegroom who was sent to establish the family of God.

To a 21st century reader, Fehribach's evidence is at first bewildering and confounding, if not bizarre. Many of us are familiar with the stories in Genesis of betrothals occurring at wells (Rebekah, Rachel). And some of us have seen in the story of the Samaritan woman the motif repeating itself, Jesus betrothing himself to the Samaritan people through the encounter with the woman at the well. Fehribach goes further and examines the sexual imagery in the conversation which she traces back to the Hebrew scriptures (*Proverbs, Jeremiah, Song of Songs*). In such texts, the well connotes the female element of sexual intercourse and the living water the male element.

Thus in *John*, Jesus is offering living water to the Samaritan woman's well, and Jesus' need for a drink from the woman's well is euphemistically and metaphorically satisfied, connoting a consummation of the bride and bridegroom's relationship. Jesus subsequently comments on the fields being ready for the harvest, which Fehribach also interprets as sexually and religiously symbolic. In *Jeremiah* and *Hosea* she notes examples of the practice in ancient cultures of understanding a field as a metaphor for a woman ready for sowing by the seed of a male sower. The harvest Jesus refers to, then, are the new children of God born of his metaphorical marriage to the Samaritan woman.

After demonstrating that each of the female characters in the gospel functions in some way to support the idea that Jesus is the messianic bridegroom, she also documents how each woman is ultimately marginalised, reduced to a role (and a passive one at that) after they fulfill their patriarchal function. She concludes that while her "analysis does not negate the possiblity that a very early Johannine community maintained a discipleship of equals that extended to women, it does lessen the possibility".

Where, then, does that leave women who have drawn so much hope from their understanding that the Johannine community may have been a model, a precedent for equality in women's and men's roles in church leadership today? The author points out ways in which the text can still be read as empowering to today's Christians - and especially women. However, she feels the future must be forged not by looking for precedents in the past, but by taking the overall scriptural call for justice (in for example, the prophets and the gospels) as a call for attentiveness and commitment to the justice issues to be faced in our own time.

Who might read this book? Certainly anyone with some theological bent or training can manoevre through the academic style, and anyone passionately interested in how women's roles in the Scriptures are to be understood would find it intriguing. But all who attempt it must be willing to shed preconceptions, whether traditional or feminist, of what *John's* gospel is all about. In doing so, one begins what sometimes seems a convoluted and farfetched journey into the literary understanding of the Hellenistic Jewish Christians of the first century. ■

Partners in creation, not exploiters

At Home in the Earth: Seeking an Earth-Centred Spirituality
by Neil Darragh
Accent Publications 204p
Price: $25
Review: Mike Riddell

Is Christianity the inevitable enemy of Earth's ecosphere, or is there some way of pursuing faith which does not exploit and devastate our host planet? In his latest book, Neil Darragh sets out to articulate a spirituality which is at once Christian and friendly to the whole of life. The result is a thoughtful, constructive and inspirational discussion which deserves to be widely read both inside and outside the church.

His proposal is for an Earth-centred spirituality, as opposed to the more common human-centred varieties. He calls for us to shift away from attitudes which are exploitative, controlling, abusive or hierarchical in our relationship with the cosmos, and to instead learn respect, participation and caring. A fundamental starting point for this, he argues, is that humans recognise they live ***in*** the Earth rather than ***on*** the Earth; that our existence is deeply enmeshed in surrounding ecosystems.

Darragh ranges widely over such topics as 'dying well' and images of God, all the time building toward a consistent and responsive spirituality which will enable people to live in ethical partnership with other beings. In effect, he is advocating a substantial reform in theology – to shift it from a doggedly anthropocentric captivity to a broader and more inclusive view of humanity's place in the created order. This is not achieved at the cost of faithfulness to the Christian tradition, however, but through recovery of some of its central themes such as incarnation, resurrection and Trinity.

There are dangers abroad in Christian treatments of green issues. On the one hand they can be lured into a romantic view of nature, regarding 'organic' as blessed and 'technological' as inherently demonic. On the other, are stridently apologetic efforts which serve mainly to reiterate the great scriptural truths in the face of misguided detractors. Darragh neatly avoids these perils, recognising the complex and ambiguous interrelationships which make up 'nature', while acknowledging the risks of perpetuating religious themes that maintain human vandalism.

Describing himself as a "self-critical insider", the author is sensitive both to

the demands of the Christian heritage and the anguish of the Earth in its current state. He positions humanity in something of a partnership role with creation, beyond either exploitation or victimhood. By accepting our position on the inside of the ecosphere, rather than outside or above it, we are enabled to fulfil our responsibilities of caring and giving thanks for the Earth.

In a powerful and insightful final chapter, we are invited to see Eucharist as a central renewing ritual which can nurture an Earth-centred spirituality. The key to this is in recognising that through the sacrament, God is made present as both food to be consumed (a part of the organic process) and as giver of life so that others may live. Both of these give indications for human participation in the symphony of being which constitutes Earth.

The reasonably accessible text disguises the fact that this is a work by an accomplished theologian. It is a carefully nuanced book, with a suitable academic trail provided through end notes and bibliography. Darragh once again leads the way by doing theology in a friendly and non-esoteric manner. His concentration on an Earth-centred spirituality engages broad concerns, and in an epilogue he makes an explicit attempt to engage in dialogue with those outside the church.

It would have been interesting to pick up the question of Christianity's relationship to other religions, given a new orientation which puts Earth rather than humanity in the foreground. Perhaps we will have to wait for another book to see this explored.

At Home in the Earth is a bold and intelligent stimulus to consider the reshaping of Christian faith in response to the demands of earthly life. Meditation suggestions, poetry and Peter Healey's illustrations make the book wholly engaging. ■

A woman for all seasons

A Retreat with Elizabeth Seton: Meeting our Grace
By Judith Metz, SC
St Anthony Messenger Press
Price: $22.50
Review: Mary Gleeson, RSM

My first encounter with Elizabeth Seton happened many years ago when, on the return journey from a 30-day retreat in Marriottsville, Maryland, my three companions and I stayed overnight at the Sisters of Charity Provincial House at Emmitsburg. My companions, all American religious women from different Congregations, wanted me, a New Zealander, to 'meet' this remarkable, holy, warm, down-to-earth woman who was the first woman to found a Congregation in the United States. They were proud of her and I believe rightly so.

As I read Judith Metz's introduction to Elizabeth Seton – *Getting to Know Our Director* – I returned in memory to Emmitsburg where much of the book is set and where I encountered in spirit this woman of all seasons: wife, mother, widow, single parent, convert, educator, friend, mentor, religious foundress – and all these things in the space of 45 years! Again I met a woman deeply in love with God and with others. Elizabeth found God in her everyday, in every moment, and lived these days and moments as the beginning of her eternity.

The book provides a retreat which is divided into seven days, each day having a theme which is introduced to us by Elizabeth Seton herself. With her there is an opportunity to be drawn into a deeper and more wholehearted love of God experienced in relationships and in everyday life. We learn that living the mystery of God in the present moment grew in her as a result of living prayerfully and reflectively. She helps us watch with eager longing for the intrusions of grace in whatever form they might appear – all she sees as coming from the hand of a Beloved God.

In the busyness of life she encourages us to take short reflection periods, "tiny islands of solitude and grace", and to find the will of God in the unfolding events of life. No stranger to sorrow, she shares her sense of God's sustaining love that stayed with her throughout her life. Her delight in nature invites us to experience its sacredness, bounty and beauty. On Day 7, she shares with us, in the tradition of St Vincent de Paul, a passionate sense of God's presence in others, especially the poor.

After each day's session with Elizabeth there are reflection questions designed to challenge, affirm and guide the reader to integrating the theme into daily life. Each day concludes with paired passages from the Word of God and the work of Elizabeth that further help our prayer, reflection and journalling.

This little book is well worth reading, but would best be used as a guide for a seven-day retreat or as inspirational material for daily prayer. ■

An Astonishing Life

Full Circle to God
by Ambrose Loughnan OP
Loughley Books, 2000
Price: $39.95
Review: Peter Murnane, OP

Ian Loughnan might have lived all his adult life working in Christchurch banks or architects' offices. But the outbreak of World War II saw him eagerly volunteering, then serving with the artillery in Greece and North Africa.

He might have come through the war as a seasoned killer, or like many young Kiwis, ended his journey in some war cemetery. But Providence mapped a different road: the mysterious "plan" that Ambrose so often later pondered. Seriously wounded in the neck during a tank battle near Tobruk, he passed through prison hospitals into a POW camp near Udine, northern Italy. Questioning his life-journey so far, Ian began to wrestle with the idea of becoming a priest. Friendship with a Dominican friar in the prison camp further clarified his choice, to become a preaching friar. But that was ten years into the future.

Ambrose - his Dominican name - tells a prison story equal to the best. Death came close at times, and many mates did not make it home. Late in the war, like many other prisoners, he was moved aimlessly around Europe. For many this was their "death march". The survivors were skeletal.

Ambrose writes powerfully, with nostalgia and tender insight into the human spirit; with humour, but never ridicule at the foibles of the pre-Vatican church, his training with the Dominicans and the Charismatic Renewal. Ordained in 1951, then briefly at Otago University, he was invited to the remote Western Solomons as a pioneer missionary. For 12 years he was deeply involved with the indigenous people's culture, faith and environmental needs. Then with heroic detachment, he accepted election as Prior of a Dominican community back among Sydney's wealthiest suburbs. Providence there gave him space through an extraordinary ministry to dying children, their parents and medics – a ministry he continued in Auckland after 1977.

One of the "full circles" that moved Ambrose to write was an invitation in 1993 to offer mass in the prison chapel he had helped build in Italy 50 years before. Another came after ten years of preaching and spiritual guidance at Teschemakers retreat centre near Oamaru. Although the dream of developing it as an eco-centre was not realized, he saw this "failure" as an opportunity to return, aged 75, to his beloved Melanesian peoples. Working among Port Moresby Seminarians as *Labun*, ('elder' or spiritual guide), he died suddenly in 1997. ■

A story of Mercy

The Mater. A history of Auckland's Mercy Hospital 1900-2000
by Michael Belgrave
Dunmore Press pp 246
Price: $29.95 plus postage (Available from Mercy Hospital, Auckland)
Review: Tom Cloher

Admission, procedure, recovery, discharge – a perpetual cycle, a surgical hospital never sleeps. The door continually open. There is always someone on duty. This is why a centennial is so well earned. It is even more so in the Sisters' case: they lived as well as worked on the property. It was their home. The author sensibly chose to listen closely to their stories as well as research the documentation.

The result is a congenial combination of written and oral history. The latter is supplied by 30 interviews with leading individuals and groups. It gives the book a welcome vibrancy which a represen-tative selection of photographs supple-ments, identifying people in the Mercy story, many of whom were doctors, lay nurses, and associated staff the Sisters greatly valued and without whom their dream could not have been realised.

There was a pre-surgical period up to 1918 while the hospital catered for convalescents, but subsequent initiatives read like a checklist of modern healthcare development: from convalescence to surgery, a health centre including a district nursing component, a nursing school, a maternity hospital, high-tech open heart surgery, hospice care, and an outreach programme for disadvantaged children.

How did they manage it? They were determined visionaries focused on how they could do better despite persistent resource scarcities. They were thoroughly professional and collaborative, they were standard setters. Finally they were dedicated, in retrospect, perhaps unreasonably so. In a century that celebrated the 40-hour week they seemed neither to experience nor expect conditions accessible to other workers, although many of these walked the extra mile too.

Most were nurses, a profession first to signal the competence of women in developing societies, but the Mater women were also administrators, fund raisers, public relations personnel, negotiators with government, consultants and office holders in the private hospital system. They were in fact forerunners of an enhanced role for women in the wider world.

For the Catholic community they (and other religious and hospitals throughout the land) were mediators in a mixed society. Not without reason most New Zealanders thought of Catholicism as something of a closed club: we had our own churches and schools and kept pretty much to ourselves. In contrast the Sisters welcomed the sick of whatever persuasion or none, caring for them without a trace of discrimination. This did much to dissipate suspicions about Catholicism. As one worthy is quoted: "if this is Catholic healthcare, give me Catholic healthcare". In non-ecumenical days theirs was a valuable contribution to tolerance and understanding.

This is an important publication. It documents the highs, the lows and in-betweens of a prominent institution in a constantly changing and sometimes turbulent century. For the actual participants it will be an indispensable record. For members of the Catholic community it is an inspiring account of what religious orders can achieve on our behalf. As a general source of information its value ought to be apparent, especially for libraries. Don't be put off by the dustcover. Its sepia tones and rather sombre picture of the then main building belies the dynamic story that unfolds within. ■

Message of Pope John Paul to the people of New Zealand

You have mentioned peace, justice and respect for human rights as important for your country, and these values and goals are also central to what you have called the Holy See's unique perspective on international issues.

The Holy See's activity in the international forum stems from a perspective.. based on respect for the inalienable dignity of every human being, a dignity which is intrinsic to life itself and not granted or conceded by any individual, group or state. It is a vision which calls for the perfection of freedom, but of freedom linked to truth – in particular, to the truth of the human person, which alone provides a sound basis for constructive political and diplomatic activity.

The most destructive untruths about the human person which the 20th century produced were born of materialistic views of the world and the person. Totalitarian systems may have foundered, but new forms of materialism have emerged, less ideologically driven and less spectacular in their manifestations perhaps, but nonetheless destructive in their effect on people and on the fabric of society.

We are quickly learning how vital it is to respect the ecology of nature, if we are not to cause serious harm to the world which future generations will receive from us. More urgent still, though more difficult, is the need to learn to respect the ecology of the human world, by which I mean the truth of the human person and the social implications of this.

The Holy See's action in the international sphere follows from its conviction that certain fundamental elements of this human ecology must absolutely be understood and defended. One of these elements is the family, the basic cell of human society and the surest indicator of a nation's health and stability. Attempts to define the family as something other than a solemnized lifelong union of man and woman which looks to the birth and nurture of children is bound to prove destructive... It is in the family that children best learn the truth of what it means to be a person endowed with intelligence and will, called to freedom and responsibility, and challenged by rights and duties.

Weak families mean a society unable to sustain its members, especially the young, in the building of the common good. Individuals and even social structures are enfeebled by forms of egoism and escapism which leave little room for commitment, self-giving love, and solidarity with the weaker members of society.

Another key element of human ecology is the inviolability of human life, especially at its beginning and its end. The Holy See insistently proclaims that the first and most fundamental of all human rights is the right to life, and that when this right is denied all other rights are threatened.

The assumption that abortion and euthanasia are human rights deserving legislative sanction is seen by the Holy See as a contradiction which amounts to a denial of the human dignity and freedom which the law is supposed to protect. A society will be judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members; and among the most vulnerable are surely the unborn and the dying.

Upon you and your fellow New Zealanders, I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God. ■

This is an edited version of the response by His Holiness Pope John Paul to the NZ Ambassador to the Holy See earlier this year

Reporting with integrity

John Pilger doesn't preach religion. The word never crops up in his reports or his books or his films. He doesn't claim to be doing God's work as he explores the situations so often hidden and sanitized by censorship and the use of language which obscures more than it reveals. Yet, spend time reading and listening to him and you can find that a little voice in your mind is saying '*blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be satisfied*'.

For the Australian-born journalist, now based in London, that hunger and thirst has been a driving force for forty years, committing him to ask the awkward questions, to doubt the party line, to seek to tell the stories behind the news which do not fit the comfortable image. In the words of Martha Gellhorn, herself a distinguished columnist of the 1930's and 40's, he is "a terrible nuisance to Authority".

In John Pilger's world Authority stands on one side, he, and the 'ordinary people' on the other. He is the champion of the people forgotten by the news media and its audience when the next big story comes along. The speed and ease of modern communications is a double-edged sword: major news stories are conveyed to the world as they are happening, but next week or next month, let alone next year, they are of no value to purveyors of news, and the world is left in ignorance of the outcomes.

One striking example of this was the Gulf War. Few who saw it will have forgotten the constant coverage of bombing raids, the commentaries of journalists ensconced in hotels in Baghdad watching the action out of the windows. It was a TV war. Ten years on we are on to new conflicts, new political dramas. Iraq is forgotten.

But not by John Pilger. This year he released his documentary *Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq* which screened on TV1 last month. It is a chillingly calm examination of what has happened in the ten years since the Gulf War to the civilian population of Iraq and in particular the children as a result of UN-imposed trade sanctions.

Crosscurrents

Kathleen Doherty

The sanctions, imposed with the intention of bringing Saddam Hussein to heel and ensuring the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, have instead had the effect of condemning half a million Iraq children to death. Because of the sanctions the detritus of war has not been cleaned up. The shells fired by U.S and British troops were covered in depleted uranium, the source of radiation in nuclear weapons. They lie on the ground, the deadly component leeches into the ground, is borne in the sand, carried by the wind.

The result is an enormous upsurge in the number of cancers seen on rarely before the sanctions took effect, most affecting children who were not even born when the sanctions were imposed. There is no medicine to treat them, no morphine to ease the pain of the dying. "Bill Clinton and Tony Blair should come here (to the hospital) to see the impact of economic sanctions", said Dennis Halliday, former assistant Secretary General of the United Nations who resigned in 1998 rather than administer the *Food for Oil* programme and who toured the hospital with John Pilger. Even before his resignation Halliday was in revolt against the sanctions: while ostensibly enforcing them he was able to smuggle in the drugs required to treat child victims of leukaemia.

John Pilger believes that refusing to accept platitudes and cliches, refusing to accept the stories of the spin-doctors and PR people, is duty of journalists. "I have become convinced that it is not enough for journalists to see themselves as mere messengers, without understanding the hidden agendas of the message and the myths that surround it. High on the list, he says, is the myth that we live in an 'information age' when in fact we live in a media age in which the information is repetitive, safe and limited by invisible boundaries.

In his 1998 book *Hidden Agendas* (Vintage) John Pilger has broken down those boundaries, seeking out the hidden agendas behind events in Iraq, East Timor, Burma, Vietnam, exploring the stories of those most affected by the Liverpool dockers' strike and investigating the whole business of the media and the presentation of news. (He claims to have been appointed to his first job in England, at the *Daily Mirror*, because he was Australian and therefore assumed to be a cricketer and a valuable assets in the *Mirror*'s up-coming match with its deadly rival, the *Daily Express*.)

His chapter '*Arming the World*' is a damning report on the British arms trade and the people who run it. He says, of arms fairs, that the one pleasure to be had at them is helping the salesmen relieve their verbal constipation. "They have the greatest difficulty saying words like 'people' and 'kill' and 'maim'. I have yet to meet one who has seen his products in use against human beings." Turning the whole thing into a marketing exercise, with 'targets' and 'objectives' and 'outcomes' doesn't wash with this relentless questioner.

John Pilger's journalism has won him a goodly clutch of awards, among them two UN Media Peace Prizes, but he has rejected the description of him by one newspaper as an 'incurable crusader'. "I'm not, I'm an incurable journalist... incurable journalists should challenge stereotypes, look behind facades, be completely independent of all their sources."

Martha Gellhorn, to whose memory Hidden Agendas *is dedicated, said of the author:* ***"He belongs to an old and unending worldwide company, the men and women of conscience. To my mind, they are the blessed proof of the dignity of man. John has an assured place among them. I'd say he is a charter member for his generation."***

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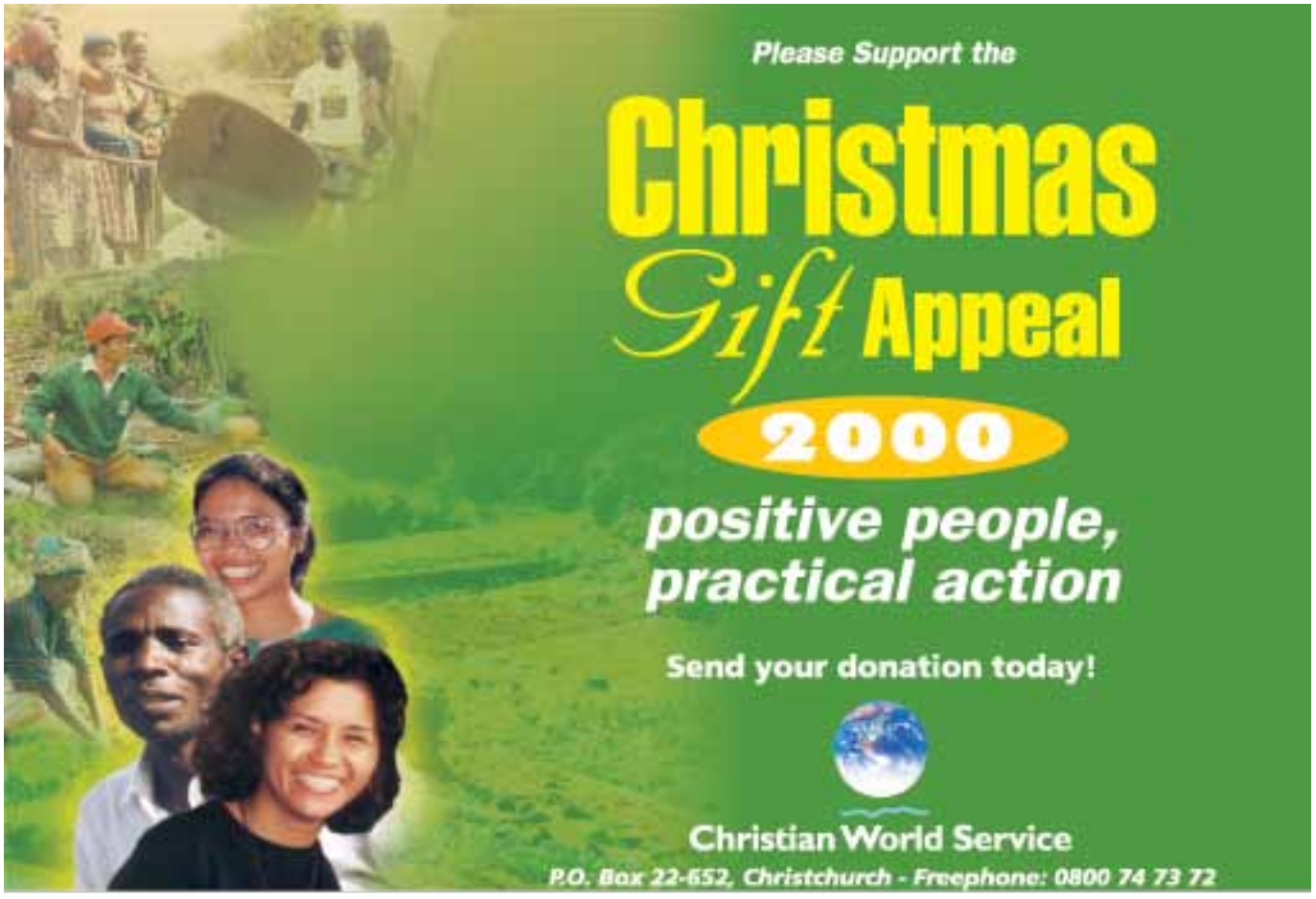

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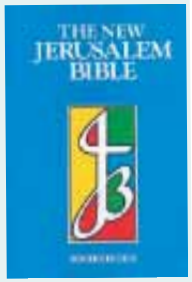

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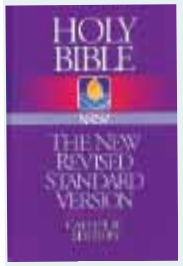

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