



Tui Motu

InterIslands

February 2000 Price \$4

Will you give me a future?



Earthrise

Suddenly from behind the rim of the moon, in the long, slow motion moments of immense majesty, there emerges a sparkling blue and white jewel, a light, delicate sky-blue sphere laced with slowly swirling veils of white, rising gradually like a small pearl in a thick sea of black mystery. It takes

more than a moment to fully realise that this is Earth – home.

Words of the astronaut Edgar Mitchell as he first beheld earthrise along the cold, dead horizon of the Moon's surface. A sublime spiritual experience.

For many across the surface of the earth the Millennium dawn was exactly like that. The fireworks, the midnight partying, the floodlit magnificence of the Eiffel Tower, the tolling of Big Ben, the succession of midnights served to unite the world's peoples. For others, however, the moment of real transcendence was to behold the first dawn breaking, perhaps after a long trudge in the dark up to a local vantage point.

Later that day in Garston, about as far as one can get in New Zealand from the sea, two groups at Mass retold with great enthusiasm different experiences of a hilltop prayer at sunrise. A humorist recalled how in the chill Central Otago air they had fortified themselves with a nip of Scotch between each decade of the Rosary during the ascent. When they reached the summit and their viewing point they were unsure whether or not it was the 17th glorious mystery! No matter – young and old, they were there to praise God for the dawn of a new day, a new year – a new era.

For us in the long, lush land of Aotearoa it is a new dawn. We have a new government, a new leader. There is promise that the growing rift between the comfortably off and those on the margins may at last be arrested and reversed. In Tony Blair's

Britain the lowest income groups are considerably better off under Labour; the re-establishment of a just minimum wage has actually increased employment in those sectors – the opposite of what was confidently predicted by Right Wing critics.

The most urgent task before our new administration – and all the world's governments – is the threat to the planet itself. There is now incontrovertible evidence that steadily increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are causing climate change. Disasters such as Hurricane Mitch, the mass drownings in Orissa and the Venezuela floods are stark evidence that the effects of global warming are already with us.

The solution is not hard to spell out. We in the First World have to cease overconsuming and be content with what we have instead of striving for ever higher living standards. Indeed the real challenge is to adopt simpler styles of living, to economise on energy use, to replace what we consume – to live in harmony with the abundance of the Earth instead of despoiling it. This is a major theme of our *February* issue. Easy to say. But it takes a courageous politician to campaign for it.

We should be glad therefore of the presence of the Green Party, dreadlocks notwithstanding. Perhaps the most telling New Year's resolution for each reader is to ask: *what simple, practical steps am I taking to do my bit?* Am I content to walk or take public transport when I don't really need to drive? How many trees have I planted; what fertilisers do I use – or *not* use?

Years ago Young Christian Workers advocated the triad: *See, Judge, Act*. Most of us can see, many of us judge. But how many Christians and people of goodwill find the energy to act? ■

M.H.

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Tui Motu-InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed.

The name **Tui Motu** was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God.

Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

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www.catholic.org/newzealand/tuimotu

Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd

P O Box 6404, Dunedin North

Phone: 03 477 1449

Fax: 03 477 8149

email: tuimotu@earthlight.co.nz

Editor: Michael Hill, IC

Assistant Editor: Frances Skelton

Illustrator: Don Moorhead

Directors:

Tom Cloher

Annie Gray

Elizabeth Mackie, OP

Margaret May

Judith McGinley, OP

Ann Neven, RSJ

Paul Rankin, OP

Patricia Stevenson, RSJ

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GE – how *do* we decide?

Susan Smith

Older readers will remember playing the game Animal, vegetable, mineral, (or human)? Today, it could be more difficult to come up with the right answer given scientific developments in cloning, Genetic Engineering and modification. These developments, prompted by the need to improve plant and animal production, invite reflection about human intervention in natural processes. Before we take up a position regarding the morality of such intervention, we need to acknowledge that humankind has always intervened in natural processes. Grafting one plant on to another and ensuring good breeding stocks in the animal world are just two examples.

One line of reflection suggests that such intervention is desirable since its goal is to improve on what we already have. Among its advantages are the reduced use of pesticides and increased yields. Genetic engineering is also opening up new and exciting medical possibilities. For example, genetic science means that a human gene has been developed that can produce life-saving insulin for diabetics. Bananas can be genetically modified to provide built-in protection against tropical diseases.

More negatively, there is concern that genetic engineering is a capitalist ploy to ensure huge financial rewards for a handful of transnationals, and to relegate farmers to what Vicki Hyde calls a *biotech-based serfdom*. It constitutes another human attack on an already fragile environment. It could conceivably go horribly wrong with all sorts of frightening mutations. In the case of New Zealand, were such dangerous experimentation to occur what would happen to our clean green image, apparently so important for the country's tourist industry?

Underlying all such positions is an anthropocentric understanding of humankind's relationship to the rest of creation. An anthropocentric perspective believes that creation is there for the benefit and use of humankind. Therefore decision-making about genetic engineering and modification is driven by what is considered best, often enough a short-term best, for humankind. Of course, we need to be concerned about what is good for us as a species. The dignity of human life is rightly the core of the Judaic-Christian traditions. But such dignity often is understood to confer superiority on humans permitting them to dominate and exploit the rest of creation.

An alternative to an anthropocentric approach is the *ecocentric*. An ecocentric approach affirms the essential unity and relational quality of all creation, and emphasises not so much what distinguishes humankind from the rest of creation, but what is shared. It asks: *What is good for all of creation, humankind included?*

An ecocentric ethic takes as its starting point the fact that humankind, like the rest of creation, had its origins in great galactic explosions millions of years ago. The elements of our bodies are shared with the rest of creation. This allows us to understand ourselves as part of creation, not as superior to it. If we could recognise and believe in this profound relationship, we could embrace an environmental ethic that affirms the dignity of each one of us and does not tolerate attitudes of superiority and exploitation toward any part of creation. At the same time it affirms the interdependency of all creation.

But would such an ethic help determine the morality of genetic engineering, genetic modification and cloning? To date there has not been significant Christian reflection on the ethics of

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Selling Tui Motu

Dear Tui Motu readers,

The market makes no allowances for the spiritual content or motive of a magazine such as ours. Financially we either sink or swim. Presently we are swimming – but only just. It's no great consolation to be told that our circulation (approx 1900) is remarkable for a religious publication such as ours in New Zealand today, when it is about 1100 short of being commercially viable.

The tantalising aspect is that our potential of 3000-plus could be easily reached if we could afford a distribution system to put Tui Motu 'out there'. Yet we do have fellow-idealists – companions on our journey – who could, and most likely will, take on parish sales each month. Are we right?

Could you please think about it and give it a try? The procedure is quite simple and is outlined below. If this challenge is taken up, Tui Motu has a future. It deserves one, don't you think?

Procedure for selling Tui Motu at weekend Masses

This concept is gospel-based: spreading the good news. Believing this supplies the energy and perseverance necessary to give this initiative its best chance.

1. Clear the initiative with the parish priest (and/or the parish council, if necessary), asking for one minute per month – January excepted – to give Massgoers some information about the current issue, usually before the Last Blessing.
2. Place an order with Francie or Michael, at the address below for xx copies. (Please use unsold copies to promote *Tui Motu* with potential subscribers).
3. Read the current issue and choose an item to talk about; holding up a picture linked with the item, if suitable. Do not speak for more than a minute.
4. Say that you will be at the church door with change and that the price is \$4. You need about \$15 in cash with you. If anyone wants a copy but hasn't any money with them, always allow credit.

Keep their name and phone number for reference.

5. Send the proceeds to the *Tui Motu* office every second month, deducting 20 percent to cover incidental expenses: postage, phone calls, unsold copies etc.

6. Make a start by selling *Tui Motu* at one Mass only, probably the one you usually go to. It may be possible to form a team of sellers to cover all the Masses in a parish. It's only once a month.

7. Keep the record of sales so that the order may be adjusted if necessary.

8. Some parishes prefer to pay a bulk subscription five months in advance to save administration. The parish then bears the cost of the advance payment, but it is your responsibility to pay it off with the monthly takings.

9. Any additional queries, please contact Francie or Michael at the Dunedin office ; or Tom Cloher (see below)

We are all in this together.

Tom Cloher, Director for Promotions

(26 Hopkins Cres., Auckland 1005. ph 09 521 1342)

the cloning, genetic engineering and modification of food supplies. We need an environmental ethic that invites us to farewell our anthropocentric relationship to creation. We need to make a quantum leap toward an ecocentric relationship that recognises the commonality of all creation, the interdependency of all creation. Such a shift would augur better for

the future of creation than narrow anthropocentric ideologies. These focus human attention either on profit-generating potential or conversely on the risks to humankind that genetic engineering and modification could mean.

It would be a shift that would allow

us to fulfil our vocation as stewards of God's creation, called to recognise our kinship with all creation, and to care for it as part of our extended family. ■

Susan Smith is a Mission Sister living near Whangarei where they offer rural retreats; she is interested in exploring creation spirituality for the Pakeha.

Apocalypse 2000



*the march of
progress is leading
the industrial
world towards the
inevitable destruction
of the planet itself*

This month we look at three topics –

- what Genetic Engineering means and implies
- the pollution of a major waterway
- why a therapist needs to be also an ecologist

Some issues

- consumerism without restraint
- loss of biological species
- pollution of air and water
- destruction of the ozone layer
- plundering natural resources
- global warming & climate change
- genetic engineering

*If you think you are too small to
make a difference, try sleeping in a
closed room with a mosquito*

African proverb

The Genetic Time-bomb

Like the rest of the world, New Zealand is being pressured to accept genetically modified food, plants and livestock. Years ago we had a choice to go Nuclear Free and we took it, with few regrets. So – what is the ethical choice this time?

Michael Hill

only your identical twin will share it. But you may have the same genetically determined colour blindness as your friend, Jane – like the neighbour's fridge.

Biologists call each interbreeding group of animals or plants a **species**. All members of the human race can interbreed with each other because their basic genetic pattern is the same. But they cannot interbreed with monkeys because the basic genetic patterns are too different. Some closely related species can interbreed (the horse and the donkey will produce the mule), but the offspring is normally sterile.

What is astonishing about the living processes of growth and reproduction is the apparent agelessness of genetic material. If we were to meet our ancestors from five or ten thousand years ago we would find them astonishingly similar to ourselves in their physical characteristics. Even Colin Meads would recognise a worthy mate in Goliath the Philistine, who had a spear "with a shaft like a weaver's beam".

Nevertheless, species change over time, and this may generally be attributed to natural selection. Plant and animal breeders for centuries have accelerated this process by artificially selecting strains to produce optimum characteristics: Phar Lap or Bonecrusher would put to shame their remote Arab ancestors of two centuries ago.

Sometimes genes mutate and unaccountably produce a characteristic

which is completely new. A famous example is the mutation in Queen Victoria which produced a factor for haemophilia in many of her male progeny, thereby decimating half the Royal Houses of Europe! Mutant viral or bacterial strains can produce lethal epidemics which spread like wildfire. The spread of AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, and elsewhere, is one example. In the course of time the balance of nature is reasserted. Either the mutant gene mutates back or nature itself evolves its own defence mechanisms.

"Researchers in the field of molecular biology are arguing that there is nothing particularly sacred about the concept of a species... they see no ethical problem whatsoever in transferring one, five or even a hundred genes from one species into the hereditary blueprint of another species.

"For they truly believe that they are only transferring chemicals coded in the genes and not anything unique to a specific animal. By this kind of reasoning all of life becomes desacralised. All of life becomes available for manipulation". (Jeremy Rifkin, Declaration of a heretic, 1985).

Defenders of Genetic Engineering justify their new discovery as simply "the latest in a 'seamless' continuum of biotech-nologies practised by human beings since the dawn of civilisation, from bread to winemaking, to selective breeding" (Mae-Wan Ho, *The Ecologist* 1997). Even the most superficial

reflection will show us that it is nothing of the sort.

How genes are remade

Genetic engineering consists in taking genes from one species and inserting them in another in order to give it advantages found in the first species. Here is an example: *a gene is found which renders a plant immune to the weedkiller Roundup. If this can be inserted into a species of maize, then such cereal crops can be sprayed with weedkiller removing all the weeds which compete but leaving the genetically modified (GM) maize to flourish without competition. Yields are thereby increased. The poor are fed. The growers and the producers and sellers of Roundup get higher returns.*

The method used is roughly as follows. A biochemical process cuts the chromosome threads of genetic material into pieces and selects the required genes. These are then inserted into cellular extracts called *plasmids*, found in bacteria. The bacteria reproduce rapidly, producing thousands of clones of the desired gene. These are then transferred into the species to be modified. One method is to spray the recipient plant with tiny tungsten pellets coated with the desired gene. With luck some will pass into the plant cell nucleus and in some cases be integrated into its chromosomes. So called *marker* genes are included in the bombardment and these enable the researchers to identify the successful splice and then breed from it.

Just before Christmas Josiah Beeman, the retiring American Ambassador to New Zealand, had a farewell interview with Kim Hill. During it he accused environmentalists in New Zealand of being “arrogant” in opposing free entry of Genetically Modified (GM) material from the United States. It was a classic case of a pot calling the kettle black.

In his own eyes Beeman’s case is watertight and infallible, and it goes like this: *Genetic Engineering represents the growing point of a huge multinational industry which will transform the world’s food supply, providing abundant grain for the impoverished millions. Its products have been scientifically tested and to date the products appear to be harmless. To interfere with the free flow of GM products across the world is to transgress one of the first principles of Free Trade; to oppose a cardinal tenet of GATT, an agreement to which New Zealand is a signatory and of which it is destined to be a principal beneficiary, competing successfully on ever-expanding world markets. So, why deny free entry to these wonderful new products from the US, one of your closest friends?*

Unfortunately Beeman’s own case was somewhat dented by one of his own countrywomen some months earlier. Suzanne Wuerthele, a toxicologist working at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Denver, Colorado, paid a visit to New Zealand in November 1998, and on the very same Kim Hill radio programme expressed strong misgivings about the safety of genetically modified foods. There are so many unknowns, said Wuerthele. “We are like the scientists who looked into DDT in the 1940s; the analogy is perfect. They couldn’t have known that DDT would be considered an environmental hormone disruptor 50 year later... This technology is so new, it appears very powerful and promising... but we have to look at the risks.”

On her return to the US Wuerthele found that she was being investigated

for violating the ethics of her employer, EPA. The complaint against her had arisen at the instigation of none other than US Ambassador Josiah Beeman, who accused her of entering New Zealand without his permission. Who, then, is being arrogant?

The fact is that scientists all over the world are showing increasing concerns over Genetic Engineering. In Britain they have called for a moratorium on the use of GM materials. The European Union has resolutely refused to allow their importation. This has aroused American anger with a threat of retaliatory trade measures. Nevertheless, the situation is being taken seriously in the United States itself where wholesalers and distributors themselves fear their exports to the rest of the world may suffer if the safety label on their goods is questioned.

How are we to judge who is right? One of the problems is that the language used by the geneticists and the literature they produce is largely beyond the understanding of the average layperson. She or he will be tempted to think that if government agencies say it is okay, then ‘who are we to question them?’ Yet, if we are to exercise any degree of ethical custody for the planet, for its creatures, for our own health and safety, and possibly for the survival of our children and grandchildren, we have to understand what is going on – and, if necessary, take decisive action.

How heredity works – a sketch

The science of genetics has proceeded by leaps and bounds since Crick and Watson in 1953 discovered that the basic elements for the transmission of genetic information were carried inside the living cell on the famous

DNA double helix. The genetic material determining the physical characteristics of each species is carried on thread-like chromosomes within the nucleus of each living cell. When the cell divides the helix unravels, but in normal cell division each half replicates itself in such a way that the daughter cells carry the identical genetic code on their chromosomes as did the mother cell.

The individual units on the chromosomes which carry the hereditary factors are called **genes**, and since 1953 the molecular structure of genes has been analysed so that very soon it is hoped the human genetic code will have been completely mapped (the so-called *Human Genome Project*).



Of course the genetic material of all humans is not identical. One can make a comparison with the furniture in a suburban house. Every house will have in it tables, chairs, cupboards, carpets, curtains etc – but the actual furniture in your house is yours alone, even though you may have the same brand of refrigerator as your neighbour. So your genetic material is unique to you:

industry. A more general drawback is the fact that the marker genes used in genetic engineering appear to be resistant to many commonly used antibiotics. What that means is that if you eat this food you could find yourself becoming resistant to medical anti-biotics. It is a known fact that in the UK more people are killed each year by antibiotic-resistant bacteria than in traffic accidents!

So is it worth the risk?

Other problems with GM

- Many economic gains are short term. Thus, planting *roundup-resistant* maize will provide a bonanza – but only until the weeds catch on. Weeds resistant to *Roundup* are certain to reappear in time, and to flourish; just as rabbits resistant to the *colesi* virus will surely return to Central Otago. Nature reasserts itself.
- Total eradication regimes using a weedkiller like *Roundup* to assist GM cereal production, have one absolutely lethal side effect. The so-called “weeds” are part of the food chains of birds and insects. Many years ago Rachel Carson warned us of the danger of the mass use of weedkillers and pesticides in her classic work *The Silent Spring*.

The loss of species all over the world is one of the frightening trends caused by modern agricultural practice. Genetic Engineering accelerates this calamitous destruction of species. Biodiversity is the traditional basis of food security. On the other hand monocultures are vulnerable to periodic plagues, of which the Irish Potato Famine is but one startling example.

- Biotech Industries spread the myth that GM food production is a vital weapon in the fight against world hunger. In 1998 *Monsanto* asserted: “Slowing its acceptance is a luxury our hungry world cannot afford”.

Yet the UN World Food programme reckons that we are already producing

one and a half times the amount of food needed to provide everyone in the world with an adequate and nutritious diet. A FAO official put it caustically: “There are still hungry people in Ethiopia, but they are hungry because they have no money, no longer because there is no food to buy.”

African delegates to a FAO conference on plant genetic resources said this: “We strongly object that the image of the poor and hungry in our countries is being used by giant multinational corporations to push technology which is neither safe, environmentally friendly,

“I have a feeling that science has transgressed a barrier that should have remained inviolate... you cannot recall new forms of life... It will survive you and your children and your children’s children. An irreversible attack on the biosphere is something so unheard of, so unthinkable to previous generations, that I could only wish that mine had not been guilty of it.”

(Erwin Chargaff, Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry, Columbia University; a pioneer in the discovery of the Double Helix)

nor economically beneficial to us. We do not believe that such companies or gene technologies will help our farmers to produce the food needed in the 21st Century.”

- What the small farmers, especially of the Third World, are up against are gigantic monopolies. Currently the top ten agrochemical companies control 85 percent of the global agrochemical market; the top five control virtually the entire market for GM seeds.

One of the weapons used by these companies is to take out patents on new plant varieties developed in countries such as India, so that farmers become dependent on buying their seed only from the Agrogiants. The variety of species, once the common property of humanity to cultivate and harvest, is becoming the exclusive property of

these multinational companies.

Some concluding reflections

If the world is heading for an ecological crisis of apocalyptic proportions, one certainty is that it is driven by the power and greed of multinational corporations, impelled by New Right free market dogmatism. This sense of a world economy out of control precipitated the recent riots in Seattle disrupting the World Trade Organisation summit. People gathered from across the globe to cry ‘Enough is enough’.

At the root of this argument lie two profound philosophical truths:

- that living processes are more than simply molecular mechanisms
- and that the living world is more than just a collection of separate, competing species. It is an intricately interrelated whole.

Speaking some years ago in Christchurch, the distinguished priest-physicist John Polkinghorne, noted that physicists in the 20th Century had with some humility come to the conclusion that uncertainty and unpredictability lay at the heart of physical processes; biologists on the other hand are still labouring under the delusion that life processes can be reduced to pure mechanism, and will soon be completely understood and therefore controllable.

Living organisms belong to a constantly changing and evolving complex whole. They interrelate in such a way that no species is superfluous, and the loss of each species is an impoverishment. Yet human activity is destroying species at the rate of some 30,000 every year. Genetic Engineering appears to be the latest and most dangerous of these activities. If we see life as a mechanism to be used and then discarded, then we will see little problem in this – a small price to pay for progress. Yet what humankind is presently engaged in is the most supremely destructive crime in the sorry history of a wantonly

The question is: *has this simple replacement of a small amount of genetic material produced a radically new plant?* Let's take an analogy. Supposing I have in my house a Chippendale table. It is not unique, but it is rare and valuable. I damage one of the legs. So I remove a similar piece of wood from a broken Hepplewhite table in my workshop and do a patchwork repair. Have I changed the table? I can still eat my dinner off it – but you may be quite sure that its sale value at Sotheby's will plummet. It is no longer an intact Chippendale table.

But what harm is there in this patchwork process? One problem is that it is not contained. It is virtually impossible to prevent the natural escape of the genetically modified plant material into the wild. This has already been amply demonstrated. Pollinating bees cannot read the notice saying: *Keep out. GM experiments in progress.*

One of the classic learning curves of recent decades has been the insistence that any new enzymes, sterilising materials, antibiotics, fungicides or

biological fertilisers to be introduced into growing crops must be **biologically degradable**. That was the trouble with DDT: it wasn't. And its residues are still found all over the surface of the earth, even in the Antarctic ice.

Nobody knows – not even the world's most eminent and experienced biochemist – whether a newly introduced biological agent never before seen will have disastrous effects further down the track. If there were harmful effects and the new material were biodegradable, then the effects would be short-lived. It's a form of insurance against further disasters of the DDT kind. But in the introduction of Genetically Modified animals and plants, the new genetic material is here for good. It does not degrade. It spreads literally "like the plague". It is no wonder that one British supermarket chain has refused to buy and stock any foods grown on soils used previously for GM experiments.

The L-tryptophan disaster

In 1989 a new brand of the food supplement L-tryptophan was marketed

in the United States by a company using genetically engineered bacteria in the production process. An estimated 5000 people were struck down with a condition known as EMS; 37 died and 1500 were left with permanent disabilities, including paralysis and neurological disorders. It took several months to trace the cause of the outbreak because the company had not labelled the new brand in any distinctive way.

Eventually it was discovered that L-tryptophan produced by this process contained minute traces of highly toxic compounds which appeared to be novel by-products of the production process. Unfortunately the company destroyed all their stocks of the genetically engineered bacteria so scientists were unable to reach a definitive conclusion as to the precise cause (L Anderson: *What is Genetic Engineering?* 1999).

This is one example of a disastrous, unforeseen consequence in what is an extremely young but rapidly expanding



In Maori tikanga God gives everything, *Mauri*, which should be appreciated and respected. It helps one to relate to and care for everyone and everything across the universe. Everything in the universe is regarded as having the same divine light – *te wheke*

(Rangimarie Pere)

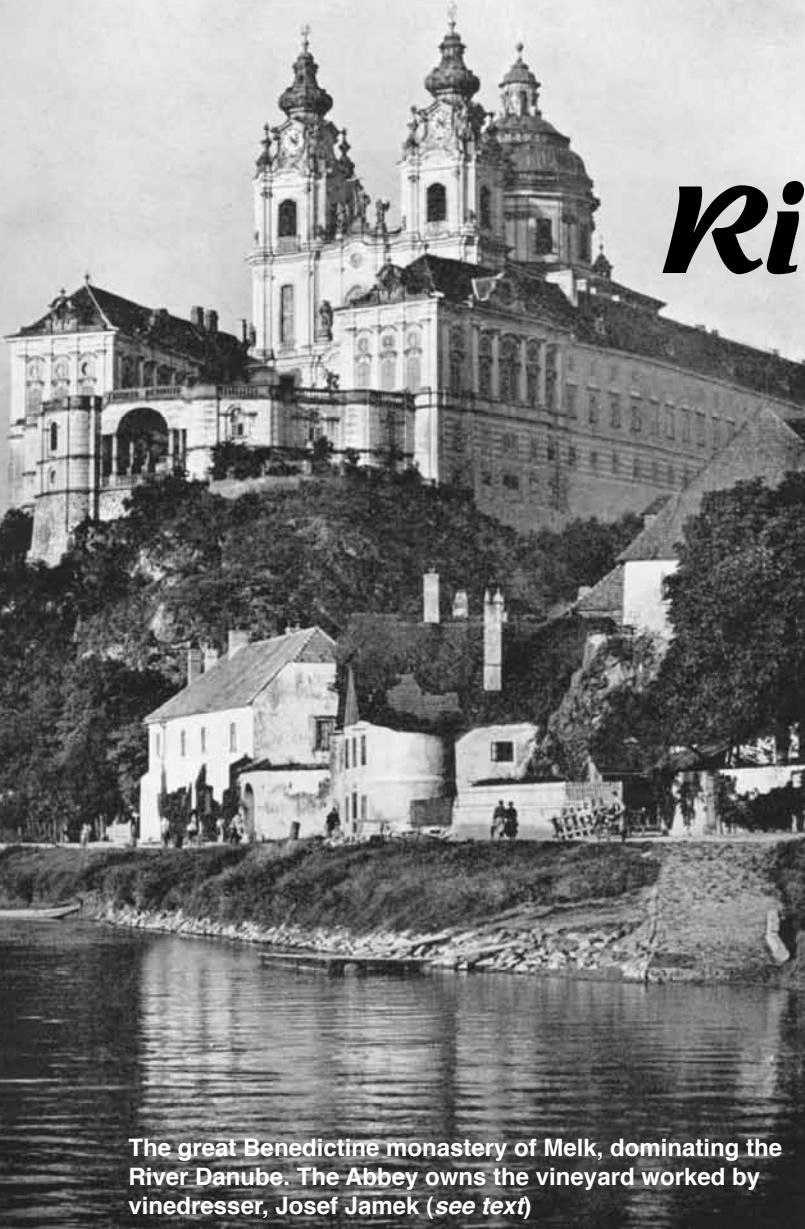
This presentation is part of an NCRS Walk by Faith assignment on the theme of Creation, by Mere Te Tai, written after experiencing the great Panguru floods last year.

**God is our strength and protection,
an everpresent help in affliction.**

**We will not fear therefore
though the earth be shaken
and the mountains plunge
into the deepest ocean;
though its waters foam and roar,
though the mountains quake and totter.**

**For with us is the Lord of Hosts,
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.**





The great Benedictine monastery of Melk, dominating the River Danube. The Abbey owns the vineyard worked by vinedresser, Josef Jamek (see text)

River of Life

One the world's great waterways has been reduced to an open sewer. But, through the Danube Symposium scientists and church leaders are striving to save it

Frank Hoffmann

additives. I still see him, leaning over towards me glass in hand, declaring quietly, "Not just the altar wine, but every drop I produce must be fit to be offered on the table of the Lord!" No wonder I felt *Introibo ad altare Dei* when I entered his vineyard: Teilard de Chardin would surely have approved!

Such quality of care is demanded of all river dwellers. Elements of soil and climate are God-given, but need human skill and devotion to produce splendid Rieslings, while preserving the environment which produces them. It is a delicate and endangered balance. The story is similar over the full length of the river... and all such waterways. On a smaller scale much has been done to restore the quality of the Thames water flowing through London; fish have returned to the lower reaches of the river for the first time since the Middle Ages.

What will be the result of this historic journey down the River Danube? The Director of the *World Wide Fund for Nature* thinks that the *Symposium* could be a historic turning point for the health of the whole Danube area.

It was sponsored originally by the European Union and organised by the group *Religion, Science and the Environment* (RSE) which has offices in Athens and London. It seeks for nothing less than worldwide comprehension of the problems of pollution, and cooperation in addressing them. Perhaps these stirrings from a spring deep in the Black Forest will produce a wave of approval and sympathetic effort, and



Patriarch Bartholomew I, titular head of 350 million Orthodox Christians. Because of his support for ecological initiatives, he is known as the *Green Patriarch*.

is very revealing to many scientists, and they are surprisingly moved to hear their own subject talked about in this way". But it worked both ways. He noted how the priests too came to use the language of scientific analysis.

Bartholomew I (known colloquially as the *Green Patriarch*) emphasised his hope that the Danube itself could play a key role in the peace process in the Balkans. Bringing the peoples together with the common aim of turning around the river's acute pollution problems, could forge a unity between communities, however dramatic their differences had been.

An instance of the delicacy of the river's natural balance, well known to me since it is close to my own birthplace, is the Wachau valley. Over its entrance towers the mighty baroque abbey of Melk (*previous page, top right*). Its gentle microclimate, combined with a mysterious deposit of loess soil on its steep slopes, make the valley one of the main wine areas of Austria. The chief threat to this traditional craft has been from the hydro engineers.

Josef Jamek, viticulturist for the Abbey of Melk and an old school friend, told me that the altar wine he produces must meet exigent requirements of purity and freedom from

In Europe, as elsewhere across the globe, technology has brought about an explosion of good – but often at an appalling cost: polluted ground water, rivers and air. For pragmatic reasons various governments have legislated to try to counter environmental mismanagement. At the same time among people of religious faith there is a growing awareness that power brings with it urgent responsibility. Otherwise our planet will die – and humankind with it.

Austria is a small country with seven million inhabitants. Church leaders there, Catholic, Orthodox and Lutheran, have headed a move to ignite a conscious will for change. In 1997 at the instigation of the bishops, there was a conference of scientists, environmentalists and church people in Graz: the result was the *Ecological Church Network*. Among the problem areas to be addressed Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I pointed out the sorry state of the River Danube.

The Danube, Europe's longest river, rises from a small spring in the Black Forest in SW Germany. It collects water from massive tributaries as it passes into Austria, Slovakia, Hungary and through the Balkans before emptying into the Black Sea. There is a constant stream of barges laden with freight plying up and down the river, irrespective of national boundaries. Industrial and human waste have polluted its waters turning it into a vast, open sewer. This greatest of European rivers has become an effluvium.

Patriarch Bartholomew saw this environmental emergency as an opportunity: a chance to bring together various religious groups, not only Christians of East and West but also Jews and Muslims. Let them put aside their differences, he said, and board a ship along with scientists and public figures to sail right down the river together on a nine day journey from its source to its mouth.

Some delegates advised caution: how could one win the cooperation of seven countries with such diverse cultures? But Bartholomew was certain that the actual experience of the river and its appalling pollution would surely bond together people of however various views, to bring about a rescue operation of the Danube, their common heritage. The project came to be known as the *Danube Symposium*.

The voyage was sched-uled to take place last June, but the Kosovo crisis caused it to be postponed until Octo-ber. In Yugoslavia, part of the journey had to be taken by bus in order to by-pass bridges destroyed dur-ing the conflict. A reception in Belgrade at the invitation of President Slobodan Milosevic, was declin-ed in favour of prayers for peace: Patriarch Bartholomew recalled the terrible wounds inflicted by the Kosovo crisis.

In Vienna, however, all the participants met veteran Catholic churchman, Cardinal König (see right), along with the Austrian President and representatives of all the churches.

It was innovative. It was a start. Patriarch Bartholomew's



Patriarch Bartholomew meeting the Austrian Cardinal Franz König, a great ecumenical pioneer.

dream has begun to be realised. One participant, the Scottish writer Neil Ascherson, observed that, *yes*, the scientists and church leaders had come to consensus regarding human responsibility for the environment. If humans are heedless, yet it is human intelligence which must set things straight again. He explained, "The way an intelligent priest can talk about the human relationship to water and to a great river,

Frank Hoffmann, a native of Austria, is a graduate in horticultural science. He has farmed at Karaka, S Auckland, since coming to New Zealand in 1939. "I was further educated," he says, "by the New Zealand woman I love and whom I married in 1950. In 1960 the writings of Teilhard de Chardin marked a turning point on the way I view the world and my faith."

*I, your Lord,
Speak to you, sing to you,
caress, present you
With endless gifts, You
do not reply.*

*Should I
Shout in hurricanes
Shake you with earth-quakes
Would you reply?*

*What creature as remote of soul
As humankind?
All that I have and am,
I give –
You do not reply.*

B.J.H.

Therapy. . . in the context of Ecology

*What is the point of all we do if the planet itself is fast being destroyed?
This question was put by Des Casey to his colleagues at the NZ Association of
Counsellors' Conference. But the outlook is not entirely without hope*

the old dualisms of earth and heaven, body and soul, mind and spirit, that we continue to position the human species at the apex of the pyramid with God at our side exhorting us to continue our dominion over all creatures and to subdue the earth?

Those ancient texts from the Judeo-Christian-Humanist tradition have, as Ian McHarg described in the 70s, given us the “injunctions for the land rapist, the befouler of air and water, the uglifier, and the gratified bulldozer”. (Ian McHarg: *Values, Process and Form*, 1970.)

It matters not, McHarg continues, that “theologians point to the same text, and choose rather the image of man the steward who should dress the garden and keep it. It matters little that Buber and Heschel, Teilhard de Chardin, Weigel and Tillich retreat from the literality of the dominion and subjugation text, and insist this is allegory”. It would seem that Christendom’s contemporary silence on the matter is proof that the difficulty of opposing the gratified bulldozer is too much of a challenge.

My other dilemma concerns those scores of people working for change – justice, gender, the Treaty, poverty, prisons, unemployment: issues that over the past two decades have rightfully found their place of impact and required response within the field of therapy. But there is a gap. Even here, there is hardly

We were thumbing through books at a bookstand at a therapy workshop. On the stand were many wonderful books that I would have loved to have bought had I the money to purchase them and the time to read them. They covered all kinds of personal, relationship and family issues; models galore, old and new; books on contexts, on gender, on culture.

My friend leaned over and said: “What use is all this if, in fifty years time, we have failed to save the

ever an ecological context included, an ecocentric consciousness beyond our self-centred

that there is something more critical than justice, gender or the Treaty is not likely to win friends. I know, I’ve suggested it among therapists! I felt as though I had blasphemed from the inner sanctuary of the Holy of Holies.

Clearly, these issues remain as important as they always have been. All these concerns are connected and the way we deal with them may well reflect our getting a handle on global continuance or not. For example, respect for the Treaty and listening intently to indigenous peoples’ connection with land and the natural world, might lead us all to what we are forgetting and losing. But even these issues are hanging adrift if they are not lifted out of their anthropocentric preoccupation, which often is about greed and self-definition. What is clear is that there will be no gender, Treaty or justice issues around if there are none of our kind here to have them.

anthropocentrism.

By and large, discussion about the Treaty of Waitangi is discussion between and about two sections of the human species; the same can be said for issues of gender. “Justice”, you cry? “Great!” But how about justice for those of the animal, bird and plant world that are on the brink? Really, who gives a toss about them as we sink into our righteous positions as they affect sections of *our* species? Of course, this is not a popular line to take. To suggest in certain fields

Ecocentric – not egocentric

The ideology of the self has never been more entrenched and pervasive. As Western men and women have become more and more estranged through the centuries from their roots which linked them to the natural world, and as many indigenous people are being seduced or cajoled away from

In the late 60s and early 70s I worked with the Young Christian Workers, young people who organised themselves into work-related groups committed to challenging their work situations towards just and compassionate environments. I have been thinking again about the urgency for people, within their work contexts, to tackle a much greater demand.

One of the young people I flattered with tried to add it to our list: he would remind us that the year 2000 would be too late to begin changing the advance of environmental collapse and the end of life on planet earth. We did a little: bucking our ideas up around wastage, writing the occasional letter to the papers condemning capitalist greed and the misuse of technology. But we were too busy with matters industrial, marching against a Vietnam war, stopping rugby tours to South Africa and joining the Trade Unions in their boycott of Pinochet's Chile.

Things are much clearer now, even if the response is only beginning to roll. It is indisputable that the planet and its life-forms are on a knife edge. Either there will be a rapid onset of global consciousness and human turnaround, or life, including our own, will vanish from the planet's surface within a few decades. The task is enormous, and alarming.

Alarming too is the number of people who seem to have already taken a position: that the problem is too big and too advanced, that despair, or at least a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness, has already taken them over, and that life is now a matter of living out, in a kind of doomsday waiting room, what remains of it. I notice this surfacing more and more frequently in therapy, the field I work in. People's depression, stress and confusion still have the familiar aspects that therapy rooms have always had, but now there is something new. When explored a little further this fear and uncertainty has a global and environmental feel to it.

While I can understand and accept this

Something I try and fit into my routine each day is to pause at dawn and again at dusk, go outside and spend a few minutes listening to a magnificent singer: the thrush. That rather drab-looking creature sings with incredible consistency and finesse. Its song never fails to lift my spirit; it excites me, and leaves me with a sense of wonder at the incredible beauty and generosity of nature. How could I not be connected up with nature when that small creature can welcome its day and mine, and then later farewell it, with such heart?

When we make an effort to connect with nature, the return we get far exceeds what



in my clients as they struggle to find a way forward, what I don't accept and have great difficulty in understanding is when this despairing, 'I've given up' malaise, emerges in conversations with my colleagues. If ever I needed evidence of the self-centredness and self-indulgence of the human species this would take the cake! It is more pervasive than I would have imagined. "I'm getting on and doing my therapy and a whole lot of things besides", says one. Others seem happily unaware of anything being amiss – an ecological collapse has never occurred to them.

These different expressions of the malaise pervade all professions, all trades, all occupations. The circus goes on and the crowd keeps cheering while Rome burns. It seems to me that no matter what we do – as therapists, plumbers, doctors, accountants, forecourt attendants, forestry workers, journalists, farmers, lawyers and ministers of religion – if we don't step outside the anthropocentric bubble which intoxicates us and glues us to human concerns, then we stay within the concrete walls that are the recipe for our own and other creatures' extinction. If we don't have an ecological context in whatever we do – and this means more than just environmental tinkering – then we are participants in ecological collapse.

If it were only us who were going to be taken out I might be able to tolerate the threatening cataclysm and lie down beside those who are already horizontal. After all, we are the perpetrators. But it is all those innocent beings, those vulnerable species, whose lights will be extinguished along with our own, who had nothing to do with the demise and who have no power to do the correction – it is for them that I am stirred. To give up now would be the cruelest of insults we could offer our brother and sister life-forms.

One of the traps and the distractions is, of course, that we are all so flat-tack in so many pursuits. Much of the population is full-time surviving the uncaring – and sometimes vicious – economic and social structures that this same species has set its mind on. A few are so seduced by the products emerging from the exhaustion of natural resources that any alternative is most undesirable, and they would fight to oppose it.

Where ecology fails to impact

Two examples play on my mind. It is a mystery beyond all my understanding, how a religion that believes in God having a hand in creation, and later sent his son into it because God loved it so much ...how such a religion can be so silent about that creation's impending destruction. Are we still so steeped in

violets. At her death her local newspaper ran the headline: “African Queen Dies: Is Mourned by Thousands”. He directed a heroin addict to sit on the front lawn “until he made a fantastic discovery”! We need to start connecting the people we work with to a more ecocentric consciousness, to do it respectfully and in context – but to do it!

Many argue that this is not appropriate, and not a place for therapy. It seems to me that it is just as appropriate as the much-needed fillip feminists gave therapy two decades ago when they reminded therapists that not addressing oppressive gender specific interactions in relationship and family contexts was to reinforce them. Feminists insisted that these issues be raised directly,

entanglements exhibiting those same excesses in the therapy room. If we haven’t come on board in thinking ecocentrically ourselves, and if we haven’t burst our own anthropocentric bubbles, we aren’t going to be instrumental in anyone else getting there. Doing this with ourselves will open up the “how” of doing it with others.

The rest is about being creative, challenging our colleagues and getting on with it in the therapy room, re-examining, or adding to, what we read. Finding ways of how to be more aware, more a part of the planet’s breathing than outside or above it, and to integrate that consciousness into our very beings. It might include more of the garden, more visits to wilderness

stories and metaphors that speak of environment, other species, the planet; having the word *connection* constantly on our minds and working *contextually*, both of them in ways that are ecocentric; re-examining our models to include ideas of *synergy* – that is, the natural and spontaneous working together of the many components in harmony with the whole (problem, person, connections, a kauri tree, a quiet stream,...); holding *hope* in people, in other creatures, in all living and non-living matter.

What is central is a radical change in our consciousness. We need a new language to begin a new narrative. We must rise above race, gender and national identity, above even our own species’ isolation,



that therapists not simply wait until they surfaced. There is a parallel. We therapists have our precedent for addressing anthropocentrism, that bogey which envelopes our work, along with every career and occupation that we humans have ever created and continue to pursue.

Obviously, therapists have to do the work with themselves as well. A rabid chauvinist, steeped in the excesses of power and patriarchy, is going to have difficulty noticing as problematic and then intervening in couple or family

areas, joining *The Forest and Bird Protection Society*, planting more trees, being more responsible about owning a cat (and never a ferret!), listening for the thrush at the beginning and end of every day as a reminder that we share this planet and are not its gods, taking time out to be with a sunset or sunrise to reflect and be inspired by their significance.

We might go on to having a corner of our waiting room that is exclusively a place of environmental information and symbolism; developing images,

and enter the wider community of other species. The irony is that only by stepping outside our preoccupations to the concerns of other species will we save ourselves. Not to do this is to ensure an early curtain call.

As we might ask a couple unsure about whether to separate or not, “What do you need to do to know you have given your relationship your best shot?”, we can ask ourselves, “What do I need to do to know I have given the planet my best shot?” But, at this stage, we simply don’t know.

their own ecocentric foundations, the human species has perched itself firmly on the apex of the pyramid.

What it doesn't realise is that the base is about to crumble. Marianne Walters talked about the 80s as a time of "... glorification of the individual, of me, mine, the self, and the celebration of being good to oneself". (Marianne Walters: *The Codependent Cinderella Fights Back*, 1990.) It is an ideology

taking time out to be with a sunset or sunrise

the highest mountain in his area, and reflect about what they saw and heard. He encouraged an agoraphobic and reclusive woman to make known her wonderful gift for growing African

that has greatly influenced the field of therapy. The march towards egocentricity, self-fulfilment and individualism has been a powerful influence on the way therapy has developed. It is urgent that therapists address this time-honoured anomaly.

Psychology, psychotherapy and most models of counselling are very individually-focused, inner-focused disciplines. Sometimes they are unapologetically self-indulgent, adding to the fallout from New Age approaches which rampaged from the early 80s around the globe like an international epidemic.

What is significant for counsellors and therapists is to recognise that our work, our very profession, is focused on self-realisation, on having "my self", of being "my self", and that

this emphasis can become narrow and disconnecting, as well as freeing and linking. Connection, yes, with the self. But connection too not only within the contexts of family, community, economic pressures, gender, etc. but a connection with the very ground we walk on, with an environment and a planet that are so generous to us because they sustain us, but themselves, at our hands, have become very shaky.

Some signs of hope

Yet there are a few showing interest. Back in the 60s Milton Erickson would suggest to depressed people that they grow a garden. He would send people to climb Squaw Peak, *Remember, that you are at an exceptional hour in a unique epoch, that you have this great happiness, this invaluable privilege, of being present at the birth of a new world* ■

(Des Casey is a Counsellor and Family Therapist, operating in Henderson, Auckland.)

2020 Vision – a myth

It is indeed a wise and good thing to live and have one's being always in the present moment. We do not know what will happen, even an hour from now.

However, I often find myself in an inner panic, fearing for the future of Mother Earth – and the viability of our magnificent and dangerous species. Hence this little myth. It gives me some hope in the midst of apparent reality.

The year is 2040. My niece Ella (10 years old in 1999) is now 51. I am long gone to wherever Consciousness lives, my body returned to compost Mother Earth. Ella's sister, Josie, is 46 and their brother, Nicolaas, is 44 – an engineer, partnered with two children. The size of most families has radically diminished, the psyche of humanity coming finally to a realisation of the effect of overpopulation. In which scenario on the planet will these children have their being?

Scenario A: *Forest and Bird* magazine is a curiosity in a museum... there are no more forests and therefore no more birds.

Scenario B: There is no need for the *Forest and Bird* magazine. Finally, in 2020, the humans woke up and salvaged the remnants of a dying planet and the few remaining rain forests.

Scenario A: There are no more animals. There is standing room for humans only. Children's imaginations are captured by pictures only, and toys.

Scenario B: No need to fear. Humans came to their senses and finally recognised the extraordinary wonder and beauty of other species. These have been fostered and saved from extinction. Children have blossomed alongside their four-legged and winged companions.

Scenario A: The ozone layer is completely shattered. Cancer reigns. Floods, famine and disease annihilate millions.

Scenario B: By 2020 diesel and petrol-driven vehicles have given way to small, earth-friendly machines. No longer are the skies polluted.. Humans have recognised their utter interdependence with every other element of life on earth.

Fire, Water, Earth, Spirit. By 2020 we have come home. By 2040 we have long since realised that indeed 'good planets are hard to find'. We have stopped spoiling our own nest. Even though the price has been great there is a new consciousness and a new respect, for one another and for all that is held in the Cosmic Mandala.

Cecily Sheehy

Helen Clark – as seen by the

Last year Helen Clark came under intense scrutiny from forty young people from all over New Zealand. The verdict was a thumbs up

Last June there was a gathering of 200 Young Vinnies in Wellington. Some of the older ones – 16 to 25 – expressed a desire to meet with politicians and put to them some of their social concerns. “We asked various political figures,” says SVP National Youth Development Officer, Nicky Waugh. “Helen Clark was the one who made time to meet with us. And we had about three quarters of an hour with her and Leanne Dalziel, whom she brought with her.

“All 200 of us went to Parliament and about 40 actually went inside the old Parliament Building to meet Helen. Most of the questions were of social concern – unemployment, tertiary students’ fees, care of the elderly, health care, education, the frigates, and so on.

“One young lad spoke about his father who had been unemployed for two years and the way it impacted on the whole family. The boy told Helen how it affected his own life – and then he asked her what she would do about it! She was sympathetic.

“Inevitably her answers were fairly political and general. No earth-shattering pronouncements. Nevertheless she listened, she appeared to want to hear from them, and indicated her desire to act and to help – without being too specific.

“Another person was concerned about the lack of support for youngsters who leave school but are too young for the adult services to be interested in them. He cited a case of a young person who was jobless, and who was given a substantial student loan to go to hairdressing school, but was then left with a debt of \$10,000. But there had been no advice or direction or counselling. There seemed to be no balance – and no real support for the young person in that in-between age group.

“One girl asked whether Helen had achieved everything she wanted to achieve in her political career; Helen had a wee smile, and said, ‘No, not yet!’ So she’s fulfilled that one!

“At the time I had to admire her for fronting up to all these young people, who can be quite intimidating to adults. Adults tend to be more careful how they word things, whereas kids will



Prime Minister-to-be Helen Clark, being told by some young St Vincent de Paul Society members what sort of New Zealand they expect in the 21st century

just go for it and not mince any words! But she seemed quite happy to be challenged by them and to hear what they had to say. She was interested in the facts and figures of what the Young Vinnies were doing themselves. It’s a way for her to discover what is going on. And we sent her a Young Vinnies Tee Shirt!

“I was surprised to find Helen Clark such a warm, approachable person, not at all standoffish. She was spontaneous and ‘right in there’ with the kids. We felt welcome, and it encouraged the young people to speak their minds. The time seemed to go very quickly. She was very relaxed and finished by having a cup of coffee with us.

“She’s a serious person. She showed a lot of respect for her questioners and didn’t talk down to them. Indeed she appeared very impressed with them. She got Leanne Dalziel to comment on some youth related issues, such as the tertiary fees and so on.

“It was a very enjoyable time, and the young people really appreciated it. They would be more inclined now to make their needs known and not be in awe of politicians. They have experienced many of the social problems firsthand in the work as Young Vinnies, but there is little enough they can do themselves. And here was someone they could talk to who is now in a position to act.

“It was a great occasion. I felt that any of the 40 would have felt afterwards: here was a really neat person I could give my support to”. ■

M.H.

he young and not so young

There we were in the supermarket hall, minding our own business, when a determined team led by a TV cameraman walking backwards, invaded our space. In the closing days of her campaign Helen Clark walked from table to table greeting the customers. We had met her a couple of times before and were glad to see her – a trim figure appearing almost small against some of her towering minders. She spent a few friendly moments with us and then moved on.

Now she is Prime Minister and will be more in the limelight than ever before. She is well prepared. Her sheer staying power amazes me. She took a battering as a junior Minister in the macho government dominated by the present ACT leaders tipped out of office nine years ago. Ever since she has worked away in Opposition, a thankless job by any measure.

She has been upbraided for not being ‘charismatic’. She refuses to be anything but herself, warm in personal exchanges, highly intelligent, well informed about current issues – and all while steering by some internal compass of personal conviction. She is a true Social Democrat,

believing that the cult of the individual and the domination of market forces has gone too far. Government, she believes, is there to serve all the people and should not be further whittled down. No revolutionary, she intends to tilt the balance back in favour of society. Her job won’t be easy. All the old bogies of debt, poverty, starved social services and social inequality, will face her, plus some fresh ones as new ministers struggle with their portfolios.

Many punters will expect a new dawn from the day she takes office, but that isn’t on. First, she must construct a coalition government from people with competing ambitions, and make it work. Storms, droughts and overseas upheavals may present new imperatives, while she finds entrenched departmental and SOE attitudes hard to dislodge. In its first term the new government must put such a score on the board that within three years its mandate will be renewed. A tall order.

Helen Clark is well-equipped by character, temperament and experience to lead us into the new Millennium.

Selwyn Dawson

A lesson in democracy

It was very interesting to watch the recent New Zealand Election, a true example of a country which upholds democratic values. We, East Timorese, have just had our first referendum ever in history, which resulted in a victory for the majority of people who have fought for independence since 1975. But our victory was not greeted with jubilation and celebration as seen in this country where all New Zealanders enjoyed post-election parties, even those who had lost. Instead our post-election time was marred by violence and cost us tears, blood and destruction.

I had spent my time watching the debate between Helen Clark and Jenny Shipley a week before the election here. They were both very critical and used words that might evoke an emotional response, yet they remained relaxed and smiled at the audience. In my opinion this is an art of democracy: you should not face your enemy with anger but smiling and relaxed.

In a democratic election there is only one winner. The real test of democracy is how the loser accepts defeat. This is not easy in many developing countries where usually the ruling party stays in power for many years, and they tend to manipulate everything to keep their advantage. A terrible example of the losers *not* accepting defeat was our referendum. When the result was announced the losers ignored the principles of democracy and tried to overturn the result through violence, only bringing further misery on the East Timorese people.

I carefully watched Prime Minister Shipley’s attitude when she conceded defeat. She said: “It appears that New Zealand has decided for a change”, and went on that she had telephoned Helen Clark and congratulated her. Conceding defeat graciously can be a valuable lesson for the East Timorese people. It does not mean we have to import all democratic structures from

other countries, but there are general values of democracy which need to be upheld.

New Zealand has played a major role in bringing peace and stability to East Timor. Most important was Mrs Shipley’s decision to send soldiers; also her success in hosting the APEC conference in Auckland which enabled many Asia Pacific leaders to get together to discuss this specific crisis. She also challenged other Pacific leaders to take part more actively to resolve it, saying East Timor was “a Kosovo in our backyard”. She received our leader Jose Ramos Horta and enabled him to meet President Clinton.

We thank Jenny Shipley for her leadership and sense of caring for the East Timorese people. Her name will be written in our history of liberation. We also expect Helen Clark to assist us and help the future.

*Joao Soares Martins
(Dr Martins is a postgraduate student at Otago Medical School)*

Are we the scene?

It was when my mother died, and I was preparing her funeral Mass, that the gender issue hit me hard. Mother had lived in thirty-two houses between marrying and dying, so I chose a reading about a pilgrim. It was a good passage from the *Letter to the Hebrews*, about Abraham wandering like a nomad in strange lands.

But what about Sarah, his wife (I was thinking of Mother making homes for Daddy and the rest of us)? She had to tag along with Abraham, moving house repeatedly, trying to make her tent into a home, keeping the place clean, doing the cooking and rearing her children, little Isaac and the others, while Abraham was entertaining angels and getting his name in the *Book of Genesis*.

It is not that Sarah was omitted or rejected, simply that she was taken for granted. She was background. The man was the scene, where it all happened.

The Jews of the Old Testament were no worse than other Eastern cultures in their down-grading of women. The Jewish writer Josephus was expressing a typical oriental view when he wrote (round 80 A.D.): *A woman is in every respect of less worth than a man*. This was not argued or demonstrated. This male, writing for other males, stated it as self-evident. Aristotle, the master of all scholars in the ancient world, called woman a *mas dimidiata*, a man with something missing. It was almost the opposite of what we know as the truth: that genetically the male is in fact a variant on the female.

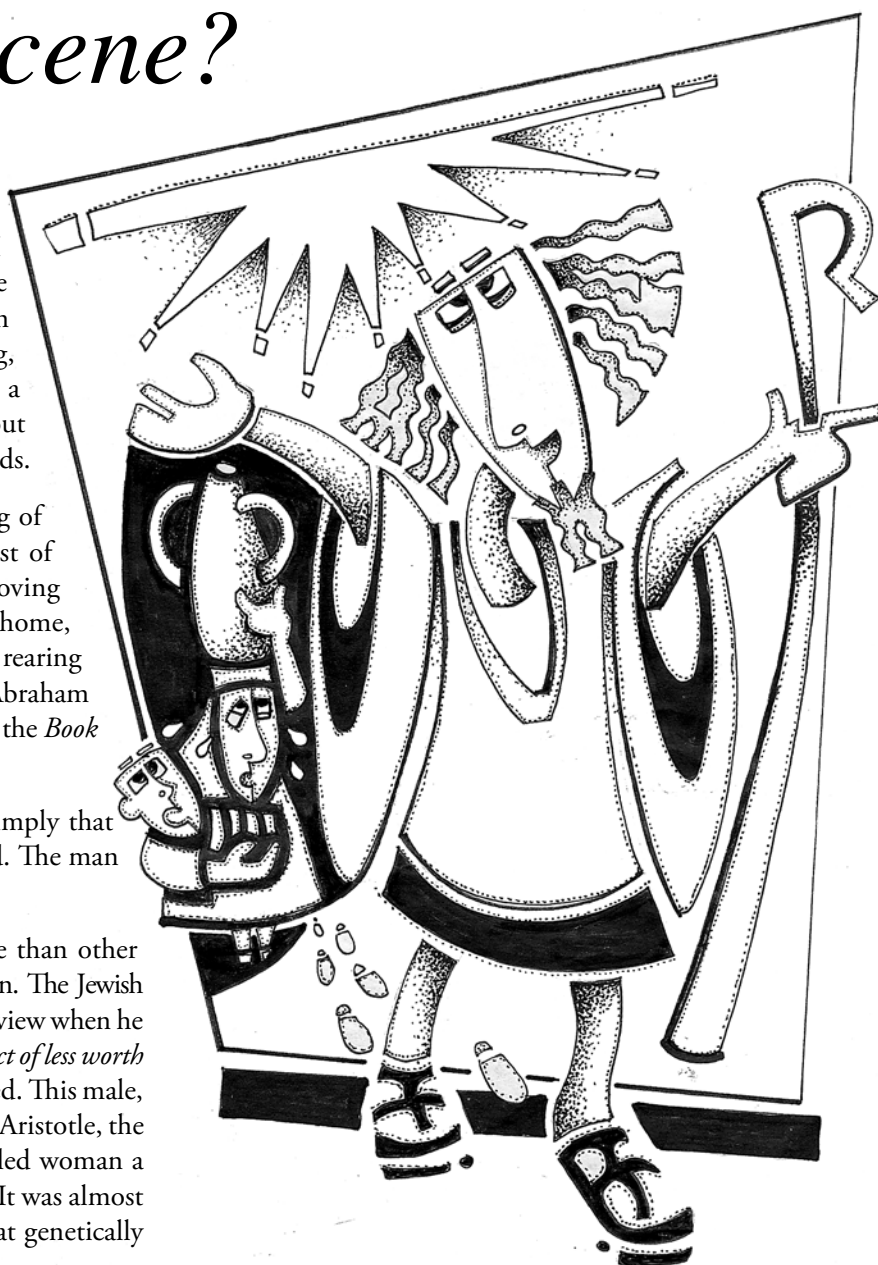
The inferior position of woman was enshrined in the Jewish religion. In the Temple, women were allowed only as far as the Court of the Women, not to the inner courts where men prayed. Her religious obligations were on the same level as those of a slave. She did not have to pray the *Shema*, the morning and evening prayer of men, because like a slave she was not the mistress of her own time – her husband might need his supper when she was praying. Judaism saw women as a source of irresistible temptation for men, and sought to safeguard morality by keeping women as far removed as possible from the public eye.

What Jesus did in face of this was revolutionary. And St Paul, writing to the Galatians, was equally revolutionary when he wrote: *Before God there is no distinction between men and women, slave and free, Jew and Gentile*. His message was lost in the following centuries, as men shaped the liturgy of the church, and spoke as though all children were *sons*, all listeners

were *brothers*, all worshippers were *men*. We are starting to put things right, but we have a long way to go before we regain the attitude of Jesus. This is at its clearest in the Resurrection story as told by St Luke.

It is no accident that Luke mentions women as the chosen messengers and witnesses of the Resurrection. A Jew would find that hard to accept. Women did not count. Yet Luke picks out women as present at the Crucifixion, and as the messengers chosen by God to announce and bear witness that Jesus was risen.

Contrast the men on Easter Sunday morning, huddled in the Upper Room, sleeping off the nervous exhaustion of Good Friday – though they had been in hiding while the women were on Golgotha. On this Sunday morning the women were up early, practical, looking after the grave, only to find themselves messengers of hope and new life.



It is a sobering Gospel for us men. We are only dimly aware that in spite of what the song says, we are not such a marvellous sex after all. As children we are more vulnerable and die easier than the other sex, so we have to be born in greater numbers. Women live longer than us. They are more at home with birth, with suffering and failure. Where father fumes over a bad school report, mother sustains the failer with hope of a future. More women than men are found at deathbeds. In men's worst moments – alcoholism, redundancy, sickness – we draw hope from the strength of a woman.

Through the Gospels Jesus picks out women as the bearers of hope. Think of Mary at Cana, hoping to save a wedding feast from disaster. Or the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, sensing the hope of living water. Or Magdalene weeping at Jesus' feet hoping for a love that would last longer than one night.

On that Easter morning the apostles at Base Camp were not all that appreciative of the female bearers of the Good News. John pictures himself and Peter rushing out half-dressed past the Marys to find out what *really* happened, with an air of

"Why am I never told what is going on?" Of course as time passed, they got their own way, and the priority which Jesus gave to women would be obscured in the church.

We need to make amends. Let me start here. On behalf of my half of the human race, I should like to say to the other half, to the women who read us:

Thank you, my sisters, for being carriers and witnesses of the Good News. Thank you for earning that privilege by your fortitude in carrying us, in bringing us to birth, and rearing us through childhood. Thank you for sustaining us with hope when we have lost it, for sharing and tending our suffering as Mary shared the Cross of her son. Thank you for clinging to the deep values, of patience, and love, and new life, that put into perspective our male vanities, our promotions and productions and liquidations and wars. Thank you for pointing us back to the hope that carries us through aging and sickness and death, to the person of Jesus, who chose you as the first witnesses of his death and resurrection. Thank you.

Paul Andrews

Millennium

We'd thought of them as slightly mad
the ones who thought He'd come again in glory
as the clock ticked midnight
(Just whose midnight was never clear!)

We, the more rational Christians, knew better
but to my surprise
I have seen my Christ on earth this week gone by

I have seen Him in the work and planning
of communities large and small
down and across Aotearoa
right around the globe –
ordinary people joining together
to make and mark the celebratory Moments
to kairanga the New Day

I have seen Him in the glories
of humanly created star-bursts
flying ferns and fizzing fires
our puny imitations of the Big Bang
joy to child-hearts watching round the world
Wellington, Sydney, Paris, London and New York
as our orb rolled to the magic instant of clock-time
and through to the new realm of numbers

I have seen Him in the awe of billions
as with bated breaths we watched –
really watched – the miracle
of sun sinking below horizon
swathed in green and gold
to swing under the belly of our night

We watched it rise in glory from mists of other seas
a daily miracle, usually largely ignored
yet on that Day we humans
again turned our faces towards the cosmos
and worshipped with bull-roarer and conch horn

I have seen Him in the hopeful hearts
the cries for times of peace and truth
and food enough for all
the wish for new beginnings
the turning over of new leaves
the honouring of our old people
as gifts from the past
and of our children
as torch-bearers to the future
a new world dawning

I have seen Him in the gathering of the threads
the looking back, the reminiscences
the discernings of patterns, trends and greatness
in the life of the earth and its peoples
the sense of being with and for each other
of one human family
of being part of making history
at the dawn of the third Millennium
since His birth

Yes, He has come again!
Could we but keep alive this new awareness
of life, creation and each other!
Jesus, stay with us! Please!

Trish McBride

Bringing God into your daily life

“Making a retreat” is a luxury few lay people could afford – but not any more

“Only priests and religious can afford to go on retreats!” Perhaps it was hearing a complaint like that from a lay friend which fired up the Josephite Sisters in South Canterbury to do something about it. The ministry of the Josephites has for many years now concentrated on the needs of rural people. A few years ago the Sisters withdrew from the Catholic school in Temuka. Nearby is the convent, a very significant building in the history of the Order in New Zealand because it was to Temuka that Mary McKillop came in the 1880s, and it is their oldest foundation. So, when the Sisters finally withdrew from the school they determined to convert the old convent building into a Prayer Centre for Temuka parish and for the surrounding district. The centre opened in 1997 with the support of the bishop

and local priests. Now it caters for all manner of spiritual needs, especially retreats and spiritual direction.

The fact remains however that not many laypeople can afford the time or money to go away for a residential retreat. But it's a different matter if the retreat can be brought to them – and better still if they can go through the exercises while doing their normal jobs. Therefore, Colleen Storey and Marie Egan, two Josephites who had spent many years around S Canterbury parishes, went to St Beuno's in North Wales to prepare themselves for a new apostolate, giving *Retreats in Everyday Life*.

This style of retreat lasts a week and the commitment that each retreatant makes is to give a minimum of one hour per day during the working week: half an

hour for personal silent prayer and half an hour or so with their prayer guide. Colleen and Marie are the guides.

The retreat is advertised in a parish some time in advance. The two Sisters will arrive in the parish on a Sunday and gather the group together in the afternoon. There is a paraliturgy, an explanation and instruction on methods of personal prayer; and then the group is divided up with five or six going with each of the guides. The practicalities are then arranged: time and place for the daily interview etc. Strong emphasis is placed on the absolute confidentiality of what may be shared during the daily interview with the guide.

Many of the retreatants have no previous experience of what it means to do a retreat – apart perhaps from a distant memory of something imposed on them when they were at school. It is no surprise therefore if they are somewhat uncertain about what they have let themselves in for. Often they will need help in quiet contemplative prayer. They are also encouraged to reflect prayerfully at the end of each day on the way God has touched their lives during the hours of the day.

The retreat goes on during the five working days of the week with each participant having a daily half hour with their prayer guide. On Saturday they all gather together again to round the process off and celebrate with gratitude the graces received. They close with a liturgy of light, using candles to symbolise that the light they have received for themselves they must now in some way share with others.

Colleen and Marie emphasise that the principal aim is to enable people to find God in their daily lives, and to learn to

The modern-style retreat movement takes its origin from the Jesuit community in Guelph, Ontario under the lead of John English SJ some 20 years ago. A historical study of the *Spiritual Exercises* indicated that its author, Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, intended such a retreat experience to be conducted one-to-one over a period of four weeks with the aim of it being a turning point in the retreatant's spiritual journey.

Over the centuries the method had been reduced in length, to 3 days or 6 days, usually preached to a group by a retreat master. Only the Ignatian framework of meditations was retained. The rediscovery of the personally directed retreat spread from Canada to Pimble outside Sydney and to retreat houses in Europe such as St Beuno's in N Wales.

The *Retreat in Daily Life* also came from Canada. One of bishops in Victoria asked the Jesuits to work out a style of retreat “suitable for lumberjacks”. After trying various options they settled on a format of one week with daily sessions with a trained director or ‘prayer guide’. This has been popularised in New Zealand especially by Fr Gerry Hughes SJ, who was invited twice by the Anglican Church in Wellington to conduct training programmes to form the prayer guides for this work.

be intimate with God who desires so much to come close to them in their day to day life.

For many it is an extremely healing experience. Past hurts or present difficulties surface, and these need to be taken in prayer to the healing Christ. The Sisters place strong emphasis on the *risen* Christ who leads the retreatants through their times of suffering, who shares in their struggle, and will bring them too to a resurrection.

Afterwards Colleen and Marie may go back to the parish so that the experience of the participants can be carried further. The retreats have now taken place in nine parishes with ten booked for this coming year. Nearly a hundred people have profited from the week of retreat. The ratio of women to men is about three to one. "One especially memorable happening," says Sr Marie, "was for a whole Catholic school staff to do the retreat at the same time."

Meanwhile from Rosary House in Christchurch the Mercy Sisters' team are doing much the same exercise in and around Christchurch city. The format and time spread is similar. In Christchurch three Anglican parishes have also enjoyed the experience.

In November, for instance, 19 people in the Sumner parish did a *Retreat in Daily Life*. The invitation came first from the parish council. The idea was put to the parishioners at Sunday Mass some six weeks before the actual event, giving the people plenty of time to think about it and organise their time.

Another variation, this time organised from Rosary House itself, is the *Retreat in the Workplace*. This is a "guided" retreat, the group of seven or eight coming together from all over the city each evening for Mass, evening meal and a time of sharing and instruction. Again there is a commitment to a period

of individual private prayer each day.

However, the more usual format is the Directed retreat within the parish. Sr Lorraine Thomas, Director of Rosary House, thinks that the ideal is for the pastor or parish team to be themselves involved and take part.

So what do the retreatants think of their experience? "At first praying for half an hour seemed like an eternity!" "Discovering a new way of prayer, no longer just words, has been really exciting". "God becomes more a part of my everyday life – a God within reach." And retreatants comment on how they have discovered how to deal with personal anger or grief or some personal hurt.

Clearly something new and rich is stirring across the Canterbury plains. ■

M.H.

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Personal Guided Retreat

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Fr Mark Chamberlain &
Team

A personal guided retreat is a time in silence and solitude during which the retreatant is guided each day personally by a Prayer Guide to discern the movement of God's Spirit.

The True Self

May 9-16

Fr Michael
Dooley

Thomas Merton believed the search for our true self is the search for God. This guided retreat uses the story of this twentieth century mystic and the insights of his writings to deepen our own search for our true selves and the God we find within.

Life's Healing Journey

June 22-30

Team

A journey towards healing of life's hurts. This is a blend of meditations on the humanity of Jesus, of input on the normal and necessary grieving/healing process, private time and individual accompaniment.

Retreat in Workplace

September 10-16

John O'Connor

Fr

(Opening: 7.00pm – Cost: \$35 per day

)

An invitation to live in a peaceful environment while going out to your workplace during the day. Evening sessions encourage the retreatants to discern the presence and action of God in the preceding days.

Preached Retreat

September 26 - October 3

Fr Alan Roberts

This retreat will focus on the Gospels to ensure that *our spirituality is entirely Gospel-centred*.

In the six days of retreat, participants will have time for personal prayers and reflection whilst focusing on the various Gospel stories. Themes: Invitation, God's love, Christ, Repentance, Justice, Death and Resurrection. Fr Alan Roberts is the author of *Make the People Sit Down* and *From One to Another*.

Touching Our Inner Wisdom

October 24-31

Fr Jim

Dooley, SM

The wisdom we need for our journey to God is already within us. In this retreat, we will meet the wise person within ourselves. We will listen for the small quiet voice that speaks to us of God in nature, through music, in Scripture and in the events and experiences of our own lives.

Preached Retreat – 'To Go Where God Leads'

November 14-21

Fr John O'Connor

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December 11-18

Fr Mark Chamberlain

An opportunity to explore the ways of the sacred in our life experiences

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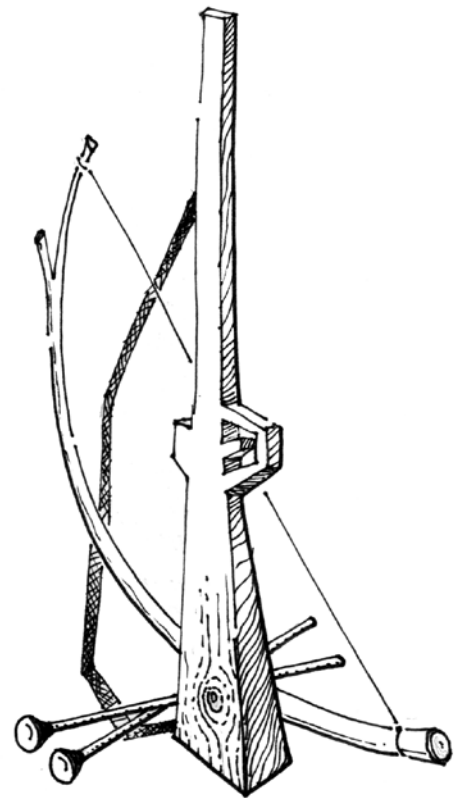
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Exploring the Beatitudes – 8

Blessed are the meek... they shall inherit the earth

Retired Methodist minister, Selwyn Dawson, rounds off this series on the Beatitudes. To be gentle is not to be a doormat but to wield inner strength



Few of us, even the devout relish being described as “meek”. Our mistake is to equate meekness with weakness, humility with wimpishness. What did Jesus actually say in this most neglected of the Beatitudes?

Translation is always difficult, especially when we remember that he spoke in Aramaic, the sturdy language of home and market place. Decades later, the gospel writers turned his words into the everyday Greek, and chose the word *praus* to convey what Jesus had said; the word conveys the idea of gentleness, strength under control, graciousness, – a word with a caress in it, but no trace of weakness. We find this nuance in the Jerusalem Bible; *Happy are the gentle. They shall have the earth for their heritage.*

Who were his listeners when he first spoke these fateful words? They would have been assorted peasants, traders, housewives, fishermen, cripples and vagrants – small-town people without political clout or social standing, who probably found his promise that they would inherit the earth, both ludicrous and disconcerting. Were they not poor and powerless, dispossessed by the rich, policed by the Romans, fleeced by collaborating tax collectors, lorded over by the religious establishment? The very idea that they could look forward to such a turning of the tables flew in the face both of their experience and their expectations.

Yet they pressed forward to hear him. There was something about this young fellow from nearby Nazareth that held

their attention. “You may consider yourselves powerless nobodies, but God had taken you under his wing, has sided with you against your oppressors, knows each of you by name and carries you on his heart. Once you have grasped that truth – or been grasped by it – you can drop your sullen defensiveness, your every-man-for-himself aggression, your grovelling accommodation to the powers that be. You can put aside any temptation to resort to violence, and live by the quiet strength and gentleness of the Kingdom. God will have the last word, not Caesar.”

This is where the confusion sets in. Some think Jesus is telling the meek, the dispossessed, the powerless to resign themselves to their lot, and use religion as a kind of aspirin to dull the pain, while unjust people and systems go unchallenged and undisturbed. That is not what he meant if I hear him right. If God’s will is to be done on earth as it is in Heaven, the structures of power are always under scrutiny and judgment, and the very processes of history can – eventually – be counted on to bring them crashing down, for God is not mocked. The universal human problem is that, in trying to build a life or a world nearer to our heart’s desire, all too often we create a hell for ourselves – and others – by resorting to force, manipulation and violence. These are not the only weapons in God’s armoury.

Was Francis weak when he and his tatterdemalion followers broke the mould of the frozen medieval church and allowed

the birds to sing again? When Mahatma Gandhi tackled the British Raj using only the methods of non-violence, was he displaying only ineffective weakness? Would the citadels of segregation have crumbled without the freedom marches – and imprisonments – of Martin Luther King?

Here in New Zealand, *Te Whiti* and *Tobu* of Parihaka, by their passive persistence showed up the greed of land-hungry settlers in such a way that no further confiscation of land took place. The Church has always been at its worst when it has used Caesar's methods to do God's work. Seven centuries have passed, but the Arab world has not forgotten the blood bespattered crusaders, with their exultant cry, *Deus Vult* – God wishes it! By choosing the devil's methods to do God's work, they forfeited their right to the Promise, and left behind them problems which still haunt us. Had those who name Christ's name in Northern Ireland adopted *praus* as their motto, the tragedy and open scandal of these last tragic years would have been averted.

We are still left with the agonising dilemmas posed by armed aggression. How could we apply the formula of meekness, gentleness, to Kosovo, East Timor – let alone Hitler? I do not know. Yet even in an imperfect world, if one tiny part of the substance nations devote to their weaponry was devoted to healing, reconciling and lifting human loads, the human community would know more peace, security and prosperity than all our armaments can ever hope to secure.

And what of our personal lives? *Blessed are the meek, the gentle* – these utterly familiar words have been worn so smooth by time and familiarity that we can rattle through them in our liturgies without ever sensing both the threat and promise they contain. The thrust of our culture today is towards achieving one's goals, securing one's rights, jostling for position and power, securing the goodies, no matter who else goes without. No wonder the Beatitudes often sound both freakish and untimely, even to practising Christians. Is that why we need so many conciliation experts, court proceedings, anger management courses, counselling agencies, victim support services, industrial strikes and lockouts, marriage conciliation counsellors, sexual harassment procedures – and why society contains so many victims? Are we never to defer to one another in kindness, gentleness, forgoing our rights if necessary to hold out our hands in help and friendship? No wonder the peace and joys of God's kingdom elude us. Are Christians so unsure of their faith that they cannot put themselves in God's hands, deal wisely and gently with those from whom they differ, and leave the issue with God?

Let Paul have the last word; (Philippians 2)

And being found in human form, he humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death – even death on the cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name...

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Mother and Son

A mother describes how struggling to let go of her lovable, infuriating, eldest boy, has helped her own moral and spiritual growth

Cathy Carroll

Jesus said “I have come that you may have life and have it to the full” (*John* 10:10). I am immediately reminded of my 21-year-old son – the eldest of my children – who is just now finding his feet and trying to fly into the maturity of his own existence and the wider world outside himself. He speaks of learning from others and giving to others and doing it from outside the conventions and despite lack of money or qualification.

My son is trying to make choices: they may not be the ones I would advise for him, but they put me to shame in their total embrace of life and love for it. In comparison I seem timid and scared of what people will think. Love definitely seems to be the generating force behind his being and his actions. I am going to quote from a letter he wrote to me recently in order to illustrate this point.

It begins: Dear Mum,

“I love you. I am endeavouring to live my life without pretence, to present myself in my truth, which I think is the right way. When you tell me to get my act together that is all you will get: ‘An Act’. Also, it is judging me, something that makes you out to be more qualified to make decisions on my life than me. I respect your opinion and sometimes I will ask for it on some issues, however I also ask you to give me the same respect. I realise it is the motherly love that I enjoyed for the last 21 years of my life. I feel that my ‘crossover’ to adulthood was better marked by me opening up to you, revealing my true spirit to you. Please make that slight adjustment in the way you approach me to keep me out of a shell.”

When this same son was in my womb I nearly lost him: I started to miscarry. My husband left me and various people advocated my having an abortion in any case. Instead of losing him or aborting him, I fought very hard to hold on to his being, to nurture him into life as if he was the last shred of a life force that George Bernard Shaw writes of. When he was about to be born, again I nearly lost him as his placenta broke dangerously away from the sides of the womb, but against all odds this boy has survived.

He is a wonderful rebel, and alive and kicking his way through life, and making me laugh as he goes. His morality is now

nearly his own. I will always, as a mother, feel compelled to be a guiding light in his life, but I find now that he also illuminates my way and that I often must humbly learn from him. Maybe this will grow and develop as we both grow older and wiser and I learn to trust him more and more. I have learnt to *let go and Let God*, where this boy/man is concerned.

In *The Sermon on the Mount*, Matthew quotes Christ as saying that “A parent knows how to give good things to their child”. Well, I feel this same son has produced in me more moral dilemmas than I have ever faced before. When giving money I have had to question myself:

- Is this money going to be used for good purposes? Could it instead be going to be used for drugs or alcohol?
- Am I encouraging a lazy lifestyle: one of indolent bludging on the dole?
- Am I depriving my other children of much needed tuition or gifts?
- At what age should a child grow up and be self-supporting?
- Does my own self-esteem depend on buying people or buying their love. Am I too scared to say *no* and be loved for myself alone?
- In the long run, is not giving better than receiving and isn't it better that a child/person always knows, from example and practice, that no matter how they act or what they do, they will always be loved, they will always have a safe harbour to come home to, and, like the prodigal son, they will always be forgiven with unconditional love. Instead of a tough-love approach, I have opted for Christ's unconditional love approach.

If our journey is one towards God, then it should not be anxious: God is *Love* and we should not be afraid of love. This *Love*, in my opinion, is a life principle of choosing the act of living not dying. Dying maybe to oneself and by so doing living for and with and because of others. Just as my son gave me a reason for living after a sense of deep despair, then I too feel compelled to always offer him an absurdly different source of continuous and abundant love: foolish maybe in the eyes of the world but abundant and unconditional, and maybe trying to live in his skin, not my own, for a few minutes if I can. This is a choice of freedom for others so that they are not hemmed in or caged by my anxieties or

dreams for them, but given the free will God gave each of us. Love has to be the generating force behind this mad parental experience that, like Kahlil Gibran says, is the “stable bow” that lets the child-arrow fly.

I would like to think that simply being a parent – a mother especially – is an absolute guarantee that one immediately discards an individualistic morality for one that embraces the good of the family. However, I have to shamefully and humbly admit, from a personal point of view, that this does not always occur the minute one gives birth and maybe not ever. Instead, in my own opinion, it is a gradually and painfully acquired process of being whittled away and giving almost despite oneself.

From those first broken nights of sleep and those endless drops of milk and blood from one’s own body, one slowly but surely is brought, sometimes kicking and screaming, into the centre of a family which at times can feel like the eye of a hurricane. As I wandered madly around many floors late at night with a crying, tired baby, my husband used to insist that I say to them, whoever it was who was eating me to pieces and depriving me of sleep like a Chinese torturer: “*I love you I love you I love you*”. It was that that often got me through without wanting to lash out, hurt or reject. Although I feel that we are all born with the divine instinct to love others, human error and fallibility often get in the way and it is only through Christ’s gift of Himself to us that we are actually able to make the journey towards Him with the help of His signposts of Word and Sacraments along the way.

I often find myself in that stage of moral development where I will do or not do something because this is what the group expects me to do. Even my aforementioned attitude to my son is often swayed by the notion of “What on earth will my neighbour think of his dreadlocks? Can they see beneath appearances? Shouldn’t he who showed such potential at school, have a degree by now?” And when I think of myself: am I so worried about what sort of a mother I look to be in the eyes of the world that I’m simply too scared to let go and just flow with the living waters of freely-moving family life and let it all just blossom in its own natural ways. Do I have to do what every other Plunket mother does and just worry desperately if my children don’t conform to the norm?

I would like to think that all the while, my conscience is becoming more and more informed. However I cannot say that this is so with any real conviction, as I find that most ethical questions are varying shades of grey, rather than being black or white. I am often called upon to love the sinner while abhorring the sin, including my own. Maybe that is the paradox of the human condition: always seeking the divine light of total comprehension and love which we can only attain when we die at the very end of our earthly existence, and when we fall into the blissful bath of Christ’s love and light. ■

Cathy Carroll kindly allowed us to publish this abridged version of her Year 3 Walk By Faith assignment on Moral Development

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Hyperbole and emotional language

I am a first time reader of your magazine. Whilst I enjoyed some articles I was disappointed at the hyperbole and emotional language with little regard for facts in *A Time for Peace* by Ron Sharp and *Crosscurrents* by Caliban.

Mr Sharp asserts: "Eighty percent of the workforce was effectively battered into submission by the Employment Contracts Act; they were forced to work longer hours to maintain the income level of the days of collective bargaining. Workers were made to feel insecure in their jobs – and effectively enslaved.."

"Eighty percent of the workforce.." – statistics please. "...forced to work longer hours.." – facts please. "...effectively enslaved.." – I beg your pardon! Is the writer comparing the standards in New Zealand to that of Negroes in 19th Century America?

In the article headed *Crosscurrents* – *Seeking the causes of teenage unrest*, the author states: *This fringe group of adolescents who for various reasons buck the system and rebel*

letters

against society has become a sort of barometer indicating the state of society. These young people are casualties of the market philosophy, of a state which places corporate success above the wellbeing and security of the individual.."

Is the author asserting that in the days of state control/welfarism there were no teenage problems?

Your correspondents seem to think getting rid of the market philosophy and voting in Clark, Anderton and Tanczos is going to cure all our ills. I will be interested to read the comments this time next year when the Government's honeymoon period is over.

T.A.Mikkelson Kohimarama

The editor has complete faith in the judgment and wisdom of these two correspondents, both highly experienced in their respective fields

Thoughts for a new millennium

Tui Motu has had some provocative features over the past year: I thought a few ideas from a non-theologian might be provocative:

1. Priest numbers. The alternative of women as priests or married ones has really only one answer. A married clergy – at least at the parish level for a starter..

2. Faith and religion. These are not the same. The great challenge of the leaders of the church is to bring about unity of faith while accepting the integrity of so many followers in various faith traditions.

The timidity of church leaders here seems to be the enthusiasm of a reluctant bridegroom! The St Vincent de Paul Society makes no exception as to whom it helps – Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu. The Holy Father has embraced the leaders of these religions.

Perhaps these indicators should be seen as a flare path for a more open approach during these early years of the new millennium.

Maurice McGreal, Glenfield

Not so spooky shocker

The Blair Witch Project

Review: Nicola McCloy

Every so often a film comes along that divides its audience straight down the middle. People either love or hate it. *The Blair Witch Project* is one such film.

After canvassing opinions from a large number of people, it is apparent that there is no middle ground with this film. It either frightens you silly or bores you rigid.

Touted as one of the scariest films ever, *Blair Witch* was made on a tiny budget by a couple of wannabe movie makers and three unknown actors. Originally marketed as a documentary, *The Blair Witch Project* is the story of a trio of young documentary makers who go into the woods to discover the truth behind small town tales of witches, murders and general ghoulishness. Predictably they get lost, they get scared, they get emotional and they get their comeuppance, all of which is caught on (very) amateur video. It wasn't until after the film was released in the US that the makers admitted that it was not actually a true story.

Unfortunately, I found myself firmly in the bored rigid camp when it came to this

film reviews

movie. There were a few tense moments but these were too few and far between, and with a very thin plot there was little to keep my interest. The characters were irritating to the point that, after about ten minutes, I found myself rather looking forward to seeing one of them getting knocked off by whatever malevolent forces were lurking in the woods.

Speaking of lurking in the woods, what this movie really needed was Barry Crump to sort out these incompetent wanderers and give them a few lessons about survival in the bush! They lose their map, they go round in circles and they care more about their cameras than staying alive?

The film has been lauded as revolutionary in its ability to make box office headway having been made on a comparatively minute budget. The way I see it, if I wanted to watch cheaply made wobbly videos of people making a lot of noise and being a bit emotional I'd borrow a tape of my sister's 21st. I already know how it ends too and it won't cost me ten bucks. ■

Disappointing Campion

Holy Smoke

Review: Peter Frost

Beautiful girl from suburban Australia goes to India, gets involved in a Religious Cult. Florid Aussie family springs her and employs arrogant but caring American 'Exit Counselor'. So far, comedy verging on farce.

From there on director Jane Campion begins to explore her interests in sexual empowerment again. If you are looking for the powerful nuances of *Portrait of a Lady* or the credible pathos of *The Piano*, you will not find them in this film. This is disappointing Campion.

Harvey Keitel and Kate Winslet work with an overwrought supporting cast of ignorant caricatures and a poor script. Keitel is asked to play a role that would make my colleagues in clinical counselling cringe and would lead to his dismissal from any professional association. We are left with Kate Winslet's efforts to lend to the film what credibility it has, and fortunately she does this with honest and skilful acting.

Most people in this film abuse one another in some way. Redemption is found in

Stewards not despoilers of creation – the Christian call

*Christian Faith and Environment:
Making Vital Connections*

Brennan R. Hill,
Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998
Price: \$22

Review: Susan Smith, RNDM

In 1967, Lynn White blamed Christianity for the world's environmental degradation, arguing that *Genesis 1:26* ("let them have dominion over the earth"), had legitimated human domination and exploitation of the rest of creation. Brennan Hill's *Christian Faith and the Environment* is a welcome addition to our growing awareness that our tradition is indeed a treasure trove of resources, ancient and contemporary, that mandates the Christian to be deeply concerned about the environment.

Hill is Professor of Theology at Xavier University, Cincinnati, and his book is primarily an introduction to, and survey of, the important contribution that theology can make to the ongoing environmental conversation, particularly for those Christians who have understood the Christian message as having personal and social significance only, not ecological.

The book's first five chapters cover the foundational role of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, and Christology's and sacramental theology's contribution. These chapters constitute a retrieval exercise whereby Hill

book reviews



summarises the liberating elements within the Christian tradition which allow Christians to speak with authority about care of the environment. He then summarises some recent public statements of different church bodies. These statements appear to be chosen for their ethical content, rather than for identifying the parameters of a new theology that would allow contemporary women and men to redefine their place in creation.

Hill invites the reader to ponder the God question and creation. To facilitate this, he summarises the origins of modern atheism, so often triggered off by images of God that suggest a transcendent being oblivious to human suffering, and identifies those contemporary responses which encourage an understanding of God as immanent. He explores the contribution that feminist theologians have made to environmental concerns through their rejection of Platonic dualism by reference to the writings of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Brazilian Ivone Gebara, Sally McFague, Anna Primavesi, and Elizabeth Johnson as examples of Christian feminists who have opted for a more holistic approach. Such an approach helps redress the damage experienced by women and sustained by the environment if Christians remain committed to dualism.

In the chapter on Christian spirituality, he introduces the reader to Francis of Assisi, Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Merton as prototypical examples of ecologically aware Christians. His last chapter on environmental ethics looks at some of the more promising

initiatives in this area, recognising that they are only initiatives, and that ongoing work is needed. The endnotes are helpful, as are the suggested readings for those who wish to further their environmental awareness.

Catholics, in particular, will find *Christian Faith and the Environment* an important addition to the burgeoning introductory literature on the need for a Christian environmental theology, spirituality and ethics. I found his section on Catholic sacramentality lucid and informative. Hill opts for a wide-ranging and generous survey, rather than an in-depth critique and analysis. The book invites contemporary Christians to focus on their need to be responsible stewards of God's gift of creation. Hill does not favour an anthropology which puts humanity on a par with other creatures. Instead, he effectively argues that human singularity in the order of creation does not invest humankind with the right to dominate; rather, we are invited to responsibility for creation and in this way, we reflect the image and likeness of God. ■

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▷▷ human acceptance, compassion and old-fashioned kindness. The Lord's Prayer is sung with credible fervour.

Harrowing, shocking – this film lacks intelligence but makes up for it with forgiveness and a love that arises from pity. ■

Peter Frost is a Counselor and Psycho-therapist at Roberts Frost Associates

The Religious vows in today's context

A Different Touch: A Study of Vows in Religious Life

Judith A. Merkle S.N.D.deN.

The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota

Price: \$NZ72 (approx)

Review: Mary Gormly, RSM

The Author of *A Different Touch*, Judith Merkle, invites the reader to engage in a reflection on the future of the vowed life. As a vowed religious I found this approach stimulating and helpful. I was both challenged and encouraged by this reflection.

Today there are many questions being asked about the relevance of the traditional vows of religious life. Questions are raised about the naming of the three vows. These invite much thought and reflection and there are no immediate answers.

Judith Merkle presents some interesting and challenging comments in her book. She develops the traditional vows with a background of culture, theology and history and invites the reader to explore poverty, obedience and celibacy in these new times. While there are no obvious 'new names' for the vows, it is suggested poverty is about the transformation of desires. It is one's desire for God that gives life meaning. She suggests obedience is an affair of the heart – how do I direct the freedom I have? Celibacy calls for an attitude that enables one to move from ambiguity to integrity.

Judith Merkle states that it is difficult to consider the future

of religious life without a sense of paradox. This is close to the experience of many religious men and women as congregations have endeavoured to move forward since Vatican II. There is paradox in living religious life today, in its struggle, in the venture to ask new questions and at the same time to recognise and foster the signs of life and hope.

I found many of the questions Judith Merkle asks are echoed within myself and those around me. How do we create a unity without returning to the limitations of the past? How do we keep communicating yet reach deeper than the differences among us? How do we stay on the journey without despairing of our relevance and our future? She reminds us that as religious we are called to believe that our own journey is part of the coming of the kingdom, not only for ourselves but for the Church and world as well. We are called to a faith that is deeper and wider than a simple belief in our survival.

There were times when I questioned the particular way Judith Merkle drew on psychology, an understanding of the human person and developmental cycle in a way that at times appeared rather artificial. There is also a challenge to us as religious in Aotearoa New Zealand today to continue reflecting on the vows from our own culture and our own experience which, I believe, is very different to that of the United States of America. However, Judith Merkle herself claims that her reflection is not the last word on the vows. Her hope is that it will invite others to own their vowed life as it is lived, and I believe this is done in *A Different Touch*. ■

A voice for the voiceless in East Timor

From the Place of the Dead: the epic struggles of Bishop Belo of East Timor

Arnold S Kohen

St Martin's Press: NY (1999)

Price: \$34.95

Review: Stephanie Kitching, RSM

The title says it all. In a few words we are introduced to the family background of Bishop Carlos Belo and to the horrors of the attempted extinction of a whole people by the Indonesian rulers. If you want a gripping book about a man who is likened to the Dalai Lama and to Mairead Corrigan Maguire (both of whom were also recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize), then this is a book not to be missed. It gives an extensive coverage of the troubles which have caused the death of hundreds of thousands of East Timorese in their own land. Written by a former investigative reporter for NBC News and a current writer for many journals including

The Tablet (London), the book inserts the reader deeply into the development of the campaign of terror in East Timor while clearly stating Bishop Carlos Belo's constant intent and practice in staying out of politics.

Bishop Belo seemed called to his position even as a young child. Growing up in a poor family steeped in traditional cultural values he achieved remarkable success in his schooling, ultimately going to Portugal to study for the priesthood. Shortly after ordination as a Salesian priest he was thrown into the thick of the ongoing tragedy by being appointed as Apostolic Administrator, the head of East Timor's Catholic Church. Within a few years he was calling on the international community to take notice and act on what was happening in his country.

The book shows us the full humanity of

a courageous Carlos Belo who stands as a pillar of truth and hope in his society, a voice for the voiceless. It exposes the complicity of various world governments in their support of Indonesia in its 1975 invasion and shakes the reader into examining their own position in regard to what has been happening in this small island not too far from New Zealand.

There is a block of photographs which add to the picturesque textual descriptions of the Bishop and his homeland and family. Helpful notes as well as a full index and a bibliography add to the book's value.

Having finished this volume the reader will no longer be able to hear reports from East Timor in the same light. The Church's stand on human rights demands a response from each individual. ■

Alan Duff: an enigma even to himself

Out of the Mist & Steam

by Alan Duff

Published 1999 by Tandem Press

Price: \$29.95

Review: Mike Crowl

Two things used to strike me about Alan Duff's weekly newspaper column. First, though he was passionate about his subject matter, his style lacked the sort of edge that makes the reader take notice. He seemed to write as he'd speak, without much reshaping of the words. Secondly, he was passionate week after week on the same topic: the need for the Maori people to pull themselves up out of the dust rather than waiting for anyone else to do it for them.

Duff's new book is in the same vein. Though the writing is generally better than it was in the columns – there are some vivid passages, particularly in the earlier part of the book – he sometimes drifts into a shapeless mode, presenting details that made me want to skip paragraphs at a time. Do we really need to know who all the neighbours were in his childhood street? That might be of interest if they played some further part in the story. But when they are given a few sentences and then forgotten, it's like the introduction of extraneous characters into a novel.

Duff is excellent in his delineation of his mother and father, a couple so contrasted that it's a puzzle to the reader as to why they ever came together. The early part of the book is worth reading for the picture he paints of his family life. We have a sense of completeness regarding the portrait of his father, but the mother, after she moves out of the family home, moves out of the book too, and we're left with little comment as to what further part she played in Duff's life. According to a photograph reproduced in this book, she was on hand when *Once Were Warriors* was published, but the one mention of her in the latter part of the text is when she wrote Duff a letter while he was in an English prison.

Duff's mother was a strong-willed woman, violent when drunk – as she increasingly was – and opposed to the intellectual side of life. There were some warm family times with her, but overall she epitomises all that Duff has been angry about: Maori people who express their lives in violent behaviour towards their spouses and children, and who can't stand those for whom the mind is a source of pleasure. It took Alan three or four decades to overcome the tendency in himself towards this kind of behaviour, though, contradictorily, he was often excellent in academic work, and excelled in sports. And it took him as long to appreciate that he was in any way lovable after the damage his mother had wrought to his self-esteem. As a result he progressed from a Boys' Home to Borstal to Prison (both in NZ and the UK) with increased leanings towards the criminal element in society. And the violent stream within his family made him a person who decided arguments with his fists.

Duff's father was an intellectual man, from an artistic family, and aimed to pass on the joy of thinking to his children. Somewhat eccentric – he painted his house black with creosote, insisted that the children ate health foods long before they were the norm, and refused to own a car – he was nevertheless the mainstay in Duff's life, always there whatever strife Duff got himself into, always willing to forgive. A man of considerable integrity.

Duff presents us with a 'memoir' which led me, perhaps incorrectly, to expect some reflection on the events of his life. He is good at telling us what emotions he went through at the time, but never seems willing or able to review those emotions from the present. Perhaps Duff feels unable to answer the questions himself yet, but I would expect the novelist in him to propose some possibilities beyond being a child of two worlds.

Neither does he give us answers as to the behaviour of the people who populate his world. Why was his mother the way she was? In spite of being the strongest character in the book, she remains all surface and no depth. We never know why she behaved so violently, so angrily, or so ambivalently towards her children and husband. Duff notes that the older Maori women spoke against her behaviour and that of her confederates, so it wasn't something, apparently, she had inherited from the previous generation.

The latter part of the book is much more roughly sketched than the rest. There's a curious gap from the time of his last prison spell, when he determined to use the time to write, to the completion of *Once Were Warriors*. We are given no idea why he chose to write this particular book, nor how it evolved. It appears out of nowhere, full-blown, and immediately successful.

A little more about the writing style. Apart from his tendency to shift from past to present tense within a section for no obvious reason, early in the piece (p.21) Duff tells us his father taught all the children correct grammar. This comes after he has written on p.11, "I'm said not to be great in that area (grammar) anyway. I'm confident enough to think that some of my writing may well force a few changes in the rules!" This is ironic in view of the number of very odd sentence constructions scattered throughout the book. Without intending irreverence to our esteemed author, their construction reminded me of Yoda in the *Star Wars* movies and his peculiar way of putting words out of normal sequence.

Duff acknowledges the input of an editor, but the puzzle is why the style and shape were allowed to remain as they are. I have to ask myself, would this book have been published as it is if Duff hadn't been well-known from other work? ■

A rosy dawn for the new Century in Aotearoa

The nineteenth century ended on a note of pessimism. Momentous scientific discoveries had created great social changes and weakened international relationships. Joseph Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness* which anticipated the end of colonialism. Troubles were surfacing in Europe and the new dawn, which promised new hope, quickly faded into the horror of The Great War. The twentieth century was a time of even greater change - the splitting of the atom, the break-away of African and Asian states from foreign domination and the demise of entire political systems like Communism. It ended in materialism fostered by monetarism which created an ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor.

Yet, there is a feeling of optimism for the new century. People, democratically, are beginning to react against the influence of big business. There is an awareness that the planet can no longer support the degradation foisted on it by deforestation, creation of ozone holes, pollution of oceans and the rape of the fish stock. Above all, there is an awareness that third world debt, which crushes the financial life out of poor countries, can no longer be tolerated. Regard for a universal quality of life is uppermost in people's minds.

New Zealand mirrors the trend. I sense a breath of fresh political air, a cleaning out of the old materialistic ideas which divided the country into haves and have-nots. The new government is moving quickly to deal with the more contentious issues on which it campaigned - an increase in the minimum wage, a fairer deal for students, a more responsible public service and the promise of more equitable social policies to come. The late arrival of the Green Party has added a new awareness of ecological issues.

Historically, the Labour Government (this time more disciplined by coalition)

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

has always initiated innovation and change, be it good or bad. Now, it is already dismantling the excesses of the previous administration by putting a sinking lid on costs, halting inflated pay rates and calling to account recalcitrant SOE's.

The briefing papers from Treasury now advise on income levels and how to close the gap. Social Services will be put under the microscope with increasing pressure on WINZ to justify its wayward behaviour. Anything to do with the tenure of a Minister such as Max Bradford will be questioned - his F16 deal, Tertiary education, electricity reforms. His own electorate has demanded such action. The arts and culture are to be given new emphasis under the leadership of Helen Clark herself. Foreign Affairs and Defence, pending the Quigley report, will no doubt be modified, which will signal a more independent policy befitting a sovereign state, with less subservience to American interests.

I could be accused of over optimism and of being unaware of the honeymoon of goodwill enjoyed by any new government. Nevertheless, consider what New Zealand has been tolerating until November '99 - the widening gap between rich and poor, the massive problem of student loans, the dismantling of the public service, the privatisation or sale of public assets, pathetic policies to do with state housing, health, immigration, and the complete loss of the "feel good" factor which has led to a loss of our brightest achievers. A new century demands new thinking. Why not be optimistic?

However, there are big problems ahead which will force New Zealand to take an international stand. The WTO,

headed by our own Mike Moore, is an organisation which will have to redefine its role in world affairs. New Zealand has much to gain from some of the theoretical policies of the WTO but Seattle emphatically voiced the opinions of third world countries (and others) which highlighted the practical inequalities in the system. The WTO is twenty-first century colonialism.

The WTO wants to build a new global economic order of free trade, unhampered by the environmental and labour regulations of independent states, which protect citizens from huge corporations. It has always ruled in favour of these and they are mainly American conglomerates. Such adjudication is never in public and all documents are kept secret. The fiasco over the importation of bananas into the EU is a good example.

Developing countries are becoming aware of the intellectual property disputes and the implications of patents on indigenous crops in India and the rights to produce and distribute AIDS drugs in South Africa. New Zealand will find it difficult to defend its agricultural interests and defend poorer nations at the same time.

The incumbent government seems to me to be best suited to take advantage of the complex challenges of the new century. It is a coalition with diverse opinions and its members seem willing, intelligent and responsible. Of course, it is very early days. However, I reiterate my own belief that a new spirit of humanism is evident in New Zealand, as is the spirit of global cooperation. Huge advances in communications and research render nothing impossible. New Zealand seems favourably positioned. ■

Our regular columnist and commentator, Caliban, is recuperating after a serious accident. John Honoré has kindly agreed to don the mantle



Christine, with her husband, Glen

Christine Elizabeth Clarke, RIP

Africans during the turbulent years of Springbok tours, against nuclear ship visits and DPB cuts, on issues of development, the environment and peace, and on local issues regarding workers' employment conditions and access to port facilities.

Christine knew that individualism and individual advance should be always tempered by the requirements of the common good. She understood the enhancement of the common good to be measured by how well or otherwise the poorest were treated. She knew that the common good had taken a hammering over the past two decades, that ordinary people like herself had been disempowered and shut out of the economic reforms.

This led her to her political commitment to the New Labour Party and her solidarity with workers. She knew the common good was not being achieved in the coal-loading issue at Lyttelton. She wanted to witness to something that would better protect the employment rights of workers. She really did live those words of the hymn that the family placed in her funeral notice and sang at her funeral: *Brother, sister, let me serve*

you, let me be as Christ to you. Christine paid the ultimate price for her belief in that concept and her commitment to it.

Christine was a wonderful wife and partner to Glen, and a great mother to Justine and Joseph. She was a much loved part of her wider family which includes her mother, sisters and brother. She was extremely loyal to her friends. She was fun-loving with an impish sense of humour. She loved gardening and flowers, books, poetry and reading, Celtic music and surprising people with little gifts. She served on her local school Board of Trustees, worked in law firms, for Marriage Guidance and Catholic Social Services.

She would be the last to see herself as a heroine in any sense. She was far too modest for that. She would see her commitment to justice as being something normal which everyone should do.

In life she sought justice based on fairness and equity. Peace was her goal. In death, more than 1300 people joined at her requiem mass and funeral service, in praying that she now shares in the fullness of the peace that ultimately only God can give. ■

Jim Consedine

Huge crowds gathered in early January for the funeral rites of Christine Clarke, the victim of a tragic incident while picketing with waterside workers at Lyttelton. The whole port came to a standstill for 24 hours to honour her memory.

An active member of the parish of St Joseph the Worker in Lyttelton, Christine was highly respected as a committed Christian and community activist. The requirements of social justice were at the heart of her Christian faith, her life's work, her political commitment. Speaker after speaker at her funeral spoke of this core quality at the heart of her being. It was witnessing to social justice that led Christine to the picket line that claimed her life. She had been such an advocate for years since her high school days at Sacred Heart College in Christchurch. She had stood for the rights of indigenous South

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Standoff at Waitangi

If I were Helen Clark I would have done what she did. I would not have gone to Waitangi. She has opted to leave the Ngapuhi people to resolve and process their issues in their own time.

Cultural change has to take place as a dynamic process, where a people can absorb change into their everyday living. For what is the point of women being given the right to speak on the Marae if in some cases they can't even speak in their own families? And that is still the case in some Maori and Pacific Island families.

For me culture is not an absolute. My image of a loving God is an absolute. Whereas culture is organic: it is a means to an end. Culture is a way that a group of human beings have evolved in order to bring life to that group. Human culture precedes race, for that which is life-giving for the whole is human and sacred.

As a Pacific Islander who has and is being nourished at the cultural tables of Palagis, Indians, Chinese, Fijians, Tongans, Samoans and many others, I believe that no one culture 'has it all sussed'. Common sense teaches me that.

No one culture should supersede the values of justice, equality and mutual respect. Culture is a form of outward expression of the core values of life, love and forgiveness. Culture is simply a vehicle that conveys values or meanings held to be precious by a group of people.

My openness to change was something I learned very early. My Dad who was an important figure in the Tongan community, was going to give prizes at a Sports Day. I – a four-year-old – went along with him holding his hand. Protocol states that all the assembled people should sit. It had been very wet – it rains in the Islands!

I said, "Mum says that people shouldn't sit on wet ground. It isn't good for them". At once Dad went up to the people and said: "This will be a very short prize-giving. We will stay standing". Since that day I have never been afraid to ask questions. I have never been afraid of change.

Either Ngapuhi men believe in equality and inclusivity – and they change their protocols; or Ngapuhi men do not believe this and won't change. This kind of scenario is very familiar to me as a woman in the Catholic church. I stand by Titiwhai Harawira *this time*.

To know only one culture can mean that I know no culture. In knowing a second, or a third culture I can discover the enriching wisdom of paradox, that things assumed to be universal are also specific, that things thought to absolute are in fact relative, and that things which seem simple are complex.

Cabrini Makasiale

Cabrini Makasiale is a counsellor in S Auckland, working primarily with Polynesian communities.

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