

# Tui Motu

Interislands

October 1999

Price \$4



***hospitality on  
the marae –  
a model for the  
christian  
church***

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The Board and editorial staff of *Tui Motu* wish to express their profound thanks for the generosity of so many donors who have helped keep the enterprise with nose above water. It has been a case of many small gifts from lots of big-hearted people.

# The Stigma of mental illness

Grant Gillett

Once you have been a psychiatric patient, people often refer to you as an ex-psychiatric patient but they don't refer to other people as, say, ex-orthopaedic patients. This complaint refers to the stigma of having been given a psychiatric diagnosis.

Such a diagnosis can often be a major life burden because the idea that you have something slightly wrong in your head is a hard thought to carry with you. It can, for instance, make people think that you are 'alien' or 'other' and society has always coined terms to mark this otherness.

Janet Frame, who was herself to become a committed psychiatric patient, reports the use of the term *loony* ('touched by the moon') among 'normal' folk of her time. "We had no loonies in our family, although we knew of people who had been sent 'down the line', but we did not know what they looked like, only that there was a funny look in their eye, and they'd attack you with a bread knife or an axe." (Frame, J: *An autobiography* 1989, p150)

She goes on to describe her reactions on passing *Seacliff*, a mental hospital, on her first journey from home to Dunedin. Like all such places it was sited well away from the milieu of normal life, and she reports the curiosity as the train pulls into *Seacliff* station in case any of the 'loonies' are on view.

The term 'loonies' is used to demarcate the inmates of *Seacliff* as undeniably different from other people and indicate that their thoughts lacking sense or are crazy. 'Normal people', faced with this unfathomable kind of mental life, feel not only at sea, but also threatened: one cannot interact with a crazy person in the ways that normally affirm or reflect our own hold on sanity and solidity.

But we should reflect on the fact that all behaviour has a context and we must

keep that context in view when we try to make sense of the apparently absurd behaviour of mental illness. The results of this reflection are often startling in terms of the light they cast on apparently senseless phenomena.

"Sometimes, with our share of stodgy apple pie in front of us, we were seized with an unreal extravagance and exuberance and would suddenly hurl our meal in the air and onto the wall behind us where it stuck and stained. This desperate rejection of what was so dear to us was infectious, as is self-sacrifice in wartime. I joined in the throwing of the food." (Frame, J: *Faces in the water* 1961, p111)

This behaviour is clearly insane, perhaps one of the most striking manifestations of chronic insanity to be found in an institution. But a similar kind of behaviour can be observed in an Oxford or Cambridge college as an expression of wilful exuberance by undergraduates, young men from the middle classes of English society. Why is this never seriously thought of as being insane?

"We flicked; we banged our crockery on the table; we sang rude rhymes about 'I took my girl to the pictures and sat her in the stalls, and every time the lights went out ...'" (Frame, *ibid*, p111.) This excerpt could go equally well in a text about undergraduate life or in its actual real-life context, a novel about life in a chronic ward of a rather outdated mental institution. Its context determines whether it is part of the evidence supporting a diagnosis or the nostalgic remembrance of the life of young male undergraduates.

But we cannot just accept this fact because the judgments concerned are of great moral significance; on the basis of such judgments people are stigmatised, and relegated to an alien status in which they are excluded from

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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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our normal interpersonal reactions and responses, and subjected to quite different treatment.

Stigmatisation is part of a phenomenon by which we distance ourselves from those who are considered mentally ill. In this context, diagnosis can be a means to labelling, excluding and dehumanising the patient, especially through its association with terms like 'loonie', 'crazy' and 'nutter'. When they are used by psychiatrists they can also have a ring of authority and finality that the stigmatised person finds inescapable.

Erving Goffman has written on stigmatisation noting that the stigmatised have experiences conditioned by their stigmata, and also think of themselves according to stigmatising stereotypes (Goffman, E: *Stigma*, 1968, p45). This dual effect of stigmatisation affects a person in profound ways. The cumulative effect of such encounters and the responses produced in the body of the person all carry a significant emotional load which itself may aggravate the mental disorder.

Imagine, for instance, Jon, a person who comes to be known as 'an ex-psychiatric patient', but who exhibits

some perfectly normal reactions: he is despondent about his bank balance, for instance. The way others respond to his reactions – talking about him, being solicitous, treating him carefully and so on – will be conditioned by his stigma. "Jon looks as if he is withdrawing into himself a bit"; "Isn't that something we have to look out for?"; and so on. The interpersonal, therefore 'abnormalised' behaviour that in another person would pass as being normal.

Being deprived of the ability to think and act for yourself also is part of stigmatisation and carries many possibilities for abuse. Once it is under way the process of stigmatisation and marginalisation can therefore gather pace in a way which would have a huge impact on anybody no matter how well they were before it began.

One way of celebrating *Mental Health Awareness Week* this October would be to repudiate such stigmatisation of mental illness in our conversation – as well as the prejudice within each one of us from which the stigma arises. ■

*Professor Gillett is head of the Bioethics department at Otago University and is a neurosurgeon.*

### Common symptoms of depression

Feelings of profound sadness or irritability

Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed

Loss of libido or problems with sexual function

Not sleeping enough or sleeping too much Change in weight or in appetite

Feelings of guilt, hopelessness or worthlessness

Inability to concentrate, make decisions or remember simple things

Fatigue or loss of energy

Aches and pains

Restlessness or decreased activity noticeable by others

Thoughts of death or suicide.

### Do's and don'ts regarding mental illness

Acknowledge what the person is going through

Give them lots of reassurance

Tell them they will get better

Walk beside them: don't drown with them

Do little things for them (cup of tea etc)

Ask what you can do to support them

If possible, increase your contact with them

Don't tell them they need to pull their socks up

Do not tell them to change their way of thinking

Don't take personally their mood or attitude to you

Don't withdraw support

Don't ignore what is happening to them.

## Caliban and Mental Health

I was concerned to read the comment on Mental Health in the September issue of *Tui Motu*. In it Specialist Education Services (SES) is labelled as “ineffectual” and its staff as “lacking skills”. These comments suggest a lack of knowledge of the assistance available to schools and of the work of the SES. They are also highly insulting to staff who are dedicated and professional people who care very deeply for the students they work with.

This year the majority of SES staff working in the area of behaviour management have received intensive training. They work with those students with the most severe and challenging difficulties. *Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour* were established this year by clusters of schools to give schools support with students who have less severe behaviour challenges, but whose needs cannot be met by the classroom teacher.

SES has also pioneered a service for at-risk adolescents that has been rated by a visiting Winston Churchill Fellow as one of the three best adventure therapy programmes in the world. Of the 150 young people to go through the programme (with up to 40 percent presenting with suicidal ideation) not one is known to have completed suicide.

In his enthusiasm to denigrate the work of SES and other agencies Caliban misses an important issue. Why are so many of our young people at risk? What value do we as a community place on the family and the community? The answer to our problems lies not in more and more funding for the helping agencies but in caring better for the

## letters

present generation of young people who are in need of support.

We extend an invitation to Caliban to visit SES to see our work and meet with our staff. *Tui Motu* readers are similarly welcome.

SES Area Manager  
Otago (ph 03 477 8610)

## The victim is paramount

Trish McBride (September issue *letters*) expresses concern about the “needs and best interests of the victims” being met by processes of Restorative Justice. I will quote from a recent evaluation done on *Project Turnaround* by the Victoria University Institute of Crim-inology.

“There is a *strong* emphasis on the *victims* at *Project Turnaround*, victims’ agreement is sought to the Community Panel diversion before the panel meets, and if they do not agree, the case is referred back to court. Victims are invited to the Community Panel meeting, and every effort is made to encourage them to attend. In all cases the action plan is designed to make recompense to the *victim* in an appropriate way. The action plan also makes the offender accountable to the wider community, and there is a focus on plans which will prevent reoffending”

In all cases I can assure Trish McBride the victim’s needs are paramount.

Jo Gregan, *Community Panel Member, Project Turnaround Timaru*

## Supportive community wanted

Would any reader know of the existence of any supportive live-in communities, preferably near Christchurch or in any part of Australia or New Zealand, or elsewhere. I have a close relative who suffers from a depressive illness and ongoing emotional problems. A lot of this is related to the fact that he is very isolated, and I believe a supportive live-in community could help to bring him out of himself.

I know from personal experience, others who have suffered from emotional problems will testify that the isolation often leads to a whole host of other problems. In order to break the cycle the isolation has got to end through some good ‘people chemistry’. This could be in either a specifically Christian or non-Christian context.

Please contact me through P O Box 9055 Christchurch, New Zealand, if you think you can help.

Jack Smith,  
*Addington, Christchurch*

## A request from Burma

Catholic literature is badly and urgently needed by Mission priests, religious and people in Myanmar (Burma). Anybody having Catholic literature such as magazines, booklets and newspapers which they would be prepared to send to the missions, please post to: Rev Dominic Savio Jude Rector, Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Kaung Road, Ward 2, LASHIO. NSS (MYANMAR)



# The Power behind the Throne

*Barbara Vincent, an ordained Anglican Minister, has carefully researched the writings of the Business Roundtable and concludes it is driven by a sort of quasi-religious faith.*

*Inspired by an international economic thinktank, the Mount Pelerin Society, it promotes a creed of market capitalism whose 'Moses' is the post-war Czech economist Friedrich van Hayek. This study summarises a recent seminar given by Barbara Vincent*



## Economic Rationalism

The belief system espoused by the Business Roundtable is an ideology, a series of 'faith statements' resting on axiomatic beliefs held without recourse to external proofs or evidence. It is like a religious creed, in the sense that its tenets exist prior to any external application. They are accepted 'on faith'. It is a pre-cut template imposed on the whole of society.

Barbara Vincent defines their ideology as "whole-hearted political and economic liberalism, opposed to any social and legal constraints on individual freedom". Individuals are seen as hav-

ing inalienable rights which cannot be taken away from them in the interest of the collective.

Individuals (*homo oeconomicus*) are completely autonomous beings. They are people seeking to maximise their own self-interest; having absolute right to their own property and existing **prior to** society; they are not naturally social beings but seek competitively to maximise their own self-interest. They choose freely whether to engage in social activity or not.

'Society' – 'the group' – has no meaning except as a collection of individuals. Any

organic concept of society is rejected. People belong to society on a voluntary basis, but such a belonging is always inferior to being independent and self-sufficient. Private ownership is to be preferred to public: it is both economically and morally superior because it encourages individual initiative.

## The common good – a myth

The axiom is: actions restricting the good of others are 'good'; actions placing restriction on oneself are 'bad'.



## Do elections matter anyway?

*It doesn't matter who you vote for. They're all the same. Hopeless!*" This seems to be the continuing refrain of talkback radio as my car glides through the suburbs. Hosts and callers incite one another to new levels of cynicism, conveniently forgetting that the critics and the criticised are two sides of the coin. We get what we deserve.

Does it matter? Does democracy matter? The East Timorese thought so. As the saying goes, democracy may have its drawbacks as a political system, but it beats hell out of the alternatives. Pretty well all our freedoms stem

from it, including freedom to assemble, to voice an opinion, or to worship publicly.

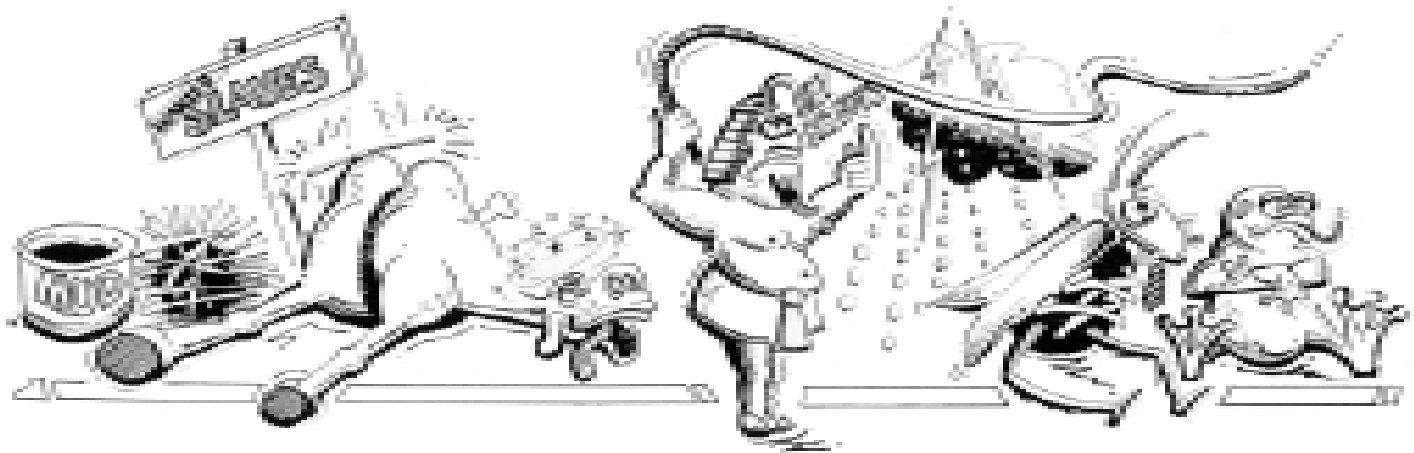
Elections, therefore, are public rituals of real consequence. They deserve our attention. Candidates for parliament merit our admiration and gratitude, not scorn. We should read the brochures, phone the candidates for clarification, attend meetings, perhaps throw tomatoes: anything to help us become informed enough to make a good choice.

This is especially true since the advent of MMP. This new creature on the political block has so far had a

bad press. It could claim 'victim' status. We have a petition to be rid of it because it makes the life of the mainstream parties difficult. Could there be a better reason for retaining it? It adds some sophistication for an overly simple political system; it demands that other views be included in the decision-making process.

We would do well to approach the oncoming election with interest and even enthusiasm. The talkback radiophiles and taxi drivers should be a bit less strident. Cynicism is the refuge of the ineffectual.

*Tom Cloher*



▷▷ But there is no such thing as *public good*; there are only individual responsibilities. The common good therefore is no more than the sum of individual goods.

If anyone defrauds the system, they are to be condemned for bad management practice, not because they are 'wrong'. They should be fined rather than imprisoned.

The wages of workers are controlled by the market. If pay is increased it is not because of need or hardship on the part of the workers, but because of shortage of labour. Increases in productivity *per se* do not justify wage increases, especially if labour is plentiful.

All goods and commodities must be owned by someone – and this extends not just to buildings but to land, and even air and water! These are discussed in terms of 'property rights', and the first question to ask is always: *who's the*

*owner?* Environmental problems are approached via individual property rights, bypassing any sense of common or public ownership. Access to resources is determined by the market which distributes them to the most valued user. Disputes can be resolved simply by trading property rights.

#### A quasi-religious faith

Barbara Vincent maintains that the best way of understanding the Business Roundtable is to see it as a sort of fund-amentalist religious sect. Its creed is based, as indicated above, on self-evident axioms. Its authority comes from within. It has an orthodox language which is repeated *ad nauseam*. Any dissent is dismissed as heresy. Economists having different views are simply dismissed as being *ersatz* economists.

What people believe and what they do are inextricably linked; so, if we want

to understand the outcomes and the policies, we need to go back to the *principles* of the Business Roundtable. They have been the dominant force not only in business but also in New Zealand politics since 1984.

Firstly, all policies are judged, not on whether they work, but on whether they are economically '*orthodox*'. Like any religion the adherents of the New Right ideology believe in the **market** and in **market forces** as transcendent realities. The market is all-powerful. It provides. It allocates fairly with an 'invisible hand'. It solves problems. It cannot fail. It is without error. It disciplines. The corresponding theological words are *Almighty, Provident, Just, Beneficial, Infallible, Inerrant*.

Since the market is supreme it removes personal, ethical responsibility for actions. In just the same way a Christian fundamentalist can disclaim responsibility for actions by claiming any outcome as 'the will of God'.

Religious movements are grounded in their past history. Economic rationalism has its 'prophets', such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill. It also has its contemporary gurus like Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman. The particular stream of thinking coming from these authorities is accepted uncritically, like the canon of Scripture, and there tends to be only one orthodox interpretation.

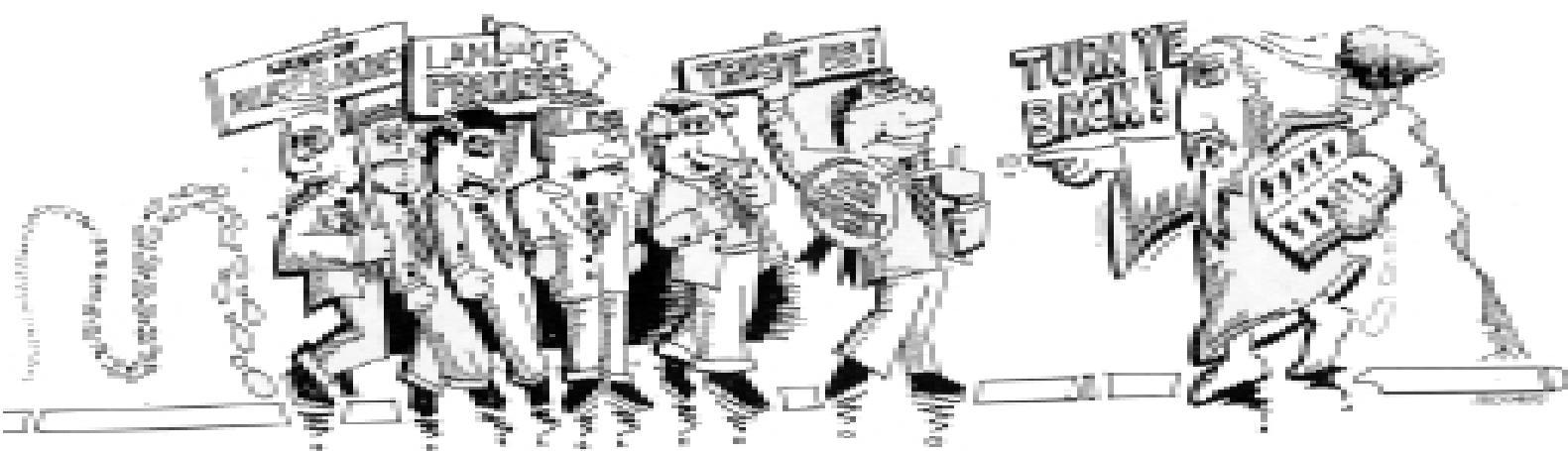
#### Language

The documents of the Business Roundtable have developed a language and vocabulary of their own.

Thus *reform* always means increased privatisation. Words such as *responsible* and *accountable* apply to actions which are auto-nomous, not dependent on any benefit or communal support. *Responsible* activity applies to the correct use of resources or funds, to efficiency and cost benefit, but not to fulfilling obligations to others. In practice

*accountable* people tend to be those at the lower end of the economic ladder.

The term *family* is increasingly used as a sweetener in documents inspired by New Right ideology eg the *Code of Social Responsibility (1998)*, but if the text is examined carefully you find that the word 'family' is interchangeable with the word 'individual'. In other words society is not an organic entity: it consists of 'individuals' and of isolated, self-contained family units.



*The market cannot fail.* An NZBR writer, Tyler Cowen, says: “We have come to understand that many of the alleged ‘market failures’ can be and are corrected by market forces”. How can ‘God’ fail? One explanation for alleged failure is that the reforms have only just begun and the full benefit cannot be seen until privatisation is complete.

No one can question the missionary zeal of the Free Marketeers. They are involved in an all-embracing mission to convert the whole world to free market capitalism. Utopia has not been

achieved yet – but it is on its way. Roger Kerr writes: “I believe business will be demanding of governments world class standards, not just their ‘personal best’” (*Building a Competitive Economy* p 281). A supernatural standard is demanded superior to that normally achievable by ordinary mortals.

This religious zealotry is curiously reminiscent of that other world creed which occupies the contrary pole to *laissez faire* liberalism: namely totalitarian Marxism. The Marxist too is engaged on a world crusade, is imbued with missionary

zeal, looks forward to the communist paradise – yet to be achieved but inevitable. They are at opposite poles, yet the psychology is curiously similar.

Barbara Vincent concludes her study: “Individualism is the underlying axiom of the libertarian theory and is as inaccurate as its mirror image, the totalitarian state. The created world is one of **relationship**, with the basic, indivisible unit being ‘individual-in-community’, not an either/or but a both/and. Distortions or evil result if the unit is broken at either hyphen”. ■

### The Business Roundtable

The Business Roundtable is an organisation of chief executives of major New Zealand businesses and is modelled on its counterpart, of similar name, in the United States. In 1995 it represented 80 percent of New Zealand business (in terms of market capitalisation on the NZ Stock Exchange). It has a permanent office employing research staff, on The Terrace in Wellington. Roger Kerr is its Executive Director.

Between 1986 and 1996 the Business Roundtable published 125 documents, written by a variety of authors, some overseas. Thirty-one are submissions to government on proposed legislation, and ten are collections of speeches and articles. Although the Roundtable claims that these documents are “published as a contribu-

tion to informed public discussion of a vital area of economic management”, in fact they are not easily obtainable through libraries and are unavailable from booksellers. Often however they are sent direct to the relevant Cabinet Minister and to parliamentarians. They seem to be targeted where they can have greatest influence, rather than being made available as a contribution to public debate.

The titles often suggest that the text will be dealing with people and their social needs. Simply reading them indicates this is not the case: they are written in a uniform style and are about economics, not people – and one particular theory of economics. Barbara Vincent has studied the style of these documents in detail, and concludes that they are not

about housing, or education, or health, or roading, as the titles may suggest. They are about systems, objectives, structures, mechanisms, gains, allocations etc. In other words they are about abstractions. They refer always to an economic template to which various public sectors must conform. The people have to fit the suit; not the suit fit the person!

An interesting exercise is to notice how the Business Roundtable deals with dissenting opinion. One way is to state the contrary notion – and ignore it. Another is to respond with an economic statement which does not actually address the question – and consider it answered. Yet another way is to dismiss the contrary opinion with belittling or disparaging comments.

# The Fantasy world of Dairyland

*A retired JP and Manawatu dairy farmer laments the threat posed by the policies of successive governments on New Zealand agriculture – the latest being the advent of multinational corporations*

**Pat Fouhy**

The goings on in the dairy world stretch the imagination to its utmost. Not satisfied with the rebuff received from the farmers last year, Government has pushed ahead with deregulation by setting up a committee to undercut the democratically expressed wish of those most affected. This is government by stealth – a practice abhorrent to all New Zealand-ers, except apparently those who have been members of Governments since 1984. The question must be asked: when do the actions of ministers against the expressed wishes of its people become treasonable?

New Zealanders have been warned on numerous occasions about financial scams operating out of, mostly, Third World countries. Recently Mr Andrew Grant, of business consultancy McKinsey's, advised dairy farmers to 'get with it', to trust him: following his advice they could expand an \$8 billion industry into a \$40 billion one in ten years. He would not say how this was to be done – "the growth strategies were too sensitive to reveal". Neither did he say how many cows he milked, or how he would be affected financially if what he was proposing was proved wrong, or what compensation he would be able to pay to victims and their families whose lives had been ruined.

Some of these extra earnings would come, he suggested, from the sale of New Zealand's dairying knowledge and skills, presumably to competing countries. He went on to say that criticism of the "mega" concept was "regional and naive", adding "Try telling *Microsoft* scale doesn't count". Neither did he say whether the sharing of knowledge and skills with overseas countries by the Ap-

ple and Kiwifruit industries has added to the value of their industries long term. He finished by saying that delay was unacceptable. International markets were being eaten up by competitors. In short, *don't stop to think* – an attitude adopted by all those who would part people from their money.

*deregulation of the dairy industry has been pushed by the Business Roundtable... so their members might have the cream*

The deregulation of the dairy industry has been pushed for some years now by the Business Roundtable. It is in their interests to have it deregulated, so their members might have the cream. What they want of course is the part of the cow from nose to the back of the udder; the farmer can have the rear end and what goes with it!

People's memories are very short. An industry that is vital in the lives of all New Zealanders cannot be so speedily restructured without the risk of grave damage to the farmers and the economy. One must ask what, or who, drives men like Luxton and Bradford in their fanatical, headlong rush to implement changes that can and do have a disastrous effect on the people of our country?

Craig Norgate, appointed to bring the differing viewpoints of nine dairy companies into one, has been quoted as admitting the growth figure of the New Zealand dairy industry to \$40 billion "was more aspiration than anything else"; then qualifies his statement by saying: "they could be realistic if based on certain assumptions about how fast we grow, and how successful we are".

An example of the methods used by Government is the way they have set up the legislation. By sheer cunning they have made sure that by giving farmers only one vote, the Government will achieve the aims of John Luxton to destroy the Dairy Board, regardless of the wish of dairy farmers. If farmers vote for a mega-company they automatically deregulate the dairy industry, even though they do not want this.

The actions of multi-national companies which handle the distribution of other people's production, rarely coincides with the welfare of the people who produce the goods. The entry of these companies into the New Zealand dairy industry will undoubtedly result in mega dairy farms and mini peasants. The sale of either *Mainland* or *Anchor* will effectively ensure the entry by the back door of the multi-national companies into the New Zealand dairy industry, with the above result.

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment in New Zealand was put on the back burner by the National Government a few months ago. This Bill would have effectively destroyed New Zealand as we know it. However some bright character realised there are more ways of killing a cat than by choking it with butter, and by going down the path Government is adopting with the dairy industry, the same ends could be achieved without taking on virtually the whole of the New Zealand public, who, when they realised the aims of the Multilateral Agreement, certainly would have been very upset.

Once again the question must be asked: what constitutes subversion and treason against a country's inhabitants? ■



# A just wage ? . . . or payment on demand



*'What is a just wage?', asks Christchurch businessman John Honoré, looking at the savage inequalities in today's society. And who is to blame?*

Mr David Bale, head of the Lotteries Commission, is paid more than \$420,000. Mr Joe Doaks, a service station attendant, earns \$19,500 – \$15,000 a year below the average wage. A few financial overlords are becoming creatures of greed and ambition while many ordinary citizens, with no financial security, are becoming victims of poverty. These are situations which, unavoidably, create envy, jealousy and resentment. But is this the whole story? Are these disparities a result of Right Wing Government policies, or is New Zealand inadvertently wrestling with the difficulty of deciding whether the job is worth the recompense?

**What is a just wage?** New Zealand had to change from a protected economy, under the control of an ageing and lethargic business leadership, to one which was performance based. Rewards had to equate with results. But for the last 15 years, New Right policies have been centred on a free market economy, with New Zealand locked inextricably into globalisation. This has led to comparisons forever being made with overseas remuneration packages, usually expressed in American dollars. Thus, Mr Bale's salary converts to \$US200,000 – still excessive – but Joe's pay becomes a derisory \$US10,000.

The economy has become leaner and meaner: an elite of business people command huge salaries, but at the expense of a down-sized and lower paid work force. Senior jobs in state owned enterprises, crown entities, public service and also the private sector have become the fast track to wealth.

The result is a fragmented society. The 1998 Study by Podder and Chatterby

shows that since 1984, income has increased only for the top 5 percent of New Zealanders; the next 20 percent remained stable, the rest declined. A study, just released by *NZ Poverty Project*, shows that from 1984 to 1998, the wealthiest 10 percent of household incomes increased 43 percent. Meanwhile the bottom half of household incomes dropped 14 percent. The figures are damning and prove the inequalities created by self-serving finance markets.

To consider the remuneration of any individual is to consider the value of the work and its worth to society. Under this criteria, the salaries of the Prime Minister of New Zealand at \$204,100, the Chief Justice on \$243,000 and the Secretary of Treasury with \$310,000 are beggarly. These people are underpaid. The work involved demands great commitment and responsibility and is potentially of huge value to society. Mr Bale's efforts are surely not in this category. Meanwhile the Service Station attendant has barely the means to raise a family.

His worth to society as a human being should not be devalued by the imbalance of salaries which make a few rich and the many poor.

Salary anomalies exist at all levels of New Zealand society. There have not been too many voices raised in protest at rugby players earning over \$200,000 a year. News readers earn around \$400,000. Paul Holmes's salary is \$750,000. The medical professionals, particularly specialists and surgeons, earn vast amounts and seem way out of line with other professions, such as school teaching.

Salaries are set by demand, but when big business and greed enter into the calculations, numbers become limitless. Public companies are no better. Fay Richwhite's extraordinary financial dealings, exposed by the Winebox inquiry, make sad reading. Shareholders of *Trans Tasman Properties*, a company described as being "at the bottom of the heap, year after year" railed against director Don Fletcher's annual pay of \$850,000, described by Max Gunn as "pure corporate greed".

There are no rules by which to establish a just wage. There is the Higher Salaries Commission, there are boards which set Crown Entity salaries and there is the Commissioner of State Services which sets the salaries of public servants. The private sector has requirements, but not standards, monitored by the Companies Act.

**Every person has, as a basic right, the right to work – to work for a just wage, a living wage**

The just wage is a question of fairness. Salaries should be established in relation to the value of the job, but opinions will always differ as to the value of the job and how much a person should earn. An individual's talents and the impact of the job on society must be considered. In a just society it is a matter for negotiation, with both the individual and society as beneficiaries. Every person has, as a basic right, the right to work – to work for a just wage, a living wage. There is no right in a just society to a personal gravy train. ■

# Big Boys – and Big Girls – don't cry

*Peter and Katie O'Connor live in Riversdale, Southland, with their two children aged 12 and 10. Peter farms 600 acres, while Katie is a journalist working for Mercury Television, Invercargill.*

*Five years ago Katie suffered severe clinical depression. Here she tells the story 'from the inside' in an interview with Philip Casey. Peter also tells his part of the story.*

*(Three half-hour TV documentaries on aspects of mental illness produced by Katie O'Connor, are being shown nationwide this month – see p.30)*

**Philip Casey:** I understand you've just made three videos on mental health. Tell us about those...

**Katie O'Connor:** Three programmes for regional television. I went to the pharmaceutical industry and said to them that some public education would be a good thing. Three companies picked it up and sponsored programmes on schizophrenia, on bipolar disorder – or manic depression. The last one is on post-natal and long term depression. The three programmes will screen on eight regional stations throughout the country in October. We travelled all round New Zealand and met some very awesome people who shared their stories.

**Your interest in mental health – is it related to your own personal experience?**

Most of us remain ignorant and fearful about mental illness, and until it happens to ourselves or to someone we love we tend not to give much thought to it. My own experience – it all came to a crunch when Mum died 5 years ago. She got cancer for the second time in her life – the first being when I was a teenager. The second time it was awful to watch what she actually went

through. What made it worse was that we knew that she knew what she was in for. We had three or four months of watching her body dying before her spirit gave way. You don't hear much about what happens in Intensive Care Units – how people can go into post-traumatic shock, and I think that's what happened to me at the end.

Losing her was a major blow because she was the last of my senior relatives to go – all her brothers and sisters had gone. Suddenly I was facing my own mortality. At the same time I lost my job, so I was dealing with two major losses at one time. I think what happened to me was a culmination of lifelong events. When I was coming out of this major depression I realised that it was not the first time I had been depressed. I had had periods of depression before and never recognised what was happening.

The major depression was connected with my Dad going missing, which became an unresolved death. I had had a number of catastrophic life events – and with Mum's death it was as if I said, 'This is it... I can't stand it'.

**I would never have picked you as a candidate for depression. You come across as a together, confident, go-getter sort of person...**

I spend 98 percent of life being exactly like that – except that the depressions in my life have all been very different.

**Okay, then, let's start at the beginning...**

My mother spent a lot of her life depressed as a result of losing people that she loved. I am following a similar pattern. She lost her father three weeks before I was born, so, I believe, emotionally she was not able to be there for me in those early months of my life. During my childhood my mother lost three of her brothers. She tried to protect us from what she was experiencing – but in me it triggered nightmares and an obsessive fear of death. We never went to our uncles' funerals – but indirectly we experienced the deaths. Deep down I had this huge fear that she was going to be next. I remember getting out of bed at night, creeping down the passage and checking to be sure that Mum was breathing. When I was 13 Mum got cancer for the first time, just when I was moving into teenage. I wasn't told. Mum was

wanting to do the right thing to protect me – but I knew and I became depressed. I remember having suicidal thoughts at that time. Mum recovered – and so did I. But when I was 19 Dad went missing in a plane – and that was catastrophic! For so long we hoped they could actually be alive.

**The circumstances of your Dad's disappearance were so unusual. Could you retell them?**

On 16 August 1978 my father and three other men from the Riversdale community went missing flying back from Big Bay, on the West Coast. Fr Cyril Crosbie, our local priest, was the pilot. I got the news at seven in the morning from my mother. I went to church and lit some candles – and then headed home. We had two weeks of search and rescue, endless phone calls and cups of tea, hoping against hope they would be found. The local community put together \$20,000 to continue the search – but the plane and the bodies were never found. And we were supposed to just carry on with life.

I can describe my early twenties as a big black hole. I was able to work. I actually got married, and Peter and I went on the 'big OE'. Yet I have no really positive memories of my early twenties because of Dad's death. The public front was completely different to the private one: I spent a lot of time crying, quietly where no one could see me.

After the birth of one of my babies, I was home and for several months I was quietly going mad – and I knew I had to go back and have contact with the adult world. It was a short post-natal depression, and I was able to shake it off when I went back to work. People do get over depressions – and I dare say it depends on the severity of the depression how long it takes to get over it.

**You mentioned earlier about lighting candles after you got the news about your Dad. What part has faith played in this story?**

During the time of Mum's illness and after, I was a deeply religious teenager.



Photos: Philip Casey

Spirituality held a deep fascination for me – my faith was a driving and fundamental influence on my life. I thought the nuns who taught me were the most marvellous women and wonderful role models. At that time my faith was very helpful – just to fall into those comfortable routines. That deep belief was there for me.

It would have been easy to blame God but I never did. I simply felt so desolate that I had only been able to enjoy my dad as an adult for such a short time. He was a big man with a big heart – and a huge sense of humour. He was always there for us as kids when Mum was struggling with her own grieving. I had always feared that Mum would die but never expected it would be him. My faith really helped me through that time.

**What about your mother? Did she recognise her depression – or was it just 'head down and battle on'?**

Mum belonged to an era when being depressed just wasn't spoken about. I don't know whether that's a New

Zealand issue – but it's certainly a southern issue. People really aren't allowed to grieve properly. They are expected to turn round and get on with life. And if you don't, you are looked at sideways.

**What happened when your mother died?**

I felt completely isolated. After a week I went back to work – to find I had no job. So I became really angry. There is only so much that the human spirit can take. I ask myself what is it that enables some people to cope – and others not. After about three weeks I went to bed and I didn't get up. I wanted to avoid thinking about anything. The only way I could do that was to sleep. I got up in the morning, got the children off to school – and then I'd go back to bed and not get up again until they came in. I would read books, but I would avoid thinking about how traumatised I was. I was beginning to have horrendous nightmares both about my job loss and Mum's death. I steadily went down hill. The grief turned quite quickly into

clinical depression. Poor sleeping, not eating, weight loss: over about four months my body just shut down – to the point where I could not have a conversation.

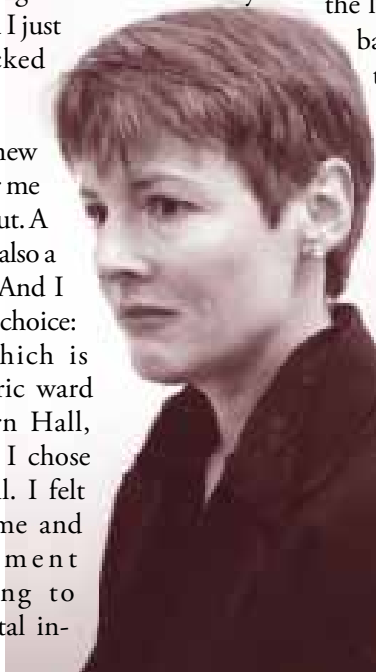
### When did you get to the point that you had to get help?

I felt I needed to be left alone to do my grieving my way. It must have been just terrible for Peter. For a start I was getting “Pull your socks up” messages. Most people do not know how to deal with clinically depressed people. They either avoid you like the plague because they don’t know what to say – or they say all the wrong things. I did some awful things – but you have to persevere and expect things like that from a depressed person. I couldn’t carry on a conversation over the phone. So you drive people away – and yet what the person needs to hear is that someone really cares and is there for them.

### ..and the crisis?

I came to the point where I just wanted to clear off, get in the car and go away. Peter became very frightened for me. One day I got into the wardrobe with my mother’s clothes. I could still smell her – and that was powerful for me. I fell off to sleep. Peter was very good, but he had to go out round the farm; and he left me with another person who started shouting: “What the hell are you doing?” – and I just fled and locked myself away.

The family knew it was time for me to have time out. A doctor who is also a friend came. And I was given the choice: Ward 12 which is the psychiatric ward – or Ashburn Hall, in Dunedin. I chose Ashburn Hall. I felt a lot of shame and embarrassment about having to go to a mental institution.



### So you went to Ashburn Hall?

Unfortunately I had to wait for a month. It is one of the issues: accessing mental help for people who need it when they need it. I didn’t want to go. The day I went I was dressed completely in black, as if I was going to my funeral. I walked into Ashburn Hall and met the woman who was to be my psychotherapist. And she said: “Hello Katie O’Connor. You interviewed me on the radio” – and I felt so ashamed! My guard was blown away. I couldn’t present anyone except myself; she knew too much about my background. All I wanted to do was to fade into anonymity and here were people who knew me! It was devastating!

### ...but you stayed?

The first weekend was absolute hell. I was in this terrible place and my family had deserted me. Then this incredibly skilled woman became my psychotherapist. Here was this person I could let it all out on. At this time I started dreaming not so much about Mum but about Dad. Lots of unlocked memories about him came flooding back. So I was dealing with all this grief that had not been dealt with.

But, after I came out I plunged into a black hole again. That’s one thing about depression: it gets worse and worse. The longer you have untreated depression, the longer the haul to recovery. I went back again to Ashburn Hall because they wanted me to go on medication. To have to take pills was a huge struggle in itself. It was three weeks of hell; I was in a much more debilitated state. My intellectual mind was doing all the right things – but my emotional mind was just shattered. You can be there and present and do all that stuff – but at the emotional level you’re a mess. I came out again... and I slid back again...

### What you are saying is that there is no easy way out – no silver bullet.

My big issue is that early intervention is about recognition

of depression by family. People do not seek help because of the stigma of seeking help for what is perceived to be a weakness. Clinical depression is not a weakness. It is not about a warped way of thinking. It is a brain disease. There is a chemical imbalance in the brain – and you go into a depression. That is something not understood by the general public. It’s a disease – not a way of thinking.

### There needs, then, to be a huge attitudinal change – as well as an educative process.

The first thing we have to do with mental illness is normalise it a lot more. Quite apart from the serious long term conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, we also have one in five people experiencing mental illness at some time in their lives. If there could be earlier intervention, then people would have a better quality of life because they would not suffer the long period of clinical depression as I had.

If I had gone and sought help, either psychotherapy or some form of medication, early on then I think the outcome would have been better for me. It would not have taken me nearly two years of my life to recover 90 percent of myself. The crawl back was a long, slow haul – and it is a very difficult process for family and friends to watch.

Can I tell you a story? When I had Ryan, I’d been on the radio on Friday and on Sunday I had the baby. It was announced over the air – and my room was so full of flowers and cards. But during my time in Ashburn Hall when I was so alone, I had no cards, very few visitors, just a few phone calls from close family. I don’t feel a grudge towards the community, but I feel so much more can be done to aid recovery and to support the family. I know I made it very difficult for people – but a letter is a very easy way of letting you know that people care. One day a nurse came up to me in the street in Invercargill and said: “Katie, I hear you’ve gone through a really hard time”. I wanted to throw my arms round her and kiss her. She



was the first person who had verbalised what I had been through. Even to this day, not even my close friends ask me about my experience in Ashburn Hall.

**Is it fair to ask what is going on with all of us who aren't sending a card or are too scared to say anything?**

It's partly a product of our culture. In America everybody goes to a therapist – someone slightly removed from your life who can support you through a difficult patch. But here in New Zealand it's a negative thing to be seen to be associated with Mental Health. People sneak into the psychiatric ward. For me though, there were some valuable things about having gone through such an experience. It wasn't entirely negative.

**Do you mean personal growth?**

When I experienced depression, I stopped and smelt the roses. When you are acutely depressed everything becomes very intense. The senses, I mean. I evaluated during that period of two years almost everything about my life. The jigsaw puzzle was shattered on the floor – and I had to pick up the pieces. All the career things that I thought were important, suddenly paled into insignificance. When you think you want to die, then you start also to think of the things that really matter in life.



My sister said to me: "You're a kinder, more compassionate person than you were". My family has learnt what the whole community needs to learn. A person suffering mental illness can't help the way they are. Simply telling people to "bloody well get on with it" is not a smart move. Also depression is a potentially fatal disease. It is acutely painful to be in such a black space. And you just want to end it. You may get to think that the people around you would be better off without you. So it's not a selfish action when such people attempt suicide.

**There is a very high suicide rate among males. Is this something which is being covered up?**

Absolutely. It's exacerbated for men

because our culture says that anyone who suffers mental illness has something profoundly weak about them. Men cope with the Stoic Scottish stiff-upper-lip response a lot worse than women even. And that is probably why men do not seek early intervention. Indeed they don't seek treatment! And so there are more male suicides. Although it has been suggested that attempted suicide rates are similar. It is just that men are more successful at it!

**If I may return to something we touched on earlier: do you see your depression as part of your journey of faith?**

I certainly see it as part of my spiritual journey. It has strengthened my belief in God. But whereas my Catholic faith at an earlier stage had provided me with support, when my mother died I was finding the Catholic Church such an acutely painful place to be as a woman – so I could not fall back on that. I think there is a link with spirituality, because people with strong religious faith have a support mechanism which is not there for people who lack religious faith.

I have a strong belief in God and that my parents are in a better place and one day I will be reunited with them. And that's a comfort. ■

**Peter's side of the story...**

When I left you at Ashburn Hall that day a guy at the Service Station said to me; "Had a good day?" I got back into the car – and broke into tears.

In hindsight the crisis had been building up from early on. At the time you were hiding in wardrobes, Kate, you were quite adamant that you didn't want help and just wanted to go away. You were acting very strangely and talking about suicide. Watching you being depressed and dealing with it, I probably got quite depressed myself. From a selfish point of view I looked at suicide too. I just couldn't stand being in there. There seemed to be no escape. A person seems to be destroying everything they had. I

went weeks and months expecting to see my wife dead through suicide. It was the only outcome I could see. What happens is you always hope for a better time. In most cases things have to come to a real head before you go for help. There are a few good days – and you think things are on the mend. It's so hard to judge whether to go for help. I think all people who suffer severe loss must go through different degrees of depression.

And we judge the community harshly for their lack of support. If you had had a broken leg there would have been plenty of cards. When people asked me, I probably showed a degree of denial because you didn't want people to know you were in Ashburn Hall. The kids have been pretty

resilient. They were five and seven then. They weren't at an age when they could understand, but they certainly knew there was something wrong. It had a very unsettling effect. The easiest way has been not to talk to them about it – but eventually we will.

A year after your Mum died and you were getting back to normal, every now and then you would 'go over the top'. But you were easier to live with again. Your psychotherapist said to me at the beginning that you would come out of this a better person. She was right. When the going is tough, you are far more reasonable these days! I mean in day-to-day living. I know our marriage has come out the stronger. ■

# Another way

Abortion is abhorrent to most Christians. In the United States it divides the political right from the left. But is the way of compassion closer to the Gospel imperative, asks Fr

*“Rachel mourns her children; she refuses to be consoled because her children are no more. Thus says the Lord: Cease your cries of mourning. Wipe the tears from your eyes. The sorrow you have shown shall have its reward. There is hope for your future.” (Jer 31:15-17)*

These words from the book of Jeremiah are bold ones. They take the traumatic situation of the inconsolable mother weeping for her child and dare to offer her hope. In our world today the crying for lost children continues. It happens in East Timor, in Africa, in suburban homes in New Zealand. Who follows in the footsteps of Jeremiah and offers hope?

Recently I went along with about forty other people from various parts of the Diocese of Dunedin, to listen Vicki Thorn speak. This articulate and energetic mother of six is the founder of *Project Rachel*, a post-abortion reconciliation and healing programme. *Project Rachel* is named after the Old Testament figure who wept inconsolably over the loss of her child and whose lament is recorded in the book of Jeremiah.

There are of course many different situations where women and men weep over their lost children but the aftermath of abortion is a particularly hidden and traumatic one. For Catholics the pain of abortion is intensified by a sense of alienation from God and the Church. For many this is the ‘unforgivable sin’ and they end up living trapped in guilt and pain. Over the years Vicki Thorn has been involved in US Church organisations in the political struggle against abortion legislation. However, it comes through clearly as she speaks that she feels a need for the Church to focus more on the healing of those wounded by abortion. This is a way for the Church to reach out as Christ did to those who need forgiveness and healing.

As an organisation, *Project Rachel* was established in Milwaukee in 1984 and since then has spread to 130 dioceses in the United States. The work has expanded into Canada, Latin America and Europe and now New Zealand and Australia. Here in New Zealand the Wellington Archdiocese adopted the programme in 1993 and this visit by Vicki Thorn has established *Project Rachel* in the remaining five dioceses of the country.

The statistics show the magnitude of the hurt that afflicts our society. It is estimated that for each woman undergoing an abortion there will be four other people directly affected by it. In the US the number of abortions performed in the last decade means that half the population is already directly affected by abortion. One of the key points made in *Project Rachel* is that it is for both men and women affected by the trauma of abortion. The experiences of fear, anxiety, guilt, panic and pressure are felt not only by the woman who undergoes the abortion, but can also be endured by the father of the unborn child, other siblings, the grandparents, close friends. If these people do not resolve their hurt then it inevitably has a detrimental effect on all their relationships. Our society is witnessing an increasing woundedness among its members and the experience of abortion is a contributing factor to this.

The actual process involved in *Project Rachel* is quite simple and involves no complex organisation. The person affected by abortion rings an advertised number and is connected with specially trained staff. These staff can direct the person to counselling if necessary and there is a list of priests who are available to speak and pray with the person and to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The entire focus is on healing for the person in a non-judgmental, sensitive and confidential manner. The experience of *Project Rachel* is that this support, prayer, and the celebration of the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation are found to be powerful healing agents. They provide a ritual which enables a person to express their experience and place it in the perspective of God’s love and compassion.

We are all aware that there are increasing numbers of people in our society who are in mental and emotional pain. The question is often asked: “What is the Church doing about it?” It is heartening to see that in *Project Rachel* the community of the Church is taking an initiative in offering a way to healing and reconciliation for those who suffer. This is, after all, the way of Jesus Christ, to console Rachel who mourns for her lost children. ■

## ... and Liane's story

I am a Pro-life Catholic woman who was raised in a strong, pro-life Catholic family, I went to Catholic schools, I worked in a Catholic convent, I have always attended Mass at least once week, – and I have had two abortions.

It is not easy for me to reveal my life to you today. As I do so now, there is a certain pain that I feel – a pain that I will feel for the rest of my life. It is this pain that gives me the strength and the courage to choose to speak out and make myself vulnerable

in hopes that many men, women, and families will be made whole again.

The first abortion took place when I was 19. I had moved out of my parents’ home and became involved with a man in the business world. He had money and paid lots of attention to me. I wound up getting

pregnant and I was scared. He took my fear and worries away by telling me would get married and keep the baby. Everything was smooth for a few weeks until he gradually stopped talking about marriage, and started talking about abortion.

My instincts told me “no” to abortion and my Catholic faith told me “no”. I fought it as best as I could in the two short weeks legally given to me at the time because I was 10 weeks pregnant – but I lost. My defences were down and my power was down. Two weeks later, in November of 1975, I walked into an abortion clinic and aborted my first conceived child. I was never the same again. After the abortion, this man abandoned me and I was left alone. I felt very much like a dead person. No life – I just functioned. No purpose – I just existed.

The next ten years were very difficult and painful – only I never knew why. I just knew something was wrong and on many occasions I felt like committing myself to a mental hospital. For years I had a strong urge to cut myself while cooking and when I did I passed the cuts

off as accidents. I had to fight with myself to control my car because I wanted to crash into the side of the freeway wall. I had three children I was unable to bond with. I was unable to hug them or tell them I loved them. I did not have the love for myself to know how to love them. What I did not know then is that these are some classic symptoms of self-abuse stemming from an abortion experience

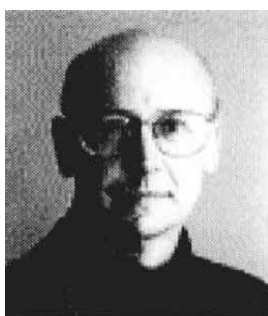
What gave me the most pain was my ability to forgive myself. I had been going to confession for years over the same sin, but I was unable to grasp onto the gift of forgiveness. I left feeling as empty as before I went in, but at least I knew I could receive our Lord in Holy Communion. Eventually, the voices of guilt and shame would scream at me so loudly again that I would feel the need to confess once more.

I lived this way until I found a priest to help me. Through counselling and praying with this priest, I was constantly reassured that I was not a rotten person. This was the hardest thing for me to accept, but I made a conscious decision to work on it and then I finally got it in my

heart. Through this decision my healing had begun.

My search for healing within our Catholic Church continued, but I could not find proper help from anyone in the Church to deal with post abortion, so I joined a Protestant based support group called Heart to Heart. It was there that I began to learn that I was not crazy, that others had experienced the same feelings and behaviors as I did. I felt that I was finally being understood. Six months later I began attending healing weekend retreats and as a result I began to have a deeper outlook on life. My self-esteem began to rise rapidly. I finally believed I had a purpose and that God loved me unconditionally.

As I look back on my life 23 years ago when I had my first abortion and the isolation I experienced, I am convinced if I had heard another Catholic woman admit that she had had an abortion I would be 23 years ahead in my healing now. I have one final message for the whole family of God: never judge a woman who has had an abortion. ■



## *Journey into silence*

*A Christian Meditation Seminar/Retreat  
led by*

***Fr Lawrence Freeman, OSB***

**Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation**

**12-14 November 1999**

**Knock-na-gree, 581 West Coast Road, Oratia, Waitakere City**

Friday 7.30pm Public talk: Cost \$15

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*Fr Lawrence will also be speaking in Whangarei, Wellington and Christchurch*

For more information:

Phone Peter 09-832-0810 or June 09-625-5532

Registration: WCCM C/- 71 Hendry Avenue, Hillsborough, Auckland



*Distinguished religious commentator and former Moderator of the Methodist Church, Selwyn Dawson, looks at the way Christians reconcile their differences. He suggests we have much to learn from Maori custom and protocol*

**T**he church has always found difficulty in adequately defining itself. The very word 'church' may, in different contexts, refer to anything from the whole People of God throughout the ages, to the small clapboard building down the road. Nevertheless, Scripture presents us with a number of metaphors, icons, each of which describes some aspect, though not the whole of its true nature.

It is the *Body of Christ* (1 Cor. 12:27) bound to continue his liberating, healing, reconciling suffering and exorcising work on earth. It is also the *Household of Faith*, (Ephesians 2:19) – an extended family where every member is valued and loved. The church is also the *Temple of God* "built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ himself the chief cornerstone" (*op.cit.*).

There are simpler designations;



## The Church – Aotea

Christians are *People of the Way*, following a leader who is the way, the truth and the life. We are the *Easter people*, living in the presence of the Risen Christ. Each of these biblical metaphors can lead us into an understanding of some

vital aspect of the church's true nature. If however, we take any one as expressing the totality of the church, we may be left with a sad dysfunctional caricature of the real thing.

**N**ew Zealand Christians, if they wish, can add yet another icon to the list – one not strictly biblical but indigenous to our own country, yet vividly illustrating and enlarging our understanding. The church is God's *wharenui* – the **Meeting House** where those who have been strangers and aliens – (*tauiwi*) or even enemies (*horoariri*) are reconciled and become one under the same roof.

Hundreds of *wharenui* (big houses) or, under another name, *whare whakairoi*



Otakau marae, on the Otago peninsula, showing the meeting house (right) and the church (left) and ceremonial entrance



(carved houses) dot our landscape, mostly in very good repair and in constant use. These combine the function of a cathedral, a community centre, an art gallery, a hospitality centre and dormitory, and an archive, and represent far more than a convenient utility.

Pakeha lucky enough to witness the colourful and dramatic gatherings and ceremonies on the *marae*, cannot but be impressed. They are most likely to be familiar with the *powhiri* and *haka* with which visitors are first challenged and then welcomed onto the *marae*. This can be an intimidating experience as the warrior with flashing eyes, twirling *taiaha* and bloodcurdling cries advances to within striking distance of the newcomer, and lays down a personal challenge.

When one understands the inner meaning of the ritual and the world from which it comes, the relevance of each and every aspect of the ceremony becomes clear. Maori genius has enabled this warlike relic of less happy days to

## roa-style

be transformed into a spectacular means of warmth and welcome.

In ancient days, each village lay under the shadow of possible marauding war bands. When strangers drew near, it was imperative that they be challenged to declare their intentions; did they come in friendship or in war? The challenge had to be fierce and intimidating – but once resolved, the protocols of hospitality and friendship took over.

The guests were welcomed with orotund oratory, greeted personally by the *hongi* (the pressing of noses, the symbolic exchange of breath) – and conducted inside the meeting house, that central embodiment of the local people's identity. They entered, no longer as



Otakau marae – the wharenui

Photos: Robyn Skelton

strangers or possible enemies, but as full participating members of the tribal fellowship. Whatever ignorance or alienation may have existed before, they were now one.

This did not mean that all was sweetness and light, that no further discordant voices or clashing opinions would be heard. Within the meeting house, following the ceremonial welcome as all lounged on the mattresses, all kinds of matters could be raised: old quarrels remembered and sharp differences raised – but these were no longer to be settled by warfare and siege, but, as it were, within the family. The feast which followed in the adjacent *whare-kai* (eating house) sealed the bond.

One further feature of the encounter; at the beginning of the ceremony as the visitors move onto the marae, called on by the *karanga* of the local *kuia*, there is a pause while each party silently recalls their ancestors and any who have recently died. The whole gathering is, as it were, encompassed by those who have gone before. Each group recognises that together they are part of a larger whole, bound in some covenant between the living and the dead.

Christians, turning to the letter to the *Ephesians*, cannot but be struck by the parallel symbolism we find there (2:13): “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall that is the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through his cross...

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.”

**Each group recognises that together they are part of a larger whole, bound in some covenant between the living and the dead**

Do Maori have a stronger sense of the closeness of their ancestors than Pakeha? I sometimes think so – as witnessed by their conduct on the *marae* when they pause to remember them. True, Pakeha





Christians also remember their dead, especially the saints and particular loved ones, but our sense of the surrounding Church Triumphant seems curiously pale and attenuated when compared with the vivid awareness most Maori feel. Yet the Scriptures are not silent on this point. "Therefore," writes the author of *Hebrews* following his heroic roll call, "since we are surrounded by so great a crowd of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely... and let us run the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." (*Hebrews 12:1*)

One further aspect of the *wharenui* seems a w e s o m e l y appropriate to the Christian understanding of the Church.

It is the very building itself (above left) – apparently a simple stylised form but in fact, according to Maori, symbolic

of something much more. Stand back from the building and you may see it through Maori eyes as representing the very body of their common ancestor whose figure may even surmount the building in the form of a carved *teko teko* (right). The barge boards (*maihi*) sloping down from the apex end in carvings which suggest fingers, so that they portray the outstretched arms of the Ancestor. The great ridge pole, stretching the length of the roof, represents his backbone. Rafters are his ribs, and the space within, his *poho* (below left), bosom or stomach.



The symbolism is clear; those who gather within the meeting house are within the bosom of their great progenitor, surrounded by the spirits of all who have gone before. Whatever they do or say within that sacred place must be in keeping with that invisible and all-enveloping kinship of which they are a part.

This symbolism is not superstitious – it is sacramental and, as with Christian sacraments, has multi-layered meanings for different people. Nevertheless its congruence with Christian insights within the New Zealand setting is dramatic and evocative.

As with every other figure of speech, this analogy of the church as the *wharenui* should not be pressed too far. Yet here,



in our own country, for those with eyes to see, are visible buildings and frequently enacted rituals which can convey to both Maori and Pakeha the all-embracing reconciling and enveloping love of our Creator and Covenant God.

Could the occasional recollection of this image help to restore and enrich a high doctrine of the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand? ■

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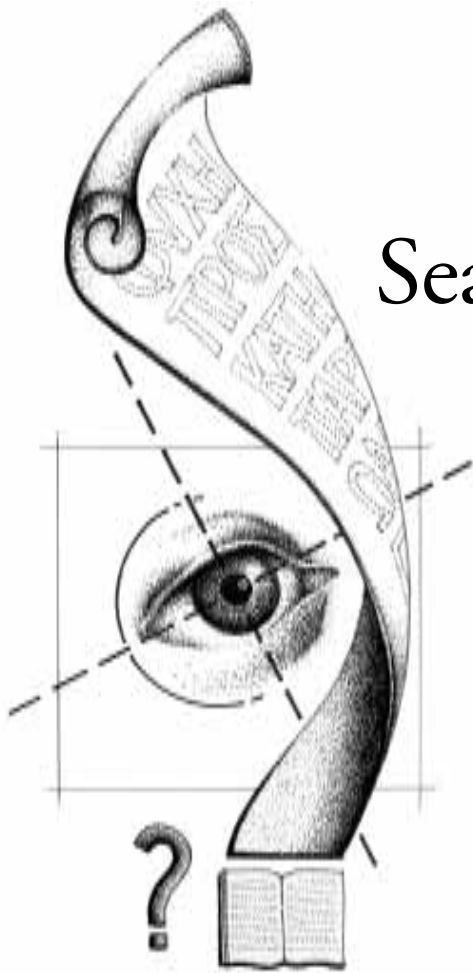
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*You search the scriptures because you think that in them you will find life; and they testify about me. (John 5:39)*

# Searching the Empty sCrypt

*The mystery of God is a word that addresses us. Scholar and spiritual guide Drasko Dizdar explores the Gospel of John with this in mind*



Religion is what we would like God to be. It's an attempt to *have* God on *our* terms; and its expression, theology, is an attempt to *grasp* (*katelaben*) the meaning of God *in* our terms.

Faith, however, is *accepting* (*parelabon*) God on *God's* terms; and its lived expression, spirituality, is *pondering* the mystery of God *in* God's terms – “*in our hearts, in the core of being*: the “place” where we encounter the Mystery that addresses (*pros ton*) us, calling us into being.

Which means that religion (and theology) is fundamentally ambiguous. When it is an expression of *faith* – when the way we would like God to be is shaped by our encounter with God on God's terms – it is alive with the mystery it lives, it's a celebration of faith, a “Great Liturgy of life”. But when it's not, it degenerates into fundamentalism... of one kind or another: either *religious*, which “knows” all about God, or *atheistic*, which *knows* all about “god” – the two sides of the same worthless coin – for, neither *believes* in God, since faith is *not* “knowing”. Indeed, it is *unknowing*: letting go of certainties and entering ever more deeply and confidently into the mystery.

Why? Because the “mystery” is not a puzzle to be solved. It is a word that addresses us, longing to disclose itself to us; and so disclose us to ourselves, our own true nature united with itself in the communion that is nothing less and nothing else than life itself: *eternal* life – a light shining in the darkness that the darkness cannot *grasp*.

Read from the perspective of faith *in a crucified failure* – the innocent victim – as the revelation of who God is, the scriptures subvert everything, all that we are conditioned to think and believe. If Jesus is the revelation of what God is like, then God is nothing like what our culture and our egos would have us believe... about God, about the world, about ourselves, about what is good and what is not – and about the scriptures themselves.

About God: crucified in all the world's crucified; about the world that crucifies: loved and forgiven; about ourselves: created in the image and likeness of the crucified who loves and forgives; about good and evil: that the gentle rain from heaven falls on both alike; and about the scriptures themselves:...

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD  
AND THE WORD WAS  
ADDRESSED TO (*PROS TON*) GOD  
AND THE WORD WAS GOD  
IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING  
ADDRESSED TO (*PROS TON*) GOD  
ALL THINGS CAME TO BE THROUGH IT  
AND NOTHING THAT IS  
CAME TO BE WITHOUT IT  
IN IT WAS LIFE  
AND THE LIFE  
WAS THE LIGHT OF HUMANITY  
AND THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS SHINES  
AND THE DARKNESS HAS NOT  
GRASPED (*KATELABEN*) IT  
THE TRUE LIGHT  
WHICH ENLIGHTENS EVERY PERSON  
WAS COMING INTO THE WORLD  
IT WAS IN THE WORLD  
AND THE WORLD CAME TO BE THROUGH IT  
AND THE WORLD DID NOT KNOW IT  
IT CAME TO ITS OWN  
AND ITS OWN DID NOT  
ACCEPT (*PALELABON*) IT  
BUT TO ALL WHO DID ACCEPT IT  
IT GAVE AUTHORITY  
TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD  
TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN ITS NAME  
WHO NEITHER BY BLOOD  
NOR BY THE WILL OF THE FLESH  
NOR BY THE WILL OF A MAN  
BUT OF GOD WERE BORN  
AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH  
AND DWELT AMONG US  
AND WE BEHELD ITS GLORY  
GLORY AS OF A FATHER'S ONLY BEGOTTEN  
FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH

THE LANGUAGE OF THE CROSS IS SHEER STUPIDITY  
TO THOSE DYING IN THIS DYING AGE  
BUT TO US WHO ARE BEING BROUGHT TO LIFE  
IT IS THE POWER OF GOD TO SAVE  
GOD CHOSE THE WORLD'S STUPID  
TO SHAME ITS WISE  
THE WEAK  
TO SHAME THE STRONG  
THE LOW AND DESPISED  
THE NON-THING  
TO BRING TO NOTHING  
THOSE WHO ARE EVERYTHING  
SO THAT NONE MAY BOAST  
IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD  
BY THIS  
YOU ARE IN CHRIST JESUS  
WHO BECAME WISDOM FOR US  
BY GOD  
AND SO TOO OUR JUSTICE  
AND HOLINESS  
AND LIBERATION



THE WORD OF GOD IS ALIVE AND ACTIVE  
SHARPER THAN ANY DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD  
CUTTING THROUGH THE NEXUS OF SOUL  
AND SPIRIT  
OF JOINT AND MARROW  
DISCERNING THE THOUGHTS  
AND INTENTIONS OF THE HEART  
NO CREATURE IS CONCEALED BEFORE HIM  
BUT ALL ARE OPEN AND LAID BARE  
TO THE EYES OF THE ONE  
TO WHOM WE MUST GIVE AN ACCOUNT

YOU SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES  
BECAUSE YOU THINK  
THAT IN THEM  
YOU WILL FIND LIFE  
AND YET IT IS THEY  
THAT TESTIFY ABOUT ME



AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH  
AND DWELT AMONG US  
...FOR SALVATION COMES FROM THE JEWS

RABBI  
WHERE  
DO YOU  
LIVE??

IT WAS ABOUT THE TENTH HOUR

WE DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING  
HOW CAN WE KNOW THE WAY?

SO IT IS WITH EVERYONE BORN OF THE SPIRIT

WHAT ARE WE DOING  
FOR THIS MAN IS PERFORMING MANY SIGNS  
IF WE LEAVE HIM TO IT  
ALL WILL BELIEVE IN HIM  
AND THE ROMANS WILL COME  
AND TAKE FROM US BOTH  
OUR PLACE  
AND OUR NATION

Instead of being *something* we read, the word of God turns out to be a *someone* – *the One* – whose gaze sees to the very bone and marrow of our being and discloses us to ourselves just as we are. It is not only “truths” we never knew that are revealed to us, but the truth that reveals us to ourselves as we are and never knew we were.

In the Gospel of John, the very first encounter between Jesus and his disciples begins with a question that cuts to the heart: “What do you want?” (or more literally, “What are you *seeking*?”) Whenever we approach the word of God, it is not we but the one we approach, the word that addresses us, who takes the initiative and puts the basic question to us: *What do you want, what are you looking for?*

So, what *are* we looking for in our encounters with the word of God? An answer? A solution to a puzzle?

John is teaching us something very important about how to learn, how to be “disciples”, about how to approach the word of God, when he tells us that the disciples answer Jesus’ question *with a question of their own*: “‘Rabbi’ – which means teacher [!] – ‘where do you live?’ (or more literally: ‘where are you staying/abiding?’)” When you read, let yourself be questioned to the core of your being (what are you seeking?) and answer the question with a question of your own, recognising that the word that questions you is your teacher.

And not only that, but a “rabbi”, a “teacher in *Israel*”. I had a teacher who used to say: *a text out of context is a pretext*. Take the word of God out of its context in Israel, *the community of faith*, and you have a lie – or at the very least a misnomer.

The implication for reading the scriptures is obvious: as an encounter between interlocutors, it is a series of questions that reveal both the text and the reader, a process by which *both* are “read”.

A text out of context is a pretext”. Find its context – the place where it lives – and you’ve found the commonground which will enable you to enter into a meaningful relationship with it, that asking the searching questions can open up. “Come, and you will see,” he replied. So they went and stayed with him the rest of that day.” An invitation and a promise: that is what an encounter with the word of God offers us.

But where is that ground? Where are we to find the living word addressing us? Surely it’s where we live – isn’t it?

Is it?

On *my* terms?

Maybe not.

My natural inclination is to want to save myself. *Our* natural inclination – as a culture, a community, a society, an institution – is to want to save ourselves, from whatever (seems to) threatens us, disturbs our equilibrium, our cohesion. And to do it, we are quite prepared to sacrifice “an-(threatening)-other”. There is nothing like a common enemy to unite a divided group into a community in a common



cause for the common good of the common-wealth. Even a most cursory glance at history (my *own* included) should be enough to illustrate the point.

But this “point” depends on the point from which it is glanced: whether from the centre or the margin, from the (bloody) altar or the b(lo)ody of the victim, *from* the knife’s handle or *at* its edge. What is so utterly *scandalous* about the apostolic *witness* – the *point of view* that is the content of Christian faith – is that it recognises the world’s “righteous judgement” against this insidious *subverter* of its order as the mendacious murder by the “prince of this world” (that “liar and murderer from the beginning”) of the *innocent victim*. And not only *this* man but *all* victims whose blood restores the peace the world *can* give – the *Pax Romana* – the peace that is *taken* in the *taking* of a life: fratricide, the *primal* sin.

The “apostolic witness” (recorded in the New Testament) is a reading of the Jewish/Hebrew “ancestral witness” (handed down through the Old Testament) from the (knife-)edge, the margins, outside the gates of the Holy City, from Golgotha.

Golgotha. Where the primal sin is undone: where a life is *given* in forgiveness of the lives that are taken. Where the “origin(al)” of sin is both healed and revealed: taking/grasping (*parelabon*) what can only ever be given and received/accepted (*katelaben*).

Golgotha.

Is that where we read the scriptures? Is that where the living word addresses us? Is that where we must “follow me”?

How?

**W**e treat biblical texts as mere objects – and dead objects at that – rather than as the “place” where the living word abides. We go looking for a dead body rather than a living interlocutor. We talk about textual *analysis*; *dissecting the text*; drawing detailed and exhaustive textual *anatomies*; *constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing* it. We search the scriptures, not because we think that in them we will find life, but to anoint a dead body of ancient texts or to venerate a classic corpus of world literature.

And we do so wondering how on earth we are going to get into this sealed tome; if we can find someone who has the hermeneutic key to open the door to the script, or at least break it down so that we can get to the meaning that is – perhaps – deeply buried inside its dark and mysterious depths. We go looking for meaning where no meaning resides: among the dead for something that is alive. For the Word is risen; and gone ahead of us into the margins: *to Galilee*.

And from the margins – with knife-edge precision – it reads us: for the tome is not only empty, the sCrypt has been left for dead, and the Word is alive and active ... disclosing us to ourselves.

Exegetes have, in various ways, merely interpreted the word; the point, however, is to be changed by it. ■

IT IS EXPEDIENT FOR US THAT ONE  
SHOULD DIE FOR THE PEOPLE  
SO THAT THE NATION NOT PERISH

FOR LIKE THE CARCASSES OF SACRIFICED  
ANIMALS  
THAT ARE BURNED OUTSIDE THE CAMP  
SO JESUS ALSO  
SUFFERED  
OUTSIDE THE GATES  
TO MAKE HOLY THE PEOPLE  
THROUGH HIS BLOOD  
THEREFORE  
LET US GO OUT TO HIM OUTSIDE THE CAMP  
AND BEAR THE ABUSE WITH HIM  
FOR HERE  
WE HAVE NO PLACE  
BUT SEEK THE LASTING CITY  
WHICH IS COMING

BUT YOU HAVE COME TO MOUNT SION  
AND THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD  
THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM  
AND THE MYRIAD OF ANGELS  
TO A FESTAL GATHERING  
A CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN  
ENROLLED IN THE HEAVENS  
AND TO A JUDGE  
THE GOD OF ALL  
AND TO THE SPIRITS OF THE JUST  
WHO HAVE BEEN MADE WHOLE  
AND TO JESUS  
THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT  
TO THE BLOOD  
THAT PLEADS  
MORE INSISTENTLY  
THAN THE BLOOD  
OF ABEL

I HAVE SAID THIS TO YOU  
THAT YOU MAY HAVE PEACE IN ME  
IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TROUBLE  
BUT BE BRAVE  
I HAVE CONQUERED THE WORLD

VERY EARLY  
ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK  
THEY CAME UPON THE TOMB  
AS THE SUN WAS RISING  
AND THEY WERE SAYING  
WHO WILL ROLL AWAY THE STONE FOR US  
FROM THE DOOR TO THE TOMB  
AND LOOKING UP  
THEY SAW  
THAT THE STONE WAS ROLLED BACK  
FOR IT WAS MASSIVE  
AND ENTERING INTO THE TOMB  
THEY SAW A YOUTH SITTING ON THE RIGHT  
CLOTHED IN A WHITE ROBE  
AND THEY WERE ASTOUNDED  
BUT HE SAYS TO THEM  
YOU SEEK JESUS THE NAZARENE  
WHO WAS CRUCIFIED  
HE IS RISEN  
HE IS NOT HERE  
LOOK  
THE PLACE WHERE THEY PUT HIM  
BUT GO  
TELL HIS DISCIPLES  
AND THE ROCK  
THAT HE IS GOING AHEAD OF YOU  
TO GALILEE  
THERE  
YOU WILL FIND HIM

BUT THESE ARE WRITTEN THAT YOU MAY  
BELIEVE AND BELIEVING HAVE LIFE

*Draško Dizdar is a member of the spirituality team  
at Holy Cross Formation Centre, Mosgiel*

## Exploring the Beatitudes – 5

# *Blessed are the Peacemakers . . . they shall be called the children of God*

So terrible have been the wars of this Twentieth Century that at long last Christians are abandoning the crusading spirit to embrace this most neglected Beatitude. Such is the hope of lifelong pacifist, Canon Paul Oestreicher

**T**he churches of Christendom – unlike Jesus of Nazareth – have been only too eager to sentence people to damnation, always vicariously on God's behalf. Heretics, of course, and all unrepentant mortal sinners. The spiritual death sentence was, for considerable parts of Christian history, accompanied by a physical one as well.

Why then not put warmakers among the doomed, if peacemaking is an apostolic task? Quite the opposite. To fight and best of all to die in the wars of Christendom, whether fought against infidels or against enemy Christians, was to be sure of an honoured place in heaven. The statues and memorials in every country with Christian traditions, testify to the sanctification of war.

There has never been a sustained attempt to move peacemaking to the centre of the Church's spiritual agenda, certainly not in practice. In theory things look better. The first three centuries of church history saw a virtually pacifist Christian community. The conversion of Constantine changed all that, but war remained, even then, theoretically at best a lesser evil. The doctrine of the just (or more accurately justifiable) war puts such stringent conditions on its legitimacy and its conduct that hardly

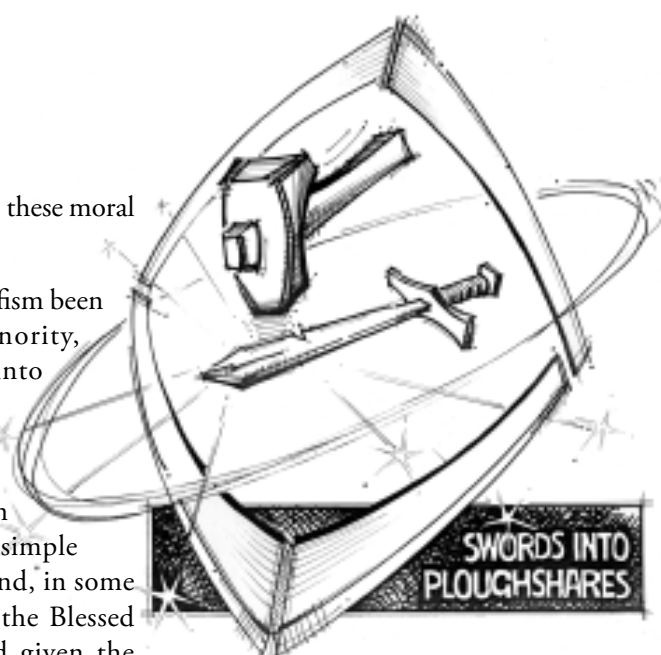
any real wars measure up to these moral demands.

In reality not only has pacifism been confined to a small minority, wars have been turned into crusades. When God is the invisible commander in chief, he cannot be allowed to lose. In crusades there is only one simple imperative: win! To this end, in some Catholic countries, even the Blessed Virgin was recruited and given the honorary rank of general.

**O**nly in this century, after two world wars, has a process of reflection set in that possibly heralds a radical rethink. Pacifists have won respect. And pacifist literally means peacemaker, not just a *no* to war but a *yes* to reconciliation, even a recognition of the Gospel's injunction to love enemies.

John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* was a landmark, the setting out of a peace agenda for the church, and that in the middle of a cold war. There has followed the setting up of *Justice and Peace* commissions throughout the Catholic church.

The almost ritualised coupling of justice and peace nevertheless creates an



immense problem, for these twins are in serious conflict, the necessary conflict recognised by Jesus when he said, in apparent contradiction to so much else in the gospels, "I have come not to bring peace, but a sword. To divide...". To demand justice, the righteousness of the Kingdom of God, is to plunge into struggle, into spiritual warfare.

To demand human rights for all is to challenge those who deny these rights. To champion the cause of the poor is to offend the rich. To rescue the people of East Timor is to confront Indonesia. In the light of that, Tony Blair had no problem in treating NATO's attack on Serbia as a crusade. To the pacifist that I am, the cross in the form of a sword that towers over every traditional British

war cemetery is offensive. In turn, my objection is offensive to many a sincere war veteran. That tension between peace and justice is inescapable.

**T**o repeat the truism that there will be no peace without justice highlights the problem. While human beings remain sinners, human societies will never be perfectly just. Peace then, by definition, becomes an impossible dream. Conversely, if peace is seen to be more important than anything else, the price must be the acceptance of some degree of injustice.

*Psalm 85* is a cry for reconciliation between peace and justice. The Psalmist knows in his heart that only with God can we do it. "What God is saying means peace for his people, his friends, if only they renounce their folly... then justice and peace will kiss each other". The *Jerusalem Bible* uses these words: "renounce their folly". The Revised Standard Version translates the same text: "turn to God in their hearts". At a deep level, to renounce our folly and to turn to God in our hearts is indeed one and the same. Is it possible? Is the Kingdom of God an achievable vision? Is it practical politics? Gandhi's mixture of idealism with political realism gives

a clue to the answer. Not to oppose injustice was, to Gandhi, to deny our humanity. To oppose injustice with the violence of the unjust was to affirm our humanity. To oppose injustice with the weapons of God was to affirm our divinity. If a Hindu can believe that, all the more must a disciple of Jesus.

### *war both civil and international could be outlawed – like slavery*

The challenge is to define the weapons of God, the spiritual warfare of the Gospel, in terms that make sense to enough people. That might be possible before the human race, given our technological perversity, destroys life on this small planet. Enlightened self-interest might still triumph.

Law, both national and international – and global ways of enforcing it, already points in good directions. War, both civil and international, could be outlawed, like slavery. Weapons of mass destruction could be made illegal and the prohibition effectively policed. We are seeing the beginnings, when armed forces are used, not to win wars but to

prevent or end them, and so to make civil society possible.

From peacekeeping soldiers to a trained supra-national unarmed 'army' of peacemakers is a relatively small step. The existence of human rights law, hardly a generation old, still in its infancy, is the right initial framework. Absolute national sovereignty is, happily, on the way out. The recognition of one common humanity is slowly moving to the centre of the world stage. The necessary equilibrium will always be precarious, but possible.

If Christians could abandon once and for all the crusading mentality, reaffirm as true enlightenment the need to love our enemies as ourselves; if we lived as though we believed in the common humanity affirmed by the young Nazareth Rabbi who challenged the vested interests of both religious and secular power, we could move from being part of the problem to being part of the answer. A tough, but possible assignment.

In Yves Congar's words: "Our earthly condition is essentially that of wayfarers, of incompleteness moving towards fulfilment and therefore of struggle". We will need to believe that, in the struggle, God's weapons work. ■



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Dom Helder Camara

*In 1975, Le Monde journalist, José de Broucker, went to Recife to interview Bishop Hélder Câmara. His own personal impression is below:*

It is always disturbing to meet a man possessed by a faith like this; a man who not only believes in a living, present God, but actually enacts his beliefs. The history that he relates and makes is illuminated with a strange transparency. Can things really be so simple? You feel you may be succumbing to the charms of poetry, to visions of Utopia. You have to summon all the arguments of critical reason to stop yourself tumbling into what looks like the naïvety of childhood.

It is impossible to avoid this kind of confusion with Dom Hélder. Listening to or reading his words is like listening to or reading the holy scriptures: the story of a creation and a liberation which God has asked humankind to complete. Listening to or reading his words, you run the risk of seeing our world, today's world and tomorrow's world, through the eyes of the God of believers. It is a severe test of both reason and faith.

*The other quotations are from de Broucker's book  
The Conversions of a Bishop*

**On the Pope:** I was at the airport when Pope Paul VI arrived in Bogota. All you could see was soldiers, soldiers, soldiers – with machine guns – all the way from the airport to his residence. I have no wish to see the Pope come to Brazil under these conditions, protected by machine guns... I long for the day when the Pope will really be just a bishop, the president of the synod of bishops, the chief link in the collegiality of bishops, the head of God's people, and no longer a king... Then he will be able to travel without worrying about security and about risking his life.

# A bishop

*Hélder Câmara (1909-1999)*

**D**om Hélder Pessoa Câmara, the Bishop of the Poor, died August 27, 1999, aged 90. He was born at Fortaleza, in the north-east region of Brazil, February 7, 1909, one of 13 children. The family was of modest means, the father, a journalist (who had to work as a part-time bookkeeper), the mother, a school teacher. An excellent student at both school and seminary, he exhibited early the exceptional organisational ability which was to mark his whole life, and which accounted for much of his success.

Ordained a priest in 1931, he worked with both workers and students, and until he was appointed to the Educational Secretariat in Rio de Janeiro in 1936, appeared, ironically, to be convinced that the fascism of the Portuguese dictator, Salazar, was the answer to Brazil's social and economic problems. He eventually found the policies of the Integralist Movement, as it was called in Brazil, to be incompatible with his convictions as a Christian.

As in many other countries in Latin America, the Catholic Church in Brazil ended the 19th Century with serious internal weakness and very little influence in society. But the 1930s, especially, marked a time when the Church sought to 'regain the world for Christ' and to christianise society. Catholic action groups were formed, modelled on the organisations created by Canon Joseph Cardijn in Belgium. Hélder Câmara's social vision evolved. In 1950, he was a member of the Brazilian delegation to Rome in the Holy Year, meeting Pius XII, gaining a friend in the future Paul VI, then Secretary of State, Giovanni Montini, whose support he gained for the setting up of a National Conference of Bishops of Brazil in 1952, which Camara served as secretary-general for 12 years.

Auxiliary Bishop of Rio de Janeiro from 1952-1964, he still worked particularly with young people and the poor. The Latin-American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) was convened in 1955, Câmara as its vice-president. The second conference (The Vatican II on Latin America) was held in 1968 in Medellin, Colombia, focusing on the pervasive human injustice and oppression in Latin America. Analysing conditions rather than proposing solutions, it yet clearly asserted that the Church should exercise a 'preferential option' for the poor, an ideal which was to become the hallmark of liberation theology. By 1959, when the Vatican Council II was called, Helder Camara was amongst six Brazilian bishops appointed to the preparatory commissions. He was never to speak in the council chamber, but he was a master of communication and networking, and brought his organising abilities to bear on what came to be known as the Revolt of the



# for our times

## *Archbishop of Olinda and Recife*

*Frances Mulrennan*

Council Fathers, that broke the control exercised by the Curia on agenda and preparation for the council sessions.

He organised regular meetings of representatives of different Bishops' Conferences, and a forum for dialogue between the First and Third Worlds. Another group, whose manifesto was written by Yves Congar, was composed of Third World Bishops, priests from the Mission de France and the Little Brothers of Charles de Foucauld. He was thus able to exercise his prophetic and practical gifts to extraordinary effect.

He became a political figure in Brazil because he insisted, in season and out of season, that the gospel involves not only people's souls, but their whole human existence – the right to work, to just wages, decent housing, and political freedom. His advocacy extended to the underdeveloped countries of the world, and characterised his life as priest and bishop in Brazil and abroad.

**H**is appointment as Archbishop of Olinda and Recife in north-east Brazil coincided with the military coup of 1964. The Church became a victim of oppression. Censored and eventually silenced in Brazil, Camara campaigned in Europe and England for an end to injustice through dialogue and non-violent pressure. He became an international hero of the Catholic left, was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and was the second recipient in 1970 of the International Martin Luther King Jr. Award, for keeping hope alive 'among the poor and disinherited of all nations'.

His due resignation at the age of 75 (in 1985) marked a sea change in the diocese. Câmara never commented publicly on the apparent destruction of his Church of the Poor. He was not honoured or consulted by his successor. But he continued to support any initiative in favour of social justice, and to criticise the exploitative intrusion of multinational firms and industrialised nations in the Third World.

His transforming blend of biblical theology and social activism was expressed in books, addresses, sermons, in Brazil and abroad. Whatever power lay in his extraordinary personal charisma, or his particular human gifts, all was lived through a life of deep personal devotion. At Paris, in 1968, he concluded a lecture on violence: "It is only those who achieve an inner unity within themselves and possess a world-wide vision and universal spirit who (will be) fit instruments to perform the miracle of combining the violence of the prophets, the truth of Christ, the revolutionary spirit of the gospel – but without destroying love." ■

### **The aftermath of the Vatican Council:**

As far as I'm concerned the backwash of the period after the Council is not the real problem. The real problem is our lack of courage when it comes to putting it into practice...

A crisis of authority is most likely to come about when the authorities haven't the courage to accept the consequences of the resolutions they have studied, discussed, voted for and ratified.

**Eucharist of the Poor:** (A thief had broken into a church and stolen the ciborium throwing the consecrated hosts down in the mud. Câmara was asked to preside over a service of atonement for the sacrilege.) 'Lord in the name of my brother the thief I ask Thy pardon. He didn't know Thou art truly present and living in the Eucharist. We are deeply shocked by what he did. But, my friends, my brothers, how blind we are! We are shocked because our brother, this poor thief, threw the Eucharistic Christ in the mud. But here Christ lives in the mud all the time!' I said the best possible outcome of our communion with Christ in the Eucharist would be if Christ would open our eyes to recognise the Eucharist of the poor, the oppressed, the suffering.

**No hope through capitalism:** It's become absolutely clear to me and to many others in the Third World that there is no hope of our people being liberated through capitalism... in every capitalist system the concern with profit takes precedence over concern for people. Even when they say: "All you have to do is wait! First we must develop the economy, then we'll tackle social reform!" It's still profit that comes first. And it's clear that the most advanced form of capitalism – the international company – makes the privileged classes richer and the poor poorer.

**Armaments:** There is a terrible, infernal logic about the arms industry. The cost of manufacturing armaments is so high that you can only afford to make them for yourself if you can also sell them to other countries... you begin by manufacturing arms to defend yourself, then you sell arms so that you can carry on manufacturing them; and then you are forced to manufacture wars so that you can carry on selling the arms that you are obliged to carry on manufacturing...

**Danger of adulation:** There is a danger of losing your head when simple people begin to think of you as an extraordinary man, as a saint. But there are fortunately ways of guarding against it. For example, when I am about to go out and face a huge audience which is applauding me and cheering me, I turn to Christ and say to Him simply: "Lord, this is your triumphal entry into Jerusalem! I am just the little donkey you are riding on!" And it's true.

# A Jubilee

Paul Andrews, S.J.

Some dates stand out in your year, for better or worse. The birthdays of yourself and those who are close you, obviously. The anniversaries of deaths that touched you. A wedding anniversary, if you are married. For Jesuits the equivalent is the anniversary of the day you entered the novitiate. Your 50th and golden jubilee is usually celebrated with your surviving friends in whatever style is possible where you are. Five years ago seven of my contemporaries and friends gathered with me from the ends of the earth to celebrate our jubilee in Dublin. It was a wonderful day, charged with an acute sense of history, of times past and friends scattered.

One of those friends was Karl Albrecht, slightly younger than myself, who had been a fellow student with me for five years. A strong, gentle, good-natured Swabian, he had survived Hitler's army and three years as prisoner of war, to enter the Jesuit Noviciate in September 1949. Ordained a priest in 1957, he volunteered for Indonesia. A turning point for him came when he moved to East Timor and witnessed the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991. He understood more clearly than the nature of the occupation which the Timorese people

have endured for 24 years, and as the people, strongly supported by their church (85% are Catholic) campaigned for independence, Karl gradually, unobtrusively and without planning it, came to achieve a remarkable moral authority.

After the vote for independence, as the militia and Indonesian army went about their murdering and looting, Karl continued to drive around the city of Dili, and out into the countryside, fully aware of the risks. Several times the looters came to take away his car. Unarmed, he faced them down and told them he needed it for priestly work (he was leading the Jesuit Refugee Service). Each time they backed away. At the height of the troubles he drove an Australian sister, who had been targeted and threatened, to a place of greater safety. On the way he passed a Jesuit residence which was surrounded by militia, intent on burning and looting it. Karl stopped the car and persuaded them to back off.

Asked by a journalist two days before he was murdered if he had barricaded himself, Karl replied: "No, I work with the Jesuit Refugee Service, and until today I have spent my days in the street trying to take food to displaced people."

Until 10 September he was delivering the last of the Jesuits' meagre stockpile of rice to refugees around Dili.

Unlike me, Karl could not plan a celebration for his Jubilee, 15 September 1999. On the night of 11th September, in the house where he lived with two Jesuit priests, he heard an intruder downstairs. He went down with a flashlight. The looter pulled a gun and fired three shots. Karl did not live to celebrate his jubilee.

The news from East Timor has been so gross and horrible that at times I felt I could not take in any more. But on the morning of my Jesuit anniversary, as I scanned e-mail and read *Looter shoots Karl Albrecht dead*, I felt what they call survivor guilt. And gentle, devoted, courageous Karl is only one of thousands who have been butchered mindlessly but in a systematic way. More acutely than ever, they pose the psalmist's question: *Why do the wicked prosper?* They make Christ's death on the cross more central than any other mystery of our faith. From the rest of us they ask, not blood-lust and revenge, but a readiness to help the traumatised survivors in any way we can. ■

## Genocide in Timor

Latest definite information says one recent report, "confirms the deaths of five priests: Frs Hilario Madeira, Francisco Soares, Francisco Baretto, Tarsi Demanto and Albrecht Karim SJ. It is obvious that the militia are not just undisciplined gangs of pro-autonomy East Timorese youth – but a combination of such youngsters and trained para-militaries from other parts of Indonesia along with members of the Indonesian elite *Special Command Force*.

"It is essential for the international community to foresee the humanitarian problem of the *whole* of island of Timor, not just East Timor alone... the UN mandate needs to be extended to all of Timor..."

Crimes against humanity in East Timor for more than 24 years are the total responsibility of the military and individuals within the Indonesian government, not the Indonesian people.

"It is a moving experience to see how these refugees are accepted by their neighbours and kin here in West Timor irrespective of their political affiliation; to see the sacrifice families are prepared to make, accepting three or four families into their simple homes to hide and protect those who are being sought by the assassin gangs."

(JPIC Commission of Unions of Superiors General)

## Shakespeare Hollywood style

*Julius Caesar*

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Reviews: Nicola McCloy



A recent Wellington weekend provided a feast of Shakespeare. On Saturday night I took in Circa Theatre's excellent adaptation of *Julius Caesar*. The play was hurtled into the nineties with women cast in traditionally male roles and power dressing being *de rigueur*. The result being a frighteningly accurate portrayal of life at the Beehive in an election year!



*Julius Caesar* was bound to be a hard act to follow, so it was with some trepidation that I attended a benefit showing of the latest Hollywood adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This is a real favourite of mine and it is a piece that I have seen done really well in the past. Unfortunately, this particular rendering of the work didn't stack up. For reasons unknown to me, the film was set last Century and the cast spent most of their time careering around on bicycles. A change of era is fine if there is a good plot-based reason for it. A Director with a bicycle fetish really wasn't reason enough. The cast was an expensive

one and unfortunately for those of us who had to endure the film, the investment failed to pay off.

The only truly inspired pieces of casting were Stanley Lucci as a very, well, puckish *Puck* and Rupert Everett as a stunning *Oberon*. Kevin Kline put in a good performance as *Bottom* but it was overshadowed somewhat by an overboiled mule scene. These performances only served to put further into contrast Michelle Pfeiffer's wishy washy *Titania* and the robotic performances of all but Anna Friel in the roles of the four lovers. Calista Flockhart barely seemed to understand the words she was saying at times (but I guess that could be down to performing on an empty stomach!).

For all the film's faults, there was one truly unforgiveable piece of casting. Perhaps one of the greatest character actors currently working in Britain was given a pitifully small cameo role. John Sessions made the most of his ten-word role as Master of Ceremonies, but really it was a chronic waste of such a talent.

While *A Midsummer Night's Dream* served up a few laughs, they were too little too late to save some incongruous setting and casting. If you really want to see a Hollywood Shakespeare, save your movie money and rent Mel Gibson's *Hamlet* on video instead. You'll probably get more laughs out of that than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. ■

## Psalms and songs to change the world

*Let Justice Sing: Hymnody and Justice*

Paul Westermeyer

The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1998

Price: \$29

Review: Professor Colin Gibson

Paul Westermeyer is a Professor of Church Music (yes, in the States they take church music seriously) at Luther Seminary, St Paul, Minnesota, and this book is the record of the five lectures he delivered as Routley Lecturer at the Worship and Music Conference held at Montreat in 1995. The theme of the conference was 'Doing Worship... Doing Justice', and in this series of lecture-chapters Westermeyer explores the ways in which hymnwriters from the authors of the psalms to modern authors like Brian Wren, Fred Kaan and John Bell of Iona have in their own terms expressed the religious theme of justice and injustice.



### book reviews

The writing is straightforward and easy, the sections of the book are laid out clearly and supplied with extensive footnotes, and the volume would be almost worth its price of \$29 for the comprehensive eight-page bibliography which concludes it. Its focus is on European (including British) and American hymnody; Westermeyer makes virtually no reference to the many writers of Asia, Africa or Australasia (including our own Shirley Murray, who attended Montreat and wrote a fine hymn for the occasion) who have addressed this important contemporary theme in their own national context.

This American writer brings a probing, intelligent mind to the subject; a sharp

critical acumen as well as a deep knowledge of the history of psalms, hymns and religious songs. There are illuminating things said about the Old Testament Psalms, the hymns of Luther, Watts and Wesley, Afro-American spirituals, the work of the Victorian John Mason Neale, and other more contemporary writers.

A flow of questions and comments keeps the reader alert and thinking, as the writer takes us through the church's traditions: Was Watts right to omit the most savage and vindictive psalms? Can the cause of ultimate Christian justice be lost by identifying God with the cause of the moment? Do we really sing the song of the oppressed or are our justice hymns, like much else in worship, an avoidance of what needs to be done in the world to change the intolerable way things are for too many people?

For ministers and worship leaders, for thinking members of congregations in any tradition, for theologians and their students, this is an important book about an important subject. ■

# A New Zealand Journey of Faith

*Set in a Long Place: A Life from North to South*

by Maurice Andrew

Hazard Press, 1999

Price: \$29.95

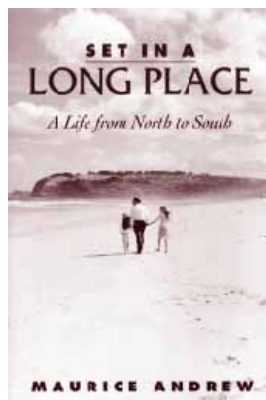
Review: Damian Wynn-Williams

Throughout his life Maurice Andrew has observed that “little things count” and that ordinary encounters can become dramatic. Any one who reads this superbly written and moving autobiography will have reason to be glad that such a “little thing” occurred one Christmas over half a century ago. It was then that as a young boy Maurice Andrew was given a small, two-day-a-page diary, a gift that would stimulate what became his life-long habit of noting down events, thoughts and impressions.

Drawing upon this record Andrew is able to recreate with engaging detail the world of his childhood and adolescence and recall clearly the people and events of his years as a student, preacher and teacher.

Due to his father’s various appointments, first as a Salvation Army officer, then later as a Presbyterian minister, Andrew experienced early on many different geographical shifts, moving gradually from north to south. It was in Dunedin that he completed his schooling and then embarked upon a degree in German literature, before entering Knox Theological Hall to become a minister himself.

In the years that followed there would many more shifts of place: to Heidelberg in Germany, where Andrew would study under the great Gerhard von Rad, one of Europe’s finest Old Testament theologians at the time; back to New Zealand as minister in a Wellington parish; to Germany again and then to Nigeria (at a time of civil war); to



Palmerston North as a lecturer in German; and back to Dunedin and the Theological Hall in 1972 where he was appointed Professor of Old Testament studies, a position he held until his retirement in 1989.

But this is no mere travelogue. It is a work that has been beautifully constructed and contains a wealth of wry observation and comment. Throughout, it reflects both the author’s great familiarity with literature, music and the arts and his passionate interest in the world around about him, qualities to be found also in his academic writing and teaching.

As the title might suggest, in telling his story Andrew explores the meaning of place and identity, what it means “to inherit the land”. This biblical motif of “the land” runs right through the book and underpins its thematic unity. Simply to inhabit a place does not ensure a sense of belonging or “being at home”, an observation that is given a special piquancy with the description of the difficulties that his wife, Gisela, would experience when newly arrived in New Zealand.

Among the many qualities of this moving story is the vividness of its descriptions. At times the reader is enabled almost to see through the eyes of the child and share his emotions.

There is, for example, the description of the train which would take the young family south to yet another home: “When the train finally arrived, late, it roared into our lives with its one round yellow eye, combining a black monster with a chunky serpent racheting round a bend, pounding and hissing through its own smoke and steam” (p.31). When Andrew writes of his father wrestling with his own studies, the reader too can almost overhear his younger sister “lining up her dolls up against the wall and teaching them to read in the same way as she was being taught: ‘S for snake, S for snake’ ” (p. 38). We can sense the doggedness of the arduous bike rides to school and university, though perhaps only those familiar with the hills of Dunedin and Central Otago will be able to appreciate the marathon nature of his exploits.

As perhaps might be expected of someone whose life has been so dedicated to the study of the Scriptures, Andrew’s

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narrative is shot through with biblical allusions and imagery, though never in a pedantic or intrusive manner. For example, in relating the time when as a child he yielded to temptation and picked out the “kiss crust” of a loaf of bread he was supposed to bring home, Andrew remarks laconically that, “the firm fluffy mound was good for food and a delight to the eyes” (p. 42).

While much of this story is naturally very personal, Andrew’s account of life at the Theological Hall in the ‘70s and ‘80s has a wider significance in that it records a period of major change in the approach to theological education and the preparation of candidates for ministry. During this time there was much discussion about doing theology

in a specifically NZ context as opposed merely to repeating a theology from Europe. In this regard Andrew saw one of the major challenges to be “... getting New Zealanders to cease being aliens in their own country and to want to belong here” (p.303).

It was also during this period that there developed the special relationship between the Theological Hall and the Catholic seminary in Mosgiel. Towards the end of his book Andrew states that, only a few years after he retired, he was “devastated when... the Presbyterian Church closed the Theological Hall, the university opened its own department of theology, and Holy Cross College shifted to Auckland” (p. 366f.). The fact that this precious ecumenical

relationship has yet to be revived at the new seminary makes this expression of devastation only more poignant.

But Andrew’s grounding in the Word is too profound to be defeated by disappointment. “Both church and community are ordinary, both lamenting and praising, both leading to the fullness of the other. The parts are of the whole and we need time and space to see them” (p. 367). At the end of this remarkable story, we see the author determined to continue travelling “the long road north and south”. “Jacob gets up again... limping.”

For those who read this story “the long white line of Aotearoa” will surely become a more familiar country! ■

## Companions for the spiritual road

*A Retreat With Catherine of Siena*

by Elizabeth A Dreyer,

*A Retreat With Teresa of Avila*

by Gloria Hutchinson

St Anthony Messenger Press

Price: \$21 a piece

**Review: Sandra Winton**

**T**hese two books are part of a series which aims to introduce readers to spiritual teachers from the time of the Gospels, through the Middle Ages up to the modern day. They follow the format of a seven-day retreat but are usable in other ways also.

They begin by introducing the “spiritual director” and, in the case of these two books do a good job of bringing the historical person to life. Then, in excellent chapters, each is placed in her historical context in a way which is comprehensible without being superficial. It is no mean feat to connect fourteenth-century Italy and sixteenth-century Spain to twentieth-century lives but both writers achieve it well.

Out of the wide-ranging lives and writings of their subjects, each book focuses on a theme. In these books it is *Living the Truth in Love* with Catherine and *Living by Holy Wit* with Teresa.

I found these books psychologically, spiritually and theologically sound. What do I mean by that? I mean that they encourage an honest look at our weaknesses and potential at the same time as keeping things in a healthy balance. This balance rests not on some human idea of sanity, or worse on a failure to challenge, but on the most profound and theological truths of how human life is ultimately contingent of God for its very existence and the utter primacy of God’s love.

I liked the way each chapter ends with open-ended questions that point the reader to an honest and down-to-earth look at his/her own life. This is not left in the sphere of internal self-improvement but asks questions like, “How does your freedom or unfreedom affect your family, colleagues at work, neighbours, people who suffer across the globe?” (*Catherine*, Day 6), or “Are you a person whose self-worth, security or peace of mind is dependent on having a little more money, property or possessions than you actually need?” (*Teresa*, Day 7).

I think these books would make excellent retreat material. They also make good daily reading or parts could be utilised for group reflection. At \$21.00 they are worth their price. ■

# Quality documentaries on Mental illness

I have had the privilege of previewing three programmes on aspects of mental illness. Produced by Kate O'Connor for Invercargill's *Mercury Television*, each is a splendid example of what is best in documentary film-making. Each has a focus and a purpose which is not diverted by side issues, fancy effects, smart camera work or an intrusive commentary. Effective close-ups, some useful background setting to place the subject in context and the careful choice of all who were involved in the programmes combined to make this series quality viewing.

I understand, as this goes to print, that they will be played over the local urban channels, and I find it a matter for real concern that this quality information will not be given airtime, it seems, on any of the major networks. Given the focus on mental illness during October, it would have been appropriate for our so-called public service channel, TV1, to have carried these programmes.

The first, *Depth of Blue – Living with Depression* was a study of post-natal depression and its effect on the lives of two women and their families. The women were articulate, open and frank in front of the camera – with supportive partners to expand and support their accounts of what they had experienced. Jill had worked until she was 30 and into 7 months of her pregnancy. After her baby was born she found herself at home for 10 hours a day in a semi-rural area with no close relatives nearby. Jill spoke openly about how she felt and how good she was at covering up when meeting other people and on social occasions.

Only her husband Tony realised how serious the problem was and knew they must get help. His understanding and support led to a doctor's visit, medication and monitoring of Jill's condition. The consultant psychiatrist, who was

## Crosscurrents

by Caliban

interviewed on the programme, noted that post-natal depression has considerable morbidity, which, if left untreated, could have disastrous effects on a family, with the capacity of blowing a relationship apart. That first important step – to admit to being depressed and to seek medical advice – is critical to successful treatment and recovery.

The second programme, *A Journey Through the Tides* is a study of Bipolar disorder (or manic depression, as it is sometimes known). It is a condition which affects just over one percent of the New Zealand population, and even more are at risk sometime in their lives. Three psychiatrists explained the medical condition in a clear and concise manner, describing the state of mania as "colourful and often grandiose in which anything and everything is possible". From this highly active state during which people can be creative and productive the episode descends into depression and gloom.

It was encouraging to hear the three sufferers being so positive and optimistic about their lives. The professionals noted that it is a clinical condition which is, in effect, a group of conditions. With careful management 70 to 80 percent of patients get better.

The third programme, *Out of the Shadows – Into the Sun* is about schizophrenia. Again the programme makers had the support of two patients and their families in the making of this

remarkable documentary. There is a great deal of fear and misunderstanding of this condition in the wider community, much of it based on sensational accounts of breakdown in care which has led to tragedy. It was very moving to hear parents speak of the relief they felt when their son was picked up by the police, because they knew then that he would receive proper treatment and care.

The psychiatrists described schizophrenia as a brain disease which presents itself in a variety of ways, disturbing a person's thought patterns. The range of behaviours made it difficult for parents to recognise the early signs of the condition, but noted that significant changes in sleep patterns were a possible indicator. Sixty percent of schizophrenics respond to treatment and can assume some normality in their lives.

The value of these programmes is the understanding they are capable of bringing to the community as a whole in attitudes to mental illness. For too long mental illness has been euphemistically described as 'mental health', glossing over the fact that it is indeed an illness, treatable as other illnesses are. By their frank discussion the participants have thrown into bold relief some of the stupidities of the Privacy Act, which can shield some of the inadequacies of our public health system, especially its failure often to support people suffering from mental illness. These videos provide a signpost for us all, giving examples of open discussion and exploration of the various conditions, backed by the strong support of family members, friends and the professionals with whom they were dealing.

Is it too much to hope that politicians and health administrators will look at these splendid programmes and re-examine their failure to deliver a quality service in the area of mental illness in this country? ■

The programmes are scheduled for screening on the following channels: Invercargill – Mercury; Dunedin – Channel 9; Christchurch – CHTV; Wellington – Saturn; Nelson – Mainland; Warkworth/ North Shore – FTN; Auckland – Triangle

# Tightrope walking in E Timor

Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo is the only Catholic bishop to have received the Nobel Prize for Peace. The citation for the award includes the words: "Carlos Belo has been the foremost representative of the people of East Timor. At the risk of his own life he has tried to protect his people from infringements by those in power. In his efforts to create a just settlement based on his people's rights to self-determination he has been a constant spokesman for non-violence and dialogue with the Indonesian authorities".

The background to this citation is fleshed out in a biography of Belo published earlier this year, *From the Place of the Dead*. The author, Arnold Kohen, has travelled with the bishop for the past five years and graphically describes the tightrope which he continually walks.

Primarily, there is the delicate relationship with Indonesia. When he was appointed head of the church in East Timor, both the Vatican and the Indonesian government thought he would be a 'safe' bishop: no rocking the boat or meddling in politics. But from the first he became a thorn in the side of

the Indonesian authorities, who had occupied his country and decimated its population. He was kept under constant surveillance, his mail was intercepted and his phone tapped. There were threats against his life. He even had to watch the food delivered to his house. Once a cake brought to him by a suspicious woman, killed the dog to which it was fed!

Another source of conflict for him were the Vatican diplomats and foreign policy makers who wanted to avoid conflict with Indonesia. Kohen instances some unbelievable examples of rudeness and sarcasm from officials in Rome, especially after the bishop received the Peace Prize. It is significant, however, that Pope John Paul distanced himself from this attitude of the Roman bureaucrats. When the Pope visited East Timor in 1989 he saw for himself the oppression suffered by the people, and he has since been supportive of the bishop's efforts on their behalf.

Perhaps most difficult of all has been the tightrope Bishop Belo has to walk with his own people. When, at the age of 35, he was appointed



Apostolic Administrator, he received a hostile reception from the local clergy. His diplomatic efforts to keep dialogue alive with Indonesia resulted in criticism especially from the young. This was particularly hurtful for one who, as a Salesian, had a special vocation to work with youth. He could understand their impatience and passion for independence, but he could also predict the disastrous consequences of impetuous actions on their part. Many times he succeeded in defusing explosive situations where the young people would certainly have been slaughtered by the militia.

Without prayer, Bishop Belo insists, it would have been impossible to persist through 14 difficult years as head of the East Timor church. He remains, before all, a bishop, a priest, a man of God: he is not, he insists, a politician in clerical garb. ■

Jim Neilan

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## Connie and Bill

**P**resident Bill Clinton came to see us the other day. He came down under; he saw; he conquered. He came to Queenstown. He was duly feted and he said all the right things. And everyone was charmed. Everyone believed him – nearly everyone.

A few days before his herald prepared the way. Connie Lawn has been our 'voice from Washington' for nearly 30 years. She too has charisma. She is winsome, witty and gracious. And she is besotted with Bill. To the people of Queenstown she said that of all the six US Presidents she has worked with – from Kennedy onward – Clinton is the finest. He is clearly the most intelligent.

She feasted her audience with the political party talk of the White House and its environs. And as regards Clinton's magnetism and personal attraction, especially to women, she left no doubt that she was completely wowed. The message the matrons of Queenstown got was: "lock up your

daughters". In the event, the precautionary note was unnecessary. Bill arrived heavily chaperoned: Chelsea and Grandma were there to keep a watchful eye on the veranda.

**C**onnie said some other things which seemed strangely at variance with her judgment on Presidential excellence. When things became too hot on the Monica Lewinsky front an appropriate diversion was to drop a few more bombs on Baghdad. Could I believe my ears? That this man who was being presented as the epitome of wisdom and excellence, could allow such a callous action to save his own skin. What had seemed to be a calumny on the part of the Iraqi press was casually confirmed by our eyes and ears in Washington.

Another pearl was a tribute to both Hillary and Bill's skill in raising money for their own political gravy train. She left her audience in no doubt that the road to power in the world's most powerful

democracy is richly paved with dollar bills. In such a context a few hundred thousand dollars to enable the President to play golf at Millbrook was most appropriate. Connie also intimated that she personally had put her name forward to be the US Ambassador to New Zealand. An ambassador is defined as "one who lies abroad in the interests of his/her country". If these revelations of hers were lies, who needs to know the truth? The message was certainly a rude shock to those of her audience who seriously look to Uncle Sam for leadership in a troubled and divided world.

**M**eanwhile in another part of the American continent a great human being quietly went to God. Helder Câmara, friend of the poor, apostle of non-violence, priest and poet, shone as a beacon of hope after the Vatican Council, but was in his final years silenced and nullified by both Church and State. Camara made no secret of his admiration for Ghandi and for Martin Luther King. I wonder what his opinion would have been of William Jefferson Clinton? ■

M.H.

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