Tui Motu

InterIslands

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join god's dance

FUTURE SHOCK was a book with a bright orange cover. In itself, it was an eye-catcher. My real memory, however, is of the mantra that Alvin Toffler threw out at us in this fascinating 1970s book: "the changing rate of the rate of change." Singlehandedly he invented the discipline of futurology: the study of change in our world. Forty years on, Toffler's popular ideas on the information and communication revolution sit up to challenge us still. Our world loves change, and is reeling under its weight. It's like a wild dragon floating in space. Can we grab it by the tail and tame it?

This month's edition has three articles which look at change from differing angles. An American Jesuit, Father Howland (pp 6-8), shows us the paths of continuity and discontinuity in the manner in which theology has moved and developed over the last 50 years.

Not surprisingly, change in theology mimics the way in which the Church itself has developed and grown during the same period of time. Such is the gift of the Spirit. May this richness we have received continue to flourish.

Dr. David Clark (pp 9-10) takes on another face of change: in the way that government takes note of the needs of the people, and the complex choices that government then faces. Based on a grounded interpretation of Christian faith, David is looking for a fairer New Zealand society based on greater equality, sharing of resources, and stronger possibilities for employment and investment. Amen to that.

The most challenging of these articles is that by Dr. Richard Miller (pp 11-13, 27) on climate change, and what he sees as happening to our beautiful world. He develops a nuanced scenario about how our world must respond now to the global changes that we in the West have brought about in an infinitesimal period of world time — since the time of the Industrial Revolution only.

While climate change is a complex phenomenon, it is clear that we have underestimated the scale of the problem. The situation is already grave, while we have developed coping mechanisms to shield us from horrific possibilities. There is a strong call to revise our understanding of the world and our responsibilities towards it.

How can you and I get governments moving to bring about the necessary changes? (Remember Al Gore's 'An inconvenient truth'?) The world already has the technical and scientific means of bringing about necessary and difficult changes that will save the planet.

Pray for the enormous political will required to accomplish it. May the power of the Spirit enlighten us, and allow our amazing human ingenuity, gritty determination and the gifts of faith and hope to inspire us.

Alan Watts wrote, "The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance."

God is asking us to join this dance.

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Front Cover Photo: ***Sea Lions, Waipapa Point***
by Paul Sorrell (*see our centrespread, pp 16–17*)

tui motu boards' news

This the season — for Annual General Meetings. Two of these have been held recently, one for the Tui Motu Foundation and the other for the Board of the magazine itself.

tui motu foundation

The Tui Motu Foundation manages as a charitable trust the funds it receives from supporters by way of debenture (loan) or donation. The trustees present at this year's AGM on 30 March are happy to assure readers that the fund is growing, despite these difficult economic times, and that it is being well and conservatively managed. The total fund now stands at $579,000. Interest rates are not high, but the total investment is generating sufficient interest to pay the editor's modest monthly stipend. The trustees are extremely grateful to all who have deposited funds in the Foundation or have made direct donations to it. Thanks are also due to Brian Rae and to Fr Michael Hill for the promotional work they carried out over the past 12 months in Palmerston North and Kapiti Coast (Brian) and Auckland (Brian and Michael).

tui motu board

On 12 May the Board of *Tui Motu* met in Wellington for the AGM and regular meeting. The annual report and financial statements provided assurance that *Tui Motu* continues in good heart. Subscriber numbers have remained constant over the past year, but the overall number has not grown. New subscribers serve to replace those who for various reasons no longer subscribe. Our goal of a subscriber list of 3,000 still seems a far-off dream unfortunately. On the other hand, the loyalty and generosity of those who do subscribe are gifts to the whole enterprise.

We are delighted that the Board has a new chairperson. Philip Casey has agreed to take on this role for the next two years. Philip brings very strong facilitation skills, which will assist the whole Board in its planning and decision-making. Welcome Philip! The Board agreed to approach two potential new members. We shall introduce them once they have accepted the invitation to join.

Michael Fitzsimons, who provides articles, interviews and editorial advice to *Tui Motu*, attended part of the meeting to engage with board members around the challenging issues of on-line publication, blogs and facebook.

Be assured that we shall not move too far or too fast (definitely not *Tui Motu*'s style!), but we have made a commitment to explore further our use of these technologies in an effort to reach a wider readership, and possibly younger readers as well. We shall endeavour to consult widely, both here and in Australia, to see what might be possible, and what the logistical and financial requirements would be. We all agreed that any such change needs to be based on a very clear vision and managed by a strong editor. The prospect could be an exciting opportunity to have the type of material and viewpoints that *Tui Motu* prints made available also to more people, more quickly and with greater opportunity for response. If you have ideas (or cautions) to offer, we would be glad to hear from you. ■

Many of our subscribers loved the cover of the Christmas edition of *Tui Motu* — Bill McCormick's painting 'God with us' — and asked how they could obtain a copy.

After negotiation with the owner and Bill, it is possible to offer a high quality A3 size print, digitally reproduced, on water colour 300 gsm paper. The quality of each print would be comparable to that of the original painting. If ten or more subscribers were interested, there would be a limited edition print, each of which would sell for $48-00 (including packaging and postage).

If you are interested in obtaining one of these reproductions, please be in contact with us here at *TUI MOTU* — email us at **tuimotu@earthlight.co.nz**, phone **03 477 1449**, or write to **P O Box 6404, Dunedin North 9059**.

Tui Motu InterIslands

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

The name *Tui Motu* was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

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'ponsassanorum'

As a member of a religious community, I have the honour and privilege of concelebrating Mass every morning. At the consecration of the chalice I quietly say 'for all'. To say 'for many' is to set a limit to the redemptive power of the cross, which is without limit, 'the acceptable sacrifice which brings salvation to the whole world.' (4th eucharistic prayer).

As 12 year old Latin students, we coined a word which is a perfect descriptive epithet of the translators of the new liturgy — 'ponsassanorum'!

Max Palmer OSCO, *Kopua*

oakley hospital

I abandon hitherto held silence, to speak to the letter *Oakley Hospital* (*TM*, May 12) from Peter Fama.

Time, statistics, and professional status whitewash a painful reality: the difference of experience between psychiatrist and patient.

Make no mistake 1968/69 Oakley was draconian in the committed section. Keys, cigarettes, and threats of incarceration and administration of shock treatment had the hallmarks, in essence, of *One flew over the cuckoo's nest*, and the famous play by the Marquis de Sade, "The Persecution and Assassination of Jean Paul Marat", as performed by the asylum inmates at Charenton.

Oppression and power in its rawness were sanctified. Kindness in some overworked nursing staff gave evidence of compassion.

They were at the coalface of patient reality. Doctors' presence was merely fleeting and removed. The majority of patients are survivors of childhood trauma and sexual abuse. They are dismissed in blanket rationale devoid of insight, and I contend it is grossly misleading.

He endeavours to absolve the medical establishment and society from focusing on the legacy of power and abuse.

Considering the high number of Pacific Island and Maori admitted into this system there is an absence of *aroha*.

Bronwen Muir, *Waiheke Island*

☞ letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not changing the meaning.
We do not publish anonymous letters otherwise than in exceptional circumstances. Response articles (up to a page) are welcome — but please, by negotiation.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE PRINT DISABLED

We can make *Tui Motu* available in a form that would allow those who are blind or vision-impaired to receive it. We would be happy to send the specially prepared copy to those who have "screen reader" software (JAWS or similar programmes).

If you know of someone who is sight-impaired and who would like to receive TM, please get in touch with us at:

Ph: 03 477 1449

Fax: 03 477 8149.

Email: tuimotu@earthlight.co.nz

A response to 'The Coming of the Spirit'

I want to react to Fr Alan's piece on "Where does the spirit whisper in the church" (TM, May '12), after returning recently from time in Timor Leste.

Living amongst the Timorese — seeing first-hand the harshness of their living conditions — being openly welcomed by all with smiles and calls of "pitardi" (hello) — the ruins left by the Indonesians in 1999 which haven't yet been rebuilt — the orphans who board at the Carmelite mission in Zumulai — orphans from the Indonesian atrocities — the thatched huts with no water or electricity — the orphan boarders in Zumulai who leave their "shed" at 5.45am in the morning for the 500 metre walk down to the local village spring for their wash prior to attending Mass at 6.30am in their school uniforms and looking neat as a pin — of getting the cart with 20 big jerry can containers and filling these up at the local village spring and pushing them back to fill the large tubs in our toilets so we can bath and wash — the local ladies walking long distances with a jerry can on their head, one in each hand walking back from the village spring with their water for their family — of Br Antonio explaining to me healthcare in terms of "if the medicine doesn't work you die" — all of these have left a lasting impression with me.

One of the Brothers explained to me that the Timor people were "poor, free, and happy." I think that's accurate — the freedom of course is from the Indonesians who left Timor in ruins in 1999 after 25 years of dictatorship.

In Zumulai, one morning at 6.30am Mass I was close to tears — in the front row of Mass were 5 orphans — two are brothers — aged 7 and 10. What goes through their minds from time to time?

So where does the Spirit whisper for me? In Timor the Spirit had a very loud whisper! If we had to walk in their shoes for a day?

Warren Smith, *Melbourne*

will we get IT right?

Ted Greensmith-West

Sydney J Harris, a notable American journalist for the *Chicago Daily News*, once said "The two words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things …"

Over the past 1.5 million years that human beings have been on this planet, we have had the need to communicate our ideas and thoughts with others of our species. Our entire way of life in society is centred on constant communication from one person to the next, right across the globe. From the dawn of our existence we have been crafting new and cutting edge technologies to make communication easier than ear to mouth. In such a short space of time we have hopped, skipped and jumped from smoke signals, to waving flags, to flicking a text across cyber space at the click of a button.

Then along comes the internet, initially designed for American Army Corps, now the gangplank used for the bombardment of social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube… all household names, which (depending on your point of view) are either the biggest thing since sliced bread, or as appealing as Silvio Berlusconi taking a day trip to the beach.

Despite this, it is not only the method of communication that has changed so much, but more importantly, what it is that we are saying to each other. During the First World War, soldiers found an ounce of relief and comfort in their already intolerable lives by writing letters to those loved ones back home. It is important to realise that for those men, racked, bloodied and raw, this communication with their dearly beloved families through a steady trickle of letters each month gave hope to their miserable situation and kept their hearts bright. In times of great darkness, these messages with the outside world enabled them to fight on, and have a reason for living and surviving other than 'King and Country'. When reading letters by these men, I feel respect and amazement at the resilience of the human spirit, but also the strength of our connections between one another.

These emotions are deflated, quite swiftly may I add, when logging onto Facebook and reading messages between people which read, and I quote, "OMG so bored, who's in town??" or "Getting my nails done, sooo cool." Or even "LMAO, just saw my cat sneeze …"

However, can the world of seemingly shallow soap-box websites be used for good intentions? What I mean is, how can these social spotlights be responsible for changes not just to communication in our modern world, but something else? A huge upheaval towards democracy. I am, no doubt, talking about the Arab Spring. With the expansion of social networking sites such as Twitter, ideas of a fairer society spread from the western world into a society where repression is natural. Of course the concept caught like wildfire, and already regimes are crumbling and communities are being reformed.

Nine out of ten Egyptians said that they used Facebook to organise protests against the government. In a report by the Dubai School of Government, it was stated that social media and its rise with new activist users in the Middle East have "played a critical role in mobilisation, empowerment, shaping opinions and influencing change". Not only that, Facebook alone boasts that now one person in every 13 has a profile that is logged into on a regular basis.

Fifty-seven percent of people are revealed to converse now with one another online more than any other way of communication, which I guess fits with the idea of the Arab Spring, the internet being the hotspot for organised and widespread social action.

Although we look upon this change as a positive lurch in the right direction, the notion of a worldwide network, reaching over 500,000,000 people, with an ability to destroy governments and initiate civil war is enough to make George Orwell turn in his grave. We are left asking ourselves is it really morally right to have such an effective tool for revolution? Mark Zuckerberg is Watching You!

So where to next? What's the 'next big thing'? It certainly seems as if humanity 'takes no prisoners' in its march forward into the horizons of bigger and better interactions with ourselves. At the rate that we are going, Facebook and Twitter may be simple things of the past, with new, innovative technologies emerging out of the mist. I wouldn't be shocked if we didn't have an iPope in the next decade or so, or possibly a hologram app in our racy new smartphones.

Anything is possible, which is what frightens me. The Social Network was about the origins of Facebook, I hope that 'Situation Syria' will not be an example of its consequences.

I hope we get it right! ■

Ted Greensmith-West is a year 13 student at Kavanagh College Dunedin, with a strong interest in new forms of communication

the changing face of theology

A Jesuit theologian traces the changes taking place in our recent theological tradition.

T Howland Sanks

A few years ago Roger Haight, an American Jesuit theologian, published an article (*America*, 17 March, '08) that highlighted the amazing diversity and richness of Roman Catholic theology as it has developed since the second Vatican Council and pointed out some lessons to be learned from those developments. He concluded, however, that there is "a kind of theological illiteracy among the laity and the clergy regarding the work of the academy." Many who are not professional theologians themselves have the impression that theology merely repeats or rehashes the theological debates of the early church — the Christological or Trinitarian controversies or those that arose with the Reformation. Others think that theology merely passes on a rigid set of dogmas and doctrines: catechism with footnotes. I hope to dispel these misimpressions.

Having taught theology for the last 40 years, I have noted other changes that have taken place, at times gradually and imperceptibly. Theology mediates between faith and culture, as Bernard Lonergan SJ once said. Therefore, as the cultural context changes, so does theology. And in the last 40 years the social, cultural and historical context has changed dramatically.

Consider, for example, who does theology and for whom it is done. At Vatican II, all the theological experts were male clerics. By contrast, when the church convenes its next ecumenical council, a majority of the theological experts will likely be lay theologians and a large number will be women.

Why? These are the people doing theology today. To see them, look at the theological faculties in the graduate and professional schools and at the students currently enrolled in doctoral programmes. These are the future theological experts.

> The notion that salvation entails integral liberation, not only from sin but also from poverty and oppressive dehumanisation, resonates not only in Lima, but in Manila and Nairobi as well.

Another difference is country of origin. At Vatican II, most theologians came from Europe and North America. Today some of the world's most creative, innovative theologians come from Africa, Latin America and Asia. Note, for example, the presenters and participants at the international meeting of moral theologians in Trent in July 2010. Some 600 theologians came from 75 countries, including Kenya, Ivory Coast, South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Cameroon; Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvador and Chile; India, Sri Lanka, Australia, Japan and the Philippines. In 40 years the church has experienced the globalisation of theology.

The prospective audiences or constituencies for whom theology is being done have also changed. At the time of the council, Roman Catholic theology was done primarily for the benefit of the church community and was heavily focused on training priests to hear confessions and administer the sacraments. Although some U.S. diocesan seminaries were located at universities (like the Catholic University of America in Washington, the American College at Louvain and the North American College in Rome), most were isolated from other intellectual currents and academic disciplines. Today, by contrast, theology takes place mainly in university departments and divinity schools, which typically are part of universities. Theology is directed not only to the church but also to the academy and the wider society. The intended audience is not just prospective members of the clergy but the community of intelligent enquirers, both Christian and others. Theology aims not only to provide an understanding of the Christian tradition but also to contribute to the discussion of contemporary issues and to provide guidance for contemporary society. Theology today addresses three constituencies: church, academy and society.

context matters

A major development in the last 40 years has been the extent to which theology has become contextualized — historically, socially and culturally. John Courtney Murray SJ pointed out that "the issue that lay continually below the surface of all the conciliar debates [was] the issue of the development of doctrine." The council thus accepted the principle that as the historical context changes, so does the formulation of church teaching. Theology is always related to the context in which it is done. Prior to the council, theology was thought to be perennial, the same yesterday, today and forever.

But it is not only the historical context but also the social and

cultural context that affects how theology is practised. Attending to this requires what Pope John XXIII and the bishops at Vatican II referred to as "reading the signs of the times." No longer is Western Europe or the North Atlantic the sole context for doing theology. The diverse contexts of Asia, Africa and Latin America provide the bases for the non–Eurocentric pluralism that characterizes contemporary theology. An intensified awareness and experience of religious pluralism is one of the major signs of the times.

This pluralism has been complicated recently by the processes of globalisation. Globalisation is not a single phenomenon, but a series of processes that lead to the interdependence and mutual influence of many actors — nation states, multinational corporations, nongovernmental organizations and 'super-empowered individuals' like Osama bin Laden. Increasing interdependence occurs not only in the economic sphere but also in the political, social and cultural fields. These areas of human life can be distinguished but not separated. As a result, cultures that once seemed relatively autonomous are ever more porous and dynamic. Political upheavals in the Middle East or drought in China, for example, have immediate and tremendous impact on other economies and cultures around the globe.

More than currencies and commodities circulate globally. Ideas and values, like individual freedom and consumer lifestyles, are exported through the media to other contexts and are modified. A theological proposal that comes out of one particular historical, social and cultural context — like Latin American liberation theology — may be adopted and adapted in another. This is what Robert J Schreiter CPPS of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill, calls 'global theological flows'. The notion that salvation entails integral liberation, not only from sin but also from poverty and oppressive dehumanisation, resonates not only in Lima, but in Manila and Nairobi as well.

hubble replaces galileo

A second major change has been called the 'new cosmology'. Our understanding of the physical universe has expanded dramatically in what John F Haught, of the Woodstock Theological Center in Washington DC, terms the 'three infinities': the infinitely immense, the infinitesimally small and the infinitely complex. We live in a universe of "unfathomable temporal depth and spatial extension," writes Professor Haught, 13.7 billion years old and of an estimated 125 billion galaxies racing away from one another at the ever-increasing rate of speed. Actually, we may not live in a universe at all but in a 'multiverse' with multiple parallel universes. The expectation that we are not alone in this universe, that intelligent life probably exists elsewhere, is part of our mental furniture.

In the direction of the infinitely small, consider the atom, once thought to be the ultimate building block of all matter. Particle physics has shown that the atom (ironically, the word means one, undivided) is composed of ever-smaller subatomic particles, which are made up of other almost unobservable particles (mesons, quarks, etc). Discoveries in the biological sciences give ample evidence of the infinitely complex. Within this new cosmology theology is carried on.

postmodernity

As the Rev David Tracy, of the University of Chicago Divinity School, has said, "We live in an age that cannot name itself." But we know that the modern world of the last century and a half is changing, so we call ourselves post-modern. The term postmodernity is ambiguous; it refers to different things in different times and places and in different academic disciplines. But some shared characteristics are an increased awareness of the plurality of cultures, races, ethnicities, religions and socio-political ways of organizing ourselves. We live with a variety of styles in art, architecture, literature and mores that are seemingly incompatible, without trying

to harmonise them into a coherent whole. Indeed, we are suspicious of those who try to impose an overarching narrative on reality (like Marxism or neoliberal capitalism). There is an increasing awareness and acceptance of the 'other' as other, despite the jingoist attitudes that still exist in US society and elsewhere. We emphasise the particular, local and regional (international corporations tailor their products to local cultures in micromarketing). There is also an increasing expectation of and emphasis on participation and dialogue in politics, international relations, education and religion. All of these characteristics and sensibilities affect how theologians ply their trade today.

theological questions

Although theology has always been done in and from a particular context, theologians were not always conscious of this, nor did they intend it. Today theologians are much more attentive to social location. To read the signs of the times, theology not only addresses itself to philosophy, its perennial dialogue partner, but engages with the social sciences, literature and the arts. These are all sources for theological reflection. The signs of the times are read and interpreted in the light of both the Christian scriptures (the soul of theology) and the whole of the Christian tradition, which in turn is read and reinterpreted in the light of ever-shifting contexts.

In whatever context theology is done, though, particular questions force themselves upon theologians: questions of war and peace, justice and inequality, massive poverty and oppression, globalisation and the new international social, political and economic order. These issues are being addressed by moral theologians and social ethicists, biblical scholars and historical, systematic and pastoral theologians.

Other issues arise from an awareness of a new pluralism within Christian theology. Strangers or cultural 'others' are no longer distant; through migration and the electronic media, they live next door. We theologians acknowledge the variety of ways Christianity can be understood and practised in Africa, Asia and Latin America. How can Christianity be inculturated in these diverse cultures and also maintain some kind of unity, catholicity?

Religious pluralism has become an urgent concern as we have recognised, since Vatican II, that there may be truth, grace and even salvation through non-Christian religious traditions. How are Christians to understand the uniqueness of salvation in Christ? What is the mission of the church in this context? Do other religious traditions have a place in God's plan, or have they escaped God's providence? These questions concern many Christians, whose first hand experience of non-Christian religion often comes when a family member marries someone of another faith.

Questions cluster around the new cosmology. How do we rethink or re-imagine our notion of God, the Trinity and salvation in Christ in the light of Professor Haught's three infinities? How do we understand the beginning and ending of human life in the light of new discoveries in the biomedical sciences? Issues that once seemed relatively clear are infinitely more complex today. Expanding scientific knowledge raises the question of atheism all over again. And scientific rationality causes us to rethink the kind of knowledge religion is, the relation of *logos* to *mythos*, as Karen Armstrong, a prolific author of religious books, suggests. How are these different forms of human knowing related? Many educated Christians today are comfortable with what they know of the universe from basic scientific discoveries.

Finally, all these questions give rise to a new pluralism within Christian theology and raise questions of theological method. How do theologians do theology in light of this expanding, exploding knowledge of the cosmos? The horizons of our work have been infinitely expanded, and theology itself has therefore expanded.

This is not to imply that more traditional topics in theology are being neglected, If anything, the present concerns of religious pluralism, poverty and injustice, inculturation and globalisation and the new cosmology are forcing theologians to revisit and re-examine our understanding and way of imagining God, Christ, salvation, revelation and faith.

future direction

What of the future? We can expect reactions against exploring these cutting-edge issues. There is always a legitimate concern that some aspects of the Christian tradition may be lost and a desire to preserve the fullness of the tradition. We will experience both continuity and discontinuity with the past. Conflicts in theology will persist, as will attempts to bring order and system to this pluralism. The task of theologians is precisely to pose questions to the tradition and, with modesty and humility, to formulate them as questions, not as firmly held assertions. Theologians have been compared to the research and development branch of a corporation, and management ignores them at its peril. The goal remains, as Scripture says, "Always be ready to make a defence to anyone who asks for a reason for the hope that is in you, and make it with modesty and respect." (1 Pet 3:15) ■

T Howland Sanks SJ is professor of historical and systematic theology at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University in Berkeley, California.

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to make our society a better place?

In his maiden speech to Parliament, David reflected upon the role of the state in ensuring all citizens have the opportunity to make the most of their talents. He also spoke out about the waste associated with poverty. This article canvasses his maiden speech and explores some contemporary choices New Zealand faces as it wrestles with social justice issues.

David Clark

What could we do in New Zealand to make our society a better place? I believe the most obvious and effective thing we could do to make New Zealand a better place to live is to narrow the gap between rich and poor.

My christian upbringing instilled in me a strong sense of social justice. My theological education and my time as a parish minister have cemented that. That some people have many opportunities while others have few — just doesn't feel right. For me, this is a gut level response rooted in firmly-held values.

Witness grinding poverty in New Zealand. It is a source of misery to many. Financial hardship adds strain to relationships variously tested by underemployment in some cases and long and difficult hours of work in others. These immediate social consequences should be enough to motivate us as a society to bring about change. But, there is more.

Unfortunately the downsides of poverty are not limited to social disruption in the here and now. A growing body of literature shows a correlation between societies with large inequalities — and poor health, longevity and other social statistics. A more equal society means better quality of life.

Generating the conditions for a more equal society is the right thing to do. But it increasingly seems that it is also the pragmatic thing to do. I believe a fairer society also makes economic sense. Here are four reasons why.

First, resources shared across society mean that all people are trained and available to make their best contribution to society. In New Zealand more than one in five children is born into poverty. These kids have to battle the odds. They are more likely to suffer from diseases of poverty, less likely to succeed in the education system, and have higher chances of ending up in our prisons. For our country to get ahead, we need all our children to realise their potential.

Greater equality is good for a second reason. If we remunerate talent by valuing professions that support the whole of society, rather than those that preserve the interests of a wealthy few, we all benefit. Neurosurgeons and teachers give more to society than great brains wasted on exploiting distortions in poorly regulated financial markets.

A third reason that greater equality makes pragmatic sense relates to public investment. Infrastructure is an example: witness growth in China's high-speed rail network. It's 12 times bigger than it was in 2008, four times larger than that in any other country, and still growing at an astonishing rate. It is hard to imagine this happening in the USA today. Where a critical mass of the truly wealthy exert undue influence on the political process — investment in infrastructure, education, research, healthcare and other matters related

to the common good, dwindles. And we all suffer. In any society with extremes of wealth and poverty, the truly wealthy cease to value common assets; able to buy what they desire, they have no need for them.

A fourth reason why more equal societies tend to be more successful is that people work harder when they know the rules of society are fair. When everyone who does a fair day's work can live well; when it is always possible for someone born in a family of modest means to be successful in their chosen field, they are more likely to strive so to do.

I hope I've made a case that resonates. Reducing poverty, valuing skills of benefit to the community, ensuring all have interest in the common good, and safeguarding fair treatment — all have both social and economic pay-offs for our society.

So what can be done to achieve these things? Plenty. A fairer tax system is a good start. New Zealand's higher income earners pay amongst the lowest rates in the Western world. And contrary to many comparable countries, we have no 'tax-free zone' to ease the burden on low-income families.

Shockingly, around half of New Zealand's 100 wealthiest citizens do not pay the top tax rate. This must be addressed. And it can be addressed through a variety of tax instruments. One such is a capital gains tax. Such a tax ensures that profits made on property transactions are treated in a similar way to other income. It also has economic benefits, but that is a story for another time.

Other measures that ensure a fairer society include well-funded schools, hospitals and social service providers. These things do carry a cost. They may come at the expense of tax-cuts for our biggest earners, but those I've spoken to say they wouldn't object.

New Zealanders value access for everyone to quality health-care. We value schools that are safe with dedicated teachers, and an education system that delivers quality results for our kids. These values are rooted in the fact that New Zealanders have an underlying sense of fairness. It is what makes New Zealanders tick. We love to see everyone have a fair go.

Our pride in our identity as New Zealanders is tied up with this sense of fairness. We can afford strong public services — and we should.

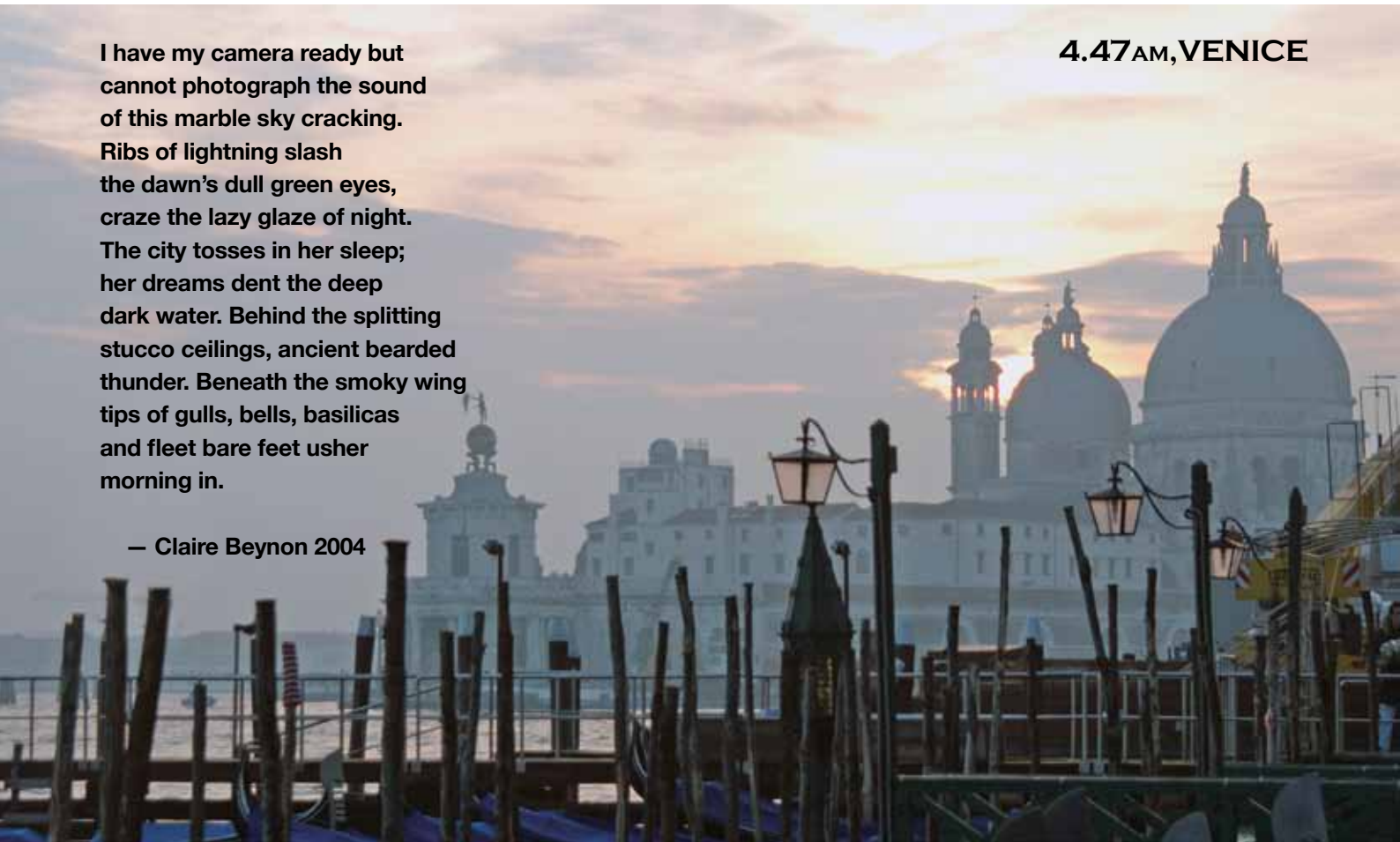
In New Zealand today, the poverty of spirit that can result from birth into deprivation often has more far reaching societal consequences than those symptoms measured more immediately and with greater statistical ease.

A more equal society that shares the benefits of a western economy across its citizenry avoids unrealized potential, wasted talent, and the kind of selfish behavior that results from distorted incentives and despair in the face of unfairness.

Not only are the conditions for a fair society the right thing for governments to busy themselves with, they also appear to provide for a better quality of life and the conditions for economic success.

In my view, a more equal society is healthier, wealthier — and wise. ■

Rev Dr David Clark MP is a Presbyterian Minister. He was elected in November to represent the constituency of Dunedin North as its Member of Parliament.



4.47AM, VENICE

I have my camera ready but cannot photograph the sound of this marble sky cracking. Ribs of lightning slash the dawn's dull green eyes, craze the lazy glaze of night. The city tosses in her sleep; her dreams dent the deep dark water. Behind the splitting stucco ceilings, ancient bearded thunder. Beneath the smoky wing tips of gulls, bells, basilicas and fleet bare feet usher morning in.

— Claire Beynon 2004

global suicide pact: why don't we take climate change seriously?

The American author, through pertinent examples, sets out arguments for taking the idea of climate change seriously. Where do we stand on the spectrum of denial or non-denial of what is an undeniable risk?

Richard W Miller

In 2009 the director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, James Hansen, published *Storms of my Grandchildren: The Truth about the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity*. One of the world's most distinguished climate scientists, Hansen has been writing and speaking for years about the dire threat posed to civilization by global warming.

example of james hansen

In fact, this self-described 'slow-paced taciturn scientist' from a conservative Midwestern background has become so concerned about the impending threat that he has been arrested several times for protesting at strip-mining sites — and last August he was arrested, along with 1200 others, in an act of civil disobedience at the White House, protesting the proposed Keystone XL pipeline. The pipe-line would transport tar–sands oil — whose extraction and refining produce up to 30 percent more greenhouse gases than conventional oil — from Canada to the United States.

Why would someone like Hansen, a well-established professional and government employee, engage in civil disobedience? After all, "climatologists, like other scientists … are not given to theatrical ranting about falling skies," writes Lonnie Thompson, himself a renowned climatologist at Ohio State University. Yet Hansen, Thompson and many others are attempting to make a dent in attitudes that are preventing Americans from recognizing and addressing what Thompson says virtually all climatologists are now convinced of — namely, "that global warming poses a clear and present danger to civilization." While those who deny that the planet is warming and/or that humans are the primary cause form a distinct minority in this country, representing only 26 percent of the US population and only two percent of those who publish in climate science — a passive or reluctant majority remains unaware of the magnitude and urgency of the problem.

planetary emergency

Climate change, however, is not just another big national problem — like long-term unemployment, health-care costs, or the national debt — that can be kicked down the road and solved later. Rather it is, according to Hansen, a 'planetary emergency,' and delay beyond a certain critical moment will entail irreversible effects, including what Lonnie Thompson calls "rapid and potentially catastrophic changes in the near future." Having such a desperate future presented to them leaves many people incredulous, a reaction that the American Psychological Association, in its report Psychology and Global Climate Change refers to as "denial in the face of overwhelming and uncontrollable risk." Yet there is no escaping the scientific evidence. We are already experiencing large impacts — from only 0.8°C (1.4°F) of warming. And scientists are forecasting another 5 to 7°C (9 to 12.6°F) of warming over the remainder of this century.

we can still save the situation

This situation is not yet beyond saving; it is still possible for us to shift rapidly to clean energy. But doing so will require

dramatic political action. There is a lot of lost ground to make up. Since the nineteenth century, the amount of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO_2) — the major heat-trapping gas — has increased from 280 parts per million (ppm) to 390 ppm. This seemingly slight rise in temperature has almost certainly boosted the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events over the past decade, as increased evaporation from higher temperatures dries out some areas and (by increasing atmospheric water vapour) causes intense storms in other areas.

For example, in 2010 — tied with 2005 as the warmest year on record — Nashville, Tennessee, experienced massive flooding that killed more than 20 people and caused widespread damage. That same year, northwestern Pakistan received 16.5 feet of rain over a five-day period. The resulting floods killed 1,600 people, leaving 16 million homeless, and destroying 6 million acres of crops. In December 2010, Australia experienced unprecedented flooding that covered an area the size of Germany and France combined.

Brazil, France, Sri Lanka, Mozambique, the Philippines, and South Africa all experienced extraordinary flooding events in 2010; the flooding in South Africa led to one of its smallest winter wheat harvests in 20 years. While South Africa's wheat crop was being battered by excessive rain, Russia (the world's third-largest wheat exporter) lost 40 percent of its wheat harvest to July temperatures 14°F above the norm. That heat wave, according to the Earth Policy Institute, led to the death of 56,000 people and to $300 billion in damage from forest fires. In the fall of 2010, China's Shandong Province experienced its worst drought in 200 years, spurring the UN Food and Agriculture Organization to issue a special alert about major potential shortfalls in China's wheat crop and the cascading effects on food prices around the globe. These extreme events led to an 80 percent increase in the price of wheat, which in turn fuelled instability in the Middle East. And on and on.

reduce ghg emmisions now

Because of the long life of CO_2, unless we immediately reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 60 percent globally — that is, down to the level at which land vegetation and the oceans remove these gases from the atmosphere — we can expect more extreme climate impacts for at least the next thousand years. In fact, since we are clearly not going to reduce greenhouse emissions immediately by 60 percent, it is probably already too late to save the summer sea-ice in the Arctic. The Arctic in summer could be virtually ice-free by as early as 2015, and totally ice-free by 2040. A dark, open Arctic Ocean will absorb a great deal more of the sun's energy, which will further increase global warming. This in turn will increase the melting of the permafrost, which will release CO_2 and methane (a greenhouse gas far more potent than CO_2). It is estimated that the complete melting of the permafrost alone could increase warming by 4°C (7.2°F).

making carbon sinks

Meanwhile, the Amazon suffered extreme droughts in both 2005 and 2010, losing millions of trees. As those trees decompose, they will release an amount of CO_2 equivalent to nearly 42 percent of the world's emissions in 2009; such events, repeated over time, could turn the Amazon rain forest from a 'carbon sink' — an important resource for drawing CO_2 out of the atmosphere– to a significant source of CO_2. These are but a few examples of 'positive feedbacks,' large scale changes that will increase future warming. Increased greenhouse gas emissions can push the climate system or elements of the system to a tipping point where the dynamics of the system take over and cause very large changes that are completely beyond our control.

When we consider that only 0.8°C of warming has caused such large-scale changes, projections in the scientific literature of the effects of our current emissions path and the corresponding temperature increase of 5 to 7°C (relative to preindustrial temperatures) appear much more believable. What will such a temperature increase mean for the human community? Let me follow the personal cue in the title of James Hansen's book, *Storms of my Grandchildren*, and travel into the future of my sons, currently ages eight, six and two, to see what sort of world they might find themselves growing older in.

the future for children

Two decades from now, when my sons are in their twenties, CO_2 levels are projected to reach 450 ppm. At that point the southwestern United States, Southern Europe, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, and Western Australia could be dustbowls. Social stability will be rocked by refugees from Mexico and Central America, fleeing drought conditions and sharp reductions in crop yields — reductions that will extend across the tropics and subtropics, where most of the world's poor live. When my sons enter their thirties in the 2040s, the destruction of the world's coral reefs from warmer and more acidic oceans caused by CO_2 absorption will be well underway. According to the marine scientist J E N Veron, "once-thriving coral gardens that supported the greatest biodiversity of the marine realm will become red-black bacterial slime" — an essentially irreversible loss, since it would take hundreds of thousands or even millions of years

for the chemistry of the oceans to return to a state supportive of coral reefs. The collapse of coral reefs, moreover, may exert a domino effect, triggering a mass extinction of ocean ecosystems.

water, food and forests

When my boys enter their forties — perhaps by now with children of their own — CO_2 levels will likely have reached 560 ppm. The global water crisis will contribute to a global food crisis, with insufficient fresh water for irrigating crops. By this time, many of the world's mountain glaciers, which feed the rivers that provide water for half the world's population, will be substantially diminished or gone. The shrinkage of the Sierra Nevada snowpack will have greatly impaired California's agriculture, which today produces nearly half of US-grown fruits and vegetables. Corn and soy yields in the US, currently a major contributor to world markets, will experience drastic declines. Forests throughout the western US will burn, with California losing 50 to 70 percent of its forests. The Amazon rainforest will suffer devastating drought-driven fires. Seas worldwide will have risen one foot, and coastal cities will enter the first phase of their destruction.

By the 2060s, if carbon-cycle feedbacks prove to be strong, the world could be 4°C warmer, and 40 to 70 percent of assessed species could be headed irreversibly towards extinction. And by the end of the century, my grandchildren and great grandchildren will live in a world where sea levels could be between three and 17 feet higher than they are now. The abandonment of many of the world's great cities will be well underway. Food markets could see an 80 percent reduction in US corn and soy yields and the collapse of California agriculture. Half the forests in the American west could be gone, destroyed by fire.

coping mechanisms

When faced with the overwhelming character of these forecasts, we develop coping mechanisms (as multiple studies in psychology and climate change have shown) that shield us from the real gravity of our situation. This is understandable, and to some extent we are all to a certain degree susceptible to this, since a real acceptance of the science requires one fundamentally to revise one's understanding of the world and one's responsibilities to it. That is not easy to do.

problem underestimated

Climate change is complex, people say; the science is uncertain. That there will be large destructive changes from the continued warming of the planet is certain; indeed, it is already happening. Yet we cannot know with certitude precisely how large and rapid these changes will be. What is clear, though, is that so far we have substantially underestimated the problem.

The polar ice sheets, for instance, are melting 100 years ahead of the 2001 forecasts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The rate of sea-ice melt in the Arctic is 30 years ahead of the 2007 IPCC projections. Carbon dioxide pollution is raising ocean acidity 10 to 20 times faster than models predicted. And many of the feedbacks that will increase warming have not been included, or are just beginning to be included, in computer models. My description of the possible future of my sons, for instance, does not include the melting of the permafrost, which is likely to start significantly increasing warming in 15 to 20 years.

the worst is avoidable

The worst of this future is avoidable, but only if planetary warming does not increase more than 2°C relative to preindustrial levels. To have a two-thirds chance of holding this 2°C line, developed countries like the US will have to stop CO_2 emissions growth this year and reduce their emission approximately 11 percent per year towards near-total decarbonization by 2050. To grasp the staggering scale of this challenge, one should merely note that the only instance of national or regional emission reductions greater than one percent per year over a 10-year period occurred during the economic collapse of the former Soviet Union, when emissions declined 5.2 percent per year and it required a halving of the economy to get it done.

What happens if we take a less radical — and more politically palatable — emissions-reduction path? If we assume that the developed world can halt the growth of its emissions by 2016, followed by a three percent reduction in emissions per year, and we include in this analysis those greenhouse-gas emissions that cannot be reduced to zero (for example, nitrous oxide and methane involved in food production), then the world will likely warm by nearly 4°C by 2100. And this analysis, from Alice Bows and Kevin Anderson of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Research in the UK, does not include the most dangerous positive feedback, the melting of the permafrost — which, it is estimated, will eventually increase warming by approximately 4°C. Figure that in, and humanity will likely find itself living in the nightmare world I sketched above. Kevin Anderson has expressed the gravity of our situation, calling our chances (in a world 4°C warmer) of avoiding mass death – the loss of more than 90 percent of human beings

continued on page 27

stories for the journey

The Gospels are texts about individual and community transformation, not a 'newspaper record' of the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth. Michael Fitzsimons talks with author Alexander Shaia about how the Great Story is more about the Jesus in us than the Jesus of history.

Alexander Shaia comes to town in late autumn, keen to shed a fresh light on the Great Story of the Gospels that we are so familiar with, in a sense too familiar with. He grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, the third son of Lebanese immigrants and still retains a Semitic outlook.

maronite background

"I grew up in a Lebanese village, living in the old ways, right in the middle of an industrial city in the American south. The gift of this was to grow up seeing the Christianity of my ancestors, the same as it has been for more than 900 years, brought from a mountain village in Lebanon, recreated in Birmingham. My father's family is the family of Maronite priests in this village, and nine of our last 11 generations have included priests called Alexander.

"I went to Maronite seminary after college for a short while, but I left in search of one that would fit me better. I immediately began to work for Roman Catholic Churches instead and did so for the next 20 years as head of adult education, leading and teaching the rite of Christian initiation of adults."

interest in transformation

In the early 90s Alexander entered a doctoral programme in clinical psychology and these days is an educator, psychologist, spiritual director, liturgist, writer and speaker. His great interest is transformation — personal and community — and his core message is that transformation rather than historical record is what the Gospels are all about.

Tonight he is addressing a small crowd at St Andrews on the Terrace with great enthusiasm. Lately he has worked with spiritual directors in New Zealand and Australia and is working on another book, a follow-up to the very successful *Hidden Power of the Gospels: Four Questions, Four Paths, One Journey.* He wears a lovely greenstone pendant, an appreciative gift from the spiritual directors he has been working with.

> "When the Church brought the four Gospels together, it was giving us a spiritual map for how to live the life Jesus promised."

dynamic presence of God

In recent times there has been a great emphasis on the historical Jesus, but the heart of the Gospel is about the dynamic presence of God right now, says Alexander. The Gospels are about connecting the Risen Jesus to the young and fragile Christian communities in Rome, Antioch and Ephesus.

The Gospel is not a sacred newspaper recording what Jesus said and did but rather the truth in every moment in time, verifiable, says Alexander. "It's about the dynamism of now, and that's what set first century Christianity on fire. The historical Jesus needs to be placed in a new configuration, he needs to be brought home to the dynamic struggle of the baptized.

"When the Church brought the four Gospels together, it was giving us a spiritual map for how to live the life Jesus promised. The stories become not just about Jesus but about Jesus in us."

gospels from lived experience

Seen in this way, the Gospels are the lived experience of particular Christian communities written in response to moments of crisis and dilemma. They come from the wrestling of these new baptised communities. The spiritual truths that underpin them are fundamental to the spiritual journey that we all must take.

mark

"Writing in the 60s, Mark gives the revelation of Jesus Christ to a community *in extremis*, after the Christians of Rome had been persecuted under Nero. They were baptised, but none of these early Christians would have believed their faith would have led to all their deaths. Seeing the text in this way, Mark's gospel becomes a prayer, a teaching, a meditation on how we walk with Jesus Christ through the valley of death. This lens organises the text in a new way — it shows the life story of Jesus in the context of trial and suffering. It opens up as a teaching but also as a spiritual practice, it's like an Ignatian exercise on the life of Jesus brought forward to this terrible moment in Rome."

matthew

"We think the Gospel of Matthew is coming from the community in Antioch in the years after the destruction of the Jewish temple and the

Alexander Shaia

massacre of the Jewish priesthood, in 70 AD. The emperor wants to destroy the Jewish faith. The Jewish people are bereft in a way few faiths have ever been in history. The only access they believed they had to God was in this temple. At this stage there was no Christian priesthood, we are still tied to Jewish ritual, priesthood and the temple. Now they are gone, and the rituals stop. The Jewish-Christian community in Antioch is wrestling, and the text of Matthew leads them in their moment of change. Underneath Matthew, is this beautiful grace delivering the message that they have a new temple, and a new priesthood, in Christianity."

luke

The third lens is Luke, in the mid-80s and it is a Gospel about how we mature in service, says Alexander.

"The text of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles is: here we are a people of a new revelation, we have a wider way for the human family to be seen, we have increased dignity for women, slaves and the poor. This way of living made us an enemy of the Emperor. This text led us through 225 years of mind-boggling persecution, of being executed for being Christian. The Roman Emperor fell 225 years later because we had changed the values of the empire. Luke is one of the first great texts about non-violent resistance. It is the text of how Jesus, Peter and Paul faced oppression, how we as Christians will face oppression.

john

"The fourth text is John, at the end of the first century. He is writing it for a community which is Greek instead of Jewish, so he uses the Greek language. It is an interior text, a meditation about how to make love your foundation, how to keep your heart open. They are meditations on the grace of God, active now."

According to Alexander, it is no accident that 300 years after they were written these four texts, these four paths on the spiritual journey, were named by the Church as the Gospels.

"Why are there four chapters? The Church leaders believed that there were four parts of the sequence to the spiritual journey, a number they got from Judaism. So the Gospel needed four accounts. The first part is how you face change, for which they rightly chose Matthew. Facing change leads to a time of great trial and difficulty, the text of Mark. The change and the ordeal lead to a moment of epiphany, John. The joy of the new vision finds its fulfilment in Luke, which is service."

gospel message for now

Seen in this light, the Gospels are not so much a verification of history but a message about how to live now. And that involves not just a faith decision, a moment of conversion, but the more difficult challenge of living as a member of a new pan-tribal family.

Says Alexander: "The idea of a pan-tribal religion hadn't been on the planet before Jesus and it was very revolutionary — and still is. We all come from one source, called to be one family gathered around one table, having the same affectionate bond to everyone who sits at the table, and not just those that are part of your bloodline. All that beautiful diversity is to be wrestled with and that is what the Gospels are about." ■

Playing in God's presence...

Regular contributor Paul Sorrell tells a story of some Otago Peninsula sea lion pups and their absentee mums

Mothers and motherhood is a subject that interests all of us. As a wildlife photographer, I have often been privy to the parenting behaviour of species other than our own – none more fascinating than the sea lions often seen hauled out on sandy beaches around Dunedin.

Since the 1980s, a small colony of New Zealand (formerly known as Hooker's) sea lions has been living on the Otago Peninsula, around 650 kilometres from the species' stronghold in the subantarctic Auckland Islands. About 20 years ago they started to breed, and every year around Christmastime a few pups are born into the colony. Each mother gives birth to a single pup, and feeds and protects it for its first year of life.

When they are a few months old, the pups are left to fend for themselves while their mothers are away hunting for fish out at sea, returning every few days to feed their young on a nutritious formula five times richer than cow's milk. Far from feeling bereft as a result of their mums' apparent abandonment of them, the pups — banded together in creches — relish the opportunity to frolic and let off steam.

One late autumn afternoon, walking along the edge of Papanui Inlet, I came across two pups mudwrestling in a sticky patch near the shoreline. In a few minutes their furry coats went from off-white to black. Eventually tiring of this sport, they made their way down to the beach, but not before turning round to give me a sheepish glance, looking for all the world like a couple of naughty children.

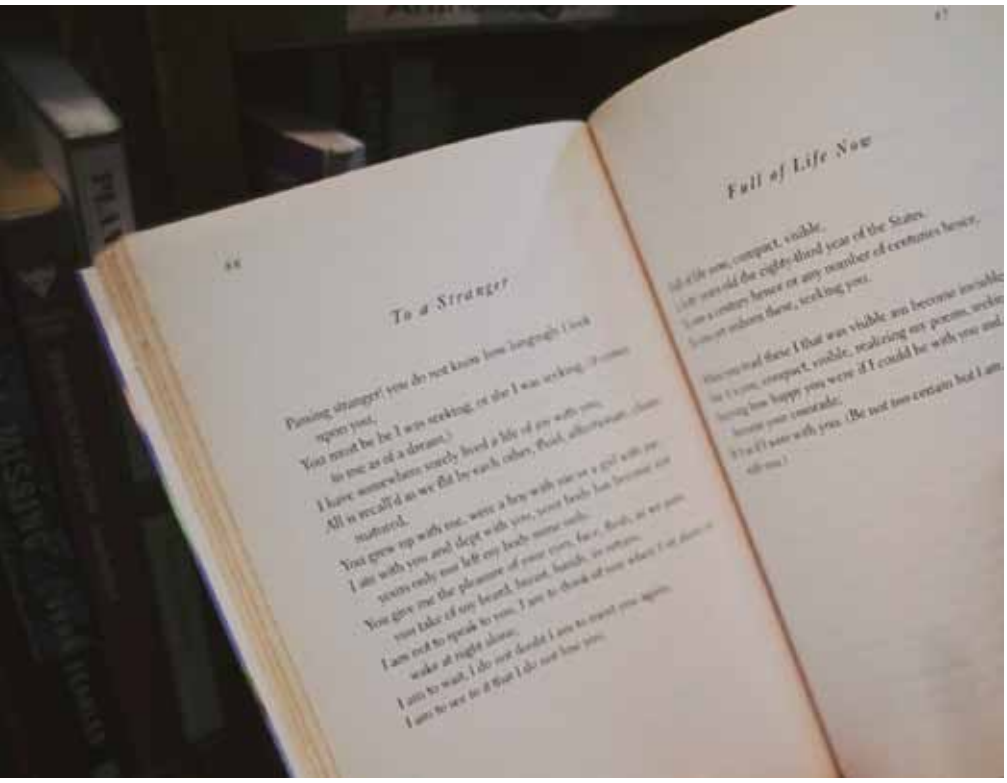
Finding a pool left by the receding tide, they jumped in to clean themselves off and were soon joined by several other frisky pups. The youngsters seemed to have endless energy. Fascinated, I watched them chasing, tumbling, diving and play-fighting for hour after hour, all at top speed.

They were curious and friendly too, bounding up to me and poking their noses into my backpack with all the playfulness of a litter of puppies. Their mums might be far away out to sea, but there was too much going on for their young ones to miss them, not even for a minute! ■

poetry, please

Nothing empowers us as much as words can.
They can bring Christ's redeeming presence into our soul.
But the dullest prose can dull our spirits, too.

Daniel O'Leary



Words transform us. Beautiful words redeem our spirit. They find their way into places of hurt within us and heal them. They slip past the sentries of the mind. They are the kisses of the soul. They enter our bodies like Holy Communion. And then they do their fertile work. We live our days differently when we carry living words inside us.

These living words shape our lives in many ways, but mainly they transform our fear. *Through Corridors of Light* is a new collection of poems of consolation for times of anxiety and illness. John Andrew Denny, the editor, writes from the depths of his "indescribable" nausea, isolation and despair. The onset of ME sapped his soul, his energy, stamina and mental clarity. After Denny wrote to *The Tablet* about this planned anthology, some words on a card sent to him began the release from his prison of intense frustration. The simple, soothing, musical words of John Masefield's 'Sea Fever' became a kind of escape from his trapped condition:

I must go down to the seas again,
to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and
a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the
wind's song
and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face
and a grey dawn breaking.

Now he was able to go "down to the seas again" and thus "transcend the limitations that illness can impose on imagination". And his new book was born.

Something within us is always desperate for the nourishment of words. In her lovely book *Saved by a Poem*, Kim Rosen quotes poet Mary Oliver: "For poems are not words, after all, but fires for the cold, ropes let down to the lost, something as necessary as bread in the pockets of the hungry."

So much healing happens when the soul is opened. We are healed by the words that let mystery in. Too many words, even religious ones, carry only hard and dry knowledge. They do not moisten or soften or reconcile. Poet David Whyte warns that "This is not the age of information ... forget the news." In 'Loaves and Fishes' he writes:

This is the time
of loaves
and fishes.
People are hungry,
and one good word is bread
for a thousand.

Jesus used beautiful words to heal the fear that fills us when we lose direction, confidence and heart — words to warm us when we shiver on cold corridors with no familiar rooms to welcome us in. We need to hear them now. The whole world needs to hear them now.

But who will speak those words to us when the Church itself is in danger of losing its own soul? Where do we look for the vital voices of hope? We look within. Our hearts still carry the echo of God's music in Creation, of the Saviour's song in redemption. Too long have those hearts and voices been silent. To paraphrase the words of Hindu mystic Rumi, "Speak a new language so that the Church can be a new Church, the world a new world."

Writing recently in *The Times*' Credo column about church worship, the Very Revd John Shepherd referred to the need for "incendiary words ... which are best able to offer perspectives we never imagined possible, never believed existed ... What is critical is the musicality of the words, their rhythmic development, their poetic symbolism, their ability to inflame our imaginations. That is why the words of our liturgies need finally to be in the hands of poets, artists and musicians."

Hans Urs von Balthasar, theologian of beauty, believed that "God needs prophets in order to make himself known, and all prophets are necessarily artistic. What a prophet has to say can never be said in prose."

We forever search for more beautiful ways of expressing the inexpressible. At a service to mark the four-hundredth anniversary of the King James Bible, the Archbishop of Canterbury was reflecting on translations. Dr Williams spoke of the importance of choosing words that carry "the almost unbearable weight of divine intelligence and love pressing down on those who first encountered it ..."

When the old words failed him, Nobel Prize winner Rabinadrath Tagore was "at the last limit of my power" as his "voyage had come to its end". Then, in his letting go into the unknown he wrote:

And when old words die on the tongue,
New melodies break out in the heart;
And where old tracks are lost,
New country is revealed with its wonders.

Theologian Walter Brueggemann calls for a poetic language where the Church's communication is concerned. When homiletic, liturgical and prophetic texts are all reduced to prose, "there is a dread dullness that besets the human spirit, and we all become mindless conformists ..."

He writes passionately about our desperate need for "a new word, a new verb, a new conversation, a new possibility". There is a crucial time for the poetic word to appear. That time is now, he says, when, because of a "fearful rationality" in our prescribed and routine rituals and proclamations, there is no room for the "excitement of our hearts".

In 'Finally Comes the Poet', Brueggemann quotes Walt Whitman:

After the seas are all cross'd,
(as they seem already cross'd,)
After the great captains and
engineers have accomplish'd their work,
After the noble inventors, after the scientists,
the chemist, the geologist, ethnologist,
Finally shall come the poet
worthy of that name,
The true son of God shall come singing his songs.

Percy Bysshe Shelley believed that poets rather than politicians were the unacknowledged legislators of the world while the much-loved poet-president of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel, said that his success in peacefully overthrowing totalitarian rule was due to his choice of weapons — beautiful words. Our Church at home and abroad is in dire need of salvation. Here where I am based, in the north of England, from the land of the powerful prince-bishops, dare we hope for a poet-bishop to arrive soon? ■

Fr Daniel O'Leary is a priest of the Diocese of Leeds, England. His website is **www.djoleary.com.**

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St Hildegard of Bingen

Pope Benedict XVI canonized Hildegard of Bingen on May 10. Hildegard has been commonly regarded as one of the patron saints of the environment — on account of her magnificent music and writings that deal with the beauty of creation. Her feast day is September 17.

Pope Benedict inserted her feast into the liturgical calendar of the universal church, with its own Mass and Office — a process known as 'equivalent canonization'. He has also announced that she will be made a Doctor of the Church in October 2012.

++++++++++++++++++

Hildegard's Antiphon:
To the Trinity!

To the Trinity be praise!
God is music, God is life
that nurtures every
creature in its kind.
Our God is the song of the
angel throng
and the splendor of secret ways
hid from all humankind,
But God our life is the life of all.

what happened at the last supper

Paul Andrews

Three of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, describe what happened at the Last Supper after Judas went out into the night to betray Jesus. Jesus took bread, and later wine, to transform them into his body and blood in the Eucharist.

St John's Gospel is different. It was written towards the end of the first century, and something had happened during those sixty years since Calvary. The Eucharist had been a symbol of unity — sharing the one table: many grains make one bread, many grapes make wine. But in those decades it had already become a source of division.

It is worse now. There is no element of our religion about which Christians disagree more than about the Eucharist. There is practically no element of the Eucharist about which Christians have not argued and divided. Where do you celebrate, in a house or a consecrated building? On Sabbath, Sundays or every day? Before noon or at any time? Who may consecrate and lead the Mass? Does it have to be the respected father of a family, as St Paul suggested, or what was later called a bishop, or a priest? Does it have to be male, or can a woman do it? Can it be a non-Christian (they can do baptism)? What language must be used, Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, the vernacular? Must the form always be the same? What is the meaning of the Eucharist, transsubstantiation, consubstantiation, representation? Is it a meal and/or a sacrifice? Is it at an altar or table or both? Who may receive communion: Catholics, Christians, Orthodox, those in second relationships – or should we have what is called a Presbyterian table, open to all? And so it goes on.

These are not just academic differences, but matters about which Christians have grown angry and been martyred. It is impossible for Rome to write a letter about the Mass which is not controversial for some group. Theologians and bureaucrats worry over regulations and their implications, and they will still be arguing and issuing rules and explanations when you and I are enjoying the beatific vision where there will be no Eucharist because we will see Jesus face to face.

The writer of the fourth gospel already had an inkling of this when he wrote his account of the Last Supper. His story of the Passover starts like the other gospels: Jesus plans it with his disciples, sits down, faces the betrayal of Judas, and then they start the meal. In the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus blesses bread and wine and tells his disciples to "do this in memory of me".

Not John. After Judas disappears into the night, Jesus rises from table, girds himself with a towel and washes the disciples' feet. It is the gesture of a slave, and also an intimate gesture, as you finger between the toes, inhale the smells and uncover the corns, blisters, bunions and other unsightlinesses that we cover up with footwear. Peter protests and Jesus insists, "If I, being your Lord and Master, wash your feet, so you should wash one another's feet."

John devotes his sixth chapter to the Eucharist, pointing out how even in the desert the Jews were arguing about the meaning of Jesus' words "eat my flesh, drink my blood". But here at the Last Supper he substitutes an episode which can unite us more securely. Jobs of service put us all on a level with Jesus. What used to be called menial work is no longer the area of slaves, but the most secure way to God. Instead of slavery, it is an expression of love. The history of religious orders is one of service to the needy. Jesus, kneeling with a towel round his waist, is pointing to that aspect of Christianity in which there is no hierarchy, and few rules.

If you are cleaning the lavatories, nobody asks are you a bishop, ordained to do that. If you are ordering the groceries, nobody insists that you do them in Aramaic or Greek. If you are tending the incontinence of an old person with dementia, nobody looks for proof that you are male. If you are putting out the bins, nobody asks about the sexual complications of the binmen's lives, or insists that you work only with people in approved relationships. In our many works of service we work with others in the same tradition as Jesus started when he put on the towel and knelt at their feet. We do not think about rules or rituals, about qualifications or ordination, but about the needs of others.

This is not to undervalue the Eucharist. We treasure it as our daily food. When Chief Secretary Augustine Birrell, a devout Baptist, was briefing his successor on Irish culture, he explained, "In Dublin it is the Mass that matters." But if we wait for the theologians and bureaucrats of the Church to show us the path to unity through the Eucharist, we will be waiting for ever. Instead we can find another sort of intercommunion, with those who, like our Lord at the Last Supper, put themselves at the service of others. That is where Jesus turned hierarchies upside down and showed us the path to unity. ■

Father Paul Andrews is a Jesuit priest living in retirement in Dublin, Ireland.

Sanctuary

Otaki, 18 December 2011

Sacred space, this thin space where
gods, gulls and ancestors dwell:
a canopy of blue and white
with Christic surround sound
and the Wind whispering in my ear
pointing me to the mother and children
exploring the treasures of driftwood.

I watch the waves roll out, sweep the sand
and gather the shells of once living beings
– ancient ancestors? –
now clustered in a grand mosaic.

Are these just random words at play
like shells gathered into some mosaic pattern
waiting for a Celtic muse
or some ancestor like John
whose cross confirmed my call?
That shadowed sketch on a sunset wall
where a founder enters in
and my place is found, that place a sanctuary
indeed a thin space this memory
entered into, where a chapel's too small.

A carpet roll of foam clears the way
ahead where unshod I walk the Moment now again.
Shoes are not the stuff of awe
and nor are sandaled feet
when in wonder at the Mystery
I stand on sacred, shifting ground
and in holy timelessness.

Oh the joy of being bodied and to feel!
To be earthed in mountain, rock and river
and Michelangelo clouds insisting
that shape and colour, sound and smell
are the backdrop to this chapel:
a shrine lit by sunset red and silent,
while windswept waves applause in welcome
and call me in a Gull's cry
to walk towards a horizon
I cannot clearly see.

Kevin Dobbyn FMS

the miracle of breath

Margaret Orange

She pours a cup of tea and walks from the kitchen to her comfortable chair in the lounge. It faces high wide windows that allow her a view of the garden. Beyond the fence distant rooftops rise to vast blue sky where today early morning puffs of cloud drift lazily eastwards.

As she sips her tea she watches cheery sparrows and bossy blackbirds gobble bread scraps that earlier she has tossed on the lawn. Sunshine casts dappled shadows across the grass, a soft breeze stirs the crab apple tree and teases the climbing roses along the fence. There is a sweetness to the morning. Her world has been renewed by the quiet of the night just passed. Time spent here each day has become a ritual. It is her leisure half-hour when her mind and spirit are refreshed.

She puts down her cup and closes her eyes. At once she is aware of her breathing, in and out, in and out. Muscles relax, her mind is stilled. Enveloped in timeless space she listens to the silence, deep, rich and healing. It embraces her in a cocoon of peace. Sometimes she remembers, as from far away, an event from the past or a need for tomorrow. The thoughts are fleeting and of no consequence; she pushes them away. She concentrates again on her breathing. On rare occasions she is filled with wonder at this simple act. Constant, regular, vital, through all the minutes and hours and days of her life it never ceases.

There was a moment, a long time ago and never recaptured, that filled her with an awe beyond words. As she breathed she became aware that all creatures, all life breathed with her. She, Creator and Creation were one, a unique and beautiful gift that defies all thanks.

Today there is no such moment, but the silence surrounds her and takes her into itself. As she absorbs the nothingness of time she becomes lost in the wonder of Creation. The infinite worlds of galaxies, of stars and of the endless universe where our tiny planet has its pre-planned space is more than human understanding can imagine. Yet, her own small yard teems with life, each tiny vulnerable seed and blade of grass and insect going about living and procreating and dying, all united by the bond of the Breath of Life.

But with inevitable persistence reality taps at the door of her mind. The thread that ties her to the silence of the room and to her innermost being is broken. She sighs, and as she does every day, ponders on those she loves, to wish them all a blessed day, and that all will be well as they travel the road of life.

She opens her eyes. Last night's dew has left sparkling jewellery on flower and leaf; sunlight makes magic in the garden. With enthusiastic energy a little bee dives head-long into the throat of a lily flower. In the distance a car door slams. High heels tip-tip on the yard next door. A woman calls a greeting, intruding on the peace that surrounds her. Today is beginning. She feels ready for what it may bring. What will happen will happen. ■

Margaret Orange lives in retirement in Masterton

silence of the heart

Donagh O'Shea

"The mind doesn't see the essence; only the heart sees the essence," wrote Saint-Exupéry in *The Little Prince*. When we hear the word 'heart' we immediately think of the emotion of love. But in the Scriptures the heart has a much broader meaning than this: it refers to the whole inner life of a person. It is the opposite of the face, where everything appears. "Do not keep judging by appearances," said Jesus, "let your judgement be according to what is right" (John 7:24).

Our faith is an affair of the heart. This doesn't mean that it is a private matter. On the contrary it touches the depth in everyone, and so it is what brings us most profoundly together. I remember reading two works that were written around 1910, one of them from the head, the other from the heart. (No need to elaborate further here) The one written from the head made great pretensions to being timeless and universal, the other made no such pretensions at all. But strangely, after a hundred years, the 'head' document is utterly dated and obsolete; while the other is as fresh as when it was written. I suspect that it will still be fresh centuries from now, and perhaps forever. The heart may seem very local and limited, very private and shy, but it touches the heart of the whole world and all ages. Our faith goes even further: it tells us our heart can touch the heart of God.

Contemplation does not mean thinking and turning things over in our minds. It does not mean remembering and repeating snatches of prayers and poems that lie around in our minds. It does not mean visualising God or Jesus or the saints. These are all good and useful practices, and they have their place in the prayer-life of a Christian. They can be part of the lead-up to contemplation, but contemplation itself is simpler than all of them. It is silent presence to the God who is "closer to us than we are to ourselves."

'Simple' does not necessarily mean easy. We are more at home with a degree of complexity. Try being completely silent for an hour with one of your friends; you will be aware of a constant urge to break into conversation — which is much more complex than silence. The silence that is contemplation requires a certain vigilance, an alertness that keeps the wandering mind from running away with us. We tend to be a little afraid of silence: unwelcome memories tend to flood into the empty space; or we become restless and feel we should be doing something useful instead of sitting here doing nothing. To persevere with it, we need to believe in its value. What is its value? It is the presence of God, so it is beyond price, as God is beyond price.

When we speak of silence in this context we usually mean silence of the mind. But there is also need for silence of the heart. Left to itself, the mind would settle like a dish of water. But the restlessness of the heart keeps it agitated. There is a kind of unfocused 'wanting' in us: we want something, but we don't know what we want; we just want to be occupied. We want to be occupied because we want to avoid the great silence …

Contemplation means going willingly into that silence, because that is where God's silent inspiration can best be heard. At first it seems like going into an empty room. We have eyes only for what is missing: we look for the usual aids to distraction — TV, DVDs, magazine — and a couch for napping. They are nowhere to be found. But if we allow ourselves to stay there and become accustomed to it, we begin to appreciate the room itself. The word 'room' means space, so a room that is cluttered with things is less a room! If we remain faithful to a practice of contemplation we begin to realise a great spaciousness in our own being, echoing the infinite spaciousness of God. "Deep calls to deep". (Psalm 41).

Many of the parables recall us to this quiet place. Just think of the parables of the leaven in the batch (Mt 13; Lk 13), the hidden treasure (Mt 13), the pearl (Mt 13), the sower (Mt 13; Mk 4). All of these suggest quietness, hiddenness, interiority. These are not the qualities of the face; they are the qualities of the heart. And as Saint-Exupéry said, "only the heart sees the essence." ■

Donagh O'Shea OP is the director of the Dominican Retreat Centre at Tallaght, Co Dublin, Ireland.

a tale of two cities

The writer looks at some of the steps which the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church have undertaken in recent times in dealing with the questions of authority and unity. How can questions raised in one local church become questions for wider church authority?

Mike Noonan

Part of the theme of Benedict's papacy has been the re-assertion that there is absolute truth. Running alongside this is a strong centralization of authority which will decisively act to quash any questioning, dissent or deviation. In addition, there has been an emphasis on providing structural support for what Pope John Paul II had named as a "New Evangelisation".

When Jesus said to his disciples "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," he left them with a dilemma which, during his lifetime, he had not had to face. Beyond a few passing references to some interactions with the Roman occupiers, the Syro-Phoenician woman and the Samaritan woman, we do not see Jesus reaching beyond language and culture. Nor was there much experience or reflection about globalisation in that first century AD. However, today, all large international organizations face similar problems as they attempt to make their way in 'foreign' lands.

what goes with colonialism?

When Christianity spread along colonial lines, the conquering and therefore 'superior' nations brought with them a host of apparent benefits. In India and Africa, these sometimes included healthcare, schools, a 'scientific' approach to life and a transportation infrastructure. Christian missionaries could be found attracting converts with the Bread of Life in one hand and bread for survival in the other. Vincent Donovan wrote very movingly in *Rediscovering Christianity* of his different attempts to engage in a spiritual conversation with the Masai tribe. He did so without the underpinning of the 'bribes'. He used neither those of colonialism, nor the divide and rule approach of converting individuals and therefore taking them beyond the pale of their tribe.

new forms of colonialism

I have thought much of colonialism in relation to where our Catholic church stands today. Many are putting their hopes on a new priesthood sweeping in from the eastern European and the developing countries where vocations to the priesthood are apparently plentiful. Their hope is that a new conversion will occur in places where Christianity has faded and grown tired. However, the places where our Churches are fading and growing tired are places which are unlikely to respond to what it is that has appealed to Eastern Europeans and to the developing countries. Gone, forever, in the western world, is the non-critical approach to matters of faith.

I believe that what the Anglican Communion is experiencing today is the challenge of holding together cultures with opposing world views. The only reason that the Catholic Church is not similarly torn is, ironically, because Roman or Europeanized Catholicism has asserted itself with such strength.

Within the Catholic Church there are many gay priests. Various surveys have told us this. There are also married priests. In Africa, celibacy is culturally unacceptable and so some African priests have taken wives. The only point of difference has been that the Catholic Church has not openly ordained gay priests or bishops or acknowledged where priests have taken wives.

It is sad that although within the Anglican Communion these realities have been named, it appears that a tearing of the communion along cultural lines has taken place.

authority and unity

The question of authority and unity is always profoundly intertwined. Exercised properly, authority will bring peace and reconciliation to all humankind. It's the acid test of authority. So the question emerges: "How can these two churches, Anglican and Catholic, hold to the unity to which they are called, first within their own communion, but also with each other?" Post Vatican II, the Catholic Church appeared to be embarking on a journey towards a greater localization of authority, while the Anglican Church was paying greater attention to how authority could be exercised at the universal level. Both churches appear since then to have been burnt by their different experiences.

The danger of centralisation is that of the whited sepulchre — outer compliance, but inward rebellion, while the danger of synodality is one of fracturing when the good of the whole is sacrificed to a local reality.

The Anglican communion appears to have fractured in the face of widely divergent views on some of the key questions of the western world: the place of women in ministry, and in the episcopate in particular, and the

question of how same sex love may be given its appropriate place within the freedom of being that has been given to each of us by God.

How divergence of opinion is handled remains one of the most important questions facing humanity. Peace and reconciliation brought about by the exercise of true authority is needed more than at any time in history. Humanity knows itself to be capable of its own destruction militarily and ecologically.

jesus and conflict

When Jesus waged peace in his lifetime, he was not afraid of conflict. He resolutely set his face towards Jerusalem, he uncompromisingly named the church authorities of his day as whited sepulchres, and he took a whip to those for whom selling was crowding out God. Nor was he averse to telling the future Pope, the rock on which he would build his Church to "Get behind me, Satan"! There is a creative potential in all conflict which we risk missing entirely if we follow a gentle Jesus, who is meek and mild.

Vatican II was primarily concerned to effect the pastoral renewal of the church and it placed collegiality at the very heart of church governance. Where Vatican I had described the infallibility of the pope and had emphasized his primacy, Vatican II brought back into prominence synodality and the teaching authority of the local bishops.

inculturation and faith

A localized understanding of how the message of Christ interacts with the local culture seems to be essential. Imagine the complexity of evangelizing the Piraha, an indigenous tribe in the Amazon whose speakers have no past tense and who pass on to one another their personal appraisal of the way of 'knowing' something. Their language contains suffixes to indicate to a listener when the speaker is passing on knowledge that is hearsay, deduced or evidential. They want to know if you've simply heard about this from others, whether you have deduced from particular information and circumstances or whether you have seen the evidence with your own eyes. Their language has extremely limited capacity to refer to the past, and so the only way of speaking with them about knowledge of Jesus, or any historical figure, who has not been seen or experienced by the tribe is by employing the suffix and language of hearsay. Hearsay which refers to people, things or events outside the tribe's experience, is counted as the weakest or least trustworthy of communications.

What I hope this story illustrates is the strong need, discerned afresh at Vatican II, for the teaching authority of the church to speak with understanding and awareness of the local culture and how that culture can best be helped towards what John Paul II described as the Splendour of Truth.

Our culture is like the air we breathe. Like the air we breathe we hardly notice it. However, everything that we notice, is noticed and understood through the filter of our culture. And so it is with our faith.

Sadly, the wisdom of Vatican II in this regard was never fully implemented. At the time of *Humanae Vitae*, there was a loss of nerve, and a centralised imposition of authority that was at variance with the vision of the Council about authority. When I say loss of nerve, I speak not about the decision itself, but the process by which the decision was made. The anguish of Pope Paul VI in coming to the conclusion that he must impose authority in this way is well documented.

Part of the vexed question that the pope faced in the loneliness of his decision making was "How can the church reverse an aspect of its teaching?" Reversals have happened: the teaching about slavery and the teaching about an earth centred universe, to name but two. These teachings were indeed reversed, despite strong scriptural support marshalled in their favour.

development of teaching

How should the authoritative teaching of the church progress? At its simplest, the local bishops listen with practised pastoral ears to their people. Their teaching is grounded and informed by a profound understanding of the pastoral realities which their people face. Their teaching is also informed by a profound respect for the sacred scriptures and for the tradition of the church. As bishops, they are called to work collegially with other bishops so that when a question in one local church raises serious questions for the wider unity of the Church, a synod is called so that a deeper expression of the truth may be found together. It's what the word 'synod' means — a way together. A synod may bring about collaboration at local, national or international level between all members of the Church and what is being discerned is the *sensus fidelium*: the recognition and acceptance of truth by all in unity. I believe that the genius of Vatican II lay in describing this way of respecting and loving the Body of Christ.

That said however, the model is vulnerable. If Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, or any part of the body, fail in their obligation to speak, or to listen, the synodal path is blocked, and the unity of the universal body is compromised. Kevin Kelly, the UK based moral theologian wrote of a time in the seventies, when a number of the Bishops of England and Wales privately expressed deep unease about a particular Vatican document, but went on the public record as being fully in support of it. Towing a 'public line', at the expense of integrity, obstructs the discernment of the *sensus fidelium*. ■

Mike Noonan, a regular contributor living in Dunedin, is an international envoy for L'Arche

the feast of corpus christi

June 10 – Mk 14:12–16, 22–26

Kathleen Rushton

Two more parish churches are now 'out' — post-quake lingo for unable to be used. One is the only church left in the new Mairehau parish which comprised the former Our Lady of Fatima, the Burwood Holy Family and the St Paul's Dallington parishes. The last parish whose church, school and presbytery were destroyed in the 4 September earthquake then met in the later 'out' Marian College Hall. They moved again to St Joseph's School Hall, Papanui. These are pilgrim people indeed. We are reminded graphically of a deep-down reality that our usual stability glosses over: the Church is the pilgrim people of God on the move.

St Bueno's Chapel, Wales

"'Come follow me …' a beckoning invitation to be a nomadic pilgrim people," is how Maureen Kelly, the architect of the re-ordering of St Bueno's Chapel Wales, describes its theme. She continues, "The Second Vatican Council called the Church 'the pilgrim people of God'. It compared its passage through history with that of the Israelites making their way through the wilderness to the Promised land … so this chapel is a 'tent of meeting' and its stone cairn altar are here set amidst desert colours of sand, sun and sky … symbols of our Exodus journey and questing towards the Way, the Truth and the Life." The photograph does not do justice to huge falls of fabric that drop tent-like from a circular ring.

four time lens

Mark tells the story of the Passover/Eucharist and its preparation (14:12-16; 22-26). He inserts his own time frame into the narrative of Jesus as well as going back to the Exodus and draws us into this mystery we celebrate in the Eucharist. There are four different lens: the time of Mark which is about 70 CE in Rome, the time of Jesus, the time of the Passover, and our time today. All of cosmic time is fused in the Risen Jesus.

Mark's lack of concrete details suggests that the narrative is intended to be symbolic. For example, the disciples sent are not identified nor is the "man carrying a jar of water." "A large room upstairs, furnished and ready" suggests the house churches, the location for the early Christian Eucharistic gatherings.

Both Passover and Eucharist are described. The blessing and breaking of bread, together with the blessing and the giving of the cup suggest the opening prayers of every Passover meal ("Blessed are you, O God, king of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine"). Both finish with the singing of a hymn. What is amazingly different is that for Jesus, the bread is his body and the wine is his blood. Mark gives us the early Church's understanding of the Eucharist.

body as the whole person

Jesus links the broken bread with his body which is about to be broken in death. In Hebrew thought, 'body' is the whole person as a physical being. Jesus' death will be a gift of himself. In inviting them to 'take', that is, to eat the bread that is his body, they receive the gift of himself into the very depth of their

being. In Mark's account, the eating of the lamb, the central part of Passover supper was missing. Jesus is the paschal Lamb.

the blood of the covenant

"Then he took a cup, gave thanks" — the Greek word used here for thanks is *eucharisteo,* which is the Church's name for the commemoration of this sacrament of Jesus' presence among us. Wine is a symbol of abundance, joy and festivity (Ps 4:7; Isa 62:9). It is also a symbol of suffering which disciples, as in the case of James and John, are asked if they also can drink (Mk 10:38).

To drink blood was unthinkable and forbidden (Gen 9:4; Deut 12:16). Blood is sacred as it is the seat of life: "the life of all flesh is in its blood" (Lev 17:14). This is why blood which is precious could be offered to God in sacrifice since nothing was more valuable than the blood of a living creature. In the Eucharist, to drink the blood of the Son of God is to share in divine life. Jesus' words: "This is the blood of the covenant" echoes the moment when God established the covenant at Sinai at the climax of the Exodus. This was ratified by the blood of sacrificed bulls and consummated in a sacred meal.

That the blood of Jesus 'will be shed' indicates a violent death. Here the tense is present meaning 'is shed.' This expresses the inner reality of Jesus' passion which is his gift of himself available 'for many.' 'For many' does not mean a limited number but is a Semitic way of evoking a vast multitude. It has been used previously in Mark (10:45) and echoes Isaiah (53:11-12).

a new pattern of life

Wine is also a symbol of the messianic banquet (Isa 25:6; 55:1). The Eucharist, our 'tent of meeting' for the pilgrim people of God, is a sacrament of new life which empowers us to move, that is, to die and rise in the new pattern of life at the heart of the universe that is the Christ. We give thanks *(eucharisteo*) by a making present of the past for the future full coming of the reign of God in the risen Christ. We sacramentalise our hope for the universe, union and transformation, and a new future in God. This feast day, when we receive the gift of Jesus into the very depth of our being, may we offer from the depth of our being a hearty Amen to *Corpus Christi,* to the 'Body of Christ.' ■

Kathleen Rushton is a Sister of Mercy working in adult education in the Diocese of Christchurch.

Global Suicide Pact

continued from page 13

— "extremely unlikely". This is not the opinion of a crackpot, but rather the judgment of the director of a major international climate centre

crucial position of US

The US has been the chief obstacle to all the significant attempts to avoid this fate. Despite being the largest historical emitter, responsible for 27 percent of the fossil fuel CO_2 emissions in the atmosphere since 1750 (China is second at 9 percent and India third at 2.7 percent), the US has been the main barrier to moving the world away from a fossil-fuel-based economy.

The failure of our political system to address this global emergency is alarming. Yet it is important to recognize that we can still avoid irreversible catastrophic climate change. With existing technology, we could harness solar and wind energy to produce over 40 times the power needed for the entire world. According to Stanford's Mark Jacobson, a leading researcher in this field, " There are no technological or economic barriers to converting the entire world to clean, renewable energy sources. It is a question of whether we have the societal and political will."

prevent global suicide pact

Our task in the US is to use all means at hand to bolster and direct that will — to inform and organize people so that, as the climate begins to deteriorate over the next decade, citizens will rise up and reject what UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon calls the 'global suicide pact.' We have a moral responsibility to join together in our communities — universities, hospitals, parishes, dioceses — and communicate to our elected leaders (and to businesses that fund opposition to climate legislation) that we do not intend to be complicit, through silence, in the mass death of human populations and the mass extinction of species. ■

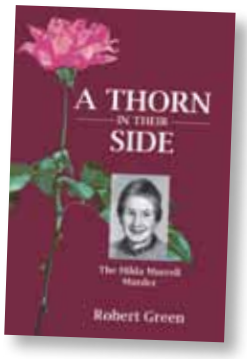
Richard W Miller is associate professor of theology at Creighton University and editor of God, Creation and Climate Change: A Catholic Response to the Environmental Crisis *(Orbis Books).*

a different kind of murder mystery

A thorn in their side: the Hilda Murrell murder.

by Robert Green

Reviewer: John Gould



Meticulously researched and told from the heart this chilling story tries to uncover the truth about the brutal murder of the author's special aunt, Hilda Murrell, in a quiet rural town in Shropshire, England in 1984. Despite exhaustive police enquiries, numerous witness sightings and significant circumstantial evidence surrounding the crime, initially no one was charged. Only after two decades did West Mercia police finally arrest and charge Andrew George with the abduction and murder based on new analysis of DNA evidence. At that time he was a 16 year old truant from a local foster home. George was tried and convicted in 2005 and sentenced to a minimum 12 year term of imprisonment.

Green questions the soundness of this conviction on several counts using a wealth of new and additional evidence he has sourced over 27 years of determined investigation. This clearly demonstrates the theory proposed by the police and accepted by the jury that the crime was committed by a lone killer and the body driven, carried and dumped in local woodland the same day, to be untenable. For starters, the alleged murderer could not even drive.

Kindly, yet fearless, Hilda a nature lover and world-renowned rose grower was a woman of formidable intellect. Due to her growing concern over radioactive waste disposal and the need to protect the environment, she decided, aged 78, to take on the nuclear establishment by testifying to a planning enquiry into the new Sizewell nuclear power plant. To add to the complexity she was close to her nephew, Robert Green, a former Royal Navy Commander who had recently resigned from a senior post in naval intelligence over concerns of the logic of nuclear deterrence as a viable security strategy. Robert had had access to sensitive and secret information relating to operations during the Falklands war. This including the controversial sinking of the Argentinian cruiser the *General Belgrano*, a political hot potato for the Thatcher government of the time. There was, therefore, good reason that both Robert and Hilda, by association, would have been individuals of special interest to the intelligence services in the early 1980s.

This is not an easy book to read. While on the one hand it is a fascinating unresolved murder mystery, it has been written not to entertain but to present explosive new evidence both to bring about the acquittal of Andrew George, as well as to expose the shadowy forces who were really behind this terrible crime. It is also a hard read, because the implications of this case go well beyond the deliberate miscarriage of justice and incarceration of an innocent man until 2018.

Most concerning of all is that Hilda's abduction, torture and murder, is not an exceptional or isolated case. The author cites more than ten other cases where individuals who have dared to challenge the military or nuclear industry in Britain and America have either been killed or closely escaped death in very suspicious circumstances. Invariably these cases are dismissed as suicide or 'road accidents' following police investigations. Some are well known such as that of Karen Silkwood a union activist at an Oklahoma plutonium processing plant killed in 1974; and Dr David Kelly, the UN Weapon's inspector. Others are less widely known such as the case of Dr Rosalie Bertell, American Catholic nun and nuclear whistle-blower, who narrowly survived a potentially fatal 'car accident'.

If you believe in justice, this is not just a book you should read, it is a book you must read. Once read, pass it on and discuss it with friends, family, concerned citizens.

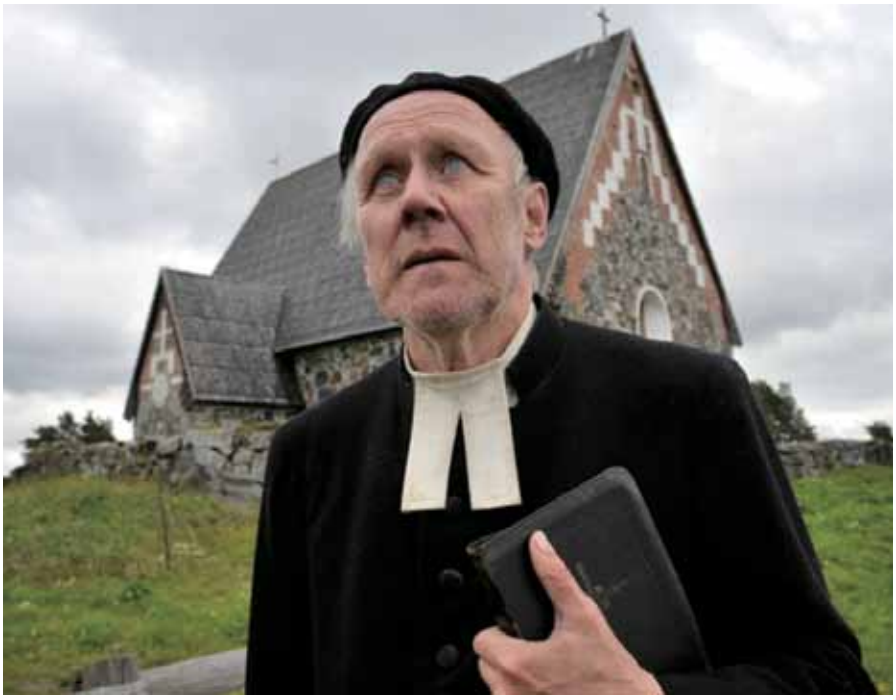
Our freedom and democracy depend on it. ■

a scandinavian gospel parable

Letters to Father Jacob

Director: Klaus Härö

Reviewer: Paul Sorrell



The title forms the regular cry of the postman as he delivers the daily mail to a retired parish priest in an isolated part of rural Finland. Isolation is a key ingredient in this simple yet moving film. In all but a couple of scenes we see only three characters — the postman is one, with an important role to play — and the hamlet where the action takes place seems to consist only of a tumbledown rectory and an ancient, empty church a couple of kilometres distant. The spare, whittled-down narrative that unfolds in this austere setting is both unsettling and poignant.

The mainspring of the story is simple. Leila, newly released from a life sentence in prison, has come to work for the blind and aging Father Jacob as his amanuensis, reading and answering the many letters he receives requesting spiritual help and counsel. Since his last assistant moved away from the district, Fr Jacob's unanswered correspondence has accumulated to fill the entire space under his bed. At first, Leila, sullen and heavyset, resents her new position and even throws some newly delivered mail down the household well. When the letters stop arriving — following a clash between Leila and the suspicious postman — Fr Jacob feels that God has abandoned him and falls into a state of despair. Leila follows suit. However, this emotional crisis marks a turning point in their relationship, and the normally taciturn Leila is at last able to share the secrets of her violent past with the gentle, loving priest she has gradually come to trust. From this point, the action builds rapidly to an unexpected and moving climax.

Like a biblical parable in its brevity and simplicity, in the wrong hands *Letters to Father Jacob* could easily have become a predictable and sentimental tale. Rather, director Härö has gifted us with an understated story of the power of love and its redemptive action in the lives of two people who were in danger of giving themselves up for lost.

Finland's official entry in the 2009 Academy Awards, *Letters to Father Jacob* was a worthy contender. As a sensitive and tender portrayal of things that lie at the heart of the Christian faith, it comes highly recommended. ■

Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

tectonic plates and progress

A development unit has been established to provide a practical plan to implement the Christchurch City Council's $2 billion vision for a new city centre. This is a small sign of hope after the earthquakes.

Geologists tell us that earthquakes and volcanic eruptions result from the interaction of tectonic plates. These are the huge plates of rock that make up the earth's outer crust which floats on the molten global interior. Over the millennia the resulting violent disruptions have created a life-friendly planet. But the continuing process causes many human tragedies.

Something similar is happening to the human race today. In 1963 Pope John XXIII pointed out that three major social forces were radically affecting the perceptions of people everywhere — the growing influence of the 'under-classes' in socio-economic, political and cultural matters, the burgeoning claims of women to equality in all aspects of public life, the crumbling of colonialism. Today we could add the communications media, technological developments and the dawning realization that our universe is subject to an evolutionary process.

To a certain degree Vatican II took cognizance of these colliding forces on religious belief and practice, resulting in a major earthquake that gave rise to an ever-increasing wave of aftershocks. Age-old assumptions have been shattered, causing bewilderment, much heartache and questioning of faith. And it seems that every time things are beginning to settle down, a new after-shock occurs. Doubtless further and probably more fundamental after-shocks await us in the foreseeable future.

These cultural shocks are exposing fissures within the Vatican also. In 1906 Pope Pius X wrote the following: "The Church is by its nature unequal, formed from two categories of person, the Pastors (hierarchy) and the Flock (the multitude of the faithful) … The only duty of the masses is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the pastors." (*Vehementer Nos*)

In contrast, Benedict XVI speaking in Mexico in March to South American Bishops said: "It is not right for the laity to feel treated like second-class citizens in the church despite the committed work which they carry out in accordance with their proper vocation, and the great sacrifice which this dedication at times demands of them." He called for "a spirit of communion" to prevail among priests, religious and the lay faithful, insisting that "sterile divisions, criticism and unhealthy mistrust" should be avoided.

Current controversies indicate that there remains a group of Vatican officials more aligned with the mentality of Pius X, than that of Vatican II. But that is another story.

drugs and the law

The Police have expressed concern over the rapidly increasing number of drivers testing positive for drugs. It can be argued that beer and wine can have some beneficial nutritional effects; it is difficult to see how other forms of recreational drug do. But is blanket prohibition the most effective way to reduce the enormous social harm resulting from their production, distribution and use?

Former senior policeman, later National MP, Ross Meurant, who was known as a 'hard man', favours decriminalisation, based on his research as a PhD student while an Inspector with access to police data on drug crime. In a *NZ Herald* article last June he wrote that 20 years ago he extrapolated Auckland statistics to cover the whole country — hypothetically about 50 percent of all crime was drug-related. "It occurred to me that the police workload might be substantially reduced if the drugs people fought over, killed for, and died protecting, were dispensed through government licensed outlets — just like alcohol …Drug addiction, like alcoholism, is a sickness. It should not be treated as a crime."

His argument is that abuse of a substance lawfully available is where the penalty should fall (such as for liquor), "not on supply or possession, which effectively stimulates a black market and underworld." The control of liquor is problematic owing to the influence of the business lobby, so one could expect similar problems with Meurant's solution. But there is growing recognition overseas that the present enforcement regimes are causing more harm than good.

The political difficulty, of course, is the emotional aspect, rather than the factual basis, for formulating a drugs policy.

machines and brain-work

Automation, globalisation and deregulation may be part of a bigger change — the application of the division of labour to brain-work. Computers can not only perform repetitive mental tasks faster than we can, they are increasingly taking over jobs formerly only university trained people could do. One small example: accounting packages that do work previously done by professional accountants.

Blue-collar jobs have been decimated in recent times but, according to an *Economist* report, economists like Paul Krugman are arguing that mid-level jobs too will be destroyed as high growth slows. There will still be a need for university professors, surgeons and so on, but perhaps we should be training more tradespeople and fewer lawyers. ■

budgets, life goals and relating

Peter Norris

For the past few weeks I have been trying to set a budget. It seems rather late but we can only do this once we find out our income. It is an interesting exercise as there is very little we can control. People might say that food and energy prices are in the lap of the Gods but I think I would rather blame another entity. Like everyone else around the country we have problems with earthquake safety and we are waiting in a queue to find the cost of remedying whatever problems we have. Insurance and rates have already taken earthquake and environmental hikes and will probably take more.

'Doing a budget' is an odd phrase that covers a distribution of assets to cope with the local situation. Most families are in the same position but with a much smaller income to play with. For a number of individuals and families it is simply a matter of survival. I have family members who live on various benefits and I know that life is hard for them. While they go from one bank withdrawal to the next the idea of doing a budget is laughable. They need enough money to eat and pay for the power. New clothes are a luxury item and are not available. Sometimes any extra money, and there is very little, goes to pay for unfunded medicines.

One thing that surprises me, is that, even though I have more money than many who cannot 'do budgets' they cope remarkably well with life and are extraordinarily generous. I know people affected by the quakes who seem more even tempered than I would be and who are very kind to those who live around them. Money does not seem to be an index for happiness or a guarantee of generosity. In fact money just seems to be a guarantee of more money and while some people who have money are quite generous they are not more so than those who do not have money.

University students do not normally have the luxury of 'doing budgets' as most are just coping. While some students are funded by their families, many are trying to be as independent as possible and others have to be independent. As well as the worries about money they are also concerned with the all embracing questions "What am I going to do when I grow up?" There is also the question that surfaces in teens and never quite gets answered: "Do people really like me?" This is closely followed by: "If they like me, do they really know who I am?" The questions about life that we never quite answer and that explain much of our behaviour are more important to us than budgets and occupy our mind more than our finances.

We all belong to groups that want our money. Sometimes these groups need the money and sometimes they both need it and want it as a sign of our commitment to the group. I know most parishes need money to keep afloat. I know that our churches, along with other groups, have wasted money. Like others, I am concerned about our survival as an institution and I want to see the good work we do continue but sometimes I wonder if we do enough about the major life questions. I am concerned about budgets. And most of us are concerned about money. But we all should be concerned about our goals in life and about how we relate to others. We should be concerned about how good we are. We might look at these questions in an egocentric way, but that is life. ■

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a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

Mangoes …
Sticky. Drippy. Tangy.
Slippery. Slimy. Stringy.
Sweet. Orange. Heaven.

I don't mean to rub it in, what with New Zealand heading into winter and cold temperatures and all. But May is another kind of month altogether in India and is synonymous with heat and of course the mango season.

At lunchtime today I just loved watching three year old Jalori smiling gleefully, much of her face and arms smeared with mango pulp. Licentiously, she rubbed mango skin all over her sticky, slippery hands and licked it all off again. After the elliptical pip was picked white and string-free Jalori was mopped clean … she gazed longingly at the fruit bowl. "Mum, can I have just one more — Pleeeazzze?"

When it comes to understanding the nature of God I often reflect on God's creative enterprises on the fruit front. I mean, what variety! What utter profusion! What completely ridiculous *joie de vivre* and excess! Dread locked rambutans, dotty dragonfruit, wrinkly passionfruit, not-a-little inappropriately shaped bananas, eyeball-like lychees, shiny baubles of boysenberry, fat-bottomed strawberries and of course the sensuous mango — India is the world's largest producer but barely exports them. We're too busy eating them!

So I learn God doesn't do things by halves. God seems to have fun while creating. God is somewhat extravagant. I suspect that if I had been put on the tropical fruit design team I would've stated that we had adequate taste, texture, colour and shape variety much earlier in the piece. Let's keep moving team, sort of thing.

But God was on to a good thing. Not letting go, there are over a thousand varieties of mango. And clearly God wasn't responsible for laundry or spending too much time thinking about practicalities, like clothes getting stained with tamarillo or blackberry juice. (The only practical way for me to eat a mango I think is wearing swimming togs and sitting next to a water source).

Many of the same accusations of extravagance and excess could be had when discussing birds. Far too many, too many colours, too many shapes. Are they all really necessary?

Then there are flowers. Spring in the Himalayas this year left a blur of pale purple violets at my feet, dark purple irises at my knees and raging clouds of red rhododendrons above my head (have I mentioned how much I like rhododendrons?). It's ridiculous how many flowers there are. And how they insist on flowering on hostile alpine rocks, beside rubbish tips, in cracks on a wall.

Frivolous is the only word for the Creator of heaven and earth!

So then, how should I be in the face of all this largesse and bounty? It's hard to avoid the idea that I should be more creative and imaginative. Revel in, run with, rejoice in, etc, a good idea. Wear more colour and texture. Be extravagantly generous all the time. And of course, eat more mangoes!

Jalori won't demur. ■

Kaaren and Jeph, with their four children, live in North India and work in health and community development.