

# Tui Motu

InterIslands

*February 2002 Price \$4*



*a path from hate to love*

## contents

2	editorial
3	promoters corner <i>Tom Cloher</i>
4-5	A path from hate to love <i>William Johnston SJ</i>
6-7	<b>Oceania Synod</b> Catholic Women's experience in NZ <i>Elizabeth Julian RSM</i> The Synod document <i>Jim Neilan</i>
8	<b>focus: science and faith</b> Auckland symposium report <i>Beatrice Hoffmann</i>
9-11	Decoding God's message <i>Richard Dowden</i>
12-13	Darwinian chance or God's design? <i>Nicola Hoggard-Creegan</i>
13-14	Bioethics: is cloning taboo? <i>Gareth Jones</i>
15	Of poppies and vines <i>Trish McBride</i>
16-17	The Apostle comes home to rest <i>Pat Lythe, Marelda Gallaher</i>
18	The art of preaching <i>John Stone</i>
19-21	<b>focus: God with us</b> Miracle stories in the gospel <i>Frank Maloney</i>
22-23	Frank's will <i>Rob Allen</i>
23-24	Emmanuel – God with us <i>Ruth Page</i>
25	Are we listening? <i>Glynn Cardy</i>
26-27	How to close a school <i>Paul Andrews SJ</i>
28-29	<b>Books</b> <i>Patrick Maloney, Michael Hill IC</i> <i>Patricia Stevenson RSJ</i>
30	Crosscurrents <i>John Honoré</i>

**Cover picture:** A Buddhist monk prays for peace at Assisi, 24 January. More than 200 world religious leaders including Muslims met with Pope John Paul. All violence, war and terrorism are incompatible with authentic religion, they proclaimed in a joint statement.

Photo courtesy Agence France Presse

# Science and faith *do* mix

Driving home after Christmas Day parish duties I happened to tune into a programme on Newstalk ZB where the religious aspects of the feast were receiving sympathetic comment. However, one interviewer kept coming back to the same question: "why is 'religion' a real turn-off for people nowadays?" *Why indeed?* I mused to myself as I sped along.

One answer is that we live in a society where a majority are third or fourth generation post-Christians. The memory has died. Nothing substantial in the way of a belief system has taken its place. To speak of the Gospel message to them is like trying to explain the colours in a rose garden to someone who is colour blind. There is no common experience to connect with.

Another powerful 'turn off' factor is that often when you hear the word 'Christian' you instinctively think of some rabid evangelist on TV or on your doorstep. Extreme fundamentalist views are put forward as the norm. And they turn me off too!

Which brings me to celebrated biologist Professor Richard Dawkins of Oxford University. After September 11 all the world wondered what sort of person could possibly pilot the suicide planes. Dawkins suggested the following. All you need is a supply of people who don't mind being blown apart. They have been 'suckered' into the certainty "that they are going to come to life again afterwards... As luck would have it we have just the thing to hand: a ready-made system of mind-control which has been honed over centuries, handed down through generations. Millions of people have been brought up in it. It is called *religion*... all we need is to round up a few of these faith-heads and give them flying lessons."

Don't imagine that Dawkins was thinking only of the followers of Osama bin Laden. For him, the certainties

of modern science have consigned all traditions of faith, even belief in a Supreme Being, into the dustbin of outmoded, obscurantist myth. In the brave new world of a Richard Dawkins there is no room for both science and religious faith. It is one or the other.

This month our principal theme addresses this challenging question. Do not, please, consign it to the 'too hard' basket. We all need to know whether modern science really has undermined belief in God. When people ask us for the Christian answer to a contemporary problem, we have to answer in terms compatible with reason and not at odds with known scientific facts.

Fortunately there are plenty of prominent scientific thinkers, here and overseas, who have no difficulty in reconciling their religious beliefs with their science. We quote some in this issue. In particular we recommend the very readable historical survey written for *Tui Motu* by physicist, Professor Richard Dowden. We also report on a symposium held last year celebrating the life and work of John Morton and Harold Turner, two intellectual giants.

The consensus of these minds is that truth is one and indivisible. There are various ways human beings can come to know it. Science is one; the path of faith is another. If they appear to conflict it is because one or other (or both) is deficient. But mature debate, without rancour and prejudice, inevitably will lead to greater light.

The danger is we may be too wary or lazy or fearful to embark on this quest. The challenge of this *Tui Motu* is to spend quality time on the focus material. Read, inwardly digest and allow these profound ideas to form your minds. Because such a discipline will surely strengthen your Christian faith.

M.H.

**T***ui Motu* lives by faith. The income derived from sales is still short of the expenses of production. In the context of market reality we ought to cease publication, but that is not even a temptation if faith is part of the equation. We don't complain about our economic constraints because this kind of experience puts us in good company 'churchwise'. Has any spiritual initiative flourished by having an easy ride?

What it does do though is attract generous levels of participation. People can sense an honest struggle probably because they've walked paths like this themselves.

## Promoter's Corner

*Tom Cloher*

Thus we have volunteers of character, competence and generosity who work for *Tui Motu* throughout the country promoting its interests in a variety of ways but especially through church door sales once a month.

This boosts our sales and has much potential to extend them although subscriptions remain our principal lifeline.

We are equally grateful to sellers and to anyone who enlists a new subscriber. If you would like to be either one or the other, don't hesitate to contact the writer or the *Tui Motu* office.

Special mention must be made of volunteers who carry out a variety of tasks on site in Dunedin, doing things people would normally be paid for. (see below)

Living by faith is testing but productive. As a saint pertinently observed: "we must do what we can and God will do what we can't". ■



**The great mailout!** The Editors, assisted by (l to r top) Suzanne Hannagan, Moya McKeown, Hazel McDonald; (below) Jim Neilan, and courier Michael Guildford



ISSN 1174-8931

*Tui Motu-InterIslands* is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed. The name *Tui Motu* was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

**Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd** P O Box 6404, Dunedin North, 9030

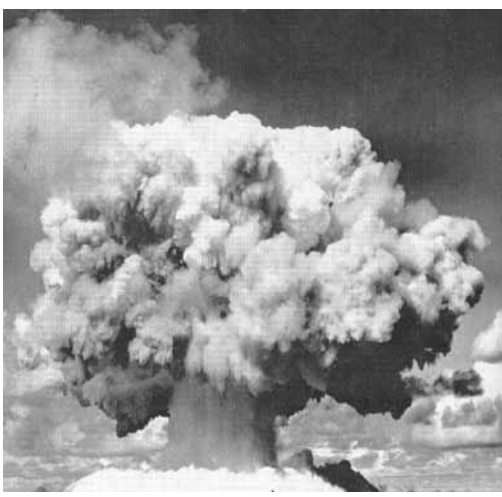
Phone: 03 477 1449 Fax: 03 477 8149 email: tuimotu@earthlight.co.nz

**Editor:** Michael Hill IC, **Assistant Editor:** Frances Skelton, **Illustrator:** Don Moorhead

**Directors:** Rita Cahill RSJ, Tom Cloher (**chair**), Margaret Darroch, Robin Kearns, Chris Loughnan OP, Elizabeth Mackie OP, Judith McGinley OP, Kathleen Rushton RSM, Julia Stuart

**Printed by John McIndoe Ltd**





# A path from hate to love

*“No peace between the nations without peace between the religions”, Hans Küng has said. But how? Pondering the terrorist attacks on the United States, William Johnston sees only one answer.*

When I returned to Japan from Europe last November, I had an opportunity to speak to a group of Japanese friends about the crisis in today's world. All agreed that the attack on the World Trade Centre was a turning-point in the history of humanity. The world will never again be the same.

Many Japanese who watched that seemingly innocent plane head relentlessly towards its target in the blue sky of New York were reminded of another turning-point in human history. On 6 August 1945, at 8.15 in the morning, a tiny silver plane appeared high in the cloudless blue sky of Hiroshima. People looked up in wonder. And then it parachuted down, the bomb that killed 100,000 people and left 100,000 wounded, blinded, paralysed, their naked bodies scorched from head to toe. That day of terror ushered in the nuclear age.

In my many decades in Japan I have encountered little bitterness, little talk of revenge. The Japanese seldom speak about the bomb. Nevertheless now, more than 50 years after that unspeakable tragedy, it is legitimate to ask if there is any connection between the ruthless destruction of the Twin Towers in New York and the cruel bomb that wiped out Hiroshima.

As my friends and I sat around a table drinking green tea, we began to speak about the clash of civilisations in this country. We reflected on the bloody clash that took place when Christianity came to Japan in the 16th century. The new religion, brought by St Francis Xavier, was at first warmly welcomed. In Nagasaki thousands joyfully received

baptism, and the missionaries were filled with confidence. But the rulers of Japan began to see Christianity as a threaten-ing colonial power, and after unleashing one of the fiercest persecutions in human history, they expelled all foreigners. For centuries Japan was cut off from the world.

And what about today? We agreed that the clash of civilisations continues in the hearts of the people, particularly in the hearts of Japanese Christians. It is described dramatically by the distinguished Japanese novelist Shusaku Endo. A committed Catholic with a personal love for Jesus Christ, Endo brought many Japanese to baptism, yet he felt uncomfortable with the exterior trappings of Western Christianity. He, a Japanese, was wearing Western clothing. His vocation in life was to change that Western suit into a Japanese kimono.

Asked concretely what the problem was, Endo replied that Christianity was too much a Western religion. It was dogmatic, uncompromising, patriarchal. It saw reality in terms of black-and-white. Its history was full of *I am right and you are wrong*, bringing inquisitions, intolerance, punishment of dissidents and downright lack of compassion.

Asian thought, on the other hand, was 'grey', flexible, tolerant. It stressed *both-and* rather than *either-or*. Above all, Asian thought was feminine, grounded in a predominantly *yin* culture. Endo often said that his faith came through his mother. I recall showing him a book about Julian of Norwich and 'the motherly love of Jesus'. He smiled enthusiastically. "Father, give me that book!" he said. The clash of civilisations

in Asia has indeed been fierce. Colonialism and religion are at its core.

As we move into the third millennium, however, one great event gives ground for optimism: the clash between Buddhism and Christianity is becoming a powerful dialogue in which both religions are mutually enriched. Christians listen attentively to the wise words of the Dalai Lama; they learn meditation from Zen teachers.

Likewise, Buddhist teachers quote the gospels, and Buddhist scholars in Kyoto have made profound studies of the Christian mystics, particularly Meister Eckhart. And all this is complemented by cooperation in helping the poor and in working for world peace. Here there is real friendship.

And this raises the million-dollar question: *can the Buddhist-Christian dialogue become a model for dialogue between the religions of the world?* Can we all work together so that the clash of civilisations becomes a union of civilisations? Let me mention two aspects of Buddhism that are valuable yet controversial:

- While it has a wealth of teaching, Buddhism has no dogma. Buddhist teaching is not absolute truth but pragmatic truth. So the Buddhist teacher will willingly use the New Testament or the scriptures of any religion provided they lead to enlightenment, which makes Buddhism very tolerant; but it can lead to a clash with Jewish, Christian or Islamic civilisations.

I believe this principle penetrates Asian society. Shusaku Endo, it seems to me, had something of it, and this was part of

his struggle. He was deeply committed to Jesus Christ; but for him (and I hope I do him justice) the Church was a skilful means.

- Buddhism is a mystical religion which leads beyond words and thinking and reasoning to the silence of 'transcendental wisdom'. Buddhists teach meditation, whether through the repetition of the name or the contemplation of a mandala or the regulation of the breath. Their mystics, like many Christian mystics, enter into the emptiness, the darkness, the nothingness, the cloud of unknowing.

**W**hat can we – Christians, Jews, Muslims – learn from these two aspects?

Assuredly we cannot abandon all dogma; but we can be less dogmatic. We can abandon fundamentalism, and recognise that much of our teaching is 'pragmatic truth'. Already we Catholics (if I may say it modestly) have become more tolerant, open to dialogue, open to compromise, open to recognising the goodness and truth in others. We can now learn from others and recognise our mistakes. But we have a long way to go.

For this uncompromising attitude which is basically religious – common to traditional Judaism, Christianity and Islam – extends to the whole of Western thinking, and it played its part in the annihilation of Hiroshima. Think of the Second World War. The stance of the Allied powers could be summed up as: *We want unconditional surrender. We are good and our enemies are evil. We will have no truck with evil. We will have no negotiation, no dialogue, no talking, no mercy.*

The result was the carpet bombing of the German cities and the terrible destruction of Japan. Men, women, children and animals died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Even the mosquitoes were wiped out. In the fire bombing of Tokyo 100,000 people, almost all civilians, died.

No one in any official position

apologised for Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and it would be idle to deny the existence of the same uncompromising mentality today. *No negotiation with terrorists* is the slogan. We are good: terrorists are evil. Anyone who harbours a terrorist or shows any understanding will pay the price. Shoot to kill! Show no mercy! And ('horror of horrors!') this attitude often has the blessing of religious authorities.

Now the frightening thing is that the Islamic fundamentalists who destroyed the Twin Towers have the same way of thinking. They, too, believe they are pitted against evil. They want to destroy the corrupt Western civilisation. They want no negotiation and they will consider no dialogue. They will show no mercy. They will die rather than compromise. It is no secret that they are working might and main to get weapons of mass destruction. For them the attacks in New York and Washington were only the first step.

And so we are faced with a very terrible confrontation. Is there any answer? I find it difficult to see an answer for the immediate future. But for the distant

### *the 'clash' between Buddhism and Christianity now a dialogue in which both are enriched*

future there is surely an answer.

The answer, the only answer, is dialogue and friendship between the religions, a dialogue in which the religions will challenge one another, lead one another to conversion of heart and help one another get away from fanatical fundamentalism. Through these means we will all find our authentic roots in love and compassion. Bernard Lonergan rightly says that all true religion is based on love; and he maintains that religious conversion is conversion to love.

Interreligious dialogue is the way of the future. There is now a *Parliament of Religions* which meets every year,

working for a global ethic that will outlaw war and terrorism and killing. The indefatigable Pope John Paul has travelled the world, seeking union between the Catholic Church and other religions. Who can doubt that the Holy Spirit is working in human hearts?

And there is a further movement, from dialogue to prayer. This was already clear in 1986 when representatives of the religions prayed for peace at Assisi; and John Paul made the extraordinary statement that the exigencies of peace transcend religion. The same Pope longs for the day when Jews, Muslims and Christians will unite in common prayer to our father Abraham. And the day will surely come – indeed it has already come – when children of East and West will unite in silent, mystical prayer at the core of our being.

We used to say that dialogue between the religions is necessary for world peace. Now we can say that dialogue between the religions is necessary for world survival. Only prayerful dialogue between Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism can save our planet from destruction. What a responsibility we have!

We concluded our meeting last November by speaking about a Japanese Christian prophet and mystic who lost his all in the holocaust of Nagasaki. Dr Takashi Nagai worked tirelessly for the sick and wounded until he collapsed and could work no more. As he lay dying of leukaemia he cried out that war in the nuclear age would be suicide for humanity: "From this atomic waste the people of Nagasaki confront the world and cry out: No more war! Let us follow the commandment of love and work together. The people of Nagasaki prostrate themselves before God and pray: grant that Nagasaki may be the last atomic wilderness in the history of the world."

Japanese Christians are rightly proud of their prophetic Takashi Nagai. ■

*Fr William Johnston SJ is based at Sophia University in Tokyo*

# The Oceania Synod 1998

*Tui Motu offers two articles – before and after the Oceania Synod 1998. The first by Elizabeth Julian RSM voices the desires and concerns of Catholic women. The second reports how those hopes are not realised in the document*

Catholic women in Aotearoa New Zealand have a proud history of political and social recognition. We believe we have a voice, that we can make a difference and we can bring about radical change.

In 1871 Otago University in Dunedin was the first in the British Empire to admit women to all fields of study. In the same year Otago Girls High School was established and today is the longest-established girls' high school in the southern hemisphere, as well as the sixth oldest in the world. In 1893 our foremothers lived in the first self-governing country in the world to grant women the right to vote.

Against this background the experience of women in the Catholic Church stands out starkly, resulting in much frustration. Women require increasing courage to remain faithful to a Church which we love but which causes many of us so much distress. Sources of this anguish are of course located primarily in patriarchy itself and in all its practical effects in the church:

- (1) the oppressive masculinity of liturgical language,
- (2) the maleness of the God image,
- (3) the domination by men through a sacramental system which forces the dependence of women on ordained men,
- (4) the marginality of women in Scripture and in its ongoing interpretation,
- (5) the absence of the experience of women in the Catholic Church's theological and moral tradition,
- (6) the exclusion of women from ordination,
- (7) the subordination of women in ministry,

## Catholic Women's Experience in Aotearoa New Zealand

- (8) a dual anthropology which insists on gender complementarity thus legitimating the subordination of women to men in church, family and society,
- (9) decision-making which is linked to ordination rather than baptism.

As Catholic women today we have to make sense of two conflicting realities. Our social reality is in complete opposition to our ecclesial reality where being women makes us unfit for ordination and renders us second class citizens.

An auditor at the 1998 *Synod of Oceania*, Dr Ruth Smithies, drew attention to this in her intervention. Aotearoa New Zealand ranks fourth in the world in terms of women's participation in political, economic and professional domains. Yet if the Gospel is to be proclaimed in a way that resonates today, women simply have to be better represented and integrated into the life of the Church. It is no longer considered acceptable for men to speak for women. Dr Smithies asked that this question be given priority citing the fact that the October Synod of the Wellington Archdiocese decided not to introduce the Permanent Diaconate into the Archdiocese precisely because the permanent diaconate was closed to women.

Another auditor, Sr Catherine Hannan DOLC, expressed the hope that the Jubilee would be a time of reconciliation

of the Church with women. She charged that many Catholic women in NZ felt excluded by the Church and that their gifts and talents are not appreciated. Citing medical technology as an area of crisis, Hannan stated: "The centrality of women in the life process means the Church should call upon women to play a major role in both decision-making and leadership in this area."

Kevin Manning, Bishop of Parramatta, Australia, a Synod participant, echoed the concerns of Smithies and Hannan and reminded those present of the 1971 Synod of Bishops' directive in their statement *Justice in the World*, "to speak to people about justice we must first be just in their eyes." Manning challenged those present to examine their behaviour and attitude toward the role of women and to heed the cry of women. The Bishop pointed to documents such as *Humanae Vitae* and *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* as teachings which require further explanation in the light of women's experience and understanding.

Bishop Peter Cullinane of Palmerston North also made his plea for a more connected image of the Church: "We need a key image of the Church that gives cohesion and a touch of simplicity to what otherwise seems complex and bureaucratic, rather than the present labyrinth of doctrines, laws and religious duties and customs which can seem unconnected, imposed and impersonal."

Meeting later with Cardinal Ratzinger in California, Bishop Cullinane articulated strongly that doctrinal formulation is always secondary to one's relationship



with Jesus and that therefore doctrine should only be a secondary concern for the church. "Doctrines and statements are only the spin-offs, if you like, of what it means to know him. He is the truth."

Although I laud Bishop Cullinane's efforts, as a woman I find nothing remarkable in his position. Women, having been excluded down through the centuries from being involved in formulating doctrine, have known intuitively that a relationship with Jesus is always prior to any dogmatic statements. Our experience of exclusion has taught us that. We operate out of a 'catechism of the heart' rather than a 'catechism of the head.' Personal prayer is the one area in which women can take part without the permission or help of a man in a church in which they have always been totally dependent on men for official religious participation. As long, however, as decision-making

in the Catholic Church is linked to ordination rather than to baptism, women's ecclesial reality will not change. There are no women in the South Pacific or the Southern Hemisphere whose reality approaches that of women in Aotearoa New Zealand. Thus the contrast between our social reality and our ecclesial reality becomes increasingly difficult to endure.

Our own bishops have been aware of the concerns of women for some time. In 1990 they took up the challenge of the Second Vatican Council "to employ suitable methods especially social research, in order to consult more suitably concerning the welfare of the faithful (*Pastoral Office of the Bishops, n16*)" and made available a report on sexism in the Catholic Church in NZ.

Since then the most significant development for women has been the founding in 1994 of *Catholic Women*

*Knowing Our Place* (CWKOP). Two Christchurch lawyers brought 12 other women together after the publication of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* to plan a response. CWKOP's main concern today is not women's ordination but the wider issues affecting women in the Church.

Providing hospitality and support for those hurt or rejected by the institutional Church, organising liturgical celebrations, national gatherings, public meetings, theological discussions, and forums, preparing responses to Papal and bishops' statements, and drafting parliamentary submissions, are key elements in their strategy. In July 1997 CWKOP launched a Charter in preparation for the third millennium. *Catholic Women Knowing Our Place* continues the struggle for equality for women in the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand. ■

Elizabeth Julian

In late 1998 the bishops of New Zealand went to Rome for the *Synod of Oceania*. In the opening days, each bishop had the opportunity to address the plenary assembly. Well-respected publications, worldwide, gave space to what our bishops had to say. Editors found their honesty refreshing: they had listened to their people's thoughts on the state of the Church in New Zealand, their hopes for the future and, sometimes, their criticisms of the status quo.

Bishop Peter Cullinane said in his *Intervention*, "Sadly there is a perception that Synods come and go, but make no actual difference." And Cardinal Williams, as spokesman for the whole of Oceania, said, "May I make one plea, Holy Father? That the *Interventions* of the first week be a constant source of reference when the Apostolic letter is being prepared. These were the themes close to our hearts. And to the hearts of our priests and people." And now, two years later, the resulting Apostolic letter, *Oceania Ecclesia*, has arrived. With 178 references mainly to previous statements of Pope John Paul

### The Synod document

and the Vatican Council, it is hardly an original document. There are excellent summaries of the Church's moral and pastoral teachings on issues such as refugees, migration, environment, the sacredness of life or the dignity of the human person. But what about those themes "close to New Zealanders' hearts"?

At the Synod Bishops Dolan, Dunn and Cullinane all strongly questioned the official Church attitude towards those who have divorced and remarried. So did Cardinal Williams, who also asked for non-Catholic partners to be allowed to receive the Eucharist with their families. Two of the bishops raised the question of the priesthood being limited to celibates and the official attitude to priests who have left the priesthood.

We look in vain in *Ecclesia Oceania* for the Vatican's response. The only

acknowledgement appears to be in Section 18 which appears dismissive: "Some of the bishops pointed out that the Church's teaching is at times questioned even by Catholic people. In so far as this is true it is hardly surprising that the voice of the Church is less influential in public life".

This could well be true, but not in the sense intended by Rome. As Bishop Cullinane bravely pointed out in his *ad limina* meeting with the Pope while in Rome, "departments of the Holy See can threaten with penalties those who have difficulties with teachings that the Church itself does not teach definitively; they threaten those Catholics who try in good faith to combine their loyalty to the Church with integrity of intellect and conscience." (*London Tablet*, 28 Nov 1998) To those who hoped that the Vatican might listen to the concerns of our bishops, *Oceania Ecclesia* is a very disappointing document. ■

Jim Neilan



# Science and Faith – *are they compatible?*

*Last year, in Auckland, a Symposium was held to look at this troubled relationship. Below we publish a brief report (and excerpts on pp 12-14).*

*Opposite, a physicist traces its history, sharing the rich experience of one who lives happily in both worlds*



*On 21 April 2001 a symposium was held in Auckland to honour two great Christian scholars – Harold Turner and John Morton...*

The steeply raked auditorium was three quarters full, mostly people 'of a certain age', with demeanours of formidable intelligence. There was a sprinkling of young people.

Harold Turner spoke, lively and vigorous. No valiant rearguard action this. He asserted that it was the Jews two millennia ago who had 'desacralised' the synagogue – as well as time, space and persons, thereby rendering them susceptible to examination. For what is 'sacred' forbids analytic scrutiny. It was this that allowed the foundations for modern science to be laid.

Stephen May offered a paper called *The Galileo Affair*, showing that the issue

was far more complex than is generally supposed. To me, it seems impossible to read the mindset of people so remote from ourselves. And yet, deep down, we humans do not change so very much.

Galileo, in presenting a view obviously disturbing to the self-image of the Church and to the common ego of humanity, should have used diplomatic caution. "Only look, and you will see!" said Galileo, offering his telescope. But the Church authorities wouldn't. There was too much at stake. They settled for the Aristotelian standpoint, rather than that of Copernicus and Galileo, so holding up the progress of science for years. There are reverberations in our time.

Is there such a command as: *Thou Shalt Not...?* This, currently and for the future of bio-medicine, is a minefield for Christians. Gareth Jones discussed the matter carefully on the issue of cloning

– even human cloning (see p 13-14). We already exert considerable control and we cannot disown it. He concluded that cloning may sometimes be permissible, after being carefully weighed up. I wondered if there would be enough people with expertise, disinterestedness and power to make any difference to the outcome? The climate would likely be hostile.

Those who gave talks spoke from their own context of science or Christianity. The two worlds are not exclusive but mutually supportive and complementary. Taken all together, these papers were a most skilful compilation, suggesting that the outcome of scientific observation points to an original benign Intelligence. Yet we are always left with mystery – for which, thank God! ■

*This impression of the occasion was written for Tui Motu by the late Beatrice Hoffmann.*



*Hunting fossils, tracing red shifts  
and bouncing billiard balls...*

*Former Physics Professor Richard Dowden guides us  
through a personal journey of scientific discovery  
which is also a journey of faith*

# Decoding God's message

**A**t the end of the 19th Century, just over 100 years ago, the great majority of Christians were what we now call 'Creationists'. An Anglican scholar, Archbishop Ussher, had calculated that Creation began on Sunday – of course, since God rested on Saturday, the seventh day! – on a date he estimated in October, 4004 BC.

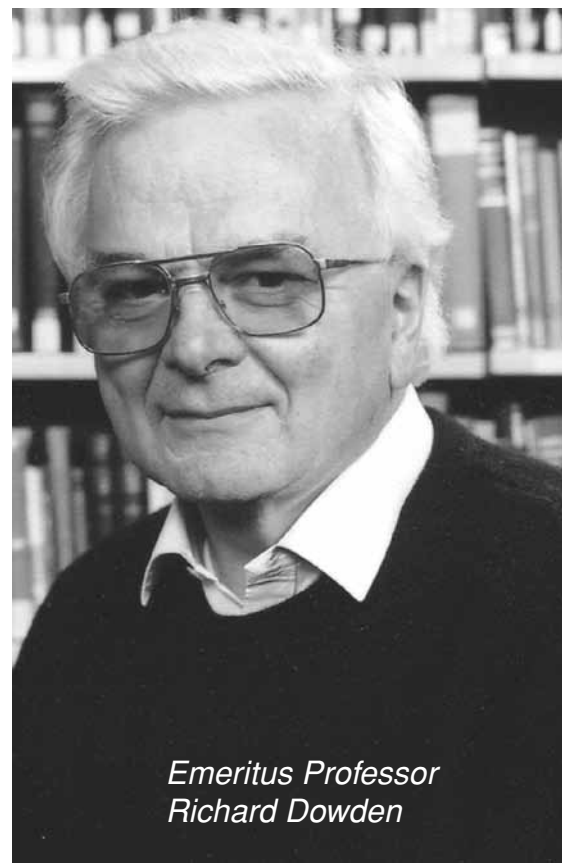
Meanwhile, at the beginning of the 19th Century, William Smith had made the first geological map of England, identifying layers or strata by the fossils found in them and naming them according to their main locations. The one geological age which everyone knows, the *Jurassic*, got its name that way. Smith made the assumption (later to be the *superposition principle*) that strata were laid down one after the other in time so that the upper layers have to be younger than the lower layers. From some assumptions about the rate of formation of strata, Smith deduced that the Earth had to be millions of years old.

This dating was extended to half a billion years by English physicist, Lord Kelvin, later on in the 19th Century. He calculated the rate of cooling of the Earth — the whole planet, not just the surface, seas and atmosphere. But Kelvin did not allow for radioactive heating inside the Earth, because the discovery

of radioactivity (by the Frenchman Becquerel) came nearly 20 years later. Any internal heating meant Kelvin's calculation was an underestimate (by a factor of 10 as it turned out). Soon after Becquerel's discovery, our own Ernest Rutherford invented dating of rocks by radioactive decay. This eventually pushed the Earth's age to about 5 billion years (5,000,000,000 years) old. So much for the Archbishop's calculation from the the Book of Genesis!

The Bible account implies (to Creationists, anyhow) that all the species were created at the same time (some 6,000 years ago on Ussher's reckoning) and were later saved from the Flood by Noah. But this was found to be in contradiction to the fossil evidence: fossils found in strata which identify the geological age (like *Jurassic*) are not found in earlier or later strata. Thus the different species had to be created over a period of a billion years or so.

To top it all, in 1859 Charles Darwin published his famous work, *The Origin of Species*, which indicated that all species including *homo sapiens* simply evolved from the first spark of life, and even that spark may have been an accidental coming together of the appropriate chemicals.



*Emeritus Professor  
Richard Dowden*

The reaction of Christians, who were mostly Creationist in those days, was to be expected. Many scientists in those days were only nominally Christian and may have welcomed the superseding of religion by science.

Some famous scientists who were also devout Christians, tried to have it both ways. Pascal, on being questioned about this, replied that he put his religion and his science into separate compartments. One celebrated geologist believed that the world was created some 6,000 years ago as described in the Bible, together with all the fossil evidence to the contrary. So, in creating everything God must have planted false evidence to test our faith!

**M**eanwhile in the world of physics another idea was gaining ground, an idea unacceptable to educated, non-Creationist Christians, then as now. Since Isaac Newton's mechanical model of the Universe had been so successful in accounting for and predicting the motions of the planets, it appeared that the future of *all* matter must be completely determined by the position and velocity (speed and direction) of every particle in the Universe at some specified instant – such as now.



▷▷ Extending this to humans, it means they have no choice in their actions, however much they might think they have. Thus they have no free will and can take no blame for wrongdoings – or credit for achievements (*I've added the latter, as I expect the proponents of these theories would still like to take credit for them!*). Little surprise then that it was precisely at this time, when materialism and determinism were so fashionable, that Karl Marx conceived his highly influential theory of dialectical materialism.

This was the time – about 100 years ago – when the conflict of science versus religion was at its peak. Many saw it as the triumph of science freeing people from the tyranny of the Church and drawing a final curtain on the ages of ignorance and superstition. So what has happened in the last 100 years to change this?

A small minority of Christians, mainly in America, are still Creationist, holding the Biblical story to be a factual description of creation and rejecting evolution in particular. A small minority (in my experience) of scientists are devout atheists who see science as the saviour of humankind. Most people today, if they care at all, see science as purely technology – and religion as being just for ceremonies like weddings and funerals. Science and religion are not in conflict because the two never meet.

Looking back to my final years at a Jesuit school, some 50 years ago, the Church's teaching appeared to be that evolution was okay provided God created Adam and Eve, and God created the first life. Maybe I understood it wrongly, for surely God created everything! This approach became known as the 'God of the gaps' — a sort of rearguard action doomed to failure as science came to explain more and more.

Curiously, the progress of science in the 20th century, physics in particular, has made for big changes of thinking. Quantum mechanics and Heisenberg's *Uncertainty Principle* (1927) showed that there is a fundamental limit to

the accuracy to which the position and velocity of a particle can be determined simultaneously. Put another way, there is a fundamental fuzziness in the position and velocity of a particle which means that prediction of a particle's future position and velocity becomes progressively vague with time.

I remember as a student having to calculate how many times a perfect sphere the size of a tennis ball could bounce up and down on a fixed but identical sphere, assuming the spheres were perfectly lined up initially. Newtonian mechanics would say the ball could bounce vertically up and down forever if it was perfectly elastic and was in a vacuum (no friction, no wind).

But using Heisenberg's *Uncertainty Principle* it turns out that the point of impact of bouncing ball on the fixed sphere drifts from perfect alignment so that after only a few bounces (fewer than 10, I think) the bouncing ball misses the fixed sphere altogether. This completely disposes of the mechanist's argument of 100 years ago and brings back free will, responsibility (blame and credit), and a controllable future.

Gone also is extreme materialism. One's mind is real, but it isn't anywhere in particular. A programme, maybe a virus, can be put into a computer, or even into a million computers, without diminishing the programme. Once created, it exists forever. Like Beethoven's *9th Symphony*, it is not anywhere in particular. Computer science is giving us a clue as to how our minds (read 'souls', if you prefer), which are non-material, can direct, control or at least interact with our material brains.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics, together with the First Law (which said perpetual motion machines were impossible), had its origin in the 19th Century during the attempt to increase the efficiency of steam engines. The First Law can be expressed as: *You can't win* and the Second as: *You can't even break even*. However, the full significance of

the Second Law was not realised until the 20th Century when it was generalised as: the order in a closed system (such as the entire universe) can only decrease. If you prefer: *the disorder in the entire Universe can only increase*.

Eventually, disorder in the entire universe will reach the maximum possible, which is the end – often called the 'heat death' – of the universe. Looking backwards in time there must be a point where disorder was zero. That must be the beginning of time and the beginning of the universe, for zero disorder implies that the entire universe was compressed into (or, rather, began as) a single point.

As it happens, we can deduce this quite independently through other physical observations (from the so-called *red shift*, which implies that the universe is expanding, and from the observation of background radiation left over from the Big Bang which started it all). We believe therefore that the entire universe did indeed start from a single point about 18 billion years ago.

Curiously, St Thomas Aquinas, having proved (to his satisfaction) the existence of God by reason, declared: *By faith alone is it known that the world has not always existed; it cannot be proved by demonstration*. Even assuming that by "world" he meant the entire universe – *all that is, seen and unseen*, as we say in the Nicene Creed) – 20th Century physics, by two independent methods, has proved by demonstration (optical and microwave measurement) that the world has not always existed, and has furthermore determined its age and proved it will end.

From this we see that the Science-Christianity thing has gradually changed from being at total loggerheads a century ago; through apartheid (they were to be kept in strictly separate compartments), say 30 to 70 years ago; to where it is now when it seems that Science and Christianity are going in the same direction. However, there is still some way to go as we will see.

The story takes up again in the early 20th Century with the Frenchman, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, born in 1881. He became a Jesuit as well as a biologist and palae-ontologist of world renown. He completed the manuscript of his best known work, *The Phenomenon of Man*, in 1938, but his Order in France forbade publication and sent him to China where he was trapped for the duration of the Second World War. Ironically, this gave him more time to develop his ideas and writings.

On his return to Paris he was enjoined by his superiors not to write any more on philosophical subjects. An appeal to Rome in 1950 for permission to publish a recasting of *The Phenomenon of Man* was refused, so this and his other works were published only after his death in 1955. It is worth noting that St Thomas Aquinas had suffered similar discouragement in his day. However, to be fair to the Church, for Rome to give permission to publish would have meant putting on it the Church's stamp of approval. The time was not yet ripe for that.

Although I was given *The Phenomenon of Man* by my brother as a parting gift on leaving Hobart for Dunedin in 1966, it was Fr Teilhard's *Le Milieu Divin* which impressed me more. It is in English translation except for the title. It has been described by *The Times* as "a meditation" and as having the makings of "a devotional classic" by the *Church Times*. That would have put me off, had I known at the time!

It is in an unusual form: meditation followed by prayer. Maybe that was designed by Fr Teilhard to disguise the 'teaching' aspect and so allay criticism by his superiors. At any rate, the essential idea (or at least what turned me on) is that everything that exists is God's creation, and therefore everything in nature is *essentially* good and made in God's image, and therefore reflecting God.

A much earlier book (by maybe 4000 years) says the same thing. It is a pity that the Creationists miss the whole

point of the creation story in the Bible, which is that God made absolutely everything and *saw that it was good*. The phrase in quotes is repeated after each of the 'days' of creation with the final being *God saw that it was very good*.

Bearing in mind that this was written for a primitive shepherd culture, the message (to me, at any rate) is that God's revelation is not limited to the Bible or the infallible Church, but extends to all we learn about God's Creation through science – not just through theology but through physics, chemistry, geology, palaeontology, and the rest.



As a scientist I see the universe, from the smallest fundamental particles of the nucleus of the atom to the huge super clusters of galaxies as an almost infinite puzzle set by God for us to solve. For those unfamiliar with the fun and thrills of scientific research, let me give an example.

I have recently become hooked on Code-Cracker in the *Otago Daily Times*. It is a sort of crossword without clues. Other New Zealand newspapers have similar puzzles. It has many of the features of research in physics in that it requires a guess which gives clues for further guesses. Sometimes, later guesses verify earlier ones, sometimes they do the opposite. Eventually you get a solution which fits by applying logic and

trial and error. It's fun to do and gives great satisfaction when you get it out.

Occasionally a physicist gets an insight or inspiration about a problem presented by nature. The problem existed from the beginning of time but had not been recognised, or was recognised but not solved previously. If one eventually gets the solution by logic and trial and error (experiment), one gets a great thrill. The problem and solution were always there from the beginning of time waiting to be found.

The existence of this logical order in the universe, this gigantic puzzle, is not intuitively obvious. The Chinese culture saw the world as chaotic and so didn't see this logical order. It seems wonderful that the laws of physics and chemistry are truly universal. The chemical elements we know here (helium was discovered in the Sun before it was found on the Earth) are the same ones everywhere else in the universe, the very same ones we would find a billion light years away.

God is revealed through the Bible, through creation, and through the magisterium of the Church. The message in the first two (and maybe the third, sometimes!) is not easy to understand. There may be (and has been) apparent conflict *but there cannot be contradiction by God*.

To take a naïve example, if the Bible implies the world was created in 4004 BC but the evidence (fossil, radioactive dating, etc) in God's creation implies the world was created billions of years ago, we must have misinterpreted the message in one or the other. In this particular case, creation tells us that we have misunderstood God's message in the creation story. In fact, the apparent contradictions between science and religion are most important. These warn us of misinterpretation somewhere.

As Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist – or, at least, the greatest physicist – of the 20th Century, said: *Religion without science is blind. Science without religion is lame.* ■





*From the Auckland Symposium we have selected two essays, on subjects which are both fundamental and controversial.*

*The accounts given here are considerably abridged*

## *Darwinian chance or God's design – how did it all happen?*

What is the basic link in the chain of biological evolution? It is the chance production of one beneficial mutation among countless less than beneficial ones; the beneficial not chosen by divine benevolence, but because the environment fails to eradicate it.

When Darwin set out around the world on the Beagle, a voyage which was to change forever the way people explained the origin of the natural world, the vast majority of thinking people accepted as absolute truth the notion that the Universe reflected the design of a benevolent God.

"The heavens show forth the glory of God", as the Psalmist cried. The 18th Century theologian and revivalist Jonathan Edwards saw "images and shadows of divine things" everywhere. The symmetry of Newton's Laws as much as the intricacy of a spider's web both reflect 'design' in Nature. Everything is ruled by love, reaching its highest form in the 'consent to being' within the Trinity itself, through human love to the harmony and order existing in the plant and animal world.

Darwin himself, when a student at Cambridge, was completely convinced by the natural theology of the current sage, William Paley (1743-1805), for whom the design of natural things, especially living things, reflected the wisdom of the Creator in the same way as the intricacy of a pocket watch reflected the skill and genius of the watchmaker.

During the five year voyage of the Beagle round the world Darwin gradually became convinced of evolution and equally gradually came to reject Paley. "The argument for design in nature," he says, "as given by Paley... fails now that the law of natural selection has been discovered. We can no longer argue that, for instance, the beautiful hinge of a bivalve shell must have been made by an intelligent being like the hinge of a door by a man. There seems to be no more design in the variability of organic beings and in the action of natural selection than in the course the wind blows. Everything in nature is the result of fixed laws."

*Accidentally on purpose  
They mean to tell us all was rolling  
blind  
Till accidentally it hit on mind  
In an albino monkey in a jungle  
And even then it had to grope  
and bungle  
Till Darwin came on earth upon a year  
To show the evolution how to steer  
They mean to tell us, though,  
the Omnibus  
Had no real purpose till it got to us.*

Robert Frost

Paley had explained the intricacies of nature as part of the divine plan; Darwin saw them simply as the result of fixed laws in general and blind chance in particular. God seemed to be consigned by Darwin to the remote beginnings of things – if there were a God at all!

In recent times, however, the universal Darwinian view has been variously challenged, especially by the *Intelligent Design* school. Scientists of this persuasion point especially to complex biological or biochemical processes which depend on all their parts being in place to work at all. There appears to be no way they could get there by a slow evolutionary process whereby one protein or one structure evolved at a time.

The metaphor often used is that of the mousetrap. A mousetrap is useless without any one of its parts – a board, a spring, a hammer, a catch, a hold-down bar. It needs all five of these in place for the mousetrap to work. A knife, by contrast can easily be imagined to have evolved by slow changes and accretions from a blunt cudgel to today's high-tec cutting implement.

One biological example is the clotting of blood which requires the cooperation of a whole series of proteins and processes. How could so complex a process have evolved by chance? Some critics have, however, demonstrated that proteins can be 'borrowed' or 'stolen' from other sources and modified – for use in the blood clotting system, for example.

There seems to be a basic flaw in this whole argument. Can God ever be regarded simply as an outside intruder? Human beings observe how human intelligence intrudes and alters the natural world. From this they argue that God's intelligence at work must be

equally irresistible. This is a dangerous analogy. Divine agency must of its nature be everywhere, not just operating in the gaps. To see God as simply an intruder in nature is flawed.

Looking at nature we see signs of extraordinary intelligence alongside signs of trial and error: we see evidence for design and also for natural selection. Is not this what we might expect from a God who gives a measure of integrity and freedom to life forms while holding all life within the compass of overriding

purpose?

*To sum up:*

how can we begin to reconcile these views with the God revealed in Scripture? God must be immanent but separate, intimately and purposefully concerned with creation, yet not forcefully intrusive. The action of God lies somewhere between the two extremes: the *intruder God* proposed by some believers and the *absent God* of the pure Darwinian model.

There will always be a wholeness and integrity to God that we can never fathom, but will be experienced as paradox or mystery. The complexity of evolution suggests that creation must be the work of God because it bears the mark of conscious intelligence, but not because it can be reduced to step by step evolutionary processes, some of which are pure chance and some the inter-vention of an 'intruder God'. ■

*Nicola Hoggard-Creegan lectures in Systematic Theology at the NZ Bible College*

*Biotechnology is a fast growing scientific discipline,  
and because it impinges on life it raises huge ethical questions*

*Bioethics – is cloning taboo?*

The rapid advance of biotechnology has produced a reaction of profound disquiet from many Christian people. This can be illustrated by the questions posed by theologian Thomas Torrance in 1984. He enunciated as a fundamental principle that no human being should ever be treated as a means to an end. That includes human embryos, no matter how early in development. In his view the act of choosing between embryos, with the subsequent destruction of some, is an utterly abhorrent form of exploitation, since it represents exploitation of the weakest of human beings. The embryo, he insists, is a human being and human beings can never be treated as a means to an end.

Another theologian, Oliver O'Donovan, writing in the same year, suggested that as soon as we start *making* human beings we necessarily stop loving them, since something that is made rather than begotten becomes something we have at our disposal, not someone with whom we can engage in brotherly or sisterly fellowship. By creating new beings in a laboratory scientists are seen as usurping the prerogative of the Creator.

Since 1984 biotechnology has advanced with bewildering speed. The creating of Dolly the sheep, reinforced by the realisation that we are on the brink of being able to produce a human being, has moved the spotlight of debate especially onto the ethics of *cloning*.

Recent theological reactions are predominantly hostile. Cloning is seen as a threat to human dignity, an undermining of the uniqueness of the human person, of that quality of separateness which is necessary for the spontaneous, free and authentic construction of a life and a self.

Cloning is opposed as:

- a violation of human dignity
- producing a human being whose status is 'sub-personal'
- cloned humans are 'made' rather than 'begotten'
- their uniqueness is being subverted.

A typical reaction is that of G Meilander, an American ethicist. It is essential, he says, to maintain the connection between procreation and the sexual relationship between a man and a woman – both for the health of that relationship and for the offspring. Begetting produces someone 'like us',

whereas 'making' results in someone 'unlike us'. Once this basic relationship is compromised, the sexual act and any resulting children become the province of the individual rather than the couple. Meilander is here condemning cloning along with all artificial reproductive technologies.

Gareth Jones responds to these assertions by firstly acknowledging the absolute need to sound warning signals. Children should never be regarded as 'products' or merely the outcome of quality control techno-logical reproduction. But to reject 'designer babies' outright does not necessarily mean the same thing as an absolute ban on cloning, even on human cloning.

For instance, he challenges some of the assumptions made in the criticisms made above. Is it true to say that the presence of an artificial element inevitably downgrades the status of the children produced? Will such babies be inevitably seen more as a product than a gift? From what is known of IVF (in vitro fertilisation) and DI (donor insemination) procedures, there is no evidence that the children produced



▷▷ are held with any less reverence than 'normal' offspring.

Jones cites the more measured evaluation of T Peters. The uniqueness and sacredness of the individual lies in its relationship with God. It is not determined by DNA. It depends on God's active grace; on God's love for each individual, however that new life comes to be conceived. A thousand human clones would still be a thousand unique individuals, loved by God.

Gareth Jones is making a plea here – a plea for good argument. God is the Creator. Yet creation is not a completed act: as humans we are continually involved in it. We become co-creators. We too are part of the transformation, under the hand of God, of the world into a light-filled, life-bearing place. We act as stewards of creation when we put our creativity to work in furthering the transformative process.

What is important is our *purpose*. If it is merely curiosity or the vanity of doing something solely because we have found out how to do it, then the act is immoral because it is self-indulgent.

But even in the cloning process we are left with the wonder of creation and the gift of new life, regardless of how it was brought into existence. It is the *gift* that is significant rather than the *means* that are employed, as long as the means are ethical and worthy of our status as human beings who image God.

In *Genesis* God bids humans to fill the land and to care for it. We are constituted as *stewards* of creation. This could well include helping humans to become more disease-resistant, genetically superior and better adjusted to the environment. Humans are encouraged to change creation for the better, should that prove possible.

The technology to achieve this is also a divine gift, to be used to benefit some while not degrading or devaluing others. The purpose should always be to meet basic human needs. Jones contends that in discovering new means, certain forms of cloning may prove acceptable, while others with egotistical goals will be condemned.

### A third way

The ethics of cloning are simply one area of a much larger canvas:

- do we see human beings as the possessors and absolute controllers of nature?
- or do we see ourselves as being *under* nature, forbidden to interfere with the processes of nature?
- But there is another possibility. Can we see ourselves as being *in* nature, with the obligation of exercising stewardship over nature – a stewardship which is responsible to God, who made us and holds all things in being. Jones contends that holding this third view may allow for some types of cloning. He counsels a cautious approach, born of humility rather than fear.

For instance, he suggests that, at present, any attempts to clone individuals, whether sheep or mice, let alone humans, are fraught with uncertainty. This uncertainty alone is sufficient to render any attempts at human reproductive cloning profoundly unethical. It is likely, however, that this situation will change at some future time.

Jones' closing words are worth quoting in full: "A Christian ethos is characterised by the motivation and aspirations of a people of faith, rather than by outward conformity to regulations regarding which forms of technology are or are not acceptable. This is something we find difficult to grapple with, because a pure heart is far more demanding than well-regulated conformity.

"It is far easier to say 'no' to all forms of cloning, and to reject scientific initiatives into understanding and controlling the earliest stages of human development, than it is to establish criteria for when they may or may not be employed. The former requires a political dictate; the latter requires mature moral discernment."

In St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh there is a plaque commemorating James Stewart Young, who in 1836 discovered anaesthesia. In years to come, might there be another plaque alongside the first commemorating Ian Wilmut, who a few miles away, pioneered the cloning of Dolly the sheep? ■

*Gareth Jones is Professor of Anatomy and Structural Biology at the University of Otago*

## John Morton and Harold Turner

Says Harold Turner: "You won't get anywhere with rocks if you start praying. And you won't get anywhere with God if you start knocking around with a hammer." Science and religion use different rational processes, but he believes there is no disjunction.

To think otherwise, says Turner, is just old-fashioned Greek dualism. "The universe is a unity, our minds are one

mind, everything is interlocked with everything else."

In his recent book *The Roots of Science* (reviewed in Tui Motu, Dec 2000), he argues that the Jewish-Christian tradition provided the environment for modern science to happen. In it, both space and time are desecralised, and can be explored and interpreted. And that is the task of science.

Professor Morton concurs. As a scientist he has always looked beyond the realm of science. He argues that faith comes first and study afterwards. Like St Anselm, Morton says: "I believe in order that I may understand".

Turner the theologian and Morton the man of science are agreed: science and faith are natural allies, they are not combatants. ■



# Of Poppies and Vines...

Northern Italy in the early summer, Pentecost Sunday to be precise. Sunny and warm, zipping along in our luxury coach, almost non-stop between Vienna and Venice. Asking Alessandro our driver to slow down a bit so I could take a photo when we got to the River Piave. My grandfather fought in a battle there in 1918, and won a Military Medal for bravery. I'd known about it for years, but had never dreamed that I'd actually visit the place.

So, at the right moment we slowed, and through the bus window I took a shot of the wide, ice-green, tranquil-looking river. Hard to reconcile that scene with warfare, violence and death. Sitting down, wondering what it was like for young Will and his companions here, back then in a bitter battle that wiped out most of his regiment. At 24 he'd had to take command of the remnant.

A sudden shock as we passed a field stained red with poppies. Through history and poetry and Anzac Day services the connection between war and poppies and blood and Flanders was in me. But this was Italy, and here it was again – unlooked for, very personal. As we travelled south we'd seen smatterings of poppies, sometimes under the martialled rows of poplars, sometimes in a field, highlighting the tapestry of buttercups and Queen Anne's lace. This was a solid carpet, like a bloodstain. But very beautiful. Poppies for remembrance.

Any pinned-on poppies I see now will have the memory of that river and that field trailing as a cloud of glory around them. Vineyards became a frequent sight. The tour guide informed us that vines are grown higher in Italy than in France and Germany. There the warmth from the ground is needed for adequate growth. In Italy, as in New Zealand, the sun provides sufficient warmth.

The twisted trunks each with its two main branches trained horizontally were distinctly visible. A tall stake for each vine rose up some way over the crosswire. There was something achingly familiar about that shape. I focussed on an individual vine in the seconds it took to pass, and with a catch of breath suddenly I saw the connection.

It looked crucified! *I am the vine.* I knew without a shadow of a doubt that Jesus had seen vines at this stage of growth

and had made the same connection. *I am the vine!*

This image too had suddenly gained a shocking new depth. *I am the vine and you are the branches.* Yes, there they were, growing young and straight up from the crucified arms, the first leaves out, full of potential. It would not be long until they too would need to be bound to the horizontal.

Without training and support they would not be able to bear the weight of the fruit, as the sap rose through the vine and recreated the ancient cycle. The vinedresser would secure and tend the vine. *I am the vine.* This stretched-out shape of life that looked so much like the stretched-out shape of death.

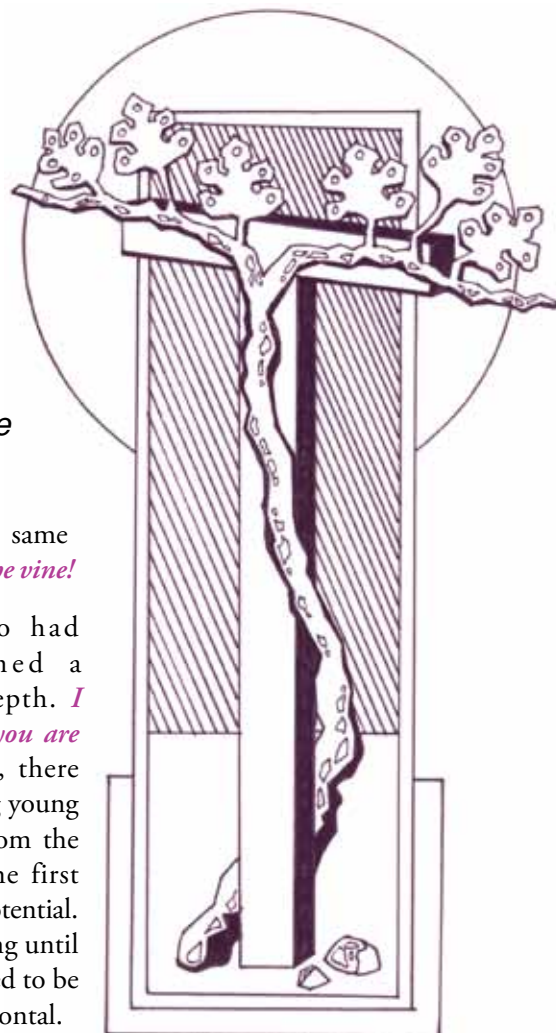
*You are the branches.* You too will be trained and pruned and shaped. The Vinedresser will tend you as he tends me, so that the times that look and feel like deaths will be the times of rising sap and promise of new life, new fruit. As my crucifixion bore fruit so will yours.

*I am the vine...*

Did Jesus, looking at the cruciform vine, carry with him the image of new shoots rising from its arms as he approached his death? Did the disciples at the Last Supper get the picture, as he offered them the image? They were a motley lot of fishermen and tax collectors, not viticulturists.

Or maybe it was the next spring when John and the others stopped in their tracks at the sight of a knobbly-kneed trunk and branches spread like nailed arms, and shoots of new life springing up. Then they knew what he meant when he'd said, *I am the vine and you are the branches.*

And the poppies became the blood of crucifixion. And young men dying included Jesus. And the women who wept include my grandmother and all the millions of others. My being there to honour lives and deaths was a part of resurrection. And



Trish McBride

# The Apostle comes home to rest

*Pat Lythe tells the story of the pilgrimage to France to bring back the bones of Bishop Pompallier. The group was led by Bishop Pat Dunn and Pa Henare Tate (left below).*

**Y**es, we have returned with the remains of Bishop Pompallier, or Bishop Pomaparie, as the Maori call him, and we have returned having walked in the footsteps of many of our tupuna in faith throughout France.

The whole pilgrimage was so sacred and spiritual that it is hard to put it into words. People ask, what was the highlight? Each day was a highlight - at some moment on each day I found myself, a pretty realistic, even cynical Catholic, moved to tears.

We 37 pilgrims, aged from the eighties to 15, Maori and Pakeha, embarked upon an experience of living history – our first stop being Rome where having the second seat in the giant audience hall was bonus enough, but being invited up for a group photo with the Holy Father and announcing ourselves with a haka had

us as we presented the Capuchin friars there with the first of four memorial plaques to mark the kaupapa. The Capuchins were there when Pompallier was ordained bishop too, and to actually be in places where these events took place was both fascinating and profoundly affecting.

A visit to Monte Cassino the next day was deeply emotional, especially for those who had whanau buried there. A different smaller group went to Assisi, where the restoration since the earthquake is remarkable and where snow fell as we walked the cobbled streets past the creamy stone basilicas.

Then it was on to Lyons by train over and through the snowy French Alps – imagine the logistics of changing trains at Milan, where you had to move 37 people and 55

connections with New Zealand. We visited St Nizier, Pompallier and Suzanne Aubert's parish church, and our Sisters of Compassion told the stories there; we had lunch at the local seminary – with connections to the Pompallier group of missionaries, and we were guests of the great Basilica of Notre Dame de Fourviere which is built on an enormous escarpment overlooking the city and its two rivers. We again entered with karanga and tangi, and told our stories as the recteur told the story of the “heart of Notre Dame”, a metal heart shaped container in which is a scroll listing the names of all the missionaries who left Lyons including Pompallier, Peter Chanel, Suzanne Aubert, and all the other French missionaries who came to NZ.

Over the next two days we walked in their footsteps and those of St Marcellin Champagnat, Jean Claude Colin, John Baptist Epalle, the Curé of Ars, and of the founders and foundresses of many of the religious orders here in NZ, the Sisters of the Mission, Cluny sisters, SMSM sisters. In fact we could not comprehend the number of connections Lyons had with us – it was overwhelming to sit in the churches and buildings they lived and worshipped in, to connect with their whanaungatanga and celebrate liturgies in English, Maori and French, liturgies at one and the same time poignant and joyous.

Then of course to Paris, a fairyland in Christmas lights by night – a visit, Mass and the hospitality of the sisters at Sacre Coeur on the Tuesday, and at dawn on the Wednesday to be at the cemetery at Puteaux where in a most sacred and dignified, unrepeatable ritual the coffin containing the bones of Bishop Pompallier were taken from the open grave. The remains were transferred to a travelling coffin, as an equal number of French and Kiwis prayed in French, Maori and English throughout. All the acknowledgements were made, a stone from Aotearoa New Zealand was placed in the grave and the parish priest of Puteaux received a commemorative plaque from the group.



each one of us floating on air afterwards. The grins stretched from ear to ear, and we still had to address the main business of the visit to the Church of the Immaculate Conception where Pompallier was ordained as bishop.

As our kuia led the way into the little Barberini church with karanga and tangi the real significance of our pilgrimage hit

pieces of luggage, across two platforms in 13 minutes! We arrived in Lyons on a freezing evening which was dissipated by the warmth of Fr John Yves Riocreux's greeting: "I am so 'appee to see you all 'ere!" The hotel's very limited lobby and room space was outweighed by the hospitality of the restaurant and the locals. Lyons was a voyage of uncovering, discovering and recovering history and

*Tui Motu asked Marelda Gallaher, of ngati raukawātainui, what the return of Pompallier's bones meant to her.*

**T**hey have brought the bones of Bishop Pompallier back because the Maori people want to give Pompallier the honour due to him, to reclaim the mana he deserves. People like Pa Henare Tate and many other Maori Catholics have been striving for this for many years, and now the time has come.

When Pompallier left France to come as bishop to Aotearoa and Oceania, it was for him a huge leap in faith. He came here for the Maori people. With him were some fellow priests and Sisters of Mercy. At that time there were no settlers. But when, later, the settlers came in numbers there was a new need for priests to look after them – and so the whole focus of the mission changed.

“The difference was that Pompallier had come for us. He emphasised to his fellow priests: ‘Just because they aren’t European doesn’t mean they are not Christian’. Bishop Pompallier accepted us the way we were. I have a real problem with my Maori spirituality and my Catholic heritage. For me I’m Maori first, and then I’m Catholic. I am confused partly because I don’t know enough about my own Maori spirituality.

“This is why for me the return of Pompallier and the hikoi with his bones around the country is so significant. It is not that there are many basic differences between Maori belief in God and the Christian way; that’s why the Maori were so quick to accept the message when Pompallier brought it. The difference is, maybe, in the way we worship. As a people we feel the need for our own Maori rite.

“Maori spirituality has tended to get lost, and become overlaid with the European way. This is why it is so important for us to reclaim Pompallier, because he symbolises what we had. He brought us Catholicism; he showed us another way to celebrate a faith. His presence as a signer of the Treaty of Waitangi was important for us. He was a voice on our behalf. He had become

a part of us and valued our religious freedom – hence article 4 of the Treaty. He had the mana to make a difference.

“Now we need another voice like his. We do have to take responsibility for ourselves. For instance, when we have a Maori Mass now, what we are doing is following the European rite put into Maori language. When Pa Hemi Hekiera visited us last year, it was special to have one of our own. He, a Maori priest, went out to invite the people to celebrate with him – and the people came.

“One of the most moving experiences for me was the healing ceremony we had after communion as part of the rite. It was done in our Maori way: a laying of hands on the shoulders, and this heals in a spiritual or an emotional way. Like the hongi, an ‘energy’ is transferred. Pa Hemi said: ‘I call you Marelda to let go of any anguish...’ It was a personal blessing for me. There is a blending together between two people – and *Io-God* is also part of it. Pa Hemi is called to be our priest. But here I too am being called forth as well, to put aside the crazy, busy life I am immersed in. It is a sort of personal call.

“To go back to Bishop Pompallier: when he went back to France after 30 years he was unknown, and when he died he was put in a pauper’s grave. He wasn’t buried with his whanau-family. He was alone. As he was there for us in the beginning, we are now here for him. Even though his mortal remains are returning to Aotearoa, his wairua – his spirit – never really left.” ■



Among those present was the great great grand niece of Pompallier, who will be coming out to Motuti for the re-interment. The procession moved to Notre Dame in Paris, where the great doors were opened, the bells tolled and Pompallier was led in by the kai-karanga to pause at the great altar before spending the day at a side altar where a marae space was prepared. We took it in turns to sit beside him, singing and praying.

That night at a joyful requiem Mass celebrated by Cardinal Lustiger of Paris, the Papal Nuncio to France, Bishop Pat and numerous other prelates, Bishop Pat preached in French and told the story to a packed cathedral. All the hymns

through-out Mass were in Maori, and as is the custom at the end, a hymn is sung to the statue of Our Lady, Notre Dame – it was *Mo Maria*, Pompallier’s own hymn to Mary. As the Cardinal said, it was the first time in the 900-year-old history of the church that Mary’s hymn had been sung in Maori.

We were led wonderfully throughout the trip by multi-lingual Bishop Pat, by Pa Tate and Marist Pa Brian, ably assisted by Fr Jean Paul Riocreux who smoothed the French pathways and tour leader Emma Davis. The manaaki of the group towards one another was a feature of the pilgrimage, growing out of the spiritual experiences we shared together.

And so home to a fervent greeting at Whai Ora marae with our bishop – the impossible dream had been achieved, thanks largely to the initiative of Pa Henare Tate – more than 30 years since it was first even thought about: the remains of Bishop Pompallier return to be a symbol, a spur to more missionary activity. Those people travelled across the world to the ends of the earth to bring the faith here. It is our turn now – and our field of activity is right here, right in that same Aotearoa to which Pompallier came to bring the good news. Pompallier’s hikoi throughout this country continues. May it in turn inspire us all to missionary endeavour ■



# The art of preaching

*To start a new series on preaching God's word, Fr John Stone of Balclutha describes how he prepares and preaches each week*

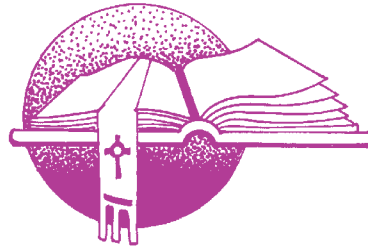
**M**y secondary school days in Invercargill qualified me to be a junior member of the Marist Debating Club. There I learned such adages as, "Every speech has a beginning, a middle and an end." And, "If you don't strike oil in the first two minutes, stop boring!" It was there I learned to think on my feet. It stood me in good stead for the 47 years so far, of sermon preparation and delivery.

I always type my sermon in full. It's not to say that is how it gets delivered, but it cuts out the useless 'filler' words that appear if you are not precise in what you are going to say. The novelist Annie Proulx said that the art of the writer lies in removing words that are either superfluous or not quite the right ones. The same is true for the preacher.

The predominant criticism about the sermons of priests is that they are too long. The reason they are too long is that they are not precise. I suspect that most priests have a few written lines to prompt them, and they take it from there. The result is their sermons are full of buffer words which mean nothing, but which they can use while they reassemble their thoughts. If you choose the words to say, write them down and hone them, then you can deliver the message in a short time.

Joined to this is 'the curse of the after-thought'. Just when the listener is saying to himself that this has been a nice little message, the preacher cranks up again and goes on with a restatement of what he has just said. He feels he must clarify, and he probably must, but what was not very clear in the first place has now been sabotaged by the preacher himself.

If you live in a small place as I do, where the only sermons they are going to hear are the ones you preach, then you have



to prepare them seriously. It so happens that I put my sermon on the Internet every week. If some desperate preacher on the other side of the world finds some inspiration in what I have written, then that's a bonus. For me, because the sermon goes on line on a Thursday, the weekend is never a last minute panic, not knowing what to say.

Preaching however is not simply reading from a text. I have mine by me in case of that sudden blankness which can come on you as you get older. But you have to make eye contact with your hearers, who in most cases modestly avert their eyes from your resolute stare. What I put on the Internet is not what I preach. They are closely related of course, but when you get up to the lectern you know that what was fine on a piece of paper is not going to work here. So you adapt to what you perceive are the needs and even the mood of this congregation. I have a couple of country places to go to as well, and what I say to them needs to have a local tone that suits them. Only experience can teach you that.

The content comes from the Sunday Readings, especially the Gospel. These Gospels are well known to both priest and people. They have been in our memories for a lifetime. Just how to make them relevant is a matter for prayerful reflection. The fact that they are so well known does not limit their content. They keep on surprising us. But the preaching style also depends

on my reading. I read widely. I read the classics, I keep up with the best sellers and I use the Internet for information. I download articles from the London *Tablet*. Whatever is current with today's readers I try to be aware of. You have to speak the language that your listeners are able to hear.

Speaking of hearing in the functional sense, it's well for the preacher to remember that these days the congregation is mostly elderly, and mostly deaf, at least to some extent. If you have a sound system, use it! It's better to be too loud than not heard at all. It is one of the curiosities of our technical age, that those who think they can be heard, generally can't be.

There is another phenomenon which I am still discovering. Most times what I preached is what I expected to. But occasionally a new idea seems to rise from within me that I had not written down at all. On those rare occasions I feel a certain passion, and that what I am saying comes from the heart, not from the memory. For me that is the essence of preaching, but you can't expect it to happen every Sunday. So it's quite a mysterious process, this preaching. Mostly it's prepared, contrived in the best sense, prayed about, and delivered with conviction. Every preacher has had the experience of being met by some enthusiastic listener who tells him how grateful he or she was to hear something in the sermon which you certainly did not say. That's the nice little reminder, that while you have to prepare as if everything depended on you, you acknowledge that hidden influence who inspired you to write and preach. ■

# God with us

*The way God interacts with us and with our world constantly intrigues and perplexes humankind. For some, God is simply on the end of the prayer chain and daily miracles are expected. For most – and that includes many believers – life and God are not quite that simple. Some of us keep God so much at a distance that we become detached and autonomous. God can easily cease to have any practical relevance.*

*But what do the Scriptures say? What about Christian tradition? Do miracles really happen? Does God really care? Tui Motu has assembled three articles in a sort of sandwich to help illuminate this crucial issue.*

*The first, on miracles, is put together from a lecture series by Australian Scripture scholar Frank Maloney. The final piece comes from a recent visit by Scottish theologian Ruth Page, and she has given us the overall title – God with us. The meat in the sandwich is an intriguing story of a dying friend, told engagingly by Robert Allen. It is there to put flesh on the theological*

## Miracle stories in the gospel

### The problem of miracles

People nowadays are sceptical about miracles. The more modern science uncovers for us the secrets of nature – especially the mysteries of our own physical nature – the less need does there seem to be to have recourse to supernatural explanations. Even Scripture has not escaped this ‘demything’ process. One great Scripture scholar, Rudolph Bultmann, said that the Scriptures must be “made relevant to modern man” And modern people don’t accept miracles. Therefore, said Bultmann, the Gospel miracle stories are unacceptable. Yet miracle stories make up a sizeable chunk of the Gospels and are found throughout the sacred texts.

One problem people have in reading the Gospels is the unfamiliar world of demonic possession and miraculous events. Scripture scholar Frank Maloney has an indepth look at the Gospel miracle stories

Take them away and you would remove an essential element of God’s purpose as proclaimed in the Gospel narrative – then and now. For when we read a miracle story we are drawn into the

meaning of the event and thereby may be drawn to see a reflection of our own situation.

Frank Maloney suggests that each time we hear a piece of the Gospel read, we are being drawn into three worlds. First there is the real, historical world *behind* the text. Jesus was not a mythical figure. Jesus lived, taught and acted. Only through the Gospel texts are we brought into rich contact with his earthly life.



There is also a world *in* the text. There is a literary narrative which speaks to us as a whole, in much the same way as a great novel might move us. The miracle accounts are so closely woven into the Gospel narrative that the story would be greatly impoverished, indeed grossly distorted, if they were simply cut out.

Most important, there is also our own world, the world of the reader who stands *in front of* the text. In the text we see ourselves and our own predicament as if we were part of the Gospel story. The Gospel acts as a mirror to our lives. We come to the Gospel as people in need of help. Through the narrative we are brought to experience the healing touch of Jesus himself.

### Did Jesus work miracles?

The Gospel miracles can be divided into healings (including exorcisms) and nature miracles (eg. Jesus walking on the sea, stilling the storm, multiplying the loaves). We cannot conclude that something didn't happen then because we do not encounter it regularly now. History is judged on evidence, not from contemporary experience.

The tradition that Jesus was a healer and a wonderworker is as old as the oldest tradition of his teaching: it cannot be dismissed. It goes against the evidence of the texts to say that Jesus was only a wisdom teacher and the healing stories were grafted on later. The contemporary Jewish historian Josephus, for instance, describes Jesus as a "miracle worker".

Nature miracles and healings are also firmly in place in the Old Testament tradition. Elisha both multiplied food and cleansed a leper. This is the Jewish religious culture Jesus was born into. In the Gospels Jesus' enemies never denied that he worked miracles. The tradition on which the Gospels are based show Jesus as a teacher who worked miracles which

are intimately related to his teaching. This is a unique aspect of Jesus' ministry.

The English word 'miracle' is somewhat misleading. It means 'something to be wondered at'. There is no question that the miraculous actions of Jesus caused people to wonder and admire. But Jesus always refuses to 'show off' his powers. Indeed, in the parable of Dives and Lazarus Jesus implies that people are not convinced simply by miracles.



The Gospel miracles are depicted as simply one of the means by which the Kingdom comes. When Jesus heals, he overcomes the power of Satan in the world.

We in our day may be able to reinterpret the event as the curing of a psychological illness. But for the man Jesus and for his contemporaries, he is seen as freeing the sick person from the domination of evil. Jesus, bringing in the Kingdom, touches the lives of sick people and raises them into true life.

The nature miracles are presented in the same way. Satan manifests his power over nature by disruption. When Jesus stills the storm, he rebukes the

wind in the same way that he rebukes the demon that possesses a person.

Jesus' actions have to be read in the context of the religious culture of his time. They are in the tradition of Elijah and Elisha – but they are more, because Jesus is bringing in the Kingdom. The reign of God is being established. The governance of the world is being changed. The prophetic vision of the Kingdom of God described in *Isaiah 61,1-2* is being fulfilled when Jesus restores sight to the blind and raises the dead.



## How have we come to know about the miracles?

The miracle stories are not ends in themselves. They came to us via oral traditions eventually written down by the early Christian communities. They address the human predicament in ways meaningful to those communities.

The earliest written Gospel (*Mark*) starts with the summary statement: *After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying 'The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel'.*

Then Jesus calls disciples (including Simon Peter) who “immediately” respond. They go into the synagogue in Capernaum and he drives out a demon. “Immediately” he goes into Simon’s house, touches a woman (breaking a taboo) and cures her. The reigning presence of God is bursting into the lives of people through these actions: obedience of the disciples to God’s call, the overcoming of a demon, of an illness, of a taboo. In the evening they bring “all who were sick or possessed of demons” to him and Jesus heals them (*Mark ch. 1*).

The writer has assembled in one day the sort of events that characterised Jesus’ ministry right through, to show what happens when the kingdom of God comes. The miracle stories are integral to this. No evil can survive when this kingdom is proclaimed in the word and deeds of Jesus. A divine urgency is being portrayed. *Mark* is showing his readers that when the kingdom of God comes among them the reign of Satan is systematically overcome.

The next phase (*chs. 2-3*) shows Jesus’ ministry running into trouble with people. Jesus continues to prevail over the power of evil – but people can make up their own minds, and many decide against him. Even the Pharisees and the Herodians – normally sworn enemies – conspire against him.

*Chapter 4* opens with a series of parables showing how great things grow from small beginnings. And then another series of miracle stories demonstrates the power of the kingdom over nature (the storm stilled), over demons, over sickness and finally over death itself (Jairus’ daughter). The whole text is a catechesis of the power of the reign of God. *Mark* selects these teachings and stories as a crucial proclamation of who Jesus is and what he does. The miracle stories are not an optional extra. They are essential to the teaching of the Gospel.

The climax comes in chapter 6 where the people of Nazareth ask the right question: *Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands?* (6,2) We know it is the reign of God. But the people of Nazareth think that because he is the son of Mary whom they all know, they can control him. They have brought him down to earth.

In the Gospel of *John* the miracle stories are used exclusively as a springboard for teaching. For example the multiplication of the loaves (*chapter 6*) leads to Jesus’ teaching on the Bread of Life. In *chapter 9* a man has his physical sight restored. Then, stage by stage, he is led to faith: he is led to the light. Meanwhile the Pharisees start by acknowledging the miracle, then denying it, then denying the authority of Jesus and vilifying the man whose sight was restored. Jesus condemns them – people who think they can see but are in fact blind, while the man who was blind comes to sight.

The miracles are never ends in themselves: they are included there in the text to lead us elsewhere.

## Do miracles still happen?

Human brokenness is not only the result of physical malfunction. Evil is present in the world largely as a result of human actions. A biblical faith tells us that when the divine plan is accomplished, not only are ‘souls’ saved but the whole universe is blessed. There will be an end to destructiveness, to suffering and tears, disasters and death. All these things represent an alienation from God, and in that sense they are ‘evil’.

A sick or suffering person is not in any sense evil, but the very existence of disease and disaster is evidence of an incompleteness in God’s plan for the world. The Gospel accounts of miracles are a dramatisation, based on historical events of Jesus’ life, of the biblical understanding of how God relates to the world. Miracles are signs of the ‘in-break’ of the kingdom of God.

The miracle event points always to the gift of the kingdom of God. Every one of us is conscious of the ‘miracles’ of our own lives. In so far as we see and believe these events to be God touching us, then we already have a foretaste of eternal life (*Jn 5,24*). These experiences take us directly to Jesus Christ as we have met him in the Gospel texts. The presence of Jesus turned around the lives of people just like ourselves. And he led the disciples – as he also leads us – into the presence of the Father, of God who is the author of all life. In this way the Gospel accounts – miracle stories included – act as a mirror to our own search for God. ■

*Salesian priest Frank Maloney is a New Testament scholar who teaches scripture in his native Australia, is a member of the Biblical Commission and has published numerous works, especially on the Gospel of John. He has lectured in New Zealand on many occasions on biblical subjects and on the religious life.*

The “Calming of the Storm” (page 20) entitled *PEACE BE STILL*, was painted by Hanna Cheriyan Varghese, a Malaysian artist in 2001. (With kind permission)

# Frank's Will

*Robert Allen*

**T**he masquerade Sunday morning told lies pretending with a mask of handsome blue sky to be warm and good. In truth the day had a cold, hard heart and core.

I had been conned into getting up early by the birds outside my window. The sun, just as gullible, was up too. Yet while it still looked the part, still orange, it was weak and the light it cast was pale. The grass was frozen solid. My breath turned to smoke. A mutton dressed as lamb day.

My seventeen-year-old son, large and raw-boned, sat hunched over the dining room table eating breakfast. In his fast maturing face I saw a shadow of the little boy I had once held in my arms, and as always a huge lump formed in my guts and unexpectedly, unbidden and without warning, I felt tender towards this large young stranger at my table.

Where had the time gone? And had I spent enough of it with him? I have three sons. What if one day one of them said, "Dad, you should have loved me more, should have spent more time with me."

How would I accept this? How to explain that I was in a constant and bitter fight with time and that some days I raced the very ticks on the clock.

It was about then the phone rang. It was Frank, a friend of mine.

"How've you been?" I asked.

"Not so good," he said sounding strange.

"Nothing serious I hope. I rang you a couple of times last week. You been busy?" I asked.

"I'm in the hospital."

"What for?"

"Cancer, mate. They took most of my stomach out last week. I would have called earlier but..."

An hour later I found him sitting up in a hospital chair, drips and tubes everywhere, and I was shocked at how much weight he had lost. He looked like a refugee from a concentration camp.

I was upset. He was my friend, and I knew instinctively that I was looking at a dying man. What's more he knew it too.

He smiled weakly when he saw me and my mind drifted back to when Frank and I had become close a few years earlier. We had been involved in a project that demanded we work closely together and a friendship had formed that became even stronger when one day, out of the blue, quite nervously, because he was a reserved and quiet man, and quite without lead-up or context he had said.

"Robbo, I need to tell you something."

"Yeah?" I had asked.

"You realise I'm gay don't you? Does that change our friendship?"

It had never occurred to me he was gay. He looked and acted straight, and while he had never spoken much about his private life I liked him. I knew he did a lot of voluntary work with young alcoholics and addicts in early recovery. I respected him for it. He was a kind and considerate human being. He had old-fashioned manners and was always gently respectful with everyone, especially women. Now he was honouring me with his truth... he was gay. Did I mind? How could I? I had never been particularly homophobic and he was my buddy.

Did I have a problem with him being gay?

"Only if you have a problem with me being straight," I had said and we had hugged. An unusual thing for me to do with any man.

Prior to the cancer when we had worked together, Frank and I used to talk for hours. He was smart, had seen a bit of life, and he had a depth of feeling for his God that was built on trust and confidence. At fifty, he was dying of cancer and all his faith had counted for nothing.

God and I were on speaking terms at the time – only just. A nodding acquaintance. Sure, I loved the idea of God, but love a persona called God?

To me God had seemed too cruel and harsh, too random in his blessings. At the time my image of God was still tied to the concepts I was taught as a child. God loved, but his love was too conditional to be returned by me. In fact I had met quite a few people who were better behaved than the God the Catholics spoke about. My teachers' God seemed judgmental, cantankerous and punished people when they didn't act in accordance with His will. I saw God as the ultimate power freak, the master manipulator, a grumpy, unforgiving old bastard, that tricked us by making us human, and then set impossible rules by which we were supposed to live.

"Do it my way or else," seemed to be His attitude – and hell's teeth, most people were better than this. Most people were more tolerant and loving than this God. Surely God was too like a spoilt, petulant child to love. Frank for one was a better person than this image of God.

So as I looked at him that day in the hospital I mentally told God off for picking on my good friend Frank, who as far as I could tell, had never

hurt anyone and didn't deserve to die young... and he was obviously dying. I knew it the moment I looked at him.

"Not so good mate?" I asked as he sat there with all those drips and tubes coming from every single orifice of his body.

"Not so good," he replied.

"The quack say anything about the outcome?"

"Too far spread to get the lot. It's not looking good," he replied.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"How long?" I asked, tears starting to well up.

"No idea. Today, that's all I have. It was the same before this and it's the same now. Nothing's changed. Might be at your funeral. Who knows? No more real guarantees about you is there? I just have to live as well as I can, for one day at a time," he grinned.

And Frank lived another three months

after that, and he lived each day as it came, as well as he could. It was a painful death, but Frank never showed any signs of regret, anger, fear, or bitterness. He never fooled himself about his chances either. Never told himself comforting lies, and yet he never lost his faith.

"How do you manage?" I asked.

"Prayer," he said grimacing through the pain one day.

"But your prayers aren't working. You're getting sicker and weaker."

"Oh I'm not praying to get better. I'm praying to face what I have to face without fear. It's up to God when I die, but I don't want to die badly. I'm not praying for health, I'm praying for courage one day at a time," he said.

"God's will be done?" I asked.

"The damage is done," smiled Frank. "But I don't want to suffer more than I have to and there's more to worry about than the physical pain. If I've got to die I don't want to spend my last days scared shitless. I want them to count."

And he wasn't scared shitless. He died serenely, with class and dignity. He didn't fight it – he just let it happen. Acceptance and peace were the results of his prayers.

As for God? He had kept his promise to Frank, and for the first time ever, I started to have some affection for the Boss upstairs who helped this gay man die in peace. I believed that God had worked a miracle. Not the one I wanted but the one God and Frank had agreed to.

He loved Frank unconditionally. He didn't withhold his grace because Frank was gay. God wasn't a cantankerous old bastard after all. He was better than most people I knew. He had led Frank gently home and why? Because Frank had asked him to. Since then I have tried to stop worrying about time, my sons and life in general. I've tried to do what Frank did. I've tried to live each day as it comes without regret for the past, and without fear of the future. I've been amazed at the blessings perceived and received when I count each day's gifts as special. ■

## Emmanuel – God with us

**T**heologians are sometimes thought of as living in a rarefied sphere of their own making, with little contact with the real world and speaking a language

unintelligible except to themselves. One theologian who gives the lie to this is Ruth Page. Ruth is a Scot, a teacher who came to live in New Zealand where, she says, she underwent a strange conversion – to become a theologian: "God gave me a push". As a result of the manner of her conversion one of her fascinations has been how God touches the created world, especially the lives of ordinary people.

Ruth took a doctorate in theology and was Warden of Salmond Hall, one of the University Halls in Dunedin. She then returned to Scotland to become lecturer in Divinity and eventually Principal of New College, Edinburgh. She

Ruth Page learnt her trade as a theologian in Otago but she lives, teaches and writes in Scotland. Recently she shared her vision of the way God relates to the world with some friends

also wrote several books, returning to Christchurch two years ago to be principal speaker at the Christchurch conference on Ecotheology (see *Tui Motu* Sept. 2000 – *How Green is Our God?*).

Recently she was back again on holiday, and *Tui Motu* met up with her.

"Theology", Ruth suggests, "has often been written as if God were somewhere else". Even the language of Trinitarian theology implies this: 'The Father *sent* the Son.. the Son *ascended* into heaven.. the Spirit *descended* ..' It is as if God were remote from us and has to make a planned effort to interact with us." There have been various answers to this problem. One fashionable idea at the present – espoused for instance by ecotheologian Matthew Fox – is called *Panentheism*. This means 'God *in* all things' or, perhaps more





▷▷ accurately, 'that all things are in God'. God is, as it were, part of the air we breathe. We are always in God's presence, God *indwells* creation. Ruth suggests that this presence is the sense of Psalm 139 – wherever we are, God is as well.

Ruth is not entirely happy with this solution. She asks: "Is God really *in* people, *in* things. I think the world is too ambiguous to say that God is *in* the world. It is not satisfactory to say that God is in a world which is so changeable, where something which is 'good' one day can become 'bad' the next." In other words, to say God is *in* all things is to imply that God is directly responsible for human sin and for earthquakes which kill thousands of people.

What Ruth Page proposes instead is to say that God is *with* created beings (*Pansyntheism*). God's gift is to make things possible. As creation evolves God is always with it at each stage, rather than being the driver. This is how she understands the biblical title, *Emmanuel* – 'God with us'. There are three interesting consequences of this idea:

### • God and the dungbeetle

God did not begin to be interested in creation only when human beings arrived on the scene.

One of the sobering facts is that over 90 percent of all species that have dwelt on earth are now extinct. So what did the long extinct dinosaur get out of being a creature of God? And how does a dungbeetle perceive God? To postulate that God is with creation means we cannot ignore the rest of creation apart from ourselves.

Evolution has produced complex creatures which relate to God in a more complex ways. Humans possess certain finite freedoms: we can love and hate. But we don't know how God relates to the dungbeetle or how the dungbeetle responds to God; but that is not to say that it doesn't. God does not see the dungbeetle as we do, from the outside. It is quite legitimate in our theology to see God as 'personal'. That may be helpful to us as humans, but that does not exclude God being bovine or canine or 'dungbeetlish'! "God is dungbeetle par excellence".

### • God and humans

To say that God is *with* us is to say that God is a force in our world to be reckoned with, yet God respects our freedom. God 'moves' us if we attend to God. Simone Weil, the French mystic, put this beautifully when she said that we need to 'attend' to God, to wait upon God, and not to constantly thrust our ego into relationships so that we prevent God touching our lives.

Simone Weil retells the story of the Good Samaritan. The priest and the levite saw the bleeding heap of human flesh and passed by. They did not allow the scene to penetrate their consciousness. Only the third man allowed the wounded person to speak to him. He 'attended' – and acted accordingly.

God spoke to the Good Samaritan via the heap of bleeding flesh.

This interaction is not to imply change in God: rather that we are prompted to respond to God but through an interaction which is mutual, involving the 'unchanging' God as much as us. This is what Ruth meant when she said that God had "pushed" her into becoming a theologian. God constantly prompts us, even without our noticing. God is constantly persuading and establishing a relationship with creation – from the dungbeetle up! This becomes important for us in our prayer. For Simone Weil the mystic, prayer was simply waiting on God, which she calls the prayer of *attention*.

This way of envisaging God also deals with the problem of power. The Greek word *dunamis* is often translated as 'power' and then used to describe divine action. Ruth Page prefers the translation favoured by the Greek Orthodox – the 'energies of God'. The energy of God becomes mingled with our energy. Sometimes the word *synergy* is used to describe this cooperation between us and God in our actions.

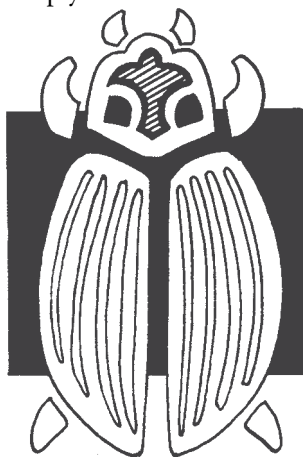
### • God and the church

God is not more present in the church than outside it. Therefore it is a mistake to see the church as the only place where God dwells, as opposed to an unholy place filled with unholy people outside the church. God is present to them too.

We live in a world which is constantly changing. This affects the church as much as the world in general. Therefore the role of theologians and ministers in the church is to help facilitate this constant change. They need to take their people with them, enabling them to constantly investigate new possibilities. The church exists to mediate the growth in the world of freedom and love.

In Christ, God incarnates freedom and love. In becoming human God – in Christ – does not change so much as accommodate to the changes in the world. Ruth uses the metaphor of 'playwright' for the Evangelists, who describe the role of Christ as Messiah, yet never reveal the whole Christ.

Ruth Page concluded with this personal act of faith: "I cannot believe that this world just passes, that it has had no eternal value at all. There have been such good happenings – as well as the bad things which should be consigned to oblivion. Even in Adolf Hitler there may be something worth remembering! I believe there must be some final harvest – and all this requires a God." ■



# Are We Listening?

Glynn Cardy

I was dropping my daughter off at school. Like for most parents of young children, this is a ten minute exercise of parking, walking in, settling your darling, and departing. As I returned to my car another father caught my eye. Fathers who drop children at school often catch one another's eye. It's a sort of gender solidarity thing.

What I noticed, however, was what he had in his hands. In one, not unexpectedly, the car keys. In the other, the cell-phone. At ten past eight in the morning, for the ten minutes it takes to escort one's child into school, he needed to be accessible to the ethereal airwaves of demand.

When I was ordained a priest in 1985 I was given a pix – a little round container not much bigger than a 50c coin. It is used for taking communion to someone who is unable to attend church. I no longer use the pix for its original intention. Instead I use a travelling communion set. The pix is used by the tooth fairy.

At a recent ordination a colleague, ruefully smiling, showed me a gift from his parish. Yes, you guessed it, a cell-phone. Bright gold. I wonder if the tooth fairy has a use for one?

There are some myths about accessibility.

*Myth 1:* If people can reach you by phone, or know where you are, 24 hours of the day, then you are accessible.

*Myth 2:* The more you are accessible to people the better priest you are. *Myth 3:* Technology enhances our lives.

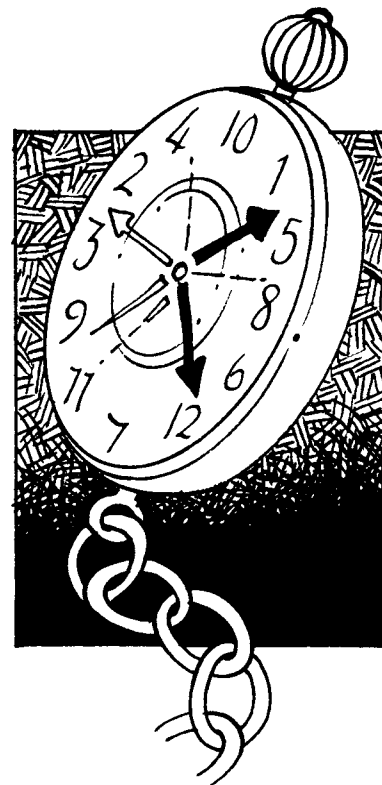
*Re Myth 1:* I once knew a priest who didn't have a cell-phone. He didn't need one because he was always at home, save for the occasional services he would take in the church next door. Undertakers

thought it was great. So did some of the needy souls who knocked on his door.

However, it was a rural parish full of farmers who never saw him walk their paddocks or talk their talk. The farmers weren't the types to call on someone they didn't know, even if he was a priest. He was inaccessible. And a cell phone wouldn't have changed anything.

*Re Myth 2:* What makes a good priest? I think a priest is one who is trying to hold both pain and promise together in their own lives and in the life of their community. To do that we have to be accessible primarily to God. Some priests make the mistake of thinking that if they are busy helping people, taking services, and attending meetings they are fulfilling their vocation. These tasks are secondary to listening. Deep listening to God within and God without.

*Re Myth 3:* Technology presents itself as value-free. It is simply there to help, albeit at a small cost. And, most of us, do indeed benefit from the wonders of time-saving inventions. A parishioner told me that her cell phone enables her not to be desk bound. She can get out. Visit people. Visit our church office. It has freed up her day.



But not unlike Hydra's barber I am suspicious. Why is it that the time we save with one 'indispensable' device is so quickly absorbed by the demands of the lifestyle that devices in general feed. I have yet to meet the person whose life has slowed down due to technology.

I'm not a Luddite. The mere fact that I'm writing this on a computer would reveal my hypocrisy. But I can sympathize with Luddites. It is tempting to simplify all problems and blame them on one villain, like technology. Oh that life was that simple. What I am is one who is wary. When our day is filled with the interruptions of accessibility will we have time to listen to God? When a cell phone can't be left in a car by itself for ten minutes I ask 'Who is controlling who?' ■

## Chaplain: Auckland Prison (West Division) Paremoremo

A 26-hours per week position of Chaplain is available. This salaried position involves providing the ministry of Chaplaincy to approximately 416 men who are imprisoned.

*For further information please contact:*

Eric Allan, Director, Catholic Family and Community Services  
Phone 09 378 9650

**Expressions of interest and applications are requested  
as soon as possible**

# How to close a school

*Paul Andrews*

When I was nine I was sent away to boarding school, and hated every moment of it. The flickering memories of that year still send a shiver through me: the stale smell of cabbage in the corridors; having to eat up lumpy porridge under stern observing eyes; trying to find somewhere to dump the hot milk, which I loathed; the helpless anger against the bullying of older boys, and the whippings in the dormitories.

Something strange happened half-way through my first term. Boys started to go down with diphtheria, which in those days was a deadly illness. A doctor came and swabbed us all, prodded the back of our throats with cotton-wool which he took away and examined, searching for the carrier.

He could not find one. Boys continued to fall sick and be taken off to isolation hospital. By half-term there was general alarm. The doctor returned, swabbed us all again, and after he had swabbed my throat, took a look at my nose, which was inflamed. He found I was the carrier, in my nose, not my throat, free of diphtheria myself, but spreading it everywhere I breathed. I was whisked off to join the colony of boys in isolation. After two weeks there I was allowed back home. My joy was doubled by the news that the wretched school had to close for summer holidays a month early because so many boys had fallen sick.

September came, and I was sent back to school, worse than ever in the dreary autumn weather. I lasted six weeks. In mid-October five or six boys fell sick of diphtheria. Again I was found to be the carrier. The authorities packed me off home with the message that I was not to return. I can still remember the

delight of that journey – and was there also a sense of power? Had I learned something from the summer's misery, a bacteriological response to helpless anger? My body had somehow found a remedy for my wretchedness, awkward perhaps for the school, but effective for me. I never spread diphtheria again, to my knowledge, but whether it was providence or power, I still regard my nose with a sense of awe and gratitude.

In our fast-moving, fluid Ireland, children carry more anxieties than ever as they change homes and schools. They show stress, but in their own special ways. As a boy in new schools (I went to six, most of them awful) I used to wonder if adults could possibly have as many worries as children.

Grown-ups have experienced a lot, and know the score, but children are only learning, and do not know how things are likely to turn out. They face more outspoken cruelty in their fellows than mothers do. I remember the terror of savage beatings in one boys' school, of bullying in my first boarding school, the fear of new subjects and awful food in my second, and the shame of delayed puberty (I didn't eat so I didn't grow) in my third.

## Signs of stress

Children show stress when they feel caught on a treadmill with no rewards, no comment from parents or teachers unless they stop working. Sometimes they would prefer negative

attention to being taken for granted. They show the symptoms of total turn-off, day-dreaming, apathy, defiance, destructiveness, sickness, bed-wetting. On rare occasions children respond to stress by quantity ambition, writing long, long essays, and spending endless hours in homework.



With children as with adults, the basic pattern is of a gap between demand (parents' and teachers' expectations and aspirations) and what they can deliver. They may have a sense that the public exams, at least in terms of satisfactory results, are beyond them. They give up hope. They need to be recognised, then to be heard.

School tends to create an atmosphere of competition. It is seldom necessary to reinforce that at home; there they need to be treasured for who they are, not for what they achieve. From parents they need realism in expectations, and lots of stroking. It is realistic to prepare them for a period of non-success at the start of a strange school. Children who may have been high-fliers up to this can expect a period of relative failure – a



useful experience, since success is what we do with our failures.

In their daily life they must have some joy (where are your daughter's/son's joys?), something to look forward to, preferably some expressive area in which they can shape their activity, put their signature, whether it be dance or games or music or whatever. I remember in strange schools idealising the past, becoming critical of new features.

*they must have  
some joy... something  
to look forward to*

Lately I met a diffident eleven-year-old who longed for the affirmation and encouragement he received from his school in USA, and contrasted it with the demands of his Irish school. His grief for that past experience was heightened by the death of a young friend who had attended his last birthday party in USA. At his age it seemed to confirm the sense of Paradise lost for ever.

## Oh for a friend!

Nothing helps more in a new school than having a friend. I remember pining for friends I had left behind, and did not have the wonderful immediacy of e-mail which many teenagers and younger children can use to keep in touch. It made a world of difference if there was some friend or relative in the new school to break my isolation. Games too were a big help, since that established a comradeship with other boys outside the competitive classroom.

Stress is at its worst in those who feel controlled by powerful others, meaning perhaps the teacher, the headmaster, the cook, the prefect, even a parent. The danger is greatest in the child who feels she cannot cope but cannot escape. We all need to feel we have some influence on our own life. So it is important to involve children actively in the whole process of settling in to a new place and school. We may be pilgrims, but our children do not have to be stressed-out pilgrims. ■

## HYMN FOR WAITANGI DAY

Where mountains rise to open skies  
your name, O God, is echoed far,  
from island beach to kauri's reach,  
in water's light, in lake and star.

Your people's heart, your people's part  
be in our caring for this land,  
for faith to flower, for aroha  
to let each other's mana stand.

From broken word, from conflict stirred,  
from lack of vision, set us free  
to see the line of your design,  
to feel creation's energy.

Your love be known, compassion  
shown,  
that every child have equal scope:  
in justice done, in trust begun  
shall be our heritage and hope.

Where mountains rise to open skies  
your way of peace distil the air,  
your spirit bind all humankind,  
one covenant of life to share.

Shirley Murray  
#155 Alleluia Aotearoa  
The N.Z. Hymnbook Trust.  
Tune: Dr Vernon Griffiths

## WALK BY FAITH

### An Extramural Course for Adults

This 3-year-course uses adult learning processes to help you to:

- *know and understand yourself better*
- *deepen your faith*
- *enrich your knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Scriptures and the Church*
- *learn with others participating in the Course.*

*For an enrolment form or further information, please contact :*

NCRS, PO Box 1937, Wellington,

Ph: (04) 496 1761 Fax (04) 496

1762

OR your Diocesan Education Office

The Programme is directed by the National Centre for Religious Studies  
on behalf of the NZ Catholic Bishops' Conference

Bible Society Ad



McIndoes to place – on disc

## A practical new guide to the spiritual life

*A Listening Heart: The Spirituality of Sacred Sensuousness*

By Brother David Steindl-Rast.

A Crossroad Book. The Crossroad Publishing Company New York. 1999

Review: Patricia Stevenson, rsj

When I received this book I was puzzled as I already had a book with a similar title by the same author – *A Listening Heart, The Art of Contemplative Living* (1983). It is a favourite that I return to again and again.

The introduction revealed all. A friend of the author had published the former from a collection of essays. Br David had never seen them as comprising a whole so when time permitted he rewrote the book omitting two of the original chapters, 'Contemplative Community', (one of my favourites) and 'The Contemplative and Monastic Vocation'. These he says will form part of a new work on religious life.

The book is now geared to all Christians interested in developing spiritually within the tradition. The key theme is: *Listen*, with the subtitle that calls us 'to come to our senses'. The author maintains that much of our theology and spirituality has lost its incarnational origins and become distanced from bodily experience.

"Responsive listening is the form the Bible gives to our basic religious quest as human beings" (p1). *Dei Verbum* reminded us that God also speaks through nature and history. We needed that reminder as we have sometimes been in danger of thinking that revelation was chiefly to be found in catechisms.

The second Chapter, *The Environment as Guru*, explains the nature of contemplation and the need we have for an environment to nurture contemplation. While the monastery is the model or paradigm of the contemplative

environment, once we understand the principles we can create this environment wherever we are.

The next chapter, and the longest, is called *Sacred Sensuousness*. It offers a step-by-step approach to a recovery of the holiness of sensual experience. Before outlining the steps the author explains the meaning of sensuousness and how it differs from sensuality. The principal distinction is that the former is a place of beginnings and the latter an end point.

The three steps are *Childlike Openness*, *Youthful Courage* and *Mature Communion*. At the first level we rediscover our inner child and its ability to perceive. "The path to God starts at the gates of perception" (p27). Some have lost the ability to really live as they age. The Gospels are always calling us to wake up but we don't hear the message because we are conditioned to a kind of living-by-numbers.

In *Youthful Courage* we learn that openness means what it says. 'Open' points beyond itself. The call to move is what stops us from embracing the first stage. "Whenever we open our senses to beauty we lay ourselves open also to the

demands of truth, for truth and beauty are one" (p32).

The third stage, *Mature Communion*, is about transformation. Transformation is a gift not an achievement. There is no do-it-yourself holiness.

The fourth chapter has a curious title: *Sensuous Asceticism*. Our spirituality must be earthed, forget the negative connotations 'asceticism' evokes – whipping oneself with bike chains, or existing on a diet of non-designer wild rice. The word originally meant a workout by an athlete. The key to asceticism is mindfulness. Mindfulness is developed by paying attention to the whole of life.

The final two chapters are *Mirror of the heart*, and *A deep bow*. The mirror is about the use of poetry, particularly Haiku, to 'freeze frame' moments for contemplation.

The final chapter sums up the religious response to God and life in terms of gratefulness.

This is a real Jubilee book. ■

### Lenten exercise

*Praying in Lent*

Donal Neary SJ

The Columba Press, Dublin 2002

Price \$15

Review: M.Hill IC

"Lent can pass us by", says Donal Neary in the introduction to this little volume of daily prayer and reflection. It sure can... especially this year when we're scarcely back from the summer holidays and Ash Wednesday is upon us.

Having a pocket volume for daily Lenten reflection is in my opinion always a real spur to making Lent a bit different, as it should be. The trick is not to launch yourself into something so ambitious

that your resolution breaks down by the end of the first week.

Donal Neary's book is just right because it commits you to only a few minutes each day. There is a verse from the Scripture of the day with a simple, practical reflection. There is a prayer to be used each day of the week: the same prayer so that after a few days the phrases become familiar and like a constant friend. And there is a resolution for each week. For example: "Speak kindly of people this week".

No big deal. I think I could just about keep faithful to this routine for 40

## What does 'Mission' mean in the post-Colonial age?

*Mission in Today's World*

By Donal Dorr

The Columba Press, Dublin 2000

Review: Patrick Maloney

For most of us, the penny has long since dropped. Mission in the sense of buying a black baby for two shillings and six pence is a concept which has long passed its 'use by' date. With it has diminished the mission image of European priests and religious, labouring in remote corners of the third world, converting the locals and establishing educational, medical and general welfare facilities.

For over a quarter of a century, Mission-sending agencies have been agonising over what precisely they are supposed to be doing. Evangelical churches continue largely as before. The mainstream churches are exploring new frontiers. Fewer Mission workers now leave our shores. By contrast, here in New Zealand, we've become used to seeing priests and religious from former Mission-recipient nations in the South Pacific arriving here to serve the New Zealand Church. Something old continues, but something new is being born.

There can be few around in the English speaking world better qualified than Donal Dorr to write about Mission today. He is himself a missionary of many years' experience in the field as well as a theologian and writer of some ability.

Though his book is of moderate length, he uses a large canvas. He takes as his starting point the assumption that we are now in the twilight age of missionary activity as the term is commonly understood, a missionary era that began in the middle of the 19th century and lasted about 150 years. In this time, zealous Christians, mainly from Europe and later, North America, fanned

out over lands all around the globe, then being opened up to European influence, very often in the wake of colonial expansion. It is a matter of record that since the 1970s, much of that has changed. What is happening is not an ending of Mission, but the end of a particular phase in the life of the Church.

Fr Dorr challenges us to come to a new understanding of Mission in which dialogue with other religions and spiritual outlooks is a pre-condition to any other dimension of Mission. From here he leads the reader to consider Mission as being much larger than the mere setting up of churches where previously they did not exist. Rather, he urges us to promote 'reign of God' values such as human liberation from poverty, ignorance, disease and injustice. He extends the scope of the Church's mission even further by challenging her to confront modern problems such as urban drift, sexism, ecological degradation, and so on.

Frankly, on first reading, it left me breathless. There is so much to take in. I believe there is material here for several books. Part Three of the book is called Re-Visioning 'Mission to the Nations' (*ad gentes*). Much of it is based on Pope John Paul's 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. My suggestion to the reader is to begin reading here. Parts Three and Four provide a setting in which the wide-ranging earlier chapters are far more easily understood.

The author acknowledges the worth of missionary work done in traditional third world settings where the model of church/convent, school, dispensary and craft shops have served well, but he points out that this model is no longer adequate, sometimes not even appropriate. He claims indeed that Mission should no longer be focused mainly overseas. It is equally necessary at

home, perhaps more so. He recognises, though, that the Catholic value of 'communion' is well served by serving beyond home boundaries.

There is a really challenging passage where, in the spirit of Paolo Freire, he calls on bishops and priests to empower those in their care to choose their own priorities in policy making.

The final chapters are more specifically directed at members of missionary orders with advice on adapting to new needs in different times.

Missionary work meant one thing to St Francis Xavier and another to Blessed Damien of Molokai. Mission is as necessary now as it ever was. Christ must still be preached, but Mission today is moving and must move in new directions. This valuable book helps us to see that the Holy Spirit is leading us to changes necessary for our own times. ■

***We will find those books for you!***

Books mentioned in this paper, or any other books you can't find, can be ordered from:



***O C Books***

Tollfree 0800 886 226  
39 Princes St, Dunedin  
Ph/Fax (03) 477 9919  
email: [shop@ocbooks.co.nz](mailto:shop@ocbooks.co.nz)

***Visit our website***



## Grandparenting – a vocation of delight

The Christmas festivities are over. The families which survived the annual reunions will be wondering again whether they were held in the right spirit. Siblings with clenched hair, aunts with attitude problems and uncles a year older but not wiser gathered on the lawns and porches and coped with feuding ten-year-olds and bored teenagers. Every family has at least one member who is a problem and has to be handled carefully. It could be me!

On the periphery of the gatherings are the grandparents with benign smiles on their faces. They ignore the mayhem and the tension and marvel at the intelligence and beauty of their grandchildren. They are utterly forgiving of the horrid behaviour of baby B. ("She'll learn, Dear"), love the stud in the teenager's lip and silently thank God that they don't have to put up with any of them on a long term basis. Grandparents are the peacemakers who, hopefully, will be called the children of God but in the meantime consider their grandchildren to be just that. The Syrian writer, Kahlil Gibran, writes about children; "they are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself... for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow". Grandchildren are God's gift to the aged, God's guarantee of

### Reign of terror

Now that the devastation of Afghanistan seems complete, having left behind unexploded cluster bombs and maimed and homeless civilians, the war against terrorism takes on new meaning. It is now the weapon of the powerful and the self-righteous who believe their own rhetoric, which is one of suppression. The concept is not new. In the 18th century, Robespierre held power in France for only a year. He was both a terrorist and an ideologue,

given to abrupt or extreme solutions. He became the philosophical apologist for terror, and from then on, was driven by the logic of his ideas. He needed to have reasons for what he did, so he made an ideology of suppression.

Robespierre's speeches on terror were the language of suspicion – of unmasking, revealing and exposing the enemy within. The idea of terror as a necessary

## Crosscurrents

John Honoré

self-defence became the official Jacobin view. It was an instrument of assault. Robespierre was obsessed with discovering counter-revolutionaries.

For him, the mission of the revolution was no longer the creation of political freedom through laws and the constitution but the destruction of evil and the enshrinement of virtue. He identified terror with virtue, "terror is nothing else but prompt, severe, inflexible justice. It is, consequently, an emanation of virtue."

He was aware of the moral ambiguity of his actions and explained that the government was the bulwark of liberty against tyranny. A clever concept, because now the purpose of terror was what determined its morality. For Robespierre, all political and personal actions had to spring from a pure heart and be expressed in the language of "truth and justice". He gave political principles and a philosophic basis to terror.

It all seems familiar in 2002. The language – "evil forces", "bring them to justice", "enduring freedom" – cloaks a break-down of the rules of international law and the demonisation of nation states under the guise of anti-

terrorism. The war against terror is now a universal excuse for suppressing political minorities in order to increase

### The nurses' predicament

the domination of the powerful and to further the injustices of tyrants.

As we go to Press, the Nurses' strike in Christchurch seems likely to go ahead. It is the old pattern of "them versus us" – the unions against the Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB). It is a very complex situation, with the nurses and health workers represented by four different unions seeking more pay for their members, and the CDHB which claims underfunding from the government as the reason for their inability to increase pay offers.

There are two fundamental facts in the dispute. Firstly, the base salary of these workers, \$20-23 per hour, is manifestly too low. Workers and the CDHB must agree on overtime rates, holiday times and long working hours both to compensate for the low base wage and to run the hospital with the inadequate staff numbers now available. Secondly, this stand-off is the culmination of a decade of inept political restructuring and a cumbersome reform of the health system which have been both costly and ineffective. Mental health in particular has always been underfunded and the job demands a dedicated, highly-trained staff which is now woefully underpaid and also short in numbers. On the other side, board members of health organisations are often seen as unprofessional in their approach and forced to be overly concerned with balancing an inadequate budget.

It is ironic that the vast majority of New Zealanders would be willing to give nurses substantially better pay and conditions, but must witness politicians being accorded hefty pay rises and then pleading "we have no more money for health". Air New Zealand can be rescued from incompetent management with \$800 million, Maori can be given a

# Was Adam's sin greed?

I enjoyed reading the article "Theology as prayer and play" by Tina Beattie (*Tui Motu*, Dec 2001), but was surprised by her use of the story of Adam and Eve to prove a feminist's point. The Bible is full of symbolic stories and the writers must have had a good psychological insight into human nature. My interpretation of this story is that, through greed, one creates one's downfall.

Adam and Eve were equally greedy for more than they had or needed, just as humankind has continued to be greedy for more than they need. The consequence of this we see all around us: poverty, pollution, violence, misery. Are there any other interpretations?

*Marja van den Bemd, Auckland*

## letters

### The 'excellence' of Catholic schools

Recently I read in *The* (Christchurch) *Press* an article intended to pump up support for enrolments at local Catholic secondary schools. It must have drawn upon archives as it contained material which gave so much offence to State schools in the early period of the Integration of Catholic schools.

State schools, then, resented the imputation that, in terms of their Special Character dimension, only Catholic schools taught 'real' values. Every school and all teachers teach values. Some not to be treasured, to be sure.

State schools countered by setting about determining their own special character which they honed and burnished to their own image. They got over it, they got new life and got on with it.

Ignoring whatever spiritual motivation that might have impelled their contemporaries in the State system, much of it Catholic as it happens, Catholic schools insisted still that their values were superior because they operated under the aegis and inspiration of the 'Real McCoy'.

But, reality is not so simple. At the time of Integration, those who had borne the responsibility for the nurture of Catholic schools were rapidly leaving for other calls. Entire generations of total immersion in faith were lost virtually overnight. Today few Religious are to be found teaching in the schools. With the best will in the world and however much resource is provided, it is not possible to compensate for that faith immersion simply by grafting some catechetical diploma onto the common teaching qualification.

In selecting a school for the education of the Catholic child one is thrown upon one's own resource to determine whether or not the icons of 'McCoy' and the special character slogan are any more than brand imaging of a Catholic school franchised to the State.

*John Drury, Christchurch*



St Patrick's Parish, Masterton, recently farewelled a much loved member. Sr Walburga DOLC has been the 'missioner' there for the Maori people of the Wairarapa for 12 years. The parish funded her work. Sr Walburga will live in retirement in Carterton. Pictured at her farewell: (l to r) Joe Mutu, Sr Walburga, Fr Michael Stieller (Parish priest), Adie Paku, Fr Tony Kearns.

*If you know a friend who might enjoy reading Tui Motu – and perhaps become a subscriber – then fill in the name below and send it to:*

**Freepost No. 97407  
P O Box 6404  
Dunedin North 9030**

*– and we will send them a free copy.*

Name:.....  
.....

Address:.....

### TUI MOTU-INTERISLANDS SUBSCRIPTION

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

..... Area Code.....

\$22 for FIVE ISSUES ☐

\$44 for ONE YEAR'S Subscription (11 issues) ☐

Overseas – all regions: \$60 ☐

I enclose a cheque for \$\_\_\_\_\_ (Payable to: *Tui Motu-InterIslands*)

or please debit my credit card (Visa/Mastercard)

Card No:\_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date\_\_\_\_\_

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

***Mail to Freepost 97407, P O Box 6404 DUNEDIN NORTH 9030***

# George W riding roughshod...

The category “unlawful combatants”, used to describe the prisoners being shipped from Afghanistan to Cuba, has no basis in law. This is the considered opinion of Richard Goldstone, a South African jurist and former Chief Prosecutor at the Hague Tribunal for War Criminals.

International Law, he insists, recognises two possibilities. There are *prisoners of war*, whose rights fall under the Geneva Convention. Or there are *common criminals*, who are dealt with by the criminal justice system of the country involved. This third category invented by the Americans originates from a dubious decision made by the US Supreme Court during the Second World War while dealing with spies. There is no analogy, says Goldstone, with the al-Qaeda prisoners.

Goldstone maintains that the prisoners should not be taken to Cuba without proper extradition proceedings and

that they are being denied a fair trial. Secretary Rumsfeld seems to be acting unilaterally, says Goldstone, and this reflects the attitude of the United States government during the crisis. Power is being increasingly concentrated in the hands of President Bush and the executive chiefs. Military tribunals are appointed to be judge and jury over the prisoners: there is no independent judiciary.

It is difficult to believe that all the prisoners so far taken to Cuba were implicated directly in the events of September 11. As it stands they have no right of appeal, not even to the US Supreme Court.

Ever since World War 2, says Goldstone, the notion that national sovereignty is sacrosanct has been gradually whittled down. Criminals can no longer shelter behind national frontiers. The decision in London to allow ex-President Pinochet of Chile to stand trial for crimes against humanity was a milestone.

What is happening at the present time is that people accused of terrorism are being arrested in many countries. The ideal would be for all of them to appear before the same international court instead of separate national tribunals. This would ensure a uniform standard of justice.

Meanwhile a veritable witch hunt is starting in the United States. There are presently over 1000 people being detained without trial. Who are they? Where are they being held? The American example will simply encourage other countries to follow suit and ride roughshod over the rule of law.

William Goldstone is adamant that public opinion must speak out and insist that the rules of due process are adhered to even when dealing with suspected terrorists. Otherwise we in the West are simply allowing ourselves to adopt the logic of the terrorist that the end justifies any means which are deemed necessary. It is significant that no less a person than ex-President Carter has said that if the present trend in America continues, “whatever war

*Two exciting new titles for Lent 2002!*



## Praying in Lent

Donal Neary, SJ

A new title from this popular author offering thoughts and prayers for a short daily prayer-time based on a phrase from the gospel of the day. As the test at the end of Lent is not what we have done for Lent, but what Lent has done for others through us, each page suggests a possible action for the day. Suitable for individual or group use. (see Review p28)

Paperback, 55 pages, \$15.00 (post 80c)

*Mail orders our speciality – all major credit cards accepted*



## Every Day of Lent

*a book of activities for children – Cycle A*

The story of our redemption comes to life for children through scripture passages and creative activities. This book leads children in the footsteps of Jesus from His temptation in the desert to the glory of His Resurrection.

Large-format paperback, 48 pages, \$15.00 (post 80c)

C

CATHOLIC SUPPLIES (NZ) LTD, 85-89 Adelaide Rd, P O Box 16 110, Wellington

Phone: 04 384 3665 \* Fax 04 384 3663 \* Freephone 0800 882 284 or 0800-Cath-Sup

email: catholic.supplies@clear.net.nz