

# Tui Motu

InterIslands

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*Is he on the cross for me?*



*inside*

- The subversive character of John
- Pilgrimage to the Heart
- Business with a values base



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# The saving impulse of God

It is acceptable to urge people to save the whale, the kakapo or the planet, yet when some eager evangelical asks us "Are you saved?" we find something intrusive and unreal about his question. When one unpacks it one discovers he's really saying, "You are a sinner under God's wrath, destined for Hell. Jesus died in your place to propitiate an angry God. Repent and accept the crucified Christ as your personal Saviour and be saved, and you will go to Heaven. If not, you are lost."

That underlying formula of belief does not match the hopes and needs of most modern women and men, who are inclined to say, "Whatever problems I have, those are not mine!" It might be wiser for us to unpack the original concept of *save* and *salvation* as used in Scripture to see what they really mean. Though the words *save* and *salvation* are not always used, the concept runs throughout both Testaments, using many powerful metaphors to express the meaning. Always God takes the initiative to rescue and restore his human children who cannot save themselves.

Israel had its first beginnings when God sent Moses to Egypt where the Israelites languished in slavery. "Let my people go!", said Moses to Pharaoh, and led them through the desert until they reached the borders of the promised land. Liberation from any form of exile remains a key theme in all Scripture – God's will to rescue his children from every bondage which holds them back from their true humanity and destiny. Did not Jesus tell the citizens of Nazareth that he had come to set the captive free?

Our captivities are various and cruel – unjust political and economic systems, destructive personal habits and addictions, minds poisoned with guilt, prejudices, resentments and sick self-destructive attitudes. The words *save* and *salvation* may sound musty in a religious setting,

but there is no evidence that modern men and women do not need to be released from whatever holds them back. Is this not salvation under another name?

A sense of alienation haunts our human condition; it is the great wall which destroys human relationships at every level, preventing communication and harmony and generating hatred. Whether through vice – a sin against our own bodies, or crime – an offence against society, or sin – defiance, neglect or disobedience of God, the inevitable alienation results in broken relationships, strife and human angst. Salvation can come only in one way – by the removal of the wall of alienation; that can come only when, through repentance and forgiveness, or atonement, the dividing wall is broken down, and reconciliation ensues. Is this not salvation? Supremely, Christians see in Jesus' death on the cross the evidence that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 19).

If Jesus is, as *John* daringly called him, "The Light of the World," he can be seen as the illuminating factor in whose light we see the world as it is, God as he is, and ourselves as we are. If he is the Bread of Life, feeding famished souls, is this not salvation? Or in a kindred metaphor, he opens the eyes of the blind to the world as it is, not as our distorted vision has shown us. Or with *John*, what is it to be *born again* but to be saved from the ravages of that commerce with the world that destroys the soul? Salvation underlies all these and other basic concepts of our faith, and it is always God who takes the initiative.

In art, doctrine, liturgy, sacrament and private piety, the Catholic Church throughout its existence has named Jesus Christ as the Saviour, sent by God to liberate, atone, enlighten, reconcile, heal and give new life to his human family. For us and our salvation, Jesus was born

*Tides of Reconciliation – 1*

## Long Night's Journey into Day

As an exercise in reconciliation it was unprecedented: 22,000 victims of apartheid told their stories to South Africa's *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in over two years of hearings, 7000 perpetrators of the violence applied for amnesty. It was a country's attempt to come to terms with its past, carried out in public, every word broadcast on public radio.

The stories of the victims and the oppressors involved in four horrific episodes were told in a remarkable documentary film, *Long Night's Journey into Day*, which screened in this year's film festival. It deserves a far wider audience than the few thousand in total who managed to pick it out from the array on offer at the annual feast.

The film lasted for 90 minutes, just a blink compared to the years of violence and horror which was South Africa in the last days of apartheid; likewise to the intense years of commission hearings which are still going on, yet enough to change one's ideas forever about what it means to listen, to hear, to forgive. The stories chosen showed that apartheid bred violence on both sides: two were of white people killed by blacks, two of groups of young black men killed by the forces of the state. Most remarkable and affecting was the meeting of a group of black mothers whose sons had been killed with the young black policeman who had been part of the anti-terrorist squad which ambushed and killed them. The mothers had tried to sit in the hearing room while the horrific police video of the massacre scene was shown, only to break down and run, distraught and wailing, from the room. The face-to-face meeting with the young man who had killed their sons was

tense and angry, one wondered how any good could come from it.

There were accusations that the black policeman had sold out his own blood for money instead of defending it. And then the most remarkable act of forgiveness – one mother who had poured out her anguish recalled that Jesus had forgiven, even on the cross he had forgiven, and so would she. "I forgive you, my son" she said to the young man who had killed her son, and she embraced him.

The turmoil and agony which lead to that moment can only be guessed at, but that mother's spontaneous act of forgiveness was a gift to the world, a moving act of love and an acknowledgment that all were victims.

Such a happening was not unique. Antjie Krog, the award-winning journalist who was a script writer for this film, tells of others in her book *Country of My Skull* (Vintage paperback), a personal account of the Commission's work which she covered daily for the South African Broadcasting Commission. It is a thoughtful record, often harrowing, which conveys the atmosphere of the hearings and the times with absorbing skill. "Retributive justice will not solve the problem, we must seek restorative justice" said Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chair of the Commission. "If people confess publicly that they did these ghastly things, if the truth is revealed, only then can we move forward."

"Learning the truth gives the opportunity for peace of heart, for forgiveness. Unless there is forgiveness in our nation, there is no future."

*Kathleen Doherty*

▷▷ one of us, a human being, breathing our air, living our life and dying our death. In our time movements have arisen to downplay the Saviourhood of Jesus and see him, not so much as God's unique messenger of rescue and reconciliation, but rather as just another wandering guru, teaching profound truths but

making no claims for himself. Later generations transformed his simple teaching into a religion centred on himself, something he never envisaged, and the whole Catholic stream of belief and practice has got it wrong.

But those whose lives have been transformed through faith in him, and

have been nourished by the continuing ministries of an admittedly far from fallible church, are unlikely to surrender the larger vision. When we are asked (as the disciples were at Caesarea Philippi) "Who do you say I am?" we will find ourselves stammering with Peter, "The Messiah of God". Is that not another

*Selwyn Dawson*



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

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

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

**Website:** [www.catholic.org/newzealand/tuimotu](http://www.catholic.org/newzealand/tuimotu)

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

**Directors:** Tom Cloher, Annie Gray, Elizabeth Mackie OP, Margaret May, Judith McGinley OP, Ann Neven RSJ, Chris Loughnan OP, Patricia Stevenson RSJ

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# Repentance – the only way

*Christian churches must take the lead in the Irish peace process, argues  
Canon Nicholas Frayling, Anglican Rector of Liverpool*

Once again the eyes of the world have been on Northern Ireland this northern summer, not so much because the new devolved Assembly has been getting on with discussing the normal affairs of community life, but because of Drumcree and the 'Loyalist' marching season and its consequent mayhem.

Ireland is England's nearest neighbour. We are bound to it by ties of language, Christian faith and shared history. That history has been painful for eight centuries. Unless some way is found to heal memories there can be no lasting peace.

In 1993, the IRA exploded a bomb in Warrington, and two little boys were killed. At that time, I pleaded in the media for a greater understanding of the history of Ireland. I mentioned the enforced settlement there of loyal Protestants from Scotland and England, to the detriment or death of the native Irish, and the ferocity which was used to subdue them. I referred to the catastrophe of the great famine as a result of which a million people perished, and the same number were forced to emigrate. I argued that, by neglect and by other means, Britain has used the people of Ireland for its own ends.

It is a fact of Christian experience, but also true to human psychology, that there can be no reconciliation without sorrow and penitence. That is always costly, and to suggest that one nation or people should apologise to another is to invite accusations of naiveté, lack of patriotism, and capitulation to terrorism. Repentance and recon-

ciliation are the very heart of the Gospel, and you cannot achieve one without the other. None of us can escape the consequences of our history. We have to live with them, but we can try to understand it better, and thereby begin to heal personal and social memories. In Ireland, it is for the churches to give a lead in providing the resources of vision and hope, to help people to find a new way forward, so that the poor will no longer cry for justice while the well-off plead for peace.



To suggest that sorrow and penitence offer the best way towards healing the relationship between Britain and Ireland is not to imply that all wrong is on one side. But it *is* to suggest that, for suffering to be redeemed, someone has to make the first move.

Such injustices can hardly be regarded as our fault, yet we cannot escape the consequences. This is true of present-day Germans in relation to the Third Reich, and present-day Liverpool ship-owners in relation to the slave trade.

They and we continue to bear the stain of such events. That is why a proper understanding of history is absolutely crucial. Maya Angelou has written: *History, despite its wrenching pain, Cannot be unlived, but if faced With courage, need not be lived again.*

There can be no reconciliation without sorrow and penitence. It is costly, but the Gospel can never be less than costly. It has as its fount and origin a crucified Messiah, who was yet able to plead: *Father, forgive.* The plain truth is, if we Christians are not committed to the search for reconciliation in all its costliness, then we have forgotten our calling in a fallen world.

I have used Britain and Ireland as an example of the need to begin to deal with the pain of our history, but each may wish to make particular connections. The then President of West Germany, Richard van Weizsacker, said in 1985, on the 40th anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz:

*Whoever closes his eyes to the past becomes blind to the present. Whoever does not wish to remember inhumanity becomes susceptible to the dangers of new infection.*

Sorrow and penitence are the Church's business, but they have a more worldly application. They are valuable in their own right. They provide, in a suffering world, means (and sometimes the only means) to break an inherent pattern of evil, and to make possible new freedom of action. In international affairs, they serve to remind us that politics alone is not enough. In theology we call it the need for redemption. In worldly terms it remains when all else has failed. ■



*...and from the other side of the Irish Sea Cait Mulligan takes a sage look at the Northern Ireland peace process*

It is about nine or ten years since I spent a week in Northern Ireland, holidaying there with some friends. Despite the beauty of the six Counties and the relative peace of those few days, I have never been back. True, the peace process is now in place but, like most residents of the Republic, I regard it as no more than what has been described as “a nervous peace”. Although violence has been decreased dramatically, there are regular reports of non-peaceful activities such as punishment beatings and the placing of bombs on the Dublin-Belfast main trunk railway line and elsewhere. Would-be visitors tend to stay away.

There is both sunshine and shadow in the big picture that is the peace process. The shadow is cast by the existence of dissident Republican and Loyalist groups opposed to the democratic principles of the Good Friday Agreement. They pose a very real threat because of their easy access to arms and their propensity for violence as their preferred means to achieving their diametrically opposed political ends.

A further and very long shadow is cast by the Orange marching season which, as in previous summers, has the capacity to destroy the fragile peace now in place. The arrogance displayed by Unionists on such occasions and especially at Drumcree, is viewed by Nationalists both North and South as highly offensive and dangerously provocative. During July and August one constantly tunes into news bulletins or scans headlines with a palpable measure of apprehension.

Thankfully, there is a bright side to the peace process picture too. The light is cast by the step taken in late June by the IRA to open some of its arms dumps to international inspection. Commentators welcome the inspections as the most fundamental development for the consolidation of the Belfast Agreement since it was ratified by referenda, North and South, over two years ago.

The question of the decommissioning of arms has plagued the peace process for three years or more. The impasse over the issue lead to the suspension in May, of the Executive and the North/South dimensions of the Agreement. The IRA's move on its arms dump, as yet unmatched by Loyalist groups, represents a breakthrough in terms of historical attitude. Unionists argue that arms inspections do not represent decommissioning. David Trimble, the North's First Minister, while welcoming this “first step”, said he looked forward to further progress on arms. The reported official sighting of a substantial amount of arms allowed for the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Unfortunately, other major questions remain. They include the weighty political matters of the implementation of the reform of the criminal justice system and the fulfilling of the Good Friday Agreement's commitment to equality. Difficult community problems awaiting attention revolve around the presence of British forces in the Six Counties and the flags issue. The latter has strongly emotive overtones in terms of symbolism, tradition and the principle of parity of esteem for all.

### *a long shadow is cast by the Orange marching season*

Newspapers in the Republic place the *Patten Report on Policing* at the top of the list of potentially fatal traps ahead of the newly-restored Executive. The Northern Secretary of State, Peter Mandelson, has angered nationalists North and South with the draft form of the controversial *Police (Northern Ireland) Bill* which he put before the British House of Commons in June. The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, described “the fundamental rowback” in it on key recommendations of the Patten Com-mission. It is difficult to see what final form will be acceptable to the Northern Ireland community as a whole. The process of reaching that final form has potential for sparking off not only dissent but violence.

It has to be said at this stage that not every citizen of the Republic follows events in the North with avid interest all the time. *As long as there isn't another Omagh; ...as long as the guns are silent; ...as long as they leave us in peace down here*, are among the remarks often heard.

People with a strong sense of history tend to recall past wrongs and to argue for *Brits out of Northern Ireland*. Stories such as those emerging at recent sittings of the *Bloody Sunday* Inquiry help many people of moderate views to understand some of the bitter antipathy of Northern nationalists towards the British Army and its presence and actions within the Six Counties. They also give an insight into the appeal that the IRA has had for young people and their readiness to wage an armed struggle for freedom.

Whereas, formerly, many criticised everything about Unionist leader David Trimble from his politics to his personal appearance, they now hold him in considerable esteem. People realise that Trimble's leadership has helped to open his party to a vision of a new and better way of life for Northern Ireland and for all its people. He has put his political life on the line to further the work of reconciliation between unionists and nationalists. Along with John Hume, he is a worthy holder of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Pragmatists in the South, especially in the business world, recognise that the All-Ireland dimensions of the Belfast Agreement have tremendous potential for trade. Commentators question whether, long-term, the European Union and its drive towards political and economic unity will simply reduce questions of national identity, both sides of the Border, to a non-issue.

My plans for this northern summer do not include a visit to Northern Ireland. But, like so many other people on this island, my hope and prayer is for a lasting peace that will dismantle the barriers of fear, hatred, bigotry and prejudice that have so long divided us. ■

*Sr Caitleen Mulligan SHF was a religious educator for many years in Canterbury and Auckland*



# *Pilgrimage to the Heart*

*For Australian church leaders Pentecost 2000 was the climax of a unique journey of reconciliation from Canberra to Ayers Rock*

The reconciliation movement has spread way beyond the cities and has begun to touch the hearts of rural Australians, says Archbishop Francis Carroll. The Archbishop was one of Australia's church leaders who pledged to further the cause of reconciliation with the nation's indigenous people, its races and cultures, and between the churches, at a moving service with members of an Aboriginal community in the shadow of Uluru (Ayers Rock) on Pentecost Sunday.

"It is clear," the Archbishop stressed, "that the reconciliation movement has begun to touch the hearts of people in rural Australia. We were much encouraged by the impressive display of Christian unity and the high degree of co-operation between indigenous and non-indigenous people in concerts and worship services along the way. The true heart of Australia cannot be healed until there is true reconciliation."

Eight church leaders from different Christian churches, each accompanied by a youth representative, travelled

aboard a chartered bus from Canberra, for the biggest ecumenical event of the *Year of Jubilee*. A group of about 60 Aboriginal people from the Mutitjulu community at the base of Uluru as well as from other parts of the Northern Territory took part in the Pentecost open-air service with the church leaders.

The pilgrims acknowledged their churches' past failures to respect Aboriginal culture, as well as their unwitting complicity in government policies for the removal of Aboriginal children from their families. They pledged to "work together for reconciliation and for the healing of our ignorance and prejudice".

Anglican Primate, Archbishop Peter Carnley of Perth, said the pilgrimage had special significance for ecumenism. "The very fact that heads of churches and youth representatives have been on the bus together for a full week is itself uniquely important. The pilgrims have not only prayed together, but have shared in some of the pain of remote and isolated rural communities." ■



Archbishop Francis Carroll, accompanied by youth rep. Justin Rofe, setting out from Canberra on the road to Uluru (photo: Sue Orchison)

The red earth gives life to the saltbush plains and the wind is silence's only companion. In the middle of the desert, you can be at one with God and reflect on the splendour of his creation, especially after the recent

rains which have given the desolate countryside a rare, almost green tinge. The thin strip of tar that traverses this lonely landscape is the only sign of human habitation. A lifeline through the desert, it bridges the continent and

brings people together from far and wide. It is into this harsh environment that a busload of church leaders and their youth representatives from all corners of the country travelled on a spiritual journey to the heart of Australia.

The destination was Uluru, formerly known as Ayers Rock, and the cause was reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, between cultures and races, and the churches the pilgrims represented. The *Pilgrimage to the Heart*, a project of the National Council of Churches in Australia to mark the *Year of Jubilee*, was an ambitious project from the moment it was first envisaged almost five years ago.

One suggestion at that time was to fly the church leaders to Uluru for a single

event. But then the concept of a week-long pilgrimage gained ground. To convince the heads of churches to travel on a bus for seven days, away from their city churches, was just the beginning. The next step, as pilgrimage director Fr Tony Doherty and Dean of St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney explained, was to organise a series of visits to communities along the way. "There were a number of places where we were not quite sure how we would be received - even as we were leaving Canberra," he said.

The pilgrims were farewelled from the national capital on June 4 by Governor-General Sir William Deane after a reception at his residence, *Yarralumla*, the previous evening. From Canberra the pilgrims set off on their mission, each carrying a hessian swag which included a seashell, a symbol of early Spanish pilgrims, and wearing a bright scarf depicting the many colours of the countryside they would cross.

**Day 1:** Then it was on to Narrandera, gateway to the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, for the night. Along the way we heard the story of bush poet John O'Brien, whose real name was Fr Patrick Hartigan, parish priest in the area for 27 years.

At Narrandera, the locals put on a show which featured the first combined performance by a choir comprising students from the local state primary and Catholic schools. An elder of the Wiradjun people also told her people's story to the drone of a didgeridoo and asked the pilgrims to deliver two message sticks to the indigenous people of Mutitjulu at the base of Uluru.

**Day 2:** The next leg took the pilgrims to Cobar... where the Great Cobar Heritage Centre offered an insight into the area's mining history.

That night at the local bowling and golf club, the town welcomed the pilgrims with a drama presentation by local children depicting the pain of rejection and choir singing. A highlight was a dance performance by the children,



Indigenous children at Wilcannia holding the Aboriginal flag, greet the pilgrims on Day Three of their journey to the heart of Australia (photo: Marcus Kuczynski)

which included two youngsters in wheelchairs.

**Day 3:** The next day began with some hesitation as the party left for Wilcannia, the town featured in a recent *60 Minutes* report which made allegations about the local Aboriginal children being abused. The pilgrims' fears were relieved when the mostly Aboriginal town turned on a picnic lunch by the Darling River.

It was the first opportunity for many of the pilgrims to mix with the indigenous people shoulder to shoulder and featured singing by the children from the local primary and Catholic infants schools. Some of the pilgrims shed a tear as they left for the afternoon run to Broken Hill.

The evening included a packed prayer service in the Wesley Uniting Church at which the city's Catholic priest and Assembly of God minister, who had been divided by a long-running disagreement, prayed together in a sign of reconciliation.

**Day 4:** The pilgrims left Broken Hill for South Australia, stopping at Peterborough for lunch. The locals of the struggling wheat belt town came together in a joyous ecumenical spirit to welcome the pilgrims. The bus continued to Port Augusta where the church communities gathered at the

Aboriginal Davenport Community Centre on the city's outskirts to light a candle on stage and make their own presentations on reconciliation.

**Day 5:** The next leg to Coober Pedy included a late detour to Woomera after word reached the pilgrims of a breakout from the town's detention centre by asylum seekers. While unable to make contact with the Muslim asylum seekers directly, the pilgrims stopped within sight of a police roadblock outside the shopping precinct and joined in prayers led by two of the pilgrims from the Assyrian Church of the East.

**Day 6:** The final leg took the pilgrims through some of the most isolated territory to Yulara, the tourist accommodation village near Uluru.

**Day 7:** The pilgrims visited the Mutitjulu community at the base of Uluru where they met the people and took part in an impromptu soccer match with the Aboriginal children.

**Day 8:** The pilgrimage climax featuring a two and a half hour open-air worship service at Mutitjulu. This was followed by a visit to Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) and capped off by a special pilgrimage dinner under the stars. ■

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# Mother Russia and the Orthodox Church

*An astonishing change is taking place in Russia in relations between church and state, so Russian scholar Peter Stupples has observed over many visits*

**O**n January 7 Vladimir Putin, then Acting President of Russia, attended the Orthodox Christmas service at the newly rebuilt Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in the centre of Moscow. After the service Putin claimed that Christ had come into the world “to liberate people from sickness, trouble and death.” Immediately after his inauguration as President, Putin, together with his predecessor Boris Yeltsin, was photo-graphed in front of the Kremlin Cathedrals being congratulated by Alexei II, the Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. How is it that two former Communists, and presumably atheists, should seek to consort so publicly with a church leader on this significant occasion?

People in the West generally know little about the remarkable recovery of the Orthodox church from nearly 75 years of suppression by the Communist régime in the former Soviet Union. When I was in Russia in 1992 I visited the northern town of Vologda, where the medieval Monastery of the Saviour by the River Bend had been given back to the church only 18 months before. In Stalin’s heyday it had been used as a prison. I was shown a corner of the grounds where people had been shot. In more recent times it had been used as a truck yard and had been very much run down. A monk from a still existing monastery had been appointed abbot.

I was introduced to this lively man, who seemed to be very much in touch with

the practical world in which he found himself, and he told me of his ambitious plans. A few rooms in the entrance archway to the monastery had been restored. Stalls had been built nearby for the Russian shire horse that he intended to use for transport. Already the abbot was well-known for his rides about the city to collect funds for further restoration. An art museum official accompanying me, who had been a Communist Party member, openly kissed the abbot’s ring. The abbot took all this in his stride. It was only to be expected, now that the church was back in the centre of things after so many years of oppression.

## *Russian nationalism was firmly attached to the Orthodox church*

When the Communist régime fell, the new authorities immediately returned to the church a great deal of what was left of its property. The numbers entering the church accelerated - not simply to become parish priests but also to join the monasteries. How can we account for this sudden resurgence of respect for and interest in the church?

When the Soviet Union broke up into its constituent parts, nationalism reared its often ugly head in many of the former republics - people gave up being Soviet citizens and reverted to being Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Estonians and so on. Many of these republics gained their independence. National

sentiment ran high throughout Eastern Europe, as if the lid on this raw emotion had been lifted after being bolted down for so long.

**I**n the past Russian nationalism had been firmly attached to the Russian Orthodox church. The Bible and the liturgy are still written in Church Slavonic, a modified form of Old Bulgarian, the language of the first Slavic missionaries in Eastern Europe. This archaic language is still used in the church. It is not fully understood by the congregation but the forms are so ingrained in the Russian psyche that this language is felt emotionally to be the very heart of the Russian spirit.

This association of the Orthodox church with the national spirit has a complex history. When Russians were converted to Christianity in its Byzantine Orthodox manifestation in the tenth century the first cathedrals and churches were built on the sites of former pagan shrines, thus already welding a semi-mythical past to the new faith. The church replaced the veneration of pagan idols with a veneration of icons, images which from the first had a dual function. They served both as a vehicle for pastoral edification and, by being used as a focus for prayer, as a way of participating in God’s Grace, following the teaching of John of Damascus.

Russia also saw its place in the world linked to its divine mission based upon a Byzantine religious-state paradigm. This was developed as a conscious political



doctrine by the princes of Muscovy after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and was expounded in the following formula by the spiritual elder Filofei: *So you need to understand, lover of God and lover of Christ, that all Christian kingdoms have come to an end and have come together in the single tsardom of our own state, that is the tsardom of Russia, in accordance with the Books of the Prophets. For two Romes have fallen, and the third still stands, and there will be no fourth.*

Through this formula the princes of Moscow, 'the third Rome', assumed leadership of 'Holy' Russia and became the first national rulers, the first tsars of a people who had thus taken upon themselves the guardianship of Orthodoxy and, it was implied, perhaps even Christianity itself.

In a recent book on icons, unfortunately available only in Russian, Oleg Tarasov, claims that these messianic ideas, through their slow gestation and political promotion over a long period, form part of the cultural collective unconsciousness of the nation. Tarasov emphasises that this profound embedding of Orthodoxy into the national psyche was not only organised from above, by politicians and church leaders, but became most significantly deeply entrenched within the peasantry, through the wide dissemination of icons.

### *every Russian household, however humble, had an icon corner*

Every household, however humble, had an 'icon corner'. At one time in the 19th century one of the three villages most involved with the mass craft industry of icon painting produced between 1.5 and 2 million icons a year. Tarasov claims that *in imparting to everyday religious sensibility a particular ontological proximity of the divine, these millions of icons likened the space surrounding a person in its own way to an 'icon', creating a form of the 'realised' eschatology of Holy Russia.*

'Holy Russia' as the protector of Orthodoxy was the banner under which the tsars of the 18th and the 19th centuries justified their wars against the Turks and their pressure upon the Austro-Hungarian empire. Their enemies were not only the Muslim Turks and the khanates of Central Asia but also the Catholic states of Western Europe, even their own Slavic neighbour, Poland. The defence of Orthodoxy, then, fashioned Russian foreign policy before 1917.

After the 1917 revolutions the new Bolshevik rulers envisioned a world-wide revolution of the working classes, into which Russia, as merely the catalyst for such a monumental upheaval, would dissolve itself. When it became clear, by the early 1920s, that the world-wide revolution would not occur in the immediate future and that the new Communist state was surrounded by those antagonistic to any such revolution, Russia was forced back into that isolation from the West which it had experienced for so much of its history.

It had replaced the Orthodox church with the Communist party but the parallels were striking: it had a new priesthood - the Communist party members; a new Bible - the Communist Party Manifesto of Marx and Engels; a new sacred mantle - as guardians of the spirit of world revolution; and it would continue to act as the protector of those subscribing to the same faith outside its borders - the nascent Communist parties abroad. In other words the deeply etched map of Russia's cultural unconscious had suffered a cosmetic change but the movement that Tarasov describes (above) had remained flowing along not dissimilar channels.

When Stalin needed to call upon the power of that movement to turn his war against Hitler into a national epic, he re-established the post of Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, abolished at the beginning of the 18th century, and permitted 'registered' churches to open. He thus joined the Orthodox mission,

if only temporarily, to that of the Communist party.

Whenever I went to Russia, from the mid-1960s on, I was aware that these 'registered' churches were visited by a regular congregation of old ladies. Some of the 'closed' churches were also visited, though with greater danger to the believers. As Communism began to lose its harsh grip upon daily life in Russia, from the mid-1980s, I noticed that church congregations were increasing. Not only were the ubiquitous old ladies still there but they were now joined by young men and women. The well-heeled were bringing their children to be christened.

By the early 1990s not only were the churches free but church leaders were given television time to put their point of view. Priests and bishops were elected to parliament. Patriarch Alexei tried to negotiate terms between Yeltsin and the rebellious White House parliamentarians in September 1993. He convened a conference to discuss ways of ending the financial crisis in October 1998. In no time at all there was a renaissance of the Russian Orthodox church that only ten years previously had seemed unthinkable.

Tarasov maintains that Orthodoxy in Russia is an essential part of that system of 'automatic responses' of collective consciousness 'laid down', like sedimentary rock, with its own forms and concepts emerging through culture, language, religion, and social life. It could be said that the cultural traditions of the Orthodox church form an essential part of Russia's 'being-in-the-world.' ■



**For a recent, easy-to-read assessment of the changes in Russia since the fall of Communism, see David Remnick's *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia***

(New York, 1998).



*It was exactly one year ago the bottom fell out of Sandra Turner's life.*

*Happily married, with two great children aged 11 and 13, she had also developed a career for herself as a psychotherapist – and she dearly loved her work.*

*Then, one day she went to see her doctor – and she was told she had cancer.*

## *If I walk through the valley of the shadow of death... you are with me (Ps 23)*

I'd had a sore back for quite a long time. I'd been through osteopaths, massage, exercise – all the usual non-medical things. So then I went down the medical track – and the first thought was that I had secondaries. I'd had a melanoma six years ago. So, last July I was told I had six months or a little longer – given it was 99 percent likely to be the secondaries.

"It was simply devastating. I had never before had to face my mortality and certainly never expected to at my age. So, over the next two or three weeks – until further tests came back – I was living as if I were dying. That was very hard.

"But then the results came back and they told us that it was a different type of cancer: it was a primary tumour in my back, not secondaries. The relief was immense. I remember we celebrated that night with champagne and our friends with us! It seemed paradoxical to be toasting bone marrow cancer instead of secondaries.

"I had three months of radiotherapy – and it seems now as if the cancer is in remission. The tumour is no longer growing, and by and large the pain is reduced... it comes and goes. So I'm

back to living a relatively normal life.

"It's not that I've *had* cancer. I *have* it. I ask myself: *what kind of consciousness do I live with? Have I had it? Have I still got it? Where is it? Is it behind my back somewhere?* Each person has to sort that out for themselves, so that the cancer has a rightful place in one's life. It exists – but it no longer takes up all of your life.

"For about three months I was only up a few hours a day. The radiotherapy totally flattened me out. My daughter told me I seemed to be always sleeping! I remember I received the diagnosis on a Friday, so I needed to close my psychotherapy practice. The Monday after was probably the most intense day of my life. I needed to see all my clients, many of them being in the middle of their therapy and not ready to finish. There was a lot of tears, a lot of grief. For me it was not knowing whether I would ever work again."

*As a psychotherapist you had heard so much of this from your clients – and now it was you who were the sufferer.*

"It was an immediate turnaround! There was no question of my limping along. It was final. My first priority was to attend

to this crisis. I was no longer able to 'be there' for my clients emotionally and spiritually. There is a whole presence in your work with someone. You can't be preoccupied with your own crisis!"

*What about your family? How were they?*

"They coped well. In a strange way, if this had to happen it was better at this time, when I felt myself to be most resourced, internally and externally. I have a strong relationship with my husband, and it soon came to me that as a family we were strong enough to manage this whichever way it went.

"I would always wish my children were older. The immediate pain for me was that I wouldn't be there to see their milestones, to take them through the next phase of their lives. For them the crisis will always be 'too early', although for me it's probably been better now than any other time! The thought of not being able to be there for them was probably the biggest grief. Not to be able to celebrate with them, not to protect them. And that's still with me."

*May I ask – where was God for you in all this?*

"I have a strong sense of the spirit of

God, the spirit of life, the creative force. Sometimes people ask me, did I get angry with God? Other people would get angry and say 'it's not fair!'

"My response from the beginning was, 'well, why *not* me? Why should one person be of more value than another? Why should one person get cancer and someone else not? It's not about the goodness or badness of people. I was never angry. I've been sad – I have grieved, especially for my children's future.

"What happened for me when I was first diagnosed was a huge response from people around me. No one could have anticipated that. It seemed the response just went rippling out. It was quite overwhelming: the letters, the cards, the e-mails, the flowers. They kept coming and coming. I began to think I was at my own funeral!

"At first it was very humbling. What it did for me was it broke down something deep down inside me. During the whole course of my training and work I have endeavoured always to 'live well' inside myself; to deal with the 'demons' and the self-critics so as to gain an equilibrium. I felt I had done that, but there are always dusty corners.

"Then, within the first six weeks of the diagnosis – and with the prospect of only six months to live – there came these waves of response from the communities I belonged to. A prayer line was set up for me! People wrote whom I hadn't heard from for years, saying 'we want you to live!'

"It has given me a huge sense of being loved and supported. I feel my God is *love*; God is in relationship. The response was there in the people – and it was without strings. It had nothing to do with what I did or what I contributed. It was just me. That was transforming. This could never have happened to me without the cancer – so that has been the gift. I have always known that I have been valued, wanted, esteemed – but I never knew before that I was loved!"

*As a child you enjoyed the unconditional love of your family, and you spend your adult life 'growing out' of that. And then, suddenly, you were given it back again!*

"Yes! It's been totally transforming. This January at a conference I ran a psychodrama training workshop. One of the participants asked me why I hadn't done that before. I thought to myself I could never have done it before. I'd have been too concerned about what others thought of me. But now that just didn't matter. The experience last July and August seems to have freed me and given me the confidence to use my skills to the full.

"Of course, parts of the process have been terrible. Yet there are things that have happened that I would never have reached any other way. A Buddhist friend, right at the beginning, said to me: 'suffering just *is*. It's part of life. It's



neither good nor bad'. Part of our life's work is to learn how to live with that truth. It takes away all the judging – and the martyrdom!

*You have been able to use your experience working with other cancer sufferers. Can you tell us about that?*

"When I was sick I looked for a place to meet with fellow sufferers, and I found there was nothing available in Dunedin then. Once I came through it, I met a colleague from the Cancer Society who had also recognised this need. So we set up a pilot programme of seven weekly sessions. It seems to meet a need.

"People gather together and look at their personal journeys and their response to sickness, coming to understand their

own story. They are all cancer sufferers at different stages. The group is called *Living the Journey*. The aim is to find a way to stay vital with the life that is yours, without denying the threat you are under and yet not being consumed by it.

"Some, during the two or three months, are clearly getting sicker – and others are getting better. That can be quite confronting. Once again it's accepting the truth – that some of us are going to get sicker and others are going to get better. The important thing is to be truthful, to be real. I love that Bible text: *to know the truth – the truth will set you free*. And that is what happens to these people. There is no formal prayer but there are many sacred moments."

**And what about the present?**

"My husband says to me: 'make sure you don't do too much'. I'm an independent person, and it's easy for me to overextend myself. If that happens I feel very depleted. Stopping still is not an easy thing for me. There is so much to do and I want to be part of it. I take pride in making my contribution. It's not easy to *not* do those things. I am still learning that lesson!"

*Is this your sabbath, the God-given time of rest? Is this the invitation to give yourself space in your life?*

*(Sandra threw back her head and laughed merrily)*

"It's a challenge. It may be my sabbath that is calling me. I'm still a reluctant participant. It is such a countercultural concept these days, to hold a confidence in oneself in doing that.

"For me the real challenge of this moment is finding a way to live with uncertainty. I know that the cancer I have is incurable. I know that it will eventually take a hold on my life again. There is an inevitability in that process. There is no knowing how long this is going to be. I am endeavouring to find a way to live with that uncertainty, not needing to know, being able to let go."

M.H.

# Meeting Jesus face to face

John Dunn

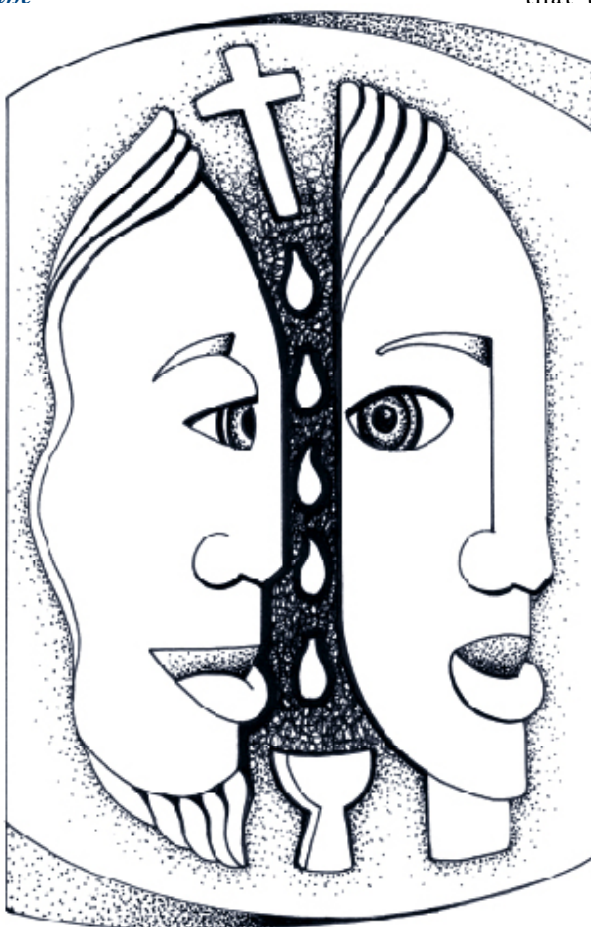
**O** Happy Day! when Jesus washed our sins away”, the editor crooned down the phone. “Please write us something about that.” Later he added the all-important context: make sense of redemptive suffering for a woman who is facing her own mortality.

It’s a tall order. Putting it another way: *how do the death of Jesus, the meaning of salvation and the meaning of human sin and sinfulness all connect?* I suppose the first thing I would want to say is that we need to widen the traditional, or Western European, understanding of death, salvation and sin. It has often seen these three categories in privatized, individualistic, spiritualized terms. Sickness, suffering and death are effects of sin, and for the most part Jesus does not save us from them. Often it is a mighty struggle to relate to Jesus and his redemptive intention out of any of these experiences. So let us try to place Jesus’ work in a wider context.

Let us begin with another woman who also was sick: the woman with the haemorrhage whom we met on the 13th Sunday of the year (*Mark* 5:21-43). She is contrasted by *Mark* with a most successful, healthy man – the Synagogue official. As befits his station, he meets Jesus face-to-face in a public encounter. Everyone knows he is important, and Jesus responds publicly to his public request.

Contrast this with the woman’s first encounter. She holds on to her anonymity, approaches Jesus from behind, and touches his cloak. She does not want to encounter Jesus or anybody. Weighed down by 12 years of suffering, isolated by her burden of ritual uncleanness, she has long been cut off from normal human encounters.

Jesus refuses to accept healing on her terms. He looks around and demands that the person who has been healed come forward. The woman who had heard *about* Jesus, now hears Jesus. She comes forward and this time she is like the synagogue official: she meets Jesus publicly and face-to-face. She tells not only him but all around, ‘the whole truth.’



Only then does Jesus declare that her faith (we might read ‘courage’) has restored her to health. Her health is now not only being physically healed. It is to be re-inserted in a normal network of social relations. It is to be a person as opposed to a non-person. It is, possibly, to become an apostle (how else does *Mark* – and do we – hear of such an intimate healing?), who powerfully preaches the Jesus

whom she had met to the community of believers.

There are other examples of this broad healing intent of Jesus. The woman at the well, the woman bent double, the man let down through the roof, Zacchaeus, and the blind man outside the gates of Jericho are examples. When the social environment is such that this broader healing intent is

impossible (see *Mark* 6:1-6), Jesus’ healing ministry is restricted. Occasionally, but only occasionally, do we have stories of Jesus’ compassion exercised without this social form of faith being asked of the sick. The raising of the son of the widow at Naim is an example. Even here, can we rule out the effects I have been sketching?

Yet death remains. There are three elements that every person, Jesus included, has to hold together in their attitude towards death. The first is our *now*. The second is our (future) time of death. The third is the huge tension whereby we hold the other two together. *Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death*, says the Hail Mary.

If we live only in the *now*, we ignore the future that will certainly come.

If we focus exclusively on our death, we fail to give the present, and others, the attention they deserve. The difficult alternative is to hold the two in tension and live both elements as fully as we can.

Jesus shared his consciousness of his impending death with his disciples, despite their on-going inability to understand. Everything he did, including his healings, was done with the awareness that it would contribute



ultimately to his death. No-one who acted as he did could expect to escape the public and political consequences of his actions. This rendered his every encounter, his every action, full of a poignancy and power, a cherishing of the present moment, which others felt and which drew them to Jesus.

The issue was true as much for the community of disciples as for Jesus. *Can you drink this cup that I must drink, and be baptized with the baptism with which I must be baptized?* he asked the sons of Zebedee (*Mark 10: 35-40*). For them, for the woman with the haemorrhage and for us all, death is not an option which we can take or leave: it is the supreme expression of our lives, the integration of all that we have lived for. As St Paul makes abundantly clear, when we were baptized into Christ, we were baptized into his death (*Rom. 6:3*).

**to live fully  
and to die well is the Christian  
task**

Jesus at his Last Supper makes another element clear. His blood is to be poured out for others, indeed for all if we understand the intent of the Semitic *many* (*Mark*). It is also for the forgiveness of sins (*Matthew*). If we continue our line of thought sketched out above, Jesus prepares to hand himself over to God, summing up his life of giving himself to others with a care for their full, social, holistic restoration as sons and daughters of God. To the sinfulness which would reduce men and women from full communion one with another and with God, and tear them all apart, Jesus opposes his gift of himself.

*This is my Body.* It is a good corporate image, and St Paul will hold on to that. But Jesus also asks his disciples to enter into the same kind of giving: *do this as a memorial of me* (*Luke/Paul*). The *this* of both these statements sums up a conformity to Christ and his self-giving which follows him in his entry into the mystery of his death by entering into the mystery of our own. It is only in the light of the Resurrection that such

statements ultimately make sense to the believer. Love, communion, life are not lost but rather are fulfilled. For some, life is to be lived with such passion that it would be enough to follow Jesus even were there no life beyond the self-giving of death. For others, and for the Christian message, this is clearly not enough. As St Paul says, *each time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming his death*. To live fully and to die well is the Christian task of our lifetime.

Perhaps we can conclude with a few insights of the writer of the *Letter to the Hebrews*. Jesus, of the kingly tribe of David, could not be a priest. Yet *Hebrews* sees Jesus' death as priestly indeed. As on the annual day of Atonement the high priest of the year entered the Holy of Holies with the sin-offering of all the people, so Jesus passed through the ultimate veil of the temple of life, passing through death into the presence of the Holy One, and taking us with him.

*During his life on earth, he offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard. Although he was (a) Son, he learnt to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation and was acclaimed by God with the title of high priest of the order of Melchizedek. (Heb. 5:7-10)*

Jesus' passion is here presented as a prayer with some astonishing implications.

- Firstly, it is of a piece with his whole life. As he prays in life, so he prays in death.
- Secondly, the text makes no attempt to hide the full agony of his death, or of his struggle to accept it, integrate it, and make it the expression of his full obedient relationship with God. So far, we can identify fully with this great human task.
- Thirdly, this human journey into death is also the journey to human perfection. From this point of view, Jesus' life has been a seeking after full humanity. It is complete only as he gives himself

without reserve into the hands of the One he calls *Abba*. Likewise, we too are fully human only in death.

Fourthly, the writer accomplishes a theological *tour de force* by noting that this death is priestly. The words *to make perfect*, in the Jewish context, are the same words which express the installation of the high priest of the year. Thus Jesus becomes fully human in death, and becoming human, becomes priest.

In the overall picture of the *Letter to the Hebrews*, then, Jesus breaks through the veil of death into the presence of God with the offering that is his whole life. True to the corporate picture of salvation and of sin, he takes us with him, to be forever in the divine Presence.

Perhaps these perspectives help sketch out why the Church in its *Rite of Anointing and Pastoral Care of the Sick* stresses that everyone is involved in the sickness and death of every person. Everyone around that person has a ministry to play. And the person facing death has the most important ministry of all. It is not a time for illusion and false relationships, for privatized notions of sin and salvation. It is a time for doing justice both to the *now* and to the *hour of our death*, for facing together the final stage of one's journey into God.

In this context, the Eucharist-Viaticum or 'food for the journey', is also the sacrament of our own dying and death.



Healing in the sense of bodily health gives way to the healed relationships of a fully human community which can look death in the face with deep trust and faith. Like Jesus, with those we love around us, we sum up our lives and give ourselves into the final mystery with the same *Amen* which was pronounced for us and over us in baptism. ■

## Exploitation by the media

Who are we to lament the conduct of the British tabloids when we have TV3 showing footage of a private video, showing the purported drunken behaviour of an All Black. For those fortunate enough to have missed it, the *NZ Herald* of 23 July devoted nearly half a page to show it all over again. How much, I wonder, did these purveyors pay to the sneaky opportunist for the use of his video?

The most sickening aspect of this cannibal behaviour was the media projection that a role model was letting his public down, when the real issue was the media letting the public down by exploiting the situation to the hilt for their own commercial purposes. Claims to virtue have seldom seemed more abject.

Charlie Cuthbertson, Glen Eden

## Imagining God's Gender

Canon Paul Oestreicher's article (*Tui Motu*, June) was wonderfully uplifting, because he acknowledged the female in God.

But when he then tendered a supposition that Jesus may have been gay, he scuttled his whole case. Women once again are marginalised by being classed with gays – gays have their own perspective, but it is not that of women – and thus contrasted as always with the 'norm'. heterosexual men.

*God created man in the image of himself... male and female he created them* (Gen 1,27).

Jill Heenan, Whangerei

## letters



### Out of desolation...

Tony Russell (in *Two Score and Ten*, *TM June*) used non-gender-specific language when he referred to 'their desolate place', and 'a spirit generous and lively, full of laughter'. However, it struck me that the visual image of desolation is quite specifically female. This surely shows that the internalisation of the imagery of centuries goes beyond words and is still quite firmly rooted in the modern psyche.

There is, however, a visual image missing. This is the male image: to man, the perfect image; to many women in the church, the symbol of suppression which could perhaps be interpreted as an experience of desolation for some. In many instances desolation indicates a failed midlife transition. But on the positive side desolation can be a grace which gives rise to the gifts of the Spirit in due time.

I was then left free to consider a second visual image in the article which now becomes more appropriate – the dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps unconsciously, someone has got it right. When the masculine – the structural invariant – supports the feminine, or transformational invariant, the joy of the Spirit is able to shine through.

If we could work at the internalisation of that image, our church could become a beacon of hope for many today.

June MacMillan, Feilding.

### Sexual abuse of power

I was interested to read the item in the July issue entitled 'Grand Inquisitor'. I thought it was good to see stone throwers brought to task. You did not say anything about the very young woman in the case. She was invisible and her pain was invisible. This was unfortunate, giving the impression of men closing ranks.

It would be good to see men who sexually exploit women brought to task, especially when they are powerful because of age or position. Powerful men – like Garibaldi, Martin Luther King and many other men in secular or religious life – have long had access to many women. If caught, they are often spoken of as having "feet of clay". To me this is like saying they have a little thread that got pulled in a piece of their fabric.

But when a man in a powerful position sexually exploits a woman, he is treating her badly in a very deep way that could be destructive to her for the rest of her life. Sometimes she may not even be aware of being hurt at the time.

Most often I see men initiating this exploitation. Sometimes I see women initiating it themselves. I see some women act as if the only way they can feel powerful is to attach themselves to a powerful man. This is because they have been abused in some significant way when young, and don't think they have the ability or right to have their own authority. If a powerful or older man takes advantage of this he is repeating past bad experiences for the woman. If he doesn't he is assisting her to grow.

Sophie Hall, Wellington

## Promoter's corner

Would it come as shock to you if I suggested that you probably don't read one of the most important items in *Tui Motu*? I need to qualify that by saying that the item appears every month and it may have a *déjà vu* impact on you.

It is the TM subscription form with its suggestion that you nominate a friend you believe might enjoy a complimentary copy. We even supply a Freepost number to simplify its return to our office.

This initiative is rated very highly as there are grounds for believing that it is our most successful recruitment avenue.

Not that surprising when you come to think of it. Friends know each other well. They can often predict friends' reactions, clearly so in this case. Such an approach is far more likely to be successful than our trying to second guess who might be a likely subscriber.

So, if you've occasionally thought *I'd like to help this magazine to thrive but my space and time is limited*, here's a quiet but influential initiative at your disposal.

I will warn the *Tui Motu* office to be prepared for a large and imminent mail delivery!

Tom Cloher

A Millennium exhibition portraying the many faces of Christ has been drawing huge crowds to the National Gallery in London. The Gallery director, Neil McGregor, has produced a unique TV series on these works of art, called *Seeing Salvation*.

Jim Neilan takes us through a part of this wonderful production

## *Through artists' eyes*

**S**ix years of studying theology had not prepared me for a 'revelation' which I experienced in 1990. My wife Judy and I were in Sansepolcro, a little town in Tuscany, in Central Italy. We found our way to a small, very ordinary looking museum. We walked into a rather stark hall – and there it was facing us: the Resurrection of Christ. I have never been so affected by a work of art. The painting is by Piero della Francesca, who was born in this town and died there on 12 October 1492, the very day when on the other side of the world Christopher Columbus first set foot in America.

Here, in a way that words could never evoke, is a physical event... an implacable and muscular Christ stepping onto the edge of the stone slab of the tomb, a banner in one hand as though on the ramparts of a conquered city.

There was no one else in the room except him and us. His wide searching eyes gaze straight at you. "Well, here I am," he seems to be saying. "Take it or leave it!"

**A**s I watched and listened to Neil McGregor's description of how he had been affected by the images of Christ in the National Gallery Exhibition, I thought back to that morning in Sansepolcro. "I know exactly how you feel. I too have been there."

McGregor, now a devout Anglican, admits to growing up with Protestant mistrust of religious images. Tongue in cheek, he says that this Exhibition has raised so many questions for him, and forced him to re-examine his ideas that "maybe the Protestants got it right."

Along with visitors to the Gallery he found himself challenged by those images to ask questions which are never raised to the same extent by merely reading about the subject. "Looking at images of Christ, for example, we ask questions which would not occur when confronting a text."



McGregor reminds us that many of the images we have about the birth of Christ or the Passion have come to us entirely through works of art. You will find no mention in the Gospels of the ox or the ass at Bethlehem. Nor will you find a word about Christ falling three times under the Cross, or meeting his mother on the road or about Veronica's veil.

In this Television series the gallery director not only helps us to view each work of art but helps explain the background or ideology behind the image. Probably the most powerful of the four programmes is the third. Its theme is the *Cross of Christ*.



McGregor explains how the different representations of the Crucifixion originate from different outlooks and how they will, therefore, evoke different reactions. “Every crucifix”, he says, “tells a different story.” For instance he takes us to Cuzco, the ancient Aztec capital high in the Peruvian Andes, and shows us a picture of Christ painted in the 1530s. Here there is no suffering saviour. Christ is dressed in the armour of a military general: every inch a conqueror. It is the military Christ, the inspiration of the victorious Spanish Conquistadors.

In contrast, the most celebrated crucifix in all Peru is also in Cuzco. It is known as *the Lord of the Earthquakes*. Christ is identified with the Inca deity, Apu – and he is still protecting the city from disaster as he is reputed to have done in the huge earthquake of 1650. Nothing could be more contrasting than these images, arising one from the conquerors, the other from the subject people.

The extent to which the presenter is himself moved and challenged comes out passionately in his description of a small, postcard-sized painting from about 1450 (*left*). It is Petrus Christus’s *Christ as Saviour and Judge*.

“It disturbed me and perplexed me,” says McGregor. “He is the king come to judge. He is showing his wounds – not to us, but to God the Father. It is an image of Christ interceding for us. Yet its intensity made me

wonder for the first time what he does when he intercedes. I need to know what he is saying. Is he reminding his Father of what he’s been through? Are we watching a kind of Abrahamic bargaining with God? Is the Father about to be changed by the experience of his son? Of course the picture does not answer – but then, neither does Scripture!”

Michelangelo’s celebrated *Pietà*, in St Peter’s Basilica in Rome (*right*). This sculpture was executed when Michelangelo was a young man. In contrast, the two other *Pietà* groups were (*below*) sculpted in his old age.



Though not described at all in the Gospels the image of Jesus being taken down from the cross has inspired many artists. The theme was almost an obsession with Michelangelo, and he returned to it during the week before he died. His different renderings of the same event reflect his own inner searchings, his faith – and his doubts.

The Vatican *Pietà* (*above*) is a young man’s view. “Death can have no victory in the face of a beauty like this,” McGregor says. “Every inch of polished marble speaks of the confidence in a greater scheme where all will yet be well.”







Michelangelo's second *Pietà* (below l), carved many years later, shows a completely different intention in the artist's mind. It was intended to stand above the altar where his own body would be buried and where Masses would be offered for his soul. So this is a 'eucharistic *Pietà*'. Christ, rather than being lowered from the cross, is slipping from the hands of he mourners onto the altar – the body of Christ and the host become one. McGregor comments: "Could eucharistic theology move and convince us in words as it does here in marble? And would we be able to ponder a text for so long?"

This *Pietà* is in Florence. There is a third one in Milan (right), unfinished. In the roughly chipped surface the



shattered body of the son is clasped by his mother, herself distorted in grief. "Here is no redeeming confidence as in the Vatican *Pietà*," the presenter declares, "only the unimaginable cost of the Incarnation in grief – and the need to believe that this much love and so much suffering cannot be in vain."

Further on we are shown the painting of Christ on the cross by the Spaniard, Zuburán (right). Jesus is alone, surrounded by darkness. His eyes are raised. Again, he is speaking to his Father. But which of the 'seven words' is he uttering? McGregor explains why he thinks they are the first ones: *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do...* In other words, Christ is praying for us.



In the Cathedral in Seville, in southern Spain, McGregor describes a different type of 'dialogue with a crucifix', where our response entails responsibility. In 1603 a young cleric, repenting of his previously dissolute life, commissioned the greatest sculptor of his time, Montanés, to create the *Christ of Clemency*.

It was to be for private devotion in the chapel where he would eventually be buried.

The young man specified (right) exactly how Christ was to be shown. He was to be alive, head



inclined to the right, looking down at whoever was praying at his feet, as if Christ himself was speaking to the suppliant. So the eyes were to be quite open and the face to have a rather severe expression. The artist was charged with making Christ 'come alive' to those who pray to him.

The plea is that Christ's suffering is for us. We can almost hear this Christ uttering the Good Friday reproaches: "Oh my people, what is it that I have done to you? I raised you up strongly – and you hung me from the gallows of the cross!"



▷▷ The final image here, from the many which McGregor selected, is a small ivory plaque (*right*) which is the earliest known carved narrative of the crucifixion. It was carved in Rome about 420. Christ stands upright, his body unmarked by suffering, victorious even over death.



At one side is the centurion with arm raised, acknowledging that truly this is the Son of God. On the other side, in contrast to Christ the Saviour, is Judas the traitor. At the bottom left are the 30 pieces of silver

#### Conclusion:

McGregor's aim throughout the series is to show Christianity as a cultural and historical force. "This is the visual language," he says, "in which the great artists have spoken to us about the biggest things. Christian imagery has given European art a visual vocabulary in which to talk about love and loss and hope." Even for unbelievers it speaks about the very nature of life itself.

spilling from a bag at the foot of the tree on which Judas has hanged him-self in despair. But on the branch of the tree nearest the cross a bird is seen feeding her young. The plaque has a wonderfully clear purpose: to force us to choose, in the light of Christ's victory over the grave. To acknowledge him

in that victory is to share in it. To deny it is, like Judas, to condemn yourself to death. The choice is a stark one: between the tree of life, Christ's cross, and Judas' fatal tree.

In England, where the great Millennium Dome has proved largely to be a white elephant, this "Images of Christ" Exhibition at the National Gallery drew capacity crowds. Everyone I know who has seen Neil McGregor's television presentation of the theme has been deeply moved by the images and by his commentary. What a pity our own New Zealand television planners could not see fit to give New Zealanders an opportunity to see this inspiring series.



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**Bible Society**



*Suddenly, in August, the Sunday readings break away from Mark and give us chapter 6 of John's Gospel, on Eucharist. Drasko Dizdar (left), Director of Holy Cross Formation Centre, discusses this with Frances Skelton and Paul Sorrell*

# The subversive character of the Gospel of John

**Paul:** *The whole Gospel of John seems to me about relationship: Jesus with the Father; ours with him – and so on.*

John is so paradoxical. It is strongly in the Jewish prophetic tradition – a mentality we simply do not appreciate. When Jesus says it is the Spirit that gives life, he means that the same Spirit that inspired the prophets, inspires him. Yet the Gospel is fundamentally subversive. John has experienced the subversive Christ – and it is the subversive Christ he reveals to us.

The Gospel of John really starts with 1:19, when the Baptist appears. He is called the 'witness'. The Baptist is interrogated by emissaries from Jerusalem. The question is *Are you the Christ?* The surprising thing is that Jesus is absent. We start with a denial: *I am not the Christ*, says the Baptist.

These first scenes take place on successive days of the first week of the ministry – so they reflect the days of Creation in *Genesis*. On the 'third day' (like Resurrection) Jesus meets with the first disciples. John the Baptist calls Jesus the 'Lamb of God' – the victim, the scapegoat. Right from the start we are told what all this is about: the new creation and Jesus the scapegoat!

*The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world:* the Passion is inevitable.

**Paul:** *I remember reading once that the whole of John is like a trial in a court of law. Jesus is 'tried' by the world, but really it is the world being judged by Jesus.*

The legal language is there from the beginning to the end of the Gospel. In the middle Jesus says: 'Now is the judgment of the world – the hour has come'. Who is the jury in this trial? At the end John says: 'This has been written so that you

might be convinced..' So *we* are the jury. It has all been done for our sake, so that we might be convinced what the truth is. The issue is how you choose: if you pass sentence against him, then he gets death. But if you pass sentence in favour, you get life! God has judged the world – and his verdict is life. Whereas the world's verdict was death. The very world which passed the death sentence on Jesus, is given the life option by God – through the Resurrection.

**Frances:** *God sends Jesus into the world – but we reject him?* John in particular shows how in interacting with humanity God is always the victim. So John is a critique of that way of being human which is intrinsically violent.

When Jesus says 'You know neither me nor my Father', he is rejecting more than just Judaism. He is rejecting that tendency of the human heart to turn God into a violent monster who has to be appeased. In fact the violent monster crying out to be appeased is the human heart.

Wherever humanity finds a scapegoat in the weak and the powerless, God identifies precisely with those very powerless. It is God who is ultimately victimised. Whenever society finds a scapegoat, that scapegoat is none other than the one who mediates God to us.

**Frances:** *How should we approach Eucharist in John?*

The trouble is we try to approach it through 2000 years of Christian history where Eucharist has been explored in all kinds of ways, including by the Greeks and the Romans in the early church who reinterpreted the material significantly. John does not belong in that context. John is a Jewish gospel – all the Gospels are. The whole New Testament is Jewish; it



isn't 'Christian'. *John's* Gospel leads *into* Eucharist. It is about Passover in its most radical sense. Passover is the context in which Eucharist is to be understood. Passover is about God doing the absurd, choosing to be on the side of slaves instead of pharaohs, of liberating a 'nobody' group of people and bringing them into a land of their own that they might become God's People. Their rule would be based, not on kings and domination, but on *Torah*.

The poor and oppressed of any time will have a natural predilection for the Gospel, just as the Negro slaves identified themselves with the children of Israel seeking liberation. The prophetic tradition brings the Jews back to this vision, and Jesus belongs to the prophetic tradition: he radically condenses it in his own person. He says it is not just a political mechanism. It is something at the very heart of humanity.

The Passover was a constant reminder to the Jewish people of what actually happened: God had taken this 'nobody' group and said: 'You are My People – I will make of you a great nation.' Each year, that has to be revisited. The Jews, however, compromised with other nations and incorporated into the Passover things like sacrifice, including things which all the other nations do except that the victim was an animal, not a human being. The Passover ritual reminded the Jewish people of the potential of the Exodus event. Now, you can do two things with a 'potential': you can learn its power to convert you, or you can institutionalise it. The Jews institutionalised Passover, and we have done the same with the Eucharist.

**Paul: Is that why the church has to be continually renewing itself?**

An institution has to allow itself to be shaken to its institutional foundations. Jesus came to do precisely that. The institution is based on a form of violence and has to exclude someone in order to keep the peace: to create an unwanted group.

In *Chapter 6* for instance, we have to be careful not to load later theologies of Eucharist onto this highly parabolic text. We have to read Jesus' words in their context. What's the punchline? 'His disciples no longer walked with him.' Then Jesus turns on the Twelve and says: 'What about you? Will you also go away?' He confronts them. He doesn't patronise or cajole. He says, 'You are free to go away. You can only stay with me if you really want to.'

**Paul: In Chapter 6, rather than people scrambling for manna, the disciples are invited into a much deeper relationships based on eating.**

Yet ironically, instead of creating community Jesus destroys it. The disciples all left him. It's not that Jesus is against community. He's against the simplistic version where the people are dependent on the manna. So they want community – but on their own terms.

**Paul: Verse 60 says they fell away because they couldn't accept his language. They were into a 'cargo cult'.**

Perhaps they did understand the symbolic value – but they still wanted it on *their* terms. And we do exactly the same. We have programmes to create community, but we mustn't do anything in them to make people feel uncomfortable. Whereas the disciples heard Jesus' invitation and they said: 'no, these words are too hard'. And that's what we say too. Yet it is the heart of Eucharist. Eucharist does not create *community*: what it does is invite *communion*. 'Enter into communion with all who share your faith based on the love of one another and of God.' Community may then arise – but that would be a pure gift from God.

In the story of the *Man Born Blind* the one invited into communion is the one who is most needy, the one being victimised. 'Who sinned', the Pharisees ask, 'this man or his parents?' The victim is set free and comes into communion with Jesus.

**Paul: He's respecting the disciples' freedom. It's interesting that that theme should also be present in the story of the woman taken in adultery, because isn't the story thought to be an interpolation in John's Gospel?**

The final redactor must have seen this story and thought: 'perfect – it fits here.' He understood *John's* thinking and thought: this is where the story of the woman belongs, because here it will have more impact.

**Paul: It's like bringing on an impact player towards the end of the game!**

Exactly! A good dramatist does that – by introducing something which doesn't quite fit and so confronting the audience in a disruptive way. The story of the woman functions like that. I think, however, that the form of the Gospel is more liturgical than dramatic, which is a Greek form. There are constant references throughout this Gospel to Passover, to the Temple, to ritual actions like washing, sacrifice and blessing.

The dramatic elements in *John* are dialectical. It is constantly putting elements in contrast and conflict. Even in the monologues of Jesus there is often a sort of dialogue going on:

*As the Father has life in himself.*

*...so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself,*

*...and because he is the Son of Man he has granted him power to give judgment.*

It's a threefold statement. You can bring it out dramatically but in a way that is actually liturgical, by giving the three lines to three different voices.

**Paul: Often Jesus speaks about relationship in language which is repetitive and abstract. It is quite hard going to read. It says the same things over and over again.**

That, too, is very liturgical. If you have it spoken – and not just by one voice – then it takes on a power that's different. This was the way of the ancient world, where a person would



not read a book alone. A group came together and read it together. In a liturgy they would not even have books. They would have memorised the text and everyone would know their parts. And that's the way to *hear* this Gospel. Whereas the stories in the other three Gospels read like novels, but this style is more of a liturgy.

**Paul:** *Is it also meditation?*

It is meditation, but it's communal meditation. It is to be taken in and felt, but not silently. It's like the psalms. That is not part of our culture today. The way the Muslim children learn the Koran by repetition would be closer in spirit.

**Paul:** *The use of very abstract terms harks back to the Prologue in Chapter 1 – getting to the depths of reality.*

Let's look at the Prologue. Right from the start the language is relational.

*In the beginning was the Word  
and the Word was towards God*

The Greek word is not 'with' God, which fits the static Greek way of thinking. It's 'towards' God. And if we translate 'Word' as *Torah*, as the Jews would, we have

*In the beginning was the Torah..*

In the beginning was 'God's will to the world' – the *Torah*. So God's will for the world is that the world is directed towards God.

*...and the Word was God*

So this world is not separated from God. The pattern of the world as God would have it is to be one with God. The Rabbis would have no problem with that.

**Paul:** *When John applies Torah words to Jesus, the Jews would have seen this as blasphemous.*

That is certainly happening among Jews, some of whom are applying this language to Jesus. But others reject it and reject them. The ones who accept become the scapegoats. But they should have expected that. They could well say: 'if it happened to Jesus it will happen to us'.

**Frances:** *This is the new reality... the new creation?*

Yes. You must follow the Messiah by taking up the cross. The cross is not a burden but the execution of a sentence. The people who carry the cross have been tried, and found guilty, and are to be executed on the cross. Jesus is saying you must take the consequences of standing up to a world of violence and saying 'no' to it. The cross was not a symbol in the ancient world. It was what people were impaled on. People who say 'I must put up with my cross' are actually choosing to be victims.

**Frances:** *Do you see the cross as a symbol of wholeness?*

This is where we are entering into the mysterious depths! The cross is the instrument of death, yet as an archetype it invokes wholeness. You have a pierced body on it, which has such contrasting meanings. The wound is not only the source of death but is where the life enters! The image is of Jesus being 'in the bosom of the Father' – and the disciple being in the bosom of Jesus. Compassion flows out through a wound

which also invites you in. When Jesus appears to Thomas Jesus says: 'come and put your hands inside me.'

**Frances:** *Have we tended to stop short at the Crucifixion then?*

We've stopped even shorter than that. Our desire is for things to flow on in cycles. And we have attempted to interpret the Resurrection in that way – the seed going into the ground and sprouting up again. Jesus said the seed must go into the ground and *die*. It's nice and easy for the seed to sprout one hundredfold. But there has to be a real death for there to be a new beginning.

**Frances:** *Is John saying that we must die to the violence of this earth? That only love can transcend death?*

Jesus says that already in this life we can participate in that process. The Christian can say that there are two certainties in life. One is that you will die; the other – that love is greater than death. You can only be certain of that through faith. When you experience love, then you have faith that is certain of the power of love. And this gives us hope that death does not have the final word.

But we have no idea what that means! This surely is why Paul puts love as the greatest of all gifts. Without love, faith is superstition and hope is delusion. Freud and Marx, the masters of suspicion, were right about that kind of religion – religion without love. They saw religion all round them used as a means of oppression. Psychologically we all collaborate in our own delusions, but we only make a religion of it if we are hypocrites.

**Paul:** *Do you mean that love is the subversive element in Jesus' kingdom?*

If we can at least identify with what Jesus is inviting us to, then we are 'not far from the kingdom'. Nicodemus is a figure we can identify with, I feel. He came by night and he said to Jesus: 'I know you are from God.' Jesus says: 'You must be born again.' Nicodemus knows what Jesus means. He says: 'How can I enter back into *Torah*. How can I go back into the source of my religion?' It isn't a stupid question.

Jesus says to him: 'Anyone born of the Spirit is spirit'. But anyone born of the world as you experience it, the world of flesh, is a part of that world. But if you are born of the Spirit that blows where it wills, then you are of the Spirit. You are invited to enter into relationship with a God who cannot be pinned down. That is the invitation to the truly contemplative life, to enter the *Cloud of Unknowing* which only love can pierce. Only Nicodemus of the Sanhedrin, reluctantly, got there. The rest didn't. It's a narrow path that leads to eternal life, as Jesus says.

**Frances:** *So this Gospel is about not setting your heart on rivalry or jealousy. Jesus is moulding in us a different heart.*

We have to be clear on two separate realities: *Torah* and Gospel. *Torah* is the pattern of God's will for the world. The *Torah* is the universe. The Gospel is like a tiny spark at its centre; its function is to reignite the universe from its centre. ■

# Running a business with a *values* base

*Mike Crowl puts Auckland business man, Dick Hubbard, under the spotlight to see how business and social responsibility really do mix*



**D**ick Hubbard, the owner of *Hubbard's Foods*, is a Christian. He's also a businessman, a combination sometimes regarded as a contradiction in terms.

Dick has been a Food Technologist most of his working life, and for much of that time he's also reflected on the social responsibility of businesses. He spent some of his career in Nuie and Fiji, where he first understood that businesses didn't have to exist merely to make money for their shareholders but could also be involved in the community and be 'socially conscious'.

In the late 80s he set out on his own, forming *Hubbard's Foods*. But after only two years of existence, his business nearly joined the dozens of others that collapse each year. Hubbard says only "extreme hard work" saved the factory from receivership. The crisis refuelled his thinking about the need for social responsibility and he has since put some of these ideas into practice.

Firstly, *Hubbard's Foods* is in a position to provide employment for the unskilled. "Our factory is very close to a large Polynesian area where there's considerable unemployment", he says. "We believe we have a social contract to provide as many jobs as possible."

He wrote in one of his recent newsletters (known as *The Clipboard*, they're sent inside the cereal boxes): "At *Hubbard's Foods* we're passionate about creating jobs. Lots of them! So our manning rates are quite high. We employ 90 people on our factory floor alone – comparable-sized cereal processing companies here and overseas would only employ 25 to 30 people. That doesn't worry me at all. But to achieve this, we can only afford middle rates of pay. We could pay higher rates of pay if we dropped our manning rates. However, that's contrary to what we're trying to achieve. I will fight very very hard for the ability to create as many jobs as possible."

Secondly, Dick refuses to remain aloof from the factory floor. He'll walk round talking to the workers twice a day, and gets together with groups of them for lunches to discuss where the business is going and to listen to what they can contribute. He says too many employers expect their workers to separate their private lives from their working ones, causing a kind of schizophrenia. For him it's more sensible in the long term to know his workers well: what their concerns are, how their families are doing and what outside matters are affecting their lives.

Thirdly, the much publicised trip to Samoa that Hubbard took the workers on. It wasn't a PR exercise, although that was a side effect. The aim was to acknowledge the contribution of all staff regardless of status or remuneration. And because around 85 percent of the staff are Samoan he wanted to give them the chance to regain contact with their people at home, and their homeland. Local elders commended the trip and the effect it had on their people, and the factory's mana increased considerably.

Dick's ideas about social responsibility weren't developed in isolation, of course. In late 1997 he attended a conference in Los Angeles held by a group called *Businesses for Social Responsibility*. He came back highly enthused, confirmed in the ideas he'd been mulling over for years. Within a few months he'd gathered a number of like-minded people around him and a NZ version of the BSR was begun. It's gone from strength to strength, continually gathering support.

Naturally there have been antagonists. Roger Kerr, the voice of the NZ *Business Round Table*, is not enamoured of BSR. He's been quoted as saying "the business of business is business," that money used for purposes not focused on increasing

the profits of the business is theft from the shareholders. (Dick Hubbard's spin on this is, "the business of business is *more* than business.")

Kerr is right in the sense that the shareholders have entrusted their hard-earned money to a business, and expect a return. However, the curious thing is that those businesses with a sense of social responsibility are often doing better in terms of profit, though it may take more time for that profit to accrue.

Hubbard believes socially responsible business will increasingly be the way of the future. The Roundtable approach – separating profit distribution from social responsibility – is outdated. "Of course a business needs to make a profit – it would go broke otherwise and cost people their jobs. It would also have no money to reinvest (for example, in new machinery)."

"But profit," he continues, "can be shared amongst stakeholders (employees and communities), as well as formal shareholders, and shouldn't be the prerogative of the privileged few who can afford to invest financially. A share of the company's profit should go towards making the community a better place to live."

**H**ubbard's factory has recovered from its major crisis in 1990. But there are always new crises. In March this year Hubbard's workers formed a picket line to protest about wages. Such is the profile of Hubbard and his leadership in the BSR movement that this 20-minute picket line (held in the workers' lunch-hour) became national news.

Hubbard talks about the affair as a 'glitch' and believes that since it happened, employer/employee relationships have improved further. And when Samoan MP, Arthur Anae, (who stepped into the fray), remonstrated with the Samoan workers, their leaders apologised to him. Part of the problem related to a deal with Tesco's, the UK supermarket giant, which meant scrutinising the

factory's costs. Hubbard admits he didn't communicate this well to the staff, and didn't hear clearly what they were saying.

And part of it was to do with wages. Yet Hubbard insists his firm hasn't slipped backwards in the wage area as the union claimed. He says, "Over the last six years our increases have been more than the inflation rate. That's surely going forwards, not backwards." He adds, "This year we introduced a unique Profit share Scheme whereby 1 percent of our pre-tax profits go to all staff. Such a scheme was of no interest or consequence to the Unions. In fact, we got criticised for it."

Darien Fenton, (general secretary of the *Service and Food Workers' Union*, who was personally involved with the negotiations), claims Hubbard is paternalistic, in spite of his good relations with the workers. She says Hubbard moulds his staff to his own agenda. But Hubbard says Fenton came into the situation without much prior knowledge of the uniqueness of his business, and tried to push the workers into a straitjacket.

The 'glitch' has now been smoothed out, is past history. Hubbard continues to move forward, preaching to other businesses around the country – he speaks upwards of 200 times a year – while making improvements in his factory.

**I**s his Christianity the driving force behind his social responsibility? "It's certainly not the total motivation behind the socially responsibility factor in our business," he says, "as I don't believe this approach is exclusively Christian. I'm trying not to put a particular Christian spin on it because social responsibility should be a fundamental part of business regardless of whether one has a religious or a secular approach. The values base I'm trying to bring to business should be universal, and irrespective of any religious belief." ■

## Assumptions & Dragons

Today at Mass...  
How easily that slips off the tongue  
No indication it's the first time  
I've been in many months  
Or of how I squirmed recently  
on receiving the standard letter  
thanking me for my generous giving  
over the last three months – Nil  
Not a true indicator of my generosity  
I hope?

Today at Mass...  
Feast of the Assumption  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Assumpta est Maria  
in coelum, in coelum, Maria  
A woman reading  
from Revelation 12: 1-6  
I don't know the reading  
but yes, it is a revelation  
The woman clothed with the sun  
the moon under her feet  
on her head a crown of stars  
She's full of possibilities, this woman  
Over the moon, you might say

But now – she's giving birth  
Struggling, crying out  
In front of her crouches a dragon  
poised ready to devour  
her precious newborn

I too know the struggle  
of the new creation  
My dragons are poised too -  
anxiety and inadequacy  
fear of the unknown  
fear of failure -  
waiting to devour my confidence  
squeeze the life from my dreams

Her child is born, a son  
destined to rule the world  
He's safely transported  
out of danger to God's throne  
and the woman flees  
to a place of solitude and nurture  
prepared by God

My heart sings – for her  
and for me

I can rise above my fears

In my place of quiet with God  
I can nurture my soul  
listen to his reassuring voice  
calming and healing  
reminding me he chose me  
for my unique potential  
And with his help I'll grow  
gracefully  
into my gifts

Jennifer Hannan, 15 August '99



# Finding God in Stillness and Silence

*Marieke Marigold (left) describes a retreat journey into silence where she was able, with tranquillity, to meet her own death*

**T**his bushclad land known as *Tē Moata* (The First Light) is situated on the Coromandel Peninsula six km north of Tairua, on 840 acres of protected native forest. The land was purchased in 1985 because of the vision of Tim Wyn-Harris, to establish an *Insight Meditation Centre*. The facilities accommodate 28 people and in addition there are four huts available, situated on a high ridge deep in the bush, for self-retreats. Through the help and generosity of the many who gathered around Tim, *Tē Moata* was birthed, based on Buddhist teaching and practice.

The present guardians, Tara, Willow, and Maia, envisage *Tē Moata* as a safe, heart-centred space which is welcoming to all who seek personal healing and growth and a place to explore their very being. It certainly was that and more for me as I recently spent a week of my life in this sacred space.

I am still in wonderment as to how I got there. It all started some years ago after reading the book *Poustinia*, by Catherine de Hueck-Doherty. This created the longing to experience that special stillness and silence with God. Then, on hearing a radio interview about a Buddhist retreat centre (not *Tē Moata*), it became one of my goals to go there on a silent retreat, much to the amusement of my family and friends as I am a naturally outgoing person and give the impression of not being able to be silent or still for long!

God heard my plea and answered, even if it was years later. Last month I found myself without husband or children (all overseas at present) and it came to me that this was the right time. I had been going to *Dances of Universal Peace* run by Tara and Maia at the Mercy Spiritual Life Centre in Auckland – dance being a passion of mine – and mentioned that I was looking for somewhere to go on retreat. The rest, as they say, is history. When Tara informed me that there was a silent retreat being held in a few weeks time on *Death and Dying*, I said ‘yes that’s for me,’ having absolutely no idea of what it was about or what to expect, but nothing was going to stop me. My goal was in sight, I could taste it.

This seven-day silent retreat was guided by Nyanaviro Archer, a Buddhist of some 20 years, 13 of which were spent as a monk in a Buddhist Monastery – one of those special souls illuminated by inner peace. Just to stand near him is already an experience in itself.

We arrived on Sunday afternoon and after a short welcoming, silence fell upon us like a warm soft blanket that one could snuggle into. Like a duck to water I took to this silence, feeling safe, loved and immediately at peace.

*Tē Moata* uses two forms of meditation, sitting and walking. I had experienced contemplative sitting meditation but had never done a walking meditation. So at first I just went walking keeping a mantra in my head and enjoying the rhythm, but didn’t have much success at keeping my mind quiet. I was a little hesitant in asking for help, but when I did overcome my arrogance and asked Nyanaviro (that was the only time I broke my silence) it was explained. The objective is to walk back and forth slowly but naturally taking about 10 paces before turning, keeping focused on every sensation of movement, staying in the absolute present with it, leaving no time or space for a separate self.

After trying this for a while and feeling as though I was getting nowhere, it suddenly came to me that I was walking in Christ’s footprints. This changed my whole perspective. I then took each step with great loving care knowing I was walking on sacred ground.

We rose at about 5.30 a.m. with the first sitting meditation at 6 followed by a walking meditation, breakfast and work meditation, (one chose a small job which was yours for the week, eg helping in the kitchen, garden etc). The rest of the day was divided between sitting, walking, work and free time. During all this the silence was held.

I found the regularity of this schedule both soothing and comforting. Some of the walking times were used for teaching, with Nyanaviro sharing both his wisdom and



humour, also some Buddhist stories and poetry, or asking us to draw a mandala. We had two times during the week of short sharing but one long sharing time that finished the retreat.

Not having asked many questions of Tara but typically jumping straight in, I naturally thought that this *Death and Dying* retreat would be on dying to self or something along that vein. So I was a little shocked when we were asked to look at our own bodily death and the way we would most likely die, eg cancer, heart attack, car crash, to name but a few. It was suggested we first examine how we felt with the idea of dying in 40 years. That was no trouble at all, as I would then be in my nineties.

But when it was slowly brought forward to the very point of happening in the next second, then trepidation and thoughts of 'no not yet, I love life too much, I haven't done all I want' set in. Carrying on to the type of death created even more anxiety for me. The idea was to sit/walk in meditation with these feelings and finding the underlying fear, face it with acceptance. Being Christian, my thoughts on death lead me to Christ's Passion and God's unconditional love for me. Focusing on this, my fears slowly dissipated without protest.

But we were on a journey and death was not the destination. Having faced death closely and come to 'acceptance', we were now ready to look at our life, from birth, and all that had been, examining values and searching attitudes. To my surprise I found this step no easier. For waiting at the door to be let in were all my self-criticisms, self-hate, unforgiveness, regrets, and all the rest of life's conditioning. Yet here too God's warm tender compassion wiped all away, when I kept focused on the precious gift of my life.

At last, around the next corner our journey came to rest ever so gently in the realisation that between birth (past) and death (future) there is only NOW and here we were encouraged to stay within this continuum, where God is omni-present. If

we found ourselves straying we were advised to just hold our 'death' very close. Being a very visual person, I created my 'death' into a small child and whenever my mind wandered, I would call her to me with outstretched arms like a mother calling her child. She climbed on my lap, hugged me tight, immediately I would be back in the NOW.

Some of my free time I spent walking the tracks which wind their way through the bush and alongside the beautiful stream that runs along the valley floor. Having always loved nature I truly felt awe at the beauty of God's handiwork. Other times were spent in the large lounge area beside the blazing fire or in the conversation pit, which was surrounded by windows on three sides, just lost in the view of the bush. Finding myself up a little early one morning I lay on my back and for the first time really examined our early morning sky, which the moon had left, allowing myself to sink into its magnificent starry depth.

*Tē Moata* has always operated totally on a *dana/koha*/donation as its only means of support, and this system of generosity is a deeply ingrained part of the philosophy of the place – thereby making it available to all. *"To trust and live moment by moment in the fullness of life, opening our hearts to giving and receiving. In so doing we see there is no difference between the two."*

I would wish for all to experience this special place, and that is the reason why I have written this article in the hope that you will be touched and moved to take action, finding God in stillness and silence. So I gift you the following poem which reflects part of my journey at *Tē Moata* that burned inside me on the last days, knowing that God would have it so. ■

*The next season of Retreats starts in September. Tē Moata can be contacted at Box 100, Tairua, Coromandel, or Ph.(07) 868 8798*

## Lily Pond

*What is this thing between birth and death?  
How do I know, where shall I find it?  
Look at death you say, but where is that?  
So I go to the lily pond. Sit pondering these thoughts  
And there in the moonlight shadow I see her  
tall, dark, still. But as I let myself sink into this death,  
she says wait, not yet. First look at birth.*

*So with the morning sun I return  
The air is soft, expectant.  
I find her waiting, my child, called birth  
gentle, green, standing in her newness,  
but she says I've been here before, go back.*

*I turn to go.  
A fantail dances to catch my attention  
as if to say, wait, be still, stay a little.  
So I sit there by the lily pond, and wait.  
  
I watch the clouds float by in its reflection  
I drink the dampness with my breath  
I hear the tui call my name  
and in that instant, there she stands,  
between my birth and death  
my Now, and she says  
Welcome*

Marieke Marygold

# The Joy of Being Wrong

Can Tarzan help us understand Original Sin – or the ecological crisis?

Neil Vaney SM sheds light on this mystery

An exciting breakthrough for Catholic theology – a tale of discovery – is happening through the work of the French Catholic anthropologist, René Girard. The version of it that I am going to use comes from a book on original sin by James Alison entitled *The Joy of Being Wrong*.

At the heart of Girard's theory is something he discovered from studying many societies – that people learn to desire by imitating others. As Alison vividly puts it, the way love arises is not '*Tarzan, he love Jane*' or, more indirectly, by wanting someone to love you, '*Tarzan, he want Jane to love Tarzan*'. It happens through having something presented to us as desirable: '*Visiting Hollywood director fancies Jane, and Tarzan, suddenly, he find Jane fascinating*'.

At first, this may sound strange. But think about your kids, how they come to want a chocolate biscuit because they see their younger brother eating one, or your ten-year-old daughter who must have a nose stud because her best friend is getting one. Or even going back a bit further; perhaps your first moment of attraction to your husband was when you heard another girl describing him. Girard goes on to say that such rivalries create unbearable tensions between friends and group members.

When they come near to violence, what happens in every society he studied was that possible violence is diverted by uncovering some innocent third, an outsider, or someone who looks different, on whom blame is fixed. The outsider becomes a scapegoat persecuted and excluded; and this restores harmony

to the group. The actors are genuinely blind to what they have done till, sometime later, a revelation from outside the group allows someone to see what they have done. Girard, an agnostic, saw that this is what the biblical texts do, and on the basis of this discovery he became a committed Christian.

Let's examine this dynamic in some Bible passages, for instance, *Jn 8:2-11*, the incident of the woman caught in adultery and brought to Jesus for condemnation. Jesus does not focus on her sin but shows the accusers how it is their act of hatred and exclusion that is sinful. Or again the man born blind whose eyes Jesus anoints with clay, then sends to wash at the pool of Siloam in *Jn 9:1-41*. Jesus shows us that there has been blindness in the world from the very beginning, a blindness that society always tries to lay on the outsider. Sin is a blindness, cured only by forgiveness, given when one has seen one's own blindness and complicity in it.

Only Jesus' death and resurrection permitted the stunning insight that God's love and offer of forgiveness is so total that not even death can gainsay it, and that God is utterly without violence. It is the human view of God that has distorted God's character because of human complicity in violence – unrecognised, unaccepted and constantly projected onto God.

This is the key that unlocks the gradually unfolding truth behind the whole of the Bible, that God is on the side of the victims, not the sacrificers. It also shows us that death is not the inevitable, natural biological destination of human life; it is part of our cultural heritage

that can and has been altered from somebody from within the very flow of human history.

Girard discovered that all cultures have stories of treacherous gods and human victims. Careful analysis of the development of such stories uncovered a common pattern. Groups that commit the first murder blame the victim or a god. Gradually this blame is transferred to a single person such as a brother, a trickster and finally the devil. The fault is transferred, responsibility avoided and someone else is fingered for the deed.

This is how Girard understands Original sin as depicted in the Adam and Eve story. A group of primates, very close to the human state, is about to kill one of their own; one of the group sees his similarity to the victim; the possibility of acceptance is dimly glimpsed but resisted. The group shapes itself around hatred of this victim who is evil, yet also good, in that his death brings unity and peace to the squabbling group once again. This, according to Girard, is the first stirring of human desire, memory and group guilt. At the first moment of possible grace but original sin, *homo necans* (man the killer) is born.

Girard sees human evolution as largely a saga of violence based on jealousy. We differ from animals in our efforts to limit the effects of murder by making it holy, ritualising it in rites and symbolic sacrifices. We hedge it around with a raft of prohibitions to try to stop violence becoming endemic and splitting the clan or tribe apart once again.

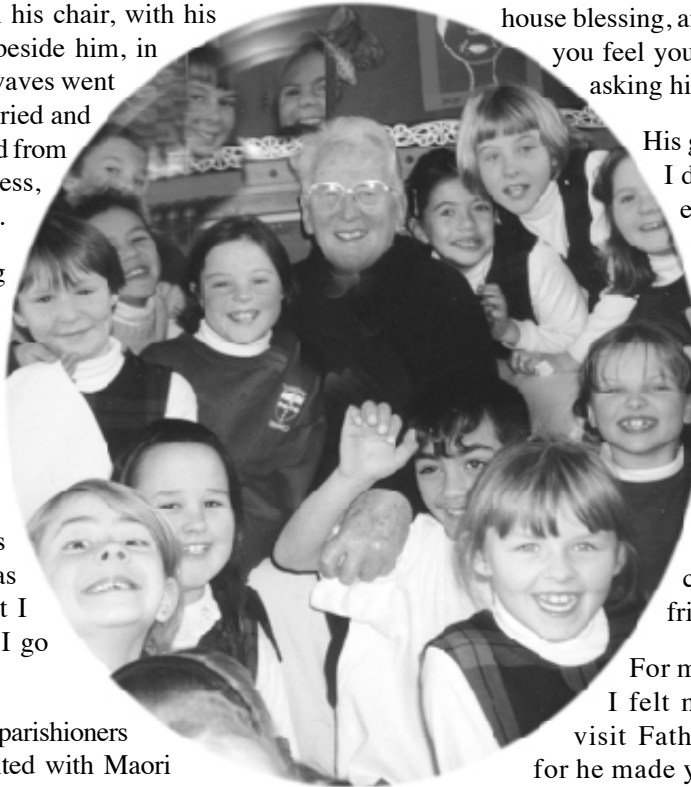
Jesus, however, provided another reading of human evolution. He made it possible to create a human conscious- ▷▷

## Fr David Bourke (1912 – 2000) – *Rest in Peace*

*Goodbye and thank you Father:* the eyes of the sick woman said as the old grey-headed priest turned to leave the Intensive Care Unit of the Masterton Hospital. Little did she, or anyone else, know that before the afternoon was much older, it would be an eternal goodbye to *Fr David Bourke*. He died peacefully, sitting in his chair, with his prayer book and crossword beside him, in the presbytery. As the shock waves went through the Parish, children cried and parishioners who had benefited from his care, attention and kindness, shook their heads in disbelief.

I remember my first meeting with Fr Bourke. He was Parish Priest of Tawa and I was working on the Maori Pastoral Care Team in the Porirua Basin. One cold, wet miserable day, I called at the presbytery to let the new parish priest know I was working in his parish. He was very kind and concerned that I was in the cold. He insisted I go inside for a cup of hot soup.

He had a great interest in all his parishioners and asked to be kept acquainted with Maori Catholic families. He offered to be available for help at Arohata, the women's prison, assuring me he would not mind being called on at any time. Then began a succession of phone calls, re families in distress. Once he gave me details about a family he asked me to visit. As I was leaving, with a twinkle in his eye, he said: *These people are not Maori, but that won't matter, will it?*



I caught up with him again in Eastbourne and Newtown and the story was the same. The last six years in Masterton, where I work, have been a delight. Each morning, over a cup of tea after Mass, he would tease and make fun as we prepared for the day's work. Many a time he helped at a house blessing, anointing or Baptism. He made you feel you were doing him a favour by asking him.

His greatest love was the children. I doubt if his pockets were ever empty of sweets which he distributed to them surreptitiously as they crowded about him. At the parish school of St Patrick's which he visited weekly, he knew most of them by name. His daily walks took him to the homes of the lonely and the elderly, as well as the sick. Many of the old and the young called to see him, just to have a friendly chat.

For myself, over the years, if ever I felt my ego needed a boost, I'd visit Father Bourke. It never failed, for he made you feel you were loved and important. Just to hear him say: "Sister dear, how nice to see you," dispelled the gloom. His life touched many people and his passing from among us has made us realise how precious were the times spent with him. *A truly Pastoral Priest.* ■

*Sister Walburga, DOLC*

ness that is not moulded in rivalry and dependent for its survival on techniques of blaming and excluding the other. This was his criticism of the Pharisees and the Jewish leaders: that they had led Israel to forget that it was a different sort of nation. They had forgotten that God had called them out of Egypt to be a different type of people, one that would not victimize but rather care for the orphan and widow, treat the stranger generously and refuse to make slaves.

### **Some Ecological Consequences**

How could this new understanding of the truth of the human condition

change our view of how we see the value of the natural world? It would first help us to see that so many of the possessions we believe we need for our comfort and survival are actually tokens of our superiority over our rivals. Reducing the vast amount spent on such consumer gadgets would enormously reduce the strain we place upon the earth.

Again so many of the wars that nations wage or threaten to inflict on other nations are justified in the name of honour, defence, justice, etc. What a revelation to see that in fact so many of them arise out of the murderous instinct

that has dominated human history but that now can no longer serve any justifiable rationale. So many famines, destructions of land, deaths of women and children today flow directly from such human pride and blindness.

Inevitably the fate of many animal populations, plants, and even huge parts of the world's surface are captive to such rivalries and feuds. In resolving such bitterness and defusing the trail of innocent victims that go right back to the first human murder, we would begin to bring to birth a whole new love of all life, both human and non-human, into our world. ■

## The things that really matter

*Tuesdays with Morrie*

by Mitch Albom

Hodder

Price: \$19.95

Review: Michael Hill IC

Why would anybody get on an aeroplane every Tuesday and fly 700 miles to visit a dying man? For that is what this little book is about. It's the story of a yuppie sports journalist who decides on impulse to go and visit his College Professor, who he hears is smitten with an incurable disease. The visit becomes a weekly ritual which Mitch Albom keeps up for most of a year until his teacher Morrie dies. The tale of an old man dying – but really it is the story, simply and humorously told, of a much younger person learning how to live.

"There are some mornings when I cry and cry", the old man relates, "and mourn for

myself. Some mornings I'm so angry and bitter. But it doesn't last too long. Then I get up and say: I want to live..."

When a person knows they only have a few weeks or months of life left, then if they are wise – and Morrie Schwarz is revealed as a very wise human being – they concentrate on all those things which truly matter. The nonsense most of us spend our waking hours worrying about simply pale into insignificance. This book will tell you nothing about becoming successful, making a lot of money, winning lotto, or how to make it in the 'best' circles. But it has everything to say about real life, about loving and relating and the simple pleasures – singing, laughing, dancing.

It is beautifully written and easy to read. It also says a lot about the importance of having a mentor and being wise enough to listen to that person at a vital stage in life.

Here are a few pearls: "The culture we have does not make people feel good about themselves. And you have to be strong enough to say, if the culture doesn't work, don't buy it!"

So what are the 'important things', the author asks.

"As I see it," says Morrie, "they have to do with love, responsibility, spirituality, awareness... As long as we can love each other, and remember the feeling of love we had, we can die without ever really going away. All the love you created is still there. All the memories are still there. You live on – in the hearts of everyone you have touched and nurtured while you were here".

This is not a formal book of theology or spirituality. The word 'God' never occurs. But if you want something to nourish your spirit, if you need a good read when the thought of dying terrifies you, then here is one for you. I doubt if you will be disappointed. ■

## Rich in poetry and human awareness

*Spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

by Pat Collins

Dublin: Columba Press: 1999

Price: \$39

Review: Paul Andrews, SJ

God knows we need it. The material world has become so intriguing and seductive that Westerners require help in nurturing an interior life. Help can come in different ways. In the 1960s Marcel Lègaud, the mathematician-turned-shepherd, wrote *L'homme la recherche de son humanité*, a precious little book about life, love, faith, prayer, paternity, distilled from years of evening reflection with like-minded friends. It had no index, because to my memory there was only one quotation in the whole book, and it was from Jesus Christ.

Pat Collins, the experienced and respected Vincentian spiritual director and teacher, has taken another path. In a book of roughly the same size as Lègaud's, his index lists over 300 people quoted. (There are places where the urge to quote leads him astray, as in the mistaken ascription of a line from Pope on page 163.)

His authorities come from various fields of study. The effect is different from Lègaud's. One is not so much reflecting in the company of a guru, as being led through a library where at every turn we are introduced to a distinguished thinker and author who has lived at some time in the last two millennia. Is it unfair to do what one often does in a big crowd, and look for people one hopes to meet? I sought in vain for Jacques Lacan, the Parisian polymath and guru who has put a perspective on so much of the thinking of the last 2000 years, and has significantly extended the thinking of Freud.

The encounters are not random. Collins is a systematic teacher, starting with models of spirituality and psychological concepts of religious experience. He frames spirituality in such a way as to allow discussion of Creation and New Age thought, and of mysticism, charismatics, and evangelisation using small groups. Though working in a field which lends itself to waffle, he has committed himself to ending most chapters with a *Conclusion*

(though these endings are not as tight as one might wish; rather than summarise, they sometimes extend the material of the chapter and add new quotations). In the final chapter one might look for a synthesis of the spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Instead it is an interesting extension of the book's material to include methods of evangelisation. You look in vain for the bottom line.

This is a rich book, rich in poetry, human awareness, and the reflections of a well-stocked mind. I shall go back to it. It holds moving and memorable passages which enrich the conceptual groundwork like raisins in a rice pudding. I think of the description of St Thérèse's last days, and a horrific episode from a story of Elie Wiesel. Above all I remember two or three stories from Collins' own experience, of how healing and listening can work marvels, if not miracles. In fact these personal reminiscences were so riveting that one could happily invite Collins in his next book to indulge the novelist in himself, as in this book he gave space to the systematic thinker. ■



## Coming to faith via messiness and good humour

*Travelling Mercies*

by Anne Lamott

Anchor Books pbk

Price: \$29.95 (OC Books)

Review: Mike Crowl

I first discovered Anne Lamott a couple of years ago when Bill Manhire commended her book on writing, *Bird by Bird*. Recently I had a splurge of reading Lamott. I re-read *Bird by Bird* in tandem with her latest book, *Travelling Mercies*, and enjoyed the old again as much as the new. (I also read *Operating Instructions*, her book on expecting, having and coping with the first year of her son's life. Sam appears in all three of these books.)

All of these books are worth reviewing, but I want to concentrate on *Travelling Mercies*. Here Lamott, in her inimitable way, describes her journey of faith. She became a Christian after many years of searching and struggling, and perhaps what I most like about her is her willingness to admit she's *still* struggling. No easy *now I'm saved, I'm okay* stuff for her. She is a Christian who's not only still learning about the wonderful grace of God, but also about what it is to *behave* as a Christian. For this reason, anyone living by the 'rules' who reads this book may struggle themselves with some of what Lamott does after she finally gives in to Christ.

Lamott is a successful writer, but like many writers and artists her life has been anything but straightforward. Her father was also a writer (Lamott's first book detailed his decline into cancer and the effect on family relationships) – and her mother a lawyer who eventually left the family and went to work in Hawaii. Alcohol and drugs were part of the normality of this family, and Lamott was the one who fell most deeply into addiction to both these. She describes her long battle up and out of this addiction and her parallel searching for truth in the spiritual area, in the long first section of the book, *Overture*. She is helped in both these areas by people from Christian backgrounds, people with other spiritual viewpoints and people with no obvious spirituality at all, each of them demonstrating Christ's ability to use people of all manner of mindsets to draw us towards him.

The remainder of the book consists of groups of short chapters in which she writes about her life since then, and the way in which her Episcopal church family has supported her through all manner of highs and lows. These chapters don't form a linear passage from her conversion to the present, but rather offer what might be seen as short stories of her life in Christ.

I haven't conveyed, however, what is so wonderful about Lamott's writing. Her spirituality isn't high-flown. Lamott is still a relatively new Christian, and much of what she writes

about is her learning process. But it's her wonderful sense of humour and marvellous irony that are most appealing, plus her sheer down-to-earth honesty about herself and life in general. She reminds us again and again how we need to keep our eyes open to the presence of God in all sorts of situations and absurdities. And her friends and neighbours are just as wonderful, and as absurd. One chapter opens, "I have this beautiful feminist friend named Nora who once said, 'I've been thinking about killing myself, but I want to lose five pounds first.'"

There's no easy way of quoting her delightful style, but I'm going to try. This extract comes from a scene when, as a person who is "too much of an alarmist to stay airborne much longer than from California to Mexico," she has to admit she's a Christian to the Latvian lady next to her, after having seen that the man on the other side is reading a book by a right-wing Christian author "who thinks Jesus is coming back next Tuesday right after lunch". She writes, "So I told the truth: that I am a believer, a convert. I'm probably about three months away from slapping an aluminium Jesus-fish on the back of my car – although I first want to see if the application or stickum in any way interferes with my lease agreement. And believe me, all this boggles even *my* mind. But it's true. I could go to a gathering of foot-wash Baptists and, except for my dreadlocks, fit right in. I would wash their feet: I would let them wash mine."

Or, "Sometimes people who've read my work send me photos of their families and I tape them to the wall in the hopes that they'll help me remember that we're all in the same soup, and that they'll make me more forgiving. Who was it who said forgiveness is giving up all hope of having had a different past?"

One warning. Lamott doesn't equate being a Christian writer with avoiding using occasional obscene language. If you can get past that, you'll find a fund of insights and delights. ■

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# Coming home to roost

The true cost of nine years of a free-market economy, under a National Government, is still surfacing and still has to be paid for. Max Bradford's electricity reforms have resulted in *TransAlta* increasing the fixed daily charge on electricity and making small users pay more. *TransAlta* is now a foreign-owned company.

Bill Birch completed his last "think big" job, before retiring, by selling off New Zealand's natural assets of hydro-electricity generation. *Contact Energy* is now a foreign-owned company. Given this degradation of a whole industry, the cost of electricity must continue to rise.

The health reforms managed by Jenny Shipley, after the infamous "mother of all budgets" in 1991, have resulted in a lack of trained staff. The remuneration of nurses was never a priority for the overpaid hospital managers on short

## Crosscurrents by John Honoré

term contracts. In their mad world, patients became clients and hospitals became service providers. Now the shortage of nursing staff has led to Wellington hospital having to cancel operations. A national shortage of nurses has become so apparent that it will necessitate increased costs of recruitment and salary.

Tertiary education under the control of ministers Lockwood Smith and Max Bradford, who both underfunded it for years, will have the most significant future cost. Universities have had to increase their fees dramatically to make up the shortfall and this, in turn, has created a burgeoning student debt. Research and development have also suffered. As a consequence,

whole research departments have gone overseas. Some professors are even advising students to go overseas. Now there is a continuing exodus of highly trained young graduates.

Due to these crippling student loans, higher legal, medical and dentistry bills are inevitable for the New Zealand citizen. The application of free market principles to tertiary education will be felt for years and the cost will be high.

More payouts to Fire Service management are surfacing. \$170,000 to Jean Martin means she received nearly \$400,000 for a year's work. This is a graphic reminder of the previous administration's lack of a social conscience. Their "trickle down" theory has proved a myth. The widening gap between rich and poor is the reality. We are now paying a heavy price for a decade of mismanagement.

## Proper Charlie

Sport, that surrogate for religion, is rife with scandals. Charlie Dempsey follows Hansie Cronje and Mark Todd into the lurid headlines of corruption, drugs and incompetence. Charlie, soccer's little battler for decades, was caught in a global war. He lost the war, the plot and his reputation.

But is Charlie the man to blame for this fiasco? It was the Oceania Football Confederation that sent a 79-year-old into the bear pit of international sport. Soccer, like rugby, is now a serious business which requires commercial acumen, the ability to do deals and to handle million-dollar budgets. It is not a life and death affair, it is bigger than that. It is money, the new age god. In the past, Charlie's years of service to soccer have been enough to get him elected as Oceania's representative to the FIFA meetings. This time he was out of his depth.

The OFC is to blame for sending an old man past his prime. Sports administrators have enormous power and privilege. Naturally, they hang on as long as possible. One could draw a parallel with the Curia in Rome. Are some of those cardinals, 79-years-old and over, still capable of making decisions which will affect millions of people?

Study the make-up of the boards of New Zealand public companies and you will find old men who should no longer be in positions of power. The OFC should have been aware that the stakes involved in this war of international sport would be too much for Charlie to cope with. It was a stupid decision to send a stubborn old man. Don't blame Charlie for hanging on to privilege and power. Blame the management and the system that will not oblige administrators to retire before their use-by date.

## The unPacific way

The South Pacific is no longer pacific. Murders in Samoa, problems in the Solomons and George Speight in Fiji undermine New Zealand's foreign policy of working towards a stable external environment for its citizens. How to cope with Fiji in the future, as it drifts towards anarchy, will test the diplomatic skills of Phil Goff and the resolve of New Zealanders accustomed to winter holidays in the Pacific Islands. It is a no win situation for everyone.

Will New Zealand remain silent when faced with the violation of human rights, other than "smart sanctions"? Can New Zealanders, in all conscience, holiday in Fiji when half the population is disenfranchised? As I write, the country is no longer a democracy. There is no rule of law and no protection of human rights. Neither The Great Council of Chiefs nor the army has any authority or direction. But George Speight has. He would like to manage the natural resources of mahogany, soon to be harvested, on behalf of the Fiji Hardwood Corporation. Where is this company registered and who are the shareholders? ■

## Different movies displaying compassion and acceptance

It is not often that I go to the movies twice in a weekend but it happened recently. The two films could not have been more contrasting. Yet I find myself wanting to hold together the two vastly different experiences and to recognise the common realities they address.

The Film Festival opener, *The Cup*, is set in a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in India where the pace of life is meditative, attentive to times and rituals with an understated and gentle humour. The strongest emotion displayed is the whispered grief of a young boy for his mother and the greatest misdemeanour is sneaking out of the monastery at night to watch World Cup soccer games on the TV at a local bar. The turning point comes when a mischievous young monk realises that in his avidity to see the Cup, he has wounded another.

The second film I saw was a Spanish film, *All About My Mother*. This film takes its audience into the dark corners of Barcelona, into the lives of transvestite prostitutes with their heavy makeup and silicone breasts. In this story of a mother's search for the father of her dead son, passions flare and flow freely – the agony of the mother when she learns her son has died, the tempestuous love of an actress for her



### Film reviews

co-star, the confusion of a mother about her daughter. There are screams, tears, bawdy jokes, guffaws of laughter, fights and tenderness. If in one film "sins" are etched with a fine pen on a page so clear of clutter that they are seen for what they are, then in the other, violent and passionate "crimes" are matched by extraordinary and passionate love.

By very different routes both films move towards acceptance and compassion. The novice master pities and saves the repentant youngster, recognising in him a heart more responsive to human suffering than to material things: "You are so bad at business, you'll make a good monk." In the Spanish film the grieving mother returns to find her promiscuous transvestite husband, learning in the end to pity him and offer him a taste of joy and tenderness. The mother of a pregnant young nun, never able to comprehend either her daughter's vocation or her fall, comes in time, through tension, confusion

and fear of AIDS, to some acceptance of her grandchild.

In both films people move and grow. The abbot, always longing for Tibet and holding to old ways, joins the monks in viewing "this fight about a ball", knowing that nothing shakes the core of things, even as new enthusiasms well up. Everyone in *All About My Mother* has to shift position from hatred, fear, prejudice and hurt to some measure of acceptance, self-acceptance and compassion.

*All About My Mother* opens in the intensive care unit of a Madrid hospital where a patient has just died. The main character co-ordinates the donation of the dead person's organs for transplant. She is soon to do this for her own son. Organ donation to save the life of another is a powerful contemporary symbol of redemption. It is a giving of one's body to bring life to another; for loved ones, a wrenching letting go. This symbol does not see redemption as paying for sin but as love, love that transcends judgement, fear and prejudice and can transform lives. In delicate daily interactions and in the large challenges, such compassion is a life-transforming possibility. ■

Sandra Winton

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## Character yes; condoms no!

**Y**outh Affairs Minister Laila Harre is a child of her time. Why not make condoms freely available to kids? It's a sensible exercise in damage control. Surely we would have less disease and fewer teenage pregnancies?

Ms Harre has reduced sexual behaviour to a health problem. Her vision has the appearance of giving kids the freedom to act, to be independent and to make up their own minds on the basis of in-formation supplied. In effect, it does exactly the opposite. It dehumanises children. Condom distribution encourages promiscuity – now there's an old-fashioned word. Children are, among other things, a symbol of the nation's uncertain future.

At the heart of things, the character of the child is critical. Does character really matter? The collective wisdom of the ages, now denied by those other children of our time, would say it matters a great deal. In both classical and biblical cultures, which have so deeply shaped our world, people well understood there was a direct association between the character of individuals and the wellbeing of both the individual and society as a whole.

To create a school environment in which condoms are freely available is to deny young people the environment where they might learn the freedom of self-control and the dynamics of trust. If we are going to have an education system that really is an education system, we need to revisit the necessary connection between belief about what it is to be a human being and the kind of behaviour we can expect to arise out of that belief.

**W**hat we need is a renewed focus on character. To have a renewal of character, we must also have a renewal of those beliefs that constrain, limit, obligate, compel and inspire. The problem is that few of us who are parents or teachers are prepared to pay the price, so we go to the bargain basement and give out condoms and reductionist sexual advice. In doing so we steal from our children the benefits of self-control.

Character without heartfelt belief is not possible. We cannot possess a strong morality that will protect children without the possible burden of guilt and shame. We cannot have character without the necessary moral judgements that will very likely offend.

Human beings are not born with a well-developed moral sensibility, much less "character". We are still mostly "unfinished" at birth. In contrast to other species which have a well-developed apparatus of instincts, we are "instinctually deprived". We don't innately know what is socially acceptable to eat or when to sleep, what clothes are appropriate when, or how to act toward others.

Our sexual instincts are not reliable guides to how when, where, or with whom sexual intimacy might be appropriate. We have no sense of what our obligations are toward the environment or toward other species, much less how to treat strangers, how to express empathy with those in need, or even that empathy toward the needy might be a good worth pursuing. We are not born with moral obligations to stabilise life, a world-view to give coherence to life, or ideals to guide our lives.

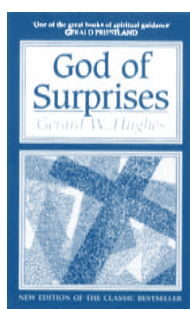
The distribution of condoms in schools ignores the basic responsibility all adults have to children – to teach them the difference between right and wrong. It is just another exercise that will lock young people into a state of extended adolescence.

*Bruce Logan*

*a classic bestseller!*

## God of Surprises

*Gerard W Hughes*



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