Tui Motu

InterIslands

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Where would you find a blue rose?

Contents

Cover:

Where to find a blue rose?

Once G.E. is let out of the lab you will be able to manufacture a blue rose, a green human, a pink politician, a puce theologian – whatever tickles your fancy.

One gigantic step backwards for the human race. . .

Stories of Faith

Readers often tell us that they especially enjoy stories of faith, narratives where people not only trace the ebb and flow of their lives but also try to discern the finger of God guiding them. In this issue we are fortunate to have several such stories.

One comes from a farming family in the far north, who have sought a simpler way of life close to the natural rhythms of earth and season. Another, the journey of a young Southlander, also from a farming background, who for a time followed the most demanding male vocation in the Catholic church – with the Carthusian monks. There are also two challenging articles from the recent Wellington conference on *Disability and Spirituality*. Challenging, in the sense that they confront the way society in general – and the churches in particular – often regard disabled people.

A common strand in these tales is that they recount the experiences of people who for one reason or another are 'outside the square'. Their experience is unusual and therefore often misunderstood, or even belittled. Yet if we look at the Gospels, we see that Jesus' mission was precisely 'outside the square'.

No one was more welcome at his table or in his company than the marginalised of his day, outcasts by reason of sickness, physical disability or because they were labelled 'sinners'. For disciples, he chose people close to the earth, fishermen and unlettered artisans. The lesson is that the love of God is to be found more especially in situations often avoided by the conventionally 'respectable', or orthodox, or physically 'whole'.

These stories have much to teach us when we read them with an open heart. *Tui Motu* is grateful for those prepared to bare their souls: it often requires courage and a bit of persuasion! The choices they have made may not necessarily be for us. But since they are clearly seeking God, what they have found has a bearing on all our lives.

It will soon be crunch time for G.E. Green leader Jeanette Fitzsimons says that to extend the moratorium on open release of G.E. organisms, new legislation will be needed now.

Allowing G.E. outside the laboratory is an extraordinary decision. Who wants it? What benefit is it to farmers, to consumers or to the country generally? It is a change being foisted on us by giant multinational agribusinesses, whose sole motive is to increase profits accruing to their shareholders. And driving it is the U.S. government of George W Bush.

Helen Clark was bold enough to stand up to Bush over Anglo-American aggression in Iraq. It seems her government is now embarked on a policy of reinsurance. Accommodation regarding G.E. will be a way of earning Brownie points with the Americans.

The pros and cons of G.E. technology and G.E. release are too complex for most of us. Is it unnatural? Is it tamper-ing with life itself? Or is it a justifiable adaptation of natural forces, like Michael Faraday harnessing electricity?

Personally I prefer to trust the instinct of the many people close to Mother Earth who totally reject it, rather than the calculations of experts who seldom stick their noses outside a laboratory or stray far from their computers in highrise office blocks. Helen Clark would do well to listen to the 'grass roots' before committing us irrevocably to a disastrous lifting of the G.E. mora-

M.H.

G.E. – keep it in the lab!

Jeanette Fitzsimons M.P.

Only a massive public uprising now will stop the Government lifting the moratorium on G.E. release in October.

Cutting-edge scientific advice will be presented to the select committee hearing submissions on the Bill that will govern G.E. release after the moratorium lifts on October 29 this year. Leading scientists, physicians and other experts will put their views to the education and science select committee on the *New Organisms and Other Matters* (NOOM) Bill which provides for "conditional release" – the category under which most of the early applications for release will fall. They will warn about the dangers of releasing G.E. from safe containment into the environment. They will put the clear scientific case for why we should exercise caution on G.E. and keep it in the laboratory.

But the only way the Government will listen to these submissions and act on them is if the public makes their opposition known en masse. This Government has repeatedly ignored the views of the public on G.E. – so we have to let them know our opposition in numbers that they can't ignore.

We need every farmer, consumer, health worker, forester, conservationist, parent or grandparent who is concerned about this technology to make their opposition known to the Government, and to their friends and colleagues. We need everyone opposed to G.E. in field and food to write letters to the editor of mainstream and alternative newspapers, big and little, national and local, saying "keep it in the lab". We recommend you write to ministers and your local MP expressing your opposition.

Stay up to date with G.E. issues, through the Green Party website (www.greens.org.nz) and other Internet resources. Get on our mailing list by contacting my parliamentary office and we'll send you news about what is happening and what we are doing. Take part in local G.E. protests. Join your local G.E.-free group. Contact your local council asking them if they're G.E.-free and if not, ask them to go that way. Write to your supermarket, telling them you'd prefer if they were G.E.-free, like the British supermarkets. Refuse to buy anything that contains G.E. ingredients. (*Check the Greenpeace website to know which foods are G.E. free.*) Support your local organic growers, stores and products.

We need you to urge the Government to withdraw from sale all foods containing genetically engineered organisms, or at least to clearly label them so that consumers can exercise full choice. We also want you to call publicly, in any way you can, for further imports of G.E. foods to be banned; and for new legislation to repeal the automatic expiry of the moratorium.

The Government has admitted that its only strategy for G.E. and non-G.E. crops to co-exist is to accept a one percent contamination of non-G.E. crops. But there is no intention to make the person who owns or grows the G.E. crop liable for any damage it does – as long as they did not actually break the law. The Green Party says that's not good enough. There's no way that people who choose to be G.E.-free should pay for the mistakes of those who attempt to profit from the biotechnology industry; especially when woeful overseas experience warns against going down the G.E. road.

Those who stand to make the gains should pay for the risks. But, even better, we do not need to take those risks. G.E. should be kept in the lab. We fully support the many uses of genetic science where the living organisms are kept in the lab – things like insulin derived from genetically modified bacteria – but where only purified and tested proteins leave the laboratory.

The unpredictability of G.E. organisms, which has been well demonstrated scientifically, threatens our health, our soil, our environment. Nothing is more important than protecting the health and safety of our children, our bodies, our environment and our nation's unique biodiversity. That's why we must all

Jeanette Fitzsimons is co-leader of the Green party

Tui Motu-InterIslands

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

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Jeanette Fitzsimons, Green Party
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Community and Housing Co-ops

I noticed with interest your focus on community (*May issue*).

I was privileged to live in a Canadian Housing Co-op for seven years. There are literally thousands of housing Co-ops across Canada, the purpose of which is to provide quality, low-cost housing. They range from high-rise apartments to townhouse complexes to heritage homes subdivided into flats. They can be a mixed group or a specific one, in terms of occupation or race.

Mine was a mixed community, with many nationalities, religions (including none), and occupations ranging from the equivalent of DPB recipients to University lecturers. It was of medium size, 102 townhouses, and situated in beautiful surroundings.

All members have to buy into them by purchasing a share of the Co-op, the value of which ranges from about $1,000 to $5,000. After that, they pay a monthly fee of 25 percent of their income and are expected to contribute two hours of volunteer time per week to help run the place. This includes specific committee meetings and the work associated with that committee, as well as a monthly general meeting. I was on a number of committees including a clean-up committee, a garden committee, an entertainment committee and the Board.

Housing Co-ops are completely self-funding, except that they begin with a low-interest loan guaranteed by the government. They are financially self-sustaining because they require a balanced membership of rich, medium and poor, so that their combined 25 percent incomes is the equivalent of what is called market rate which means they are financially sustainable and therefore can pay off the mortgage and provide for ongoing maintenance. Members are expected to be community-minded – in fact there is a rigorous interview process before you can get in – and active in pursuing their ongoing community commitments.

In addition to the security of good quality, low-cost housing, members gain vital skills in all the detailed daily business that is required to run what is essentially a multi-million-dollar business. For the disempowered, such as single mothers, of whom I am one, living and working in a Housing Co-op can literally turn one's life around.

Canada has been named the most desirable country in the world to live in. I am convinced Housing Co-ops are the reason why because they provide solutions to many of the problems brought on by poverty. If anyone is interested in learning more about this, they can email me at susan@pragmata.co.nz

Susan Frykberg, Dunedin

Ordination of Women

Unlike Chris Sullivan (*May issue*), I find the argument that neither Jesus nor the Apostles ordained women unconvincing.

I agree that Jesus and the Apostles did not "ordain" women. The New Testament seems clearly to indicate that they didn't "ordain" men either.

That Jesus chose the Twelve is clear, but it is not clear that they were chosen for priesthood, since the New Testament nowhere mentions a specifically Christian priesthood, nor a priestly status or functions as they are known historically. There is no indication that any of the Apostles chose anyone, although they ratified the community's choice of deacons.

From my not very exhaustive inquiries, I understand that the first specific indications that a special group of leaders called priests existed, occur in the writings of Irenaeus towards the end of the Second Century. So it seems to me that sometime during the Second Century this group became universally established, although I do not know of any conciliar or similar decisions which formalised it. I would really appreciate being given a reference to a document which is unequivocal about this.

Otherwise, I think it reasonable to conclude that "the church" which authoritatively established a male priesthood about 1900 years ago may decide equally authoritatively to establish a female one now.

T A Camp, Kaiapoi

Closure of Mass centres

I must for justice sake respond to Joan McFetridge's letter in your *June* edition encouraging us to listen with our ears and not our fears in regard to clustering of parishes and training of pastoral leaders.

In defence of myself, I have been listening eagerly, for some years now to the development of the clustering of parishes into Pastoral areas, and to the planned formation of lay people as Pastoral leaders to work along side Priests in pastoral ministry. Unfortunately I hear in a state of anxiety all the promises of the development of leaders from within the community, the retention of Parish communities and Parish identity. This anxiety is based on experience.

Just over two years ago the church where my family attended Mass in the northern districts of Upper Hutt, was closed for a temporary period due to the shortage of priests. This church remains closed today. All sacramental celebrations, in this parish, have been centralized. The experience of the heart-rending and tearing apart of a vibrant, creative life-giving faith community, causes me to be fearful that this will be the fate of other churches and faith communities over time.

Some twenty ago pastoral workers were sent to the northern districts of Upper Hutt, as a far-sighted attempt to form the baptized for ministry because of the projected shortage of priests in the future. These pastoral workers encouraged and formed lay men and women in all forms of ministry. More than this, they helped to develop in the community a sense of their baptismal call to full and active participation.

The St Peter Chanel community was a fertile ground where the laity could have assumed responsibility for the ongoing mission of the Church. The community understood well the meaning of servant leadership and were attempting to practice it.

The model of leadership, which was witnessed by us with our ears and eyes, to secure the closure of the St Peter Chanel Church has dismayed us and yes probably did leave us listening with our fears rather than our ears.

I'm reassured by Joan's comments about the launch out training programme and eagerly wait the flourishing of the Church in creative new ways. I am afraid though that my experience leaves me anxious and I will continue to raise questions, as I believe consultation and collaboration are essential elements to the development of this new model of Church leadership.

Teresa Homan, Upper Hutt

Spiritual Ecology

Thomas Moore

I'd like to understand why spiritual groups and the churches are not generally in the front lines of the ecology movement. I would think that the interest of churches in ethics or their impassioned ideas about creation and its goodness would motivate them to take the lead in protecting the natural world. I would expect spiritual communities to turn their idealism on the atrocities we still commit in relation to nature. But, unless I'm mistaken, spiritual voices for nature are few and relatively weak.

I can think of several reasons for this neglect. Of its nature, spirit tends to move away from the body and the material world. It focuses on knowing everything, embracing the universe, and possessing the truth. These are huge ideals that can spirit attention away from the lowly concerns of the body and the world of rocks and animals. Spiritual people usually don't like to be contaminated by the ordinary and the physical. Anorexia is not just a personal problem, it's a cultural way of life.

Spiritual communities often focus their ethical energy on a few select issues and ignore others. Growing up in the Catholic Church, I was led to feel that sex was the major area of sinfulness. Even today, people seem to think that if they have their sex lives in order, they're well on the way toward ethical responsibility, no matter that their company is polluting the local river. A narrow moral focus obscures other claims on conscience.

Spirit also tends to be severe. Religious people may be brought up to think of ethics as a matter of anxiety and guilt. I was never taught that my happiness might depend on living a moral life, or that a strong sense of meaning might emerge from intelligent moral decisions. I thought of ethics as a threatening demand. In that context nature might appear to be a moral wilderness, and association with it might be seen to have an impact on one's own ethics.

Nature is the revelation of the spirit

Spirituality tends to streamline everything it touches. People like an eight-fold path, ten commandments, twelve steps and five pillars. These poetic summations of complex truths are attractive and helpful, but the downside is that they oversimplify and fail to present an adequately complicated approach to morality. Theologians may know all the subtleties, but the average person lives by the shorthand.

Spirituality also tends to form itself in hierarchies, preferring dogmas and legalities over discussion and exploration. Some people today cynically ridicule moral subtlety by referring to the 'ten suggestions' rather than the ten commandments. But again, hierarchies may discourage individuals from making subtle moral judgements, and a plethora of rules and teachings may absorb so much attention that other important issues are ignored or underplayed.

One final reason for the neglect of nature is the tendency in the spiritual life to focus on the individual's progress and the particular community's welfare and membership. The twentieth-century emphasis on personalism hit the spiritual world hard. In many cases spirituality today looks like a bright version of self-improvement, and this absorption with the self works against concern for the world outside the self, even though the teachings generally say otherwise.

But all of this could be turned around, given a shift in the way we think of the spirit. As theologians and poets have said for centuries, nature is the revelation of the spirit. There we find a transcendence of self right before our eyes. There we see a degree of beauty and force that can shake us to the foundation. There we see mystery everywhere, in spite of our efforts to understand and control.

While living in Ireland, I could understand how the old Irish monks developed such a strong, earthy spirituality, living as they did on the rocky ground, beside the surging seas, and in the pressing weather. But we all live on this Earth somewhere, and every place has its local spirit that gives the region its character and indeed its spirituality. We only have to explore the small piece of land, sky or water in front of us to find the divinity written about in the great theological libraries of the world. ■

Thomas Moore was a Catholic monk. He is author of many books, including *Care of the Soul* and *Original Self*.

Resurgence

Your Kingdom Come –
the story of St Francis Farm, Hokianga

Joseph and Catherine Land farm organically in the far North. They follow a spirituality based on prayer, work and study. They belong to the Catholic Worker movement. This is their story.

A kingdom, like a body, has many parts. This is our part: a 'finger nail' perhaps, unmanicured. Dawn, light the fire, make a 'cuppa', kids stirring, feed the chooks, sweep the porch, prayers, breakfast, talk about the day ahead. That's the rhythm. We try to keep it – though sometimes we get left behind.

No machinery, no power, no phone, no 'off to school', voluntary poverty, wanting to be Third World subsistence farmers in a First World country. Easy to state – hard to explain. We have so far evaded definition, like, it would appear, most Catholic Worker houses and farms.

We live in Hokianga on a fairly rugged piece of land. We moved here in 1978 as a nuclear family, my parents, Peter and Judith, and seven of their nine children. We lived simply on a small income, and were mostly occupied in trying to establish basic amenities. There was an openness to anyone joining us as visitors or community. No one stayed longer than a year, until we, the children, started marrying.

All through the '80s there was much coming and going, building houses and a small purchase of next-door land. By the mid-90s we had become seven households of 25 – and increasing – people here, with three more families living half an hour up the road.

This all came about as a product of our unique upbringing, determined by my parents' deliberately thought-out choice how to live. We were taught to question and evaluate the practices and motives of the society around us. We were to hold fast to the values of the primacy of God, integrity of thoughts and actions, voluntary simplicity and Christian charity, among others.

This tended to hold us together as an extended family. Though we often discussed these things, the hurly-burly of bringing up young families somewhat obscured any original or future vision. Occasional family 'community meetings' emphasised the growing realisation that we didn't really have a common agenda that was strong enough to keep us living in community.

2001 saw a big shake-up. Our population halved, leaving us with three households, not committed to living in community but wanting to continue this lifestyle to some degree. This shake-up was well motivated in that each family was exploring what would be most life-giving for themselves – and acting accordingly.

On manual labour

It was, ***writes Catherine***, the handwashing that was the hardest thing for me. With a young family of seven, it was a big load at times, but I thought how our grandmothers did it when there was no other way, and that made me get staunch about it.

The grace and dignity of manual labour are stronger with the jobs that need doing every day. You can get into a routine of being with God. Or, if you have someone with you, there is something bonding and satisfying about doing the work together. Don't get me wrong – some days it is just a plain drag!

But I know for sure that if we installed a washing machine my life would not be better. I would lose much more than I would gain. I'm not advocating drudgery but I don't see that the extra leisure time gained since modern appliances have been used, has meant less stress, or more connection with God.

For Joseph, the recurring requirement is firewood. He chops it down – a 20-minute walk from the house, and brings it back by horse and sled. We stack it near the house, and the bigger children saw it up each day. They do it quite cheerfully They have discovered for themselves that work isn't something to be negative about, but is satisfying and enjoyable.

Some jobs are such that we often feel a reluctance to go and do them, but to do them with noisy machinery does not mean they need doing regularly – and the whole mentality about getting it over as quickly as possible can make us more negative about them. I am talking about the rhythm and routine – a flow of grace and peace, an attitude of being with God.

The vegetable garden is a good place to experience this. It is also the place to develop community – if community is desired. Here I speak mostly as an observer – unlike Joseph and our four eldest who have spent many hours with their uncles (and friends) hoeing, weeding, planting and harvesting.

Catherine's and my journey through this time went from 'roughing it' initially to a drifting into the normal rationale in New Zealand of work-for-money-for-things. About 1988 we realised what was happening and changed direction back to the land, with a much greater emphasis on viability ie. productivity, than we had previously. Since then we have pursued this course with an ever-deepening attraction to voluntary poverty and a searching for more ways to live the works of mercy.

Catherine and Joseph in their kitchen at St Francis farm

So – enter Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin and the Catholic Worker movement. Up till then (about four years ago) we had felt fairly isolated in our chosen life. We related, each separately, to our church, to social justice and peace groups, ecologists and alternative farmers; and as espousers of voluntary poverty, to no one! Now here were people who, at least on paper, professed all these values simultaneously. It was hard to resist. We decided to become a 'Catholic Worker' farm.

Hokianga called and holds us for several reasons. The land is poor, the climate wet. In New Zealand terms the word is 'marginal'. Our local economy is depressed. These aren't usually considered attractions, but for us they are. The spirit is so easily quenched by affluence but rejoices in simple sufficiency. That's not to say we aren't tarred with that human brush of always trying to 'improve our lot'. But we try to keep it in check.

More Maori than Pakeha live in Hokianga. So, a part of our life here is our connection with Te Hikutu – the local hapu, especially in our church. We share biculturally our Catholic spirituality and faith, and we share friendship.

A much repeated whakatauki here is: *He o ha te mea nui o tenei ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata* (*What is the greatest thing in the world? It is the people, the people, the people*) The ethos of this proverb is that people matter, each and every one matters: that the complete well-being of people is the number one consideration in any policy making – what C.W. calls 'personalism' This inherent quality of Maoritanga and their spirituality, uniting Te Atua, Te Tangata, Te Whenua, has helped form us.

We attempt to live what we call 'preventative social justice'. Our primary vocation lies in trying to build a spiritual, just and ecologically sound environment. We see this way of life as a credible model of farming which could provide a *good* living anywhere. 'Good' measured by global standards, not those of Western affluence. Peter Maurin insisted that a radical analysis of social problems would always lead back to the land. Are we getting there? By little and by little.

Fundamental to this lifestyle is Te

Many people comment we have chosen a hard way, but I really think that compared with the modern life of high pressure – always 'on the go' – this choice is easier. We would have more time with modern conveniences, but we will not have more love.

Writes Joseph: I sustain myself and my family through manual labour. Other avenues were, and still are, open to me but fail even to tempt. As a teenager seeking a well-balanced lifestyle, I considered how I knew some few labourers who philosophised, thought, read and talked; but no academics who worked – *really* worked – manually.I love working manually. It is very 'grounding' in the here and now. It is eminently satisfying. Contrary to popular opinion, it is *dignified*.

When Peruvian peasants grow potatoes, they use only simple handtools and their own muscles, with occasional donkey or ox power. They take the harvested potatoes to their homes and eat them. No machinery. These potatoes represent 20 times more energy than has been used to produce them.

And the other side? A hamburger from McDonald's has taken 20 times more energy to produce than it represents. The plethora of labour-saving machinery involved – tractors and trucks to slicers and warmers – are killing the earth.

We grow our potatoes like the Peruvians. The knowledge of the rightness of this, of the 'energy positive' equation, makes us stand tall, assured. It gives us dignity. All our manual labour is like this. Manual labour keeps us fit (while still being productive). Our bodies are not just houses for our minds. They are part of our very being, integrated with mind and spirit. Physical work is uplifting for the spirit.

A warning, however. Just as 'book' people have trouble finding space for that bit of manual labour, so too we labourers easily neglect the reading and writing (though not necessarily the thinking and discussing). Prolonged heavy labour can sap all one's energy and just leave a husk. To hold all these factors in a life-giving harmony is a skill we are still learning.

Whenua, the Earth: nurturer, source of life. We are developing with increasing success a way of farming that is both sustaining and sustainable, producing good quantities of food on previously unproductive land. The rewards are many:

- good organic food.
- a shift from being dependent on the multinational, capitalist economy that is swallowing this world.
- a security based on the ups and downs of nature.
- a knowledge that we are trying not to be on the side of the oppressors (well aware that to live in one of the richest 20 percent countries makes us *de facto* deprivers of the poor).
- a great sense of hope for the possibilities ahead.

From my earliest years I have lived in a home whose door has been open and hospitable. Catherine and I have tried to maintain this in our home, and being C.W. is providing more opportunities to share our life. The sense of support we get from other Catholic Workers both here and overseas is very uplifting. We are looking forward with some trepidation – but with much joy and hope.

Catherine writes:

I love this life that Joseph and I have chosen. When I first came to live here with the Land family 23 years ago I was a town girl, and although I was very impressed with the startlingly radical way of life, I also thought that if/when I had a family of my own I would find it too difficult in these conditions. Well – here I am all these years and seven children later, and I can truly say it is the best way of life I could wish for.

Things have changed from those first years of extreme simplicity whereby the family had virtually started from scratch. We have been able to purchase some adjacent land for the big gardens. The process of Joseph's and my journey into choosing voluntary poverty for ourselves has been a gradual one as we became more and more convinced and drawn into it.

Perhaps by New Zealand standards of living our life would be considered substandard, because we have no electricity, washing machine, phone or television in our home, and we don't use tractors and chainsaws or any other machinery. However, it is actually very enriching living without these things. We do our work by hand and cook on a fire. Sometimes it is hard, but always it is good.

By world standards we are still extremely wealthy. We have to acknowledge that we are part of the rich and powerful elite of the world. We have our own land,

Joseph Land preparing the land wioth horse and plough in the time-honoured way

we have self-motivation and learning and physical strength, and we are able and free to choose to be different. We have been taught that Jesus had a clear preference for uplifting and favouring the poor. We believe that it is important for us, the rich and powerful, to live simply – not acquiring more than we need, and seeking to be 'go-givers', not go-getters, as Peter Maurin put it.

Joseph goes out to work for money when we need some (usually for fencing or other farm work), which happens about four days out of a month. The gardens provide an abundance of organic food all year round. It is quite worrying to me that many young people out there are growing up without the delicious wholesomeness of vegetables. Processed food has ruined appetites and caused other disconnections with Mother Earth. We also have a good supply of milk, butter, yoghurt, fruit and eggs in season – and occasionally meat.

Food cooked on a fire has a really good taste, especially bread. I cook on an open fire. Hearth and home are cosy and warm. Except, I have to admit, there are some windy days when the smoke gets blown back into the room, and then it is not so pleasant! We bake our bread and other food in 'camp ovens', which go on the hot plate and have hot coals shovelled onto their flat lids. My hands are often black and sometimes my face gets streaked. It is one of the ways of praising God.

One of the most rewarding things of our life is seeing the young people having such a wholesome life. They play and work and learn and have a great time. They are often up in the bush, enjoying life together, with their many cousins who live nearby. In the evenings we sit together by the fireside with a book read by Joseph or myself. We love all the old classic stories the best. We teach the children at home, which gives an integrated education and is very rewarding for us all. Their play and work on the land or in the home is part of their education too.

We are not opposed to technology as such (indeed we have 12 volt lighting powered by solar panels), but we sometimes wonder if the industrial revolution has caused more greed and less love in the world. In our morning prayer time together our favourite and guiding prayer is that of St Francis: *Lord, make us an instrument of your peace. . .*■

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G.E. Report

Opposition to GM by the Green Party, says Green leader Jeanette Fitzsimons, does not mean total opposition to genetic research. Such research has already brought huge benefits, such as the genetically engineered micro-organisms to produce proteins, which can be extracted, purified and turned into pharmaceuticals. There is no problem with that as long as no living G.E organism goes from the lab into the environment. New drugs produced by these means have to go through 10 years thorough testing before being released for use.

The basic objection to G.E. is moving genes across species, thereby creating organisms which have never existed before and then releasing them into the environment and into the food chain, where they can multiply and where we cannot reverse the process if we find we don't like what happens. The real benefits of G.E. are in the laboratory.

Since the Labour-led coalition came to power in 1998 there has been a moratorium on the release of G.E. organisms in New Zealand. A petition was signed by over 90,000 people seeking a Royal Commission and moratorium. This produced, in effect, a four year 'stay of execution'.

However, during this time overseas evidence by no means favours lifting the ban. For instance:

• weeds have become increasingly resistant to G.E. herbicides, making the weeds increasingly difficult to eradicate.

• spread of seed and pollen is found to be wider than first thought. It seems unlikely that IRMA could ever sanction the release in New Zealand of brassicas such as canola, which are prolific pollen spreaders.

What the Royal Commission said:

1. *Proceed with caution.* The Greens agree with this.

2. *No bio-reactors.* Food animals or plants should not be 'engineered' to produce a chemical which is not food, to be then extracted for another purpose. Currently, an overseas company is breeding some 10,000 sheep in the Waikato, engineered with a human gene in them to produce AAT, a protein which might be used to treat cystic fibrosis. There have been no clinical trials completed to see if AAT works; nor any research to see if there is another way to produce it.

The sheep have already been engineered to produce AAT before we even know if it's going to work. This research is driven by the possible profits to be made by engineering such products via sheep or cow's milk. Yet the Royal Commission insisted that food animals should not be used this way because of the risk of the materials getting into the food chain.

What will our European customers think when they learn that we are genetically engineering dairy cows using human genes? The government has rejected this recommendation by the Commission and pinned its faith on putting up a fence around the cows! And it has just put up another $26 million to further this kind of ag-research.

3. *We should do a proper economic study of the effects on NZ economy of introducing G.E.* The government set up a group to do this. Some assumptions were negative: eg. that markets might reject G.E. food. Some were positive: eg. a predicted productivity increase greater than our competitors. When Treasury summarised the report for Cabinet, it predicted an increase in economic growth from G.E. But Treasury deceived the Cabinet by filtering out those scenarios which might jeopardise the acceptance of G.E.

4. *If GE is introduced it must not take away people's freedom to buy organic food.* The government wants the best of both worlds. MAF has responded that this aim is achievable as long as there is a one percent tolerance in organic food. This is the American threshold. Growers and consumers will have to accept a one percent contamination of what is eaten! But how can this margin be preserved while G.E. organisms spontaneously spread?

The fact is neither growers nor consumers want G.E. For the beekeeping industry, releasing G.E. organisms will be disastrous because the honey export market depends totally on New Zealand's 'clean green' image.

5. *Horizontal gene transfer.* There are strong barriers in nature to reduce this so that each species remains distinct. But it seems that some transfer does happen. We do not know if manipulation of nature to artificially transfer genes horizontally will trigger a greater spread or not. The Royal Commission recommended that horizontal transfer in nature be carefully studied before any release. Such research will take several years to get results, by which time the horse will have well and truly bolted.

Advocates of Genetic Engineering claim that G.E. crops resisting insect pests will benefit everyone because it does away with the need for toxic sprays. But what happens is that the chemical which poisons the insect becomes present in every cell of the plant, not just in the external spray. And what happens when the insect evolves a tolerance, as it surely

Gary Goldberg, former CEO of the American corn-growers association, said: "..if we knew than what we know now, American farmers would not have been so easily convinced that G.E crops were the way to go. Our land has been contaminated with G.E. pollution that we cannot control or remove from our environment. Conventional farms are being contaminated, and we have no choice of G.E. or non-G.E. crops...

"None of the promises have come true... We are losing export markets." Since 1995, corn exports from the US to Europe have declined sharply.

Through the Whirlwind

Christopher Newell

The first ever New Zealand Conference on Disability and Spirituality *was held in Wellington in May. Dot Wilson (below right) has sent* Tui Motu *a general report. Edited versions of two keynote addresses appear below*

It was as if I had been hit in the stomach. I furtively looked around the room and realised that no-one else seemed to be aware of the damage. I had been hit, pulverised, decimated in the name of encountering the sacred, in the midst of prayer.

The study day had dealt with the social issues confronting the world. In my paper I had asked people to identify the variety of issues. Poverty, unemployment, war – they all spilt out. I then went on to suggest that these were all symptoms of a continuing social problem – the creation of *otherness*.

At day's end a very senior churchman offered some concluding thoughts, thanked the speakers and prayed with us. In praying he mentioned each of the speakers and gave thanks for each of their gifts and contributions. Yet, when he came to name me, there was to be no expression of gratitude for my gifts. Rather, he prayed for my healing, praying in such a way that I wished to vanish through the seat of my chair. It was as if he had heard nothing in my paper.

I had not sought prayer about healing. I was having a tough week, but I was feeling okay with myself. Yet, in that moment of prayer – in invoking the sacred – all of the dominant notions of *otherness* that I had been speaking about were perpetuated, slammed back in my face, reinforced by a senior cleric in the name of God. For many of us with disabilities, such violence is perpetuated in everyday accounts of theology and in dominant approaches to theology which mirror the secular: accounts which render those of us with disabilities as *the other*.

If that senior cleric had cursed God for my racial background and prayed that I be delivered from this state to another racial background, I would like to think that there would have been some murmurs of dissent. If he'd said how sorry he was to God that I was born an Australian and prayed that I might be turned into a Kiwi – well perhaps that might have been an understandable prayer!

This is yet another case of no-one bothering to talk to us about *our* conception of self. In my case this fits in with my vocation – how my experience of the darkness of encounter-ing my own disability, my mortality, fits as an integral part of my faith journey. The searing experience of pain, of taking just one more breath and then stealing myself to take another – just like Jesus on the cross; of crying out at times: "My God, My God why have you forsaken me". It is part of who I am. At times I curse and swear, but I also see my experience as an integral part of my journey, my make-up as a human being. Indeed some of the best skills and life experiences come from my experience of disability and brokenness.

This cleric was re-asserting in a powerful way his understanding of the world. I see it as another way in which medical discourse and the medical model, with its accounts of us as being deficient, have actually been taken up in uncritical ways by the church. Yet all the major religious traditions can actually help us encounter ourselves as part of the dignity – the inherent worth – of the human person. What I was encountering needs to be named as *disablism*.

Riding the whirlwind

Are the whirlwinds that seem to accost us inherently negative? Within my own Christian tradition I can't help reflecting on Job (*Job 38:1*): "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind." For all the problems of illness and impairment and lack of understanding,

such appalling whirlwinds can create pathways, opportunities and perhaps even foster new growth and understanding of ourselves.

It may take time. It may take structures. In my case it could be the space provided by this conference which provides me with the opportunity to work through an incident which had been of great pain to me. The trick is not only to tell our stories but also to find ways of having these believed and incorporated into the stories of our faith traditions.

The irony of course is many of us here are actually regarded as those natural disasters. We think we're experiencing the winds of adversity through alienation and illness and disability. Yet others view our very lives as inherently tragic whirlwinds, wreaking destruction upon all who may be potentially touched by us.

Surely our lives are authentic, sacred, important. Much natural disaster associated with our lives is actually made by society. The experience I had at the hands of a spirit-ual leader was all about

the creat-ion and perpet-uation of *otherness*. The media carries headlines every day which point to our lives as whirlwinds and catastrophes, rather than gentle breezes, opportunities for birds to be lifted in flight, and seeds scattered.

Stem cells and wheel chairs

Let's have a look at the recent Australian stem cell debate, represented as the clash between the two Christophers: Christopher Reeve and Christopher Newell. We were treated to an extremely superficial debate to do with cloning and the use of embryonic stem cells, where the catastrophe, the tornado, the cataclysm of disability had a starring role. Parliamentarians burst into tears as they spoke for the first time about their constituents with disability and earnestly informed us that embryonic stem cell research would deliver us from disability. Strangely, those of us with disability were not invited to talk.

Finally, we were treated to an almost messianic visit by the broken Superman. Christopher Reeve, whose narrative of tragedy had played such a central role, was invited, at an astronomic fee I might add, to speak in Australia. The same week that megastar Reeve arrived courtesy of Qantas in a specially modified first class cabin of a 747, Qantas managed to inflict yet more significant disabilities upon my already long-suffering wheelchair.

Well, my chair has been patched up, Mr Reeve has departed, and the discourse of welfare reform blaming people with disabilities for their situation continues. Australia like many other countries has successfully avoided any form of critical examination of the way in which the whirlwind of disability is created by society itself in a variety of ways, in *disablism*. There is no acknowledgment of the sacred, the spiritual, to be found in disability.

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Nothing about us without us

Perhaps the most profoundly important thing about *Through the Whirlwind*, the recent Wellington Disability Conference, is that many people with disabilities participated in the planning. In this way it lived out the motto of the international disability rights movement: "nothing about us without us". The twin aims were to explore the connection between disability, spirituality and faith and to enhance the relationship and understanding within and between disability and faith communities.

The biggest barrier to participation for disabled people within our communities is people's attitudes – of ignorance and fear. The New Zealand Disability Strategy has as its slogan: *disability is in society, not in me*. Disability is a process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only by their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have. Contemporary society is built in a way that assumes that we can *all* move quickly from one side of the road to the other; we can *all* see signs, read directions, hear announcements, reach buttons; we can *all* have strength to open heavy doors; and *all* have stable moods and perceptions.

The Conference abounded with stories told and shared over wine and laughter and tears. Stories of people who had discovered an incredible resilience in the face of ignorance, oppression, misunderstandings and other people's fears. The experience of disability, of being labelled as 'other' or different, was arguably what brought us together. But that was not so apparent as we shared our common understandings and different viewpoints of what it is like to be a person on this earth, and how we name and grapple with questions of faith and meaning.

I don't think that there would have been a person present who was not moved in some way by the personal honesty as the stories unfolded. I believe that seeds were planted so that people could take back a new-found awareness to their communities – whether they be church, work, accommodation providers, schools or the venue staff who took care of our physical needs throughout the Conference. The whole environment was warm and supportive, allowing people to feel safe in sharing their personal stories that helped to identify systemic issues.

At the previous Conference in Melbourne in 2001, its convenor, Rev Andy Calder, said: "it was my pleasure to hand on a baton during the Opening Ceremony, which had been carved from an old stump. The symbol of the baton speaks of a shared journey, and the piece of wood which was once a cast off, had been transformed into a piece of work and art that others never thought it could possibly become".

In Wellington, too, we were receiving and handing on such a baton. Indeed this was a most powerful conference and I felt privileged to be a part of it.

Dot Wilson

Finding the sacred in the everyday

Yet many faith traditions really do stress the spiritual to be found in the everyday. "Life is a sacred adventure", say Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat. "Every day we encounter signs that point to the active presence of Spirit in the world around us. *Spiritual literacy* is the ability to read the signs written in the texts of our own experiences. Whether viewed as a gift from God or a skill to be cultivated, this facility enables us to discern and decipher a world full of meaning."

Spiritual literacy is practiced in all the world's wisdom traditions. Mediaeval Catholic monks called it "reading the book of the world." Muslims suggest that everything that happens outside and inside us is a letter to be read. Native Americans find their way through the wilderness by "reading signs."

The profoundly important thing about conceptualising our lives as a sacred adventure is that we then recognise disability as part of that. All of us, with and without disability, experience whirlwinds. Despite the forces of economic and technological determin-ism, disability will always be with us. What I need to do is help my senior clerical colleague and many others to grow, to recognise that disability is also part of the sacredness that we experience in life.

The myth of independence

My clerical colleague longs for my healing, although I wonder who really needs healing. We have something profound to teach the rest of the world: that life is about *inter*-dependence and the myth of independence is one of the most destructive ideologies around. Many of us who have lived with disability have striven for independence. What we were really doing was seeking a proper respect for our autonomy, for our dignity, for opportunities to become as fully human as possible.

What do we come to this conference for? To be warring voices in competition with each other; or to create a temporary community, to recognise all that binds us together, to recognise the common spiritual dimension to our lives that transcends any faith differences, to learn and to be nourished by each other?

A desire for independence and control over our lives is central to claims for euthanasia, by which is often meant legalised medical killing. This is a crucial issue for the disability community, as many people with disabilities will inevitably be part of the categories created in legalising such a practice. I have been through the darkness of desperately desiring euthanasia and requesting it. I will always be grateful to the health professionals who supported me through this period rather than informing me that this was an understandable request and that in my circumstances I merited it.

I look forward to your stories of whirlwinds and gentle breezes, but most importantly I look forward to sharing

Some questions for the conference:

⁂ Will we recognise the importance of whirlwinds in creating pathways, opportunities and even new growth?

⁂ Will we, people with and without disabilities, be prepared to claim our lives as sacred adventures, worthy of thriving: worthy of not just being narrated by others but told by ourselves in our own terms?

⁂ Will we reclaim story-telling as a fundamental way to make connections with the spiritual and the faith traditions from which we come?

⁂ Will we recognise story-telling as an important way of repairing the damaged lives of those harmed through spiritual communities?

⁂ Will we recognise that 'otherness' is practised by both spiritual and secular communities: that this is fundamentally a spiritual and ethical problem. We ask the tacit question: "who belongs to my moral community and whom will I exclude?"

⁂ Will we be prepared to learn from the important example of the bi-cultural way adopted by this country? A way which learns from the wisdom of indigenous people, towards the creation of respectful structures? In so doing, will we recognise the power dynamics of what we are doing as we reclaim disability as part of the sacred?

Rev Christopher Newell, AM is Senior Lecturer at the School of Medicine, University of Tasmania. He is an Ethicist, Anglican priest and Australian disability activist.

Hymn of the Month

Stranger, standing at my door,
you disturb me in the night:
you have needs I can't ignore,
you have eyes that speak your plight.
Do I know you, nameless face,
battered woman, detainee,
hungry youth or welfare case,
jobless parent, refugee?
Do I know you, nameless face?

You are strange in speech and dress,
you have children at your side,
you are not like one of us,
you have begged away your pride.
If you passed across my screen
I might switch you out of sight,
worlds away you might have been,
yet you stand here in the night.
Do I know you, nameless face?
I am fearful of your claim,
yet I cannot turn away.
Stranger with a foreign name,
are you angel come to stay?
You are messenger and guest,
you the Christ I can't ignore,
you my own compassion's test,
stranger, standing at my door:
you, the Christ I can't ignore.

In some Churches, the first Sunday in July is kept as Refugee Sunday but "the stranger among us" is a constant theme, especially in this world of refugees. Here is a hymn written for our times.
The words are by Shirley Murray and it is found in FAITH FOREVER SINGING #60 (*The New Zealand Hymnbook Trust*)

Health and Theology . . .are they related?

Indeed they are, says Mary Caygill, *Methodist Minister and Lecturer in Pastoral Theology at St Johns/Trinity Theological College in Auckland – but not always happily.* Mary *speaks 'from the inside' as one who has suffered depressive illness*

At a recent church service I was invited, along with others, to join in the prayers of intercession. The theme of the sermon had been those estranged from society, treated like modern day 'lepers'. The Gospel reading had been of the account of Jesus reaching out to touch and heal a leper.

In the prayers we prayed for a number of groups identified as being estranged and like lepers of today. We went through a range of groups and then suddenly I heard the phrase: "We pray for those with mental illness who have lost their minds." I wonder what my reaction would have been if the person had said, "We pray for those with physical illness who have lost their bodies".

Health and Theology. Are they related? Unequivocally ***yes***. The question reflects a strange conflict. For is not the faith tradition – and here I speak of the Christian faith tradition – at heart about the unconditional value of each human being and the gift of life itself? Christianity is for 'health': the tradition has always believed in health and human well-being. But unfortunately that's by no means the whole story.

For, since the beginnings of the early Christian movement particularly as it moved away from its early Hebraic roots, we see a different story emerging. A systematic story of the body – and thus health – became a problem; no more so demonstrated than in talk of 'mortification of the flesh', sin as an essential flaw of the human person, and ultimately the classic dualistic thinking which has succeeded in undermining the material body as being of less importance than the purity of the disembodied soul.

What I heard in that prayer of intercession was a statement which epitomises the worst of classic Western dualism many of us operate out of almost automatically. Dualism manifests itself in the form of *opposition*, affirming the negativity or the lesser values of one pole relative to the other. One pole is favoured over the other.

The history of disability studies speaks of those considered able-bodied being favoured and thought of as being of higher value than those named as dis-abled. And those dualisms are deeply embodied. Those dualisms have facilitated and justified the domination of the lower order: people of colour, women, disabled, varying sexualities etc. – anyone or any thing opposed to what at any time would be defined as the norm. This is classic dualistic thinking, and with such thinking comes varying degrees of alienation and disconnectedness only resulting in a diminishment of humanity. Such a consequence is by no means healthy or emanating from the core belief about the unconditional value of each human being.

The social history of persons with mental illness, especially long term, is marked by poverty, exclusion, oppression and lack of opportunity, that bestows upon them the status of non-persons within society. It is through a myriad of unnoticed social gestures and negative assumptions that persons living with mental illness find their sense of personhood and self-worth being constantly eroded.

The incomprehensibility of mental health problems makes it difficult for 'normal' persons to relate with the 'other'. The tendency, then, is to engage in an 'I – It' relationship toward the incomprehensible individual and assume him/her to be incapable of entering into authentic relationship, to withdraw one's relationship, and to pass responsibility for the individual on to the so-called professional.

The person, endowed with the same gift of life as all others, is responded to as an illness. This becomes the ultimate point ▷▷

of stigmatisation – of objectification. Thus people who suffer from depression become 'depressives', those living with the illness of schizophrenia become 'schizophrenics' and so on.

The other day a colleague shared with me the following story. She was in chapel, seated next to someone for whom English was about the seventh language. It again came to the prayers of intercession: "We pray for those who are invalids". Not being used to that particular word she read it as it looked: in-válid. Not valid! My colleague pondered this startling revelation and the classic dualistic thinking which lies behind that word.

Michael Wilson, an English theologian writing in the '70s wrote:
"Inclusion is a pattern of health, exclusion a pattern of death. In social terms a society may 'kill' (may treat in a way which spells death for) those of whom it disapproves, those whom it fears, those by whom it feels itself threatened. So society excludes (kills, sometimes literally) either by its attitudes, by segregation, institution-alisation or execution, the bad, the mad, the black, the widow, the leper, the aged, the underprivileged, the mentally subnormal, the rebel and the dying.

"This exclusive pattern of dealing with 'pollution' results in a safe and 'sanitated' society, but not a healthy society ...A sanitized society is produced by constant purging and cleansing – by pushing undesirable elements beyond the bound-aries, and policing those boundaries to prevent them from re-entering."

Christianity needs to return to its earliest roots in Hebraic thinking, which today is paralleled by many indigenous world views. Ivone Gebara, a Brazilian woman theologian, speaks in terms of the need for circular concepts, not hierarchical, dualistic concepts, which will always consider the other to be either inferior or superior and therefore inevitably exclude others at every level of human relationship. "In a circular concept, everything depends on everything else, and if one element is affected the whole is affected."

In this world view a human being is first of all a being-in-relationship, then consciousness, then personal creativity. We are born as human beings into an interrelated context, and it is from that context that life flows. We are not born into a broken relationship as flawed beings that need the ultimate connection of relatedness to be redeemed or saved. I'm not saying in this that sin is not a reality for I believe it very much is, but rather I see sin in terms of the conscious or unconscious breaching or shattering of connection which can take place at multiple levels.

Alison Webster, English Anglican, suggests that the opposite of well-being is not illness but rather dis-ease, in the sense of *un*ease – being ill-at-ease with ourselves. Well-being is to do with the interweaving of the psychological, the physical, and the spiritual.

Well-being is dependent on our interrelationships with one another, offering the possibility of either harm or flourishing. Relationships based on perceptions where people with disabilities continue to be perceived as something other than entirely human, can only continue to harm and prevent the kind of flourishing and ultimate connected-ness which well-being is pointing towards. Relationships which are abusive where the person is robbed of their subjectivity and treated as object to be used and abused, can never create the conditions for well-being. Well-being must be about naming oneself, not being named by others; naming our limitations as we understand them, not as others do. This dimension relates to the very nature of doing theology in ways that are healthful and create well-being.

As I understand it, personhood is bestowed by God in and through relationship. The dimensions of that personhood are discovered through community by its members. This gift of personhood includes the right to be named and to be included in the memories and hopes of the community.

What does it mean to bear a name and be remembered? In remembering someone, we acknowledge the person as worthy of memory and acceptable as a full person. Christian theology over many centuries has been preoccupied with the task of naming: the names of God, or *how* one might access God, and *who* might access God. As a consequence a great deal of negative control has been exercised particularly over the lives of women and those considered to be as 'other'.

Many modern movements take lived experience as the starting point of theological reflection. That action in itself lays claim to the possibility of naming oneself and one's lived experience in relation to the divine. Actually placing what we feel and experience in our everyday lives at the heart of how we begin to understand God, faith, and spirituality, is a reversal of traditional theological method which has been nothing less than disadvantageous to a relationship of health and theology.

To return to the question: *are Theology and Health related?* Intimately so, in that there is the potential for theology to undermine by its thinking and practice the possibilities of well-being, or enrich and prophetically challenge by engaging in countercultural thinking and in so doing dismantle current world views and ensuing modes of living.

I began this presentation with a story about a prayer of intercession. Let me finish with another prayer of intercession:

We pray for the fragile ecology of the heart and mind. The sense of meaning. So finely assembled and balanced and so easily overturned. The careful, ongoing construction of love. As painful and exhausting as the struggle for truth and as easily abandoned.

Hard fought and won are the shifting sands of this sacred ground, this ecology. Easy to desecrate and difficult to defend, this vulnerable joy, this exposed faith, this precious order. This sanity. We shall be careful. With others, and with ourselves. Amen

(Michael Leunig)

St Peter Chanel (1803-1841)

the blood of martyrs is the seed of faith

Michael O'Meeghan SM

This year marks the bi-centenary of the birth of St Peter Chanel; he was born on 12 July 1803, the fifth of eight children in a farming family with a small holding in south-western France. The area was still troubled with the political instability that followed the French Revolution. That, plus the need to help on the farm, meant that his primary schooling was rather fragmented.

In his early teens the parish priest helped him with special lessons, so that at 16 he was ready to begin his four years of secondary education at the minor seminary. He progressed to the major seminary to be ordained at 24 as a priest for the Belley diocese. For his first year of priesthood he was assistant in a medium sized town, already thinking seriously about applying for an apostolate in the foreign missions. Then followed three years as a parish priest in a small country town where the church was still in disarray, a generation after the revolution. With quiet zeal, tact and compassion he transformed it. Underlying his approach was his personal motto "Aimer Marie et faire l'aimer" – 'to love Mary and bring others to love her'.

In 1831, aged 28, with his bishop's permission he joined the small group of priests who had hopes of starting a Society of Mary. He was one of the three representatives who went to Rome to ask the Pope's approval for their planned Society of Mary. This approval was given in April 1836 when the Marists accepted responsibility for new missions in the little-known south-west Pacific. By the end of that year Peter was one of the first band of missionaries, four priests and three catechist brothers, attached to Bishop Pompallier, who sailed from Le Havre on Christmas Eve for this pioneering mission.

After a prolonged journey out to the Pacific, fact-finding and considering possibilities, on All Saints Day 1837 Pompallier placed Fr Peter Bataillon and Br Joseph Luzy on Wallis Island, in an island group north of Fiji. A week later he founded a second mission, leaving Fr Peter Chanel and Br Marie-Nizier Selorme 170 km away on Futuna, the smaller island of the two. By then the Bishop had decided to make his base in New Zealand and, via Sydney, landed in Hokianga on 10 January 1838.

For three and a half years on Futuna, Chanel and Marie-Nizier battled with language difficulties, strange customs and food, sickness, malnutrition, loneliness. Hardest to bear was the seeming lack of success in adult conversions. But they persevered, living and preaching the Gospel, in spite of the king's tolerance wearing thin.

The eventual conversion of the king's son proved to be Peter's death warrant. The king kept control of his people largely through the worship of evil spirits. His son's becoming a Christian undermined this power, so Peter had to be stopped. With the king's approval a small group of his tribal leaders clubbed Peter to death while Marie-Nizier was absent visiting elsewhere. It was 28 April 1841.

When he heard the news of Peter's brutal death, Pompallier sailed to Wallis, accompanied by Fr Philippe Viard, later to be the first bishop of Wellington. Viard went ashore on Futuna, refusing any armed escort, and gathered Peter's remains which were then brought to New Zealand. These were kept reverently at Kororareka (Russell) until 1849 when they were returned to France.

Because of the difficulty of getting reliable eye-witness evidence, it took the church a long time to be satisfied that Peter died because of hatred of the Catholic faith, and not merely through greed of his few possessions, or resentment at Peter's efforts to act as peacemaker between the warring tribes. He was officially declared a martyr and beatified in 1889. He was declared a saint by Pope Pius XII in 1954, and because of his connection with New Zealand St Peter Chanel is honoured here with a feast day. ■

The bi-centenary is due to be celebrated in New Zealand, in France and in the South Pacific on 12 July. Shortly after St Peter's martyrdom the entire population of Futuna embraced the Catholic

Carthusian monks in choir at La Grande Chartreuse, in France

La Grande

When Tui Motu *readers Brian an*
to a Kiwi wedding in the south of France,
get inside one of the world

Early last July we had the pleasure of spending time in France's Massif Chartreuse – situated between the cities of Chambéry and Grenoble. We drove from Chambéry over the Col du Granier (1134 m) and found ourselves in an area of green valleys and limestone mountains. Our destination was the picturesque village of St. Pierre d'Entremont where we had rented a "gite" – or crib – for a week along with a group of family friends all hailing from Southland. Between the 14 of us, we had three houses in and around the village. Our little house was surrounded by farm buildings and had once, we suspected, been a barn.

The village itself boasted two Catholic churches and two town halls. This puzzled us until we learnt that the river flowing through the middle of the village was once the border between Italy and France. It is now just a provincial border between Isère and Savoie. Having found the bakery in Savoie, the grocers shop in Isère and a marvellous cheese shop back in Savoie, the fridge was stocked up and we were ready to explore this beautiful area of France.

Top of our list was a visit to the Grande Chartreuse Monastery, the motherhouse of the contemplative Carthusian Order. St Bruno established the first hermitage here in 1084. It is thought that he was born in about 1030 in Cologne. Early in his life he went to Rheims where he was to remain for 30 years acquiring a reputation throughout France for his teaching, his integrity and his love of God.

Having opposed the lifestyle of his worldly bishop, Bruno was forced to flee Rheims in 1076. The Pope gave orders for the bishop to be deposed and the clergy looked to Bruno to be the new bishop, but he had received a call to a more solitary life. He was guided by Bishop Hugh of Grenoble to a place of solitude in a deserted area of the Chartreuse where the monastery is still to be found today. The surrounding mountains made access extremely difficult thus preserving the monks' solitude. Modern roads and bridges have made access much easier and a visit to the "correrie", a building which once housed sick monks but is now the museum, is simple.

The museum itself is modern and hight tech. Hand-held audio sets are provided. These are simple to use and tell the story of life at the monastery as you move from room to room. Every aspect of the history of the monastery is covered, concluding with a display of all the other Charterhouses in France and overseas. We were able to wander through an original 'cell' identical to the ones where monks live solitary lives of prayer and work.

Chartreuse

nd Margaret McCloy, were invited
they little thought they would actually
's most famous monasteries

While the word 'cell' may conjure up a picture of a narrow room and little space these rooms are larger than expected. Each cell consists of a small entrance room, a main room which is used for prayer, study, sleeping and eating, and a downstairs workroom which opens on to a small garden. Each monk cultivates his own garden. Meals, delivered to the cells through a hatch in the door, are taken twice a day but only once a day during Lent.

The museum also boasts a magnificent full-scale model of the monastery made by one of the monks. The model provides a good opportunity to piece everything together.

The monastery's rule includes walks, in groups, in the surrounding countryside one afternoon a week and a full hike in the hills once a month, weather permitting. Exercise can be taken in the cloisters at other times. The only time the monks get the chance to come together and talk is during recreation on Sundays. The rest of the week they maintain a vow of silence.

The rule has not changed for 900 years and during Vatican II it came under scrutiny in Rome. Two members of the Order were duly despatched to state their case and prove that it was a healthy way of life. One was well over 80 years of age! When a monk dies he is buried in an unmarked grave within the monastery walls.

The famous 'Chartreuse' liqueur is produced not far away in Voiron and only three monks know the secret recipe. Making and selling the liqueur has provided the monks with the basics of life and thereby enabled them to live their life of solitude and silence. The green Chartreuse was first produced in 1764, and in 1838 the yellow Chartreuse was discovered. Small bottles were for sale in the museum shop, but as it was a little too medicinal for our taste we did not buy any!

From the museum it is a two kilometre walk up through the trees to the Monastery itself. It was drizzling with rain, but we decided we would make the most of our visit by seeing as much as possible. An 11 kilometre wall encloses the house, but a viewing area overlooks the site. Having come past the monastery we were unsure how far away the viewing area was.

The rain was becoming a little heavier, and we asked one of the ladies we met if she knew how far we had to go. She said that we would get soaked so we started back the way we had come and chatted to her as we went. I asked her if she had been to the Chartreuse before, and she smiled and said: "My son is the Novice Master. We come every year and stay for two or three days in the guest house just outside the monastery".

She told us that one year, she and her husband had come with their five married children, sons- and daughters-in-law and grandchildren - 30 in all - and had taken over the whole of the guest house. One other daughter was unable to be there as she is a Carmelite nun!

We were introduced to her daughter who spoke English and had a particular interest in the history of the Grande Chartreuse. She showed us a little chapel inside the gatehouse where we would never have thought of going. Small and dark, it contained a jewel of a stained glass window, brightly coloured and modern in design. She spoke of the monks often being a bit hungry and said that her brother found being Novice Master cut down on his time for solitary prayer.

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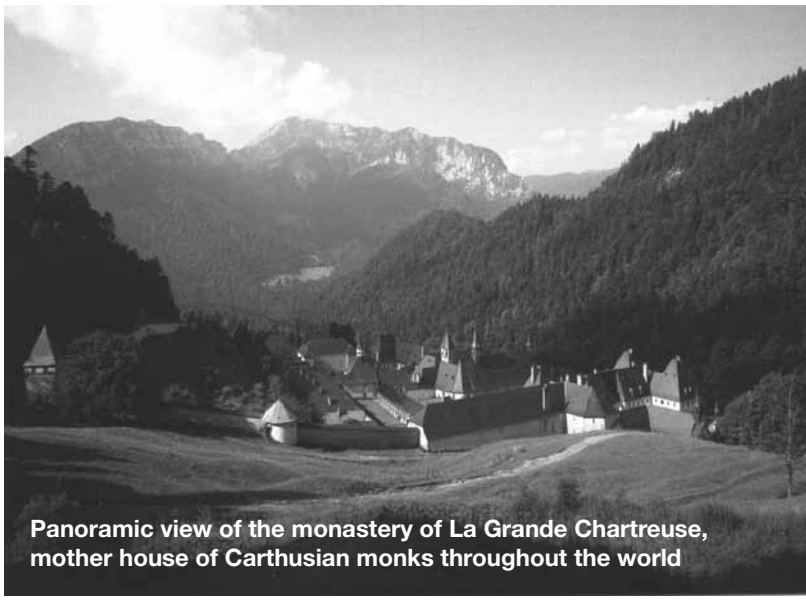


Panoramic view of the monastery of La Grande Chartreuse, mother house of Carthusian monks throughout the world

The monastic buildings of La Grande Chartreuse, close up

Asked if we had 20 minutes to spare, we were then invited into the guest house to wait for the end of Vespers when we would meet her father, her husband and her brother, the Novice Master. The men in the family took part in the prayers in the monastery church but the ladies were not allowed to join them!

The Novice Master was a tall ascetic looking man who talked to us about the time in the 1900s when the monks were forced to leave the Grande Chartreuse and go to another house in Italy. Government troops arrived at the gate and, thinking that they were freeing the inhabitants, told the monks that they were all free to do as they wished whereupon they all walked back inside. Not quite what the soldiers had in mind!

Local people hid the library books and some items of furniture until the monks returned in 1940. During the monks' absence the government tried turning the house into a 'retreat for tired intellectuals'. However, the tired intellectuals did not find the accommodation to their liking and the scheme failed! We were shown some semi-obliterated lettering above the gateway that dated from this period which the Father General had removed when the monks returned.

Among the strong traditions of the Chartreuse there is room for some modern developments; among these is the establishment of their own web site – set up by the Novice Master. The website, in French, English, Spanish, Italian and German can be found at www.chartreux.org. It provides an in-depth insight into the history and life of the Carthusian monks and nuns.

In the course of our conversation we told the Novice Master that we would think of them praying at night whilst we busy during our day here in New Zealand. We left these charming people to enjoy their time together hardly able to believe our good fortune. We had certainly picked the right person to ask the way and maybe coming from New Zealand had given us a bit of a novelty value! We certainly had a story to tell the rest of our friends that night over dinner.

In complete contrast we visited the village of St Hugues which was named for the Bishop of Grenoble who was, for half a century, a good friend of the first Carthusians. The church of the same name is described as a Museum of Contemporary Sacred Art. We didn't really expect to see anything that would make the detour worthwhile - how wrong we were!

The church is the work of an artist known as Arcabas. In 1952, at the age of 25, Arcabas started what was to become 33 years of work, covering the walls on all sides and on three levels with the most beautiful, predominantly red and gold paintings depicting Biblical and Gospel themes.

A plain sculpted altar and tabernacle and magnificent stained glass windows in vibrant blues and greens contrasted with the colours on the walls. Completing the picture are striking studded doors. Photographs of the church prior to 1952 show a dull grey stone interior which only serves to highlight the stunning transformation that has taken place.

We completed our week, learning by chance that our landlord had crafted all the wood for the interior of our little house in the workshop at the Grande Chartreuse where he had been employed for many years.

This wonderful part of France is well worth a visit. The Massif Chartreuse is a National Park and caters especially for trampers. A real bonus of being a little off the beaten track (and not featured in the Lonely Planet guide book!) was that we were the only foreigners in the village: an experience which is becoming rarer in France.

The combination of friendly locals, wonderful food, the company of good friends and places as fascinating as the Grande Chartreuse, combined to create a week that was good for body and soul! ■

Southlander Michael Wilson describes his six years as a Carthusian monk

Singing with your heart in tune

In 1996 I was working in Cairo operating a tunnel-boring machine on a year's contract. Cairo is a big city of 18 million people, so any time off I had I used to get out and I sometimes explored the desert outside the city in a Jeep Cherokee. At night I would stay at old Coptic monasteries. The principal one I visited was St Anthony's near the Red Sea about three hours drive out of Cairo. It was founded in 300 AD and many of the buildings date back a long time. The monks made me very welcome giving me food and a bed for the night.

While there, I got friendly with one of the monks, Fr Discouris, who had been in the monastery for 20 years and was Prior. Since I liked the life there, I asked him about joining. He suggested I should try a Catholic monastery first. The Copts are Orthodox. "Your grandmother will turn in her grave," he said, " if you leave the Catholic church and become Orthodox!" In fact the Copts are very close to us.

I got to know an old hermit, who had lived apart in a cave for 50 years but had just come back into the monastery. I used to speak to him, and found a deep peace and holiness about him which attracted me. He would glow in the dark! He asked me why I had come there. I said I liked the silence and solitude. He persuaded me that I had a lot of questions within myself, and that was why I was seeking solitude.

I said, wouldn't I find the answers in books? He'd spent 50 years in a cave with no books! He asked me where the questions were coming from. I said: "from inside me." So he said that that was where I'd find the answers. Not in books. "Ask yourself the questions", he said. "By looking for the answers in books, you are trying to short-circuit the process." The unconscious doesn't like unanswered questions.

I went back to Cairo and thought about trying a Catholic monastery. I happened to see a picture of St Hugh's Charterhouse in an English newspaper. The reporter had been allowed to stay the night there.

Taking the plunge

I wrote to a Fr Cyril at St Hugh's. He was to be my novice master. His reply was very succinct. "Come and try."

First, I made a retreat. Fr.Cyril said to me that if I was drawn to the silence and solitude, then I would be a 'Father'. Some who come wanting to be a Father, find they cannot stand the silence and solitude. So they leave.

I knew nothing about the structures of the Carthusians. In Egypt they were all monks, and they just ordain enough priests to have the Mass. In the Carthusians only those who are devoted to silence and solitude are ordained. The Brothers have an equally important role. They maintain the monastery, and there is sufficient prayer to satisfy their vocation. St Hugh's is a huge building in West Sussex. They have spent the last ten years rebuilding. So I went there: I loved it right from day one.

I flew home to New Zealand first and said goodbye to my family. I got rid of all my belongings and returned to the monastery with just two bags. I had been earning a lot of money, so that was quite a difficult thing for me.

Another hard thing was my girl friend. We had been close for ten years, and we were actually engaged. But she received the grace to understand and let me go, and I got the grace to leave. We both recognised it was a call from God. So she said: "You've just got to go and do this." I didn't break the engagement straight away. What if I only lasted a month? During my second year she visited me, and we decided to break it off. But we are still good friends. It was very hard. Those first two years were 'hell'.

Carthusian monk reading in his cell

It took me all those two years to stop speaking. I'm an extrovert, so I found it really hard. Just try going for a couple of days without talking! But I felt called to the life. I find it hard to explain. I just knew in my heart that this was where I was supposed to be. Not that there weren't times – every day – when I would say to myself: "Am I mad to live like this?"

My family found it very hard to accept what I had done. People don't understand the life of a monk. And it's ▷▷

▷▷ not easy to explain. How could I express in words what I went into silence to find? There are so many angles to it.

Living as a Carthusian

For instance, the psychological angle. Fr Cyril was prior and novice master. So I saw him regularly. He would come once a week – sometimes for five minutes; sometimes for three hours. When you live alone like that you need someone to 'unload' onto. Even hermits have to keep in touch with someone, like the local bishop.

The life was hard enough, but when I got there the cells had become more 'civilised' with a shower and stove to heat water. They had really brought the monastery out of the dark ages. The prayer routine with the long night office is just as it always has been. I had been used to working night shifts so getting up in the middle of the night was not a problem. The Coptic monks also get up at 3 am.

I enjoyed the rhythm of the divine office. There was a young Belgian monk who was a very good musician. We kept the Latin hymns, but while I was there the psalmody was translated into English, and that made it so much easier. The diehards complained, but one of the old monks said to me, "I've done this for 50 years and never known what the hell I've been singing!"

Manual labour is also part of the life. I had a garden by my cell. I developed it by putting a pond in with fish. I dug a well: I drew on my experience of digging tunnels! Cyril encouraged me to do things in my cell, like installing solar heating for the water instead of using a stove, which wasted a lot of heat.

I also had a hobby building barometers, and during the six years I made 40 of them, which the monastery was able to sell. People used to buy them as 'holy objects', made by the monks! You needed a creative outlet, because in the silence there is a lot which wells up from your unconscious.

God is in the present, in the 'now'... if you live in the present, you live in God

In the monastery there is no external stimulus: no newspapers, no radio, no TV. You are simply surrounded by stone and wood. The journey you are on is an internal one, but it needs means of expression. So creativity is part of the life.

I really learned how to pray while I was there. Before, prayer had been largely an external thing. God was an external concept. I had to throw away many childhood ideas. The year before I joined, I had become quite close to the Coptic church. I would say the Rosary; I started going to Mass every day. So something was happening inside me. But during the years of silence the words stopped. It took a while, but the whole relationship between me and God changed.

Cyril encouraged people to try different ways. He said to me: "Just let everything go and stop the words. Stop the beads. Still your mind: stop the thoughts. Don't give the ideas any energy. And stop feeling guilty about it. If you stop doing what you usually do, you feel you are being lazy and God isn't listening."

When you are trying to get close to God who is inexpressible, you have to let go of all the terms you learned in CCD and in RE classes. When you let these go, then God approaches you as he is. It took me four years to let it all go. God extends your faculties. It ceases to be about place and time. God is in the present, in the 'now'. If you live in the present, you live in God. And worries about the future or the past cease. Now I'm always present to God. There's not a moment when I'm not.

We used to say the Office of Our Lady on our own. At first I recited it out loud. But then I said it in my mind. I changed bits because they didn't work for me. You can adjust it to suit your individual needs. At one time I thought I should drop it altogether, but Cyril asked me: "What are you going to do with your day?" The office helped structure our day. It breaks it into manageable portions. If you had nothing, you'd go mad! You needed a structure.

Cyril always encouraged me to do what I could, not what I couldn't do. The Statutes which had been developed over 900 years, were there as a guide. It took me six years to learn to live them. I was extremely happy during that time. You feel so blessed. If you get too proud, a few weeks of boredom soon bring you back to earth!

Carthusian monks' Timetable

In cell	23.30	Office of Our Lady
In church	0.15	Matins
In cell	2.15 to 3.15	(depending on length of Office.) Prayer and bed
	6.45	Get up a second time
	7.00	Prime and private prayer
In church	8.00	Mass
In cell	10.00	Prayer Study Manual work
	12.00	Sext, meal and free time
	1.15	None
	14.00	Study or Manual work
In church	16.15	Vespers
in cell	17.00	Evening meal. Reading and prayer
	18.45	Compline
	19.30	Bed
	23.30	Get up for Night Office

Silence

Silence and memory go well hand in hand. We know that silence is not a void, but on the contrary by its very nature a fullness; but a fullness in which our thoughts are made known. Speech that is the result of bustle and noise is bound to be superficial. The seat of silence should be the depths of our being, and that 'being' only utters something true and profound when it comes from that silence, and is its expression.

That is why the world's chatter – idle conversation, the Press and so on – is so fatuous and wearisome, instead of being restful and beneficial. That is why, on the other hand, in Charterhouse one experiences such peace.

There, everything emanates from the calm depths of the soul, where all is recollected and silent. That is where God dwells and where we unfailingly find Him, if we abide there too. Not everyone, obviously, because of the circumstances of their lives, can experience that same recollection that exists in Charterhouse, but they must not be afraid to set aside as far as possible some moments, however short, for recollection, and to give some time to Him Who dwells within them. It is in that silence that He speaks to us, and bids us listen. *(written by a French Carthusian monk)*

I had always had a lot of questions about life. One of things I did was to study philosophy, right back to Aristotle and Plato. It was brilliant. It has helped me think outside the square – that whole abstract world of the philosophers. There was a wonderful library in the monastery. I never dreamt I would have the chance to spend time in a library like that and read the great philosophers of the past. I taught myself Latin so I could read more.

> I left with a profound sense of peace and happiness... I had received more than I ever dreamed of

Losing the tune

Among the things I would look at were my dreams. They keep you in touch with your own truth, not somebody else's. I looked at them with Fr Cyril. I saw that a lot of what was coming up was part of what I had inherited. I had to let it go.

And then I knew I had to leave. I had come to a closure. I was happy with the way I had lived. But it had come to an end. I left with a profound sense of peace and happiness. In those six years I received more than I ever dreamed of. I looked at whether I should leave for most of a year.

There was a sign which helped me make the decision to leave. I had discovered my voice while I was there and I used to lead the choir at office. I was the cantor. I learned how to sing properly and I loved it.

But when I began to debate whether I should leave or not, I started singing half a note out. Everyone noticed except me. They got a singing instructor in to show me what was happening. He got me to hum the tune of a hymn, then sing it. Then I could hear the difference. He said: "when you hum it, you are using your left brain. When you sing, you use the right side." In my head I wanted to stay, but my heart wanted to go. So there was a dissonance.

When you sing you are expressing yourself from the heart – and mine had gone out of tune! So I said to Cyril: "It's time to go". He agreed. And straight away I started singing on key again. I had gone back to singing with my heart. He recognised the sign. He probably knew all the time I wouldn't stay. But he was determined to work with me. He was a good psychologist. He knew who would stay.

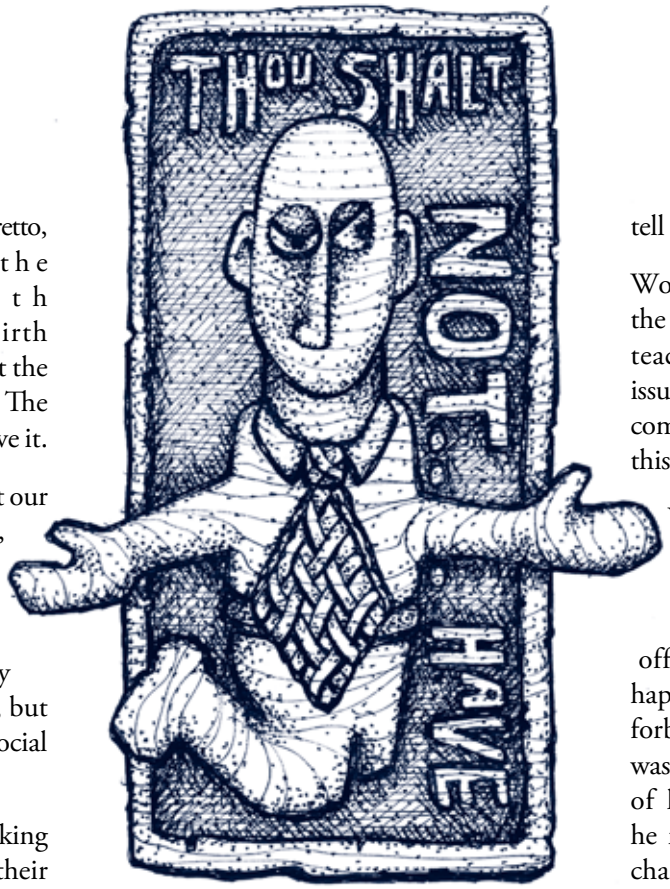
About 30 men come each year to Parkminster to try the life. Probably one a year would stay. And perhaps once every five years there would be a solemn profession. So there is a huge fallout. Most who came were trying to escape from life – they have to discover that though. But I didn't go to escape anything. I enjoyed my life in the monastery.

I found it very hard to come out after six years, But I had gained a lot. It had been the right thing to do. It took me three or four months to adjust to the world I had left, because so much had changed. But now I am at peace with my years as a monk. ■

Southland born and bred, Michael Wilson has now returned to boring tunnels – for trains, under Sydney

Compassion . . . *a way out?*

Alan Roberts



The great mystic, Carlo Caretto, believed that the problem with the Church's teaching on birth control was not the teaching but the weight of the pronouncement. The world was just not ready to receive it.

Probably much can be said about our teaching on de facto marriages, re-marriage after divorce, and even same sex relationships. Why is it with sexual morality, people hear the sound of every gong from the Church's towers, but hear little when it comes to her social teaching?

When Fr Tim Radcliffe was speaking to the priests in Blenheim at their national gathering, he referred to the importance of speaking the truth and he made mention of the fact that the priest can find himself standing between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand he must be loyal to Church teaching, and on the other he must consider the pastoral good of his flock.

In the past, people unable to measure up to the fullness of our sexual teaching or teachings on marriage, for the most part stopped coming to Mass and the sacraments. Today, however, there is an increasing trend for those in such situations to continue receiving communion. It should be added that many are simply ignorant of the rules!

Be that as it may, most in these predicaments are simply coping with life. When people do cease receiving communion, I think it can safely be said they suffer from 'unworthiness'. We have to ask what message are we giving out?

Perhaps we can say they have not yet experienced the power of grace that draws and motivates others to give themselves to God in the way the Church would like. But is this enough to tell them not to go to communion?

Working on the presumption that the Church is correct in her moral teaching concerning those sexual issues, the question I ask relates to the compassion of Christ. Do we explain this clearly, loud and clearly?

When we read of the encounter Jesus has with sinners, there doesn't seem to be much moralising, yet the sinners go off repentant. What would have happened to Zacchaeus had he been forbidden to meet Jesus because he was a sinner? Wasn't it at the moment of his encounter with Jesus that he made his big announcement to change? The story doesn't indicate he had made up his mind to change before he met Jesus. He was curious, and grace was at work in him. However, Zacchaeus was able to change his behaviour because it was simple enough to do so. He was ripping people off. What would have happened had he been in a second marriage with a few children? I think the story would have been wrecked!

Doesn't the Zacchaeus story tell us that when someone is not measuring up they should be encouraged to keep on meeting Christ? We have no difficulty saying such people can continue praying (which is also a meeting with Christ), but should we say that sacraments like Eucharist are out.

When we tell people they can't receive communion, it seems to me, no matter how delicately we phrase it, we are conveying a message that says: you are not worthy. By implication it means: I am. Doubtless that is not what is meant. Most of us are well aware: there but for the grace of God go I. Doesn't grace come to us gradually in the form of wisdom, understanding and surrender?

And then there is the matter of how much I can give. For

those who divorce in early life, remaining single forever must be a very daunting thought. It takes a lot of faith to accept this and only a very motivated person is able to. Many just can't accept it... right now. In order to justify themselves they reason that the Church is wrong so they throw it all away. Very committed Catholics fall into this trap.

Surely we all know that most of us hold back and say no to God at some point. We live, I suppose, in the hope that eventually our response to God will become more complete.

Let us examine our attitude towards personal wealth. There doesn't seem to be any loudly expressed morality saying it is wrong to accumulate money far in excess of your needs, particularly when there are couples in your neighbourhood struggling to find the mortgage for a home.

Most of us would hardly be able to cope if a law were made about this, and announced on the same scale as our teaching on sexuality. When holding back relates to sharing more generously with others we barely blink an eyelid. To cope, I have to be content with what I have given God so far in this area of my life. Why can't I say the same in regard to other areas of morality?

Sacraments are an encounter with Christ. For many, their spiritual life needs these rituals, much more so than someone who has explored the depths of faith. Why are they refused at times in their life when they need them most? Can't we rest in the knowledge that we're all sinners; that we all have a great chunk of life not yet given over to God.

Alphonsus Ligouri wrote in his Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, when you are cold you move towards the fire. Jesus says: It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. What is this obsession we have with only those in the state of grace receiving communion? Has not the state of grace become a matter of ticking off a list?

Should we not content ourselves with saying: as long as you want to grow in Christ you are welcome. If you have difficulty with the ideals of the Church, don't worry, none of us measure up completely. Stay open. If needs be, Jesus will help you see the truth and will prepare you to let go. If God asks something of you, you will also receive the strength to obey. If you are in a situation you can do nothing about, it will be corrected eventually. The important thing is: look upon the face of God, no matter what. ■

Fr Alan Roberts is parish priest of Plimmerton, Wellington

High Up And Almost Hidden

The wind blew. I walked through the uncared for headstones to the porch of the little old church. The door squeaked as I entered. The sagging sign said to keep it closed so the sheep wouldn't get in. The church was in Dartmoor, Devon, and old, being a very relative word in England, was the late 1400s.

The medieval nave was dark and wooden, inviting mystery and intrigue. Sitting down I lazily leant my head back and searched the ceiling. Vaulted wooden beams rose above me. The rib cage of the ancestors. The crafting of a former age. The intersection of interior timber is called a boss and can be augmented with a particular design or motif. High up and almost hidden from view, I found what I was looking for: the Three Hares.

Three hares in a circle. Three ears cleverly arrayed so that each hare looks like it has two. Three entities individually incomplete but finding their completeness in each other. The hares are a holy symbol, found in holy places, like on the Dart Moor. It is not hard to find Trinitarian associations with the hares. The Trinity has traditionally been thought of as three personae (persons, faces) of the one God. The first being called 'God the Father'. I prefer the name *Te Matapuna*: the wellspring, source, of life. *Te Matapuna* is less personal than Father but escapes the male-in-the-sky imagery that too many people, consciously or subcon-sciously, take literally.

The second 'face' of the Trinity is traditionally called 'God the Son'. Again the title lends itself to a literal belief that the man Jesus is part of a holy triumvirate ruling from the heavens. Rather it is more accurate to say that the earthed essence of the Jesus life is integral to God's 'life'. The tears, the love, the passion, the justice of Jesus are woven into the core of godness. This 'earthed essence' is not anthropomorphic. It's not Jesus sitting in the clouds. It's not male or female, though with artistic license it can be depicted as either.

The third 'face' is called God the Spirit, or Holy Ghost. I like the notion of Spirit/Ghost, wind, breath, that is uncontrollable. Another set of Spirit metaphors is weaver and wool – the Spirit weaving her vibrant threads of love and anarchy throughout the creation.

Each 'face' of God is, like the hares, of the same substance. The Source, the Essence, and the uncontainable Spirit are one in being three. They are inexplicably connected, and flowing into each other.

So, in this darkened Dartmoor roof boss the hares, while looking like three separate beings, on closer inspection are not. Without one another they would be deformed and incomplete.

The Celtic carvers liked symbols with a strong earth connection. The hare is a grounded animal. It has a long symbolic association with fertility (all those little baby bunnies!) and with regeneration and new life. The so-called Easter bunny is really the Goddess Eostre's hare.

The hare was also considered to be a trickster. In the study of religion and mythology a trickster is a god/goddess

or human who breaks the rules of the gods or nature, ultimately with positive effects. Often, the rule-breaking takes the form of tricks. Think of Prometheus who stole fire from the gods to give to humans. Or think of Maui who slowed the sun.

In West African folk tales the hare is a trickster. These tales emigrated to America and form the basis of the Brer Rabbit stories. Brer Rabbit represents the Black slave who uses his wits to overcome circumstances and even to enact playful revenge on his adversaries, representing the White slave-owners. Though not always successful, his subversive efforts made him both a folk hero and friendly comic figure. Note too that Bugs Bunny is actually a jackrabbit, a species of hare.

The trickster brought about reversals, unexpected outcomes, and unpredictable endings. The trickster tricked us into believing, into hoping (hopping?) for a different future. One lens through which we can view Jesus is that of the trickster.

Were the Celtic crafters aware of all the religious associations with the hare? Probably not. Sometimes symbols are bigger than those who use them. Chipping away, high up and almost hidden in the rafters, I wonder how much they did know. Were they aware the Three Hares can be found on the ceilings of Buddhist caves in Dunhuang, China, dating from 589 CE? The Hares, like Easter, were not originally, or exclusively, Christian. Were they aware that the 'Silk Road', a result of the Pax Mongolica, which ran through Dunhuang, connecting West and East, was probably the route travelled by the Three Hares as they hopped from country to country, religion to religion? They popped out in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Judaism.

Would those Devonshire artists be surprised to learn that the Three Hares are today also found in Wales, France, Germany, on a 12th century Iranian brass tray, and on a coin bearing the face of Kublai Khan?

With my neck starting to hurt I continued to lean back in wonder at the Hares. High up and almost hidden from view they had survived the zeal of Christian reformers. Like Cromwell and his gang who in the name of piety destroyed so much beautiful art. If those misguided iconoclasts had only known of the Buddhist connection, heaven help us – they probably would have burnt the church down!

Frankly I tire of most Trinity sermons.

Three-in-one, one-in-three,
Whatever else, it is non-sense to me;
Latin, Greek, Councils and creeds,
How is it relevant to our needs?

I have heard countless sermons on water, steam and ice. In recent years it's been talk of God-in-community. I heard the other day of a preacher likening the Trinity to a three-person cycling pursuit team. Athanasius would squirm.

Personally I prefer the ambiguity of a medieval Devonshire roof boss: the Three Hares. No one really knows what the symbol means. Just as no one really knows God. We can make some good guesses, but that's all they are. High up and almost hidden the symbol is mysterious. Like God. It invites speculation but defies specification. Like God. It is hard to explain. It is known, yet remains unknown. Like God. The Three Hares are not the property of any one – any one religion, church, or culture. They just are. Like God.

Glynn Cardy

Glynn Cardy is Anglican priest of St Andrew's, Epsom, Auckland

Who provides the narrative in contemporary culture?

Jonathan Sacks

At the heart of any culture is the process by which we bring successive generations into a narrative, the story of which we are a part. There is, of course, not one story but many, but storytelling is the place where identity is found; it is the vehicle of continuity.

In the mists of our past, that is what the elders did for the members of the tribe. Today, that is what television does for us and our children. We no longer gather round the fire; instead we cluster round the screen. The technology has changed, but not the task of telling the story – of adventure and quest, risk and discovery, sacrifice and redemption.

Stories tell us who we are, where we came from and what we might aspire to be. A culture is defined by its narratives. If they make strenuous demands on the mind and spirit, then a culture has the most precious legacy of all. That is why the great dramatists, poets and novelists have an influence deeper and more enduring than politicians or military leaders. If the great stories are lost, forgotten or ignored, then a culture has begun its decline.

Television today has replaced the theatre of the 20th century, the novels of the 19th, the Bible of the 17th, the folk-tales of the village, the bedtime stories parents told their children. It has become the single most powerful arena of narrative. Some years ago, my wife and I were sitting at the Lord Mayor's Banquet. We were talking to our fellow guests about the death of the great art of political rhetoric. I suggested that one of the reasons was that we no longer had shared texts.

I proposed a simple experiment. The Prime Minister (it was John Major at the time) was about to speak. I suggested that we listened to the sources from which he quoted. That would tell us what are the shared texts of our time. He spoke and quoted. His text? An advertising slogan.

Contemporary television offers us a foreshortened and fragmented world. With its disconnected videos, tribal rhythms and its overt celebration of sex and success, it is the metronome of our attention span. A few years ago, the religious reflection on the *Today* programme, *Thought for the Day*, was cut from three minutes to 2 min 45 sec on the ground that no one could concentrate for three minutes any more.

Television puts the eye before the ear, is interrupted by advertisements and breaks down stories into hour or half-hour episodes; it is thus a medium in which it is hard to present sustained or nuanced thought. In presenting any issue, it prefers conflict to the search for consensual solutions on which democratic politics depends.

When television presents moral issues, it chooses extreme spokespeople, searching for drama but in fact creating a tragic view of the moral life, in which the rudest voice wins. Through Oprah Winfrey-type confessionals or *Big Brother*-style voyeurism, it removes authority from reflection, judgment and wisdom, and locates it instead in the reactions of the audience, the crowd, the mass. It resembles nothing so much as the arenas of Caligula's Rome.

This is bad news, and it makes no sense to say that this is what the public wants. The shapers of culture carry a moral responsibility. If a politician, in a racially charged neighbourhood, were to deliver a racist message, it would be no excuse for him to say that this is what his audience wanted to hear. To the contrary, the fact that they want to hear it is the very reason he should not say it.

None of this is necessary. Take films for example. *Chariots of Fire* is an essay on principle versus ambition. The screen is as compelling medium as any for the exploration of moral issues.

My overwhelming sense of television is of opportunities missed. To quote a rather fine insult: on the surface, it's profound, but, deep down, it's superficial. What I want to hear are the moral voices. I want to hear respectful dialogue on the environment, globalisation, the digital divide, the human genome, the future of the family and what justice might mean in tomorrow's world.

I want to see programmes that exemplify the concept of civilisation-as-conversation, that do not insult the intelligence. I want to hear interviewers and panellists who are not paid to be rude. I want to see programmes that exploit the potential of the medium to convey spiritual drama and moral wisdom. I suspect that in this I am not alone.

Television should have space for stories that enlarge the moral imagination. It should be bold enough to give a hearing to counter-voices that challenge the ruthless imperialism of political correctness.

We look to all concerned to develop a new framework for broadcasting and communications that will encourage broadcasters to take risks, produce strong narratives and develop conversations around the ethical dilemmas of our times. This can only strengthen our collective future.

Jonothan Sacks is retired Chief Rabbi of Great Britain . Abridged from an essay in Culture and Communications, *ITC 2001*

Pessimistic views of Australian Catholicism

A Long Way from Rome: why the Australian Catholic Church is in crisis
Edited by Chris McGillion, Sydney Allen and Unwin, 2003, (211pp) Price: $36.95
Review: Jim Neilan

POPE HIJACKED!
The Holy Father is secretly put on a Virgin flight and flown to outback Australia where the country's Catholic bishops are holding a council at Jamboosalim. There, he is given a blunt assessment of the Church in today's world. He agrees to a five-year plan of action. All clerics at present employed in the Vatican are to leave Rome by the feast of Pentecost. All titles, such as Cardinal and Monsignor are to be abolished. All clerics will be assigned to parishes in their home countries.

Laywomen and men will staff Vatican congregations, departments and offices. The Pope will have no official residence – he will travel from region to region, living with the local bishops, helping them serve their people in ways that best suit their culture.

No - this is not an extract from the book I've been asked to review. It's the synopsis of a novel, which could follow a reading of this book. The idea came from the title. The Church in Australia is certainly more than geographically *a long way from Rome* if the *crisis* described in this book is real.

Chris McGillion, the religious affairs columnist for the *Sydney Morning Herald* has invited six Australian media journalists to comment on various aspects of the church's life in his own country. They cover the relationship between the Vatican and the local church, the abuse of authority, the decline of Catholic ritual and music, the generation gap and the lack of a sense of the sacred.

Several contributors refer to the fallout following the Oceania bishops' Synod in Rome in 1998. Australian and New Zealand bishops were quite forthright in expressing the concerns of their people about pressing pastoral problems such as clerical sexual abuse, the role and participation of women, the sympathetic treatment of the divorced and re-married, and the requirements of priestly ministry. But when the official Vatican report on the meeting was published, it didn't even mention the sexual abuse scandals and brushed off the other concerns with the assurance that they would disappear with a return to discipline (obedience to Rome), and the revival of pious practices such as the Rosary.

A further document, entitled the *Statement of Conclusions*, was later imposed on the Australian bishops stating that their church was in "a crisis of faith", and referring to sloppy interpretations of true teaching, the blurring of roles between clergy and laity, and a corrosive impact on the authority and status of priests. The *Statement* was seen to undermine the role of the local bishops and left many Catholics disappointed and angry.

Two of the book's contributors refer to another undermining influence that has recently plagued the Australian church. There is a highly vocal right-wing group who go behind the bishops' backs and report directly to Rome on anything they consider unorthodox in teaching or practice. Their charges have obviously influenced the Roman perception of the local church. These concerns about the nature of authority in the Church are not unique to the Church in Australia.

Other issues, thoughtfully covered in the book are more Australia oriented, and, as such, have a particular interest for New Zealand readers. Music critic, John Carmody, is concerned that parish liturgy and music are in a parlous state. In his youth he became so tired of hymns such as the emotionally paradoxical *O Mother, I could weep for mirth,* that he decided that he would write the quintessentially Catholic musical: *Stop the Perpetual Novena! I want to get off!* But, he says, worse was to come, with much of today's liturgy seeming to stem from an American campfire.

Imagination Abandoned is the title of historian Paul Collins' thought-provoking chapter. With other contributors, he examines the superficial values and culture of present-day Australians, and finds fault with the Church for not challenging them effectively. At a time when there is a fascination with the spiritual, the supernatural and the mysterious, the Church seems unable to engage with this.

Pope John Paul, at the beatification Mass for Mary McKillop in 1995, supported the inclusion of Aboriginal culture into church life and ritual. At this Mass, despite opposition by Vatican liturgists, the opening penitential rite was replaced by the Aboriginal purification ritual, the *Smoking Ceremony.*

Churchmen have not appreciated the rich potential of the indigenous culture along with the natural space and wilderness of Australia as a source of experiencing the sacred. "Perhaps one of the biblical metaphors to which we should attend", writes Carmody, "is that notion of desert and isolation, because European Australia is arguably the most anti-intellectual (and hence unspiritual) culture in the Western world. We are an utterly, perhaps irredeemably, secular society. We urgently need prophets to emerge from that desert."

Hardly an optimistic synopsis. In fact, the whole collection leaves one feeling very apprehensive about the future. The contributors have each written in an easy-to-read style, setting out the problems facing the Church in their country. But McGillion's final words in the book sum up a pervading sense of pessimism: "Who would turn the lights back on and reveal a vision for Australian Catholicism for the 21st century remained an unanswered question." Perhaps the forthcoming novel will point the way. Or, better still, an increased circulation of *Tui Motu* across the Tasman. ■

A generous compendium of 'religious' verse

Spirit in a Strange Land: A selection of New Zealand Spiritual Verse
Ed. Paul Morris, Harry Ricketts & Mike Grimshaw (200pp)
Auckland: Random House, 2002
Price: $39.95
Review: Mike Riddell

Are New Zealanders religious or not? As any equivocal academic might tell you, it depends what you mean by the question. *Spirit in a Strange Land*, which is a self-confessed collection of spiritual verse, is a remarkable book as much for what it represents as for what it contains.

It bears witness to two dawning home truths. The first is that 'religion' – organized, institutional, ecclesial and doctrine-bound – has never taken very well in New Zealand soil. The editors note there are other collections of 'religious' verse; but with a few notable exceptions, we may be grateful that they do not limit themselves to such a dreary fund of material.

The second and related recognition is that the inhabitants of these islands, in common with all other peoples, are 'spiritual'. The word itself, of course, is slippery. Its ascendancy in contemporary discussions is an allowance that people do experience life 'religiously' while quite outside allegiance to any institutional form of faith.

Secularity, in other words, may mean the decline of Christendom, but not the end of people searching after God, meaning or mystery in their lives. In support of this proposition, the opening and closing essays of the volume are insightful. But the greatest weight of evidence is provided by the poems themselves.

They dance on the page, whirling free of any formal steps and dazzling in their movement and colour. It is as if someone has held a party in an abandoned cathedral. James K. Baxter described the Spirit unforgettably as blowing "like the wind in a thousand paddocks, inside and outside the fences". *Spirit in a Strange Land* gives the truth to this image.

We might expect to find certain voices here: Baxter, Bethell, O'Sullivan, Cowley. But there are others who are surprise guests – unanticipated, but very much at home. Hunt, Eggleton, Marshall, Frame, Manhire, Smither, Turner, Stead – even vigorous atheist Keith Sinclair. By their presence they are witness to a movement of spirit, a soulful connection to life and land, which is bigger and deeper than that commonly acknowledg-ed by the church.

It may be that the true vehicle of faith in this land is to be found in its art rather than its worship. The collection coincides tantalisingly with the McCahon exhibition *A question of faith*. To read these poems is to have one's eyes opened; to feel the excitement of new possibilities. Perhaps it is yet possible to be both a person of faith and a person who belongs here. This fine book may help us "learn the trick

Learning from one's grandfather

Pushing Time Away: My Grandfather and the Tragedy of Jewish Vienna
Peter Singer
Fourth Estate
Price: $34.95
Review: Kathleen Doherty

The views of controversial Australian-born bioethecist Peter Singer tend to polarise people.

His theory that animals have the same rights as humans and that some categories of very impaired humans are not persons and so have no right to life has made him the most dangerous man in the world in the eyes of his critics. Others consider him the most influential living philospher and he holds a professorship at Princeton University. All of this makes his latest book a sharp change of direction.

It is the story of his maternal grandfather, David Oppenheim, a secular Jew descend-ed from a centuries-old line of rabbis who was a classics teacher in Vienna and suffered the fate of so many of that city's Jewish population after the Nazi annexation of Austria – internment at a concentration camp where, weakened by starvation, he died. David Oppenheim and his wife, Amalie, also a university graduate at the turn of the century, a time when this was unusual for a woman, were part of the Jewish intelligentsia – "the yeast in the cultural mix which made Vienna one of the most exciting cities in the world". Also in that mix was Sigmund Freud and his arch-rival Alfred Adler. David Oppenheim knew them both and his siding with Adler when the rift developed between them is a fascinating glimpse into the highly charged intellectual life of the period.

The story has been reconstructed from letters which miraculously survived. They reveal a man who believed in education, the power of reason, knowledge, who could perhaps have made his escape (as did his daughter, Peter Singer's mother) if only he could have made the decision to leave without his books. In spite of what he saw happening around him, David Oppenheim believed that the nobility of German culture would save him, but, as Singer writes, his understand-ing of his fellow human beings failed him.

The title comes from a phrase in one of David's letters to his fiancée about the difficulties in their relationship: she was three years his senior, an observant Jew who kept the dietary laws while he had rejected religious observance, both had attractions to their own sex, but, as David observed "what binds us pushes time away".

This could have been yet another telling of a sadly predictable tale albeit a beautifully and sensitively written one, but what starts out as a family biography ▷▷ becomes much more by Peter Singer's

Exploiting an indigenous people

Money Makes you Crazy: Custom and Change in the Solomon Islands
Ross McDonald
University of Otago Press (95pp)
Price: $29.95
Review: Jim Elliston

The New Zealand Herald, 7 May 2003, referring to continuing violence over recent years, states: "The *Asia Development Bank's* latest report on the Solomons says the fiscal situation is desperate and quality of life has plummeted".

Scottish born Dr Ross McDonald, who teaches matters relating to business, social issues, culture and the ethics of modern economics at the Auckland University, gives insights into the reasons for that report in this brief work. It was written after he had completed four years of occasional fieldwork between 1998 and 2001 in search of a better perspective on how the global economy is impacting on the indigenous Solomon Islanders. "Although wholly wrecked communities may be apocalyptic for custom peoples, they are completely inconsequential to the calculations of international finance".

The Solomons offer many examples of communities trying to cope with the impact of globalisation. Each island in the Solomons is effectively its own world with its own tribal groundings and fabric of languages, customs and beliefs. McDonald develops five short pieces, one on each type of approach to dealing with the problem adopted by different communities.

Some communities have withdrawn into the familiar certainties of custom and revived the cultural beliefs that have long guided them to a sustainable and secure existence. In other, more moderate communities, a modest and managed contact with foreign money is being cultivated through regulated tourism. Others have taken radical leaps into modernity, only to learn that the ethos of gain in the global economy can be ruthless and oblivious to the moral restraints of a cooperative spirit. In some cases large communities have lost their lands, foreign interests are depriving them of their traditional supplies of fish, and trickery and deception – sometimes aided by locals with an eye to personal gain – have wreaked havoc on their livelihood.

McDonald praises efforts at maintaining cultural values, but avoids cultural romanticism (headhunting was common in the Solomons until 70 years ago). He puts the current situation in historical perspective, with examples of positive foreign contributions. It is relatively easy for an invading force to destroy the infrastructure but it is never easy to replace it with one as good – no matter how bad the original may have been. The slow, hard slog of gradual change from within doesn't appeal to those secure in the knowledge of their superiority.

Amidst all the negative descriptions he highlights the wisdom and goodness of so many who are selflessly working to preserve the best elements of their cultures, and describes some simple but very effective ways in which shortage of basic goods can be turned into a community-building exercise.

The book reads like a travelogue yet it is penetrating in its analysis of the varying situations. Almost every page is studded with vivid word-pictures. In recounting individual stories it acts as a compendium of real-life examples of social psychology, ethics, economics, community building, problem solving, and many other things, including missionary endeavour. And amidst the tragedy of a ravaged people one finds seeds of hope for the future. ■

▷▷ interweaving into it his own experiences and observations. He sees a continutity between his grandfather's intellectual stand and his own: a dedication to secular humanism espoused by many European Jews, and in the epilogue he muses over why it is that even though he has no belief in the after-life he feels that writing this book in some way mitigates the wrong done to his grandfather. And he sees the development of a global community as being one in which the universal, humane, nonsectarian values which his grandfather espoused can be appreciated – "something which time has not pushed away". ■

Bush's roadmap a one-way street

On April 30, just after George W Bush had crushed Iraq, an enemy of Israel, the Israelis and the Palestinians were presented with the US-inspired 'roadmap for peace'. Before the 'coalition of the willing', Israel was the major partner of America in world politics, particularly in the Middle East. Thus, it is no surprise that the Bush administration has sided with Ariel Sharon, to the point of treating Yasser Arafat, the legitimately elected president of Palestine, as an impediment to the road map. The plan is so one-sided that it is doomed to fail. The mayhem and the killing continue in a tit-for-tat series of strikes which is totally impoverishing the lives of both sides.

In essence, the roadmap is a belated attempt to convince skeptics that Bush is indeed engaged constructively in dialogue. But he insists that Palestinian resistance to Israeli settlements must cease and suicide bombings must stop. The Palestinian government must recognise Israel's intrusions and killings as just an extension of Bush's global 'war against terror'. On their part, the Israelis must withdraw their troops from Gaza and stop settlement activity. They are not required to dismantle illegal settlements.

Bush exhorts the world to stop supporting Palestinian 'terrorists' while Israel continues its ongoing carnage in the Palestinian cities. Ariel Sharon kills with helicopter gunships, missiles, tanks and bulldozers – financed by America. The hypocrisy is blatant. The roadmap reflects the Bush administration's view that Palestinian resistance to Israel's violence is the root cause of the conflict. There is no talk of the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Palestinians must comply fully with all Israeli and American dictates as a precondition to any concession by Israel. The roadmap is a fraud. Palestinians have no option but Jihad.

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

Alack! Jacques Chirac!

French President Jacques Chirac continues to rile George W Bush. Chirac, alone, is persisting in his criticism of the American president. At the end of the G8 summit in France, Chirac reiterated his conviction that the US-led war against Iraq was illegitimate. After a few staged photo opportunities, Bush left early, early enough to avoid hearing Chirac blame the Americans for not closing the gap between the rich and the poor. Chirac opposes Bush's trashing of the *International Criminal Court* and America's version of free trade which is trying to flood Europe with GE crops.

This long-standing friction between America and France can be traced back to the De Gaulle era, when France insisted on her right to produce hi-tech military equipment. America has always opposed an independent European military force. But France is against the use of military force to impose global supremacy, a strategy which seems the priority of American foreign policy.

Basically, America will wage war in order to establish its version of democracy, and then leave. What is left is usually a country in chaos, an infra-structure destroyed and a puppet regime in thrall to American foreign policy and business interests. The entire Middle East is now an obvious example. Bush's belief that America can do this without both domestic support and genuine allies, is wishful thinking. Chirac is more realistic.

The Iraq war has weakened the EU, both in its cohesion and in its financial strength. US policy has wrecked NATO, which the Bush administration is now trying to reshape into a police force for America. Given that France is a cornerstone of the EU as well as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and NATO, is it surprising that Chirac continues to speak out against American imperialism? Nevertheless, let it not be forgotten that Jacques Chirac was the first world leader to have personally laid a wreath at Ground Zero.

Maori deserve better

Parekura Horomia's recent abject response to criticism by the opposition concerning the funding of Te Mangai Paho and Maori broadcasting in general, tends to prove the Peter Principle which suggests that he has been promoted beyond his ability.

He was elevated to Cabinet level after the Dover Samuels debacle – another sorry affair for Maori. Since then, he has been unable either to present an effective voice for his people or persuade other New Zealanders to support Maori issues. Sadly, he is considered a liability to Maori interests and an embarrassment to the Labour hierarchy.

Prime Minister Helen Clark has come to his rescue and still supports him as Minister of Maori Affairs. The Prime Minister is wrong. Maori are badly represented. Horomia seems incapable of arguing their cause at government level and is considered a joke in parliament. He has a negative image in the electorate. The reason for persisting with such an incompetent parlia-mentarian is to safeguard the Labour vote with East Coast iwi. This is politics at its most base level, particularly when there are more qualified Maori who would ably fill the role of Minister of Maori Affairs.

The Peter Principle concludes that it is difficult to demote someone to a lower rank even if that person would be much better fitted and more happy in a lower position. Parekua Horomia could solve the problem himself. ■

Truth stranger than fiction

Flicking from TV channel to TV channel is not an exercise to be engaged in when in company with other members of one's religious community. But in moments of solitary possession of the remote, it can have its merits.

First it was a few minutes of George Orwell's *1984*. The scene was a packed hall whose occupants were being incited by the repeated words of Big Brother whose face loomed over the assembly on a gigantic screen. His call was to hatred and revenge against those who threatened the state of Oceania – (Orwell's 'Oceania', not ours). Those present shouted, rose and waved their arms in support of what the leader was saying. No matter, as the accompanying sound track made plain, there was in fact no external enemy threatening Oceania. It was all a vast hoax to ensure support for the establishment.

Then switching to a news clip on President George Bush's visit to military personnel at the Gulf War headquarters at Qatar. This was not a formal parade ground event. Rather it was the president moving through close packed tiers of solders, reaching out, grasping hands, while everyone in uniform shouted approval and support, waving their arms enthusiastically.

The similarity of the two scenes was frightening. Even more so the fact that while Orwell's scene was imaginary, Bush's scene was real. At Qatar there was a show of the enthusiasm whipped up to oppose a threat that many believe did not exist. The gain from this was support for the military economic establishment, whether the service careers and sense of patriotic fulfilment of the military or the profits and employment opportunities of industry.

The war also gave many Americans the satisfaction of hitting hit back and hurting someone after suffering themselves the pain and humiliation of September 11. No matter that those called upon to suffer and be killed belonged to a nation that had no demonstrable links with the Twin Towers attack. No matter that almost all of the suicide bombers were nationals of the US ally, Saudi Arabia, which was of course left untouched.

On a later occasion the remote brought up a movie worth keeping on the screen for its full run. *Thirteen Days,* the 1962 Cuban missile crisis seen through the eyes of White House presidential assistant, Kenneth O'Donnell, played by Kevin Costner. At that time the world came closer than most realised to a Third Word War – and a nuclear war at that.

The drama of the movie came not so much from the struggle between America and the Soviets as from the tension between the US military and the Kennedy brothers. Time was of the essence. In less than a fortnight the Soviets would have operational nuclear missiles in the Caribbean that would have the entire United States within range. The heads of the military urged they be taken out promptly through a pre-emptive air strike, followed up by invasion of Cuba.

President John and brother Robert, his closest confidant, saw this as precipitating Soviet retaliation that would lead almost inevitably to outright nuclear war. Just how they overcame the opposition of the military and like-minded politicians to win peace and security by diplomatic means was the grist of the movie. How it made one regret that in recent times a hawkish American administration had encouraged the warlike propensities of others instead of restraining them.

Presentation of real life on the TV screen is a mixed bag. At times reality is distorted rather that presented fairly. But at other times even fiction comes too close to reality for comfort. ■

Humphrey O'Leary

Giving the (long-suffering) public what it wants?

The article by Jonathan Sacks (*see p26*) is as appropriate to this country as it is to the United Kingdom. Perhaps the most telling point he makes is his analysis of what the public wants.

If we question the taste or morality of a particular programme we are often told that "this is what the public wants". We may not like it because of its vulgarity, crudity, or lack of morality, but we have to like it or lump it because it is 'what the public wants'. We, as members of the viewing public, are told again and again that TVNZ's main task is to give the public what it wants.

But the problem immediately arises and assumes a much greater complexity when we look for a definition of what it is the public wants. And this is affected by the people who are entrusted with making this decision. Those people are limited by their place in society, their values and attitudes and their personal views of what people want. I suspect that the people in TVNZ who make the purchases and who arrange the pro-grammes are strongly influenced by two major factors. The first is their desire to please their advertisers and to keep their custom at all costs, even if it means placing sub-standard offerings in prime time viewing.

The second major factor is that these people will be influenced by their age, experience and job level, each on comfortable middle to upper manage-ment levels in TVNZ. These people, with their level of youth and inex-perience, are obviously locked into the latte world of strip joints, sexual experimentation and of fulfilling one's perceived needs without acknowledging one's responsibilities.

Their vision of moral exploration is what Oprah Winfrey pretends to explore in her super confessionals, while 'Big Brother' type voyeurism joins in what Sachs has described as the tragic view of the moral life in which the rudest voices win. He likens this view of the audience, the crowd, the mass, to the arena of Caligula's Rome.

We have, in this country, most news items on moral issues presented by extreme spokespeople so that there is rarely the exploration of an issue, and we have to settle for statements of position, with no middle ground or exploratory discussion in between.

How rewarding it would be if we could have on our television, "the moral voices in our society, respectful dialogue on the issues confronting our society and programmes which exemplify the concept of civilisation-as-conversation, that do not insult the intelligence." Was it too much to have hoped that the Charter could have contained such a commonsense and practical aim?

Keith Harrison

TV correspondent, Otago Daily Times