

Tui Motu

InterIslands



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PEACE WINDOW AT THE UN

Marc Chagall's great stained-glass window at the UN Secretariat building in New York must be the 'best-kept secret' in that place. When I first saw it in 1982 I was astonished and overwhelmed; it struck me as by far the most powerful and challenging work of the modern art featured there. But I had to ask to find it – maybe because UN policy was to shy away from advertising works with explicitly religious symbols. Maybe also this work is in need of a sympathetic understanding of its biblical imagery as relevant to a message of global peace for humanity and all life on the planet.

A many-sided artist, Marc Chagall (1887-19) began to work in stained glass at the age of seventy. He completed this "Peace Window" in 1964, donating it as a memorial to the life and achievement of the Swedish UN secretary, Dag Hammarskjöld who died tragically in Africa in 1961. (There is also an abstract

sculpture by Barbara Hepworth at the UN in his memory.) So here is this large window, around 12 by 18 feet or 3.6m high by 5.4m wide at floor level. It has rich dazzling blues with dashes of red and golden yellow. Like much stained glass, it is not easy to photograph. More important is how the work is arranged to deliver its message.

Vision and Life

The key figure at centre right is the prophet Isaiah who contemplates a new earth full of peace, joy and harmony. This is shown as a vast cosmic circle in the left half. Figures in it depict the prophet's vision (Isaiah 11, v.6):

The wolf shall lie down with the lamb and the leopard shall lie

down with the kid and the calf and the lion and the fatlings together and a little child shall lead them.

We can see the various animals and the child leading them in the foreground.



Christmas 2001

***The Board and Editorial team of Tui Motu wish
all our readers and supporters a blessed and
peaceful Christmas.***

***May the coming year 2002 be a time when
the peoples of the world turn their backs on
selfishness and greed, so that the violence which
has punctuated the beginning of the Third
Millennium may cease.***

***And may the Christian voice for justice and
abiding peace be heard and heeded.***

December 2001 cover picture

Our Christmas cover is from the *Bolton Hours*, a private devotional work created in York, England, about 1415 for the Blackburn family, prominent city merchants. It was almost certainly executed in the local Dominican Friary. The manuscript is richly decorated and on parchment.

The crib has been a favourite subject for Christian artists from the first centuries, but devotion to the Bethlehem scene received a big boost from St Francis, who is credited with the invention of the traditional cribs we put up in church at Christmastime.

The prominence of the ox and ass is also early. Luke's account

mentions 'manger' three times (Lk 2:7,12,16), echoing Isaiah (Is 1:2-3): "The ox its owner knows, the ass its Lord's manger.."

Some of the very earliest Christmas scenes have simply ox and ass and crib – no Mary, Magi or shepherds, not even baby Jesus! Nothing could more eloquently portray for us the poverty and simplicity of the Saviour's birth.

We chose the *Bolton Hours Nativity* not just for its simple beauty but because it shows the Son of God coming to redeem the whole of creation, represented here by the animals as well as Mary and Joseph. ■

▷▷ Even the snake rearing up is friendly, so that children can safely play at the adder's den, as the prophecy goes on to say. Around the circle are various angelic figures, works of mercy, a mother embracing her child, a girl beneath a tree in brilliant blossom out of which an angel kisses her. It is a vision of peace on earth, with animals and humans living happily together in cosmic harmony, in tune with the messengers of heaven.

But, it might well be objected, this is still in the realm of the poetic and artistic imagination – perhaps an idealised version of the circus ring (which Chagall indeed enjoyed). These objections of the hard-headed realist are not in the right half of the window. Here are the experiences of history, the sufferings and longings of people through the ages. The prophet's own people, the Hebrews, have received the Ten Commandments of the Jewish Torah from an angelic Moses (above). Now they move along through roads and cities with their families,

conversing, dancing and collecting flowers. But the crucifixion (top right) is an example of the sufferings to be endured. For Chagall, a Jew, Jesus is a poet and prophet who identifies with the sufferings of the Jewish people past and present. Yet as the people move on their journey through history, their gaze is directed through the vision of their prophets to this goal of peace.

A biblical vision for the world

So here is a powerful visual representation of the bible's prophetic vision addressed to the world. The circle contains a cosmic vision in which all things are related. The movement of peoples is the journey in time through which they work towards implementing this vision in living history. It sums up the twin emphases of the ancient Hebrew prophets – the call to a future hope and the challenge to face the realities, hardships and failures of earthly history where ethical effort can serve this hope. Chagall was brought up

in the Hasidic Judaism of Russia and through-out his life he read the Hebrew Bible and illustrated its themes in a great series of etchings (completed in 1956) and subsequently many windows, paintings and mosaics of the "Biblical Message".

The 1960s when Chagall created this window was a time of youthful hope and idealism for many in the West, but also a time of threatening violence – the 'Cold War' and missile crisis, assassinations, disasters in Africa, China and Vietnam. In new ways now we face the 21st century with apprehension. If the United Nations became the target of further terrorist attacks in New York, Chagall's "Peace window" would be shattered. This is a chilling possibility. Yet the power of the work would survive, rooted in its biblical message of faith, hope and love. ■

*Albert Moore is retired Professor of Religious Studies
at the University of Otago*

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Corrections.. in the November 2001 issue:

• the introduction of rabbits to New Zealand was written as 1938 instead of 1838 (page 32)
• **Fr Grahame Connolly** SM's name was misspelt on page 20 – as 'Fr Graham Donnelly'. Humblest apologies

Peace and world leadership

Peace this Christmas is in the minds and the desires of all people of goodwill. Peace is a gift of God. Peace is depicted on our Christmas cover – the unconditional love of a God who became a helpless infant for love of us, and who by being born in poverty made at Bethlehem his 'preferential option for the poor'. Since September 11, ordinary people throughout the world – the devout along with the agnostic – have united in their ardent prayers for peace.

Half a century ago, the end of World War II saw the birth of the United Nations. Even though the great powers have consistently ignored or tried to manipulate this body, at least it has provided one forum for the voices of small nations and oppressed minorities. It is at the UN, not the Pentagon or the White House, where world peace is to be sought and found.

In November, in a speech to the UN virtually ignored by the world's media, President Mohammed Khotami of Iran presented to the delegates the peace-seeking face of Islam. "After September 11", he said, "the US should be seen alongside other nations who have suffered from injustice and despotism for years and even centuries."

Khotami did not merely throw in Iran's hand against terrorism. He pointed to the root cause – the brutally unequal distribution of the world's wealth under global capitalism. "We cannot live in islands of prosperity and progress," he said, "while the rest of the world is increasingly caught in poverty, illiteracy, disease and insecurity." Khotami proposes that the West and the Islamic world should unite in righting the inequities of globalism.

The peace theme is continued through this issue of *Tui Motu* by a display of Chagall's great peace window at the UN in New York (*see inside front cover*), by

a series of quotes from Vatican II on peace issues, and also by a hard-hitting condemnation of the aerial bombardment of Afghanistan by Auckland academic, Peter Wills.

What the world cries out for at this present time is good leadership. We can do without the George Bush version of 'biggest bully on the block'. Or the 'me too' sycophancy of Tony Blair. The word that comes to me as I write is 'statesmanship' – or its gender-inclusive alternative if there is one. We need a world class leader who can rise above national self-interest and commercial advantage, who can be transparent in seeking truth and resolute in the pursuit of just solutions.

One splendid example in recent history is Mikhail Gorbachev. We are privileged to print opposite an appreciation of the life and work of Gorbachev by one who knows modern Russia well. Gorbachev's career at the top was brief, yet at a stroke he changed the course of modern history.

In our own land too we need a leader beyond the common run. Helen Clerk in her first two years has shown herself a consummate politician. She is wise and fearless. She has real sympathy with the most needy. But has she that single-mindedness and courage to take the long view on social and environmental issues? Will she resist the commercial imperative and take a principled stand against GM?

And, more immediately perhaps, will she raise that critical voice the world so sorely needs to hear against the American militarist roller coaster? Handing the Americans a blank cheque is no pathway to peace. Helen's star is still in the ascendant. If she can rise above the petty pragmatism of the pygmies who surround her, then we will know we have a leader to be proud of.

M.H.



Man of the Millennium

In political terms few can lay better claim to such a title than Mikhail Gorbachev, the man whose 'glasnost' changed the face not only of Russia but the world.

Peter Stupples

In 1988 I flew to the Volga city of Saratov. I was the first Westerner to be granted a visa to visit what was then a closed Soviet city since no one knew when. I am an art historian and I was putting the finishing touches to a book on an artist born and brought up in Saratov.

I had built up good relations with the Soviet authorities over many years. They appreciated that I was putting a Soviet artist on the world map. They helped me get that visa. It was not easy. I only knew of their success hours before the plane took off from the airport in Moscow.

I had to 'pay' for my visa by being the official guest of the Saratov authorities. I was met at the airport by a cavalcade of black limousines. I was greeted by the mayor, as well as by the second

secretary of the Communist Party, the Party's regional cultural secretary and many others. I was overwhelmed and not a little alarmed.

Four days in Saratov to gather valuable archival material and to be the subject of razzamatazz? I spent time with the secretary of the artists' union and was hounded by the fearsome cultural secretary, who wanted me to visit collective farms.

I pointed out that I was there to gather material for a book. I realised I was the first Westerner to visit their city for some decades, but she would have to rest content with my placing flowers at the foot of Lenin's statue in the main square, visiting the site where Gagarin landed on returning from his first flight into space, and visiting a collective farm shop crammed full of Soviet-made jeans.

Two years later, in August 1990, my book published, I returned to Saratov to gift a copy to the art gallery that had given me such generous support in difficult circumstances. Since my first visit many Westerners had made the flight to the city. It was easy to get a visa, but more difficult for my contacts to arrange the visit through official channels.

My friends in Moscow were uncertain whether they would even have a job at the end of the year. There were no limousines to meet me, no officials, only my friends from the art gallery. I was not expected to carry out any diplomatic missions. I could get on with my work without interruption. The secretary of artists' union would soon be out of work. No one knew what had happened to the formidable cultural

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

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▷▷ secretary. She was not missed.

Of an evening I watched television. I saw a bishop of the Orthodox Church give an hour-long address. I sat mesmerised by a television talk-back programme in which a government minister was roasted by commentators and members of the public. He sat squirming, mopping perspiration from his brow as hostile questions pierced his dignity. I found it difficult to comprehend the radical changes sweeping the Soviet Union. The Communist Party had been whisked from centre stage. A new political order was taking shape. It was heady, exciting, scary, and unbelievable. What had brought about these changes?

Mikhail Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on 11 March 1985. He had a perfect 'Red' biography. He was the son of a peasant, had trained as a machine operator in a tractor station. He was bright. He joined the Communist Party and was whisked away to Moscow to take a law degree, the normal pathway into the ranks of the Party's officials.

He returned to his hometown where he became leader of the Communist Party's youth movement. He then worked in the agricultural sector before becoming First Secretary of the Party in Stavropol in 1966, aged 35, and Regional First Secretary in 1970, with a place on the Central Committee of the Party in Moscow a year later.

Agriculture was a key to Soviet prosperity. Since collectivisation in the late 1920s there had been one crisis in the industry after another. Gorbachev knew what he was talking about down on the farm. His voice was heard in high places. He claimed that higher production could only come about by reforms that would take into account the wishes of the farmers as opposed to the central planners in Moscow. Agriculture needed investment.

Cash could only be made available

for farmers if less was set aside for the military. The defence budget could only be cut if the Cold War was scaled down. Bureaucracy burdened the whole Soviet agro-industrial complex. The system needed to be overhauled, made more efficient. It was not a question simply of throwing money at a problem but of making improvements in organisation, of listening to the workers themselves. Andropov, General Secretary of the Communist Party, advanced Gorbachev, as leader of the young reformists. Under Andropov's successor Gorbachev was put in charge of the economy and ideology and was himself elected General Secretary in April 1985.

As General Secretary Gorbachev firmly believed that the only way to shock the nation into economic high gear, to rid the Soviet Union of an unproductive elite, of graft and corruption, was through a profound democratisation of Soviet society. He rapidly introduced a *troika* of reform policies.

*Glasnost is about
transparency –
it opens the account
books of history*

Glasnost was what we now call 'transparency', open debate about all-important issues. For open debate you need to open the books – not only the financial accounts, but also the account books of history, the way the organisation was run in the past and is run in the present. Newspaper editors need to encourage investigative reporting. Television news producers need less restrictions.

In 1987 Gorbachev phoned Andrei Sakharov, the intellectual leader of the moral opposition, and asked him to "resume his patriotic activities in Moscow". For the voice of the people to be heard there was simultaneously the need for democratisation, transparency in appointments, in debate, in decision making: "plurality of opinions by no means suggests the imposition of one

particular viewpoint. It is, rather, a fusion of diverse opinions on the basis of which we approach the truth.

"If we are to speak about the current state of debates, more often than not we are bound to see here not joint intellectual work, not an exchange of opinions, not attempts to think together and find joint solutions, but something rather like a face-off between mutually opposed groups. And although everybody professes to be fighting for democracy, calls can be heard for violence in dealing with opponents" (*Gorbachev, 1989*)

Do we live up to such ideals in our own "democracy"?

In addition to *glasnost* there was also a need to reconstruct the system to make it more efficient: this was called *perestroika*, political and economic reconstruction. The Communist Party was itself part of the problem, it would have to be democratised, opened up to genuine criticism and itself made an arm of the reform process.

Gorbachev's 'Red' biography gave no indication that he would or could come to such policy positions. No previous General Secretary had used his authority to such ends. Most had used it to bolster the power of the Party against the people, even to feather their nests and the nests of their extended family, as Yeltsin and his cronies were to do later. Gorbachev was a man who looked at a set of problems and tried to find the best pragmatic solutions.

In the West this would be radical politics, in the Soviet Union it was revolution. Did Gorbachev realise what he was unleashing by his *troika* of policies? I do not believe that Gorbachev fully understood the processes by which he would seek to turn words into action. I believe he thought the implementation of these policies in themselves would enable the Soviet Union to overcome its poor economic performance in comparison with the West, and would enable the Communist Party to renew itself from within, making it a catalyst for radical change.

What he did not understand was that it would be difficult to control the forces for change he set in motion. For I also believe that Gorbachev remained a committed Communist. The Party was to remain in the driving seat and steer the Soviet Union towards Communism, a new, pluralist, democratic Communism, even if there were those, in the East as well as in the West, who believed that such a phrase was a contradiction in terms.

Ivan Frolov addressed Western philosophers in 1988 claiming that *perestroika* was a 'profound qualitative revolutionary transformation' that would lead to a complete reappraisal of the legacy of Marx and Lenin. He claimed that Marxism was a 'science of liberation', that *perestroika*, in the true spirit of Marxism, would lead to a moral cleansing of the Soviet system. *Pere-stroika*, he stressed, was a 'transition phase leading to a qualitatively new condition of society, to a humane and democratic socialism'. I believe Gorbachev also embraced these aspirations.

Perestroika could be seen at work most dramatically in the Congress of Peoples Deputies after the elections of 1989, when for the first time there was a choice of candidates in most constituencies and even an archbishop was elected. Gorbachev's attempt to shift power from the centre to local soviets was also dramatically successful. There was a use of referenda, Leningraders changing the name of their city back to St Petersburg.

A year later a struggle developed between Gorbachev, trying to keep a reformed Communist Party in charge of *perestroika*, opposed, however, by a more populist Yeltsin. Gorbachev harangued the Congress, tried to persuade, and taught himself and the deputies how to debate rather than rubber stamp. Gorbachev tried to make Russians understand that freedom is only effective if concomitant responsibilities are also taken seriously, that the consequences of reform need to be thought through.

Congress was televised. Everyone watched every televised session. Can you see people in shops glued to the debates in the New Zealand parliament? In a visit I made to Vologda in 1992 I found the city heady with democracy. Everyone was optimistic. It was the way the world could be.

Yet with the loss of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe in 1989 and profound changes in the Soviet system itself in the first half of 1991, reactionary forces were gathering for a coup against democratic madness. People were now contemplating a Soviet Union without the Communist Party in power.

Glasnost had revealed the deep corruption of the Party over decades. Russians felt shame for the public display of their gullibility and culpability. When the possibility of getting rid of the Party – and with the Party, the shame – presented itself, people grasped the opportunity, without thinking what they might be losing in the process.

Soon it was too late to change their mind. After the attempted coup of August 1991, Gorbachev was history. He was the instrument of change and when that change took place he was thrown out for new instruments – the market, nationalism, a new, capitalist self-interest. The West was euphoric over the demise of Communism and welcomed the Soviet Union to the club of global capitalism.

George Soros believes that it was the Bush and Thatcher administrations that were responsible for the failure of the West to assist Russia towards a more balanced democratic open society, and who instead delivered it up to the oligarchs and the mafia, the very antithesis of Gorbachev's aspirations (*Who Lost Russia?*, New York Review of Books, April 13, 2000). Indeed Soros sombrely concluded, "with regret I had to conclude that the West did not care very much for the open society as a universal concept".

Why do I think that there is a case

for calling Gorbachev political 'man of the century'? Here was a man who wanted the best for his country and was ideologically brave enough to see that the very system which had delivered him power was corrupt and did not have humanitarian values at its heart. He was willing to use the media and democratis-ing processes to reform that system. He was willing to say no to empire in the interests of social reform at home.

He taught himself how to share power with the Congress. He taught members of Congress how to debate. He believed in the ideals of democratic socialism. In 1990 he described the direction the new political system might take as a 'socialist law-based state' with the highest priority given to humanitarian ideals, "a democratic organisation of society, a parliamentary system and the triumph of law and diversified ownership under social justice".

Gorbachev's strengths were his weakness. Political systems are dynamic. Give people freedom and they will take it, and take it places that might lead to freedom's demise. Perhaps Gorbachev's example may give us pause to rethink what we call democracy. Perhaps we don't educate our citizens for its responsible use. Perhaps there is no longer any moral authority – religious or secular – that we can use to guide our thinking towards the responsibilities that go with freedom.

Getting rid of a totalitarian regime is no guarantee that democracy will grow on the cleared ground. Democracy needs to be nurtured by forward thinking, by a sincere, inclusive *glasnost* as well as *perestroika* based on humani-tarian values. Do our current political parties have any moral precepts that guide their planning of policy? Is there for them any ideological high ground which is carefully thought through? ■

Peter Stupples is retired Professor of Art History at the University of Otago

Thou Shalt Not Kill

What right have we to give unconditional support to the war in Afghanistan?

Does this conflict fall within the classical criteria of a just war?

And what of the track record of the protagonists?

Peter Wills

I have written a shocking letter to Prime Minister Helen Clark saying “I attach information sufficient to identify a woman whom I think you wish to kill”. The woman is Edna Yaghi who said “You have made me your human bomb. I strap explosives onto my body and search for a place to detonate myself. Yes, I kill your civilians, but this is the price you have to pay for killing my brothers and sisters.” She is apparently what is called a terrorist, one of the people against whom our country has pledged to fight a war to the death.

New Zealand has sent its best killers, the SAS, to help the Americans in their attack on Afghanistan because the war there is a war against terrorism. If you are prepared to go so far as to take another person’s life, you should at least be honest about what you are doing, the way Edna Yaghi is. But our SAS have no time for that. They are Special Forces. They act covertly behind enemy lines and must evade detection, even if that involves the murder of innocents. They cannot take a growing coterie of prisoners with them on their mission. They act swiftly and surely. Regrettably they sometimes have to kill people to silence them and then move on.

The killing we are party to in Afghanistan is above the law. Some of it pours down from the sky and the victims below have no recourse, not in our land, not at the International Court in the Hague, nor to Allah. Much of our killing is directly intended but some of it is a result of our carelessness or ineptitude. Our weapons are not perfect to our needs, and sometimes they malfunction. We always have an excuse when bombs or missiles hit houses, Red Cross depots and mosques.

Our Prime Minister seems to accept that civilian deaths are an inevitable byproduct of the greater good we are

achieving. We are hunting down Osama bin Laden and replacing the Taleban with a cabal of other tribal forces that has come to be called the Northern Alliance. In the process innocent people are dying.

But who are these people whom we accidentally kill? They are unnamed Afghans. We feel under no ultimate obligation to defend their right to justice. They were unwise enough to live in a town that our forces have decided to attack. Do they have not families who grieve? We send personal messages of sympathy and money to help Americans when they are attacked by terrorists, but when we are responsible for killing innocent people, we pretend it isn’t anything personal.

There has been a lot more direct talk about the intent to kill people in Afghanistan than I can remember in relation to other military campaigns. In 1991 our friends killed tens of thousands of Iraqis. We heard some numbers, but we were given few details. By the time the international press arrived, the carnage meted out to the retreating forces on the road to Basra had been cleared up.

Recently they showed on television the first pictures I have ever seen of how it was done. With bulldozers. They dug huge graves, pushed in anything evidently human and covered it all over. Individuality was lost. There was no systematic check for survivors or signs of life. The burying was just the last part of the killing, as it had been the first part of the killing along the Iraqi front line. There, bulldozer tanks were used to form a road by covering the trenches, along with their human contents. The defenders of freedom chose live burial as its way of killing thousands of enemy soldiers.

However, the Pentagon’s weapon of choice for mass killing is the hydrocarbon fuel BLU-82 Daisy Cutter bomb. A first explosion spreads a fine kerosene vapour into the atmosphere over a wide area high above ground zero. A second explosion ignites the fuel vapour, creating a massive pressure wave. Eleven of these weapons, the most devastating in the US arsenal short of nuclear weapons, were used in Iraq in 1991 and this month they have been used against Taleban forces in Afghanistan.

It is a horrible irony that a single Daisy Cutter is reputed to have killed 4,500 Iraqi soldiers and that a similar number of innocent New Yorkers were killed by the hydrocarbon fuel bombs guided to their World Trade Center target by suicide terrorists. The way Daisy Cutters kill is grotesque. Victims are either obliterated in the explosion or they suffocate and drop dead where they stand.

What is clear is that no one is really interested in rounding up the sympathisers of Osama bin Laden and bringing them to justice. They are to be killed mercilessly, as we have already seen when Kabul fell to the opposing forces. Such killing is not new to the tribes of the Northern Alliance. They slaughtered 50,000 people before they were driven out of the city by the Taleban last time around. People cheered on the streets when the Taleban defeated the Northern Alliance, just as they do now when it is the other way around.

As I write there is an unknown number of foreign recruits to the Taleban cause, “Arab-Afghans”, trapped in the city of Kunduz with nowhere to go. Our enemies there have been pounded by US bombs for days, but this has been ineffective and has caused more

civilian than military casualties. Now, the Northern Alliance, who promised to accept the surrender of the Taliban but not the Arab-Afghans, is attacking. They want to kill all these foreigners.

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says that the US does not want prisoners, and it is too dangerous to allow them to be escorted to another country under UN protection. He has effectively pronounced a death sentence, extrajudicially. The Red Cross has expressed concern and the US does not seem to care about the niceties of the Geneva Convention to which it is a signatory.

In the mid-1980s the CIA was delighted to have the Arab-Afghans help the mujahedin fight the Soviet Union. Between 1982 and 1992 as many as 35,000 Muslims from 43 countries fought in Afghanistan, according to journalist Ahmed Rashid, author of *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game* in Central Asia. Osama bin Laden was among the recruits. Retired Brigadier Mohammed Yusuf, who oversaw Afghan policy for the Pakistani intelligence service, says the CIA used to laugh at the fact that bin Laden was spending his own money doing their job.

Then the US lost interest in Afghanistan in 1989 when the Soviets retreated, but after the 1991 defeat of Iraq militant Muslims became furious with the continuing US military presence in Saudi Arabia, home to Islam's most holy shrines. Bin Laden left Afghanistan in the early 1990s but returned in 1996 and continued to recruit as he had in the 1980s.

There is no doubt that force must be used to restrain bin Laden's Arab-Afghan forces that make up the al Qaeda network. By all accounts they have declared a Holy War against the United States and will kill as many people as they can if they are given freedom. However, the solution is not to declare an open season on hunting and killing certain fellow men using whatever thuggish forces are available.

The application of violent force against fellow humans requires a judicial mandate, or at least it does in a civil

HYMN OF THE MONTH

While tanks rumble the streets of Bethlehem and bombers give messages from on high, over Afghanistan how can we sing with the Angels and the Wise men? Here is a carol of the "true shalom" – *PEACE CHILD* – written by Shirley Murray and set to a haunting tune by Colin Gibson and published in *CAROL OUR CHRISTMAS* by the NZ Hymnbook Trust.

Peace Child,
in the sleep of the night,
in the dark before light
you come,
in the silence of stars,
in the violence of wars -
Saviour, your name.
Peace Child,
to the road and the storm,
to the gun and the bomb
you come,
through the hate and the hurt,
through the hunger and dirt -
bearing a dream.
Peace child,
to our dark and our sleep,
to the conflict we reap,
now come.
Be your dream born alive,
held in hope, wrapped in love:
God's true shalom

ADVENT

*Flax buds
Hanging over the pathway
Waiting
to burst into summer
Luigi
Leaning on the sea wall
Waiting
For the fishing boats
to come in
Seagulls
Gathering on the sand
Waiting
For the first chip
to fall from the packet
Children
Bare feet at water's edge
Waiting
For the sea
to be warm enough for swimming
Pohutukawa
Lining the parade
Waiting
To roll out the red carpet
Brown grasses
Clinging to the shore
Waiting
For the next gust
to lead them in their dance
The whole world
Darkened by war
Waiting
For the Light of Christ
to shine on every land*

Sheila McGrath

society. And furthermore, a civil society only exists when parties refrain from exacting their own retribution and appeal to the those vested with the task of upholding the law.

The standard of Thomas Aquinas for a 'just war' is that all other means of resolving the dispute or containing evil have failed. That is not the case in Afghanistan. No other means have been attempted. If, over the last few years, the United States had invested as much money in reconstructing this devastated country as is now being spent each month to destroy what is left, there is no doubt the outcome would have been better. Perhaps then bin Laden could have been brought to justice and this horrible renewal of two decades of war could have been avoided.

Having taken no active interest in the plight of Afghanistan over the last two

decades New Zealand has absolutely no right to give assistance to those who seek further to destroy the country. We should call the SAS back immediately, decry the arbitrary killings carried out by the Northern Alliance, Taliban, al Qaeda and the United States alike and demand of the United Nations that it institute immediately a simple civil system for the enforcement of international law.

For the last 20 years I have had hanging on my wall at home two photographs I took in 1977. One is of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York and the other is of the Neanderthal skull that is displayed in the museum in Bonn. The connection between these two pictures has taken on an unfortunate new meaning. ■

Peter Wills is Associate Professor of Physics in the University of Auckland

Gene technologies in medicine and agriculture advance apace – but so do the ethical questions. The Christian response is based on absolute reverence for the gift of life. Tui Motu looks at two aspects

1. To GE or not to GE – *that is the question*

Ron Sharp

We, my wife Edith and I and our two children, have lived on this one and three-quarter acre (7000sq.m) plot that we paid to be responsible for, since 1987.

We were new to working seriously with the earth. Over the past 14 years the character of each season, the response of each plant species, the change of plants according to feeding practices, the effects of rain, sun, moon and planets, frosts, temperatures and drought have gradually revealed to us that the planet Earth is alive, a living organism, pulsing and breathing, constantly changing and unpredictable.

Once upon a time I used to think that humans were given the authority to subdue the Earth. That thinking has been turned upside down. Today it is very clear from our experience that we are far from dominant in the relationship we have with Papatuanuku (Mother Earth).

The forces of our galaxy are capable of, and actively involved in, awesome movements that make our interference with the earth like

poking Her with a pin. Earth's age alone is in the millions compared with our tens.

But She is open to a relationship with us. Our interdependence is one of trying to work in harmony together. We can work as partners, as co-creators in balanced processes. That is how we will not get infestations of so-called pests and diseases. We communicate with each other – earth and human – finding what is appropriate in the conditions, diversifying and rotating crops. To preen Earth's prowess rather than to poison Her potency!

*GM procedures
are like playing Russian
roulette with the whole
biosphere*

Over the years I have come to recognise the Universe as the body of God, teeming with the gentle evolutionary life of the Spirit, touched by the Word of an ongoing sound (presence) for which the Son (sun) is light; all received through our reflective consciousness – unique, it seems, to humans. Humans as a 'part of a whole, not top dog on a totem pole', as once thought. Each of us struts across the stage, yet we are but particles in the human story.



Up to the present we humans have been a cosmic anomaly. We rape and pollute the womb that nurtures and sustains us. We have become a dysfunctional family, blind to our own addictions. We constantly insist on our superiority, obsessed with power over all that surrounds us – more god than God.

Our scientists are paid by tunnel-visioned, profiteering conglomerates to treat symptoms while ignoring integral totalities and interdependent systems. They have developed weedkillers, insecticides, fungicides, nematocides, rodenticides, algicides, molluscicides, growth regulators, miticides, defoliant, disiccants, attractants and chemical fertilisers. These agents are now so widespread that every person on earth has absorbed at least 250 synthetic chemicals into their bodies. All this for markets which are obsessed with perfection and appearances at the price of becoming alienated from nature. No wonder cancers are so common and cows go mad!

And now that tiny blueprint, on which all life is built – our genes and DNA strands, is seized upon as the latest target for exploitation. The vast, complex and fragile web that is life, is under speculation. Hybridisation, which is a natural process, has had disastrous effects on Third World subsistence small farmers. Crossing potatoes with a toad or forcing fish genes into strawberries or scorpions into corn: these procedures are so unpredictable and irreversible that some scientists liken it to playing Russian roulette with the whole biosphere.

Once out in the open this new creation is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to recall because it is a living, self-replicating organism. In Canada, genetically engineered canola is already developing into a major weed problem, and in the USA over a billion dollars has been spent on trying to recall a potentially allergenic GE corn variety, which has contaminated 430 million bushels of harvest.

The *New Zealand GE Free environment register* has been established to record the position of every property in the country whose owners or managers will not accept any risk of contamination on their property from GE crops grown on neighbouring properties. The criteria for a 'neighbouring property' will be any crop within the foraging range of bees, currently set at 8km. Any home garden, farm or business property can be registered, either by visiting www.gefreeregister.co.nz or ringing 09 438 8649 with the following information:

- *contact details of owner/manager of the property*
- *number of residents at the property*
- *map co-ordinates*
- *size of property.*

The aim of this exercise is to cover the countryside with so many 'no go' areas that it will be futile for Government to attempt to allow GE crops to be planted *anywhere* in the country.

It is hardly surprising that some modern commentators think homo sapiens is heading for self-destruction. The wisdom that begat the Agricultural, Industrial and Information Revolutions is largely a spent force. Our achievements have become our atrocities. All the indications, culminating in the 11 September terrorist attacks, are pointing humanity towards an honest

confrontation, without helplessness or hopelessness, to bring us to our senses.

Even if we humans were to wipe ourselves out, Mother Earth would recover from any damage done and give rebirth to a new and hopefully wiser species, prepared to work with the Spirit of evolution and co-create a Kingdom or Reign of God. ■

Ron and Edith Sharp, parishioners in Motueka, have a small holding nearby at Riwaka. They are ardent advocates of organic horticulture

Vatican II on Peace

Peace is not merely the absence of war. Nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies. Nor can it arise out of government by tyranny. Instead it is rightly and properly called "the effect of justice" (Is.32:7). Peace is the fruit of the harmony built into society by its divine founder, and brought about by men and women as they thirst after ever greater justice. (GS 78)



2. Genes, clones and stem cells

In medicine the new gene technology is posing some hard ethical questions. Dr Anna Holmes looks at a few of the outstanding issues and suggests answers informed by Church teaching

Jim Neilan

What is a human being? This was the question posed by Dr Anna Holmes in a talk about bioethics to a group in Dunedin in mid-November. This fundamental question is raised today by the new technologies, which present challenges to those involved in the ethics of issues such as cloning and stem cell research.

In the December 1997 issue of *Tui Motu*, Dr Holmes wrote about the ethical issues raised by the new birth technologies, but in the intervening four years there has been an explosion of information in this area. One example is the Human Genome Project, completed

last year, which has identified the 100,000 genes of a human being. There are 12,000 references on the Medline internet site about stem cell research, nearly all within the last few months. And it was recently announced that a new human being may soon be produced from two 'parents' of the same sex.

The Catholic Church has always been clear in its teaching that a human being exists from the moment of conception when egg and sperm unite. And so it is never lawful to deliberately destroy an embryo. Many in the scientific world dispute this view. Even within

some Catholic ethical circles there are arguments about whether the embryo is a 'person' before the time when twinning can occur before the time when it can divide into two 'people' (at about 14 days).

Is the embryo, it is asked, at this stage a unique being, and, therefore, can it be classified in ethical and philosophical terms as a person? Dr Holmes believes strongly that if we depart from the belief that human life begins when sperm unites with egg, we have started down the dangerous slope of losing respect for the uniqueness of each individual person. For instance, is an embryo that

Genes, creation and the Bible

The six principles of ecojustice (as established in the *Earth Bible Project*) are:

- **intrinsic worth** – the universe, the earth and all its components have intrinsic worth and value.
- **interconnectedness** – Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.
- **voice** – Earth is a subject capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.
- **purpose** – the universe, the earth and all its components are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has its place in the overall good of that design.
- **mutual custodianship** – Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners with – rather than rulers over – earth to sustain its balance and a diverse earth community.
- **resistance** – Earth and its components not only suffer from human injustices but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.

These principles, states Norman Habel, founder of the *Earth Bible Project*, are meant to be universal. They were developed in co-operation with ecologists and do not represent a theology. Through them we are pursuing an earth reading informed by ecojustice.

From principles 1 and 4, the Genesis command to serve the earth (*Gen. 2:15*) is clearly earth-positive, whereas the command to subdue the earth (*Gen. 1:26-28*) is earth-negative.

In support of the positive principle, in *Mark 10:42-45* the followers of Christ are not to assume the oppressive posture of 'ruling' but of 'serving' as Christ did. That means serving *all* creation, not suppressing it. Serving all the way is "being obedient unto death for Christ" (*Phil. 2*).

In the Old Testament the mandate to dominate (*Genesis 1*) is challenged in *Job 39* where God asks Job whether "the wild ox will serve" (See *Earth Bible* Volume 3: Will the Wild Ox Serve You? *Sheffield: 2001*).

3. The parable of the Sower in *Mark 4* is very significant. I believe it turns the concept of the kingdom upside down. The kingdom is not a 'rule from above' but a process of life emerging from within Earth. What is true of Earth is true of the 'kingdom'.

I believe there is here an allusion to *Genesis 1:9-13* where Earth is revealed and God calls life to emerge from Earth. Here Principle 3 is evident. Earth is a subject, who knows a mystery humans do not, and 'of itself' brings forth life. God's kingdom is not some detached spiritual realm above, but involves a life force below emerging from Earth. ■

could become twins less human than one that is past the time of twinning?

The eugenics movement (as typified by the Nazis) saw certain human life as disposable. Dr Holmes asks if there is a danger that some of today's trends could be headed in the same direction. Biblical teaching is that human life is sacred: ignore this fundamental truth, and we are quickly back to the jungle.

Stem cells

Currently one of the most debated topics in bioethics is stem cell research. President Bush made this comment in August this year: "In the case of stem cells, the promise of miracle cures is set against the protection of developing life."

Dr Holmes pointed out that much of the information on stem cells has

*Biblical teaching is
that every human life is
sacred*

developed in the last few years, and the medical possibilities for their use are growing daily. Stem cells are very important because they have the potential to turn into any tissue in the body. One fascinating property of these cells is that they migrate naturally into damaged tissue e.g. into the brain or the heart.

But how, and from where, are these stem cells obtained? Here we run into ethical problems. Stem cells from embryos less than seven days old have the potential to turn into any tissue in the body. Stem cells from placenta or cord blood have less flexibility. Stem cells from adult tissues are the least flexible.

Many scientists insist that the most flexible cells for helping medical disorders come from embryos. These can be 'left-overs' from *in vitro* fertilisation procedures in which sperm and egg are joined in a test tube. Some will have been implanted in a woman's uterus, while others are frozen and stored. When couples no longer need

or want them, the embryos are usually discarded. A growing number are adopted by couples unable to produce them.

The United Kingdom now legally permits the cloning of embryos for the specific purpose of stem cell production, but it is the only country to have legislated in this way. Their use is deemed to be legitimate if used before they are 14 days old. Again, we are back to the basic question, *when does human life begin?*

Conflicting ethical views

The Catholic Church is totally opposed to such a use of embryos, insisting that stem cells must be obtained in other ways. Research is being done on the modifying of adult stem cells. If stem cells obtained from a patient are injected back into that patient, there is less danger of rejection because they already belong to that person.

The cord blood and placenta stem cells can also be used to produce some but not all tissues. They can easily be collected after birth and obviously there is no harm to the donor. One example of their use would be to store them against the possibility of a person developing leukaemia later in life.

*the driving force
in much research is the
possibility of huge profits*

But scientists ask why we should wait for possible advance in the use of alternatives when people can be cured here and now with embryonic cells? This would seem to be a case of the end justifying the means. We are, after all, in relatively early days of gene technology, and the repercussions of techniques adopted now will carry on through future generations.

Unfortunately, the driving force in much of the research being done is the possibility of huge profits. Funders of research are anxious to protect these – and hence the drive in the United

States and Britain to patent genes and gene technology. This drive for profits is often at odds with moral behaviour.

Technology and science are changing so rapidly that even the operators cannot keep up. So it's vitally important that informed Catholics speak out on ethical issues. Pope John Paul has been tireless in upholding reverence for all life, insisting that every person is unique.

*each discovery –
does it reverence the
human person?*

We are fortunate indeed to have people with the medical experience and deep personal faith of Dr Anna Holmes. These are the words she wrote four years ago in *Tui Motu*:

The difficult questions, in the light of Christian ethics, need to be asked for each new discovery: does this process reverence each person? Does it care for the most vulnerable? Does it lead to growth and freedom? Or oppression? Is it open to political or economic manipulation? Who benefits, who loses from it? Does it reveal a new way of loving God? Finding the balance of ethical actions in such a complex world is a continuous process of debate and wise seeking of truth in an evolving world. ■

at McIndoes

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Theology as prayer and play

How do you become a theologian? Mother and housewife Tina Beattie tells how she followed the promptings of the Spirit into a world of discovery, a world of 'prayer and play', the world of Eve, the 'first theologian'

I grew up in Zambia with a traditional view of a woman's role: find a man, get married and have children ('in that order', my mother used to add). I followed the conventional route, but I came to realise that, however great my love for my husband and children, marriage and motherhood were an all-encompassing but not an all-sufficient way of life. To cut a long story short, I sent my youngest child off to school and I started a degree in theology and religious studies at the university of Bristol.

I knew from the beginning that I wanted to study theology. I had converted to Roman Catholicism several years earlier. I believed then, and I still believe now, that the Catholic theological tradition is unrivalled in its depth, coherence and scope, and that it provides open doorways into thinking about everything from faith, history and politics to art, literature and music.

I was blissfully happy: I remember walking home with fish fingers and oven chips for the children's supper wedged in among the books in my backpack, and feeling fully alive to everything around me. That, says Irenaeus, is what the glory of God is – a person fully alive.

The community of academic theologians is for me rather like Groucho Marx's idea of a club I don't want to belong to if it would have me as a member. I do not think that being a theologian is any more or less 'for God' than any other work that a believer might feel called to, such as driving a bus or becoming a brain surgeon, except that it carries a greater risk of hubris. It is easy to discern an obsession with power encoded within that most abused and over-used of words, 'God', and that is why I tend to agree with Rahner that one should use 'God' sparingly. It is to respect the absolute otherness and mystery of God, in relation to whom theology can only ever be the language of invocation, prayer and yearning, shaped and nurtured in the matrix of the believing community.

Rowan Williams says:

God is not there to supply what is lacking in mortal knowledge or mortal power, but simply as the source, sustainer and end of our mortality. The hope professed by Christians of immortal life cannot be a hope for a non-mortal way of seeing the world; it is rather trust that what our mortality teaches us of God

opens up the possibility of knowing God or seeing God in ways for which we have, by definition, no useful mortal words.

For Williams, the community of prayer safeguards the integrity and honesty of theology.

Prayer and Play

If silence stands guard over the hubris of theological language, it is nevertheless important to find ways of talking about God that open into a prayerful playground of the spirit. In Proverbs 8, God's wisdom describes herself as being 'ever at play in God's presence, at play everywhere in God's world' (*Prov 8:30*). The image of play can serve as an antidote to power. It suggests an environment of trust as well as of learning, but it is also a reminder not to take ourselves too seriously by over-investing our own theological speculations with any claims to divine authority.

Our language about God is of necessity a language about ourselves – the worlds we inhabit or invent, the terrors we encounter or imagine, the hopes we cherish or fulfil. In this context, God becomes both the imaginary companion of our conversations, rather like the imaginary friends of childhood who often seemed vividly real and present, and the inaccessible Other whom Catherine of Siena calls 'the fire and abyss of love'. Playful theology, aware of its own limitations, does not seek to describe or to define God but rather to discover a space of creative expression, a space of laughter and tears, within the fire and abyss of God's love.

Theological coherence also depends upon a sense of narrative and tradition, otherwise theology ceases to be a communal venture and becomes the idle speculations of an individual, and once again the spectre of obsessive power looms over it. Thus, in my own theology, the open space of play is bounded by a sense of critical fidelity to the teaching authority and traditions of the Church. In the present climate of authoritarianism this is a difficult balancing act, and there is often a sense of conflict between theological integrity and ecclesial obedience.

Catholic tradition recognises an informed conscience as the ultimate voice of authority, and respects the role of reason in informing the development of faith. The opening section of Pope John Paul II's widely acclaimed 1998 encyclical, *Fides*

et ratio, describes faith and reason as ‘two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth’.

On a number of controversial issues in the Church today, particularly those concerning ordination and sexuality, reasoned debate has produced a variety of different arguments and convictions, and only in a spirit of theological openness and prayerful exchange can we hope to discern the Spirit of God at work in our deliberations. To silence one side of the debate, and to use threats against those who, with integrity, honesty and an informed conscience, dissent from Rome, is to violate reason’s capacity to illuminate and deepen faith.

The theological vision of women

The development of a collective women’s theological vision is one of the most urgent and dynamic vocations of modern theology. This is another reason why I believe that the humility of silence must be balanced against the chatter of the playground, in order to accommodate the proliferation of language that is a feature of emergent women’s theologies around the world.

Like many women I have often found myself reduced to silence as the people around me pray to a father God in the language of men, brothers and sons. I have read with dismay and disbelief the recent instruction issued by the Vatican, *Liturgiam authenticam*, which forbids the use of inclusive language in the liturgy. But however painful and alienating the present situation is for women who seek an authenticity of worship and self-expression in the Church, the silences imposed on us can be used constructively, as times of reflection on what it means to pray to or talk about God in such a way that one resists both ideology and idolatry.

The feminist theological critique serves as a reminder that God is beyond gender, and that as male and female human beings we are equally made in the image of God, equally like and unlike God. This means exploring ways in which we can speak of God in feminine as well as masculine terms, so that the divine image finds theological expression in both sexes.

The Brazilian theologian Ivone Gebara speaks of ...the other side of human experience: the side of the person who gives birth, nurses, nourishes, of the person who for centuries has remained silent with regard to anything having to do with theology. She begins to express her experience of God, in another manner, a manner that does not demand that reason alone be regarded as the single and universal mediation of theological discourse. It is as though we were discovering, very powerfully and starting from our own situation, the mystery of the incarnation of the divine in the human, not just because ‘we have been told,’ but because we experience it in the confines of our lives as women.

Seeking a more authentic and relevant theological vision than that to be found in much modern theology, I find I am sustained and stimulated by an unlikely assortment of



“The medieval women mystics – a rich resource..” Hildegard of Bingen receiving the Spirit’s call to write (12th century painting)

past and present believers. I am increasingly attracted to the writings of the early Church, and I think this is because the Church Fathers were a less exclusively male community than their medieval and modern successors. Many of them were developing their theological reflections in conversation with women, and Gregory of Nyssa attributes his writings on the resurrection to the deathbed reflections of his sister, Macrina.

The medieval women mystics are another rich resource for the construction of a women’s theological vision that complements, and also sometimes challenges, the androcentric perspective of Catholic theology. Unfashionably, perhaps, for a feminist, I love Augustine for his passion, as he forged a Christian vision that set itself over and against the disintegrating world of the Roman empire. But I also love Aquinas for his irenicism, writing as he was at a time when

▷▷

Vatican II on Peace

Civil rulers who must at the same time promote the universal good as well as protect the interests of their own people, depend to a great extent on public opinion and public feeling. Their efforts will be fruitless as long as hostility, contempt and distrust as well as racial hatred and uncompromising ideologies continue to divide people and put them in opposing camps. Hence there is a supreme need to re-educate attitudes and guide public opinion in a new direction. (GS 82)

▷▷ Christianity and culture seemed harmoniously integrated and mutually illuminating.

Among modern theological writers, I am inspired by the vivifying struggle of third world women theologians in Africa and Asia, and by the literary eloquence of black American womanist theologians. And the social encyclicals of John Paul II are, I believe, among the greatest visionary texts of modernity, a gift of com-passion and wisdom that the 20th century Church will bequeath to future generations of all faiths and none.

The theology of Eve

I think that there has perhaps never been a better time to be a Catholic woman theologian, and when I consider what it means to say this, I find myself irresistibly drawn to reflect upon the world's first and most influential theologian – Eve.

Rescuing her from the crude image of fallen sexuality that generations of male theologians have imposed upon her, Christian women today are constructing a new persona for the biblical Eve. It is Eve who converses theologically with the serpent, weighing up her options and taking responsibility for her actions. The woman is, says Phyllis Trible, 'both theologian and translator'. The man, on the other hand, is 'a silent, passive and bland recipient... The man does not theologise; he does not contemplate; he does not envision the full possibilities of the occasion'.

Honnor Morton, a 19th century English nurse, unknowingly echoed the voices of many others when she wrote in her journal: "To you, oh Eve, we owe it that we are as gods, and not as

children playing in the garden – that we know the good and evil and are not left in ignorance and lust. Man had stayed ever in uninquiring peace, but to you was given strength to grasp the apple, to proclaim that woman at least prefers wisdom and the wilderness to idle lasciviousness in Eden."

Perhaps Eve should be the patron saint of theo-logians, for she symbolises the loss of innocence that necessarily accompanies the acquisition of knowledge. Like her, the theologian must leave the paradise of un-questioning intimacy and union with God in order to pursue the question of God through the alienating wilderness of culture and learning. Like her, the theologian must also recognise that the desire for knowledge is opaque and vulnerable to the seduction of hubris – the desire to use knowledge in order to acquire the power of gods.

Like Eve, the theologian is also called to be 'mother of the living'. That means using the knowledge we have acquired to bring new life and hope to the children of God, being ever attentive to the weak and the hungry, to the newborn visions that seed themselves in the human spirit and cry out for the knowledge of God.

Donald Nicholl argues that 'the place for a Christian theologian is in a community, a genuine community where the members share one another's lives. It must also be one where men and women are together, and it must be one where children are not hidden away.' Living theology means learning to think from within the distractions, demands and needs of others, following patterns of thought through the intricate, complex webs of everyday life, and looking for the connecting thread that weaves together an ongoing conversation with and about God, within the chatter and clutter of life.

If God is the ultimate 'Other' of theology, then maybe children are the closest we adults ever come to encountering the otherness of God in the mystery, the vulnerability and the foolishness of God's wisdom at play in our midst, constantly distracting us from the serious business of doing theology. Immanuel, God with us, is a God who comes among us as a newborn child in order to learn his humanity from a woman, the New Eve, the only theologian ever to grace the world with the perfect Word of God. ■

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Silence of the churches on Genetic Engineering

I was invited – as a church person – to join the recent *GE free* hikoi to Government House and Parliament.

I wish to say how disappointing it was that Christian communities were not visibly represented during the hikoi.

The spiritually-based communities that declared their presence and support included Maori and Jews. In listening to one Jewish man I was fascinated to hear him quoting Biblical passages that spoke of the need to respect the sacred nature of each life form. The clear and principled Maori and Jewish positions made more obvious the absence of Christian voice and demonstration.

A number of the hikoi participants expressed their regret that there was such quietness from the Christian churches about the *GE free* issue. Some said that they have met Christians

letters



who are deeply concerned about the implications of genetic manipulation, but they do not hear those concerns taken up publicly by church leadership or by church communities.

On the positive side, the leaders of the hikoi did express their gratitude for the hospitality offered to them by *St. Columba's* church in Grey Lynn and *St. Michael's* Anglican Marae church in Palmerston North – and to *St. Matthew's in the City* for being willing to help out. Having taken a small part in the hikoi, as a church person, I do appeal to all who read this to take up this issue as a matter for prayer, study, discussion, and action in your churches – if that is not

already happening. I believe a renewed search of our Christian tradition, which stresses so strongly the sanctity of all life, must reveal important insights on these issues, insights that are worth communicating with others.

It is important to acknowledge that Christian prayer did have its place in the hikoi, mainly from Maori participants who made sure there was karakia at the beginning of each day, meal, and gathering time.

For any church or family looking for a way to affirm the *GE free* movement it is possible to register your property as *GE free* (*below*).

Susan Healey, Auckland

See also Ron Sharp's article on pages 8-9 with instructions how to register your property as GE free. Ed

Appreciation of a Catholic education

Recently I attended the 90th jubilee of St Bede's College in Christchurch. I was a pupil there from 1956 to 1961, for me very happy years. This year also marks the appointment of the first lay Principal and the departure of the Marist Fathers. These events prompt some reflection.

Not until many years after finishing school did I fully realise at what cost this education was provided and appreciate the pressure the college staff worked under. They were teaching and getting by with limited resources, marking homework, worrying about performances in public examinations, running a boarding establishment, coaching sporting and cultural activities, saying their daily prayers – about one hour in those days – and on top of all this, many were studying part-time for university degrees.

This was prior to the integration of Catholic Schools, so the system was viable only through the long hours worked by the unsalaried religious staff in the schools and by the sacrifices of the Catholic community who funded

the undertaking.

Despite these challenges my classmates and I were the recipients of quality teaching. I continue to be grateful for the efforts of Frs Leo Evatt, John Loft, Bern Ryan, Bill Spillane, Mick O'Meegan, Kevin Mahar, Phil Roberts, Kevin O'Connor, Bernie Vella, Basil Blake, and, that model of versatility, Jack Hogan. Others will have a different list of names, as will those who attended other schools staffed by religious orders. We recall them all as human beings with strengths and failings, but on balance, and considering the limited resources available, it is remarkable what they achieved.

Part of the curriculum in those pre-Vatican II days was a daily Christian Doctrine class – five times a week for six years is a significant amount of teaching. However, with hindsight, what seems to have had a more lasting effect on me is the sheer commitment of the 20 or so priests.

The Catholic education system has come far since my school days and now operates in a very different manner.

Then, as now, it aimed to provide education within an environment where secular learning occurred side by side with a growing appreciation of our faith. Somehow, the Catholic education system made a great contribution to lifting the status of the Catholic community despite, and perhaps even because of, what would now be regarded as drastic under-resourcing.

Of late I have become aware of some criticisms of the motivation behind these achievements. In my view this simply forgets things as they were then. Both my parents' and grandparents' generations were victims of religious prejudice.

Everyone wished to break away from this, and the whole Catholic community took great delight in the successes, small or large, of any of our number. It would be a great injustice to forget or belittle the wonderful commitment of the staff of the Catholic Schools of those days who succeeded in extending the horizons of so many of us.

Michael Pender, Christchurch



Looking up towards the monastery of Our Lady of Montserrat. The 'serrated' mountain – 'Montserrat' – can be seen behind

*Nic McCloy visits
one of Spain's most famous sanctuaries
and is bowled over by the experience*

After several frenetic days soaking up the art and atmosphere of Barcelona, repose was exactly what we needed. A 50 minute train ride from Barcelona's Plaza de Espanya station brought us to the base station for a cable car which disappeared up into the moonscape of the Catalanian mountains. Hidden in these mountains is the Benedictine Basilica and Monastery of Montserrat, home to *La Moreneta* – the Black Virgin of Montserrat.

The view from the cable car was breathtaking but not nearly as stunning as what we were to find at the top of the ride. The monastery at Montserrat is Spain's second most visited pilgrimage site, after Santiago de Compostela. There has been a monastery on this site since the ninth century, but apart from a 15th century cloister, the bulk of the current complex was built in the early 19th century after the basilica and monastery were sacked by Napoleon's armies.

The walk from the cable car to the monastery complex took us past a café and souvenir shop, and up into the Plaza de Santa Maria. Foresight meant that we

"Man will find no repose, b

A 21st century to the Black

had booked a room for the night at the monastery hotel, Abat des Cisneros, so we could dump our bags and explore at leisure – although not before drinking in the view over the Plaza, the basilica and down into the valley below. The contrast between this and the modernist madness of Barcelona was amazing!

Our late afternoon arrival meant that we avoided the bulk of the crowds and didn't have to queue to climb the stairs to the niche above the main altar in the basilica to pay our respects to *La Moreneta*. Tradition dictates that visitors to Montserrat touch the orb of the statue of the Black Virgin. The statue is considered to be the soul of Montserrat, and is reputed to have been made by St Luke and then brought to Spain by St Peter. During the Moorish years the statue was hidden in a nearby cave, and since then has never left her mountain home.

Following our visit to the glorious basilica, which boasts a richly enamelled altar and many paintings by local Catalan artists, we visited a small and unusual room in the complex. The room is home to the many items which people have left as tributes for prayers to *La Moreneta* – these included two wedding dresses, a leg cast, crutches and a braid of hair. By now it was early evening and a pre-dinner mountain stroll took us along a path dotted with tiled shrines to Our Lady erected over the years by groups who had made their pilgrimage to the mountain.



ut in his own Montserrat.”
(Goethe)

pilgrim's tribute to the Black Madonna



On our return to the monastery, we found we were in time for sung Vespers in the basilica. The beauty of the dusk in the mountains and the sense of peace which descended with the departure of the day trippers was glorious. After a most unpilgrimlike dinner at the hotel, the mountain air meant that we fell easily into a peaceful sleep punctuated by the chiming of the basilica bells.

An early morning saw us head up the mountain further on a funicular train for some more hiking. The monastery is set in a national park so is an ideal venue for both strollers and serious hikers. Forgoing the rigours of the path to the highest peak, I decided to walk to the Hermitage of St Joan. This is one of the many hermitages on the mountain and in the early morning

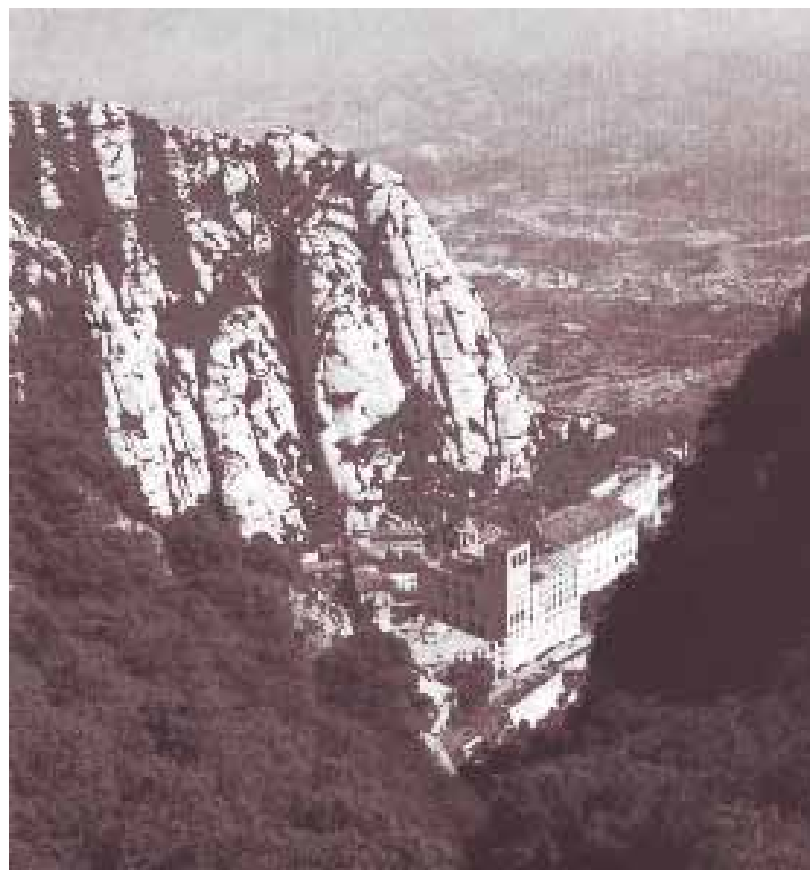
silence, the hermit lifestyle made perfect sense to me.

I happily wandered in the hills for several hours, being drawn back down to the monastery to see one of the things that Montserrat is most famous for. At 1pm every day the Montserrat Escolania sing the *Salve Regina* and the *Virolai*. The boys' choir is world renowned and to see them sing in the basilica was a rare treat. All of the boys live and study at the monastery and they rarely perform anywhere else.

All too quickly – and without enough time to see the Museum or to do as many of the local walks as we wanted – we found ourselves back at the station waiting for a train back to Barcelona and the real

Barcelona is the capital city of the province of Catalonia, in northeast Spain. A few miles outside is one of Europe's most interesting pilgrimage sites. Situated in spectacular mountains – “a weird combination of Arizona and Bavaria”, says one travel writer – it is the shrine of Spain's most famous icon, the Black Madonna (pictured centre page).

Nearby is Manresa, the cave where St Ignatius Loyola spent several months in prayer, finding his vocation and composing the Spiritual Exercises



..and finally, looking down from the top on the Monastery buildings and the Catalanian plain

world. However the time spent at Montserrat served to recharge the batteries of two weary travellers, much as it has for many pilgrims over the centuries. ■

Nic McCloy, Tui Motu's regular film critic, is presently working in London

Branded for Life

Globalisation is creating a new world culture hooked on consumerism, says American commentator Tom Sine. And no one is more vulnerable to the enticements of corporate advertising than young people – Americans today, the world tomorrow

The WTO's 'battle in Seattle', followed by mayhem in Genoa, stirred worldwide concern about the impact of the new global economy on our poorest neighbours and the environment. An international coalition of environmentalists, labour union leaders, citizen activists, and church leaders has come together (with the help of the Internet) to challenge the agendas of the World Trade Organization. But many peace and justice Christians, a part of this new coalition, are still focused on the issues of the 1970s and '80s. In the '90s we moved into a new neighbourhood, and few in the church seemed to have noticed.

When the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union imploded, virtually every nation on earth joined the free-market race to the top. Overnight we have become a part of a one-world economic order. This global boom economy raises issues regarding its impact on workers, sweatshops, and escalating environmental damage, but also a host of new issues that will require imaginative responses.

In economic centralization, domination is the name of the game. As Michael Quinlan, chairman of the board of McDonald's, declares, "I am open to any course that helps McDonald's dominate every market." Through aggressive expansion and mergers, transnational corporations are achieving domination of their global markets. Power is concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer global corporations as these behemoths mate and merge. This is likely to seriously undercut the future of representational government.

The consolidation of corporate power is of greatest concern in the domination

of media and information systems. Alle Lasn, in an article titled "Communications Cartel," wrote that the flow of information worldwide is controlled by an ever-shrinking number of transnational media corporations led by seven giants, like Time, Warner and Rupert Murdoch. "Between them," says Lasn, "these media giants have taken over the whole global mindscape."

In 1997 a landmark accord that effectively ended state control of communications and media was signed by 60 countries under the auspices of the WTO. This opened up the \$600 billion global telecommunications market to all comers. MCI's president Gerald Taylor predicted, "There's probably going to be only four to six global gangs... as this sorts out." What are the likely consequences for those who want to express or access dissenting views?

*a 'borderless'
youth culture has
emerged – the uniform
Levis, the drink Coke, all
hard-wired to the same
pop media*

Some point out that we will have full freedom of communications on the Internet. But others aren't so sure. Jeff Mallett of *Yahoo* warns that because there is so much money at stake, the media giants are likely also to turn their attention to the Net. They will be seriously tempted to become the cyberspace gatekeepers, dictating the terms of access and making dissenting viewpoints harder to find. It could also

undercut the new global activism that's using the Net to give corporate giants such headaches.

A homogenized global village. How are the architects of the world economic order using media to alter the human landscape? Two Pentecostal pastors from the Dominican Republic told me they had lost their entire youth over a period of five years. Coincidentally, MTV had come to their country over the same five years, along with other manifestations of American pop media.

In the last seven years a 'borderless' youth culture has emerged. The uniform is Levis. The drink is Coke. And they are all hard-wired to the same pop media. Outside the United States this phenomena is seen not only as a product of globalization but as a new form of American colonization. The world is beginning to look like an American strip mall, complete with KFC, Pizza Hut, and the Golden Arches.

In Naomi Klein's provocative new book *No Logo*, she cites the New World Teen Study, which found that the single most significant factor contributing to the shared taste of the middle-class teens was TV – in particular MTV, which 85 percent of them watch every day. "The more viewers there are to absorb MTV's vision," she says, "the more homogeneous a market its advertisers have, to sell their products." The world's youth are targeted for a very simple reason – they are more amenable to the values of the global shopping mall than their parents' generation. While adults often still prefer culturally specific customs, young people, according to economist Joseph Quinlan, "prefer Coke to tea,

Nike to sandals, Chicken McNuggets to rice, [and] credit cards to cash."

McWorld's marketers are not just interested in selling products to the global youth. They are intent on changing their values so they will all want to buy the same products. Whether we recognize it or not, people of faith are in a worldwide contest for the hearts and minds of the next generation.

The branding of American youth

When I was a teenager back in the '50s, we listened each week to a few hours of music that our parents really hated (early Rock and Roll). We watched TV occasionally. We went to a movie on Friday night. A recent report states that American youth are online 37.5 hours each week – TV, MTV, video games, and the Internet.

Think about that! What possible impact is an hour of Sunday school each week likely to have against 37.5 hours online? Are the young still deriving their sense of values, identity, and spirituality from home, church, and community, or has their formation been taken over by the marketers of McWorld?

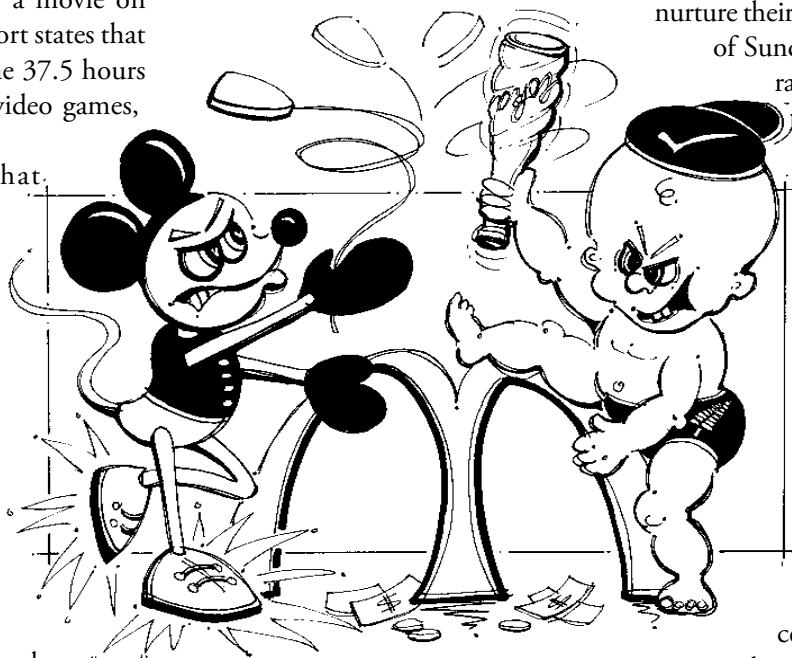
In *No Logo*, Klein reveals that the global economic architects are not just trying to create more ardent consumers to keep the boom economy booming. Corporations like Nike have created a myth powerful enough to infuse meaning into raw objects – such as tennis shoes. By identifying with deeply cherished parts of a culture, corporate brands take on a transcendent quality. They have transformed themselves from marketers of products to 'brokers of meaning'.

"A pair of \$150 Air Jordans," says Klein, "are not just shoes but a kind of talisman with which poor kids can run out of the ghetto and better their lives. Nike's magic slippers will help them fly just like

it helped Michael Jordan fly." American young aren't just buying products, they are being branded for life.

The mighty mustard seed

In Scripture we read about a God with a different agenda for creation. McWorld's agenda begins with domination, the assertion of power, and the rapid centralization of the global economy. God's agenda begins with the mustard seed. The destination of McWorld's economic engineering is a global shopping mall where our identity, our common humanity, and even our spirituality are derived from our consumerism. The destination of the mustard seed conspiracy is a vast



international homecoming where the blind see, justice comes to the poor, and shalom to the nations.

In the '70s there was a strong emphasis on lifestyle change that encouraged Christians to live a scaled-down version of the American dream. But if we hope to contend with the seductions of McWorld, we need to do more than simplifying the American dream – we need to reinvent it. Fighting the global giant requires a reawakening of biblical imagination, a reminder that we are called to labour for a very different dream – one far more creative and celebrative than what McWorld has to offer.

During a brainstorming session with Christian schoolteachers in Australia, a group came up with a fresh idea to teach primary kids how to decode marketing messages. The students designed a totally useless but intriguing product, then developed a marketing and advertising campaign to go with it. This way they learned the subtext of all the messages directed at them across the media.

We need communities of resistance and celebration to flesh out this vision of God's new order in everyday life. There is a group in Oakland that tries to express God's shalom vision in every aspect of their common life, including how they nurture their young. Instead of one hour

of Sunday school each week, they

raise their young all day long

in ways that help them

to decode the messages

of McWorld. Their kids

then give expression of the

future of God by helping

put on neighbourhood

block parties.

We have moved into

a new neighbourhood.

We are not simply

dealing with the issues

of consumerism that we

contended with in the

'70s and '80s. In the 21st

century, global marketers

have taken an entirely new focus

that is much more seductive than anything

we have seen before. The people of God

have the opportunity not only to respond

to the challenges of globalisation, but also

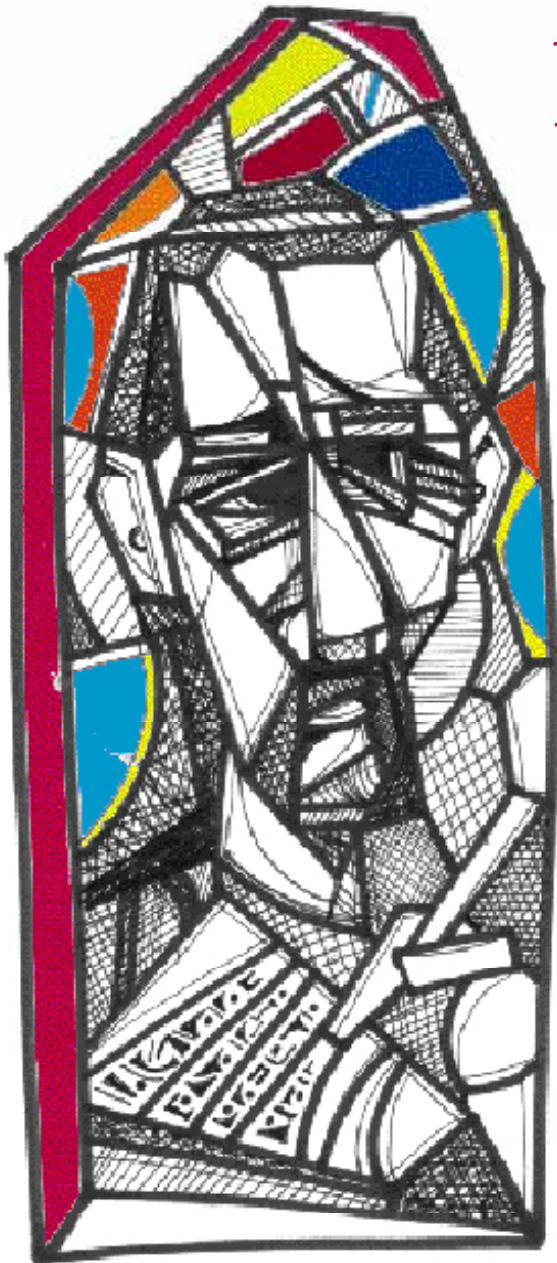
to dream new dreams for the human future

– dreams that begin with a mustard seed. ■

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His most recent book is Mustard Seed vs. McWorld (Baker Books, 1999).



Baxter the mystic

New Zealand's greatest poet. A grubby, disreputable drunk – or one through whom God speaks. Mike Riddell explores the complex character and sublime writing of James K. Baxter

- He's a complex character. Baxter was a social reformer and was regarded as a prophet. He was a tramp, the founder of a community, a controversial public figure. So we have many facets to consider.
- The scandalous nature of Baxter; his moral life pushed the boundaries. To some extent this was an 'act'. He himself said, "I am a coarse man by intention". He swore and used sexual analogy to shock and gain attention. In the final years of his life he left his wife and family in his pursuit of 'Jerusalem', and he formed liaisons with other women along the way.

So, can such a person reveal to us anything of God? Can God shine through a life so broken and fragmented? My analogy for him is that of stained glass. Because the glass happens to be stained, that doesn't diminish the light that shines through it; indeed it adds colour to it. What the man reveals to us of God need not be limited by his own human failings. O'Sullivan claimed that Baxter suffered at the hands of Catholics "who took it for granted that any kind of mystical experience could begin only after one's purification from sin had been complete". I wish to concur with the view that we might credibly award him the title of mystic.

Baxter as a mystic

His pilgrimage to Catholicism via Anglicanism was for Baxter a serious journey. Many commentators miss the depth of his Christian faith. In his final years nearly all his writing was a reflection of this journey. Baxter was in Dunedin for two years as Burns Fellow and worked for the diocese. During that time he experienced a call, which he describes as a 'dream' which came to him. He said to Colin Durning that his 'spiritual radar' lead him to Jerusalem. He understood the metaphor of the place, with all of its religious resonance. He went there via Auckland where he began working among drug addicts; and then he meandered his way down to Jerusalem where he set

Some years ago, Eugene O'Sullivan, friend and confessor to James K. Baxter, wrote of the significance of his newly deceased companion. O'Sullivan saw in the life of the poet something much more significant than a literary contribution. Comparing him to the English mystics Richard Rolle and Julian of Norwich, he wrote: "A New Zealand man, a man from a new culture altogether, has gone out alone to search for God... no modern writer I know of has attained such a degree of accurate articulation of the soul's journey." O'Sullivan regarded Baxter as our first indigenous mystic. This declaration is of course controversial. It is easier to speak of someone as a 'mystic' who has been sanctified by history, than of someone like James K. Baxter who exists for us in living memory. Some of the barriers to our owning him as a religious visionary include the following:

- For Dunedinites he's a local boy. Some of us may have heard him swearing while sitting on the steps of the Cathedral after Mass. He has walked in our streets and drunk in our pubs.

up a community, which became a place of controversy. Many whose lives were broken came there, were welcomed and some were healed. He himself chose to dress in old clothes, go around in bare feet and live a life of visible poverty. During these final years he was consumed by his relationship with God and all his work reflects this.

He became a person of prayer and his facility with words have enabled us to share in the riches of this experience, demonstrated in the widespread use of his *Song to the Holy Spirit*. Among his explicitly religious poems, *Song to the Father* expresses the melding of Christian faith and joy in creation which shaped Baxter's mystic vision.

Father, beyond the hills and water,
Beyond the city of the stars,
In a chosen overcoat of night
You hide from me. All men find it so,
And I would be a fool to grieve
Because my bones can not yet rise

Into your heaven. Now at moonrise
The glitter on the river water
Makes every stone and plant cell grieve
For what you lock behind the stars,
Promising that it will be so
But not in the now of night.

Father, I am myself the night
In whom your sun will have to rise
When death demands it must be so.
My heart dissolves in me like water
And the blunt arrows of the stars
Lodged in my marrow make me grieve...

Baxter made his life of prayer obvious. He was wont to fall on his knees in public places and start to meditate. This was a common sight, even in such busy places as Vulcan Lane in Auckland. People frowned at him but he was never molested by the police or by neighbours.

Some young people however would join him and meditate also in their own way. Baxter would say to them: "It's quite all right for us to meditate here. All the people here are meditating – some on their bank accounts, some on their health, some on the fact that they will die soon, some on the fact that their wives or husbands neglect them. Everybody meditates. We're just doing the same as everybody else".

He became very aware of the materialism of our society and the need for poverty both in the material and the spiritual sense. He chose to demonstrate this visibly by his appearance – though his wife mentioned somewhat cynically that he still had a dinner suit hanging in the closet at her place.

Baxter reflects on this in the *Jerusalem Daybook* which I regard as a spiritual classic. He says: "Why do I go barefoot? Why do I have long hair and a beard? Why do I wear old clothes till they become unwearable? Every

time I meet people in the towns they ask me these things. It is not enough to say that appearances don't matter.

"Poverty is the actual answer. All men are required by God to have a spirit of poverty. But God may touch a man here or there – no less a sinner than his fellows – and say to him:

'It is your business to be visibly poor – to do without everything you can do without – shoes, a barber, a house of your own, a fire to sit at, a desk to write at, some varieties of food and occasionally all food, the approval of your neighbours, your own certainty of being in the right – but above all, the sense of comfort. A comfortable servant might begin to serve comfort instead of serving me'.

"To be poor is not to become good. Poverty is availability. It is to be that void, that nothing, on which Te Wairua Tapu moved at the beginning of the world, and still does move. I am incapable of being good – my soul is a mass of faults and contradictions – but when I know I am nothing, then through the eye of the needle God can do what he wants to do. It is when I think that I'm something that my life backfires on me."

His asceticism

Baxter was sustained by the rituals of the church. He loved the Mass, especially when celebrated in the communal house at Jerusalem. The sacraments were the source and sustenance of his spiritual insight and energy.

Sometimes in Jerusalem he would retreat to a remote spot and scourge himself as a form of purification. He would prostrate himself for long periods on the floor of the church. He occasionally wore a hair shirt. These practices may seem strange to us, but with his propensity to certain sins Baxter found in these disciplines a means of cleansing.

At one point he thought of giving up his writing because he thought it a form of mental possession. Colin Durning challenged him on this, and Baxter said, "I tried to give up writing but the poems just kept climbing up my back".

Eugene O'Sullivan introduced him to the works of the English mystics, which he absorbed. It was from his reflections on these that Baxter produced some fascinating dialogues. For ▷▷

Vatican II on Peace

If peace is ever to be achieved, a primary requisite is to remove the causes of dissension. Wars thrive on these, especially on injustice. Excessive economic inequalities and an unwarranted delay in applying the necessary remedies are often the causes of such dissension. Other causes spring from a quest for power and from disregard for human rights. At a deeper level they arise from envy, distrust, pride and other selfish passions (GS 83).



example, his largely unknown *Dialogue with the Beloved One*. It brings us into the heart of Baxter.

You have to carry me, little donkey.
Yes, Lord, but it is still absurd.
Donkey is the right word – loud-mouthed,
braying, unchaste stupid beast that lives on thistles.
Just now I'm in my stable,
but when we get on the road,
what then?

They can't see you.
They can only see me,
and I'm bound to do everything stupidly.

*Little donkey, I will tell you what to do,
and if I don't your mistakes will be necessary humiliations.
Otherwise you might forget who your rider is!*

If the worst comes to the worst, Lord,
and I'm a persistent scandal to others,
I could always make some contact with the bishops.
You might not be interested in my sins but they would!
You speak in my heart,
but they are 'you' in the Church,
because you decided it should be so.
If they tell me to get back into my stable
I will be bound to obey.

*If, if;
You live by 'if' and it has no meaning.
All you can do is to live inside whatever now
I give you.
If you accept that fully,
you can be at peace.
You belong to me, not yourself.*

Yes, Lord.
*The time will come, little donkey,
when they will sell your hide to make shoes with,
and that will be quite enough tribulation for you.
Do you love me, little donkey?*

Yes, Lord.
You know that is what I desire at the bottom of my heart.

Then what have you got to worry about?
Self-delusion, Lord.
The effect of my past sins;
the fear of committing more.
*I can look after those things.
All you have to do is put one foot in front of the other.
That is all you are capable of doing.*

Yes, Lord.
*I hedged you in,
and brought you here
where you can converse with me at leisure.
This is my desert – what you call 'the gap'.
Do you like it?*

In itself I loathe it, Lord –
more than any other situation;
but I'm glad to be here
because I know I'm near to you.
These thrills in the scalp and tremors in the heart

*are unimportant;
You can only be happy now by dying along with me.*

Yes, Lord.
*What do your sins mean?
I made you.
You made your sins –
a little burned patch in my harvest field,
your nothing.
Is what I made or what you made the most important?*
What you made, Lord.

*Then, count yourself more valuable than your sins.
To think otherwise is to put your creation above mine.
All that I have made I love and find good.
But when the justice of my mercy begins and I forget you,
then even that little burned patch will be covered over.*

Yes Lord.
I both desire and fear what you speak.
*You can go now, little donkey.
I prefer you to be the donkey that you are
than any other creature.*

Yes, Lord.

Baxter often condensed these dialogues into poems, as illustrated in the *Jerusalem Sonnets*.

Brother Ass, Brother Ass, you are full of fancies,
You want this and that – a woman, a thistle,
A poem, a coffeebreak, a white bed, no crabs;
And now you complain of the weight of the Rider
Who will set you free to gallop in the light of the sun!
Ah well, kick Him off then, and see how you go
Lame-footed in the brambles. Your disconsolate bray
Is ugly in my ears – long ago, long ago,
The battle was fought and the issue decided
As to who would be King – go on, little donkey
Saddled and bridled by the Master of the world,
Be glad you can distinguish not an inch of the track,
That the stones are sharp, that your hide can itch,
That His true weight is heavy on your back.

There are the same analogies and symbolism as in the *Dialogue*, although the tone is different. You can see the relationship between the public poetry and the inner spiritual journey which is generating the poems.

Baxter's themes

The subjects which Baxter tackles are of course the common ones of mystical discourse. The uniqueness of these themes is that they are embodied in someone who has lived among us. They are enfleshed in a language we understand.

• *Emptiness*. This was an integrating factor of his later period. He called himself Hemi Te Tutua ('Hemi the nothing'). His goal was to become nothing. In the sonnets he talks of a journey of subtraction in his life – "you can tell my words are crippled now; The bright coat of art He has taken away from me.. Home and bed He has taken away from me... Prayer of priest or nun I cannot use...". It was a process of letting

go of what was familiar, with a sense that God was with him stripping away all the extraneous props on which his life had depended: his wife, home, family, even his sense of artistry have been taken away.

- His *poverty*, already mentioned above. This was used to raise discussion among people. His visible presence stood as a scandal for some. He was able to raise issues of materialism and its crippling effect on the spiritual lives of many. The New Zealand Trinity, he said, consisted of respectability, the dollar note and School Certificate.

- *Kenosis* was his methodology – the process of pouring out and self-emptying, referred to by Paul in *Philippians II*.

“Through a theology of *kenosis* Buddhist and Catholic stand on the same ground. *Kenosis* means self-emptying, always with the proviso that one hopes to make more room for God and one’s neighbour. Te Ariki emptied himself by his suffering and docility to the unknown will of Te Matua. Let us not imagine that the Father instructed the Son as the skipper of a coastal boat instructs the engineer. The will of God is rarely explicit. One learns the theology of *kenosis* not out of a book but by tramping 40 miles with sore feet in the rain. It is a different man who takes his coat off at the end of the journey.

“The soul has to be wounded as well as the body. Wounds are like fountains in the soul. Through our wounds we achieve availability. Today, on my forty-fifth birthday, I walk on a cold muddy track between the cottages, meditating as usual on his union with our haphazard calamities, and butchered by my longing for the apparently impossible harmony which will come at the end of all things.”

Through self-emptying he comes to a centre where the ego no longer dominates and Baxter hopes to make room for God and for others.

- The *void* or *gap* or *desert*. A Maori term, Wahi Ngaro, is used by Baxter to speak of that potent wasteland of encounter which is the ground of the mystical way. He uses it frequently in *Autumn Testament*:

Wahi Ngaro, the gap from which our prayers
Fall back like the toi-toi arrows
Children shoot upwards – Wahi Ngaro,
The limitless, the silent, the black night sky
From which the church huddles like a woman
On her hillock of ground – into Your wide arms
Travelling, I forget the name of God...

He speaks of the place of unknowing, travelling towards this place of emptiness, of darkness and uncertainty. This place where the name of God is forgotten almost, and yet the presence of God may be there.

- The *darkness*, not fearful or cold but warm and embracing. A place which must be entered into as part of the spiritual journey. To experience this Baxter would creep across at night to the church and prostrate himself on his own in the

darkness.

I had lain down for sleep, man, when He called me
To go across the wet paddock

And burgle the dark church – you see, Colin, the nuns
Bolt the side door and I unbolt it

Like a timid thief – red light, moonlight
Mix together; steps from nowhere

Thud in the porch; a bee wakes up and buzzes;
The whole empty pa and the Maori dead

Are present – there I lie down cruciform
On the cold linoleum, a violater

Of God’s decorum – and what has He to tell me?
‘More stupid than a stone, what do you know

Of love? Can you carry the weight of my Passion,
You old crab farmer?’ I go back home in peace.

There is something of St John of the Cross in Baxter’s late poetry, an influence he was fully aware of. It comes through in the following love song between the poet and God:

The streets are bare, my Love,
Since the day you touched me, –
I walk within your silence
In Pharaoh’s city,

The fine coat I wore
Might keep you from our bed,
I have thrown it in the fire,
I wait for you naked, –

I am black yet lovely
When the clear sun shines, –
Since you have touched me
Not If, but Is remains.

Truly you gave me
The poor to embrace,
In their faces I can see
The colour of your face,

But I cannot live without you,
Now that my goods are gone, –
Because my door is broken
You can come in.

All these images simply open him up to the love of God. These are his themes towards the end of his life. He had a deep sense of his own impending death, and in his writing his own soul seems to meld with the soul of Christ. His heart cry echoes the heart cry of the divine. In the concluding *Jerusalem Sonnets* is a kind of comparison between Baxter’s life and that of Christ. He has emptied himself to the extent that finally the voice of his Lord begins to speak through him. This may be either monstrously egotistical, or the fruition of a life deepened by the mystical path. It may be some years yet before history makes plain the most accurate description. ■



In praise of Santa Claus

It is a mistake to underestimate Santa. He mightn't get a part in the Bible, but he's sure a big part of Christmas.

In our parish we have a children's Christmas Eve service. It is one of the biggest services of the year. Children are everywhere, and the atmosphere is charged. We sing, we laugh, we tell stories of cribs, candles, and of Christmases past. We also have Santa.

Santa is often a problem. For the purists it might be a biblical one. For us it is a practical problem. We seem to lack extroverted males around here. Those who can stick out their stomach, chuckle "Ho, ho, ho", and answer smart seven year olds. Believe me, it's not a job for introverts!

Sometimes the Santa part of the service is, to my critical ears, okay. Sometimes it's ho hum. Sometimes it's worse than ho hum. But – and this is the interesting bit – Santa is never a flop. He never falls from the grace the children extend.

On Santa's entrance the energy levels rise. Whatever he says is listened to. Whatever he does is received with rapt attention. The power of Santa is quite formidable.

Many people take a low view of Santa. He is paraded in every shopping mall in the country encouraging people to buy. He doesn't say "Pay that phone bill". He says buy that thing or this thing or any thing. All things, we know, we could do without. Santa is a slave of rampant consumerism.

Then there is the bribery brigade. "Now, boys and girls, if you aren't good [read: do what I say] then Santa won't come." Santa's morality is reduced to the suspect morality of these parents. Everything in life has to be earned. Including love. Including Santa.

Jim, my neighbour, also takes a low view of the Santa myth. He objects to the portrayal of vertically challenged

people working in cramped 'sweat shop' conditions. He objects to reindeer being used as promotional aids with no benefits accruing to the threatened reindeer herds of Northern Europe. He objects to an obese elderly man being given, firstly, licence to enter any home or premise, secondly, a monopoly on the disbursement of gifts, and thirdly, an annual parade in his honour. Santa, to him, is a symbol of inequity.

The original Santa was, of course, a saint. Dear old wealthy Bishop Nic in the ancient city of Myra who gave generously to others. One story has it that an angel visited him one night and said, "Nicholas, you must take a bag of gold to the Pawnbroker's, for he is very poor and has three daughters. Unless they have a dowry, they will be sold into slavery". Nic took the gold and rushed to the Pawnbroker's house where he discreetly dropped it through a window. Naturally, the parents were overjoyed. Now their eldest could marry.

As you would expect in a good story this angelic visitation and discreet dropping of gold happened three times. But on the third and last time the Pawnbroker, curious to discover his benefactor, locked all the windows of the house. Nicholas, not being short of ideas, climbed up on the roof and dropped the bag down the chimney. The Pawnbroker never knew it was Bishop Nic, but close friends did and later told.

It's a story about sympathy for those impoverished, practical assistance, and innovative delivery systems. It's about shedding wealth. It's about the virtue of anonymous giving – a virtue that our modern world of sponsorship seems to have forgotten.

Personally I take a high view of Santa, and not just to infuriate my neighbour Jim [which it does]. I simply believe in Santa Claus. And, like most beliefs it has been refined and tempered by

experience, in particular that wonderful experience of sitting, week by week, in front of children and having to explain in simple precise language the meaning of life, faith, and flying sleighs.

There comes a time in most children's lives when some of the mathematics of the Santa saga seems insurmountable. Consider the number of children in your community, the number and size of presents, the dimensions of the sleigh, the distance from your community to the North Pole, the aerodynamic possibilities of reindeers, etc. So, inevitably, the questions arise: "How come...?" "How does he do that?" And, looking at me as though I was a Martian, "Do you actually believe in Santa Claus?"

If the inquisitor is worth their salt they won't stop there. "Well, what about the down the chimney bit?" "Yep," I reply, "I'm into it." "Look Glynn," my young friend continues, "Our chimney is designed for someone who eats only lettuce. It has a metal pipe of some 20 centimetres in diameter. Are you telling me that Mr Santa can squeeze down that?"

"Well," I respond, girding myself to the challenge, "Tell me how a well-known Rock Band can sing their stuff through cyberspace, come into my computer, which can then cut it onto a blank CD for me to play whenever I wish? And you think a bit of chimney pipe is a problem?" Around about now my young friend will roll the eyeballs, code for 'my silence is not my assent'.

The better question to ask is about meaning. For Santa means giving. Giving to others. Giving to those you don't know. Giving with no strings attached. Santa is about dreaming that nothing is impossible when it comes to helping and sharing. No elf, no chimney, no amount of snow, or consumerism, or cynicism, is going to

Symbols of Christmas

Symbols are for those
who 'look with other eyes'
for the message hidden within.
A tree can be a tree or
the Wood on which our Saviour dies.
A candle is a source of light
and a sign of his presence.
We may see a bell as just a bell;
it speaks to others of worship,
"Come, let us adore".
The gifts we give
as tokens of our love
are symbols of those
given by wise men
to Him-from-Above.
Santa's not just a dream for kids
but symbolic of St Nicholas'
kindly deeds.
A sprig of holly green and red
becomes the thorns
and drops of blood
from His head.
Ropes of tinsel glitter and glow.
So too the rays of a star
the way to Bethlehem show.
But over all, above all, and for all...
the star itself;
the symbol of our Saviour's birth.

Nan Hurdle

Fishing companion

Paul Andrews

One day last summer – really too fine and bright a day for fishing – I was out on my own on Lough Carra. The wind dropped round noon, the sun shone from a cloudless sky; we were, as the poet put it, as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean. Better abandon any hope of catching trout, and just enjoy the lovely lake. After a while in the midday heat I shipped the oars, lay down in the bottom of the boat and dozed.

I woke up aware of some tiny movement. The sun was still warm, the lake still windless. Looking down at my legs, I saw a beautiful big red damselfly (sometimes called dragonflies) had settled on my trousers just above the knee. She too seemed to be drowsy in the sun, and slowly and gently I moved my finger up behind her and touched, then stroked her long red body. Instead of flying away she arched her body, in evident enjoyment. I had never before got on talking terms with an insect, but she and I were certainly in communication. After a couple of minutes she fluttered her gossamer wings and flew away, but it was only to circle

round me and land again on exactly the same spot on my trousers. Again I stroked her gently, and again she responded with a luxurious curling of her body. A second time she flew away, circled, and landed on the same spot. The encounter was repeated again and again. The day seemed endless. I was in no hurry and neither was she. When she came back for the thirtieth time I stopped counting – till our conversation was rudely interrupted.

There were other boats on the lake, and one of the anglers grew concerned at the spectacle of my boat out from the shore, with nobody visible on board – lying on the floor of the boat I was out of sight. He motored alongside, and hearing him I stuck my head above the gunwale. *Oh* he called. *I was worried. Have you nobody with you? I have, I said, but she's left the boat for a bit.* He smiled and motored off, scratching his head. Where is she now, my beautiful red-bodied friend? God knows – and neither a sparrow nor a damselfly drops to the ground without His

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▷▷ stop it. This is why I believe in Santa.

The Santa saga is more powerful than any 'factual' findings by the geeky PhD student who sat for three consecutive Christmas Eves with a telescope and video camera on a rooftop. Santa inspires and encourages the best in humanity, the best in you and me – selfless giving to others.

It isn't the Christmas message that Matthew and Luke had in mind, but it is a message that can lead people into God. ■

A gentle way of resolving racial tension

Healing our History: The Challenge of the Treaty of Waitangi

by Robert Consedine & Joanna Consedine

Penguin 2001

Price: \$29.95 287pp.

Review: Mike Riddell



Book Reviews

Perhaps a new millennium provides fresh impetus for considering the state of race relations in our land. Certainly the father and daughter authors of *Healing Our History* are hopeful that we might take whatever opportunities are offered us to advance justice, reconciliation and healing between Pakeha and Maori. Their book is written as a contribution to the process, in an acknowledged context of a troubled relationship. In doing so, it provides some genuinely important and much needed insight.

It is a book written by Pakeha, for Pakeha. Opening with a chapter which describes Robert Consedine's experience of growing up in a Catholic home in the Christchurch suburb of Addington, there is a warmth and familiarity which allows a sense of connection for many ordinary Pakeha. Throughout the text, the personal stories and anecdotes continue to ground the more serious discussion, saving it from becoming doctrinaire. Robert Consedine has led an interesting life, and his reflections on it are humane and relevant to the more ideological subject matter.

The thesis of the book is that Aotearoa/New Zealand, in common with many other countries, has suffered deeply from its colonial history. The first call of the authors is for understanding of that history. They lament the way in which our story of settlement and nationhood has been suppressed, often being displaced by European history. The recalling of colonial abuses of power

in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi is considered necessary to making sense of our current situation, and the first half of the book is largely devoted to this task.

The result is a competent synthesis of historical data, helpfully set against the background of the colonial movement in other parts of the world. History, of course, is never neutral, and the authors pick their way carefully through what are sometimes controversial interpretations of events. They argue convincingly for the systematic dispossession of Maori by the Crown, through manipulation and abuse of the Treaty of Waitangi. Much of this has been documented before, though as a narrative is not widely known or appreciated by Pakeha.

The genuinely helpful part of the book, to my mind, is to be found in Part Two, where the attention shifts from the understanding of history to the healing of it. Here there is the recognition that Pakeha, confronted with an uncomfortable history, have to have some way of dealing with it other than guilt or defensiveness. A veteran educator and co-ordinator of Treaty workshops, Robert Consedine offers his accumulated wisdom on the processing of historical pain.

There is a welcome acknowledgement that an atmosphere of confrontation or blaming is not helpful to transformation. When it comes to working through

the implications of the Treaty for Maori and Pakeha, parallel workshops are preferred to allow participants the freedom to explore their own questions and prejudices. The Consedines argue that time and space must be given for people to examine their own perspectives, even if those views may be misinformed. Only in an atmosphere of honesty can they be expected to move on.

An excellent chapter on 'Honouring Our Stories' advocates the reconciling power of telling and hearing personal and representative stories. This helps to draw attention away from recriminations, or the reductionism which would evaluate Treaty disputes in purely financial terms. If our bicultural history is to be healed rather than continue as an open wound, we must be able to move beyond recrimination to a situation of sincere dialogue.

The bringing together of passion for justice and forgiveness does credit to the Catholicism it reflects, and though not explicit, we gain the sense that the principles articulated in this text are an example of faith applied to the social setting. Some poignant discussion of the Consedine family's tragedy with the death of a daughter is handled sensitively, and makes important connections with the overall argument concerning the process of healing.

We are encouraged by the authors to find a new sense of cultural identity as Pakeha, so as to be secure in our place as Treaty partner. It is time for Pakeha to take some initiative in addressing our corporate past, and this book may become a valuable tool for doing so. My main concern is that the people who have the most to gain from reading it may be the least likely to do so. Those who are committed to the path of reconciliation in this land should buy

Here is an opening...

Enough Clear Water

by Anne Powell

Published by Steele Roberts, 2001

Price: \$19.95

Review: Sandra Winton

This is a collection of 70 poems in three sections. The first section is set in Aotearoa New Zealand, and feels deeply rooted in the familiar: Ngaio Gorge, Oriental Bay, a ewe birthing, a seal, rivers, beaches, hills, the light of this place. The language is ours too: "plains open as pikelets", "Korowai", "Grant Dalton", "our tiny hands/holding mugs of Milo". Anne Powell writes firmly from her identity as a pakeha New Zealander. From this position she reflects on encounters with Maori people and the Maori world looking at a feather cloak being given a pounamu, the experience of being *karanga*-d in and on other experiences that feel both personal and recognisable.

The first poem lays out the style of these poems and a theme of the book. Looking at a feather cloak in an exhibition at *Te Papa*, the writer is drawn into the beauty of the bird, its violent death in the forest and then the way the feathers are woven to make a precious cloak. It mirrors the way the poems themselves take life experiences, both beautiful and violent and weave them into an artistic creation that then has another human use.

The second section moves "off shore" as its title indicates. This move is both geographical and a move into a different experience as the land of New Zealand is replaced by desert and village and a landscape that includes war and violence. The

final section reflects more explicitly on religious themes.

Here is an opening – this line about being called onto a marae, reflects a central theme of the book. There is the opening between Maori and pakeha, the opening between the living and the dead, a touch opens up the past and the book has many images of opening: windows, bays and plains, a cave's mouth.

In the final poem, God and the Buddah sit in "the tent at the top of the world" and "they keep the tent open". The poems themselves constantly open up – from the moment of experience into that space that makes room for deeper awareness and presence,

*This watershed time &
where I must wait
to catch the drift
and life of tide that fills
and feeds the thirsting
sand.*

Coves

In these poems Anne Powell presents a spirituality of movement – from the moments of daily life into openness and spaciousness that is free and yet grounded. I like very much the way that she is able to move from any starting point, not just the beautiful and traditionally "spiritual". She honours lightness, letting go, the tiny moment and largeness. Water that flows, carries and can be transparent is a central image. In an age when certainties seem to have crumbled one after another, Anne Powell offers a kind of religious experience and spirituality that may enable us to move in our world and our own country in a way that is both flexible and centred.

The more time I spent with her book the more I liked it. It is beautifully printed with a cover that matches the contents with its pictures of the same scene flowing into one another.



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Some of the good ‘reads’ from 2001

Kathleen Doherty

No Great Mischief

If it were not for the intervention of a determined editor armed with a bottle of whisky, devotees of Canadian writer Alistair MacLeod might still be waiting for the appearance of his first novel. Until two years ago this meticulous craftsman was known to a relatively small band of readers who were used to waiting a long time between courses: in 30-plus years MacLeod had published just 14 short stories, each one a beautifully constructed gem.

Some ten years ago the word went out that he was writing a novel, but years went by and there was no sign of it. That is when the editor stepped in. It is now part of publishing folklore that he drove from Toronto to Windsor, where Alistair

MacLeod was Professor of English at the university, and swapped a bottle of malt whisky for a manuscript, handwritten, mainly in old exam booklets, which had been under construction for 13 years.

MacLeod protests mildly that his editor should get a new dining-out story, and that he wasn't working on his novel all the time, confining the writing to the university summer vacations and thinking about the story the rest of the time. He concedes however that his editor's action probably advanced publication by the two years he had allowed for delivering a well-presented typed manuscript.

The result was well worth the wait. *No Great Mischief* is a wonderful novel. It was immediately recognised as significant when published in Canada, and earlier this year took the world's richest literary prize, the *IMPAC Dublin Literary Award*. The faithful band who waited for so long for this novel feel a

warm glow of pride – Alistair MacLeod, now 65, unassuming and with a real love for the beauty of words, seems to inspire great affection in his readers.

Given its epic scope – it tells the story of the MacDonalds from the time their ancestor, the first Calum Ruadh (red-haired Calum) left Scotland in 1779, after fighting for Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden, until the time of the narration in the mid-1980s in Canada – it is a surprisingly intimate novel. Alistair MacLeod is, above all, a great storyteller. His narrator, who has received the family history from the grandparents who brought him up, mixes the past and the present so that they form one gripping story of the ties that bind a family to each other, to their history and to their home.

For the narrator, Alexander MacDonald, identified throughout his life by his Gaelic-speaking family as *gille beag ruadh* (the little red-haired boy) the past is ever-present. The recurring family names and red hair make sure of that. It gives to his life a richness and an understanding which is as enviable as it is painful.

Alistair MacLeod has a superb control of language. He has said that he thinks through every sentence and reworks it in his head before he finally commits it to paper. He also has superb control of time. In *No Great Mischief* he works in three time frames – the present, the narrator's own personal history, and his family's history from the time they left Scotland – weaving the three together effortlessly so that the situation of today makes total sense when seen against the background of the family.

The title comes from General Wolfe's cynical comment on recruiting the Highlanders for the assault on the

Plains of Abraham, that it was “no great mischief” if they fell. This family, like so many others, has rejection and hurt built into it. In the hands of this great writer it has been made noble. *No Great Mischief* is available in *Vintage* paperback, \$26.95)

Island

The short stories on which Alistair MacLeod's reputation was built have now been reissued, along with two new ones, in a fine collection, *Island* (*Jonathan Cape*, hardback, \$59.95). Slow-moving and beautifully written, they are set among the people of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, where the author grew up and where he still spends the summers, but their appeal is universal. These poignant stories capture a way of life which is fast disappearing as economic necessity forces the people to leave their old way of life for employment in the cities.

Last year Alistair MacLeod was on the judging panel which gave the premier Canadian literary award, the *Giller Prize*, jointly to Michael Ondaatje (for *Anil's Ghost*) and David Adams Richards (for *Mercy Among the Children*).

Mercy Among the Children

This latter is an unusual work for today – a moral fable. It is the bleak story of a family living in grinding poverty in rural New Brunswick whose plight is attributable to the father, when an adolescent, having promised God that if the life of a boy he thought he had injured were spared, he would never harm another living soul. In one sense he doesn't – he accepts the insults, the false accusations and the harm done to him by others in his community – but in another sense by loading his wife and children with the consequences

of his pact he does immense harm and it is hard to have great sympathy, let alone affection, for this morally upright man. The narrator is his son, who is not entirely credible in the role. While his understanding perspective softens our view of his father, he has too much knowledge of what people thought and did in situations where he was not present to make him convincing. But whatever shortcomings the novel has in this aspect are made up for by the superb descriptions of the harsh landscape, which is an intrinsic part of the narrative.

The truly titanic struggle of a man whose life is shaped by the belief that the wrongs people do always come back to work against them, and that he cannot truly be hurt if he does no harm to others, should be uplifting but it is not. One is left with a feeling of great sadness as the characters struggle against poverty and ignorance. The question of good versus evil has been thrust into the minds of virtually everyone in the past

three months, and it makes this novel, if not comforting, memorable.

The Dark Room

With *The Dark Room* (Heinemann) Rachel Seiffert has made a stunning debut as a novelist. This is her first published work and was short-listed for this year's *Booker Prize*. In three separate novellas, linked only by theme, it deals with three young German people before, during and much later than World War 11 who are forced to confront the consequences of a war and its attendant atrocities for which they were not responsible but which impacts hugely on their lives.

In the last and most complex section, set in the late 1990's, a young German academic who breaks the family silence and discovers that his beloved grandfather had been in the Waffen SS sets out to find the truth of his grandfather's war. It is a painful search which, once started, cannot be put aside, and which changes his world-view forever.

Rachel Seiffert is only 30, the daughter

of an Australian father and a German mother. She now lives in Berlin. Wisely, she has made no attempt in this novel to deliver judgement or to resolve the questions posed. Rather, she deals with the results of guilt and denial which, more than half a century later, still reverberate in the dark rooms of the mind where painful truths are hidden.

The Journey Home

Dealing with such truths, but in a very different way, is *The Journey Home* (pub *Pantheon*) by Olaf Olafsson, Icelandic born, now living in New York. It is a quiet, beautifully poetic account of the final visit to her homeland by a woman who is desperate for reconciliation – not least with herself – before she dies. Told in a series of short chapters it too deals with the effects of an eventful past on the present. It is suffused with the sights and the smells and the tastes of the narrator's youth – the reader comes to care very deeply for this brave and intensely vulnerable woman who is driven to make this final journey. It is a book to burn the midnight oil for – read

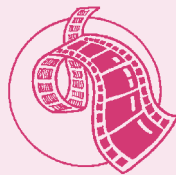
Amelie

Review: Nic McCloy

French films, in my view, fall into two categories. The first type are made the way the French make their sausages. They have a complexity of flavour, a little bit too much blood, a dose of spice and bits that you can't really tell what they are but are tough to digest.

The second type are made the way they make their sweets. Small, gorgeous morsels that attract the eye and then tantalise the taste buds. Sweet enough to leave you wanting more but not so sweet as to make you feel ill. Thankfully it is in this category that I would place *Amelie*.

Having recently suffered through Baz Luhrmann's take on French film with *Moulin Rouge*, I wasn't sure that I could cope with more Parisian feel good on film. However, a wet Saturday in London is enough to send anyone fleeing indoors and where best to hide from the Autumn but the local cinema. So it was at the Rio in Dalston that I first met *Amelie*.



far the lightest of his films (ignoring *Alien Resurrection* which was just embarrassing!). It has the same style and spark of *Delicatessen* and *City of the Lost Children* without being quite as dark.

Amelie follows the life of a young Parisian girl through her rather unusual childhood to the present day where she is a waitress in a small cafe. Her mission in life is to make other people happy and she goes to extraordinary lengths to make some very unusual people happy. The film is peopled by misfits and outcasts and *Amelie* manages to bring out the best (and sometimes worst) in them.

The film is extremely funny and completely charming. The laughs come easily from start to finish and the Jeunet magic is caught beautifully by a brilliant ensemble cast. This is a film which provides a couple of hours antidote to the troubles of the world and we could all use that at the moment. ■

The latest offering from Jean Pierre Jeunet, *Amelie* is by

Howard plays the race card – and backs a winner

John Howard has won a third successive term as Prime Minister of Australia with the biggest swing for an Australian party in Government since 1966. One would have to say that he represents the views of the Australian people and that is deeply disturbing. John Howard's politics are distasteful.

His victory at the polls is based on the turning away of the 'Tampa', loaded with asylum seekers, which he summarily ordered back to the open sea. Illegal immigrants and international refugee rights were both abandoned and his popularity soared as a consequence. He rushed to support the war against terrorism with a commitment of troops and equipment which showed Australia to be just as much in thrall to the US as Tony Blair's England. Apparently this won him support as well.

John Howard has made no apology for the government's mistreatment of Australia's Aborigines and continues to regard his near neighbours in the Asian area with suspicion. He has no dialogue with Indonesia, he ignores Asia and he prefers agreements and accords with Europe and the USA. By playing the race card both at home and in Asia, he has created a fertile field of resentment with the biggest Muslim country in the world.

This guarantees problems in the future. The swing to his party was helped by voters leaving the racist *One Nation* party for his Liberal/National coalition. These voters openly approved of Howard's stand.

So Howard is the man Australians want to lead their country. A man whose foreign policy in the Pacific has been disastrous. A politician who has been given the mandate to continue Australia's racist history and to support the US war in Afghanistan. I wonder if Australians can live with all this for three years without grave consequences.

Crosscurrents

John Honoré

Frail Alliance

The *Alliance* party's national conference (attended by US diplomats) called for a review of its support for the deployment of SAS troops in Afghanistan. Prime Minister Helen Clark immediately responded that "New Zealand was committed to a long-term contribution to the war". It is interesting to note how the pro-war consensus has been forced on all countries and any dissent will not be tolerated. "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" warns George W. Bush. The sovereignty of nation states such as New Zealand has manifestly been imperilled, but who is protesting?

Alliance party members dared to question Jim Anderton's handling of the affair and expressed dissent with the US bombing. It seems that nothing must be done to displease the US while they continue the devastation of Afghanistan. But many countries view the war with repugnance and support for it is weakening. *Alliance* party members are voicing this view. Phillida Bunkle does not "feel comfortable with the involvement of NZ troops". This is not treason. It is a valid concern in the minds and hearts of many people. If such views cannot be aired without a rift in the coalition government then it must be said that Helen Clark and Jim Anderton have forgotten their position as a centre-left coalition. The *Alliance* party is left-wing and has members such as the astute Leila Harre who is ideologically left and willing to stand up and be counted as being against the

war. Jim Anderton would do well to remember this. Helen Clark's dismissal of the *Alliance* on this issue and Jim Anderton's insistence on stability rather than principle have weakened both their leaderships and the coalition.

In Memoriam

To avoid cancellation of Canterbury subscriptions to *Tui Motu*, let me say immediately that I think Saint Todd Blackadder is a great bloke.

His canonisation by all Cantabrians was justified when he led his team to victory against those 'Scarflies' from Dunedin in the NPC final. But – I am delighted that Toddy is going to Scotland.

I am tired of Toddy! Toddy is a press industry all to himself. For the whole rugby season every Monday morning, the local paper had pages and pages devoted to rugby and Toddy, together with photos of him on the front page and the back page. Toddy smiling, grimacing, in the mud, holding aloft opponents or trophies, opening schools, kindergartens and envelopes containing medals and money.

Toddy says a few self-deprecating words at the old folks' gulag or at a function for preschool ankle-biters and off the front page go George W. Bush and Gary Moore. The poor man cannot go anywhere or do anything without a phalanx of adoring fans greater than any attributed to Madonna or Michael Jackson.

I don't think that there is a sporran big enough in Scotland for Toddy. What I fear now, of course, is the arrival on the front page of Toddy in kilts, kissing Scottish babies or tossing cabers. But for now there is a daily paper without Toddy. Respite! On a recent trip to Dunedin, I met a man who, when asked what he thought of Toddy, replied "Who's he?" And I had to say "Good on ya, mate!". ■

Violence is the path of death...

Can the American military action in Afghanistan be justified? This is the question religious leaders, theologians and moralists are grappling with.

No one denies that those who are to blame for the atrocities must be brought to justice. (Of course, those directly responsible are already dead.) But some are asking if the word 'war' is apt for the action taken by the US. Is it giving the terrorists a stature they do not deserve?

In the United States, the Catholic Archbishop of Philadelphia, Cardinal Bevilacqua, a well-known supporter of the Republican Party, gave President Bush a hearty pat on the back, assuring him, "We are engaged in a just war". On the other hand, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops was much more restrained in its language. It studiously avoided the term *just war* and urged that the military response to conform to sound moral principles. In its letter to the President it also expressed the hope that our foreign policy will give new emphasis to deepening our engagement with the Arab and Muslim worlds. (On this point, I was shocked to read last

month that mosques and Islamic centres have been ordered to fly the US flag to show their loyalty.)

One of the most concise and balanced statements I have seen came from our own New Zealand Anglican and Catholic Bishops on 8 November. It begins with a quote from Pope John Paul II, 21 October 2001, "In the name of God, I repeat once more: violence is the path of death and destruction which dishonours the holiness of God and the dignity of people."

Our Bishops write:

Those of us who live in relative security and affluence, need to be honest enough to apologise most sincerely for our years of blindness to the plight of suffering peoples, the poor, and those who carry the tragic and heavy burdens of history, wars, dominations and betrayals. It is an illusion to believe that terrorism can be defeated with revenge or violent reprisal. The hostilities are causing large numbers of civilian casualties. The innocent are suffering for the guilty.

They then make the following points:

1. *We support all people who wish to*

examine the underlying causes of the current wave of terrorism, and those many people of the United States who want to examine their own history.

2. *We challenge the rhetoric about a long war and reaffirm the moral necessity for diplomatic and legal solutions.*

3. *We are concerned about the resulting massive displacement of people.*

4. *We urge all people in New Zealand to seek to understand Islam more accurately and build closer relationships with Muslim communities.*

5. *We appeal to predominantly Muslim states to respect the rights of their non-Islamic citizens to practice their faith in freedom.*

6. *We ask that the observance of Ramadan, which begins on November 17, be seen as an opportunity for negotiations leading to a just and peaceful solution.*

7. *We urge all Christians to make our Christian season of Advent, which begins on December 2, a time of prayer for world peace.*

Jim Neilan

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The Aussie election – pursuing ‘gift horses’

The overriding reason for the re-election of Prime Minister Mr John Howard and his coalition government was a racist exploitation of asylum-seekers according to a reading of the Australian political scene that many commentators rushed to make, some even before the votes were counted.

Less than a fortnight after the election, new Labour leader Mr Simon Crean, in his first media conference, conceded that his party’s problems were not all Tampa-related, but rather an inability to connect with its traditional voters on a raft of issues.

Did Mr Howard masterfully direct a fear campaign to pull the strings of millions of gullible voters, or was he a shrewd campaigner who knew not just one gift horse, but a whole trackfull of them, when he saw one?

What is certain is that Mr Howard has been the target of personal abuse and ridicule over his entire period in

leadership on a scale seldom seen before in Australia. His physical stature, his facial expressions, even his voice have been lampooned by commentators. His policies have been roundly blasted by the media, by social commentators and churchpeople. Yet he probably increased his majority, a remarkable achievement by any Prime Minister up for election for a third term.

However, Mr Howard and his colleagues will be kidding themselves if they believe they have achieved a ringing endorsement of their all-too-often divide-and-conquer strategies.

Some say Australians have never before been so divided. That is arguable to say the least – we all have remarkably short political memories it seems – but it is true that the path the nation is taking seems destined to divide the and the even more than it does Labour and Liberal parties.

Geoff Orchison

The Catholic Church has been a front-runner in pointing this out to Australians, and in doing so has set itself up perhaps inadvertently as an arch-critic of the Howard government. This is an awkward and less than useful position to be in for the next three years.

It could be said, too, that its criticisms have been less than convincing to the community as a whole. In the end, the Church has simply been lumped in with many government critics. It has a job ahead of it to stake its separate position again in the Australian landscape on many social issues that its faithful are divided on. It is a balancing act the Church has to be prepared to take on, or face the consequences. ■

Geoff Orchison is Editor of *The Catholic Voice* of Canberra and Goulburn

The trials of Tariana Turia

You don’t become an associate minister with portfolios in Health, Housing, Maori Affairs (social development), and Corrections in this Clark government without a generous share of energy and talent. The hounds might like to believe otherwise but she is a target not because she is incompetent but because she is ubiquitous and passionate about the crises her people face – the imprisonment rate above all; comprising less than a sixth of the population, Maori number about half of the country’s prisoners. Any effort to grapple with this issue ought to win applause you would think.

Not on your life, Mr Tony Ryall assures us, as he lists the bureaucratic misdemeanors committed by this lady in her efforts to influence the prison

culture: *Tick the boxes, contact the right officials at the right time and order, or you are a rank failure.* His passion for propriety might be more credible if he had acknowledged the tough work she was doing for constituents most in need and the work ethic and compassion driving such initiatives.

Being hounded by politicians is bad enough but when the media hounds join the pack the situation really deteriorates. Quite recently in the Auckland press we were treated to the most racist cartoon in my memory as an irate mailman tips a load of hate mail on to Tariana’s desk behind which she looks haggard and distressed. Add to this the following reference to her as being “the dimmest bulb in the Labour string”: this is especially rich coming

from one of the lesser luminaries of the media stable.

Fortunately this staunch lady seems less than likely to disappear. That will be good news for her constituents. It will also be good news for New Zealanders who appreciate politicians to whom individuals really matter, especially those most rejected by society. No one I know would think any less of a politician who had enough concern and compassion to visit someone from the electorate who is serving a prison term – as long as all the right people are contacted first of course! ■

Tom Cloher is chairperson of *Tui Motu* board



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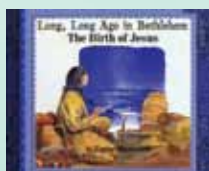
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