

# The Conference At Cambridge September 24-26, 2004

## The Keynote Speakers

### **David Boulton**

Former Steering Committee member of SoF (UK), writer and broadcaster, formerly head of News, Current Affairs and Documentaries at Granada TV UK and now a member of H M Government's Broadcasting Standards Commission.

*"I want to call it a republic [of Heaven] because  
I want us to be citizens, not subjects."*

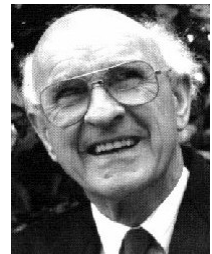
David's most recent books, 'The Trouble with God: Religious Humanism and the Republic of Heaven', 'Real Like the Daisies...: Essays in Radical Quakerism' and 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Republic of Heaven' are available from Unity Books, Auckland [unitybooks@xtra.co.nz](mailto:unitybooks@xtra.co.nz) and Wellington ([unity.books@clear.net.nz](mailto:unity.books@clear.net.nz) - phone 04 499 4245)



### **Lloyd Geering**

First Life Member of Sea of Faith (NZ)

*"Those persons who love their fellows  
because they are convinced of the value of love are  
more morally mature than those who love  
because they are commanded by a higher authority."*



### **Ghazala Anwar**

Religious Studies Department, Canterbury University.

*"There is no god but God and  
Jesus is the Messiah of God"*



Dr Anwar's speech was not available for publication at the time of preparing this Supplement but we expect to have it early in the new year.

# Seek Ye First The Republic of Heaven: Religion - evolving, revolving or devolving?

*Excerpts from the Keynote Speech by David Boulton*

WHEN WE ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE OF RELIGION, we cannot any longer seriously persuade ourselves, let alone anyone else, that religion as a whole is evolving into enlightened rationalism and moral humanism. It is patently refusing to follow any such script. Indeed, it seems that evolution, understood as a gradual progression into something better, just doesn't figure on religion's agenda. Christianity must change or die, says Jack Spong. But I see little sign of it doing either.

What then of revolution? It may have been the intention of Jesus and the great religious sages to turn the world upside down, but organised religion seems to spend much of its time in last-ditch attempts to preserve the status quo: keep women in their place, keep gays out of the pulpit, maintain the old superstitions of pre-modernity (life after death, divine interventions), leave the rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate. Mary's vision of a time when the mighty would be put down from their seats and the rich sent empty away looks as distant and utopian as ever.

If religion isn't into progressive evolution, and has no revolutionary agenda, perhaps the one sign of change is its tendency to devolution. That's one way of describing the variety of "new age" spiritualities which, for many, have filled the hole once occupied by church-based religion. But are these spiritualities any improvement on what went before? They tend to be less hierarchical, less dogmatic, less judgmental, less damaged by sexual repression, less violent. But they also tend to be self-absorbed, narcissistic, obsessed with self-fulfilment, contemptuous of rationality, and intellectually empty. They have little significant ethical content, no social programme, no hunger for a better world. They prefer making love to making war, and I won't argue with that, but they have no taste for "speaking truth to power", for the hard grind involved in creating conditions for beating swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks. I find new age spiritualities pretty dispiriting. I don't buy the suggestion that they are the devolved religion of the future - and if they are, please stop the world, I want to get off.

Let's face it. In ten, twenty, fifty, one hundred years time, the whole religious scene is unlikely to be significantly different from the way it looks today. The fears and insecurities which feed irrational supernaturalism and breed the superstitions of conservative religion, fundamentalism and a vapid spirituality show no sign of fading away. What future for religion? I'm afraid the most likely answer is: much the same as the past and the present. Bad religion will always be with us as the disease rather than the cure. So I'm going to address a much more limited question: Where to with our faith?

By "our faith" I mean the open-minded, open-ended, undogmatic reflection on what our diverse religious traditions can mean to us today when we have abandoned absolutes, ultimates and an external God: our on-going search

for the precious core of wisdom and insight which is at once both ancient and bang up-to-date. Isn't that the essence of the Sea of Faith quest? Where to, then, with that?

It is our responsibility in Sea of Faith and the growing networks promoting a humanistic understanding of religion to nurture it, to grow it on, to see that it is not entirely swamped by the tidal waves of irrational supernaturalist religion. It is our responsibility to see that a questioning faith, a critical faith, a rational faith survives, if only on the margins of an overwhelmingly negative religious culture. We have to speak up for that in our churches and meeting-houses and Sea of Faith groups. We have to be prepared to stick our heads above the parapet, to open our mouths, to "come out" as men and women who have taken leave of God for God's sake, who value religion not as magic and mystery but as a poetry to live by, speaking a language which reaches the parts that everyday secular language can't penetrate. We must keep our flame alive, "like a little candle burning in the night".

Yes, I'm talking about a humanist understanding of religion, where "no Saviour from on high delivers", where we know we can no longer look to the sky for help. I'm talking about a way of looking at religion whereby, in community, we work out our own salve-ation - the salving, or healing, of our shared wounds, and find our own way to atonement - at-one-ment - with ourselves, our fellow-creatures and with the world of which we are a material and a living part. (I emphasise that we do this in community, together: not as isolated individuals absorbed in private notions of self-fulfilment). In this very human world God is not an external reality but our very own idea, our concept, our creation, our projection, our dream - though, paradoxically, we discover that it's true, after all, that God is our creator, since it is the gods we make for ourselves which make us what we are!

A vision of God as the embodiment of what makes us most human has never been better expressed than by William Blake two hundred years ago. The italics are mine, but the poetry is his:

To Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love / All pray in their distress,  
/ And to these virtues of delight / Give forth their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love / Is God, our Father dear;  
/ And Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love / Is man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart, / Pity a human face, / And  
Love the human form divine, / And Peace a human dress...

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Love isn't easy. Loving your neighbour is hard enough sometimes, when your neighbour won't follow the soap jingle about neighbours "being there for one another... that's when good neighbours become good friends"!

But loving your enemy is something else. Loving the fundamentalist who would drive you from his church? Loving the suicide bomber? Loving Donald Rumsfeld?

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Mercy, pity, peace and love only come alive in action, in public expression. So I want to put this to you: In a faith, or a spirituality, which privileges mercy and pity (or compassion), can there be any room for excluding political and social issues from our religious discourse, since it is the political and social which govern our relationship with others?

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It's our job in Sea of Faith not just to talk about these things but to demonstrate that a Christian or religious humanism is better equipped, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, to help us begin to live out the demands of mercy, pity, peace and love, the virtues which, says Blake, are what we mean by "God"? How can we put our religious humanism, our faith in the wholly human spirit, into practice? Where are our guides?

Well, we could do worse than go back to a Mediterranean peasant-teacher called Jesus. Never mind whether he was historical or mythological, the Jesus of the Jesus stories offered us glimpses of a possible alternative reality which he called "the kingdom of heaven". In this new society, it was the poor who would be blessed, the peace-makers who would survive, the powerless who would inherit the land. Liberation theology? Certainly a liberating vision, an enabling dream. Here's a spirituality with a kick in it, a revolutionary dynamic. It's a social spirituality, a political spirituality. It's an action spirituality.

I'm not talking about cut-and-dried blueprints, party programmes, power trips. I'm not suggesting Sea of Faith adopts its own social or political programme. God forbid! But I am saying that a spirituality which shies away from exploring the social and political implications of a radical religious humanist faith is a half-cock spirituality. And half-cock isn't half good enough!

Jesus' challenge is still with us. My own modest proposal is that we start by bringing ourselves up to date and dropping the "kingdom" bit in favour of the republic of heaven. I don't want to suggest that the republic of heaven is nothing more than the kingdom with a new brand name, but continuity demands that the kingdom is at least our starting point. The kingdom is the inescapable foundation for the republic. The republic is post-kingdom, as our western culture is post-Christian, where the present is not a denial of the past but is shaped and changed by it.

There's a lot that I would be happy to import into the republic straight from the kingdom. The republic of heaven proposes an overturning of the old order which puts down the mighty from their seats, privileges the hitherto unprivileged, sees the hungry fed, gives the unhappy cause to laugh. Membership is offered to those who don't lead respectable lives and are no better than they should be. The religious who say "Lord, Lord" will have their membership suspended till they stop talking their religion and start living it. Foreigners, minorities, asylum seekers, economic migrants, those who think different thoughts and do things differently, will be welcome. Children, whether naughty or nice, are honorary members already. Respectable middle-class people who go to church or temple or synagogue, pop the odd coin in the collection plate, take out standing orders for Greenpeace or Save the

Whale, and read all the Sea of Faith newsletters, will be excluded if they suppose these attributes and dispositions give them an automatic right to citizenship, as those who imagine they deserve it thereby demonstrate that they don't.

What the republic will not import from the kingdom is the notion of blind obedience and passive subjection to an external divine lord, master and king, for lordship, mastership and kingship belong to the past. The republic is to be built, stone by stone, by the free citizens of the republic of heaven, fully aware that they alone are responsible for what they are building and how they build it. The republic is to be the masterpiece of the wholly human spirit, and the fruits of the human spirit are the religious virtues of mercy, pity, peace and love. But there are also religious values and impulses which can have no place in the republic. As Rabbi Sara Blumenthal puts it in E L Doctorow's novel *City of God*, "the impulse to excommunicate, to satanize, to eradicate, to ethnically cleanse, is a religious impulse. In the practice and politics of religion, God has always been a licence to kill". So the republic must embrace virtues which traditionally have been considered non-religious or anti-religious: independent-mindedness; freedom of thought, speech and action; liberty, equality, brotherhood and sisterhood; romance, laughter, generosity and tolerance; common decency and common welfare; creative imagination and reason - each valued for itself, and not because a sovereign lord so decrees.

I want to call it a republic because I want us to be citizens, not subjects. And I want us to acknowledge that building the republic of heaven is our responsibility, not one we can leave to a heavenly king.

The republic is within us when we make the effort to commit ourselves to mercy, pity, peace and love; it is among us in the communities and networks which work selflessly to mend our wounded world; and it is a future, better world, that alternative reality which could be ours if we would only make it!

And who can doubt we need the vision! Two thousand years after the Jesus stories, millions live in a world which might reasonably be considered closer to a republic of hell than of heaven. The long sigh and shriek of misery, grief, pain, anguish, sickness and despair threatens to tear the world apart.

Where among them, where among us, are the rebels, agitators and outsiders, the partisan recruits to the underground army of subversion whose loyalty is pledged to the republic of heaven, the City of God?

Yes, the City of God. For here's a paradox for the religious humanist. God does, after all, have a place in the republic of heaven! God, the most powerful of all the potent symbols ever created by the symbol-making species called humans, God understood as our incarnation of mercy, pity, peace and love, tosses away his crown and joins us in the messiness and absurdities of our human lives. And that's the trouble with God: he can't be written out of the script. So since he won't go quietly, let us retain him, as our story of him, in the capacity of honorary consultant-adviser helping us create the hallowed secularism which is the hallmark of the republic of heaven.



# The Evolving Path of Faith

*Excerpts from the Keynote Speech by Lloyd Geering*

THE COMING GLOBAL CULTURE WILL BE HUMANISTIC because all cultures, being human creations, have a common human base. It will also be secular. By 'secular' I mean 'this-worldly and natural' as opposed to 'other-worldly and supernatural'. The modern knowledge explosion has brought about the gradual dissolution of all world-views, which divided the universe into the dichotomous realms of natural/supernatural, earthly/heavenly, and material/spiritual. Those world-views have been replaced by one that sees reality as one vast physical universe of astronomic dimensions of space and time. This universe operates according to its own internal laws and is self-evolving. What our forbears took to be signs of supernatural forces turn out to be the products of primitive interpretation and human imagination.

'Secular' does not mean 'non-religious'. Religion is the depth dimension of every culture. It is that which provides culture with motivation and cohesion. It is not some thing that can be added to culture or taken away from it. Religion has been usefully defined as 'a total mode of the interpreting and living of life'.

The term 'faith' refers to the internal attitude of trust in relation to life in the world. Christians have no monopoly of it, even though it has been one of their basic words. Faith of some kind is essential to human existence. We humans cannot live well without faith or trust. The absence of faith leads to depression, lack of motivation and despair. When Jesus said to the woman, 'Your faith has made you whole', he was not referring to her beliefs but to her trust and attitude to life.

[The] term 'cumulative tradition' refers to the objective products which accumulate as a particular society walks its path of faith - such as stories, Holy Scriptures, temples, and sacred practices. The cumulative tradition marks out the path of faith and gives identity to a culture. It is the product of faith, and though it serves to nurture the faith of later generations it is not to be confused with faith itself. Where this confusion does unfortunately happen, faith is replaced by idolatry. Most cumulative traditions become strewn with fallen idols. In a vibrant culture the inner experience of faith is continually manifesting itself in new creations as it evolves to meet the new circumstances of its time. As Smith said, 'One's beliefs belong to the century one

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In the modern secular world the supernatural forces and the objective personal God have lost their reality. What survives from the Christian past are its human values and motivating aspirations. Some of these, such as love, compassion, and justice, were long treated as the attributes of God. ... The fact that we can now refer to them as human values, and find some of them highly honoured in other cultural traditions also, does not make them any the less important.

Other values, such as freedom, were long prominent in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The pursuit of human freedom started when Moses led the Israelites out of slavery. It went further when Jesus freed people from religious legalism.

With the coming of the modern world, however, the pursuit of freedom has flourished as never before, starting with the freedom to think for oneself. It was quickly followed by the freedom to speak and to publish. This led to a whole series of emancipations - the democratic emancipation from absolute monarchy, the emancipation of the slaves, the emancipation of women from male domination, and, currently, the emancipation of homosexuals from homophobia. Sadly, the churches have often been initially opposed to these emancipations, just as they now fail to see the signs of the kingdom of God in the coming of the secular world.

The values most highly prized in the secular world are the continuation and expansion of values in the Judeo-Christian tradition. These values, such as love, justice, and freedom, convince us by their own inherent worth. They do not need the support of divine authority. The authority their worth exerts over us has replaced that of the now departing deity. Those persons who love their fellows because they are convinced of the value of love are more morally mature than those who love because they are commanded by a higher authority.

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But 'humankind's coming of age' also means that individuals are freer to choose their way of life or path of faith. This is why we have come to value diversity more than conformity. The conformity of belief and practice so dominant in the past made 'heresy' the most heinous of sins. 'Heresy' is derived from a Greek word that means 'choice'; it is used in the New Testament to refer to those who have the audacity to choose their own way of life in contrast with that of the majority. ... In the free and open society of today the exercise of personal choice is not merely permitted but has become a necessity. We are all forced to be choosers, that is heretics!

The path of faith, along with the moral life associated with it, have become personalised as never before. We are now challenged to make new moral decisions and to work out our own solutions to the problems of life. Of course this new freedom has its negative side. It brings no guarantee that we shall make wise choices.

What is the answer to these unfortunate consequences of the new freedom? Some opt to return to the apparent security of the cultural womb from which we all emerged. That is the attraction of the widespread rise of fundamentalism. In so far as this brings seems to bring immediate relief and spiritual satisfaction, fundamentalists receive their reward, as Jesus might have said. But the fundamentalist response requires one, in ostrich like fashion, to shut one's eyes and close one's mind to everything that is in conflict with its beliefs.

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The study of the past illuminates the present but it does not dictate the future. That is why the Bible remains an invaluable set of documents. We learn much from it but we are not bound by it.

To exemplify this I now take three themes from it, which are basic to the Judeo-Christian tradition, and yet universal to the human condition.

The first is faith. Every cultural tradition is an evolving path of faith. The Bible itself emphasizes this when that narrates a history of faith, starting with the figure of Abraham. ... [W]hat made Abraham a model man of faith? It was because he heeded the voice he heard within him and, as the New Testament says, went out not knowing where he was to go. He had no map. He had no Torah, no Bible, and no Qur'an to guide him. The Midrashic Jewish legends even tell how Abraham smashed his father's idols before setting on his journey. Faith requires us to surrender attachment to all tangibles. For the journey of faith we must be free of all excess baggage.

The Judeo-Christian tradition has on many occasions found itself so weighed down by its accumulating tradition that it has had to jettison its excess baggage. The Protestant Reformers abandoned a great deal of what had accumulated in mediaeval Christianity, including the belief in Purgatory. The Second Axial Period requires us to jettison a great deal more than the Protestant Reformers did — heaven and hell, a divine saviour, an objective personal deity, and the whole system of dogma constructed around them. Important as these doctrines may have been in the past as the expression of faith, they have now become a hindrance to faith.

Faith is not dependent on belief in a personal God or in any particular object. In common human experience faith is multi-faceted and operates at a variety of levels. That is why, in various secular contexts, we may be exhorted to put faith in ourselves, in our ideas, in other people, in the natural world. It is over to us to clarify for ourselves just what we put our faith in; for, whatever that is, it has become our god. That remarkable Christian visionary and scientist, Teilhard de Chardin, was so awestruck by what he had learned of the self-evolving universe that he once said,

'If, as the result of some interior revolution, I were to lose in succession my faith in Christ, my faith in a personal God, and my faith in spirit, I feel that I should continue to believe invincibly in the world. The world...is the first, the last and the only thing in which I believe. It is by this faith that I live.'

In this ecologically sensitive age, that is a good place to begin. The evolution of life on this planet is an awe-inspiring mystery and was what Teilhard had come to understand as God. The capacity of life both to diversify and to renew itself is more breath-taking than any of the incidental events that were traditionally called miracles. The creativity manifested by the human species in its evolving cultures more than compensates for the vandalizing and destructive tendencies it also possesses. All these observable facts are sufficient to generate faith even though they provide no guarantees. Dispensing with all of the supposed certainties of the past we have to walk into the future depending on faith alone. Faith is a matter of saying 'Yes!' to life and all that it offers.

The second theme is hope. This is as basic to the human condition as is faith. Where hope dies, faith grows weak, for the two are closely allied.

The experience of hope has played a dominant role in the long history of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Abraham

looked forward to a city which has foundations. Moses looked to a land flowing with milk and honey. The Babylonian exiles hoped for the restoration of the Kingdom of David. Christians looked for the coming of the Kingdom of God, the very words becoming permanently captured in the Lord's Prayer — 'Thy Kingdom come'. In the course of time, however, this hope became transformed into a post-mortem personal destiny in heaven, which even became known theologically as the Christian Hope.

The coming of the secular world has brought us back to earth again where something like the original intention of the 'the Kingdom of God' is once more relevant. Our chief hopes for the future are much more this worldly. Individually, of course, we hope for a long and healthy life. Collectively, we hope for social harmony, for economic prosperity, and for international peace. More recently our hope has incorporated the conservation of the earth's ecology.

Hope must not be confused with blind optimism. As I have tried to show in a book, *The World to Come*, the century we have entered is presenting us with so many frightening challenges that it is becoming quite difficult to hold out hope for a better world. Yet, as theologian Jürgen Moltmann has said, 'It is just because we cannot know whether humanity is going to survive or not, we have to act today as if the future of the whole of humanity were dependent on us'.

My third theme from the Bible is love. There has always been general agreement that this is central to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Jesus named, as the two major commandments, injunctions selected from the Jewish Scriptures — 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and strength', and 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'.

But Jesus went further than anything in the Jewish tradition. He said, 'Love your enemies'. This is the most original dictum in all of his teaching. It is sadly ironic that through Christian history the exhortation most central to the teaching of Jesus is just what Christians have found most difficult to carry out. Not only have professing Christians been little better than anybody else in loving their enemies but even the centrality of love itself became obscured. The love for others that we were exhorted to fulfil was projected on to a divine Saviour so that his love for us would provide us with personal salvation. The original message of love, which exhorted us to save others, became distorted into one of exploiting it to secure our own salvation.

It is strange that so few have ever noticed the conflict between Christian dogma and the most authentic sayings of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount a sharp contrast is drawn between the wise builder who built his house on bedrock and the foolish builder who built his house on sand. We should note that it was not because of divine providence that the one house stood firm while the other perished. It was due to the wisdom of the man who built it. This, like so many of the exhortations of Jesus, manifests the moral philosophy expounded by the Christian monk Pelagius, which Christian orthodoxy judged to be heresy.

The deconstruction of Christian dogma has brought back to light the bare outlines of the original Jesus, the teacher, the man of wisdom, the one who, while sharing the tensions and uncertainties of human existence, also revital-

## The Panel Discussion

As has become the usual practice, the Conference ended with a Panel Discussion chaired by Noel Cheer, involving the Keynote Speakers. Below are some of the things that they said, either verbatim or in paraphrase.

Because this was a Conference in which we looked back on the last 20 years, we took the opportunity at the beginning of this last session to ask the panelists to look forward 20 years. Steering Committee Member Yvonne Curtis, who is a member of the NZ Futures Trust, presented three “scenarios” and asked how likely they were to eventuate.

In brief, the scenarios were:

1. **Believing Individualist Community:** The major religions will still be a significant presence in local communities, but their national and global influence will be weaker. The focus of belonging will be largely the support for the individual’s “spiritual” life.
2. **A Believing Community:** The major religions would be on the increase, with their faith and social aims integrated into the life of the community. There would be regular meetings for worship and community building and participation in community activities for the wider community. In this scenario, the division between religions and state could break down and lead to a new mix of political parties based on the official “state” religions.
3. **A Questioning Community.** The traditional religions will continue to decline and their congregations will age faster than the population. Worship will be more varied and not within a formal institutional setting. There will be a strong strand of Religious Studies, which will be part of the compulsory and life-long education curricula. Leaders within the congregation would become “ministers” and “ordained” leadership would no longer be the norm.

Lloyd Geering, discussing scenario 2: “We have to go back to 1800 [to see] this scenario really working and it has been disintegrating ever since.”

Ghazala Anwar, discussing scenario 2: “I can’t see New Zealand having a state religion.” She expects that both Pakistan and Iran will be secular states 20 or so years from now. Having experimented with Islamism (politicised Islam), there is likely to be a backing away from it.

David Boulton, discussing scenario 3: “This is the scenario that we liberal, questioning people would most like to see happening.” But it looks unlikely in, e.g. Asia and Africa. He is heartened by the descriptions of developments within Islam that Ghazala talked about.

Lloyd Geering: “I have often said that New Zealand is the most secular country in the whole world.”

“... ‘religious’ in my sense of the word, that is, trying to understand what to make of life ...”

Then, on to the panel discussion, based generally on the contents of their presentations:

GA: “9/11 has certainly radicalised me — I have become involved in politics, [and now listen to the news].” Previously, many Muslims would simply have left political affairs to politicians and to the will of God but these events have

“challenged mainstream Muslims to get up and reclaim their faith.”

DB: “... as Ghazala said, God is the light in the heart — that’s pure Sea of Faith ... and pure Quakerism.”

“Our principal job is to argue against the demonization of Islam while recognising the awfulness and the evil of fundamentalisms on both sides.”

LG: “[Fundamentalism] supplies motivations on both sides and, at the moment we are working towards a third international war in which the Christian fundamentalists, supported by (and supporting) Jewish fundamentalists are siding against the whole Islamic world.”

DB: “... our (western) complicity in the creation of Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic terrorism. Our continuing support for Israeli state terrorism and for keeping open that appalling wound in the Middle East is the engine which is creating so much despair ... and hopelessness of millions of young people.”

GA: “... about Islamic fundamentalism, the issue is political and not religious because we are an orthopractic [‘do the right thing’] religion, so the fight is not about some dogma, the fight is about some very real political issues that have ensued ... injustice ... Palestine ... Iraq ... Afghanistan. This is a practical issue before the international community and it needs to be resolved in a political manner, with due process internationally. If that begins to happen it will take all the air out of Islamic fundamentalism.”

The Chair then asked for comments on what influence each speaker would like to have on grandchildren, real or ‘virtual’.

LG: “... the path of faith of my grandchildren — that’s their parents’ job.” “What I fear that the young generation lacks now is some appreciation of our whole cultural background — even the English Departments at universities deplore it: they cannot teach English Literature anymore [because] its so filled with biblical references that their students haven’t a clue ...”

DB: “I know that they will not have the Authorized Version of the Bible wired into their brains in the way that it is wired into mine, and a large part of me regrets that because it has been immensely useful and inspirational in my life. But I do acknowledge that as grandparents we are going to have a responsibility to see that our grandchildren at least know enough to make their own choices as they grow up.”

LG: “‘Bring people up in the faith’ is now seen as reprehensible, as ‘indoctrination’. As (grand)parents we have no right to do that because it is taking away their freedom ... ‘The Faith’ mean a set of doctrines [which I have now rejected]. Faith is something different from that — trusting parents, self and life.”

GA: “Most families ensure that the child knows how to read the Qur’an in Arabic and knows some passages by heart so that they can pray.”

When one reads those words ... it makes me aware that for those on the receiving end these Crown policies could easily be called cultural genocide. I do think it is important that we seriously address issues of cultural oppression, the suppression of *tohunga* (the oral transmitters of Maori cultural knowledge) by the criminal law, the deliberate marginalisation of *te reo Maori*, 'Operation Re-location' in the 1950s and 1960s, 'pepperpotting' policies and similar issues. Most of the focus of current Crown policy on the settlement of Treaty grievances is on losses of land and economic resources. The Wai 262 claim ... is one of the few opportunities that have arisen for cultural oppression issues to be canvassed. Its hearings have taken many years and after all those hearings it is possible that the forthcoming Tribunal report will focus on the narrower issues of intellectual property over indigenous flora and fauna rather than the wider issues of Crown policies that have undermined Maori cultural knowledge systems.

In all the fuss about underpants, frauds, and resignations in Te Mangai Paho and Maori Television Service it seems to have been overlooked that successive governments have been extraordinarily dilatory in attending to the desperate plight of *te reo Maori*. ... The language is a *taonga* .. in the Treaty of Waitangi. So there is a legal obligation, a moral obligation, a Treaty obligation to take significant steps to redress the drastic damage caused by so many decades of assimilation and integration policies. Peace-making in Aotearoa, in my view, must include much more strenuous efforts to acknowledge the everyday importance of *te reo Maori* as an official language of this country.

There can be no doubt that significant peace-making steps between Maori and Pakeha have taken place in the last 30 years since the Maori Land March and the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975. I incline to being a glass half-full optimist rather than a glass half-empty pessimist. Yet it pains me when I hear so much talk about the privileges Maori are supposed to have these days — so much so that non-Maori claim to feel like second class citizens. As Danny Keenan, a Taranaki academic and Treaty settlement negotiator, wrote in the NZ Herald recently: "One does not need to recite endless figures showing negative Maori achievement rates to make the case that Maori hardly occupy a favoured standard of citizenship." [2 Sept 2003] Treaty settlements are a very modest — one might say meagre — token of recompense to *tangata whenua* for lost property rights. How is it separatism or a breach of the common standards of citizenship to provide redress for unjustifiable losses of property rights? Those rights are recognised in English common law on aboriginal title, in international law and in the Treaty of Waitangi, as well as in their original source under *nga tikanga Maori*.

I have been engaged in a Treaty settlement negotiations process working for Te Uri o Hau, a hapu whose ancestral marae are dotted around the northern shores of the Kaipara harbour. It is exhausting hard work. Research on the claim and Waitangi Tribunal hearings occupied many weeks from 1994 to 1998. Then in one year, 1999, our negotiation team met 98 times with Office of Treaty Settlements staff leading up to signing a Heads of Agreement in November of that year. A year later there was a Deed of Settlement, then a Bill, select committee hearings and finally Te Uri o Hau Claims Settlement Act 2002. In the hard

work and often difficult negotiations there was a spirit of peace-making because this hapu is determined to move towards socio-economic parity with the general population in their district within a generation. That is the vision. They were determined to put in place mechanisms that would enable them as a hapu to meet national, regional and local government decision-makers in partnership towards achieving that vision. They do not want to remain as supplicants and petitioners. All of us should celebrate and affirm that sort of vision rather than complain about separatist privileges being bestowed on Maori.

I remain critical of successive governments as to the way that they have approached the Treaty settlement process. Far, far too often governments have taken unilateral decisions and then purported to "consult" with Maori. We need to spend more time thinking about the truth and reconciliation aspects of this whole process. I have written a short critique of governmental one-sidedness that is available in an e-journal: "Honouring the Treaty of Waitangi — Are the Parties Measuring Up?" [www.murdoch.au/elaw/](http://www.murdoch.au/elaw/) [vol 9, no 3, September 2002]. We have yet another example of that right now over the foreshore/seabed issues.

Part of the problem is that so few decision-makers are at ease in the Maori world. Integration policies of the past were so successful that Maori had to be bicultural but Pakeha could, and did, get by living a monocultural life. Oddly it is right-wingers like Duncan McIntyre and Douglas Graham who have seemed to cope better than most in meeting with Maori *kanohi ki te kanohi*. A thoughtful piece [23 August 2003] from John Roughan, editor of the NZ Herald, struck a chord with me. In part it read:

"The Appeal Court judges have suggested how tough the tests could be. Left to the law, our rights to be on a beach anywhere around the country would be fairly safe, I suspect. But the Government hasn't given us a chance to find out ... In their inhibitions they are typical of most of us. If I was a Maori I think it would strike me starkly that New Zealand needs the expression of its indigenous culture more than it knows." Amen to that.

Maybe I am preaching to the converted. I hope so. But we have a lot of work to do. Ngati Mutunga oppressors of Moriori became stalwarts of the prophets of Parihaka. Ngati Pakeha of Aotearoa New Zealand, the people with whom I identify, have a journey to travel on towards *maungarongo* — towards the making of peace — in Taranaki and throughout our land. Some of us are on the journey, but not enough of us. And there is a lot of work to be done. Prophets in our tradition call on us to dream dreams and see visions, to hate evil and love good, to let justice roll down like waters, to beat swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks. We may have our own diverse ways of understanding the notion of God/Te Atua, but I hope that, with the *tangata whenua* of our sacred mountain, we too can proclaim:

**Kia whai kororia Te Atua i runga rawa; kia mau te rongu ki runga ki te whenua; me te whakaaro pai ki nga tangata**

# The Panel Discussion

As is the usual practice, the Conference ended with a panel discussion involving the Keynote Speakers. Te Miringa Hohaia (who had to leave early) was replaced by Lloyd Geering. Also on the panel, which was chaired by Noel Cheer,

Lloyd Geering: "You cannot have a culture without its own language ... [but] ... all small cultures and languages spoken in small areas are going to disappear ..."

David Williams: "The Welsh have turned around a minority language into a growing language ... if we are to survive as a species we must hang on to diversity."

Derek Evans: The assertion of a minority language has an important political dimension.

Derek Evans: 'Restorative justice' and similar processes such as reconciliation require five things to happen for the victim: 1) the victim's story of what happened is made known 2) "they want the people who have done these things identified and recognised" 3) they want someone in authority to declare what happened to them was wrong 4) restitution or support for rehabilitation 5) those in authority to say that it will not happen again, to their children, because specific changes have been made.

Lloyd Geering: The Holocaust induced a feeling of guilt in the West for what it, through the German people, did to the Jews. This has enabled Israel to develop the strength that it presently has. Older Israelis who remember the Holocaust recognise this but younger Israelis fail to see the irony in the fact that "Israel is treating the Palestinians in the same way that they were treated by the Nazis."

David Williams: On the still-undetermined 'foreshore' issue, "the government contributed to a race relations disaster ... when Maori are perceived as getting uppity, that plays out at the local level — landlords feeling more able to discriminate against people in tenancy situations ...."

Derek Evans: Talking in the context of the US as an "hegemonic power" (in French "hyperpower"): "The United States is probably the nation that has the least level of international accountabilitys, formally, of any country in the world." The United States will not acknowledge an international treaty as

Derek Evans chose to talk to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, and to say "good for you, I want to encourage and support you" and that he has "a deep well of respect for what you stands for". He wanted to draw attention to the UN Declaration of Human Rights as a treaty "in the name of the people" and not one between governments.

David Williams wanted to talk to Hu Jintao, the President of China and to acknowledge that the Chinese people are growing in significance in the world-wide scheme of things, and especially in the South Pacific. He wanted to tell President Hu that he is disturbed that the recent archeological discovery in China of what seem so obviously to have been very old foreign money was jingoistically declared to have been Chinese in origin. "Its OK to be different, its OK to have different people in your country — different nationalities — its actually OK for the Dalai Lama to come home to Tibet and [its OK] to honour the different minorities — because a world in which Americans rule, as they rule at the moment, is a world dominated by Europeans and its not a very good world to be dominated by Europeans if you're Chinese. Look what happened to some of your citizens who came to New Zealand in the gold mining period — they were rather harshly dealt with. We don't want that to happen in the future when you are dominant. We want you to be kinder to us than we were to some of your citizens in New Zealand."

Lloyd Geering "conversed" with US President George W. Bush. "Now 9/11 was a terrible time for you and we all felt for you very much — it was a terrible blow — and I can understand why you felt that you needed to react by starting a war on terrorism. But I think you went about it in the wrong way. If you were really sure it was Osama bin Laden, why didn't you offer to go and have a good old talk to him, face-to-face. ... You always solve these things better by talking to them. You see, Osama bin Laden felt that he had a real

... feeling that you are concerned with finding the world of weapons of mass destruction ... but you went to the wrong place ... they weren't there ... and you, of all people, should know where one is to be found ... its in Dimona ... yes, its in Israel ... and why haven't you ... caused to send inspectors there? ... We really wish you well because you are a very powerful person and much of the world depends on you."





