

“Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive”.

Sir Walter Scott

As I read between the lines

Charlie Martin, published in “The Press” 10 September 2023, tells us a story about Julian Batchelor, a man he describes as having romped over New Zealand with the spirit of a doomsday preacher warning about the apocalypse. [HERE](#) is the article.

Well? In brief, Martin’s style is florid, personal to the man and tone deaf to the message delivered.

Here is an alternative version:

Julian Batchelor has toured New Zealand, discussing proposals of co-governance for New Zealand and challenging the rhetoric that goes with it. He is an articulate, educated speaker, with flourish and flair in the delivery of his message.

I have actually attended one of Mr Batchelor’s seminars and can attest, first hand, that he speaks the truth about our history. There is absolutely nothing ‘racist’ in what he conveys, only facts.

Time and again, his detractors have taken extraordinary steps to prevent him from delivering his message. Clearly they are threatened. People may not like his message, but why are the protesters enabled to create a general air of unpleasantness and have it follow Mr Batchelor like a storm cloud?

Surely, when Mr Batchelor is regularly disrupted, jeered at when protesters threaten him, try to drown him out with waiata and thunderous haka, try to smash his computer, scuffle, vandalise his car, deflate its tyres, it is not unreasonable for there to be a police presence? Or are we to believe this is reasonable behaviour and not within scope for the police? Refer to the Rosie Parker mayhem in Auckland Domain earlier in the year.

When he is expected to shout over, or cease talking, in the face of waiata threatened in order to drown out his message, is it unreasonable for him to refuse to speak until there is courteous silence?

Why is it that he is pejoratively said to ‘rail’ against those that oppose him, yet acceptable for Mr Martin to describe him with impunity as “New Zealand’s Cassandra for co-governance; a martyr for Māorification”?

It is also of dubious value to equate Mr Batchelor’s views on homosexuality with those on co-governance. If actually he has conflated them, then references would be appropriate. There are none. Was homosexuality referred to in the Treaty of Waitangi?

Who are the critics causing his venue bookings to be cancelled? Why are they doing this? Why do the venue owners agree? What is so threatening about Mr Batchelor’s message that these people so persistently try to stop him speaking?

It is said that Mr Batchelor’s message is contentious. Is it any more contentious than Te Pati Maori’s ‘transformational’ justice policy to abolish all prisons by 2040?

There is also an air of hypocrisy in that Maoris can claim grief (and indeed many millions of dollars) over ‘their’ land, yet Heritage New Zealand can give third parties rights over Mr Batchelor’s land without telling him (whatever happened to indefeasibility of title?) and people can defecate on his

driveway. That it not socially acceptable behaviour, it is disgusting. Even dog faeces must be removed by their walkers.

One would be forgiven for understanding from Martin's article that Maoris before 1840 were a peaceful race of gentle folk living in harmony with nature, inhabitants of New Zealand from time immemorial.

Is this how victims of Te Rauparaha would have seen him? Is this what the Chatham Island Moriori experienced in their hosting of Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Tama? Was there in fact no fear and desperation in the Kati Mamoe as they took their last stand against Ngai Tahu on the beach in Dusky Sound? Aaah! The death canoes!

Is not the haka a performance intended to create fear – relieved only by war or formalised gestures of goodwill? What is the purpose of wahaika, tao, huata? Of taiaha, pouwhenua, tewhatewha, hoeroa, patu (in their several forms and materials)?

Modern science tells us that Maoris are descended primarily from Asian races interspersed with the DNA of other biological interactions. Their stories tell us they arrived by canoe from Hawaiki. They also have patupaiarehe, spirits of reddish hair and skin, unlike their own – imagined, or real?

Barry Brailsford in "Song of Waitaha" tells us of "Uru Kehu" with pale or freckled skin, blue eyes and fair or red hair. Where are these people today? Maybe our Maoris have some explaining to do!

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Maoris had a Stone Age culture.

Put simply, their most sophisticated tools were made of stone, wood and bone but not pottery. It was not easy to warm water!

They had no metallurgy.

They had not discovered the wheel or its uses – transport was by foot or afloat. (Do not imagine endless magnificent war canoes; more often humble makeshift rafts). Food was what could be gathered from nature, albeit there was some cultivation of the sweet potato that had arrived with them, in places where it was warm enough to grow.

Thus, the menu: dogs, rats, fish, birds, maybe and fern roots, native plants and berries and of course, human flesh: a handy slave girl casually slaughtered if insufficient captives from the last raid on a weaker neighbouring tribe were not available. No mutton, beef, pork, potatoes or corn.

For some reason, it is considered a racial insult to describe their culture as "Stone Age".

However that does not change the facts.

Again, Maoris had no written words, vocabulary only for what they needed or imagined (taniwhas etc.) and conversely none for things of which they knew nothing – horses, coffee, libraries.

They had an oral tradition passed through generations describing the world they knew or believed in Papatuanuku, Tangaroa, Ranginui, Ruaumoko. And of course the fabulous Hokiioi.

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Then we get to the vexed question of what is history and what is science? Curiously, anything that runs counter to the asserted beliefs of Mr Batchelor's antagonists is described as nonsense – pseudo-history, unreliable, elaborate theory, bizarre, magical thinking, not readily understood in rational terms and mystical politics. This is justified by denigrating individuals.

Poor Icarus died for bizarrely dreaming he could fly– did someone remind the Wright Brothers or Richard Pearse or Gustave Whitehead that theirs was magical thinking?

Strangely though, the late Dun Mihaka of bare-arsed politics and Marama Davidson with well known views on white cis men, are not ‘debunked’ nor is the definition by Hipkins of a woman. As for science: we need only to refer to Professor Georgina Stewart’s comments on the “infamous Listener Letter” in which seven senior university professors accused Maturanga Maori (traditional Maori knowledge) of ‘subverting’ science, despite readily admitting that they knew nothing about Maturanga Maori, or even what it is.

Rightly or wrongly, we have the Royal Society of New Zealand providing financial grants for the study of taniwha (but not unicorns).

At present there is no knowledge, magic or science that enables us to read the minds of others, nor to go back in time, nor to read the minds of people from the past.

We simply have the information they have left, which may be in many forms which may be contradictory and which should always be subject to scrutiny and further validation. The truly skilled do that with open mind and clarity of thought, courage and independence.

But, alas! Where today do we see quotation of the works of Sir Apirana Ngata – surely respected by all? What of the words of William Colenso – a witness to the events of February 5, 1840? Why is the enlightening narrative of Frederick Maning ignored?

After all, he lived with a northern Maori tribe in the 1830s? Can their accuracy be doubted? Why does ‘modern’ thinking dismiss the life experiences of these people?

Last but not least, who has conferred on Mr Martin the right to declare that “in some ways the damage is done. Thousands of people have attended or seen one of Batchelor’s seminars ... They fear Batchelor’s apocalyptic visions of the future...”??

Or should we say, last but not least, we must recognise the words of Mr Batchelor: “If the public can’t talk about important public issues, how can they be reasonably resolved?”

To quote Frederick Douglass, in Boston 1860, at an abolition meeting shortly before the American Civil War began: “To suppress free speech is a double wrong. It violates the rights of the hearer as well as those of the speaker.”

Bruce Moon

Nelson

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Footnote: Charlie Martin has given no references except the names of people noted in his article. We give no more here.