

A pair of sandals

A pair of sandals, old black pants
And leather coat – I must go, my friends,
Into the dark, the cold, the first beginning
Where the ribs of the ancestor are the rafters
Of a meeting house – windows broken
And the floor white with bird dung – in there
The ghosts gather who will instruct me
And when the river fog rises
Te ra rite tonu te Atua –
The sun who is like the Lord
Will warm my bones, and his arrows
Will pierce to the centre of the shapeless clay of the mind.

© Used with the permission of the Estate of James K. Baxter

'A pair of sandals' is from 'Selected Poems of James K. Baxter' (Auckland University Press, 2010) edited by Paul Millar.

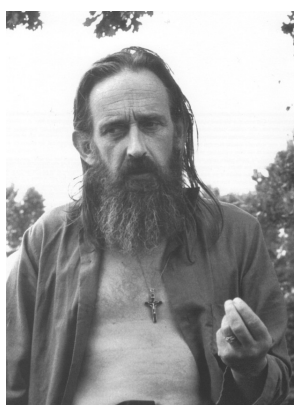
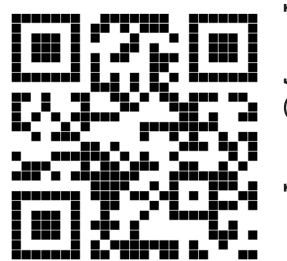


Photo: Ans Westra

James K. Baxter One of New Zealand's finest poets and most controversial figures, Baxter was often at odds with a society unable to face its disturbing reflection in his work. As a dramatist, literary critic and social commentator, Baxter often judged New Zealand society harshly, yet always from the perspective of one intimately involved in the social process. Baxter was legendary for his appearance — barefoot and bearded — and for establishing a spiritual commune at Jerusalem, near Wanganui. Baxter died in 1972 and in a rare honour for a Pākehā he received a full Māori tangi, attended by hundreds of people from the many walks of life with which Baxter's intersected.

(Biography by Paul Millar, from www.bookcouncil.org.nz)

Scan the QR Code for more*



phantom
billstickers Ltd.

poetry@0800phantom.co.nz

*More about the Phantom Poetry on Posters Program at www.0800phantom.co.nz/blog/poetry or Friend Phantom Billstickers on Facebook for updates.