

**Archived Summer 1999-2000 issue  
of Spiritual Growth Ministries Newsletter:  
"Jubilee Time"**

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*Jubilee time is more than rest,  
more than healing.  
It is the birth of an entirely new  
reality born from a vision  
of divine mercy and justice.  
Justice not as the establishment of  
rules and the meting out of  
punishments,  
but justice as the rightful  
distribution  
of the good earth and its fruits to  
all the earth's inhabitants.  
Justice as the recognition of and  
living out of relationships of  
compassion and mutuality.  
Justice as the foretast and peace  
of a New Jerusalem.*

-Wendy Wright-

## **EDITORIAL by Andrew Dunn**

Here we are about to enter a new century and the third millennium since the birth of Jesus who is Christ.

From the earliest origins of Christian writing the significance of this birth has been highlighted as *the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God* (Mark 1:1). The Magi offered him gifts fit for a king (Matt. 2). The first three Gospel writers recall Peter's startling declaration of him as *the Christ of God* (Luke 9). The Johannine writings describe him as *the Word made flesh living amongst us, full of grace and truth*. Paul's earliest writings (early 50's AD) send greetings to his readers, *the church ... in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Thess. 1:1). The richest trinitarian blessing circulating around the early Church begins with *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ* (2 Corinthians 13:13).

This Christmas, along with the Church in every nation, people and language we celebrate these remarkable truths of Jesus' birth and life, *Emmanuel, God present with us* (Matt. 1:23). Where our over-familiarity has dulled our sense of the uniqueness of these claims of God dwelling amongst us, now is an opportune time to re-discover the hugeness of what is being said here. St Paul's comment that Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God staggers me. He adds to the staggers with comments such as: *for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible .... all things have been created through him and for him ... and in him*

*all things hold together* (Coloss. 1:15-17). This we celebrate with silent awe, this we honour with our worship, this we witness to with our allegiance.



That much modern rationalism, and the systems of thought it has spawned both inside and outside the faith, doesn't have the framework to cope with such things is a pity. However, it highlights the need to keep this celebration simple, clean and clear. When the millennium committee can't acknowledge Handel's *Messiah* as a cultural statement worthy of celebration in our nation (as happened in Auckland earlier this year) then we are on a strange path out of touch with our roots and heritage.

In this Newsletter we offer something for the new century and millennium springing out of the good news of our faith. The articles all focus in some way upon the themes of Jubilee, walking humbly with our God and discovering deeper implications of faith in Jesus Christ for life in our world.

Walter Brueggemann tells this simple story to illustrate the modern problem of assumptions and power (we have adapted it slightly). He calls it ***Justice - a right reading of real things (An Agenda For Ministers.*** 1986.6):

*A very proper lady went to a tea shop. She sat at a table for two, ordered a pot of tea, and prepared to eat some biscuits which she had in her handbag. Because the tea shop was crowded, a man took the other chair and also ordered tea. The woman was prepared for a liesurely time, so began to read her paper. As she did so, she took a biscuit from the packet on the table, and noticed that the man did the same. This upset her greatly, but she ignored it and kept reading. After a while she took another biscuit, and so did he. She glared at him. He took another, the last one, broke it in half and offered her half. She was indignant. She paid her money and left in a hurry, angry and hurt. She hurried to her bus stop and opened her handbag to get some money for her ticket, and there she saw her packet of biscuits - unopened!*

In Jubilee time there's an opportunity to take another, deeper look at our assumptions in relation to life, power, ownership, land, personal relationships - in fact all our realities. It's an invitation for a re-reading of reality, a time to assess how well we see it and how honestly we embrace it. The Hikoï of Hope (the march for justice) of last year thrust before our nation many fundamental issues that need addressing, and was ignored, even derided, by many. We have a further opportunity to take another look at reality for all New Zealanders with an encouragement to do something about it.

*What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8 NRSV).

Here's the good news for a simple, effective and uncomplicated life. While doing this faith may never be as easy as it sounds here, is a vision of the way ahead that is crisp and wonderfully enticing and ancient.

We invite you to seek God's invitation as we enter a new century and a new millennium as disciples of Jesus who is the Christ.

The question of how to be the church in the new millennium entails both a reflection on the foundations of our faith and a critique of the global culture in which we now exist. Two initiatives in particular suggest that the biblical idea of Jubilee may provide a useful model in this endeavour. These are the Catholic observance of the year 2000 as the "Great Jubilee" and its call for a celebration of the birth of Jesus as the inauguration of a new era. And secondly, the Jubilee 2000 International movement which, in June of this year, secured a commitment from G8 world leaders to cancel \$100 Billion of unpayable debt owed them by the world's poorest countries. This article briefly surveys the biblical development of the Jubilee year in order to offer a basis for further thought and discussion.

## **THE FAVOURABLE YEAR OF THE LORD**

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.  
(Luke 4.18-19)*

Luke recounts that when Jesus had read from the scroll of Isaiah the prophet he declared to a transfixed home crowd that, "today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4.16-30). Jesus' visit to the Nazareth synagogue is foundational to the third gospel's picture of his mission. And it is here that we find the most direct reference to the idea of Jubilee in the NT. Yet as with any aspect of the gospels, in order to unpack its significance we must start where the story begins - in the scriptures of Israel.

## **"YOU SHALL PROCLAIM LIBERTY THROUGHOUT THE LAND TO ALL ITS INHABITANTS"**

The principal Jubilee text is Leviticus 25. The first eight verses of this chapter deal with the Sabbath year. The year of Jubilee can be understood as the culmination of a cycle of seven Sabbath years. The Sabbath year had three basic provisions: the release of Hebrew slaves, the cancellation of all debts within the community, and rest for the land (Ex 21.2-6; Ex 23.10-12; Lev 25.1-7; Deut 15.1-18). This seventh year of "release" was also to be a year when the law was read to all the people as they gathered before the Lord during the festival of tabernacles (Deut 31.9-13).

At the completion of seven "sabbaths of years", the trumpet was to be "sounded loud" and the fiftieth year declared a Jubilee: "You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants" (Lev 25.10). In addition to the Sabbath year provisions, Jubilee legislation added a fourth requirement: the return of all land to the original owners.

The year of Jubilee was then, a year of release, return and rest. Ancestral land which had been sold because of indebtedness was not to be a permanent alienation. Hebrews who had been sold into slavery were to be released, and the land was to be left to fallow: "you shall eat only what the field produces" (Lev 25.11). Because of this, the sale of land was more like a lease, the price being calculated according to the number of years remaining to the next Jubilee (Lev 25.13-17). In addition, sold land could be "redeemed" at any time by a kinsman of the owner, or by the owner himself upon payment of a sum calculated on the same basis (Lev 25.24-28).

At the heart of this legislation were two basic concerns of Israelite society: land and family. The year of Jubilee worked out the implications of God's sovereignty over both. Although gifted to his people, the land remained God's land and this generated both rights and responsibilities for the nation and individuals. The deliverance from Egypt and possession of the land were all part of God's gracious act of salvation (Lev 25.38). Israel's continued security within the land was directly linked to their faithfulness to the covenant (Lev 26.40-45). It was thus impossible to separate the issue of the land from Hebrew faith and ethics.

The year of Jubilee was also a reminder that God's reign meant freedom from bondage. Because they had been freed from the bondage of Egypt, both the land and the people were God's possession and could never be permanently sold (Lev 25.23, 42). The ancestral land of an Israelite, as allotted by Moses, was seen as an inheritance, not simply from parents, but from the Lord. It was the focal point for his practical response to

God's grace. To deprive someone of their land was to deprive them of their godly inheritance (1 Kings 21; Micah 2.1-2). To enslave a Hebrew was to forget that all Hebrews were God's freed slaves.

## JUBILEE PRACTICE

There is no material evidence that the Jubilee legislation was ever practised, although this doesn't preclude the possibility that it *may* have happened. There was no question that the economic demands of the Sabbath and Jubilee years were far reaching and required a trust in God's providential sovereignty over time and nature (Lev 25.20; Deut 15.9). Yet it was adherence to these requirements that would give Israel a distinctive social shape among the nations. God's purpose was a new community who in their social life would embody his righteousness, peace, justice and love, thus becoming a pattern and vehicle of redemption to all the peoples of the earth. It is clear, however, that under the monarchy, Israel moved steadily away from the social and economic ideals of redemption and Jubilee (cf. 1 Sam 8).

By the eighth century, the chorus of prophetic condemnation had become a trumpet call throughout the land, not proclaiming liberty, but calling the nation to "return to the Lord" (Joel 2.13). The complaint was aimed squarely at the economic injustice inflicted by the rich and powerful upon their fellow Israelites. The message was simple: failure to honour God in the material realm could not be compensated for by religious showmanship (Amos 5.21-24). Ritual would never replace ethics. The inevitable divine judgement meant expulsion from the land.

## JUBILEE AS A FUTURE MESSIANIC HOPE

Yet amidst the prophetic voice of doom, there was a glimmer of hope for the future, of a restored Israel whose return to the land would symbolise a restored relationship with God (Amos 9.11-15). Neither was the year of Jubilee altogether forgotten. The ideas of release and liberty, return and restoration, were taken up metaphorically in Isaiah, particularly chapters 58 and 61. As the prophet foresaw release for the Babylonian captives, he described Yahweh's anointed herald as the one who would come as Israel's redeemer, inaugurating the final epoch of salvation. So while not losing any of its ethical force, Jubilee came to be understood in terms of God's end-time restoration of humanity and nature to his original purpose. It is into this context that

Jesus speaks, presenting himself as that anointed herald.

### "TODAY THIS SCRIPTURE HAS BEEN FULFILLED IN YOUR HEARING"

Jesus' Nazareth sermon was a declaration of the inbreaking of God's end-time reign in his own person and mission. The first thing to note about the citation recorded in Luke's gospel is that it is a fusion of two texts from Isaiah, 61.1-2 and 58.6 ("to let the oppressed go free"), taken from the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament). The citation of Isaiah 61 stops abruptly in middle of v2, omitting the phrase, "the day of vengeance of our God", and so emphasising the nature of the declaration as "good news." A more literal translation (from J.B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 77) reveals two further emphases:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me  
 for he has anointed me;  
 To preach good news to the poor he has sent me:  
 To proclaim for the captives *release*,  
 and to the blind sight;  
 To send forth the oppressed in *release*;  
 To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

It is likely that the "year of the Lord's favour" refers directly to the Jubilee year. The emphasis upon "release" (*aphesis*) provides a further strong link to Jubilee theology. Approximately half of the fifty or so occurrences of *aphesis* in the Septuagint are found in Leviticus 25 and 27 where they translate the Hebrew terms for "year of Jubilee" and "release." The significance of Jesus' sermon would not have been lost on his audience, no doubt familiar with what was then a popular messianic text: the era of God's favour had come, when all debts would be pardoned, the oppressed set free, the captives released and Israel restored.

It seems clear that Jesus was not calling for a literal enactment of the Jubilee year, but was rather referring to his anointed ministry of "release from sins" and from the binding power of Satan (Lk 7.18-23; 13.10-17; Acts 10.38). It is equally evident however, that the coming kingdom demanded a response at the economic level that would have clear social implications. As John had responded to the crowd: "whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise... do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation and be satisfied with your wages" (Lk 3.10-14).

At the heart of Jesus' declaration is the key mission statement, "to preach good news to the poor." The clauses following serve to flesh out the shape of that mission. An important question is then, who are the poor? It is likely that "poor" refers not simply to an economic class, but to those who are socially excluded (cmp Lk 4.18; 6.20; 7.22; 14.13, 21; 16.20, 22). Jesus mission then, involved the overturning of previous measures of power and privilege and the creation of a new community where all were free to receive the grace of God.

This socio-economic dimension is well illustrated throughout the gospel, not least by Jesus' meeting with Zacchaeus. Faced by a grumbling crowd, the "sinner" Zacchaeus' response to Jesus is, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Jesus' reply is to the point: "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and save the lost" (Lk 19.1-10).

It is further significant that the Church in Acts responded to the progression of the good news at the level of mutual economic help. The summary found in Acts 4.34a, "there was not a needy person among them", seems to be a clear allusion to Deut 15.4, a Sabbath year text which speaks of the blessings associated with obedience to the provisions for debt remission.

Proclamation of the "good news" thus involved two dimensions of transformation. A restored relationship to God and a restoration to community. Freedom from diabolic, social and economic chains. The resulting community would succeed where Israel had failed, becoming a community whose worship of the true God and love for one another was expressed in the struggles and realities of life in the first century and beyond. Our focus on these issues has underscored the point that the *ideals* of Jubilee have been substantially preserved in the ethical response demanded by the kingdom of God. What then of today?

### **"LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN LIKE WATERS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE AN EVERLASTING STREAM."**

As we have seen from its OT beginnings, the year of Jubilee was primarily an economic institution aimed at preserving an equitable distribution of the land and preventing the accumulation of ownership by a wealthy minority. The result would be a free people inhabiting a free land and rendering to God the honour due to his name. Jesus' use of the Jubilee imagery had far reaching implications, and as we read in Luke and Acts, these included an ethical thrust into the socio-economic sphere. Jubilee then, provides a paradigm for Christian ethics and for the critique of various political and economic agendas at work in our nation and globally.

The basis for our response to global issues is the universality of the Jubilee principle. In parallel to the declaration of Leviticus 25.23, "the land is mine", stands the affirmation of Psalm 24 that, "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it." The equitable distribution and responsible use of the world's resources is a universal moral principle based on the act of creation itself. The explosive growth of the internet has brought the global community from our front gate to our desk top. Our response to the poor, hungry, and oppressed can begin with the click of a mouse in order to become informed about the issues and to offer practical support. Among the many well known organisations working in these areas, three in particular provide worthwhile places to start: The Hunger Site (<http://www.thehungersite.com>), the Netaid homepage (<http://www.netaid.org>), and the Jubilee 2000 International homepage (<http://www.jubilee2000uk.org>).

The number of Christian organisations and individuals at the forefront of these works is a reminder that the eighth century prophets were not social reformers, political activists or revolutionaries. The basis of their message was theological, their cry for justice was rooted in a knowledge of the just God. Similarly the

response of the Church to the economic and political issues facing this nation cannot be divorced from our responsibility to live as transformed faith communities. Before we can speak with integrity into the political issues surrounding the growing economic imbalances of NZ, surely we must critique the economic paradigms which form the basis for our own personal and community existence.

The concept of Jubilee is a critique of the tendency of our nation toward the accumulation of personal wealth and rampant consumerism. Yet to live in the spirit of Jubilee entails a thorough and ongoing examination of the use and care of all our resources, rather than a simplistic renunciation of wealth per se. It means that our communities will be characterised by a concern for the economically poor and the socially marginalised.

## **YOUR KINGDOM COME: PRAYERS FOR RELEASE AND JUSTICE**

The biblical idea of Jubilee thus calls for a wholistic spirituality where justice and righteousness are held together. It is a reminder that a heart close to God will be moved by the things that move the heart of God. It is worth noting in conclusion, that the gospel of Luke, where the Jubilee motif finds its most focused expression, also underscores the responsibility of prayer. Luke presents prayer as central to the progression and fulfilment of God's purposes in the face of obstacles and opposition, and envisages a prayer life in which a request to be forgiven and forgiving, stands alongside a call for justice (Lk 11.4; 18.1-8).

### **A Jubilee Prayer:**

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.*

*David - Psalm 51:10-12*

### **A Song for the End of a Century:**

*Bless our God, O peoples,  
let the sound of God's praise be  
heard who has kept us among the living,  
and has not let our feet slip.  
For you, O God, have tested us;  
you laid burdens on our back;  
you let people ride over our heads;  
we went through fire  
and through water;  
yet you have brought us out  
to a spacious place.*

*Psalm 66:8-12*

## **CARE OF THE EARTH AND JUBILEE by Mary Maitland - Parua Bay**

The turning over of our calendar from the 1900s to the 2000s is certainly capturing our attention these days... millennium bugs, lavish concerts, parties galore, efforts towards the remission of international debts, and more quietly, local justice initiatives and prayer experiences... many with the potential to allow us to stop, to ponder and to choose to live life more consciously and with greater global awareness and respect.

The Sabbath and Jubilee years in their Biblical context are closely tied to a rethinking of relationships, a redistribution of wealth, and a resting of the land. It is a wholistic context embracing all created reality. So let

us for a moment consider some aspects of this Jubilee vision of our Biblical ancestors that could impact on a healthy appreciation of and connection with creation.

In the face of the ecological degradation of our planet Earth, with its land, oceans, atmosphere and organisms in crisis because of wasteful human activity, people everywhere are coming to understand we cannot continue to use the goods of the Earth as we have in the past. One of the challenges of our present times is for eco-justice to find a home in the actions and reactions of all Christians. This calls us to honour in more explicit ways the primary context of Divine revelation in the unfolding process of creation, and to examine our attitudes towards all life forms.

Do we acknowledge creation itself as the primary narrator of the sacred story that gives us access to the Divine? How well do we listen to the Earth-speak? Are we still caught in the spatial dualism which contrasts the heavens and the earth and keeps God's reign distant?

The Jubilee vision also challenges our concepts of ownership. The Earth belongs to God. As a reading of Psalm 104 reveals, all creatures look to God for life. Do we live on Earth gratefully? lightly? as tenant? steward? trustee? co-creator?... conscious of our mutual connection with the rhythms of nature and its life forms? Is Earth a sacred heritage or just a commodity, an economic resource? The Genesis "dominion" (1:18) did not include domination. God entrusted humanity with the land and to be in good relationship with it.

Do we see the land as gift as our Biblical ancestors did? How well do we respect the integrity, dignity and beauty of creation? How well do we exercise concern and care for our natural environment? Does the way we live enhance Earth's capacity to manifest God's artwork, the communication of a dynamic God deeply engaged within an unfolding, ever new sacred story? In the simple act of breathing, how aware are we of filling our lungs with "Ruah" the Spirit of God?

Another element worth exploring in relation to the Jubilee frame work is how well we honour creation, the land, ourselves, through the rhythm of Sabbath rest. The activity of God in the Genesis story supplies the basic model for periodic rest, but as the Biblical story expands, the Sabbath laws as recorded in Exodus extend the day of rest for all people, and all livestock to cover nature as well... especially the soil. This day of rest or fallow time, or Sabbath, places a limit on productivity and highlights the intrinsic worth of all creation and its right and need to be refreshed or restored. Honouring the Sabbath gives time to acknowledge the goodness of the Sacred Mystery at the centre of creation and the goodness of creation itself. It moves us out of over-drive to pause, to ponder, to quieten, to simply be.

Do we have rhythms of withdrawing from work and resting as the Sabbath teaches? Are we over-demanding on ourselves, our neighbour, and value ourselves and other people for their productivity only? How much attention do we give to setting aside quiet time for sacred listening that connects us more deeply with the ground of our being?

For Christians, the Jubilee event is tied to the engagement of God becoming enfleshed within time and Earth's being, in the birth of Jesus. It is clear that Jesus possessed a profound sense of the natural environment, was at home within it, knew it as the place of God's presence and desire for communion and was able to appreciate it as a metaphor of the quality of God's loving care. We have much to learn from Jesus' respect for the natural world and His identification with natural elements such as water (John 4:13-14), bread (John 6:48) and light (John 10:11).

Let us read the gospels with this in mind, and notice that here, in Earth's context is where the reign, the kingdom of God is unfolding. This is what Jesus proclaims. Let us experience it and celebrate it as we walk on this Earth that welcomes our birth and receives us in death.

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### **A Morning Prayer Ritual:**

*We raise our hands in praise  
We stretch out our hands in compassion  
We hold out our hands in offering  
We open our hands to receive*

*We touch the earth as pilgrims  
We place our hands on our hearts  
for God dwells within.*

*Joyce Rupp. Auckland 1999.*

## **HOW THE JUBILEE THEME HAS BEEN USED IN A RETREAT SETTING** **by Catherine Woodcock - Wanganui, and Marlene Dunn - Palmerston North**

As we approach the new millennium, we as Christians celebrate the fact that God became human and lived among us 2000 years ago. This is the starting point for the call made by some churches to go back to the biblical roots and keep the year as the Great Jubilee.

The Book of Leviticus, Chapter 25, describes the practice of Jubilee. Maria Harris sums up these core Jubilee teachings:

You shall let the land lie fallow, that is, you shall practise Sabbath;  
You shall forgive debts, letting forgiveness in;  
You shall free captives and proclaim liberty;  
You shall find out what belongs to whom and give it back;  
You shall hold a great feast, learning to sing the canticle of 'Jubilate.'

The Jubilee tradition is both visionary and pragmatic, offering us concrete responses to the challenges of contemporary life.

As one response to this call to 'return to our roots' we offered 6-day silent retreats based on the Great Jubilee. Three were held in Wanganui and one in Wellington. We also offered a one-day retreat in Wanganui.

The retreats were guided, with an opportunity for individual spiritual direction. We gathered twice daily. The morning session set the theme for the day by way of input, prayer and reflection. A sheet for reflection and suggestions for making some creative response was provided. A variety of art materials was available. The evening session included an opportunity for retreatants to share what had been significant for them from the day.

We began the retreat with a ritual 'Crossing the Threshold' to symbolise our response to God's invitation to "enter the land which I am giving you" (Lev.25:2). The following days saw us reflecting on the themes of Sabbath, Forgiveness, Freedom, Justice and Jubilation. We were aware that any one of these themes could have been the subject of the whole retreat.

Feedback has indicated that retreatants have appreciated the silence, the leisurely pace of the day, the focal point for each theme, the evening sharing and the creative approach of the handouts. The latter have been helpful for ongoing personal prayer and use with other groups.

This type of retreat initially involves many hours of preparation. Once that is done we are able to step aside and let God take over. Personally we have found the experience of these retreats enriching and humbling as we journey with the retreatants and marvel at the unique ways God touches each of them.

Maria Harris, 'Proclaim Jubilee' *A Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1996) p.2

**God's justice**  
*has a dynamic,  
transformative quality.  
It causes things to change,  
and it expects that things must need change  
if there is to be abundant life.*

**Walter Brueggemann**

## A Prayer on entering a new Century

*Welcome us, O God:*

- clear our sight from the blind spots of the century we leave behind;
- warm our hearts from the chill and distance of life's separations;
- heal the pain, wounds and scars of the battles we've fought;
- cleanse the mistakes of pride, self-will and the marks we've missed;
- save us from our distortions and delusions;
- broaden our understanding of your grace;
- deepen our insight of all that is real;
- open our minds to all that is true;
- increase our wisdom
- infiltrate your Love through every emptiness;
- strengthen us in each challenge
- and deepen our commitments.

*Through Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour.*

**Andrew Dunn**

## WALK HUMBLY by David Crawley - Henderson

*"do justice ... love kindness ... walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8)*

What is humility? "Having or showing a low estimate of one's own importance," according to my dictionary. The Latin root is *humus*, meaning ground, suggesting that to be humble is to be low to the ground, diminishing oneself. The Hebrew lexicon hints at a more relational understanding - biblical humility has to do with creating room for the largeness of God, rather than having a low estimate of oneself. In a broader way, then, let's think of humility as *creating space for another's reality to be truly expressed*.

In that light, what might Micah's challenge to "walk humbly with your God" mean for us in practice? Several aspects impress themselves on me as I reflect on that question.

The first expresses the priority of humility: *create space for God to be God*. This was the heart of the prophetic challenge to God's people. Their weakness was not a lack of religious fervour. Sacrifices and festivals were celebrated with enthusiasm. But the prophets saw that it was like a party at which the supposed guest of honour was sidelined. They consistently reminded their contemporaries that true worship meant living out the "worth-ship" of God - asking what matters most to God and pursuing it wholeheartedly. And according to Micah 6:8, what matters most to God is justice and mercy, the two great pillars of the whole of covenant law in the Hebrew Scriptures.

My humble walk with God, then, begins with creating the space to listen to what is important to God. Each day the "crust of self" needs to be broken open by the word of God. In the silence the ancient call to love and justice finds room for fresh outworking.

If there is challenge in walking humbly with God, there is also relief. Creating space for God means *laying down the burden of being God*. I do not have to run the universe or save humanity single-handed! Yes, I am called to "do justice" with all my might, but I do this as a co-worker of the one who alone can bring to consummation the kingdom of peace and justice. I am called to "love mercy", but I gladly remember the limits of my loving, knowing that even Jesus did not and could not minister to every needy person he met. I

am invited to surrender my ego-driven need always to be in control. Walking humbly with God frees me to sit with silence, with pain, with unanswered prayers, with unresolved dilemmas, and to allow all of these to enlarge the space in my life for Mystery.

Recently I read the published diaries and letters of Etty Hillesum, a young Dutch Jewish Lawyer who eventually died in Auschwitz at the age of 29. Her reflections on life were profound beyond her years. She was not particularly religious, quite worldly in fact, but the entries in her diaries over the three years before her death record something of a spiritual journey. Initially her reflections were very preoccupied with herself, her various relationships and her self-sufficient approach to life. In her own words: "I wanted to be handed everything on a platter, like a badly spoiled child." (18) Gradually there developed a greater space for a reality beyond herself. She began to see in nature a beauty which she no longer needed to possess. Increasingly she could live one day at a time with "the inner certainty that everything will be taken care of." (19) Initially she wrote about herself as "The girl who could not kneel" (58). Then it became "the girl who gradually learned to kneel" (61). Prayers began to feature in her diary entries: "I shall follow wherever Your hand leads me and shall try not to be afraid." (63)

As I followed Etty's journey, I did not sense her diminishing, losing her individuality, her sharpness. On the contrary, as the space within her enlarged to embrace a reality greater than herself, and as her trust in that reality grew, there developed also an inner strength and a remarkable capacity to love.

Another of Etty's early prayers illustrates a further aspect of creating space for God: "I kneel once more on the rough coconut matting, my hands over my eyes, and pray: 'Oh, Lord, let me feel at one with myself. Let me perform a thousand daily tasks with love, but let every one spring from a greater central core of devotion and love.'" (70) You see, Micah 6:8 is a package deal. Justice and mercy find their source and shape in God. God's people could be expected to know how to do justice because God had done justice for them. They had been slaves, God had liberated them. So they were called to treat slaves and strangers in Israel with like compassion.

"Do justice and love mercy" is therefore a call to *draw from the wellspring of God* within me. "Walk humbly with your God" is the invitation to come, to spend time at that well, to draw deeply from it, and then to go out and refresh others. When people asked Mother Teresa how she could keep ministering to the destitute and dying of Calcutta, her answer would inevitably stress that prayer and works of compassion must be the two sides of the same coin.

In May 1942 as conditions worsened for the Jews in Holland, Etty Hillesum wrote:

*The threat grows ever greater, and terror increases from day to day. I draw prayer round me like a dark protective wall, withdraw inside it as one might into a convent cell and then step outside again, calmer and stronger and more collected again. I can imagine times to come when I shall stay on my knees for days on end waiting until the protective walls are strong enough to prevent my going to pieces altogether, my being lost and utterly devastated. (133-134)*

Even if our circumstances are not as desperate as those faced by either of these extraordinary women, we too need to draw our affirmation, our strength, our hope from God. If we do not, we will unconsciously seek to draw it from those we minister to, or from the success of our ministry

There is a dimension of Micah 6:8 which is barely glimpsed in the Hebrew Scriptures, but is central to the New Testament. Jesus summed it up in the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family [that is, the hungry, the thirsty, the refugees, the naked, the sick, the prisoners], you did it to me."

From this perspective, to walk with God is not a matter of scaling great spiritual heights in order to walk alongside God, though there may be mountain top experiences. Nor is it a matter of turning ourselves inside out to achieve some mystical experience of God, though such experiences may happen. God is rather to be found among the lowly, the poor, the oppressed, the little people of our world. Walking humbly therefore also means seeking God there. It means openness to sharing in God's work of bringing good news, justice and mercy to the poor and the oppressed. In this way, humility is closely allied to *hospitality*. To create space

for God is *to create a homely, welcoming place* in our hearts and lives for the wounded people, the brothers and sisters of the wounded Messiah.

Etty Hillesum spent her last months in Holland at a huge holding camp at Westerbork. Her letters from there, and the testimony of those who remembered her, reveal a person of immense courage and compassion. She poured herself out nursing the sick in the hospital barracks and somehow continued to create beauty and meaning in a context that in most respects was hell. Her last recorded writing was a postcard to friend, thrown from the freight car of the train which took her and 1000 others to Poland. It begins, "Opening the Bible at random I find this: `The Lord is my high tower'," and tells of how they left the camp singing.

To return to where we began, humility has nothing to do with grinding ourselves into the dirt. It has nothing to do with feelings of inferiority, self-hatred, or retreat from life. People like Etty Hillesum, Mother Teresa and Jesus show that to walk humbly with God *requires* us to be at home in ourselves, so that we are free to give ourselves fully to serving God. To create the space for God to be fully God we need to give ourselves the space to be all that we can be, to be fully human.

Quotations from Etty Hillesum,  
*An Interrupted Life and Letters from Westerbork* (Henry Holt, 1996)

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## Jubilee

*Time for justice and mercy*

*to meet and kiss.*

**Wendy Wright**

There is something very  
beautiful in work  
which is well  
and precisely done.  
It is a participation  
in the activity of God,  
who makes all things  
well and wisely,  
beautiful to the  
last detail.

**Jean Vanier**

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## A PERSONAL SPIRITUALITY FROM A CELTIC PERSPECTIVE

by Alison Newell - Portsmouth

I write as a Celt, a Scottish woman who feels a resonance with the Celtic tradition in my bones. There are four main features of this tradition that I write about.

### PASSION FOR LIFE

The first is the passion for life. The 9th century Irish theologian, Eriugena, spoke of the mystery of the *Life Force* and its power to germinate and fructify. Spirituality is for me about the sap of life that makes me feel alive, that makes me want to respond to what is around me. Feeling alive, I find myself aware both of the goodness of life and the pain of life.

That life is good is sometimes almost overwhelming. I find there is a deep welling up of thanks for the vitality of life within us and around us, a deep knowing that life is gift in all its beating and pulsing, in its

birthing and growing and dying. At these times there is in me a wild and natural passion for life that cannot be contained within church walls. It is a passion that connects me to God's life force within all things: to the sea in its fullness, the earth in its greening and growing, to the flowers in their energy of colour, to the creatures in their energy of movement, and to people in their energy of living. It is wild because it is spontaneous and unrepressed and it is based on wonder at the mystery of God's life at the heart of creation, at the heart of the world and at the heart of humanity.

## **VULNERABLE GOD**

The second feature of this tradition that strongly resonates with me is related to its massive high-standing crosses (with the circle of the sun or world cut through by the cross). This speaks powerfully of the place of God's suffering in our world. Our whole creation in its imperfection and brokenness needs the knowledge of an incarnate God who is deeply with us in our pain and suffering, as well as in our newness of life. I experience God as a God of passionate love, seeking to be known by us, living deeply in the world and knowing vulnerability and woundedness. We, being made in the image of God, are born to reflect God's creativity and vulnerable love. I experience life as a gift, but it is a gift shrouded in pain. The wounds are countless - of failure and hurt, of lack of well-being in the world - the wounds we inflict on others, the wounds we receive ourselves.

I know that the vulnerability of life can make me come alive to compassion. I know that where the Gospels tell of the vulnerable infant God or the vulnerable dying God I am led to a heightened awareness of this place of God's dwelling. However, when in life the pain seems overwhelming, how do we hold one another's pain so that we do not drown or shut off our ability to feel? How do we remain instead alive to the pathos of life? How do we remain alive to the common humanity we share with our brothers and sisters across the world who are suffering because of war or poverty or disease? How do we stay alive to the task of building new bonds of care when the old structures of clan or community are breaking down, leaving many people in our societies feeling isolated and alone?

## **INTERWEAVINGS**

The third feature of Celtic spirituality to which I would like to point is its love of the Trinity. This reflects an understanding of God in terms of relationship and love, of mutuality, corporateness and interconnected-ness that encompasses creation and humanity. It is this same interconnectedness of the eternal with the temporal, the spiritual with the material, that is expressed in the interweavings of Celtic art designs. I like the phrase of the American theologian, Beverly Wildung Harrison who says 'We are body-selves who touch and see and hear each other into life'. Our spirituality surely begins and is rooted in our bodies and relationships but also in the body corporate and politic. The experience of mutual love from childhood onwards is the place which holds and contains the breadth of human experience, from joy through anger to grief and pain. The Trinity is another way of speaking of mutual love, about the mutual giving and receiving of love within God, a love that encompasses the world, holding our pain and renewing us in life.

Through mutual love we learn what it means to become our true selves, reflecting God's creativity and vulnerable love. In this way we learn what it means to be truly at home in our bodies. The Celtic mystic and poet, John O'Donoghue, writes 'Your body is the only home that you have in the universe. It is in and through your body that your soul becomes visible and real for you. Your body is the home of your soul on earth ... The body is the angel of the soul.' For me, creativity and vulnerable love and a sense of being alive are wrought out of the darkness of God as well as Her light, out of the wildness of God as well as Her order, out of the pain of God as well as Her pleasure.

## **GOD'S BEST IMAGE**

The fourth characteristic of the Celtic tradition is its understanding that humanity is made in the image of God and as such bears an essential goodness. This is conveyed powerfully by the 4th century Celtic teacher, Pelagius, who taught that when we look into the face of a new-born child we are looking into the face of God. This leads to a sense that salvation is about being liberated by grace from sin and evil and to be our true selves, made in the image of God.

The experience of the essential goodness of life and its mystery is given to me in the most *ordinary* contexts of life, whether in the beauty and wildness of creation or when digging in the dark earth as a gardener, whether among friends and family or in the nights of deep sexual sharing with my partner. It is an experience known in my pregnancies as I felt the mystery of life within the darkness of my womb and then at my children's births as I first held their firm fleshy humanity. It is an experience felt when living alongside Central American refugees and listening to their stories of suffering and despair, of courage and hope. It is an experience found with some prisoners who in the midst of rejection and lack of liberty and space know an inner freedom. It is an experience known in the midst of political process where there is working for justice and liberation or at time when laughter, tears, songs, stories and silence have been shared.

### **SPIRITUALITY IS...**

Spirituality for me means listening for God and discovering that there is nowhere She has not touched for She lives and loves at the heart of life.

### **What does Yahweh ask of us?**

Only this:

- to love tenderly
- to love fiercely
- to love tenaciously

We are called to be tenderly and  
fiercely determined to hold firm  
to life - even as Yahweh holds us.

*Sharon Parks*

### **HEY, MAN, DO A GALILEE COME-DOWN**

**by Bernard Thornton - Gore**

God found a way  
to come down from the sky,  
to walk in Galilee,  
take out boats with fishermen,  
and practise carpentry -  
You've seen wind search landscape  
for places in which  
to be embodied:  
tree foliage, and grasses,  
quickened to life,  
given movement and voice  
by wind's sure entry.

Did you know that  
Jesus had a body like mine?

Do you think  
Jesus thought Mary beautiful  
when she wiped his feet  
with her long hair?

You walked in the church.  
Up and down. Amongst us.  
And you had in your hands  
this big brown loaf  
like those you can buy

any day of the week  
at Premier Foods

And holding it up  
you broke it with your hands,  
and as the pieces came apart  
in the air, the spirit chose me  
for a vessel, as substantially  
as Jesus putting his hand  
on the rail of Peter's boat  
to go out for a bit of quiet  
on the lake, and a spot of fishing.  
God found a way  
to come down to earth -  
he called it Jesus.

Jesus found a way  
to come down to me -  
he calls it you.

The wind finds a way  
to let me know it, too,  
stirred grasses, shaken leaves.

Come down from your pulpit,  
I need you on my heart's street  
for the east wind's blowing there.  
Hey, man, do a Galilee come-down.

God came down to earth,  
you came down  
out of your pulpit,  
and we got rid of  
several hierarchies  
and abstractions  
that had been bothering us  
for years.

You sat in your chair  
and talked to us  
on a broken Saturday  
which neither I nor the world  
knew what to do with:

You see I have lived  
the string of yesterdays,  
and know a miracle is something  
you can't order at the corner store -  
but sit with me,  
and thread me through  
the books, and words,  
and music of your path,  
and my unjoinedness  
will join itself to Jesus  
getting his feet wet in the shallows.

Hey, man, do a Galilee come-down!

---

**Let the same mind be in you**  
*that was in Christ Jesus,  
 who, though he was in the form of God,  
 did not regard equality with God  
 as something to be exploited,  
 but emptied himself,  
 taking the form of a slave,  
 being born in human likeness.  
 And being found in human form  
 he humbled himself  
 and became obedient to the point of death -  
 even death on a cross.*

*Therefore God also highly  
 exalted him  
 and gave him the name  
 that is above every name,  
 so that at the name of Jesus  
 every knee should bend,  
 in heaven and on earth  
 and under the earth,  
 and every tongue should confess  
 that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
 to the glory of God the Father.*

***Philippians 2:5-11***

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## **ATTACHMENTS by Warren Deason - Albany**

*One of the multitude said to him, "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me".  
 But He said to him "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?"  
 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of all covetousness;  
 for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions".  
 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully;  
 and he thought to himself, "What shall I do for I have nowhere to store my crops?"  
 And he said "I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones;  
 and there I will store all my grain and goods. And I will say to my soul,  
 Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years;  
 take your ease, eat, drink and be merry"  
 But God said to him "Fool! This night your soul is required of you;  
 and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"  
 So is he who lays up treasure for himself; and it not rich toward God"  
 (Luke 12: 13-21, RSV)*

*Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of God.  
 (Hebrews 12:1-2, RSV)*

Hear a contemporary voice of writer Annie Dillard (one of this generation's most profound nature mystics writing in the English language) "I think it would be well, and proper, and obedient, and pure, **to grasp your one necessity and not let it go**, to dangle from it limp wherever it takes you. Then even death, where you're going no matter how you live, cannot you part."

New Zealander Paul Hawker felt the strength of that "one necessity" when at the age of 43, at the height of his creative powers and his career, he still felt "restless and rudderless". He was aware of an aching gulf in his life. "I was a lost soul, directionless and confused. The unanswered questions had become critical as life itself. Time to discover what was and wasn't real, and to risk all in the process". (*from Soul Survivor*)

For Paul Hawker this pursuit of God drove him to the wilderness...

For Jesus the imperative was the same. Jesus' own struggle with his one necessity is recounted in the gospels. Jesus was driven (by the Spirit) into the wilderness to face the power of all that might divert and distract him, that which he might be attached to, however worthy those things might be, from his pursuit of the will of God. In the wilderness experience that call was posed most sharply - in that place of quietness and deep stillness. All that might pull him away, however worthily, from the Father's will.

So here we are - in our wilderness place (retreat) entering into deeper silence and perhaps struggling as Jesus did, as Paul Hawker did with the call of being taken by this "one necessity".

Dangling limp from the jaws of this "one necessity" is handing over control ... There is a passivity in there that is frightening for us. Struggling in its grip might be more likely reaction on our part.

But better to face this now rather than on the soul's last night ... as it was for the property developer of the gospel. (Luke 12:20)

If we are carried by this "one necessity" one of the stopping places will be the place of self discovery:-  
 - the place where we will have to face all the ambiguities and contradictions deep within us.  
 - where we will face all that which we are really attached to, all that which clings so closely ...

One point toward the latter stages of his journey Paul Hawker, at a particularly difficult time, cooped up by a storm in his hut for three days, loses it. An eruption of anger and obscenities follow. God is put in the dock.

In the silence which follows Paul Hawker senses a pleased God responding, "At last you've stopped pretending... now we've got some honesty, now we can really get stuck in." The delight of a God who finally has an honest soul to deal with ...

That which clung closely to Paul Hawker was this deeply ingrained desire to please and it had become an obstacle to his meeting the God he desperately sought. Like the strongest attachments it had become part of his being and attachments never fish with unbarbed hooks ...

Eugene Peterson in his translation of Hebrews calls them "parasitic sins..." But perhaps not always so. A parasitic relationship is one where the host is fed upon and receives no comfort from the relationship. I think that attachments can become so much part of us that they are part of our being. There is mutual dependence, almost a symbiosis.

And the subtlety is they are not always obviously unworthy ...

Even spirituality can become an "attachment".

The contemplative way or mystical way can become an attachment.

Even the profound "Aha" moments, the religious experiences can become an attachment when they are sought for themselves rather than where they point, where they become a fixation rather than the fixation being on Christ.

They cease to be attachments and find their rightful place when they point beyond themselves to the deeper reality of God - they

become like midwives helping bring to birth the life of God - and growth into the image of Christ.

Let another Paul (2,000 years earlier) have the last word:

*"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers and Sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own; **but one thing I do**, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the*

*goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*  
*Phillippians 3.*

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### **THREE VOICES by Matthew Jack - Takapuna**

(Ref. to Psalm 8)

When I look at the stars,  
the vast stretching expanses above my head,  
and when I see the cycles of life and death that claim the creatures around me,  
I know that I am very small.  
So I must fight against all that is big,  
and threatens to engulf me.  
I must grasp what might be mine,  
snatching the patterns of land  
and overcoming the passing seasons.  
I become big by slaying the giant sleeping trees,  
and telling tales of my vast, enormous power.  
When I look at the stars  
they laugh,  
I rise to fight.

When I look at the stars,  
I feel very very small.  
I know that I am nothing.  
When I look at the stars  
and all that this world is to me,  
I am already defeated.  
For who am I to challenge the waterfalls,  
or capture the light of the sun?  
Who am I to hope  
that I might leave the smallest mark on this world  
of ancient hill and plain?  
No, I am nothing;  
the stars tell me so.  
So I shall deserve unemployment  
and find that despair fits me well.  
I shall pack away the dreams of braver people  
and close the book of growing worth.  
When I look at the stars  
I let the others fight.  
Me?  
I become so small, I die.

When I look at your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;  
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?

Yet you made them a little lower than God,  
and crowned them with glory and honour.

...O Lord our sovereign God,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

*Faith makes a difference.  
Thanks be to God*

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### **Friendship**

*is the best medicine in life.  
It is ... a bridge between us  
and the perfect love of God.*

*Aelred of Rivaulx*

### **In solitude**

*we discover that our life  
is not a possession to be defended,  
but a gift to be shared. In solitude  
we become aware that our worth  
is not the same as our usefulness.*

*Henri Nouwen*

### **Grace**

*makes God  
uncontrollable,  
dangerous!*

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## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **PROCLAIM JUBILEE by Maria Price**

*Reviewed by Mary Concannon*

**A Spirituality for the Twenty First Century.  
Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville, Kentucky 1996.**

As the title suggests this book is designed to help us face the new millennium from a biblical perspective. The chapter titles indicate this:

Themes in a Century: Challenges for Jubilee  
Let the Land Lie Fallow  
Forgiveness as a Way of being in the World  
Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land to All its Inhabitants  
Jubilee Justice  
Sing a New Song: The Canticle of Jubilation

However as these titles also suggest it does so in the context of the modern world.

Walter Bruggemann in the Foreword puts this well:

"Harris has refused to leave things in the conventional categories and so can bring matters into new relationships that quietly resketch our usual segmentations of the world".

There is a full set of reflective questions at the end of each chapter which are equally suitable both for individual use and for group discussion. The price of the book (it is not cheap for its size) is compensated for by the possibility of its multiple uses.

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### **SOUL SURVIVOR by Paul Hawker**

*Reviewed by Warren Deason*

**A spiritual quest through 40 days and 40 nights of mountain solitude.  
Northstone, British Columbia, 1999**

At the age of 43, NZ born, but Australian based film maker, Paul Hawker, felt a restless melancholy in his life. At the urging of a friend who told him he needed a "wilderness experience" Paul Hawker set out to find God in the Tararua ranges he had tramped as a young man. Somehow there had always been an invitation for him in these enticing yet dangerous hills. 22 years before he had been overnighing on the Arete peak and he awoke just at sunrise and suddenly captured for him was a layer of cloud stretched across the pass, touched by the sun's first rays. It was a "kind of perpetual gentle haunting - not only the stunning beauty but also the unique timing". That experience of, at that time, unrecognised gift, never left him.

The book recounts the story of Hawker's hunger to discover and listen to this mystery we call God. The publisher classifies the book as "spiritual adventure/inspirational" and adventure it certainly is. His desire to hear and follow the inner voice leads him through breathtakingly wonderful and agonisingly painful experiences.

It is a contemplative adventure where he is invited to learn to "wander and wonder", to pause, to ponder more deeply, to begin to see the universe in a patch of lichen. To celebrate the journey rather than see it as the means to arrive.

As this journey progresses he struggles with the limitations of even naming his experiences. The word "God" seems "just too small, it is lesser, definable, cloying, diminutive and excluding". He starts to develop his own naming. God becomes for him: Source; Loving Presence; Own One; Coach; Holy One; Questioner; The One (who is without equal); Voice...

His own expanding discoveries about this "Own One" and how this "One" communicates with him, lead him on a painful journey of discovering himself and the ambiguities and contradictions deep inside. At one stage of his trek, cooped up in a hut for several days, he explodes with resentment and anger at God - and instead of indignant response he senses an almost playful delight in God.

" At least you've stopped pretending... now we have some honesty, now we can really get stuck in'. This beautiful God wanted me to share my heart's hurt, my heart's desires, my pain, my joy, my frustrations. Nothing less would do."

Paul Hawker's ultimate discovery though is of love and grace. A discovery of the community of God's being and that Community of Love is in love with us. "...I am loved, so incredibly loved. Truly loved beyond comprehension..."

The format of the book itself invites a slow pondering as well as a quick read. Wide margins are peppered with quotes from those who have pondered deeper realities and these quotes deserve reflection.

One of the dangers of solitude can be self-deception. Just whose voice is this? My own, the Voice, misleading spiritual voices? Paul Hawker offers a page or two of criteria for discernment and these are worth reading. I found the book shelved under New Age/Motivational and this may mean it will be read by a wider audience than a purely Christian market. I suspect that this is Hawker's intention - it offers an honest account of a spiritual journey, largely free of institutional Christian language. I think it should become a New Zealand spiritual classic.

**SOUL FRIENDSHIP by Ray Simpson**

*Reviewed by Andrew Dunn.*

**Celtic Insights into Spiritual Mentoring  
Hodder PB. 1999. 294pp. \$26.95.**

Ray Simpson, Guardian of the Community of Aidan and Hilda at Lindisfarne, adds another significant book to his offerings on things Celtic - this time on spiritual direction. His introduction briefly states the value of seeing life as a journey on which "we need people to accompany us who have experience of this journey" (2).

The Need (Part 1) for soul friendship (from the Gaelic *anamchara*) is acute for, as Brigid of Kildare said, "A person without a soul friend is like a body without a head". His discussion of ten reasons for the renewed interest in this ancient way outlines clearly the usual hungers and emptiness of modern life (Chapter 1). Simpson is a little harsh on what he calls the narrowness of spiritual direction as practised in modern times. It is if it only centres around confession, but there would be very few directors today who do only that. One question to keep in mind in reading this wide-ranging book has to do with the parameters of soul mentoring. Is it everything in the spiritual life or has it specific goals, aims and areas of focus?

Simpson then spends a short chapter (2) outlining soul friendship for the uninitiated. Here is a very helpful discussion on the heart of this calling, and on its ethics and professionalism. It would make an excellent introduction for anyone wanting to understand what spiritual direction is all about.

Part 2 outlines soul friendship in the Celtic tradition and his 12 chapters cover emphases from many strands that impacted on the Celtic Christians: John the NT writer (rapport), desert spirituality (detachment) and hermits (wildness), Irish insights (fostering), Columba (prophecy), Columbanus (fitness training) and Aelred's work on friendship, among others. So it's a book that ranges far and wide in tracing the elements to be found in the work of the soul friend. In this it is fascinating, and raises the question of the choice of these elements as distinctives. Simpson has certainly added some that I wasn't taught in my training - "wildness", I like the sound of that!

Part 3 is a beginner's guide to finding and becoming a soul friend. It's more meaty than the heading suggests and again offers some wise and steady suggestions both for training and practising spiritual direction as soul friendship.

Appendix 1 offers a form of commissioning liturgy of a soul friend, following the Community of Aidan and Hilda's practice. Appendix 2 has 10 pages of resources for soul friends: training organisations (all British), a wide range of books and cassettes on spiritual direction and related disciplines, and Simpson includes some sources of classic letters on spiritual direction which I haven't seen before.

Each chapter concludes with discussions points and exercises to enable work in some depth on the content. The book could be used as a refresher course in this unique task of soul-friending others. All in all a very useful presentation of material which would stimulate the work of pastors, priests, counsellors, therapists and spiritual directors.

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### **Spiritual Direction Discovery**

*Learning about God is very  
different from learning God!*

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### **TAKING NEW ZEALAND SERIOUSLY by Tim Hazledine**

*Reviewed by Clarice Greenslade*

#### **The Economic of Decency. Harper Collins NZ 1998**

Being rather illiterate in the whole business of economics, but with an increasing disquiet and scepticism about what I hear and see of the N.Z. free market economy, and its TINA (there is no alternative) presentation, I approached this book as a sort of duty for the good of my soul. I expected to have trouble understanding it, and I didn't expect to enjoy it much, but did. I find myself checking whether friends and acquaintances have read it because I want to discuss it with anyone who has.

Tim Hazledine is a Professor of Economics at Auckland University. He is a lively human, engaging writer. In **TAKING NEW ZEALAND SERIOUSLY** economic thought becomes accessible to a non-economist. This basically very serious, important book is fun to read, often humorous, and certainly not above taking the mickey out of pretentious ideas and people. It will not put up with nonsense, especially the politically correct nonsense of current economic thought. Its illustrations of more difficult material are homely and everyday.

Hazledine states his own position clearly and often - and there is no missing it! Towards the end of the book he says of challenges to the extreme free market economy of New Zealand since 1984. "The orthodox challenge to laissez-faire individualistic free markets worries about the side effects: alienation, extremes of wealth and poverty, deterioration of spiritual values... These are indeed valid concerns in themselves... but I am suggesting a deeper, more fundamental challenge. Rationalism, laissez-faire, globalisation - call it what you will - is not just bad in its side-effects and its spin offs; it is bad economics, even bad MARKET economics. Thus Hazledine challenges the New Zealand version of free market economy at the very point where it makes claims to success, and on the only point which its exponents think really matters.

Rather than try to present a picture of the book's whole thesis, let me relate to one area of it about which I had felt a special concern, and by which I hope to whet your appetite to read the whole.

I have been concerned and puzzled by the seeming proliferation of management roles (filled by those who may be unfamiliar with the professions concerned) in such organisations as the Health Service, and by the extraordinary salaries and other kinds of remuneration they seem to require. Hazledine discusses this very fully devoting a chapter to it under the title "Shock Collapse of Managerial Productivity !" (Don't you like that?) He points out that in 1956 each "manager" could handle only 20 transformation workers (those who do "stuff that other people want for its own sake e.g. building, making, teaching, healing, fixing...") By 1981 this ratio had risen by quite gentle degrees to 1 for 9. But then it more than doubled over the next decade becoming currently 1 for 4. "Of course administration is an honourable enough trade " he comments, "and good managers are useful citizens. But why do we have so many of them and why do we pay them so much? It is surely an irony of the market "reforms" that their most outstanding consequence has been an explosion of transaction costs in general, and management costs in particular... and it is no fluke... imposing a full blown commercial regime basically means tossing aside as "uncommercial" much of the trust and mutual forbearance - the social capital that enables people to manage themselves - and replacing this with an expensive system of monitors and guards, known politely as managers. And who will guard the guards themselves?... More guards, more managers, reaching up to the million - dollar club in lofty pyramids of bureaucratic excesses".

To make his point that the results of a "bureaucratic bloat" can be "quite spectacular" he uses the example of Fletcher Challenge Ltd. where there are 2,301 members of the 100K club, with a hierarchy of 7 levels, each manager in charge of 3 or 4 subordinates from \$100,000 to \$1,000,000 each level about 40% higher paid than the level below it. The total salary bill for all this was \$292 million (1996) which would cover the entire operating budget of the University of Auckland and also halve its student fees. The two institutions are about the same size with a total of 25,000 people.

Hazledine believes that the important factor missing in free market thought in N.Z. is the concept of social capital - trust, empathy and goodwill. In fact its absence is both assumed and fostered. He believes we need a different, process-orientated point of view - "get the process right and the outcomes will look after themselves".

On that sacred cow of the free market, the ECA, he says "it has been a washout in terms of labour productivity - less than 1% growth per year in this decade, well below the growth level achieved in previous decades in N.Z. and over the same period in Australia ... mediocre productivity performance, even more mediocre real wage growth and increased insecurity of work ..."

'Taking New Zealand Seriously' is a book for election year, all the more because it moves away from a Left versus Right polarity to a lateral approach. It is a book with a new vision for a new millennium. And it is a book for a year of Jubilee.

Other books on the NZ economy:

**Only their Purpose Is Mad:***Bruce Jesson: Dunmore Press 1999***The NZ Experiment: A World Model For Structural Adjustment.***Jane Kelsey: AUP 1995***LIVING AT THE EDGE by Penny Jamieson (Bishop of Dunedin)***Reviewed by Susan Jones***Sacrament and Solidarity in Leadership.****Mowbray, London 1997**

I found this book difficult to read. Not that Bishop Penny Jamieson writes in an obscure or difficult style, on the contrary, her prose is lucid and flowing. It's the subject matter which is difficult. . Bishop Penny confronts, head-on, the power agendas floating around the Church from the context of her election as bishop. Most of us do not confront power issues in such a way, especially when the power is finally in our hands. Bishop Penny's direct dealing is unsettling, but power dynamics within the Church should unsettle us. Only by handling power justly and appropriately can (undeniably) powerful Church leaders, such as spiritual directors, truly serve God well.

4 of the 11 chapters of the book contain 'power' and 'authority' in their title, but all of the book is suffused with the issue. SGM'ers will be struck by the emphasis Bishop Penny places on holding the exterior and interior life together.

I searched long and hard for the key to matching my interior life with my exterior life; specifically matching the interior life of my spirit, all I was and all that I longed to be for the God I had been called to serve, with the exterior life, in which all my relationships with friends, family, passing acquaintance and unknown stranger had shifted. (p.2)

Bishop Penny does not advocate shedding power in order to identify with the oppressed by identifying downwards. For those who do this "give up their responsibilities for using the power and resources that they do have." (p15)

Women will find a helpful analysis of how power in society operates for women. "The challenge for women in Christian leadership is not to eschew strength, but to reorient and redefine it, authentically and appropriately, with a firm foundation in Christian tradition and spirituality."

Discernment is the topic of chapter 3 and Bishop Penny deals with the processes, both personal and corporate, which she has found helpful, identifying which circumstances have caused mistakes in decision-making. The next chapter, "Caring", contains useful information on the dynamics and dangers of transference. "Holding" (Ch.5) deals with unity and diversity "It is essentially the call to hold the centre while letting the edges move." (p.78) Chapter 6 deals in a widely ranging way with ethics, recognising that "We speak into a society whose only common value is that of individualism, a value which itself makes ethical thinking quite problematical." This chapter leads inevitably to the next on abuse of power. An important point is made:

Indeed, for the Christian community to show a willingness, even an insistence on acting out the formulas and behaviours of forgiveness before they acquire some real meaning, some real grace, is to collude in the abusive behaviour. Forgiveness [in this circumstance] becomes denial (pp.117-118)

This contradicts the largeness of God who can "forgive the enormity of our sin: we do not need to trivialise it, or resort to reductionism, It can be faced in all its Zealanders need, so that we work out how we can be church right here, at home in new Zealand and follow God in this time and this place.

"Praying" is kept for the last chapter and after some autobiography, we are told of the loss of rhythm in the move from parish priest to bishop. Bishop Penny admits to a "discontinuity" between self and public persona "It was essentially the gap between my exterior life and my interior life, which always leaves one feeling fractured, because God created us to be whole people." (p.183) Many readers will identify with such labour pains when one pattern of prayer loses its appeal and another is waiting to be born. Bishop Penny tells of the value contemplative prayer was to her. She

... did not see how God could call me to be both a contemplative and a bishop. I am profoundly grateful to the friend who saw my dilemma, encouraged me to give contemplation a go again, and pointed me back with some tentativeness, towards the natural roots of my prayer life. (p.186)

She deals with the difficulties of escapism versus contemplation, the vulnerability of contemplative prayer and letting God be God. "I have found God in this slow lane." In this contemplative process, she values soul friends who "will both accept and challenge what I say, and will hold it sacred and deep in their own prayers, thus reinforcing, by the resilience of their faith, my own faith when it might be at a point of faltering." (p.193) Prayer for this woman has been tested in perhaps the most exposed and public position the church has demanded of a woman yet.

Bishop Penny makes one statement I wish to contradict. She claims there is no fear of her being mistaken for God since she is female. Most spiritual directors, I hope, are aware that whatever gender powerful people, (such as themselves) are, the transference easily happens. Many a powerful, domineering mother or other significant female has been mistaken for God. Male and female helping professionals can experience the same counter-transference regardless of gender.

The first female diocesan bishop in the world is the author of this book, however, it could be about any church leader. All of us must grapple with power and prayer in the church as directly as Bishop Penny here. Dare we read this book ?

## FILM REVIEW

### THE SIXTH SENSE

**Directed by M. Night Shyamalan.**

*Reviewer: Andrew Dunn*

To make sense of this film one needs to see the ending, and then have time to let most (or is it some) of the puzzle of its construction and theme fall piece by piece into place. It's a well made film which deals with what is known in Christian theology as *the intermediate state* - what happens to people when they die. It's not about ghosts! Shyamalan's particular interest is to explore what happens to those who die violently whether through accident, torture, illness, murder or suicide. His conclusion (as far as I could understand it??!!) was that they need, and seek, understanding, recognition and help to go to rest. "Out of the depth I cry to you, O Lord", prays Cole, the young character played by the 8 year old Haley Osment.

I was immediately taken into our understanding of the Gospel's messages about death and dying, about Jesus having visited the place of the dead where he laid its horrors to rest, and about his resurrection and victory over sin, evil and death.

The film doesn't posit a half-way house while people get sorted out and work with their trauma. Rather, it suggests that some living people have a sixth sense by which the traumatised dead make contact and seek to be known, heard and understood. I know of no evidence of such a thing - sixth sense for me has always been the contemplative and intuitive sense, Newman's *illative* sense. Still, if the traumatised wanted to make contact I guess that would be as good an avenue as any.

How much better, though, to find our rest in Christ Jesus who knows our pain and carries our grief in both life and death.

Technically it's also a powerful film - very slow moving, dark (in lighting terms), dark in content as the pain and separation of harsh death is explored, tense and taut from beginning to end. Bruce Willis is seen in a very different light to his usual screen persona. Here he's the sensitive, deeply caring child psychologist Malcolm Crowe. He's trying to be an actor now, says he! Haley Osment is really the big find as an actor and will be worth keeping an eye on as he grows up.

The Sixth Sense raises powerful issues and may need two viewings to appreciate them fully. One for me is this: do we know much at all about what happens to those whose life is wrenched away from them? Another is, are our celebratory services of their lives, and our funerals' content adequate to encourage them to move on and rest peacefully?

A gripe I have is that none of the New Zealand reviewers of this film that I have read seem to grasp the nub of what it is about. Is there a difficulty with understanding the spiritual realm amongst modern New Zealand media people? I have thought so for some years, ever since Don Lochore put his pen away. These reviews add to this belief. And that's a pity, for as the new Millennium unfolds there will be an increasing number of spiritual themes explored in film. Perhaps as a Jubilee project we, the viewing public, could encourage them to take a jubilee rest, rethink their secularism and come back renewed in spirit and in their world views!

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

### **The Art of Soul-Tending for Youth Ministry.**

K. C. Dean and Ron Foster.

*Upper Room. Nashville 1998. \$30.00.*

### **A Spirituality for the 21st Century.**

Maria Harris. Proclaim Jubilee.

*Westminster John Knox. 1996.*

### **Soul Survivor. A Spiritual Quest Through 40 Days and 40 Nights of Mountain Solitude.**

Paul Hawker

*Northstone. 1999. \$29.95.*

### **Fatherless Sons. The Experiences of New Zealand Men.**

Rex McCann

*Harper Collins. 1999. \$26.95.*

### **The Pastor as Spiritual Guide.**

Howard Rice

*Upper Room. Nashville. 1998. \$35.00.*

### **Soul Friendship. Celtic Insights Into Spiritual Mentoring.**

Ray Simpson

*Hodder PB. 1999. \$26.95.*

### **Feed my Sheep - Spiritual Healing and Renewal for Those in Christian Leadership.**

Flora Wuellner

*Upper Room. Nashville. 1998. \$40.00.*

### **A Mind at Peace - dealing with mindless thoughts.**

Mary Funk

*144pp \$19.95*

### **The Monastic Journal. A quarterly dealing with contemplative spiritual disciplines and traditions**

Paul Illsley OEF (ed.)

- posted on the internet at <http://www.monastery.net>

**Retreat Centres. A directory of retreat in New Zealand.**

Published by the Retreats Committee, Council of Christian Nurture, Anglican Diocese of Auckland.  
 P.O. Box 37-242, Parnell, Auckland 1033, October 1999. Ph. 09 302 7213. Email:ccn@ak.org.nz

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**SPIRITUAL DIRECTION RESEARCH PROJECTS**

We have selected some of the research projects completed by trainees in our Spiritual Directors' Training Programme.

Available from: The Administrator, 2 Judkins Cres., Howick, Auckland, New Zealand 1705.

Price for Each Paper: NZ \$5.00 (inside NZ) and NZ\$10.00 for overseas orders.  
*Cheques payable to Spiritual Growth Ministries.*

Ngairé Beehre: *Spiritual Care of the Frail Elderly with Alzheimer's Disease.*

Helen Farrelly: *Suzanne Aubert - Foundress of the Sisters of Compassion.*

Ron Larsen: *Gay Christians and Spiritual Direction.*

Nola Myles: *Post Evangelicalism and Spiritual Direction.*

Mary Maitland: *A Christian Earth-Centred Spirituality and Spiritual Direction.*

Alison Palmer: *Issue Facing Returning Missionaries*

Ceridwyn Parr: *From Cloister to Cafe - Another Model of Spiritual Direction.*

Patricia O'Donnell: *The Creative Process as a Tool in Spiritual Direction.*

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**SGM TRUST NEWS**

We had a very stimulating SGM Workgroup meeting in September. The main areas of our praying, discussing and planning are these:

We have decided that all Retreats and the Training Programme must cover all costs in running them. For retreats we will seek out cheaper venues and offer retreats of various styles and lengths. Training Programme fees will increase more sharply than planned. We are implementing both of these immediately. Since the meeting we have learned from Inland Revenue that we must register for Goods and Services Tax (GST) and this will be payable from the inception of the Trust, August 1997. From now on all our activities that attract GST will have this indicated as part of the fees. For 2000 the prices have GST indicated separately.

We're keen to explore the challenges of spiritual direction for Generation X and post-modern people. Sue Pickering is developing prayer companionship in various ways in Taranaki and we watch these developments with interest and encouragement.

We also talked about how to raise more funds for our work and decided to return to our simpler form for Friends of SGM Appeal. Our last appeal was a failure and so we repeat it with this Newsletter as a separate flier. We include the opportunity to assist with our printing costs which are substantial now with the growth in our distribution of the Programme and Newsletters. Please support it as generously as you are able.

**FRIENDS OF SGM APPEAL**

Our need for funds is great as we face losses on retreats until we shift on to a fully user-pays footing. We do

not have any independent source of funding apart from the Friends Appeal and the administration grant from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand which covers only some of our running costs.

We also owe Inland Revenue GST from August 1997 and will need to pay that in a lump sum! Can you help with this?

Our work is highly significant for many people as the quieter, more contemplative streams of our faith are discovered. It doesn't make headlines or offer recipes for success in work or ministry, but is deeply undergirding and nourishing of the spiritual life for many in their life's work, families and in congregational life and ministry. It has been said that the Church which survives in the Third Millennium will be the contemplative church rather than the overly activist Church which burns us out physically and spiritually. So, here's a wonderful project to support as the Church of the present and the future is shaped and fitted for its work and witness.

Gifts may be sent to The Administrator, 2 Judkins Cres., Howick, Auckland, New Zealand 1705.

### **My faith**

*is the grand drama of my life.  
I'm a believer, so I sing words of  
God to those who have no faith.  
I give bird songs to those who dwell  
in cities and have never heard them,  
make rhythms for those who know  
only military marches or jazz,  
and paint colours for those  
who see none.*

**Olivier Messiaen**

### **CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NEWSLETTER**

**Mary Concannon OP** co-ordinates the SGM Spiritual Directors' Training Programme and is a spiritual director and supervisor.

**David Crawley** lectures in biblical studies and spirituality at the Bible College of New Zealand.

**Warren Deason** is parish minister at Albany Presbyterian Church on Auckland's North Shore and also works in spiritual direction and retreats.

**Andrew Dunn** lives at the new Oasis Retreat and Study Centre at Albany Heights, North Shore and chairs the SGM Trust.

**Marlene Dunn and Catherine Woodcock** are Sisters of St Joseph and spiritual directors in Palmerston North and Wanganui.

**Rob Edwards** is researching prayer in Luke's Gospel for a Master's Degree, and lives in Nelson.

**Clarice Greenslade** is retired from parish ministry and lives at Governors Bay near Christchurch. In her spare time she lectures in spirituality, works as a spiritual director and at Christchurch Cathedral.

**Matthew Jack** is minister at St George's Presbyterian Church, Takapuna, North Shore.

**Susan Jones** is a doctoral research student in theology at Otago University.

**Mary Maitland** is a spiritual director and leads the Mission Sisters' Retreat at Parua Bay, Northland.

**Alison Newell** is a Church of Scotland minister working in the Anglican Diocese of Portsmouth, England. For a number of years she worked with her husband, Philip, at Iona.

**Bernard Thornton** teaches in Gore and is a writer. His first novel, *Schist*, has been published recently.

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