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COMMENT

Andrew Dunn

Justice and spirituality! What a combination, what a theme! We could begin with definitions and concepts but looking at the theme of justice in Scripture led us, in the Editorial Group, to decide that our starting point needed to be in the doing of justice, the loving of mercy and walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

So we hope this approach will prove fruitful.

While Greek philosophical notions of justice are stretching, and Roman legal notions form a background to modern western law, it is more significant that Scripture revelation, salvation history, biblical insights and teachings shape Christian thinking. God is seen as just! In fact justice is one of God's characteristics, an attribute that reflects who and how God is.

Take as an example, Psalm 145. Honouring the greatness and goodness of God, the writer speaks of God's grace and mercy, goodness, compassion and faithfulness, and, in verse 17, adds, "The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings." Indeed, the Lord "loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord" (Psalm 33:5). This summarises the message of many Scripture writers' experiences of the Lord's goodness and justice. In Moses' song (Deut. 32:3-4 NRSV) he recites in the hearing of the whole assembled Israel:

*I will proclaim the name of the Lord;
ascribe greatness to our God!*

*The Rock, his work is perfect,
and all his ways are just.*

*A faithful God, without deceit,
just and upright is he.*

And Amos (5:24) tells what Yahweh hopes for:

*Let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing
stream.*

The Hebrew and Jewish writers see justice as a character trait of the Lord of all creation. Chris Marshall uses the word "attribute", and says, "As an attribute of the Creator God, justice furnishes the ground plan of creation." He adds, "... our knowledge of justice springs ultimately from our knowledge of God, and that there can be no true knowledge of God without an appreciation of God's own unflinching dedication to justice."¹

This means that for humankind made in God's image, issues of justice are not to be seen as add-ons for a few with a social conscience or an interest in society. Rather, justice must flow in the veins of our lives and affect how we are with one another, with the hurt, the sidelined, those whose freedoms and rights have been ignored or their lives damaged by others' greed, actions, power or prejudices. For believers in the living God, justice is not an optional extra! It is a Christian virtue, a way of life and doing the truth.

There is a clear connection between justice and spirituality - one is an expression of the other, an outworking of what we believe and how we do the truth.

Jesus could see this clearly for himself and he draws all his disciples into living it out as a way of life however uncomfortable it may be at times. He has harsh words for

¹ Chris Marshall, *The Little Book of Biblical Justice*. Good Books. 2005. 23 & 25

those who keep all the religious obligations but “neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others” (Luke 11:42).

At a basic level of life and freedoms the issues are often very clear, and we sense intuitively when injustices occur. However, they are often not clear, especially when secularism opens up fresh ways of seeing things that have been long-held beliefs within society or church over many generations. Or when cultural beliefs held over centuries are challenged by the young who bring other ways of thinking and acting into the family, church or culture.

One case in the New Zealand Courts at present illustrates the cultural dilemma. A Corrections Department woman worker attending a Marae celebration refused to leave her front seat with her male colleagues and take a back seat amongst the women as marae protocol demands. She believes that under the Human Rights Act her freedom as a woman is assured, even on a marae. She lost her job over this and now has her day in court. Two cultural beliefs have clashed here. It will be intriguing to see which way the judgment goes.

It happens in many other areas of life as well - in ethics, in medical ethics, with changing sexual mores and their challenges to biblical and theological understandings, in ecology and rain-forest destruction, in race relations and the need for apologies for past hurts and redress for past wrongs; in dealing with asylum seekers; with the use of modern war weapons and methods. The list is endless. We might even say, “What isn't a justice issue?”

It's at this point that the major difficulty appears, namely how we decide what is just and what is not. Often within faith

settings there's a tension between what “the world” accepts and believes and historic religious, faith, doctrinal or theological beliefs portray as the way of faith. However, this dilemma does not mean that we ignore the issues. Far from it. We are expected to engage, to wrestle with the dilemmas posed, the challenges offered to our complacency.

One serious problem with our justice system is that it is built around the notion of retribution, of “paying one's debt to society”. This penchant for retributive justice has biased the courts and justice system towards punishment rather than rehabilitation, and as a result produces increasing waves of hardened and bitter people released back into society. Restorative justice, with New Zealand in the forefront in research and writing on this much more biblical approach, seeks to work with perpetrator and victims to restore and to heal. This more redemptive approach is rooted in God's mercy and grace and seeks to see these flow into restored lives, families, society.

Finally, there are two words to keep in mind as we think about justice and how to be part of this God-like activity in the world. One is *prophetic insight*. The other is *advocacy*.

Prophetic insight is the ability to sense and see injustice and open it up for all to see. It takes courage and strength to live with this gift of the Spirit. The other, advocacy, is to work on behalf of those who can't seek just results for themselves. In this land of ours and around the world there is no end to the issues and situations where as advocates we can engage directly and know we are doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up,
Jesus went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom.
He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.
He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he 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.*

...

And he rolled up the scroll,
gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.
... Then he began to say to them,

Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Luke 4:16-21. NRSV

MICAH

Eugene Peterson

Prophets use words to remake the world. The world - heaven and earth, men and women, animals and birds - was made in the first place by God's Word. Prophets, arriving on the scene and finding that world in ruins, finding a world of moral rubble and spiritual disorder, take up the work of words again to rebuild what human disobedience and mistrust demolished. These prophets learn their speech from God. Their words are God-grounded, God-energised, God-passionate. As their words enter the language of our communities, men and women find themselves in the presence of God, who enters the mess of human sin to rebuke and renew.

Left to ourselves we turn God into an object, something we can deal with, some *thing* we can use to our benefit, whether that thing is a feeling or an idea or an image.

Prophets scorn all such stuff. They train us to respond to God's presence and voice.

Micah, the final member of that powerful quartet of writing prophets who burst on the world scene in the eighth century B.C. (Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos were the others), like virtually all his fellow prophets - those charged with keeping people alive to God and alert to listening to the voice of God - was a master of metaphor. This means that he used words not simply to define or identify what can be seen, touched, smelled, heard, or tasted, but to plunge us into a world of *presence*. To experience presence is to enter that far larger world of reality that our sensory experiences point to but cannot describe - the realities of love and compassion, justice and faithfulness, sin and evil ... and God. Mostly God. The realities that are Word-evoked are where most of the world's action takes place. There are no "mere words."

(Micah Introduction in *The Message*. NavPress. 2002. 1669)

SPIRITUALITY AND JUSTICE

Anne Hadfield

Spirituality is a buzz word in contemporary society. But some spiritualities bring life and others are superficial. For spirituality is more than a private search for a spiritual experience. It involves both the journey of individuals into a deeper connection with the source of life in God and also the broader task of uncovering the image of God in all humanity. Theology asks *Who is God?* And spirituality asks *Where is God?* For Christians this presupposes a desire to live according to the pattern of Jesus Christ who is, through his life and ministry, *the defining theological paradigm for Christian action in the world.*

Authentic spirituality is therefore not self-centred but has a natural flow. It involves the whole person. It is earthed in Aotearoa New Zealand and results in a partnership beyond the individual. It is symbolised by the picture of a tree planted by a stream which bears fruit and does not wither (Psalm 1).

Authentic spirituality in a natural flow

While there may be a season for solitude and retreat, there is a natural flow in and flow out of energy. Thomas Merton, the renowned contemplative, for example, worked in the Peace movement and for Inter Faith dialogue. The spiritual director of Evelyn Underhill, who wrote a classic book on Mysticism, told her to set aside her solitary prayer for a time and go and live with the poor. Authentic spirituality does not stagnate in an ego-driven piety. It is not an escape.

Conversely, an outward-facing life without an adequate personal spiritual discipline can expose us to burnout and spiritual blindness. We fail to recognise our shadows. When we recognise our own violence we can work effectively for peace; when we name our own excesses and greed we can draft legislation which deals wisely and humanely with issues such as gaming.

Authentic spirituality will manifest in a growing compassion, a desire to serve and an identification with humanity. It will fuel our efforts to honour peace, justice and the integrity of creation. Martin Luther King describes one such instance of the flow in/flow out effect of a deep dependence on God. One night he came to the end of his resilience. Threats and anonymous phone calls were wearing him down. He went down to the kitchen and knelt there desperately crying out to God for strength to continue his fight for justice for black people, a fight which he knew might cost him his life. He says, "At that moment I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced him. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying, 'Stand for righteousness, stand for truth. God will be at your side forever.' Almost at once my fears began to pass from me. My uncertainty disappeared. I was ready to face anything. The outer situation remained the same, but God had given me inner calm."¹

Three days later his house was bombed and eventually he was assassinated, but civil rights were won.

Authentic spirituality involves the whole person.

¹ Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love*, (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1964), p.113

Some of the old dualisms between earth and heaven, body and spirit, prayer and action are thankfully being abolished. The Hebrews were not guilty of such false divisions. Micah knew the connection between action and spirituality (*Micah 6:8*). So did Sirach, the teacher of wisdom.

“Deliver the oppressed from the hands of the oppressor and you will be like a *child of the most High who will love you more than your own mother does.*” (Sirach 4:1f)

Matthew's collection of sayings known as the Sermon on the Mount show Jesus reinforcing this holistic discipleship. Words about prayer alternate with encouragement to share cloaks, forgive enemies and go the second mile. They reach a crescendo in the prayer, “Your Kingdom Come”.

Perhaps those on the margins, where the challenge of suffering is continually present, can teach us most about the integration of prayer and action. Dom Helder Camara of Brazil, twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his work to liberate the poor of his country, once said, “No matter where I am, there are always great injustices that weigh on my soul. So every night when I get into my bed I rest my body, but soon I rise to pray and rest my soul. The two are different because rest for the soul is a special kind of rest. It is being at peace with God; it is being in union with Christ. My whole day is offered to Christ and for all the brothers and sisters I have met that day, I pray that they may discover the same presence of Christ in their lives.”²

Authentic spirituality is earthed.

Through its traditional theology of incarnation, Christians have emphasised the embodied revelation of God in history. It is part of God's creative purpose therefore that *we bloom where we are planted*. For New Zealanders this means honouring our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It means respecting Maori spirituality. It means earthing our spirituality in metaphors of this landscape and grappling with issues of justice in this country. We need to drink from our own wells.³

People with earthed spirituality see signs of despair (sin) and signs of hope (grace) in the world around them. Such people include Rutherford Waddell, a Presbyterian minister, who fought for justice for women employed in the clothing sweat shops of New Zealand in the 1880s; the poet James Baxter, and Whina Cooper who led the land march protest against the loss of Maori land in 1975. These people were not in Gethsemane sleep, oblivious to the sufferings around them, but awake and ready to express their convictions with the passion of the God of justice.

Such an authentic spirituality does not stop at action which could be labelled charitable welfare. It rigorously uses the intellect to unpack the assumptions in the surrounding dominant culture and offers an alternative view of reality.⁴

Authentic spirituality results in a partnership

Authentic spirituality therefore is not a warm fuzzy process which makes us feel good. The way of salvation is always the

² Dom Helder Camara. Source unknown

³ This is a phrase from *Bernard of Clairvaux*, reclaimed by the Latin American theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez.

⁴ See Walter Brueggeman, *The Prophetic Imagination*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

way of cross and resurrection. Authentic spirituality is dangerous. As Camara once said, when he gave to the poor he was heralded as a saint, when he began to ask, "Why are they poor?" he was branded a Communist. It is essential therefore if we are to last the distance that we do not act alone. We need to find support in networks, communities of faith, CASI, allies in society. These communities of faith and hope can, by the grace of God, effect great things. Remembering how small, powerless, "silly" acts of declaring schools, municipal buildings and churches to be nuclear free led to our country's stance on this issue. As I write, while Pakistan and India are on the brink of nuclear violence, the visiting Dalai Lama has publicly affirmed our action as a sign of hope not just for our country but for the world. Such is the awesome possibility of mustard-seed faith and action. As Bonhoeffer reminds us, such action in turn increases our joy and freedom in the Spirit.

Action

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer says:

Daring to do what is right, not what fancy may tell you, seizing reality boldly, not weighing up chances, freedom's in action alone, not wavering thought.

*Leave aside anxious delay and go into the storm of our history, borne along solely by faith and God's will and commandment, freedom, exultant, will welcome your spirit with joy.*⁵

⁵ From *Stations on the Road to Freedom* in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Abridged Edition (London: SCM, 1981), 133

Interview with Louise Nicholas - 27.9.07.

The New Zealand Police's *Operation Austin*, looking into allegations of sexual misconduct by some of its officers, laid charges and a number of court cases followed. At the centre of these was the testimony of Louise Nicholas of Rotorua (among others). We spoke with Louise in September.

Refresh. It's good to come and talk, Louise. You say that you have a Catholic background but are not religious.

Louise Nicholas. I was christened a Catholic and did the whole thing going to Sunday School and so on but as I grew older church just wasn't a part of my life, or of my parents' lives either.

Refresh. I'd like to talk about some of things you have been through and things we saw in the trials. When did you first get a sense that there was an injustice happening in your life?

LN. Well I had a sense of injustice way back at the age of 13. I knew that everything that was happening was not right but I had no control over all that was happening. So I had to learn at a very young age to deal with all that was going on. And as my life unfolded over the years I just got a sense I knew there was nothing I could do. No one was going to believe me simply because of who these guys were. So I just learned to live with it, managed to put it away in a box but I couldn't forget it as any victim, any survivor of sexual abuse never forgets. I learned to deal with it in my own way.

Refresh. So what lifted the lid off the box?

LN. It was when I had a visit from Philip Kitchin, the Dominion Post and later TVNZ

journalist, who had been investigating for a good number of years the story he had heard about. When he came to me and said, "Look, I've got this evidence to prove that what happened during the trial in 1992-93 was a huge injustice", what he called "a cover-up". And when he showed it to me it was like I knew it all along but didn't want to believe it, because there were times during the trials of 1993-94 when it just didn't feel right. And when the guy was acquitted someone said to me on the Court steps afterwards, "Well it wasn't the verdict we hoped for but at least you can put it behind you now". And I thought to myself that there was something not right, a feeling, but there was nothing I could do about it. I just carried on and when Philip showed me what he had, it didn't take long to agree to do something about it.

Refresh. Where do you think your courage comes from?

LN. Well my mother tells me that I come from a long line of very strong-headed women. But I think it was because I knew I wasn't the only victim of these men, and I saw the injustice and thought, "I've got to do this". And not just for myself but for the other women out there who hadn't come forward. So I took this fight on, but not just for me.

Refresh. So what kept you going, where does the perseverance come from?

LN. From the support, the love of family and friends and the sheer determination on my part. I just didn't want to see what I dubbed "the bad men" getting away with doing bad things and making me feel bad about myself. I knew it was wrong and wanted to do something about that, and I wanted to show that I wasn't the bad person.

Refresh. It seemed to me watching the TV news items and interviews that there was a considerable degree of self control and dignity really. What do you think about that?

LN. I think that when I saw the injustices in my life and got myself up there I was not going to let them take me back down there again. I also had to keep in mind that they all had families and even though some of the family members said some pretty nasty things about me, that was okay because that was them venting their anger and they had to vent it at somebody - and unfortunately that was me. But I've always believed that I don't own what happened to me. The ownership falls on them - they were the ones who did the bad things and they own it, not me. Unfortunately families stick together, and they did, sticking to their husband, father, brother and that was okay, but I had to keep that in the back of my mind that there were children involved and I hated seeing them get hurt. But their fathers should have thought about that. It's as simple as that.

Refresh. Where does God come into all this?

LN. Well actually God's been ... he's the one who ... there have been times when I've been really down and it didn't really matter what anyone said or tried to do to help me, it wasn't enough. So to look above and say, "C'mon mate, I don't know if I can do this, I'm going to need some help here but stop testing me." So I had this argument with him, "I need your help but don't keep testing me, I don't know if I can take much more." But I found in the wee hours of the morning that I couldn't sleep and I would be sitting there and there would be tears and I would just say, "C'mon mate, please give me the strength to keep going because I need it." Which is

really weird. I do believe, and it is important to know that he is there, and that there is someone else I can talk to. I don't always want a response. I just need to know there's someone there to talk to and I think he's the best one for the job.

Refresh. So is that prayer, or do you also pray in prayers?

LN. Yes, I think that's it. Yes, as I say, I had these long conversations with I suppose you could say thin air; and as I say I didn't want a response; I just needed to get it all out. It was like I know there was someone there listening anyway. And I did, I prayed a lot that I did have the strength to carry on because there were times when I just wanted to fold up.

Refresh. Then you started to wear a cross around your neck, a Christian cross. Why was that?

LN. Yes, I went into a shop and searched for the right one and bought it deliberately. It wasn't just any one. There was one there that took my eye. I don't know ... I drew strength from it. I felt I could keep going; it was like a safety net for me.

Refresh. It was certainly a very clear sign for those who treasure the cross that you wore it in this situation.

LN. Yes, there were times when I was on the stand in the Court when I was getting absolutely hammered by the defence lawyers and I would quite often just hold it. It would basically stop me from jumping out of this witness box and hitting someone. Yes, it gave me some peace actually.

Refresh. What about hope? When did that dawn?

LN. That really came about, oddly enough, with the public reaction after the story

broke. To see that and to receive the hundreds of cards and letters of support from total strangers, I knew then that the journey ahead was going to be a long and difficult one but with that sort of support and the love that I was receiving I knew that I was going to get through it. And hope came into it then.

Refresh. And do you think the journey is over?

LN. No. And I don't want to it be. Not now, not ever. I know that sounds a bit weird but I've gone through too much just to be able to walk away from it all because I see now that there is hope for others. At the end of the day I can see that what I've done by finding the strength to stand up and be counted, I am hoping that others will do the same. And if the changes that are needed in our justice system happen then, no, I don't want the journey to end.

Refresh. What's your book about?

LN. My life. I start off as a little girl growing up in Murupara. And I start with finding that when bad things were happening just to get on my horse and ride into the Ureweras, such a spiritual place, and I'd ride in and feel everything go and I'd find peace, and be so safe, I was free. But the moment I rode back out again I knew I was riding back into the depths of hell. So I often rode into the bush, my safe haven. I talk about how the Tuhoe people, the Maori, helped in such a positive way. I talk about my family, a very ordinary family, not dysfunctional. It tells of all the horrors and what's come of it in the hope that it will help changes to be made.

Louise Nicholas - My Story by Louise Nicholas and Philip Kitchin was published in October 2007. Published by Random Press, Auckland, NZ

God Almighty

God Almighty,
how can you go on
holding up your world?
Aren't you tempted to simply let us drop
or even more to savagely send us
spinning into nothingness?

I want to know your heartbeat
see what you see
feel what you feel

Noble sentiments
expressed honestly

Until I hear tonight of the little ones
your little ones
with non-accidental injuries

Such a polite term
for such a terrible truth

Little ones who've been bashed
tortured deliberately
by those who should protect them

My ears tried to turn away
from hearing of the five month old
who was held down
in a bath of boiling water
'till his little body was all burnt
or the one who was thrown about so hard
that his liver split
and whose body was a pattern
of merging bruises

And I lie down in my warm bed
and can't block out the thoughts
and my heart screams in hurt
even as those little ones
must have screamed
and I sob and sob and sob

God Almighty
I want to smash the heads
of these destructive folk
which just proves how unlike you I am

You with your amazing mercy
Grace that would reach out
even to these despicable objects of shame
of human refuse

Do they hurt because they were hurt
revenge screaming internally from all
they suffered?

What can I do, Father
how can I live?

As I face the new day
the grief is strong
already many tears have washed my eyes

Forgive me that I'm such a coward
that I'd prefer to insulate myself
from this world's pain

God, give me your love
for all mankind
not just those I judge to be okay

Courage me
so that I can step out of
my safe and comfortable world
and enter where you walk
in the paths of blood
and pain
and fear

Jesus this was your body broken
this was your blood that flowed

Anna Johnstone

RETRIBUTION OR RESTORATION

Paul Zehr

In my earlier writings, I often drew a sharp contrast between the retributive framework of the legal or criminal justice system and a more restorative approach to justice. More recently, however, I have come to believe that this polarisation may be somewhat misleading. Although charts that highlight contrasting characteristics illuminate some important elements differentiating the two approaches, they also mislead and hide important similarities and areas of collaboration.

For example, philosopher of law Conrad Brunk has argued that on the theoretical or philosophical level, retribution and restoration are not the polar opposites that we assume (in Hadley pp 31-56 see Book list). In fact, they have much in common. A primary goal of both retributive theory and restorative theory is to vindicate through reciprocity, by evening the score. Where they differ is in what each suggests will effectively right the balance.

Both retributive and restorative theories of justice acknowledge a basic moral intuition that a balance has been thrown off by wrongdoing. Consequently, the victim deserves something and the offender owes something. Both approaches argue that there must be a proportional relationship between the act and the response. They differ, however, on the currency that will fulfill the obligations and right the balance.

Retributive theory believes that pain will vindicate, but in practice that is often counter productive for both victim and offender. Restorative justice theory, on the other hand, argues that what truly vindicates is acknowledgment of victims'

harms and needs, combined with an active effort to encourage offenders to take responsibility, make right the wrongs, and address the causes of their behaviour. By addressing this need for vindication in a positive way, restorative justice has the potential to affirm both victim and offender and to help them transform their lives.

A Little Book of Restorative Justice by Howard Zehr, one of the founders of the restorative justice movement. Goodbooks. Pennsylvania 2002. pp 58-59.

WITHOUT PAIN, THERE IS NO HEALING

Kristin Jack

Silent night, Holy night,
Christmas cards, tinsel and bells,
tender turkey and blood red ham,
springtime lambs, fleecy white,
pure and clean, each of us saved
by the power of righteous living,
going to heaven, holding tight:
forget the dark, the dirt, the dung,
antiseptic stable, deluxe suite,
halos shining golden and bright,
desert wanderers gone too far:
the best of food, of wine, of coin,
German cars and beautiful wives,
filtered pools and unstained lives,
forget the thirst, the despair, the pain,
silver crosses, three-piece shrouds
Simon Sorcerer knows why he came
blood and tears lost in the years,
we'll smile and go to church again:
but without pain, there is no healing,
and without sacrifice,
there is no salvation.



Justice issues surround whaling

Above: Discarded whale chase boats at Enterprise Island, Antarctica - part of the fleet which participated in the near extinction of the humpback and minke whale populations in the southern oceans. *Below:* Humpback whales at close quarters in Wilhelmina Bay, Antarctic Peninsula, where they are making a slow recovery.

Photos by Andrew Dunn - 2005



JUST SPIRIT

Engaging with Yahweh

David R. Grant

My hope is this article will be useful, but not in any utilitarian sense, ie, if we could understand the Prophets, and what motivated them, we could be Prophets too. The temptation to resist is the quest to reduce any analysis of prophetic life to a formula of slogans, and to reduce the prophetic process to an educative process, ie. if we could learn the process, we would possess the Prophet's mana. The prophetic stance cannot be reduced to a technique able to be taught or learnt (see the transfer of mana in the Elijah/Elisha story; 2 Kings 2).

Nevertheless, we can put up some markers that will help us. In the arrangement of the canon we have inherited there is a job description of sorts for Prophets, found in Deuteronomy 18:15-22 (for Kings, Deut. 17:14-20, for Priests, Deut. 18:1-8.). The Prophet will come from the community (v15). Yahweh selects the Prophet (v15). The Prophet is for the time when God's people control resources, property and land (v9 and 15). The Prophet relays the speech of Yahweh, however that speech is 'heard' (v18-19). Prophets are there to address the powerful (see 17:14ff) because Kings are there, Prophets must also appear. The Prophet speaks against the illusion of security in resources, and against manipulative management (v10-11, 14). There is a test for the authenticity of prophetic utterance (see v22), although Deuteronomy 13:1-6 offers an alternative and somewhat contradictory test.

Other markers appear in the prophetic texts. The function of the Prophet is to intervene on the basis of Torah justice (see

Amos 8:4-6; Sabbath rest is a hedge against exploitation. Jer. 7:8ff). The function of the Prophet is to expose the powers which violate the covenant between Yahweh and Israel (David/Nathan in 2 Sam. 12). The function of the Prophet is to speak against royal seizure (Ahab/Elijah/Naboth in 1 Kings 21), or unlawful seizure by the wealthy (Mic. 2:1-5). The function of the Prophet is to give encouragement in the face of hopelessness by creating the picture of a new world (see Isaiah's Servant Songs 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12). The function of the Prophet is to ensure the common people receive justice and well-being, both of which could be threatened by King and Priest (Mic. 3; Jer 6:13ff).

From these markers we may affirm the following in terms of the Prophet's spirituality. Prophets were keenly conversant with the peculiarities of their people's relationship with Yahweh, and the myriad of stories which emerged from that rich engagement. They knew well the Exodus tradition, and the solemn covenant made between Yahweh and Israel - that covenant with its strong theme of justice; and they knew the King knew that too and was familiar with the story of the people (see Deut. 17:14ff). So the Prophet and the King could speak the same language and share the same story. (Today the context is quite different because Prophet and State speak different languages and have different assumptions. Thus today's Prophet must be bilingual, speaking both the language of faith and the language of State).

Prophets are acutely aware of distress and dysfunction in the community only because they are acutely aware of their own pain - a spiritual exercise (Jer. 4:19-20; 8:18ff. See also Hosea; was Hosea going through a messy divorce himself?). They

perceive hurt, danger, and injustice long before the rest of the community is even aware there is an issue because the rest of the community has been dulled into thinking that the present arrangement is normal, and can envisage no other arrangement, even cooperating with and benefiting from the oppressive system (Jer.8:4ff). Prophets understand the spirit of the age and notice injustice, so have a similar perspective to Yahweh who notices the affliction of Israel and is determined to act (Ex. 3:7ff a turning point in the story of Israel).

The Prophet has a rich interior life, a spirit capable of expressing the truth in poetry and metaphor which will outrun sober reason, common sense, and temperate reporting. Much of the Prophet's work is

of Yahweh, and give the licence to insist on promised future, insisting even to God's own self. Here Moses argues against Yahweh, telling Yahweh to act as a God of grace. Grace is difficult, unmanageable, fierce, unreasonable, and hard fought for - and uncommon!

The Prophet 'sees' horizons beyond the immediate (Is. 65:17ff; Jer. 16:14ff). The Prophet is not a mere optimist; the Prophet is a person of high hope, never muted nor buried by the awfulness of the current situation. The Prophet does more than simple social analysis, but offers a vision of newness where the community well-being and justice might be re-established (see Jer. 32).

The Prophet risks everything as mediator of Yahweh's speech, from both Yahweh and

“The Prophet 'sees' horizons beyond the immediate”

delivered in poetic language which makes extreme claim but captures the heart of the listening community. Any literalist is left floundering in the wake of the Prophet's word, and settles too soon for reasoned, and thus reduced, closed, manageable prose, that offers no slippage, no room to manoeuvre, no reprieve, no amnesty.

The Prophet's spirit of empathy engenders a fervent pastoral sense (Ezek. 34:11ff), and has such insight into the God of the story that he can fearlessly reiterate the profound and gracious promise of Yahweh to care for the community, even when the community may deserve far less. The Prophet is unfettered from, and goes beyond the easy, wooden notions of crime, judgement, and punishment, and deals more with just futures of well-being and shalom. Some say the revelatory words of Exodus 34:6-7, and its odd parallel in Numbers 14:17-18, are crucial to the Prophet's understanding

contemporaries. With maturity of spirit, he exercises rare and dangerous candour in conversations with Yahweh (Jer. 20:7ff), not conforming to the regular notions of obedience (Jer.12). Moses resisted Yahweh's initiatives (Ex. 3:1 - 4:17), as did Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-10), and both these characters argued with Yahweh (Num. 14, see above, and Jer. 12:1-4, Jer. 15:10). These texts reveal a very dynamic conversation where neither party will give way easily; maybe each takes his cue from Abraham who dares to confront Yahweh (Gen 18:16ff), but in any event, blind obedience to the word of God will not do. The Prophet's further risk is with the hearers. Hosea is dismissed as a fool (Hos. 9:7); Amos is accused of being a mercenary prophet (Amos 7:12), and is threatened with banishment. After enduring all sorts of harassment, Jeremiah is taken to Egypt against his will (Jer. 43:1-7). The common

fate of Prophets was death (Matt. 23:37).

The Prophet's relationship with the worshipping community is deeply ambivalent. There is a necessary and passionate connection with the Temple/worshipping community, (see Is. 6; Ezek.43, 44; Zech 7:2-7), for that is where the Prophet sources the prophetic vision, and that is where the Priests, who are guardians of the Torah and its interpreters, exercise their task (Mal. 2:6-7; Jer. 18:18). But the Prophet puts the Priests' exegesis and practice under intense scrutiny, and is not afraid to chide or condemn when the interpreter of the word gets it wrong. He is aware when the liturgy is misused, the covenant violated, and justice is neglected (Amos 5:18ff; Ezek 34), and says so to the practitioners of the liturgy.

As the stories have it, the Prophet ventures a bold approach to the Deity, less like a parent/child, and more like mature child to parent, where there is deep respect. The power differential is more equal, and therefore both parties take the speech between the two more seriously, and each party will ponder long over the demands of the other. It is something I imagine Yahweh welcomes, because Yahweh, then, is taken seriously.

That relationship in turn emboldens the Prophet to face the powers on earth, rather than live a life of docility and meek deference. It is a risky business because the Prophet runs a line close to arrogance with all parties. Such a relationship is nurtured in no easy environment, but in the wretched fray of human existence, to the point of a shared deep grief by both Yahweh and Prophet (see Jer. 31:20; Hos. 6:4ff. See also Lk. 19:41ff). But then, newness only comes out of weeping, as both Yahweh and Prophet know (Matt. 5:4).

FORGIVE US LORD

M. Jane Hansen

Forgive us Lord, for
Their children are dying
Whilst we play our economic chess games
With other nations' and other people's
lives;
Giving aid with one hand
And taking it away for debt payment
With the other;
Paying a pittance for a day's work
And calling it wages;
Selling their suffering in our High Street
Shops
So our children can find their identity
Behind a fashion label.

Reluctant to relinquish our grip
On the material blessings
We consider to be solely
Our birthright
We justify our actions in the name of
'free trade'
And close our ears to their cries for
Justice and the
Essentials of life
Forgive us Lord.

Strength without
compassion is violence,
compassion without
justice is weakness,
justice without love is
totalitarianism,
and charity without
justice is baloney

Jaime Cardinal Sin of Manila

THE BEATITUDES: GOD'S JUSTICE IN ACTION

Chris Marshall

Christian attitudes to the Sermon on the Mount are deeply ambivalent. We extol Jesus as the greatest moral teacher of all time and treasure the Sermon on the Mount as the most searching and powerful utterance we possess on the moral life. In practice however, we dilute, curtail or simply ignore a great many of Jesus' ethical demands. Our professed admiration for the noble sentiments of the Sermon on the Mount is matched only by our determination to minimise its impact on Christian thought and practice.

There are several reasons for this paradoxical state of affairs. But the main one is to do with how rigorous and uncompromising so many of the Sermon's demands are. Jesus allows no half measures. There must be *no* anger, *no* desire to retaliate, *no* hatred, *no* anxiety, *no* divorce, *total* purity of heart, *total* forgiveness of others, uncalculating generosity. Worse still, Jesus sets up God as a feasible model for human behaviour. "You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48). Jesus appears to demand a perfection of inner attitude and intention that may be possible for God, but is surely unattainable for ordinary human beings. The same lofty ideals and moral absolutism that win our respect leave us reeling in disbelief or despair.

This is even true of the so-called "Beatitudes" that introduce the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1-12). Not only do these seemingly innocuous assurances of God's blessing set the tone for all that follows in

the Sermon, including the most austere of Jesus' demands, but individually they give expression to an ethical radicalism that Christians have rarely taken seriously, or even recognised the existence of. To understand how the beatitudes function in this way, and how profoundly challenging they are, I want to identify four realities they focus upon. There are four dimensions we need to keep in mind in order to appreciate the stunning vision of reality the beatitudes offer.

A Whole of Life Focus: The beatitudes are often regarded as individual spiritual virtues or "be happy" attitudes. They describe an inner posture or mental outlook that attracts God's blessing. However while the beatitudes undoubtedly include reference to inner attitudes and intentions, they go well beyond this. They demand qualities of conduct as well as designating qualities of the heart.

It is true that grammatically the beatitudes are in the indicative not the imperative mood. That is to say, they are formulated as descriptions of certain conditions, not as ethical demands calling for obedience. But the indicatives contain *implicit* imperatives. Jesus' identification of those qualities of life that God blesses carries with it an indirect summons to corresponding deeds of obedience. This is confirmed by the fact that several of the beatitudes are matched by *explicit* imperatives later in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. 5:9 and 5:20; 5:7,9 & 5:43-48).

The beatitudes, then, are both blessings and requirements, gifts of grace and demands for practical obedience. They commend not just interior sentiments but a concrete style of living and acting in the world. To be "meek" is not just to have an inner attitude of humility, but to live a

lifestyle of powerless dependence on God. To be a “peacemaker” is not just to enjoy peace, but to work for peace by acting to resolve conflict.

A Kingdom Focus: The beatitudes describe the quality of life appropriate for those who have entered the kingdom of God and who live in conscious submission to God's rule. Jesus began his ministry by announcing that God's long-awaited kingdom of perfect justice was drawing near in his own person (Matt 4:17). A new saving reality was breaking into the world of suffering and oppression, though it was not yet here in its fullness. Not surprisingly, Jesus found the warmest reception for such a message of liberation and hope amongst the most needy, amongst the sick and the possessed, amongst the victims of human unkindness (Matt 11:2-6). For them, the coming of the kingdom was truly good news.

The beatitudes presuppose Jesus' announcement of what God has done to change the history of the world. They describe how reality now looks in light of God's intervention in human affairs in Jesus Christ. And they reflect both the “already” of God's kingdom, and its “not yet”.

In the beatitudes, true happiness or “blessedness” is defined not by present circumstances and prosperity, but by the sure knowledge of the ultimate triumph of divine justice over evil. The poor and the persecuted, the meek and the mournful, are declared to be blessed not because they are poor and wretched but because they participate in God's kingdom. They are blessed because they know for certain that when God's kingdom comes in its fullness, they will find consolation, mercy and justice. The absolute certainty of this future transformation brings blessedness to those

who suffer now because they can be sure that present pain will be swallowed up in future victory.

But this hope is more than “pie-in-sky-when-you-die”. Jesus is not telling the oppressed simply to accept their present plight and wait passively for the happiness of heaven. For the good news of the kingdom is that God's eschatological reign has *already* begun to operate in the present age. A new day has dawned. Change has begun. The blessings of the future kingdom are even now the possession of the poor.

This is perhaps why the first and last beatitudes are in the present tense. “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sakes, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. The intervening beatitudes are in the future tense. But the reward of the future kingdom is framed by references to the blessings of the present kingdom. The promise of future blessing for the meek and maltreated on earth is matched by the present blessing of belonging to God's kingdom, which is already active to bring an end to their suffering.

But how does this work? In what ways does participation in God's kingdom concretely affect the situation of the poor and persecuted? It does so partly because the poor experience God's personal companionship with them in the midst of their poverty and pain. But it does so also because the kingdom of God is meant to become a social reality in the community of Jesus' disciples, a community committed to God's new order, a people called to live out the vision and values of the beatitudes here and now.

This is where the beatitudes acquire their disturbing radicalism. They are not simply

a source of consolation and hope for future change (though they are that too); they are also a charter for Christian action in the present. One of the primary ways the poor and oppressed will find the blessedness of participation in God's kingdom is in and through the *community* of God's kingdom, amongst other recipients of God's saving grace who are committed to embodying the values of the beatitudes in their common life and working for the agenda of the kingdom in the world around them, an agenda of justice, mercy and peace.

A Communal Focus: Traditionally the beatitudes have been understood as descriptions of personal virtues, private character traits that every true believer ought to display. But it is worth observing that the beatitudes are addressed to the disciples as a group (5:1), they are all in the plural, and they take the form of descriptions not demands (though demands are implied). This suggests that Jesus is not primarily talking about personal moral qualities but about what the messianic community ought to look like. The beatitudes are Jesus' attempt to define the ethos of the church as a colony of God's kingdom, to set forth the values and priorities that the Christian community will incarnate in the world when it is faithful to its commission.

The entire Sermon on the Mount presupposes participation in the community life of a people prepared to be radically different from the world around it. A community that honours the poor, demonstrates integrity, craves for all that is just and right, prefers mercy to punishment, makes peace not war, suffers for its commitment to the way of Jesus. This of course requires that each individual member strives to live in conformity with Jesus' demands. But it is impossible for individuals to do so without the support

and trust of others. It is precisely as isolated individuals that we are most apt to fail as disciples. We will only be inspired and empowered to live "beatitudinally" insofar as we are surrounded by fellow believers who share our commitment and whose collective direction will sustain us when we fail individually.

But where do these values come from? How do we know what "poverty in spirit", "meekness", "righteousness" or "peace-making" mean? Where do we look for guidance on how these qualities work out in practice?

A Christological Focus: The beatitudes do not commend a set of abstract moral principles that any reasonable person can understand and follow. They are not the ethics of common sense, even sanctified common sense! They are the ethics of God's eschatological kingdom. More specifically they are descriptions of the kind of person Jesus - the bearer of God's kingdom - was. Jesus embodied his own teaching. His life gave content to his words. His actions and relationships illustrated his demands. We can therefore learn what the humility, mercy, righteousness and peacemaking of the beatitudes means by looking at the way Jesus lived.

Jesus pronounces God's blessing upon the "meek" (5:5). The word "meek" occurs only twice elsewhere in Matthew's gospel, and both occurrences refer to Jesus himself (11:29; 21:5). We learn to be meek by emulating the meekness of Jesus. Jesus blesses peace-makers (5:9). Jesus himself is God's ultimate instrument for bringing the peace of heaven to earth (Lk 1:79; 2:14; 19:38,42; Acts 10:36). We learn what peace-making entails by looking at how Jesus operated.

Jesus blesses the mournful (5:4). Jesus was also mourned (Matt 26:38; Lk 19:41). He blesses those who hunger for righteousness;

INCARNATION

Kathy Hughes

he himself "fulfilled all righteousness" (3:15; 5:17-18; 27:4,19). He extols the merciful (5: 7); he himself showed mercy (9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:30-1). He comforts the persecuted (5:11f); Jesus too was persecuted and reproached (Matt 26-27).

So the content and implications of the beatitudes are defined by considering the practice of Jesus. He actualises his own words and thereby becomes the standard or model to be imitated by his followers. And, for Matthew, imitating Jesus means imitating God (cf. 5:44-48; 3:17). Which brings us full circle: these heart-warming, ennobling beatitudes actually are "verbal grenades" that give expression to that revolutionary rigorism in Jesus' ethical teaching the Christian church has so long struggled with.

Conclusion: I have proposed that the beatitudes are best understood as descriptions of a *whole way of life* that we, as a Christian *community* are called to live, a life modelled on *Jesus* and bearing witness to transforming reality of *the kingdom of God*. They offer us a vision of reality that stands in stark contradiction to the way reality looks to the world around us. The radicalism of the beatitudes only makes sense - and will only seem practical - if we accept Jesus' assertion that the world-as-we-know-it is passing away and God's new creation is being born. The question we face is whether we accept the truth of God's perspective on reality or the common sense perspective of the existing world order. "Let God be true, and everyone else a liar" (Rom 3:4).

This is an abbreviated version of the first part of my essay "The Moral Vision of the Beatitudes: The Blessings of Revolution", in D. Neville & P. Matthews (ed.), *Faith and Freedom: Christian Ethics in a Pluralist Culture* (Sydney: Australian Theological Forum, 2003), 11-33.

Jesus, what do you mean when you say to me...

'When you feed a hungry beggar
you feed a hungry me.

When you give a thirsty stray a drink
you assuage my thirst.

When you give clothes to one without
you are clothing me with warmth.

When you visit a prisoner
you visit an imprisoned me.?

Is that like me saying...
when I visit my lonely father
I'm visiting you?

When I walk my dog along the beach
I'm walking with you?

When I hug my children or a friend
I'm hugging you?

When my beloved and I make love
we become one with you?

Does it mean...
when my daughter dries the dishes
you are helping me?

When friends and I go hill-walking
you are walking with me?

When a stranger holds the door open for
me you are showing me courtesy?

When a baby snuggles into me you are
trusting me and filling me up with love?

Could you be saying...
the times I let myself siesta when I'm tired
you are giving me rest?

When I laugh myself silly at swing ball
you are filling me with joy?

When I trust my intuition
you are my guide?

When I trust another enough to tell them
my heart you are restoring my soul?

WHY HUMAN RIGHTS MATTER TO CHRISTIANS

Kristin Jack

1. **All Human Beings are Created in the Image of God:** First, and most crucially, our commitment to Human Rights stems from the Biblical teaching that all men and women are made in the image of God and bear the divine image. Therefore each individual human life is infinitely precious and should be treated with the respect due those made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27, Psalm 139, Matthew 10:29-30, James 3:9).
2. **All Human Beings are Equal before God's Law:** The Bible is explicit in its teaching that all people are equal before God and before the law (Leviticus 19:15, Deuteronomy 16:18-20). At the same time it is realistic in its understanding of human sinfulness and corruptibility, and therefore urges that we be *especially* diligent to ensure that the legal rights of the poor and the vulnerable are not overridden by those more powerful (e.g. Exodus 23:6, Deuteronomy 24:17, Amos 5:11-15).
3. **We are Commanded to Protect the Rights of the Poor and Vulnerable:** Moreover, Scripture calls on all of us and particularly those in leadership positions to protect and provide for those in our society who are the least powerful/most vulnerable; e.g. widows, orphans, refugees, the poor (e.g. Psalm 82, Isaiah 1:16-17, Proverbs 31:1-9), for God identifies with the suffering of the poor and exploited: *'to oppress the poor is to show contempt towards God'* (Proverbs 14:31).
4. **Christ Identifies with the Poor, the Oppressed, the Vulnerable:** In the life of Christ, we see this principle lifted to new heights: in his lifestyle he consciously and deliberately identifies with the poor, the refugee, the outcast (Luke 8:20). This identification with the vulnerable reaches its climax with Jesus declaring that how we treat the vulnerable is how we are treating him (Matthew 25:31-46).
5. **God Knows and Cares about Every Act of Injustice on Earth:** In the New Testament, these Old Testament principles given to Israel are picked up and universalised (Matthew 5:44-45): Jesus teaches the preciousness of each individual life before God (Matthew 10:29-31); that God's justice is universal and that all will be judged by the same standards (Matthew 12:18-21, Luke 18:6-8, Revelation 20:11-15).
6. **(a) Civil Rights and Civil Disobedience have a rich Biblical Tradition:** Elsewhere in the New Testament, we see the Apostle Paul insisting on his "rights" as a citizen in the face of oppression from government officials (Acts 16:37, 22:25, 25:11) Earlier, the apostles confirmed that if their leaders ordered them to take actions that violated the teachings of Jesus, they must obey God rather than men (Acts 4:19). Actually, there is a rich vein of 'civil disobedience' in the Scriptures: from the Hebrew midwives' refusal to perform infanticide (Exodus 1:15-21); to Daniel's refusal to follow King Darius' decree (Daniel 6); to Jesus' refusal to kowtow to Herod (Luke 13:32), Pilate (John 19:8-11), or the religious leaders of his day (Matthew 23).

(b) But what about Romans 13? : Many Christians since Jesus including Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his opposition to Hitler, and Martin Luther King Jr. in his opposition to racism - have drawn on this Biblical tradition of civil disobedience. They clearly saw that Romans 13 ('everyone must submit to the governing authorities...') has its limits: whenever a government abandons its mandate to be God's servant to do good, it loses its moral authority. Whenever a Christian is ever faced with the choice between obeying the teachings of Jesus or the edicts of the government, it is the Lordship of Christ that must take precedence. One of the great tragedies of Germany through the 1930s and 1940s was that the Christian church overwhelmingly fell in line with Hitler and his Nazi rule, in part due to their reading of Romans 13. Only a small minority (lead by Bonhoeffer and Niemoller) declared boldly that we must obey God, not man.

Jesus is our Lord. We are bound to follow His teachings. Our highest allegiance is to the Kingdom of God. Every other government, every other pledge, every other oath of allegiance, every other act of patriotism, is totally relativised by this.

(c) Rights versus Responsibilities: Biblically, we are made more aware of our civil responsibilities than we are of our civil rights. We have a responsibility to love and do good to our neighbours (Romans 13:8-10). All of us have a responsibility to contribute to the 'common good', and to submit to our government, its laws, and to pay our taxes - so long as these are in turn contributing to the common

good, and not to the furtherance of evil.

7. **The Spirit of God is on the side of Life and Liberty; and against Oppression:** We are called to live in cooperation with God's Spirit in proclaiming Good News to the poor and oppressed. The good news lifts, liberates (Luke 4:18-19) and brings life (John 10:10). Satan, and the powers and principalities, on the other hand, use fear and intimidation, violence and oppression, and are ultimately revealed to be destructive and death dealing (John 10:10, Ephesians 6:10-20).
8. **We are called to Pray and we are called to Act:** We are called to do good to all people (Galatians 6:10); *to do* acts of justice, and *to pray* for justice to come (Micah 6:8; Luke 18:7; 1Timothy 2:1-2).

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me.

*Martin Niemoller
(one of the few German church leaders who, along with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, had the courage to speak-out against Hitler and his Government leading up to WWII. As a result he spent 8 years in Dachau concentration camp.)*

He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.

Martin Luther King Jr.

DISCOVERING MUM'S RIGHT ABOUT RELIGION? PRICELESS.

Tapu Misa

New Zealand Herald - Perspective
Wednesday September 12, 2007

I should have known that mentioning my conversion experience would be seen by some people as the equivalent of "coming out". That's how countercultural Christianity has become, at least here in Godzone.

Last week's column drew more emails than anything I've written in the last year or two, not just from those who wanted to share with me their miraculous Damascus Road experiences, but those still searching for that elusive "something" they can't quite put their finger on, some deep spiritual longing that isn't satisfied by shopping, bigger houses, or the latest car (no matter how hard advertisers insist that such expenditure is good for the soul).

Clearly, we'd like to talk more about God, but the conversation tends to be hampered by the level of ignorance and hostility in our secular world. Most people, it seems, get their theology from The Da Vinci Code.

Having become a Christian, I can see why I resisted it for so long. People who dismiss it as a crutch for emotional cripples are wrong. Although I find the world a better, richer, more compassionate place with God in it, there's no getting away from the fact that Christianity is a demanding religion. I've no problem loving my neighbours as myself but loving and praying for my enemies has so far proved more of a struggle (though I have ceased to wish them ill).

And not only am I supposed to face up to my awful imperfections, but I'm supposed to do something about them.

Though, needless to say, before I became a Christian, I didn't really think I had awful imperfections, just tiny ones that didn't matter very much.

And I could never see why my devoutly Christian mother thought I needed religion when my life was going so well without God.

If there was a spiritual deficit, I was too busy to acknowledge it.

In any case, I could always pick and choose from the kind of undemanding, New-Agey, non-specific spiritualism that left me free to do whatever I could rationalise - which, to be frank, included quite a few things I'm ashamed of now.

I wish I could be satisfied with the kind of secular karakia that an academic friend of mine recites with her university students at the start of each class. It pays homage to the wind and the sea, which would be a relief actually, because they aren't likely to make demands upon my time and conscience, the way pesky Christianity does.

I've wished, too, that I could enjoy my spirituality from the comforts of my bed on Sunday mornings; that I could still believe the mantra about Jesus being a great moral teacher but organised religion being an unnecessary waste of time, because it would save me having to trek to church each Sunday morning, where I used to feel a little like C. S. Lewis.

"To me," he wrote, "religion ought to have been a matter of good men praying alone and meeting by twos and threes to talk of spiritual matters. And then the fussy, time-wasting botheration of it all! The bells, the crowds, the umbrellas, the notices, the

bustle, the perpetual arranging and organising. Hymns were (and are) extremely disagreeable to me. Of all musical instruments I liked (and like) the organ least."

But, as Lewis pointed out, Jesus required it, through the observance of Holy Communion, and it has become, for me, a necessary spiritual rev-up, and a way to connect with a community of like-minded people, many of whom spend their days doing good works in their neighbourhoods, backed by the church.

People ask me about my denomination, but I don't think it matters. I've worshipped at loud, American-type churches, where the singing and dancing and preaching reminded me of African-American services. And at the more restrained, traditional church, where modern worship and singing is mixed with old-fashioned English hymns. I like both.

Televangelists may preach the benefits of the "prosperity doctrine", which promises financial riches for Christ's followers, but I tend to think of Christianity as more a case of: ask not what God can do for you, but what you can do for God.

Or as the brilliant German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in 1937, "when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die".

Bonhoeffer worked against the Nazis as a double agent during World War II, and was hanged by the SS three weeks before the war ended for his complicity in the plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. In his view, "obedience to God's will may be a religious experience but it is not an ethical one until it issues in actions that can be socially valued".

That, says progressive American preacher Jim Wallis, author of the best-selling *God's Politics*, is what's been missing from religion today - the biblical vision of social justice and healthy societies.

The Old Testament prophets and Jesus cared far more about the poor and the oppressed than they did about sexual and cultural issues, says Wallis, and would have seen the widening gulf between rich and poor as the real immorality.

MARTYR OF THE AMAZON

On Feb. 12 2005, Sr Dorothy Stang walked along a dirt road deep in the heart of Brazil's Amazon, on her way to meet a handful of poor farmers bearing up under harassment from illegal loggers and ranchers. She trudged along, until two hired assassins blocked her way. In response to their challenge, she produced maps and documents proving that the government had designated the land as a reserve for the landless poor. "Do you have any weapon?" they asked. "Yes", she answered, showing them the Bible she carried for decades. She opened it and began to read aloud: "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice. Blessed are the peacemakers ..." Then she said, "God bless you, my sons."

They shot her six times and ran leaving her body on the dirt road all day, witnesses later said, because they were afraid they would be shot if they moved it. It rained, her blood mixed with the dirt ... At her funeral 2000 people marched. "Today we are not going to bury Dorothy, we are going to plant her."

National Catholic Reporter. 2.10.2007.
ncrcafe.org/blog/1122/

AMAZING GRACE: THE SPIRITUALITY OF REFORM

Peter Lineham

The film *Amazing Grace* has fittingly marked the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the Slave Trade. It has reminded us of a now-forgotten theme; that religion has often been a critical factor in promoting social reform. I want to ask the question of whether there was a 'spirituality' of reform. The answer is interesting.

We should firstly note that Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect were in fact 'johnneys come lately' to the reform campaign. This campaign traces its roots to the Quaker resolution of 1727 and their ban of members owning slaves which was agreed in 1776. Quaker opposition to the trade arose directly from their view that the image of God was in every human. So they refused to respect the outward status of people, and would not take off their hats in the presence of the king. It was Quakers who dominated the first Abolitionist Committee. But as non-Anglicans they were at a severe disadvantage in the British state and it was necessary for Anglicans to lead reform in Parliament. There were other Anglicans of a liberal hue who supported reform, among them Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson. But when they persuaded Wilberforce, the close friend of the Prime Minister William Pitt, to be their parliamentary spokesman, the campaign became connected with the first English evangelicals, the Clapham Sect.

The Clapham Sect, the witty nickname given to the little company of evangelical Anglican parliamentarians who played key roles in the parliamentary campaign

against slavery, had chosen to live close to each other in the little village of Clapham, just across the Thames from Westminster. They were essentially a group of lay people, although the church at Clapham was the centre, with John Venn as vicar. But it was the homes of the Wilberforces and the Thorntons which were the open homes where strategy and community and family devotions merged. The film neatly conveys the flavour of their company. This evangelical Anglicanism had a rather different tone from later groups with the same name. It had a certain exuberant, even boisterous cheerfulness and optimism. Later evangelicals adopted pre-millennial beliefs about the inevitable decline of the world from God. The Clapham Sect were mostly post-millennialists and passionate supporters of the state church.

Their spirituality also arose from their view of the state. They were most anxious to strengthen the monarch against what they regarded as a depraved aristocracy and a criminally evil urban working class. So Wilberforce in 1789 used his influence to persuade the king to issue a proclamation against vice and immorality, and he then organized a 'Society for Giving Effect to His Majesty's Proclamation against Vice'. This campaign was perhaps more important to Wilberforce than the abolition of the slave trade. After 1802 the Society instituted private prosecutions against popular evils, including Sabbath breaking, swearing in public and gingerbread fairs. Their view was that the state had to defend morality. Other evangelicals were rather critical of this approach but Wilberforce defended it:

I know that by regulating external conduct we do not change the hearts of men, but even they are ultimately wrought upon by these means, and we should at least so far remove the

obtrusiveness of temptation that it may not provoke the appetite which might otherwise be dormant and inactive.

Wilberforce was defending his priority to work through politics for 'two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners' against his own sense that maybe he should have become a vicar. So Wilberforce offered a curiously evangelistic reason for reform, in order to limit the open opportunities for sin. An unfortunate consequence of his logic - a logic too often apparent in the history of evangelicalism - was the desire to enforce respectable behaviour as the first step to evangelism. An adjunct to this idea was the idea held by the first missionaries to New Zealand, that 'natives' needed to be civilized before they were evangelised. So Maori needed to be clothed, taught to read and to abandon tattoo before they could be baptised.

Consequently the freeing of the slaves was only one stage along the pathway to renewal. This was why the establishment of the Sierra Leone Colony was supported by the Clapham Sect. Slaves had been freed in England since the 1770s but the result had been the emergence of a criminal underworld of unemployed blacks in London. So Wilberforce and his friends thought about social change both for blacks and the working class as the first step to transformation. He wrote of the need to:

raise these poor creatures from their depressed condition, and if they are not yet fit for the enjoyment of British freedom, elevate them at least from the level of the brute creation into that of rational nature... Taught by Christianity they will sustain with patience the sufferings of their actual lot, while the same instructors will rapidly prepare them for a better; and

instead of being objects of contempt, and another of terror... they will be soon regarded as a grateful peasantry.

So there was a moralising and improving tone to this Anglican evangelicalism.

The spirituality of the movement focused on redemption. This is very apparent in the role that John Newton, the converted slave trader, played in the movement. There was huge respect for someone with a testimony of deliverance informing his life and hymns. The Claphamites valued the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for its reminder of salvation; it reminded them to look backward to their great sin and their great salvation through the cross of Christ. It was a spirituality of gratitude, which never could forget what life had once been:

I once was lost but now I'm found
Was blind but now I see.

And that logic made the Anglican evangelicals embrace abolitionism and reform movements because they too were redemption movements. Reform appealed precisely because it was redemption. They were by no means reformers in the modern sense of wanting to review all social structures on a notion of equity of outcomes and distribution of resources. They thought a hierarchical world was the best system. The film rightly shows a real tension between Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, for Clarkson was attracted to French revolutionary ideas of equality which appalled Wilberforce and Thornton. Wilberforce's book, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in This Country, contrasted with Real Christianity* (1797) emphasises the Augustinian doctrine of original sin as the very core of the human personality. He saw humans as both corrupt and weak, and charged that enlightenment optimism



IN EVERLASTING MEMORY
OF THE ANGUISH OF OUR ANCESTORS.
MAY THOSE WHO DIED REST IN PEACE.
MAY THOSE WHO RETURN FIND THEIR PASTS.
MAY HUMANITY NEVER AGAIN PERPETRATE
SUCH INJUSTICE AGAINST HUMANITY.
WE, THE LIVING, VOW TO UPHOLD THIS.

Photos by Margaret Dunn
1998

Slave Castles on Ghana's Cape Coast

Top left: the British Castle. *Top right:* the Portuguese and, later, Dutch Elmina Castle.
Slave irons in the Elmina Castle Museum; the punishment cells; the Memorial
plaque to the millions of people shipped to the Americas, West Indies and
East Indies

leads to a substitution of pleasant manners and business for real Christianity. So despite his keenness to reform manners he never put any faith in external regulation. He held that external good behaviour was exceptionally dangerous as a distraction from true faith. He noted how religion is often 'cribbed and hemmed in' by this kind of moralistic behaviour. Warm and keen emotional response to God lay at the heart of Wilberforce's faith.

As the film hinted, the Wilberforce household was chaotic perhaps reflecting both Wilberforce's many years as a bachelor and his exuberant personality. Southey commented on the household on holiday at Keswick in 1818:

Wilberforce has been here with all his household, and such a household. The principle of the family seems to be this, provided the servants have faith, good works are not to be expected from them, and the utter disorder which prevails in the consequences is truly farcical. The old coachman would figure upon the stage. Upon making some complaint about the horses, he told his master and mistress that, since they had been in this country, they had been so lake-and-river-and-mountain-and-valley-mad that they have thought of nothing that they ought to think of. I have seen nothing in such a pell-mell, topsy-turvy and chaotic confusion since I used to see a certain breakfast table in skeleton corner [a reference to the past bachelor pad of C.W. Wynn at Oxford, to whom Southey is writing.] His wife sits in the midst of it like patience on a monument, and he frisks about as if every vein in his body were filled with quicksilver. (cited by Coupland's biography *Wilberforce*, 210-11)

Perhaps one can explain why his family went in very different directions - his sons, Henry and Robert, became keen Tractarians and later Roman Catholics and the other son, Samuel, was the Bishop of Oxford who pompously opposed Darwin. They recoiled in distaste from the political evangelicalism of the post-Wilberforce age and yearned for an orderly church life.

Focusing on one individual can distort our picture of how reform occurs. 'Great men' rarely achieve much by themselves. They are the voice for larger forces and values. It is curious to see in this case how religious values became a vehicle for positive change. In these days when it mostly has the opposite reputation, it's important to see the ways that spirituality and social reform interact.

There is a word in the Pharisee's prayer (Luke 18:9-15) that is outside the Jewish form, and that one little word gives him away. He doesn't give thanks that God has spared him from being a thief, rogue, adulterer or tax collector; he gives thanks that he is not like them. "God, I thank you that I am not like other people ..." Really? Here he crosses from the grammar of gratitude to the grammar of elitism. It can be a very subtle line and we almost never notice when we cross it, but we do it all the time. What betrays us is an unexamined refusal of kinship. It shows every time we use us-them language.

Paul Duke
Christian Century
November 1995



"And who is my neighbour?"



Artist - Jo O'Hara

ASK ME WHERE I WAS

And still I hear it
on and on
in the hidden corners of my mind
that eternal scream
which echoes
down the corridors of time,
refusing to be silenced
it accuses me
of passivity, thus
an accessory to crime.

And still I see it
that spreading stain
a wound that never heals
that bloodied mud
that asks me where I was
that asks me what I saw:
all the children dying
in the hidden corners
of a distant foreign famine,
in a small forgotten war.

So I pray my prayers
I pay my tithe
I read my Bible every day,
I live in plenty
I sleep in peace,
and offer praises to Our God:
that though you are there,
I am here,
and so your pain is far away,
a different world
I pray to never know;
for I hope to live a blessed life
where my hands are clean,
my heart stays pure,
and there'll be no stains on me.

And yet, and yet,
there are those awful moments
unguarded and unbidden
when your screams finally reach my ears
and you ask me if my Jesus
really is the same Jesus

that was tortured for his faith
crucified for his love,
and there are those awful moments
I finally see the terror in your eyes,
and you make me wonder
if He will one day ask me
where I was and what I saw
when His children were all dying
in a distant foreign corner
in a small forgotten war.

Kristin Jack

SARAH AND HAGAR WEEP

M. Jane Hansen

Hear their cries Lord,
for the world grows tired of listening
And has other wars to fight.
Israel and Palestine, hemmed in by
Their past and their enemies
Watch each other warily, as
Day by day their
World grows
Smaller.

Rescue them
As the rockets whine and bullets fly,
When electricity is cut off
And taps run dry.
Their children, with only frustration,
Bitterness and half-remembered dreams
To feed on,
Are hungry.
Prey to the fanatics' hatred
And thirst for revenge,
They are led astray,
And carried away in coffins.

Comfort them,
Whilst ancient adversaries fight to the death,
Parents weep for children who
Will never grow old,
And ordinarily people have nowhere to hide.
As Sarah and Hagar weep
Remember Abraham's children, Lord.

SHALOM (שָׁלוֹם)

Alice Sinnott

*The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace (Shalom).
(Numbers 6:24-26)*

Or an inclusive version:

*May God bless you and keep you;
may God look kindly upon you and be
gracious to you;
may God bestow favour upon you and give
you peace.*

Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman described the above blessing as "probably the single benediction offered most in Judaism" (*Gates of Understanding*, II, p. 79)

Shalom (שָׁלוֹם) is the Hebrew word that can mean peace, joy, freedom, integrity, reconciliation, community, harmony, justice, truth, communication, hello, goodbye and wellbeing. While most people understand Shalom to mean peace, peace is only one small part of the meaning of the word. In Israel, the general population use the word Shalom on a daily basis to greet people on first meeting or even casually on the street, to bid farewell to people, much in the way we might say hello or goodbye. Shalom is also used to speak of peace between human beings and God and of peace in the political sense of peace between tribes, groups or countries. It is also used to refer to the well-being, welfare or safety of an individual or a group of individuals. Its equivalent in Arabic is Salaam.

Shalom Aleichem "well-being be upon you" or "may you be well", is used to greet others and is a Hebrew equivalent of "hello". On

Sabbath eve, observant Jewish people usually sing a song called *Shalom Aleichem* before they recite the *Kiddush* over the wine for the Shabbat dinner. *Shalom Aleichem* is a traditional song sung on Friday night at the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath. In this case the words mean to welcome in the angels who accompany a person home on the eve of the Sabbath. It can be sung with many different melodies, but it is always sung with great happiness and joy.

We also find the expression *Shalom Aleichem* attributed to Jesus in the Gospels when he says, "Peace be unto you," a translation of *Shalom Aleichem*.

Shalom by itself is a very common abbreviation, and is used in Modern Israeli Hebrew to both greet and farewell. The word *Shalom* is widely used in popular Israeli songs such as *Shalom Chaverim*. Bill Clinton ended his eulogy for Yitzhak Rabin with the words *Shalom, Chaver* (Goodbye, friend).

**Spiritual direction
is a form of
pastoral care in which ...
(we assist those) on a journey
of discovering,
appreciating, and responding
to the presence and invitation
of God, in the hope
that we can live
our lives with
a heightened awareness
of love
and a deeper commitment
to love.**

Ekman Tam. *Presence*, 12.2. P64

GOD IN A BROTHEL

Gary Shaw

Pressing her small body into mine, she grabbed my hands and placed them on her backside, encouraging me to pull her closer as we swayed and moved across the dance floor. In other circumstances, these attempts at seduction may have worked. However the girl looking into my eyes was all of 16 years old and her makeup and forced smile failed to conceal her fear, her youth and her genuine desperation.

I was in one of about twenty small brothels that lined both sides of a dead-end street in one of the worst parts of Tapachula City, Mexico. This southern-most city is a major transit point for young girls fleeing the poverty and violence of Central and South America. Many of them are brought here by force, having been sold to 'coyotes' or human traffickers who operate with impunity in this very corrupt and largely indifferent part of the world.

Lisa (not her real name) was no exception. At the age of 10 or 11 she had been casually raped and discarded by a man living in her own neighborhood in one of the many squalid barrios of Honduras. Lisa became pregnant as a result and after she had her baby she was, like any mother, desperate to find a way to support her child. Leaving her precious newborn with her own mother, Lisa journeyed north in the hope of finding work. Like many hundreds of thousands of girls around the world just like her, what she found instead was a small army of ruthless men and corrupt Government officials, only too willing to utilize her vulnerability to their own financial advantage.

Sold to a brothel owner and with threats of further rape and beatings hanging over her head, Lisa did her best to sell her small body to the many locals, tourists and miscreants that found their way onto her dance floor. She had tried to run away only once and had gone to the authorities. Instead of finding assistance however, she was imprisoned as an illegal alien and eventually taken to the southern Mexican border where she was forcibly evicted. Lisa was then picked up by the very same coyotes who had profited from her once before and trafficked back into Mexico. Now, with twice the debt to repay, Lisa knew better than to try to escape again. She also knew better than to trust any of her customers, many of whom were local policemen who received "free services" for their complicit cooperation and "protection" of the local sex industry.

So it was that I found myself looking into the eyes of a child, desperate to survive another night in hell. What Lisa didn't know was that I was an investigator working for an international human rights organization and that I was there to get her out of that hell. I was wearing a covert camera and I had already recorded the brothel owner receiving payment for the purchase of Lisa's sexual services. I was confident that with my testimony, I possessed sufficient evidence under Mexican law to successfully prosecute the owner and facilitate the rescue of Lisa as well as the many other young girls who were imprisoned by him.

Having paid for Lisa, the difficulty I now faced was extracting myself from the situation without arousing the suspicion of the management or otherwise offending or further endangering Lisa. Lisa was however very reluctant to let me go as I

represented her only potential source of income for the evening. In a moment of rare inspiration and quiet desperation, I began to pray for her. And then, quite suddenly, everything changed.

I saw for the first time a child greatly loved by God, in whose life evil had been allowed to flourish and triumph leaving her thoroughly enslaved and devoured. And in that instant I was filled with hate and anger. A holy hatred for the evil of an indifferent world that had so easily allowed its children to be violated, systematically abused and exploited.

Any uncertainty I previously had about walking into such a dark and “evil” place, vanished. My fear of my own capacity to sin was replaced with a courage and a

anything of my real purpose for being there to her. But perhaps, at some deeper level where words cease and communication begins, she sensed that I was different from her typical customers. Looking her in the eye I smiled casually and told her that I would be back soon. Having learned to read men's eyes, Lisa sensed my uncertainty. Accepting it as she had accepted every other deception in her life, she began to sing me a love song in her native tongue. With tears in my eyes and in hers, I gave her a hug and departed.

During the next four years, I conducted numerous operations throughout the developing world. I had the opportunity to participate in many successful operations that resulted in the rescue of many hundreds of women and children from

“God was in that brothel before I arrived”

confidence that was not my own. I knew that God was in that brothel before I arrived, suffering with Lisa, witnessing her defilement night after night and sharing in her tears; and that he would remain in the brothel long after I left.

I felt just a fraction of his pain as he identified himself once again as the one who is close to the brokenhearted, suffering with those who suffer. And not in any audible sense, I nevertheless heard his call to go boldly in his name to such places as these, to rescue the oppressed, to defend the orphan and to plead for the widow.

Having made an excuse as to why I had to leave without having sex with her, Lisa walked me to the doorway of the brothel. Taking my hands in her own and looking me in the eye, she asked if I was coming back for her. I had not communicated

slavery and international sex trafficking. I gave evidence at numerous trials around the world that resulted in the successful prosecution and conviction of many perpetrators. And as a result of our work, many women and children were placed in safe and secure aftercare facilities where they could receive the care they needed. However, for a number of reasons, I was unable to return to the brothels of Tapachula, Mexico and a proposed operation to facilitate any rescue was subsequently aborted. Lisa, I presume, like many others, is still waiting for someone to invade her darkness...

The Church

In my journey behind the lens of oppression and injustice I have learned a lot about what is required to successfully combat it. However none of the things I have seen during the last four years has

been as disturbing to me as the indifference, irrelevance and idolatry of much of the western church.

President and founder of International Justice Mission, Gary Haugen, has said, "When people see suffering in the world around them they ask, 'Where is God?' What they need to ask instead is, 'Where is the church?'" I believe it is we in the church, more than those in the world, who need to repent.

From my understanding of the gospel, the sins I have seen committed inside the brothels and Go-Go bars of the developing world, pale in comparison to the sins we commit as the church, when we allow ourselves to be entertained, seduced and enslaved by orgasmic worship that focuses more on our own feelings and desires than on the maker of a world that is suffering.

So much of our worship is antithetical to the gospel in that it is self-absorbed and powerless. So much of our teaching is completely depraved in that it encourages us to focus on our own potential and development rather than carry a cross.

As an example, one of the recent best sellers in the Christian book market is "Look Great, Feel Great". And the words of the prophet Amos ring down through the years...

*"I cannot stand your religious meetings.
I'm fed up with your conferences and conventions.
I want nothing to do with your religion projects,
Your pretentious slogans and goals.
I'm sick of your fund-raising schemes,
Your public relations and image making.
I've had all I can take of your noisy ego-music.*

Do you know what I want?

I want Justice...

*Woe to those addicted to feeling good -
life without pain.*

*Woe to those obsessed with looking good
- life without wrinkles."*

If the western church is going to reach out to the victims of modern-day slavery and oppression, we must first get rid of the unbiblical idea that to be a Christian means we "invite Jesus into our heart to be our personal Lord and Savior..." like some kind of personal genie - there to answer our wishes. We have made God in our own image; a white Anglo Saxon middle-class protestant who serves on the church board and tithes and prays and has a quiet time with an insipid "personal" Jesus who inspires him or her to be nothing more than "nice". The call of God to embark on an adventure where we take the offensive against sin and injustice in the world is too often reduced to a personal code of moral purity. The Kingdom of God is therefore replaced with a "devotional guide for our own spiritual fulfillment."

Fear

But I think the greatest hindrance to effectively combating this evil is our fear. As a church we fear our own sinful nature, we fear the world and we fear evil. Instead of teaching our children and young people that they are bearers of the most wild, untamed and dangerous force for good in the world...we teach them to fear the world. If some Christian bookstores are anything to go by, then our greatest fear is Harry Potter and the Da Vinci Code. As Erwin McManus says, "We have bought into the Christian cliché, the Christian lie, that "the safest place to be is in the center of God's will....but God's desire for our lives was never to insulate us in a Christian

bubble where we risk nothing, sacrifice nothing, lose nothing, worry about nothing.....the Christian life was never about being safe - emotionally or physically...It has always been about engaging a dangerous, cruel worldwith fearless love.” In short it has always been about carrying a cross.

Conclusion:

If it is true, that we believe something when we act as if it were true, then the majority of the western church simply does not believe that light is stronger than darkness. They are not following Jesus but a domesticated creation of our own culture of conspicuous consumption. The western church should not contemplate taking on the evil of human slavery, injustice or indeed any kind of evil, until we are willing to embrace the cross. Then we will know, not by head knowledge but by our own experience, that greater is he that is in us than he who is in the world.

Within the evangelical church we talk a lot about “knowing God” and “knowing Jesus” and we invite people to know him. But as a church do we really know him? Jeremiah 22:16 defines what it means to know God, “He defended the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Is that not what it means to know me?” declares the LORD.

Like Lisa, I have met many, many other young women and children around the world who are still waiting for someone to invade the darkness that enslaves them with the light of the Kingdom of God; the power of which the very gates of hell cannot withstand.

(First published by Church Missionary Society, 2006)

MARY'S MERCIFUL SONG OF JUSTICE¹

And Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God
my Savior,
for he has looked with favor
on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations
will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One
has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the
thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful
from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry
with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise
he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham
and his descendants forever.”
Luke 1:46-55. NRSV

¹ Title by Jan Johnson. *Weavings* XVII, 6..35.

THE HORROR OF DEPLETED URANIUM

Peter Murnane OP

When uranium ore is refined, 95% of the metal produced is less-useful "depleted" uranium (238U). This "heavy metal" - known as DU - is both chemically poisonous and radio active. It ought to be stored securely, but industry has found it more profitable to sell it for use in weapons.

The military in USA and UK now use armour-piercing shells and bombs that contain a core rod of DU. Many other countries possess these weapons. They can pierce steel armour or concrete as a hot knife cuts butter, but when their DU explodes and vaporises the metal becomes a deadly aerosol dust that spreads through the air, water, soil and food chain.

If these microscopic particles enter the lungs, mouth or a wound they continuously irradiate the living cells with alpha radiation, damaging the DNA - especially in reproductive organs - causing mutations and cancers and the widespread breakdown of major organs. DU is much worse than Agent Orange, for even the deadliest chemical poison will eventually break down or leach out of the soil and food chain, but DU will remain radioactive for billions of years.

In wars in 1991 and 2003 about 1500 tonnes of DU dust have been spread across Iraq. It has also been used in Afghanistan, Kosovo and probably Lebanon. Will it ever be possible to clear it up?

After depleted uranium was first used in Iraq in the 1991 war, leukemia increased by

600% and birth defects by 300%. Returned Gulf War veterans have high rates of cancer and deformed babies. Some of the birth deformities resemble those found only after nuclear tests.

"But they say DU is harmless!"

This is the nuclear industry's propaganda. It hides and distorts experts' evidence, using its immense influence to malign, threaten or sack eminent scientists for speaking the truth about DU. As witness, see the stories of Drs Douglas Rokke, Rosalie Bertell, Chris Busby, Kevin Baverstock, Professors Eric Wright, Asaf Durakovic and S-H Gunther. Sadly, political expediency has contaminated even science and the media. Research that would reveal the truth is directed away from the central issue, or is suppressed.

Using DU is a crime against humanity for it will harm countless people in all future generations. However, ordinary people, in solidarity, can correct such evils. They have brought an end to legalized slavery, apartheid and atmospheric nuclear testing. Belgium banned all DU weapons in March 2007. You who read this can help put an end to the production, sale and use of Depleted Uranium weapons by sharing this information, for example, through churches, schools or radio talk-back. A comprehensive discussion of DU can be found in the *New Internationalist* journal, November 2007, and from these websites:

www.cadu.org.uk
www.bandepleteduranium.org
www.wagingpeace.org
www.mindfully.org/Nucs

Jesus said, *Whatever you do to the least of my sisters and brothers, you do to me.*
(Matthew 25:24)

TRADE JUSTICE for the eradication of poverty

What's the problem?

Half the world lives in poverty - that's around 2.8 billion people worldwide living on less than US\$2 a day. This is almost 50% more than 25 years ago. 800 million people around the world are chronically hungry and malnourished and, every day, 30 000-children die as a direct result of poverty. Every year the gap between rich and poor is getting wider. With only 14% of the world's population, high-income countries account for 75% of global GDP (Gross Domestic Product). The situation is unacceptable.

What's the solution?

We believe that trade justice is the key to alleviating poverty. Fair trade is an important part of trade justice, ensuring that producers and artisans are paid a good price for their goods and can live well on their income. But more must be done. Poor nations must be empowered so that they can generate their own wealth and use their resources to work their own way out of poverty. This is the best route to long term, sustainable and independent development.

“Proper economic prices should be fixed not at the lowest possible level, but at a level sufficient to provide producers with proper nutritional and other standards.”
(John Maynard Keynes, 1944)

Unfair Trade

But there is a barrier to this happening. At the moment, international trade rules are rigged in favour of Western countries. Through the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the world's richest nations

control the way that trade works and have imposed agreements and rules that protect their interests and leave poor countries exposed. Over 99% of world trade is conducted by the West, costing the developing world about US\$700 billion a year in lost income. The rich world forces open the markets of poor countries in the name of 'liberalisation', and then dumps heavily - subsidised produce and drives down local costs. With the West subsidising its farmers to the tune of US\$1 billion a day, poor producers with no subsidies cannot compete on price. So they have a choice: to sell their produce at a loss or not to sell at all.

In the early 1980s, Haiti produced almost all of its own rice but was forced to open its markets to foreign imports. As a result, it has been flooded by cheap, subsidised rice from the USA which has driven down the price of local rice. The consequences have been appalling for the fifth of the population who rely on rice production for a living. Some rice farmers left their land to find work in the Dominican Republic, others have taken their children out of school because they can no longer afford it. Without an income, rice farmers can no longer buy food they need for a well-balanced diet and 50% of children in Haiti are malnourished.

Rich countries play another cruel trick: they charge high taxes on imported goods so poor nations can only afford to export raw material like cocoa and cotton. It is the rich who turn these into more valuable products and reap the rewards. Success in exports can be critical to poverty reduction: it is estimated that a mere 1% increase in world-export share for all developing regions could reduce world poverty by 12%. Only a change in international trade rules can bring about such shifts.

The future

Developing countries must have the right to determine their own trade and investment policies, putting the interests of their own people first. International trade rules should reflect this and should support sustainable livelihoods, and promote women's, children's, and indigenous people's rights. The West has an obligation to recognise the particular needs of developing nations and to use their influence in world trade affairs in a more positive way. Rich nations must stop using international trade rules to benefit themselves at the cost of others.

We know that change in the international trade rules would be a huge step towards poverty eradication. We ask you to join us in calling for that change. Now.

Read more at www.tradeaid.org.nz or visit your local Trade Aid shop.

Trade Aid works to improve the livelihoods and wellbeing of disadvantaged producers and speaks out for greater justice in world trade.

From a Trade Aid pamphlet.

Faith is not about high hopes! Not about achieving in our own capacity. Faith opens us to God's grace, to trust in God.

It's not a commodity - but openness to

God and his working beyond our understanding. Grace - that totally out of proportion response to us and to our

needs. Grace, is a response to our weakness - and we can trust this even when we can't get a response - and trust

is built out of that. It's about being loved, it's not about living to earn

God's love

- that's granted, that's a given.

Frederick Buechner. *Telling Secrets*.

REPLENISHING THE TANKS

Andrew Dunn

Introduction

It doesn't take long in the front line of heavy ministry, social, justice, ecological and political issues, to learn it's the place where weariness of soul and poverty of spirit combine with physical and mental exhaustion to create symptoms of the slippery slopes of burnout. Unnoticed or unattended, difficulties soon arise. So how do we nurture ourselves and keep up an adequate intake that enables costly engagement with human and spiritual issues to continue without the downward spiral? Here are a few thoughts gleaned from reflecting in our patch of bush and gardens this spring. We're seeing some very suggestive images for nourishing our spirits and feeding our relationships with God.

Companioning

It's green-hooded orchid time down where the kauris grow - small, delicate, green and white-striped hooded flowers rising out of narrow lush grass-like leaves, easily missed when walking by. *Pterostylis agathicola* only grows where kauri trees grow because they have a symbiotic relationship, a companionableness, that is important to both the orchid and the fungal growth in the litter of kauri compost. The orchid photosynthesises the sunlight which feeds the fungal material in the compost and the fungus relays to the orchid the food it needs in return. Both the orchid and the kauri grow healthily as a result.

Mark's Gospel records Jesus as inviting to be with him those he wanted to be his companions, to share deeply with him (Mark 3:13 JB). *Con* - with; *panis* - bread:

“breaking bread together with” is the root meaning of the word. This companionableness is vital for the life and health of both the disciple and the church. It requires constant attention lest it dry out, become overly formal and unsatisfying.

Gathering

I saw a sparrow today picking and tugging away at some wool from our sheep which had been caught on something in the paddock. It tugged away until it had a beak full then flew off to add it to its nest. Last week a tui was doing the same with moss in the manuka. Eggs will be laid and kept cosy and warm by the wool and the moss. With new chicks hatching and replenishing the flocks, the toll taken by marauding possums and rats will cease for a while. There's a discipline in gathering what we need to nourish our lives and protect our souls from the depredations of life. We do well to collect rich and useable materials: Scripture phrases and verses, refreshing Gospel stories, fresh insights from Jesus' life and sacrifice, his dying and rising and presence today, theology, doctrine - and from whatever other sources enrich our lives.

Gleaning

The quail are back. They disappeared in the winter and we thought the wild (and tame) cats and the resident stoats had wiped them out. But no, here they are again working the lawns and paddocks, feeding on all the suitable seeds and titbits they find. There are six of them, three males and three females, and we're hoping each pair produces a large family. Last year a single male made his home in our garden and glassed-in breeze way where he parked for weeks until he found a mate. Perhaps he's back with her again this spring.

There can be something systematic about our feeding too. It doesn't have to be hit and

miss, hand to mouth. Meditation can be a rich way of accumulating rich nourishment from Scripture and other sources if we give ourselves to the gleaning.

Sipping

A family of tuis comes to our bush and gardens when the nectar trees and shrubs begin to flower. They are here now with their song and chatter doing the rounds of the banksia and Tahitian pohutukawa shrubs. A couple of days ago one was sipping from the large pink camellias as well, something I hadn't seen before. They go where the nectar is.

What's so intriguing this year are the contortions they go through to get to the nectar. I saw one clinging up-side-down to a bottlebrush twig while it reached up into the drooping flower-head sipping away. Sometimes all we can do is sip however we can when the nectar flows for us - and be content with harder rations when it doesn't.

Ruminating

Our sheep go through an interesting cycle of foraging, eating, resting, chewing their cud, and resting again. It happens at night as well as during the day. They are *ruminants*. They need time to sit and chew over their intake. It is quiet reflective work which produces the maximum nourishment from the grass they eat. Ruminating as a meditative discipline is like that - it draws upon the richness in our intake and nourishes and refreshes. But how do we get the time, space and quiet to do it in this fast-moving, electronically-invaded world?

Hunting

Every evening and on into the night we hear the developing calls of the moreporks as they begin their antiphonal cries and set out on their night-time feeding in and around the edges of the bush. It is silent

work apart from the mournful cries as they keep in touch - and obviously fruitful as they are at it every night whatever the weather. They seem to work systematically through one patch of bush and then on to another, sometimes near to the house and other times further away.

The sacred kingfisher hunts here too, but differently: in daylight, sitting quietly on a post or branch waiting and watching, and then darting rapidly down to its prey and back to its perch with worm or grub in its beak

largely unnoticed in their rich habitat unobserved in deep silence and immobility. Yet here are some of the rich array of unidentified and unnamed fungi that New Zealand bush is famous for. Fungi experts and hunters travel the world searching for such treasures. To find them and sit with them gives a sense of being on the edge of mystery, of seeing what few others have seen. Seeking, finding and enjoying the deep, damp, dark, quiet places of the bush and the special treasures it holds expands the mind and heart deliciously - and attunes them for the mystery that is all

“There's a time to be active as well in our spirits.”

The harrier hawks have another method. They glide silently on the air currents above the bush canopy, working systematically looking for prey.

There's a time to be active as well in our spirits. We do well to foster habits of searching and finding from any and every source the food we need to nourish us for today, tonight, tomorrow. There's something active about it because like the manna in the desert we can't store up much for long. It needs replenishing regularly as any relationship does.

Mystery

Hidden away amongst the leaf litter on the forest floor are the most exquisite fungi I've ever seen. Most are small - some are only a few millimetres, almost too small to photograph in the dark shades where they flourish. Eye-catching colours abound - lemon, bright yellow, various tones of brown, grey, blue, and icy-white as well as the bright orange of the large poisonous *amanita* under the pines. There they flourish in the cool damp of winter, most of their life-cycle taking place underground. They all seem perfectly happy flourishing away

around us when we live by faith and not by sight alone!

Time

There's something about the spaciousness of these bush-covered gullies and ridges that invites people on retreat here to spend time amongst it all. Time spent waiting and watching rewards them with insights and experiences that refresh and nourish. There's always something new to see but it takes time to go searching, to sit open-eyed and open-hearted, to watch, wonder and pray. Seldom is one disappointed. Learning to make time to take time and indulge oneself in the timelessness of God and Grace and God's good earth is not readily achieved these days of pace and pressure.

So ...

One way or another we need to feed and be nourished for our work and witness. There's a trail of wreckage that is not life-giving to persons and people around the deep issues of justice and engagement with challenges to systems, policies and economies. It's costly work.

Jesus knew it too! He said, *Come to me, all*

you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matt. 11:28-30 NRSV)

Helder Camara puts it well: *I understood that in view of my decision to give myself unreservedly to God and my neighbour, it would be absolutely necessary for me to devote space and time to prayer.*

See what images of refreshing and sources of nourishment you can find within your lifestyle and circumstances that help you maintain the disciplines of prayer and devotion, of waiting and watching, worship and making use of all the means of grace at our disposal. Find what freshens and nourishes the soul and feeds your spirit in the heavy loads you bear.

COLOSSIANS 3: 1-17

So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, *act* like it. Pursue the things above over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ - that's where the action is. See things from *his* perspective.

Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your *real* life - even though invisible to spectators - is with Christ in God. *He* is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you'll show up too - the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile be content with obscurity, like Christ.

And that means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel

like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. That's a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God. It's because of this kind of thing that God is about to explode in anger. It wasn't long ago that you were doing all that stuff and not knowing any better. But you know better now, so make sure it's all gone for good: bad temper, irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk.

Don't lie to one another. You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire. Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, and with his label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete. Words like Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilised and uncouth, slave and free, mean nothing. From now on everyone is defined by Christ, everyone is included in Christ.

So, chosen by God for this new life, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you; compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offence. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of whatever else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ - the Message - have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives - words, actions, whatever - be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.

ASSOCIATION OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS' CONFERENCE REPORT

Wellington, 27-29 July 2007

Kathleen Rushton RSM

From her vote of thanks at the
Conference.

My whole being longs for you, O God (Ps. 42:1)

In our yearning for God and our clouded awareness of God's yearning for us we stretch words to name, capture and deepen that experience. To describe this we use symbolic language, an aspect of which is love mysticism which may be described simply as the path to the heart. This symbolic language evokes the divine/human love relationship in ways thereby we move from the loves we know and experience in our embodiment, in our bodies, to love of the Divine. This language resonates with our very being, with our sexuality.

Dr Janet Ruffing RSM led us into love mysticism through the mystical tradition which Christians, knowingly or unknowingly, share. The twelfth century Bernard of Clairvaux and the thirteenth century Gertrude of Helfa belong to the shared Christian tradition before the scandals of separation in the sixteenth century and the subsequent splinterings of the unity Jesus desired (John 17:22). Entry into the world of these mystics encounters the gendered language of lover and beloved which can create certain difficulties and even embarrassment. This symbolic language is, of course, biblical. Recall the Song of Songs which does not mention God so focused is it on the human lover and the beloved.

Through the Sufis, Rumi and Hafiz of the Islamic Tradition, Janet led us into a love mysticism beyond gender. Here, the whole

created world speaks of the Beloved, even the world of food in a school, in a kitchen corner. In our times, how valuable to know that love mysticism is among the religious traditions which our Abrahamic faiths share.

The Beloved in love mysticism impels us to love the Beloved and to love as the Beloved embodying whanaungatanga/right relationships with God, creation and all people in our daily living.

Some of us were led along paths we had trod before into this vivid imagery of embodiment and sexuality. Some of us were faced rather uncomfortably with even the nature of symbolic language itself, let alone, the surprising and maybe shocking world of the imagery of love mysticism, as well as Janet's plea for a positive theology of pleasure.

Our conference focus was "Deepening the Journey." That journey is a varied one, nevertheless, it is along, through and extending the Great Christian Tradition of Spirituality, of which love mystical is a treasured part. While this may not be the path of all, as spiritual directors, for whanaungatanga/right relationship with our directees, we have an obligation to be familiar with that Great Christian Tradition of Spirituality. I congratulate our executive on bringing Janet, scholar and practitioner among us; for linking us through her, a founding member, to Spiritual Directors International as we become of age as an association.

The Hebrew word *nepas*, usually translated as "soul" came to mean "breathe," the vitality which gives life to one's whole being. *Nepas* evokes praying and longing rooted more deeply in our bodies than the dualism of "soul" and "body" conveys. Our conference speaker offered a way to explore this embodiment: "My whole being longs for you, O God" (Ps 42:1).

Andrew Pritchard

Perhaps it was being just on time, a bit late and then just on time for my three appointments yesterday afternoon that made the following impact me so strongly. (It comes from www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/practiceofday.php accessed 8 November)

Jewish teachings regard wasting another person's time as a kind of stealing. . . . Routinely keeping other people waiting turns you into a thief.

- Rabbi Joseph Telushkin in *The Book of Jewish Values*

To Practise This Thought: Be on time for all your appointments.

Living contemplatively in the reality of everyday life is not necessarily easy. Yet how much our world needs the presence and contribution of people who have a base of contemplative practice from which to live. Like the man in the gospels who said to Jesus, 'I believe, help my unbelief' I hope that you will join me in saying, 'I desire, I long, help my limited progress!'

Spiritual Growth Ministries is a living organism of people and spirit/Spirit who seek to encourage, inspire and resource one another in intimate relationship with God. The fruit of that will be transformation, personal, interpersonal and structural.

Richard Rohr in his talks entitled *The Divine Dance: Exploring the Mystery of Trinity* (available from Pleroma Christian Supplies order@pleroma.org.nz) says so well that we are included in that dance and that contemplative practice is a central means by which we experience and deepen that reality.

As I hear reports of people's experience as they have attended retreats or quiet days, or as they have found spiritual direction of such assistance as they have moved onwards in life, or as a Refresh article has touched them deeply, I give thanks to God again for this work.

Recent reports include those from retreats in several parts of the country that have been well attended and much appreciated. With the perseverance of leaders in the south the first of hopefully many retreats at Maniototo went ahead this year. Feedback is encouraging this to be extended to four days in 2008.

Retreats in Daily Life are proving to be accessible and helpful in many parts of the country and often lead to people seeking regular spiritual direction as an outcome of having attended. The most recent of these of which I'm aware had the team working to capacity with the large number of people registering.

A wide range of quiet days and creative events continue to be appreciated with both events like introductions to contemplative prayer and newer offerings like film days or contemporary approaches to spirituality being well attended. At the same time not all events offered run and there is not a clear pattern as to why some are responded to and others not. Prayer, openness to change and perseverance are all called for!

2007 has been another fruitful year for the Formation Programme, with a surge in applications making this the biggest first year group yet, though, perhaps as a consequence fewer applications have come in for 2008. The 'Waikanae Week' in July

was a triumph of planning and coordination by Sue. Additional team members were co-opted to provide full coverage of the practical work and their contribution was invaluable.

As I proof-read the 2008 Programme today, which you will now have together with this copy of Refresh, I am again grateful to God, for the people who pray, prepare and work to present all that Spiritual Growth Ministries offers and for each one of you. In particular I am grateful to Carole for her

tireless work in the background making sure that communication and administration runs smoothly, to Sue for the giving of herself through the Formation Programme that shapes and influences so many, to Andrew as he resourcefully orchestrates the reflection, writing and editing that makes Refresh such a great journal and to all the members of Workgroup and the Formation Advisory Group - thank-you!

Never is God a tormentor of the human conscience. He buries our past in the heart of Christ. He came to weave our life like a beautiful garment with the threads of his compassion.

Brother Roger of Taize

Whatever other description there may be for restorative justice, at its heart it is a movement of hope and non-violence. It contains the possibility of offering people traumatised by crime or caught up on offending, a positive hope-filled and respectful way forward. ...

It should be welcomed as a genuine breakthrough in the resolution of conflict and in creation of justice. It is justice that matters, justice that everyone wants. Restorative processes will deliver better justice. ...

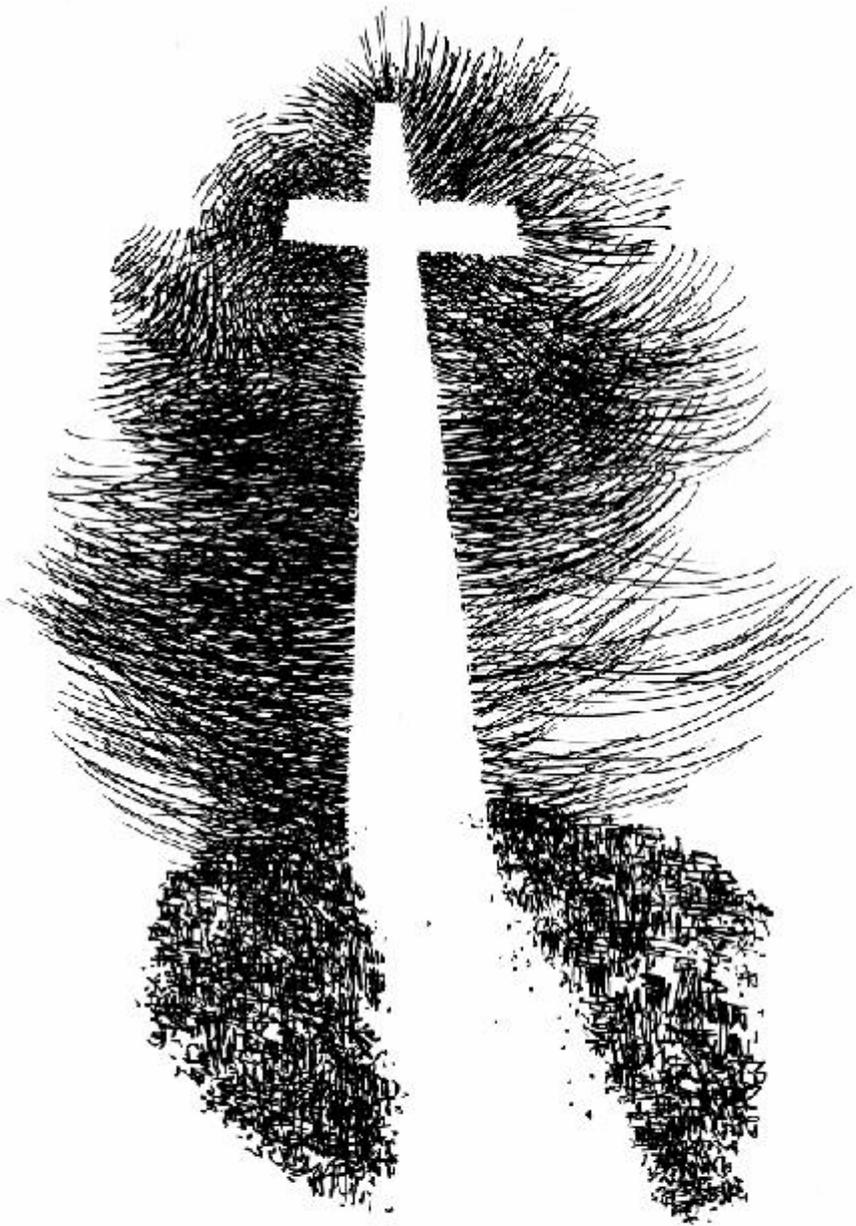
Restorative justice is a movement of non-violence. It provides a mature human response to complex situations of conflict and crime. It does not necessarily provide a solution to either. But it is a process that respects those involved and enhances the families and communities to which they belong. It recognises that violence is unacceptable and provides a non-violent but challenging and positive way of proceeding.

Jim Consedine. *Restorative Justice A Movement of Hope*.
www.restorativejustice.org.nz



We Believe

A Quilt by Elise Westcott



"... where heaven's love
and heaven's justice meet ..."
Elizabeth Cecilia Clephane

Artist: Jo O'Hara

BOOK REVIEWS

The Little Book of Biblical Justice.

A fresh approach to the Bible's teachings on justice.

Chris Marshall. Published by Good Books 2005. pp 74. NZ\$10.50

www.GoodBks.com

Available from Church Stores, Auckland.

Reviewed by Andrew Dunn

This is one of a series of "Little Books of Justice & Peacebuilding". They include books on Restorative Justice, Conflict Transformation, Family Group Conferences and the Little book of Contemplative Photography, among others. Written and published in the USA by Mennonite writers they offer easily read and relatively short books on significant topics for people engaged in applying the Gospel to life and issues today.

Chris Marshall teaches theology at Victoria University of Wellington and has an acute sense of the Kingdom of God and kingdom values. This book is a fine example of his thought and writing.

The opening section "What is Justice?" is a gem where Chris attempts to give a workable approach to this difficult question and succeeds!

In the second section he works with justice in the biblical world view. The third section deals with what he calls "the contours of Biblical Justice": such things as justice as an attribute of God, emulating God, hope, justice as an obligation and a restorative activity for Christians, among other themes. The book concludes with a section on Jesus and Justice emphasising his mission and kingdom.

Each section has a summary of the material presented. The book concludes with an appendix summarising key points plus a Scripture index and a list of other books to read.

If this is a good example of this series, new to most of us in NZ, then it's a series worth exploring further.

Mystic Street: Meditations on a Spiritual Path.

Inwardly and outwardly:
a journey of the heart.

by S.T. Georgiou. Novalis Publishing Inc: St. Paul University, Ottawa, 2007.
328 pages. NZ\$38.00. Foreword by Brother Patrick Hart, O.C.S.O.

Reviewed by Paul Fromont

In his latest book, *Mystic Street*, Steve Georgiou has a turn of phrase that often strikes me as being true to the experience of so many of us: "*we are travellers of the heart*" (p.32). Consequently, I read Georgiou's book as an invitation to travel the uncharted territory of my own heart and life experiences. *Mystic Street* is a travel book of sorts, one that describes the adventure and the wonder of a journey through inner and outer landscapes. The reader slowly and attentively responds to the beckoning of mystery; mystery woven like a fine, rich thread through the everyday and the ordinary. In this case the "everyday and the ordinary" is Steve working toward his doctoral degree in Religion and Art at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. *Mystic Street* carries on from where Georgiou's earlier book *The Way of the*

Dreamcatcher: Spirit Lessons with Robert Lax Poet, Peacemaker, Sage left off (as an aside, for those not familiar with Robert Lax, he was Thomas Merton's best friend).

And, I must say, the views from this continuing journey are of a type that make you stop dead in your tracks. You stand still. You "wake up" as if from a dream. You rub the sleep from your eyes and you look and you see the wonder of the holy and the sacred in all that you know you've seen, but somehow, ironically, never really noticed. The experience on page after page is enough to take your breath away!

Mystic Street is a collection of vignettes (of varying length); a gathering together of the insights of Georgiou - a writer, artist and teacher - who, to borrow from a friend, "doesn't just write *about* the sacredness of the everyday, he writes *out of and into* it."

To have read this beautifully presented book, and to have pondered its black & white photographs is to have unwrapped a gift of great value. I warmly recommend it to anyone with an interest in (Christian) mysticism & spirituality, to those who see the present moment as sacrament, to spiritual directors, and to those (who like St. Ignatius) want "to find God in all things."

It's a book for those who want to walk more deeply, attentively and honestly with their own lives and stories. I did - and am - as a result of slowly wandering down *Mystic Street*.

It's available on Amazon.com or from its US distributor www.23rdpublications.com. Cost (incl p&h) approx. NZ\$38.00. Getting a "very good" or "like new" second hand copy from the US will save approx \$6.00.

FILM REVIEW

AMAZING GRACE

Director: Michael Apted. Bristol Bay Productions 2007

Reviewed by Maureen Lamb

Amazing Grace was premiered in England on March 23rd this year to coincide with the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Great Britain. It is based on the true story of William Wilberforce who, at 21, entered politics where he had to learn how to survive and operate in a world of skilful deception and cunning one-upmanship. For over 20 years he persevered in this environment to accomplish his dream. Wilberforce's vision was twofold - the abolition of slavery and the reforming of society. He achieved both before he died in

1833. His story is both an inspiration and an exhortation.

From the opening scenes, this film, rich in symbolism and invitation, is pregnant with the Holy. "Amazing Grace" - how aptly named for grace abounded however disguised. Wilberforce, magnificently portrayed by Ioan Gruffudd, was no saint - rather someone who suffered ill health, was flawed and vulnerable and yet open to the Spirit's nudges. A man after God's heart. Wilberforce was drawn to the plight of the oppressed and less privileged, sharing Jesus' righteous anger. Cameos from the lives of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Peter, Thomas, Judas and the Pharisees were woven into the tapestry of this

colourful story. How powerfully narrative speaks. It reminds us all of our common humanity and innate hunger for grace.

It is said of Wilberforce, *"He proves that one man can change his times, but he cannot do it alone."* Like us, he needed companions to reach his full potential. Wilberforce's friends with their diverse personalities and strengths all shared his vision and passion. They fearlessly reminded him of his goal and kept him focused and resolute in the face of relentless opposition. William Pitt, in spite of some mixed motives and personal ambitions, for the most part remained a loyal, fun-loving and close friend. It was Pitt and Wilberforce's combined youthful exuberance and optimism that fired them to reach for what appeared impossible. However, Wilberforce, riddled at times with self doubt, fear and chronic ill health, struggled to remain confident. He needed help to rediscover, reclaim and sing his 'song.' Friends helped him to realise he could serve God **and** be a political activist. Holding opposites was an ongoing tension for Wilberforce. He was a contemplative and among dandelions and spiders' webs he was transported to another world. However, an awe-filled world could not diminish the relentless fire burning in his belly. A fire that was fuelled by dreams, images of child slavery and humans manacled as cargo. He became a driven man who doggedly persevered to awaken social conscience.

Wilberforce's remarkable achievements were poignantly birthed and sustained by his relationship with God, the integrity and wisdom of his spiritual mentor, John Newton, and the encouragement of his wife, Barbara. Newton penned the famous words of Amazing Grace. This hymn

poignantly mirrors the life stories of most of the film's characters. It was truly a redemptive film. Imperceptibly the scales were removed from the eyes of Wilberforce, Newton, Pitt, Lord Fox, parliamentarians and even the Duke of Clarence. Their perspective of life, humanity and each other was changed for ever. Personally, the highlight of the film was the liberation of a tormented soul. There is power in the healing potency of story-telling. *"Once I was lost, but now I am found, once I was blind but now I see."*

The film ended with the strains of Amazing Grace - this time played by a military band in front of Westminster Abbey, the resting place of Wilberforce's tired body. What a fitting tribute to a national hero, an exceptional commoner who unquestionably left the world a better place.

Unfortunately, this is not the end of the story. God created us equal and yet there are **still** an estimated 27 million people worldwide who are enslaved against their will, 50% are children. 2.4 million people are **still** bought and sold annually - each with a similar story of injustice and oppression.

What is our response?

Justice wakes me
from a walking sleep,
the kind of self-centredness
that would leave me
unaware of the humanity
around me ...

Kristen Ingram
Weavings. XVII:6. 20

RESOURCES

ARTICLES

Drinking from the Waterfall God was my companion.

John Steward. *Presence*. Vol. 10. No. 1. February 2004. Where spiritual direction nourishes those engaged in demanding

social action and justice issues. In John Steward's story it was in Rwanda during and following the massacres of the 1990s. John lives in Melbourne. You may be able to access this article through the website of Spiritual Directors International: www.sdiworld.org

DVDS AND CDS

Spiritual literacy: reading the sacred in everyday life.

DVD (six discs). Ardustry Home Entertainment. \$125(US) for the set, Available through the website spiritualityandpractice.com
Reviewed by Warren Deason

This beautifully-packaged and presented set of six DVDs directed by Canadian documentary maker David Cherniack, is based on the book, *Spiritual literacy: reading the sacred in everyday life*, by Frederick and Mary Ann Bussant. The Bussants offer this resource as a way of helping us develop the contemplative stance toward life. They suggest that various spiritual exercises, common to all the main faith traditions, help us recognise the sacred in our everyday living. They gather these practices alphabetically and so provide us with an A-Z of spiritual practice. For example the first DVD looks at the practices

of Attention, Beauty, Compassion and Devotion. Each exercise is presented by a series of video clips accompanied by readings drawn from a wide range of authors. Many will be well known to readers of *Refresh*, others less so. But all combine to offer a quite stunning resource. The emphasis is on practise and study guides are provided on the Bussant's website to help individuals and groups find ways to, in their words, "appreciate the magic moments of grace in everyday life". Depending on the current exchange rate, you should be able to have it sent airmail to you for no more than \$200 (NZ).

The Hunger for Depth and Meaning

Learning to Meditate with John Main

A set of 10 CDs and a guide book are available from Medio Media, the publishing arm of The World Community For Christian Meditation. www.mediomedia.org

BOOKS

Michael Battle. *Practicing Reconciliation in a Violent world*. Moorhouse Books. Harrisburg and London. 2005. pp 115.

Michael Battle. *Blessed Are The Peacemakers*. A Christian Spirituality of Nonviolence. Mercer University Press. Macon, Georgia. 2004. pp 281.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *The Cost of Discipleship*. MacMillan, New York. 1961.

Samuel Amirthamand Liberato Bautista (ed). *Those who would give light must endure burning*. TUGON An Ecumenical Journal of Discussion and Opinion, published by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. 1986. pp 151. Creative essays on spirituality, justice and peace.

Jim Consedine. *Restorative Justice Healing the effects of Crime*. Ploughshare Publications. P. O. Box 173, Lyttleton, New Zealand. 1993. pp 176.

Donal Dorr. *Spirituality and Justice*. Orbis Books. 1984.

Ulrich Duchrow and Gerhard Liedke. *SHALOM - Biblical perspectives on Creation, Justice and Peace*. WCC Publications, Geneva. 1987. pp198.

Michael L. Hadley (ed.). *The Spiritual Roots Of Restorative Justice*. State University of New York Press. 2001. pp 264.

John Francis Kavanaugh. *Following Christ In A Consumer Society*. The Spirituality of Cultural Resistance. Orbis Books. 1983. pp 167.

Christopher Marshall. *The Little Book of Biblical Justice*. A fresh approach to the Bible's teachings on Justice. GoodBooks, Pennsylvania. 2005. pp 74. NZ\$10.50 from Church Stores.

Michael O'Laughlin. *Henri Nouwen His Life and Vision*. Orbis Books 2005. pp172. A biography illustrated with 140 photos, written by a teaching assistant of Nouwen's during his Harvard University days.

Dick Scott. *Ask That Mountain*. The story of Parihaka. Reed/Southern Cross. Auckland. NZ 1991. pp216.

Hugh Thomas. *The Slave Trade*. The history of the Atlantic slave trade 1440-1870. Picador. 1997. pp 925.

Howard Zehr. *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*. GoodBooks, Pennsylvania. 2002. pp 74. NZ\$10.50 from Church Stores.

JOURNALS

The Common Good.

Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor. A newspaper of the Christchurch Catholic Worker. Price: free or donation. Available from Te Wairua Maranga Trust, Box 33-115, Christchurch, New Zealand. www.catholicworker.org.nz

Living Justly In Aotearoa.

A justice, peace and integrity of creation newsletter from the Justice and Peace Office of the Bicultural Desk of the Auckland Catholic Diocese and Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand. Private Bag 47904, Ponsonby, Auckland. Email: davidt@ada.org.nz

WEBSITES

Catholic Worker

www.catholicworker.org.nz

The Churches Agency on Social Issues.

www.casi.org.nz A Christian agency dealing with social, economic, ecological and political matters in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Article "Slavery Today" on the NZ

Salvation Army website:

www.salvationarmy.org.nz/SITE_Default/SITE_Events/Abolition_of_slavery.asp

Sojourners: Christians for Justice and Peace.

www.sojourners.com

Quaker programmes and comment on current issues.

www.quakers.org.nz

Websites featuring the Parihaka story of non-violence and the 2008 Peace Festival.

www.parihaka.com

www.history-nz.org/parihaka

The Micah Network - a group of 300 Christian relief, developmental and justice organisations from 75 countries, formed in 1999.

www.micahnetwork.org

International Justice Mission, based in Washington DC, is a human rights agency that rescues victims of violence, sexual exploitation, slavery and oppression, and acts as an advocate for victims.

www.ijm.org

Spirituality and Practice

Crossing Boundaries

Ultimately, it is not our own strength or courage or iron will that get us over the terrifying chasms that seem impossible to cross. Grace alone can see us to the other side. It is God who invites us to participate in his mysterious will for the union of all things. God yearns for us to join in the divine love that longs for justice, and "works the redemption on the human race."

All we have to do is follow. If we will just stand up and take the first step, God will be with us all the way across; God will be the way we get there. And God will be waiting on the other side.

Deborah Douglas. *Weavings* XVII:6.15

FILMS WITH A JUSTICE INTEREST

Amazing Grace see review

China Blue - a 2006 documentary on the injustices in the rag trade which follows a pair of jeans from the sweat shop factory in China to the retailer in the USA; directed by Michael Peled.

Erin Brockovich - 2000 film directed by Stephen Sonderbergh and starring Julia Roberts. Gives true life account of Brockovich's work in exposing a cover-up of a large corporation's industrial waste poisoning of the town of Hinckley's water supply.

Romero - 1989 film directed by John Duigan. Depicts the life of assassinated

Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero who spoke out against repression and injustice in El Salvador.

The Insider - 1999 film directed by Michael Mann which tells the story of research chemist Jeffrey Wigand who appeared on a 1994 CBS *60 Minutes* programme in which he exposed the tobacco industry's work to increase the addictiveness of cigarettes.

Black Gold - Directed by Marc and Nick Francis, this 2006 documentary looks at the global coffee market and issues of fair-trade and focuses on the exploitation of Ethiopian growers.

JUSTICE

to be justice
must be much more
than justice.

LOVE

is the law of our condition,
without which we can
no more render justice
than a person
can keep a straight line
walking in the dark.

George MacDonald

GOD IS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Bruce Maden

Equipping community to become 'aware of their awarenesses'. Spiritual direction, a practice uniquely equipped to infuse community development.

A mother shares that at the birth of her baby she was told by medical staff that her baby was unlikely to live. In the midst of feeling deeply troubled she felt an unseen hand touch her arm and a clear voice say, 'Don't worry it will be all right'. She said that from that moment her fear diminished and she felt her baby's life was in the hands of Atua (God). When her baby suddenly died some months later she was comforted by remembering this poignant experience.

This story was one of many collected in the course of a research project which sought to record the narratives of spiritual experiences of people in a community development setting, based in the suburb of Highbury, Palmerston North.

Building on the work of David Hay, Paul Hawker and Simon Brown the research project sought to explore the premise that Spiritual Direction and the Contemplative tradition have an essential place in the neighbourhood beyond the institutional church in assisting 'neighbours' to become increasingly 'aware of their awarenesses'.

The results of this project suggest that it is possible to create a 'sacred space, a holy place, in the neighbourhood' where a community of people grow in paying attention to the 'Word' in another. A milieu can be created that gives freedom to speak out about encounters with the Mysterious Other, God or simply the 'Weird', where stories can be shared and people learn to ask questions of each other to 'thicken' the emerging understandings and where through simple but intentional

conversations people individually and in groups can be guided to both express their spiritual experiences and to inductively co-formulate their understanding from these experiences in their own language which may be significantly different from traditional Christian language.

The research identified some of the critical elements in the creation of such a milieu.

These included that spiritual guides or 'soul friends' need to have or develop:

- Finely-tuned antennae to hear and see the spiritual dimension, the wairua, in people dwelling in the neighbourhood beyond institutional church.
- An ability to create a relational sacred space where 'questing' and freedom of expression is encouraged.
- A commitment to allowing God to be God increasingly freed from cultural and religious institutional constraints.
- A commitment to one's own ongoing spiritual formation. (If one is to guide people to discover God's movement in the 'beyond' then it appears vital that the guide is increasingly at home in the 'beyond' themselves).
- A willingness to immerse oneself in the neighbourhood to respond to the vocational call to a spirit-inspired life of social commitment and to inspire others to embark on the same 'journey'.
- A shared theoretical and theological framework of understanding that supports God being in the neighbourhood.

The research paper strongly concludes that God is indeed in the neighbourhood moving beyond the framework of institutional religion and that there is an exponentially growing need for spiritual guides who are able to assist people discover truth organically.

For a deeper exploration of this research paper see www.wgcn.org.nz.

CONTRIBUTORS

Warren Deason is pastor of Albany Presbyterian Church.

Andrew Dunn lives and works at Oasis Retreat and Study Centre, Albany.

Paul Fromont lives in Cambridge (NZ) but wanders via the spiritual discipline of blogging.

David R Grant is a Presbyterian Minister (retired), now living at Snells Beach north of Auckland.

Anne Hadfield is passionate about fostering spiritual growth and does so through SOULSCAPE in Wellington, spiritual direction and other outlets. She was a founding member of SGM.

Jane Hansen lives at the foot of the Kaimais with her husband Jim, near the Wairere Falls where pilgrims come from around the world.

Kathy Hughes is a wife, mother, spiritual director, musician, poet and student in Christchurch.

Kristin Jack, works with the Servants to Asia's Urban Poor Mission (www.servantsasia.org), and with his wife Susan and two children has been living amongst the urban poor in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, for over 13 years now.

Anna Johnstone is a writer and photographer living in Glenfield, North Shore City.

Maureen Lamb of Lower Hutt enjoys films, Spiritual Direction and hospital chaplaincy.

Peter Lineham teaches history at Massey University, Albany Campus.

Bruce Maden is involved in the leadership of Te Aroha Noa Community Services, a community - development organisation committed to the holistic development of the western suburbs of Palmerston North. He has diverse interests in spiritual direction, counselling, adult education, research,

community development and most things outside the square!

Chris Marshall is St John's Associate Professor of Christian Studies at Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand and author.

Tapu Misa is a journalist who contributes a weekly column to the New Zealand Herald.

Peter Murnane OP lives in Central Auckland and works on justice issues and in spiritual direction.

Louise Nicolas lives in Rotorua and continues to work for justice in New Zealand policing and Courts.

Jo O'Hara, a Christchurch artist, works in various mediums and has contributed our centrespread as well as the other artwork in this issue.

Andrew Pritchard - husband of 1, father of 3, Convenor of SGM, self-employed spiritual director, supervisor and teacher, lives in Shalom Christian community on the Kapiti Coast and relaxes by pottering in his shed and playing golf.

Dr Kathleen Rushton of Nga Whaea Atawhai Sisters of Mercy lives in Christchurch where she works in Scripture and Theology and has particular interest in linking these to Spirituality.

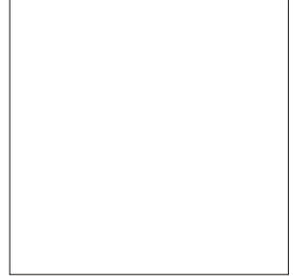
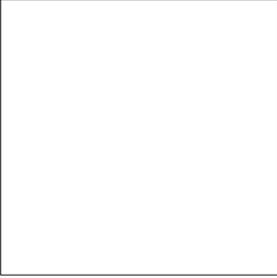
Gary Shaw has worked for the New Zealand Police and is now involved with justice issues and the sex trade. He is soon to publish a book on this work.

Alice Sinnott teaches Old Testament at the Catholic Institute of Theology, Auckland University and St John's College.

Elise Westcott is in Year 12 at John Paul College in Rotorua and made this quilt for the Young Designer Awards. It was displayed in the National Quilting Association show in Hamilton earlier this year.

MY OWN JUSTICE ISSUES

Use this page to write your own issues and what
God is inviting you to engage with



**And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God**

Micah 6:8

