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FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY – THE EARTH IS SHAPING US
TO LIVE WITH LESS*John Howell**

12.1 Introduction

The earth is shaping us to live with less. In the short time we have to prevent catastrophic climate damage, questions of faith and spirituality impinge on how we transition to find the good life while living with fewer resources. We need good science, far-sighted political vision, and wise and fair communities that have faith in the future. I will argue that faith communities have wisdom traditions to draw on with an alternative spirituality to fear and panic.

This chapter, in two parts, begins by clarifying what is meant by faith and spirituality. I will argue that these are not exclusively religious terms, although they are important concepts in religious thought and practice. Because I understand religious narratives under the broad brush of the poetic, and their vitality is located in song, prayer, myths, liturgy, parables and proverbs with the metaphorical and the analogical, then in the second part of the chapter, I will use poems to elucidate some key issues of faith and spirituality to point a way forward from our current materialistic straitjacket.

Stephen Gardiner describes the runaway emissions as an ethical tragedy like a moral storm with three fronts. The first is global, with the rich nations favouring their own interests. The affluent can retreat to their fortresses and leave the rest to their fates. The second is intergenerational, with the current generations taking advantage of future generations. The third is theoretical in that our moral and political institutions are under-developed for the task.¹ An example is disregard for the polluter-pays principle.

I will consider the following:

- The urgency of the coming storm. Is it too late? I will distinguish between end-of-world predictions and the prophets.
- I will contend the earth covenant in the Noah story will rebalance human exploitation.
- Stern claims climate change is a classic example of market failure (Stern, 2007). How can economics serve the common good in this transition?

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1 Stephen M Gardiner *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011) at 6.

- The wise person does not build a house on sand. As sea level rises and extreme droughts and floods displace populations, how are we to care for climate change refugees?
- If technological fixes will only take us so far to carbon neutrality, is it time to seek life in traditions different from the script of a consumer society?

I will connect each of these strands with what I consider to be the underlying spiritual values located in the sacred stories of religious literature, with the hope that some of their insights will point to a future for my grandchildren.

12.2 Part one

12.2.1 A definition of faith

Let us take faith as a trust or commitment, which presupposes belief and has a cognitive aspect. It is close to "believing in", as opposed to "believing that", but will presuppose some beliefs of this latter kind. Faith can also involve insight, discernment and understanding.

Having faith is having trust. Faith is not the same as belief. Faith does entail some beliefs. If I have faith in a person, I believe them to be trustworthy. Faith is situated in a relationship. I have faith in the pilot of the aircraft, or the driver of my car. I have faith in the other drivers on the road to obey the law so I will be safe. I trust the music teacher to teach in the belief that he or she will act in good faith so my child will learn the musical skill I pay the teacher to instruct and inspire them in. If the music teacher touches them in sexually inappropriate ways, then my trust is misplaced and I can say that they acted in bad faith. In business, the employment law requires the parties to bargain in good faith. When a business partner acts in bad faith, then business relationships collapse. Anywhere there is a relationship of trust that the people involved have faith.

• *Moral code.* Faith requires a moral code. I have trust in my bank. Trust is implied, for example, in the very title of a promissory note, which is based on the promise that the parties will act in certain ways in the future. When banks act out of greed, as a Royal Commission in Australia has recently found (Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry, 2019), failing to meet the basic standards of honesty, then our faith in these institutions is diminished.

• *Faith in private and in public.* Paul Fiddes discusses two of Shakespeare's plays: "Measure for Measure" and "The Merchant of Venice".² Elizabethan jurists made a distinction between private and public spheres of life. Fiddes says Shakespeare stands with Erasmus, who declared that "there can be no good prince who is not also a good man".³ The connection between the administration of justice and the person of justice – including the judge's own morality – is a theme that Shakespeare

2 Paul S Fiddes "Law and divine mercy in Shakespeare's religious imagination: Measure for Measure and The Merchant of Venice" in Francesca Bugliani Knox and David Lonsdale (eds) *Poetry and the Religious Information: The Power of the Word* (Routledge, Abingdon (UK), 2016) 109.

3 Desiderius Erasmus *The Education of a Christian Prince (1516)* (translated by Lester K Born, Columbia University Press, New York, 1936) at 189, quoted in Harvie Ferguson *Religious Transformation in Western Society: The End of Happiness* (Routledge, London, 1992) at 77.

continually works at in dramatic form. In the "Merchant", the fundamental contrast is the generous risks of love and the mathematics of commerce, in theological terms, between law and grace. If we think about applying the characteristic of acting in good faith to our leaders, this challenges the practice of turning a blind eye to bullying or predatory behaviour, or denial of climate science by CEOs on the justification of their financial results for the company. We need our business leaders to act in good faith and with integrity as we transition towards a net zero carbon economy. Their dilemma is that "it is not just legal for them to maximise profits, it is also a requirement that shareholders can enforce".⁴ While the financial returns from oil are higher than renewables, a transition is hindered.⁵ This makes it urgent for nations to legally adopt pollution taxes and to cease to subsidize the extraction of fossil fuels. Oil companies can act in good faith by recognising the validity of the climate science, ceasing their lobbying to continue business as usual, and adopting transition planning.

• *Faith in the wrong things.* Michael Sandel, in his book *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, says:⁶

The logic of buying and selling no longer applies to material goods alone, but increasingly governs the whole of life. The years leading up to the financial crisis of 2008 were a heady time of market faith and deregulation – an era of market triumphalism. The era began in the early 1980's, when Ronald Regan and Margaret Thatcher proclaimed their convictions that markets, not government, held the key to prosperity and freedom. And it continued in the 1990's, with the market-friendly liberalism of Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, who moderated but consolidated the faith that markets are the primary means for achieving the public good. Today, that faith is in doubt.

I will return later to suggest some different metaphors than the "market" or the "invisible hand" that economics might use.

• *Radical trust.* In his book *Out of the Wreckage*, George Monbiot uses the lessons of Bernie Sanders' campaign as a way to bring about transformational change. He cites women's suffrage, civil rights and the end of apartheid as mass mobilisation of citizens.⁷ While acknowledging all political parties rely on volunteers, Sanders' campaign was an attempt to connect with a different constituency than "big money", and avoid employing staff. Two of Sanders' campaigners, Becky Bond and Zack Exley, explain how close he came to gaining the Democratic Party nomination. They developed a model called "radical trust", delegating the biggest possible tasks to volunteers and leaving them to get on with the job. They found that passion is more important than perfection, and they trusted passion. They had faith that the passion of those who wanted an alternative to the control of the rich and powerful would attract a like-minded faith (Bond and Exley, 2016).

4 Editorial "Crude Awakening" *The Economist* (9-15 February 2019) 9 at 9.

5 Id.

6 Michael Sandel *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (Allen Lane, London, 2012) at 6.

7 George Monbiot *Out of the Wreckage: A New Politics in the Age of Crisis* (3rd ed, Verso, London, 2017).

• *Leadership.* Monbiot does not highlight the place of inspired leadership, nor refer to religious history. But the change movements he mentions had religious leadership or support, Martin Luther King being one example. King's first and second names come from Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant reformation, who nailed his 95 theses to a church door in 1517 (Perrigo, 2017). It is not insignificant that Luther's catch cry was "justification by faith". At the same time, the founder of the Jesuits, St Ignatius of Loyola, developed his spiritual exercises of meditations, prayers and contemplations. Both were responding to the need for institutional changes similar to the challenges we face today. Is the climate change problem too big for democracy? Inspired leadership in the past has come from leaders with religious motivation. We are waiting for today's religious leaders to answer this call.

• *We all have faith of some kind.* Faith, then, is not the exclusive domain of religious belief. All the relationships we enter into, such as in marriage, parenting, education, business, politics have an element of faith and trust. Our faith has a religious dimension when we bring to it a belief structure and practice, such as a monotheistic God, or a special person like Jesus Christ or Muhammad.

12.2.2 The concept of spirit and spiritual function

Spirit is a verb

Spirit is a verb
fire and wind
found in a burning bush.
Take off your shoes.

Spirit is Leunig's duck
flying in the slipstream
brooding in the nest.
Wing it.

Spirit is Talisker Whisky
craft, barrel, mature
it will have body.
Savour it.

Spirit is my father's cornet
played in war and peace
a family treasure.
Blow it.

Spirit is an old running shoe
battered in the hills.
worn in the garden.
Recycle it.

Spirit is a shadow
shade from heat

always with light.
Touch it.

Spirit is water
drink in the desert
green in the garden
twinkle in the eye
balm for the ache.
Take this cup.
Drink it.

Paul Morris, in his essay at the end of a poetry collection on spiritual verse, writes:⁸

Spirituality always makes cultural and communal claims. Spirituality is cultural. To fail to recognize my spiritual dimension is to diminish my divine self-image and to deny myself full personhood. Spirituality is personal and collective identity. Each particular form of life generates and is underpinned by a specific spirituality, a mode of thinking and practice that allows one to participate in the "divine" body. One of the most significant forms of modern spiritual identity is to be found in the heretical form of national identity.

Morris uses the notion of the divine image to define spirituality, and a secular spirituality is regarded as heretical. However, he describes atheistic or secular spirituality, and acknowledges that spirituality has a wider scope of expression than within a religious frame.⁹ The heresy of national identity could refer to the tyranny of Hitler's Germany. (Morris wrote this before "Make America Great Again", or Putin's Russia came along.)

Bearing in mind Holcroft's observation that Christianity never really took root in New Zealand as a cultural identity as, say, in Britain, religious institutions cannot claim that spirituality is narrowly restricted to religious belief or practice.¹⁰ No one church or strand dominates the religious plurality.

Spirituality does require a worldview, a belief system of some kind, and in using spirituality, we refer not only to the individual ("He was down in spirit"), but also to a team (consider how we evoke the team spirit in the haka before the All Blacks play rugby) and a nation ("It was the fighting spirit that got the British through the war"). We can speak of spirit as breath, giving us character and identity.

8 Paul Morris "New Zealand Spirituality: A time for re-enchantment" in Paul Morris, Harry Ricketts and Michael Grimshaw (eds) *Spirit in a Strange Land: A Selection of NZ Spiritual Verse* (Godwit, Auckland, 2002) 182 at 182-183.

9 Paul Morris, Harry Ricketts and Michael Grimshaw "Introduction" in Paul Morris, Harry Ricketts and Michael Grimshaw (eds) *Spirit in a Strange Land: A Selection of NZ Spiritual Verse* (Godwit, Auckland, 2002) 9 at 11.

10 Paul Morris "Spirit Abroad: Reflections on New Zealand Spirituality and Identity" in Paul Morris, Harry Ricketts and Michael Grimshaw (eds) *Spirit Abroad: A Second Selection of NZ Spiritual Verse* (Godwit, Auckland, 2004) 217 at 224.

In biblical times, the spirit was not a personal being. It was a principle of action, not a subject. It never becomes part of the structure of the living being. The Hebrew word translated spirit can also be translated wind or breath. As a principle of activity, the spirit is morally neutral and can be found in both good and bad activity. (Hence the reference to the "unclean spirit".) We can think then of spirit as breath, that activity that gives us life, or that activity that moves us. That movement can be either good or bad.¹¹ If I ask the question: "What is it in this that gives me life, or breath, or character, or a connection to place?", then I am describing my spirituality.

I have chosen the definition of spirituality from a collection of spiritual verse, as opposed to a creed or theological doctrine, because the genre of the biblical story is poetry or prose. Engaging with the language of poetry is more likely to catch the spirit, compared with the organisational control of a creed. Spirit is a verb defined in practice and poetry.

12.3 Part two

12.3.1 Is it too late to stop disastrous climate change?

When the train has left the station

Railway track
you carry the carriages
to Tangiwai bridge.

River track
you carry the lahar
from crater lake.

Loco KA949
you head from Waiouru
at Christmas in '53.

Whangaehu River
six metres high
silt and rocks, ash and sand
you smash pier 4.

Charlie Parker
you brake the train
to slow its jump
into weeping waters.

Is it too late to stop the train? What is going on with the driver? Are the warning signs sufficient? Since the 1953 tragedy, warning measures are now in place to prevent such a disaster occurring at

11 John L McKenzie "Aspects of Old Testament Thought" in Raymond E Brown, Joseph A Fitzmyer and Roland E Murphy (eds) *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Chapman Publishing, London, 1968) 736 at 742.

Tangiwai again.¹² But if the train gets too close to the bridge, its momentum will carry it even if the brakes are applied. The timing, the speed and the size of the train are critical factors. For a driver to ignore the warnings now would be a dereliction of duty. Is it too late to stop the climate disaster train? There are examples of religious groups that have predicted when the world will end.

- *Rapture theology.* Rapture Christians take literally the second coming of Christ, and predict the end of the world is coming. Millenarianism takes Revelation chapter 20 literally. Belief in the Rapture, also known as millenarianism or eschatology, has multiple variations, but the core view is that there will be an apocalyptic war, Jesus will return, and true Christians will be "raptured" or ascend to heaven, with the rest of the earth's inhabitants punished (Kaplan, 2017). Rapture believers are split about the order of events, but they are united in the belief that only Christians will be saved (Maza, 2018).

- *Rapture influence in the White House.* Rapture theologians and historical evangelicals hold several other views that hew closely to Trump administration policies. They believe that earth was created for man's use, for example, and that environmentalism is a form of blasphemy (Meyler, 2017). It appears that a significant number of members of Trump's executive are Rapture Christians, including the Vice-President, and a Rapture preacher, Ralph Drollinger, holds regular bible study in the White House. The presence of Rapture Christians in the White House raises questions about the theological and scientific illiteracy of White House appointments, and how the bizarre and the extreme now influence the White House (Timmons, 2018). It reinforces President Trump's denial of climate science.

- *End of world predictions.* Jerry Falwell Snr was a fundamentalist preacher who predicted in 1999 that the Second Coming would probably be within 10 years. His is one of an extensive list of predictions and claims for the second coming of Christ with announced dates for the end of the world (Gribben, 2009). They have all failed.

- *Evidence is important.* We may take two messages from these failures. The first is that reading the Bible with this exegetical framework is a nonsense. It is bad faith. It can be seen as a rationalisation that seeks to undercut or weaken the moral prescriptions, and in so doing undermine the ethical challenge of climate change. In that sense, it is morally corrupt.¹³ The second is that predictions of the future need to be tested with a caution. Evidence is important.

The mainstream Christian traditions do not literally interpret the symbolism in the book of Revelation, nor entertain doomsday fantasies: "You do not know what day your Lord is coming."¹⁴

12 Tangiwai is a small rural community in the Ruapehu District of the Manawatū-Whanganui region of New Zealand's North Island, near where the country's worst rail disaster occurred on 24 December 1953: see Kevin Boon *Tangiwai Rail Disaster* (Price Milburn, Nelson, 1990).

13 Gardiner, above n 1, at 301, 306.

14 Matthew 24:42; 25:13.

• *Prophetic voices.* The narratives of the prophets state a predicted calamity will occur if the Ruler continues to follow a particular path. Jonah, for example, preached to the city of Nineveh to change its ways. It did. (The legend of the whale is not the main point of the story.) Often, the prophets are arguing for doctrinal purity, or against wickedness, or to turn away from false gods. The plot structure is, if you go down this path, then this is the consequence, so repent, change.

One of the key differences today is the base of scientific data. While the science is evidence-based, how the future will unfold is a calculated estimate. Yet, there is an argument that the climate scientists who warn us of these future predicaments stand in the biblical tradition of the prophets (but not the eschatologists), and we should hear the voice of God in what they say.

• *Heed the warnings.* As the train gets closer to the bridge, and if its momentum increases or even holds, then our worries about the end can be taken seriously. This is particularly so if a major polluter and/or its leadership is in denial. As time runs out, the collapse of our civilisation in some form is more likely.

12.3.2 The earth covenant (compare the Earth Charter)

Noah opens the window of the ark

There's a tui in the Ngaio tree.

I think of Noah's raven
flying over the waters until they dried.

The tui is not a gannet nor albatross
skimming the waters a long way from home.

It needs a branch to sing from,
a portal into which to chortle.

• *Noah story.* There are two strands of oral tradition that are woven into the Noah account, and it is not science or history, but a religious story (Brueggemann, 1982). Whereas Genesis 1 has humankind as vegetarian, by the time we get to Noah, humankind is eating every living thing as food. The outline of the story is this: humankind was wicked, the creator grieved that, and wondered if human beings should be blotted out. However, Noah was a righteous man, God instructed Noah to make an ark, with two of every kind of living thing. There was a great flood, the ark survived the flood, and after the event, God entered into a covenant.

The Noah story in Genesis 6 links with the first story of creation (Genesis 1-2:4a). In Genesis 1, humankind is granted dominion following the making "in our image". There is a blessing to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28). This is a role which is associated primarily with kings, and within Israelite royal tradition, one frequently finds a connection between the ideal king and the fertility of the land.¹⁵ Two texts from elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible make it

15 Mark G Brett "Earthing the human in Genesis 1-3" in Norman C Habel and Shirley Wurth (eds) *The Earth Story in Genesis* (Volume 2, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 2000) 73 at 77-78.

clear that the dominion of a god-like king would create harmony with the physical earth (Psalm 72:3) and the non-violence of other creatures (Isaiah 11:6-11:8).¹⁶

Augustine, Aquinas and Luther do not support any simplistic notion that "dominion" is to be treated as a synonym of exploitation.¹⁷

That the earth was ruined by the time we get to Noah suggests that this dominion was improperly exercised, and God resolved to destroy it (Genesis 6:11-6:13).

There are three significant differences between Genesis 1 and Genesis 6.

In the first creation story, humankind and the beasts and birds are vegetarian (Genesis 1:29-1:30). In the Noah story, every living thing shall be food (Genesis 9:3). One of the important choices we face today is what kind of food we eat. This is a major topic outside the scope of this chapter, except to say that those who choose to be vegetarian do so with the authority of the first creation myth.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that in Genesis 9:1 and 9:7, permission to subdue the earth is withdrawn.

Thirdly, in Genesis 9:13, it says: "I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth."

The earth is a living entity in its own right, and as such has an intrinsic value.¹⁸ Intrinsic value is important in ecological ethics, and in how we measure and value non-human life in economics. It gives foundation, for example, to the legal personality of the land in section 3 of the Te Urewera Act 2014:

- (1) Te Urewera is ancient and enduring, a fortress of nature, alive with history; its scenery is abundant with mystery, adventure, and remote beauty.
- (2) Te Urewera is a place of spiritual value, with its own mana and mauri.
- (3) Te Urewera has an identity in and of itself, inspiring people to commit to its care.
- (9) Tūhoe and the Crown share the view that Te Urewera should have legal recognition in its own right...

Other examples are found with the Whanganui River and Taranaki Maunga. There is scope for the law to do more of this.

The covenant, of which the rainbow is a reminder, is between God and Noah and his descendants, with every living creature, and with the earth. The promise is a flood will never destroy the earth. A promise is a two-way relationship: our part of the covenant is to live in such a way that God does not regret his creation; that we fulfil the promise of creation.

16 See Gardiner, above n 1, at 125.

17 Robin Gill *A Textbook of Christian Ethics* (3rd ed, T&T Clark, London, 2006) at 272.

18 Gardiner, above n 1, at 125.

• *No insurance against climate change.* Some Christian groups believe that this is an insurance policy against climate change (Hanley, 2018). Unfortunately for them, large parts of the earth are becoming uninhabitable, not by floods, instead by extreme fire events. The forests dry out and become fuel. The rise in global temperatures will melt glaciers and ice caps, and cause sea level rise. It is sea surges that will make the Pacific Islanders migrate. The sea birds will adapt, the land birds, such as tui, need a tree. If we are like Noah, we will open the window and watch the birds.

12.3.3 Earth as a garden

A matter of degrees

Pure

As long as the air was clean,
so was the rain;
as long as the land was unsoiled,
so was the stream;
as long as the stream was filtered,
so was the lake;
as long as the lake was alive,
so was the river.

River, when we drink your water,
it clears our throats.

The gardener sings, works,
marries land and river
in fertile soil.

Drought

The morning mist burns off.
The garden tries to lick its lips.
Wilting plants lose their spine.
This was a land of plenty.

River, you are the artery of the land,
your pulse is slowing.

The gardener works in the cool of night,
wonders when trout and river will run again.

Flood

From the courtyard wisteria,
bronze leaves and raindrops
implode the puddles.
The gully begins to avalanche.
Rain roars to the lake outlet.

River, you are a storm water drain,
uncontained.

The gardener stores the last of the vegetables,
preserves the seeds.
waits through the night.

Temperature rise

We shall walk in ashes and dust,
dark grey out of the blue,
unexpected but unsurprising,
like when the thin skin of the earth erupted
a volcanic cloud over the garden,
except it's a gradual tipping point,
a matter of degrees.

• *The second creation account in Genesis.* The second and older creation account in Genesis 2-3 is set in a garden. The Lord God (this divine title is a clue that it is different from the priestly account of Genesis 1) forms man from the dust of the ground and breathes into his nostrils the breath of life. Breath is also translated as spirit – that which makes a living being.

Man is put in the garden to till it. It is not good for man to be alone, so he is given a partner as his helper. Man is also given the power of language to name every living creature. Woman is made out of his rib and they "cling" together to become one. (Different but one is not a relationship of submission by either partner.) Anatomically, this is not scientific, but then this is not a story of science. It is a story of relationship, of our human condition.

Genesis 3 pictures a serpent leading to the brokenness of the relationship between the gardeners. The serpent is a wily old fox. A fruitful garden depends upon land, water and plants. This is the given of the garden for humankind to till. I suggest it is a foundational image of understanding creation. When we lose our relationship with the land, we lose something fundamental to our identity and our existence. Māori talk of the land as their bones.

The biblical image is a flourishing garden as the context for the good life. When God formed humankind from the dust of the ground, and breathed into them the breath of life, he put humankind into a garden. Dust, breath or spirit, garden (Genesis 2:7-2:8). And then:¹⁹

But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. ... Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

Notice here that the spirit of faith is in accord with the biblical narrative. Our spirit connects with, or is checked against, the story. Grace extends through this process, a process that renews our inner

19 2 Corinthians 4:13-4:16.

nature. And note the role of the narrative here. The story is a way of evoking and balancing. As such, it requires judgment and imagination. The result is a renewal of our inner nature.

• *Applying the garden metaphor in economics.* Sandel has written about how the metaphor of the market economy, instead of being a tool for organising productive activity, has become a way of life – making a market society.²⁰ The intention of the New Zealand government to adopt a living standards framework to measure well-being is a change in direction (New Zealand Treasury, 2018).

An alternative metaphor to "market" might be to think of the economy as a "garden". A garden image includes crops for production, but not just the commercial. The gardener knows how to protect and care for water and soil, and factoring in good husbandry with knowledge of the science, especially climate science.

12.3.4 Sea level rise

The sandpiper's lament

Between sea and coastal cliff,
estuary tides rip, shift.

The dredge spits slurry on to dunes,
a circular war, a windblown ruse.

Gulls grace, glide,

eye the drift, cyclone, tide,
eye the lift, oil, soil, spoil.

The setting for this poem is the Mangawhai Heads (township in Northland, New Zealand). There are many places, and more to come, where sea surges are eroding the coastline. It shows clearly the circularity of dredging sand which is then by wind and sea returned to the same place. Coastal communities throughout the world, and islands in the Pacific, are now facing dilemmas not of their making:²¹

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!

The parable of the wise and the foolish in Matthew 7 is apt for thinking about the transition we face as we move towards a net zero carbon target. Face the fact we need to build on solid foundations and avoid shifting sand. Will we adopt a just and generous assistance to innocent victims to relocate?

20 Sandel, above n 6, at 10.

21 Matthew 7:24-7:27.

Whatever we do, let's not move sand around.

12.3.5 Refugees

Old bones

High tides seep into the garden. Again.
Too high. Too often.
The fence crumbles.

Bleached coral stalks the reef.

The Tuvalu Rev pours, at his sanctuary,
his stormy outburst to his ancestors.

The cyclone has wound the clock to breaking.
The graves are waterlogged canoes.
On higher ground he reinters.
The benediction blown to the oceans.

- *A view from Tuvalu.* From a Tuvalu perspective, the issue is that the pollution of the air by carbon is caused by the major industrial nations (although we all contribute in our own way). Tuvalu contributes little to nothing in comparison, yet they will lose their island due to rising seas (Roy, 2019). The polluter should pay, in this case, the cost of relocation.

- *An ancient story contrasting law and spirit.* An ancient relocation story is the exile of Israelites to Babylon. The first move to Babylon was through conquest. It is the return from Babylon that is full of interest. Persian armies won a decisive battle against Babylon at Opis on the Tigris river in 539 BCE, and Cyrus removed the oppressive conditions in Babylon. He allowed those in exile to return. Ezra came from Babylon with a copy of the Law and the power to enforce it:²²

For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God, which is in your hand.

The law is a product of both internal Jewish incentive and external Persian directives. That is, the directives of the exiled community and the directives of the Persian King defined the world of Judah. Ezra's law was in many senses exclusive (no foreign wives or children) and elitist (the returning exiles had precedence over the locals). But it was based on shaping a national identity through religious worship and the Torah. It was conservative. By contrast, the post-exilic Second Isaiah (40-55) is rich in poetry and religious imagination. It contains the four servant songs. The remaining chapters of Isaiah extend the covenant to all who obey and are an invitation to abundant life. It is from Isaiah 61 that Jesus reads in the synagogue: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me".²³

22 Ezra 7:14.

23 Luke 4:18.

- *Two paths.* These two paths of closing ranks to preserve identity (law), or having an open inclusive character driven identity (spirit or grace), are being played out in the world's immigration policies for refugees. Some refugees set up a copy of their home of origin in their new place, stuck in their old home religion and culture. Others take an open inclusiveness to their new place. These open and closed patterns are mimicked by the host. There is a lesson we can learn from refugees. They know what it is to suffer loss and they know the experience of sacrifice. They will have deep insights into how to live simply. (Should we have sympathy for those rich refugees buying large and exclusive tracts of land, escaping to our precious landscapes? The Overseas Investment Office might have a clause that asks not just how much money they have, but how they will contribute in climate change mitigation.)

- *Spirituality is demanding.* Belden Lane writes: "Extremity is the necessary, even normative starting point for understanding the strenuous character of the spiritual life."²⁴ He then adds: "My fear is that much of what we call 'spirituality' today is overly sanitised and sterile, far removed from the anguish of pain In fierce landscapes one knows that being good, being sweet, being nice, will not cause life to sing."²⁵ In the transition to carbon neutrality, scaremongering and fear may undermine the imperatives before us. The strenuous character Lane refers to will require courage and serenity.

12.3.6 The consumer society

Enough stuff, stuff enough?

Mum, I want a watch.
 Why do you need another?
 Steve Jones has the latest.
 Have you talked with your father?
 He said talk with you about stuff.
 Don't you have enough stuff?
 I've enough toy stuff,
 I want big boys' stuff.

The landfill tips into the plastic ocean.

The mother looks to the grandmother.
 The father looks at the grandson.
 The grandmother cries time.

- *A New Zealand report on options to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.* In a report prepared for GLOBE-NZ, Vivid Economics found that if New Zealand substantially afforests and there are beneficial low emission technologies along with land use changes, the country could achieve domestic net zero emissions by 2050. Beyond 2050, New Zealand will not have further land for forestry

24 Belden C Lane *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988) at 20.

25 *Id.*, at 43.

abatement and will rely on new technologies, as yet unknown.²⁶ This "faith" in the future is admirable, but there is a glaring gap. Technological development consistent in a sustainable economy will only take us so far – relying on technological fixes is high risk.

- *Limits on water.* Consider, for example, the component of our renewable electricity generation that relies on water. We harness the melting snows as they flow into our lakes and rivers. Climate change will produce extreme weather events of drought and flood. In times of extreme drought, these water flows will reach a point insufficient to generate electricity. As the ice/glacier volume shrinks, as measurements show it is, then ice melt and water flow will reduce. At what point this run-off will bottom out is uncertain, but it lies ahead.²⁷ With our current technology, electricity generation from water will increasingly be a limited resource.

- *New technology.* Any new technology takes time, and like a new medicine, we may not know its side effects immediately. Our current technologies and their substitutes, of course, have roles to play. But what are these roles and what is the play? Technology has a mix of benefits and harms, it can be used for good or evil – or perhaps shades of grey rather than black and white.

- *The consumer society.* The consumer society is scripted to customers and shareholders. It has many benefits to our civilisation. These virtues become vices if this is the only script we play. The consumer society has no ability to harness whether it is serving our need or our greed. It strokes our appetite to buy. A market demand assumes our ability to pay, and those that cannot afford to buy, such as a house, become homeless. It ignores the gift "economy", those services which feed our deepest needs for love and self-worth found in relationships and community, not a market segment. This is the spirituality of gift.

- *Spirituality of fear and greed and the risk of war.* Mahatma Gandhi said: "The world has enough for everyone's needs, but not everyone's greed".²⁸ Securing our borders and defending our privileged way of life from conquest is a common ploy now in political power plays. Fear and the imaginings of dispossession will employ spirited rhetoric. Peace is fragile. The risk of war as we adjust to sustainable societies and to carbon neutrality is a real threat.

- *Materialism.* Kasser contrasts materialistic goals of money, image and status (encouraged by consumer capitalism) with the intrinsic goals of personal and community well-being. His research shows: "The more that people care about materialistic goals, the lower their personal well-being."²⁹

26 Vivid Economics *Net zero in New Zealand: Scenarios to achieve domestic emissions neutrality in the second half of the century: Report prepared for GLOBE-NZ* (Vivid Economics, March 2017) at 34.

27 Kennedy Warne, Dave Allen and Rob Suisted "The Final Meltdown" *New Zealand Geographic* (Issue 154, November-December 2018) 50-59. See also Motu "Drought under climate change: what do New Zealanders need to know now?" (29 November 2018) <<https://motu.nz>>.

28 Mahatma Gandhi, quoted in Oliver Balch "The relevance of Gandhi in the capitalism debate" *The Guardian* (online ed, 28 January 2013) <www.theguardian.com>.

29 Tim Kasser "The True Cost Interview" (2016) The True Cost <<https://truecostmovie.com/tim-kasser-interview>>.

They tend to lower health and happiness. In particular, they care less about ecological sustainability and their lifestyles tend to have a more damaging effect on the planet.

His studies show more exposure to advertising leads to stronger materialistic values.

Kasser advocates various curbs on advertising, including regarding it as unethical to advertise to children under 12. They have a right to be protected in their formative learning years from advertising until they have a value foundation to assess and balance the advertising to consume.³⁰

• *A spirituality of enough*. A spirituality of enough is learning to live with less "stuff" to free us to value a non-materialistic lifestyle.³¹

Many expressions of spirituality (for example, the Papal Encyclical and the World Council of Churches) teach that the "good life" lies not in the competitive quest for possessions, the accumulation of wealth, or fortresses and stockpiles of armaments to provide for our security. The Accra Confession from the Reformed Churches, for example, rejects "the culture of rampant consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the neoliberal global market system or any other system [including absolute planned economies], which claims there is no alternative."³²

Kasser says:³³

... the very earliest writings in philosophy and religions and such – Socrates and Lao Tzu and the Bible and Mohammed and Buddhism – suggest to people that materialism is pretty problematic, that it will crowd out what it means to have a meaningful life, that it will crowd out spiritual strivings, and that it will crowd out authenticity.

Professor Yuan T Lee, President of the International Council for Science, believes a deep transformation to global sustainability is needed, beginning immediately with dramatic reductions in human footprint, population growth and consumption. His simple formula was "Shrink + Share".³⁴

30 Tim Kasser "Living in a material world" *New Philosopher* (Issue 18, winter 2017-2018) 52.

31 World Council of Churches "Statement on COP 24 and Just Transition to Sustainable Economy" (7 November 2018) <www.oikoumene.org>.

32 World Communion of Reformed Churches "The Accra Confession" (2004) at [21].

33 Kasser, above n 30, at 52.

34 Yuan T Lee (2014) (personal note taken from his talk at Victoria University of Wellington, 5 September 2014).

12.4 Conclusion

The earth is shaping us to live with less.

It is challenging us to:

Listen to its voice,
heard in the science of the climate,
and the warnings of the waters.

Listen to the birds,
for if we burn or flood their nests,
our nests will wane too.

Cultivate our planet as a garden,
where the market is in a corner to enjoy its shade.

Reject "fear and greed". Imagine another script,
for our and future generations,
where treasures of life are found in simplicity and humility.

Say enough is enough,
for we have enough stuff to go around.

Build our house on solid rock, not shifting sand,
and care for our neighbour and the refugee,
for peace is a precious gift.

These are matters of the spirit,
lived in good faith to sustain life for our grandchildren,
and their grandchildren too.

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